

Jeremiah 29:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

Analysis

God warns the exiles against false prophets and diviners who promise what people want to hear rather than God's actual word. The phrase 'your prophets and your diviners' is telling—these are prophets the people have chosen for themselves, voices that confirm their desires rather than challenge them. These false voices assured the exiles that Babylon's power would quickly be broken and return was imminent. This pleasant lie was far more popular than Jeremiah's hard truth of seventy years exile.

The warning 'neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed' is particularly insightful. God takes responsibility even for the people's self-deception—they 'cause' these dreams because they want them to be true. This psychological insight recognizes that we often hear what we want to hear, selecting voices that confirm our pre-existing desires. The exiles wanted quick deliverance, so they listened to prophets promising it, dismissing Jeremiah's contrary word as pessimism or even heresy.

This pattern repeats throughout history. Paul warned Timothy about a time when people would 'heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears' who tell them what they want to hear rather than sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3). The antidote is commitment to Scripture's authority regardless of whether its message is pleasant.

We must examine whether we're drawn to teachers because they proclaim God's truth or because they confirm what we already believe.

Historical Context

False prophets in exile included Ahab and Zedekiah (mentioned in v. 21), whom Nebuchadnezzar executed for their lies. Hananiah in Jerusalem had prophesied return within two years (chapter 28) but died within that year as judgment. These false prophets were not merely mistaken; they were dangerous, offering false hope that led people to poor decisions. Some exiles apparently attempted rebellion based on false prophecies, bringing Babylonian retribution upon the Jewish community.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How can we discern between true and false teachers—those proclaiming God's actual word versus those telling us what we want to hear?
2. In what ways might we 'cause dreams to be dreamed'—selecting teachers and messages that confirm our existing desires rather than challenge us?
3. What practical steps can we take to ensure we're under Scripture's authority rather than choosing interpreters who merely confirm our preferences?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	כֹּה	אָמַר	יְהוָה	צְבָאוֹת	אֱלֹהֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	אֵל
H3588	H3541	For thus saith	the LORD	of hosts	the God	of Israel	H408
		H559	H3068	H6635	H430	H3478	
יִשְׁיָאוּ	לְךָ	נְבִיאֶיךָ	אֲשֶׁר	בְּקִרְבְּךָ			
of you deceive	H0	Let not your prophets	H834	that be in the midst			
H5377		H5030		H7130			
וְקִסְמֵיכֶם	וְאֵל	תִּשְׁמְעוּ	אֵל	חֲלֹמֹתֵיכֶם			
and your diviners	H408	you neither hearken	H413	to your dreams			
H7080		H8085		H2472			H834
אֲתָם	מַחְלֵמִים:						
H859	which ye cause to be dreamed						
	H2492						

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 5:31 (Prophecy): The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

Ephesians 5:6 (References God): Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Jeremiah 14:14 (Prophecy): Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

Jeremiah 28:15 (Prophecy): Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie.

Jeremiah 23:21 (Prophecy): I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

Jeremiah 27:9 (Prophecy): Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon:

2 Timothy 3:13 (Parallel theme): But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

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