

Jeremiah 29:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD.

Analysis

Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD. This verse pronounces divine judgment on Shemaiah, a false prophet who opposed Jeremiah's message and incited rebellion against God's revealed will. "I will punish" translates the Hebrew paqad (רִאָفָת), meaning to visit, attend to, or reckon with—often used for divine visitation in judgment. The punishment is comprehensive: Shemaiah's line will be cut off ("his seed... shall not have a man to dwell among this people") and he personally will miss the restoration God planned for the exiles.

"Neither shall he behold the good that I will do" is particularly severe—Shemaiah would not witness the return from exile and restoration promised in Jeremiah 29:10-14. Having rejected God's true word, he forfeits participation in God's future blessing. The indictment is clear: "he hath taught rebellion" (sarah, שָׁרָךְ, meaning turning away, defection, apostasy) "against the LORD." False prophecy isn't merely mistaken prediction—it actively leads people away from God's will and constitutes rebellion against divine authority.

This judgment illustrates Scripture's consistent principle: those who lead God's people astray face severe accountability (Matthew 18:6, James 3:1). Shemaiah's false optimism contradicted God's revealed plan, potentially causing exiles to resist God's purposes and miss His ultimate blessing through submission to judgment.

Historical Context

Jeremiah 29 contains Jeremiah's letter to the Babylonian exiles (597 BCE deportation), instructing them to settle in Babylon for seventy years rather than expect imminent return. This counsel contradicted popular false prophets who promised quick deliverance, creating intense opposition to Jeremiah.

Shemaiah the Nehelamite, mentioned only in Jeremiah 29:24-32, was among these false prophets in Babylon. He sent letters to Jerusalem demanding that Zephaniah the priest arrest Jeremiah for prophesying that exile would be lengthy. Shemaiah's 'prophecy' aligned with what people wanted to hear—immediate restoration—but contradicted God's actual plan. This made him popular but dangerous, as exiles who believed him might resist Babylon's authority (bringing further destruction) or fail to build the communities God commanded.

The judgment on Shemaiah fulfilled God's word through Moses concerning false prophets (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:20-22). His punishment—being cut off from his people and missing the restoration—demonstrates the seriousness of claiming to speak for God falsely. History vindicated Jeremiah: the seventy-year exile proceeded as prophesied, and the next generation returned to rebuild Jerusalem, while Shemaiah's line disappeared from record.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What distinguishes false prophecy that 'teaches rebellion against the LORD' from honest error?
2. Why is the punishment for false prophets particularly severe in Scripture?
3. How does Shemaiah's fate illustrate the principle that rejecting God's revealed will leads to missing His blessing?
4. In what ways might religious leaders today teach 'rebellion against the LORD' by contradicting Scripture?
5. What responsibility do believers have to discern true from false teaching about God's purposes?

Interlinear Text

פְּקֻדָּת הָנָתָן אֶת־מֵתָה לְכָה
Therefore thus saith the LORD against the LORD Behold I will punish
H3651 H3541 H559 H3068 H2005 H6485

לֹא יְהִי הַלְּבָדִים שְׁמַעַי הַעַל
Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his seed لا
H5921 H8098 H5161 H5921 H2233 H1961 H0

אֵלָא בְּתוֹךְ יִשְׁבֶּן לְעָם
he shall not have a man to dwell among for my people
H376 H3427 H8432 H2088 H3808

נִאֵם לְעָם
neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people saith
H7200 H2896 H834 H589 H6213 H5971 H5002

יְהִי הַלְּבָדִים עַל
against the LORD rebellion because he hath taught against the LORD
H3068 H3588 H5627 H1696 H5921 H3068

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 28:16 (References Lord): Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.

Jeremiah 17:6 (Good): For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

Jeremiah 22:30 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

2 Kings 7:2 (References Lord): Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org