

JEREMIAH'S LETTER TO THE EXILES - 1

(Jer 29:1-19) 10/17/18

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I. CONTEXT

- A. *The historical situation of the chapter was that in 597 B.C., some three thousand Jews had been exiled with Jehoiachin, among them a number of priests and prophets along with the royal household.*
- B. *In Jerusalem, Jeremiah heard that some exiled false prophets were predicting an early fall of Babylon and an early restoration of the exiles to Judah. Jeremiah's letters warned the exiles against this deception and urged them to wait patiently for God's time (Feinberg).*

II. THE FIRST LETTER TO THE EXILES (Jer 29:1-14)

- A. Jeremiah's Letter to the Exiles (1)
 1. Even though Hananiah was no longer a threat for Judah after his demise (Jer 28:16-17), three other false prophets were addressed by Jeremiah.
 2. The three false prophets mentioned among the exiles were Ahab the son of Kolaiah (Jer 29:21), Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah (Jer 29:21), and Shemaiah the Nehelamite (Jer 29:24). They were in part, the occasion for Jeremiah's letter.
 3. This was the first letter recorded in the Bible (Feinberg). There were numerous letters written in the OT (2Ch 21:12-15; 30:1, 6-9; 32:17; Ezr 4:7-8, 11; 5:6; Neh 2:8-9; 6:5).
 4. There were numerous types of written communication in antiquity. They were papyrus (reeds), parchment (animal skins), wooden tablets, clay tablets, and ostraca (potsherds). Though each of these have been discovered in Israel, Jeremiah most likely wrote on either papyri or parchment (cf. Jer 36:2, 4).
- B. After Second Deportation (2)
 1. The timeframe was given as sometime after King Jeconiah was taken into captivity. This was the second deportation from Judah to Babylon in 597 BC.
 2. Taken into exile along with Jeconiah was the queen mother, officials, craftsmen, and smiths.
- C. Letter Sent Along with Officials (3)
 1. The letter was given to emissaries of king Zedekiah. They were Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah.
 2. Most likely, they were traveling to Babylon with King Zedekiah's regular tribute money.
- D. Addressed to the Exiles (4)
 1. The message of the letter was from the Lord of Hosts.
 2. The letter was expressly addressed to the **exiles** taken to Babylon from **Jerusalem**.
- E. Build Houses (5)
 1. The exiles were told to settle in and begin to build houses and gardens.
 2. Instead of expecting to return to Jerusalem anytime soon, they were to settle in and begin to build their lives.
- F. Take Wives (6)
 1. In the same manner, they were to take wives and bear children. Of course, they were not to take foreign wives (Deu 7:3).
 2. Their long captivity should not limit their lives or increase.
- G. Pray for Babylon's Welfare (7)
 1. They were to do everything they could for the "**welfare**" (*shalom - peace or soundness*) of Babylon's success. The more Babylon succeeded the more those in captivity would succeed.
 2. In fact, Judah was to **pray** to the Lord **on behalf** of Babylon's success. Later on, King Cyrus would ask for the prayers of the people (Ezr 6:10).
- H. Do Not Listen to False Prophets (8)
 1. However, if Judah was to prosper during captivity, then they must reject the message of the false **prophets**.
 2. They were not to listen to these false prophets, diviners, and dreamers (cf. Jer 27:9).
Diviners were those who claimed to consult with beings or things to find out the future.
Dreamers were those who claimed to receive divine dreams.
- I. False Prophets Were Not Sent (9)
 1. The Lord reiterated that these false teachers were **not sent** by Him.
 2. They were self-proclaimed prophets (cf. Rev 2:2).
- J. Exiles Return in Seventy years (10)

1. Hananiah prophesied that the exiles would return in two years (Jer 28:3). There were more false prophets making the same false prophecy.
 2. The Lord said He would bring the exiles back to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, it would not be until Babylon was removed from power in **seventy years** (cf. Jer 25:11-12).
 3. Seventy years was the timeline that the Lord gave to Jeremiah in which He would **visit** His people, release them from captivity, and bring them back to Jerusalem.
 4. Some maintain that the seventy years of captivity were between 586-516 BC, concluding the rebuilding of the Temple. Others hold that the seventy years were between 606- 536 BC, concluding with the decree of Cyrus to release Judah.
- K. Lord Gives Future Hope (11)
1. The sovereign Lord had **plans** for His people and He would carry them out. These were plans of **welfare** and **not calamity**.
 2. The Lord offered a **future** restoration and **hope** to Judah.
- L. Judah will Call Upon Lord (12)
1. It would precipitate a response from Judah in which they would **call upon the Lord**.
 2. Following Judah's repentance, the Lord would **listen to them**.
- M. Judah will Seek Lord (13)
1. They would seek the Lord with all their heart and find Him.
 2. Their relationship would be restored with the Lord.
- N. Lord will Gather Israel (14)
1. The Lord would restore to them their previous **fortunes** which they had in the promised land. In addition, the Lord would gather His people from **all the nations**.
 2. *Fulfillment would occur in the era of Ezra and Nehemiah, and beyond this in even fuller measure after the Second Advent of their Messiah (cf. Dan. 2:35, 45; 7:13, 14, 27; 12:1-3, 13) (MSB).*

III. THE SECOND MESSAGE TO THE EXILES (Jer 29:15-19)

- A. Judah Still Embraced False Prophets (15)
1. Some claim this was a second letter written by Jeremiah to the exiles. It very well may have been, since it seems to include a response from the exiles.
 2. They did not heed the first warning but **raised up prophets** in Babylon who would oppose Jeremiah's prophecy.
- B. Address to Kings and People (16)
1. The exiles may have had a false confidence since a king (Zedekiah) continued to sit on the **throne of David**.
 2. In addition, not everyone from Judah was in captivity. There were still **people and brothers** who dwelled in Jerusalem.
- C. Sword, Famine, and Pestilence (17-18)
1. As for the king and those who remained in Jerusalem, impending judgment would come upon them.
 2. The Lord promised the three-fold calamity of divine punishment. It was the **sword, famine and pestilence**.
 3. Those who still remained in Jerusalem were like **rotten figs** which could not be eaten. In other words, there was no hope that those who remained in Jerusalem would repent. Judgment upon them was inevitable.
- D. They Refused to Listen (19)
1. Those remaining in Jerusalem rejected God's word, warning, and offer.
 2. They rejected God's prophets over and over. This was a sad repetitive theme in Jeremiah (Jer 25:3; 26:5; 32:33).

IV. OBSERVATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

- A. We observe God's discipline to His people.
- B. We observe God's grace and mercy to His people.
- C. We observe God's displeasure with false prophets.