

Jeremiah 29:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;

Analysis

God identifies Himself as 'the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel'—establishing that despite geographical displacement, He remains their covenant God. The phrase 'unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon' contains a crucial theological point: God takes responsibility for the exile. It was not merely Nebuchadnezzar's military prowess or Judah's political miscalculation—God Himself 'caused' this exile.

This divine sovereignty over catastrophe is essential to understanding suffering and judgment. The Babylonians were moral agents responsible for their brutality, yet God sovereignly used them to discipline His people. This paradox—human responsibility and divine sovereignty—runs throughout Scripture. God did not approve of Babylon's sin, yet He incorporated it into His redemptive purposes. The exile was simultaneously God's judgment on Judah's sin and Babylon's sin for which they would later be judged (chapters 50-51).

The recognition that God 'caused' the exile should have brought both humility and hope. Humility, because it acknowledged their suffering as deserved discipline. Hope, because if God caused it, He could also end it. No earthly power held them captive apart from God's sovereign will. This theology later shaped how exiled communities (including the early church) understood their suffering—not as abandonment by God but as part of His redemptive purposes.

Historical Context

The 597 BC exile occurred when Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar after only three months as king. Unlike the 586 BC destruction, this first exile was relatively orderly—the elite were deported but the city was not destroyed. Jeremiah's assertion that God 'caused' this exile would have been controversial; nationalistic voices claimed Babylon had merely won a temporary victory and deliverance was imminent. Jeremiah's contrary message—that this was God's doing and would last seventy years—was seen as defeatist and unpatriotic.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that God 'caused' the exile change how we should respond to suffering and setbacks?
2. What is the difference between saying 'God allowed this' versus 'God caused this,' and why does it matter?
3. How can we hold together God's sovereignty over difficult circumstances with human moral responsibility for evil actions?

Interlinear Text

לְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה אֱמֹר כִּי

H3541

Thus saith

the LORD

of hosts

the God

of Israel

H3605

H559

H3068

H6635

H430

H3478

בָּגָל הָ

אֲשֶׁר

הַגְּלִיל יְהִי

unto all that are carried away captives

H834

whom I have caused to be carried away

H1540

H1473

בָּבֶלְהָ מִירוּשָׁלָם

from Jerusalem unto Babylon

H3389

H894

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 24:5 (References God): Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.

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