

Jeremiah 29:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

By the hand of Elasar the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) saying,

Analysis

By the hand of Elasar the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah—Jeremiah sent this explosive letter via diplomatic courier, not random messengers. Shaphan's family had protected Jeremiah (26:24) and championed Josiah's reforms; Hilkiah discovered the lost Torah scroll (2 Kings 22:8). These names signal credibility and covenant faithfulness.

Whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon—The irony is profound: Zedekiah's own ambassadors, sent to reassure Nebuchadnezzar of loyalty, unknowingly carry a letter telling exiles to settle permanently and pray for Babylon's welfare (vv. 5-7). The Hebrew **שָׁלַח** (shalach, sent) appears twice—Zedekiah sent envoys, but Jeremiah sent God's true word. One mission served political expediency; the other, divine purpose.

Historical Context

Zedekiah (597-586 BC) was Nebuchadnezzar's puppet king, constantly pressured to rebel by pro-Egyptian factions and false prophets. These diplomatic missions attempted to maintain the fragile vassal relationship. Shaphan and Hilkiah's sons served in Zedekiah's administration despite its compromises, showing godly men can serve flawed systems.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How can believers faithfully serve in secular or compromised institutions without endorsing their errors?
2. What does it mean that God's word travels through 'official channels' to subvert official lies?
3. Why does God choose credible messengers? How does character validate message?

Interlinear Text

חַלְקִי הַ בָּנִי גֵּמָרִי הַ בָּנִי הַלְקִי הַ בָּנִי
By the hand of Elasar the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah

H3027 H501 H1121 H8227 H1587 H1121 H2518

נְבוּכָדְנָצָר אֶל יְהוּדָה מִלְּךָ צְדָקִי הַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁל חָאשָׁר
to Nebuchadnezzar of Judah king of Zedekiah whom sent H834 H7971 H6667 H4428 H3063 H413 H5019

לִאמְרָה בְּלֹה בְּלֹה בְּלֹה בְּלֹה
saying of Babylon of Babylon of Babylon of Babylon
H559 H894 H894 H4428