

Jeremiah 29:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon;

Analysis

This chapter introduces Jeremiah's letter to the Jewish exiles in Babylon—a remarkable document that shaped how God's people should live in a pagan culture. The recipients are carefully identified: 'the residue of the elders...the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive.' This was the elite class of Judah—the first wave of exiles in 597 BC included King Jehoiachin, nobles, craftsmen, and soldiers (2 Kings 24:14-16).

The fact that Jeremiah wrote from Jerusalem to Babylon highlights the divided state of God's people. Those in Jerusalem were tempted to believe the exiles would return quickly, while those in Babylon heard false prophets like Hananiah promising immediate deliverance. Into this confusion, Jeremiah speaks God's true word: the exile will last seventy years (v. 10). This required accepting a difficult present reality rather than grasping at false hope.

This letter establishes a theology of exile that remains relevant for Christians living as 'strangers and pilgrims' in this world (1 Peter 2:11). We are exiled from our true home, living in a culture that does not share our values, yet called to faithfully inhabit that space. Jeremiah's instructions—build houses, plant gardens,

marry, multiply, seek the city's welfare—provide a model for faithful presence in a hostile culture.

Historical Context

The letter was sent around 594 BC, about three years after the first deportation. The exiles were settled in various locations in Babylon, including Tel-abib by the river Chebar where Ezekiel prophesied (Ezekiel 3:15). Archaeological evidence shows that some Jewish exiles prospered in Babylon, engaging in business and even owning property. Yet they struggled with the tension between accommodation and assimilation, between faithful presence and losing their distinct identity as God's covenant people.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does Jeremiah's letter teach us about how to live faithfully in a culture that does not share biblical values?
2. How do we balance seeking our city's welfare while maintaining our distinct identity as God's people?
3. In what ways are Christians today 'exiles' living in a foreign land, and how should this shape our engagement with culture?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵלֶּה	דְּבַר י	הַסֵּפֶר	אֲשֶׁר	שָׁלַח	יִרְמְיָהּ
H428	Now these are the words	of the letter	H834	sent	that Jeremiah
	H1697	H5612		H7971	H3414
וְהַנְּבִיאִים	מִירוּשָׁלַם	אֶל	יְתֵר	זְקֵנֵי י	
and to the prophets	from Jerusalem	H413	unto the residue	of the elders	
H5030	H3389		H3499	H2205	
הַגּוֹלָה	וְאֶל	הַכֹּהֲנִים	וְאֶל	הַנְּבִיאִים	
which were carried away captives	H413	and to the priests	H413	and to the prophets	
H1473		H3548		H5030	
וְאֶל	כָּל	הָעָם	אֲשֶׁר	הִגִּיל	
H413	H3605	and to all the people	H834	had carried away captive	
		H5971		H1540	
וְנְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר	מִירוּשָׁלַם	בָּבֶלְהָ:			
whom Nebuchadnezzar	from Jerusalem	to Babylon			
H5019	H3389	H894			

Additional Cross-References

Esther 9:20 (Parallel theme): And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far,

Hebrews 13:22 (Word): And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

Acts 15:23 (Parallel theme): And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: