

Jeremiah 5:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

Analysis

This verse specifies the corruption: 'The prophets prophesy falsely' (hannēḇî'îm nibbē'û ḥāššāqer, הַנְּבִיאִים נִבְּאוּ בַשֶּׁקֶר)—claiming divine authority for human messages. 'And the priests bear rule by their means' (wēhakkōhānîm yirdû 'al-yēdēhem) indicates priests exercise authority through false prophets rather than God's word. 'And my people love to have it so' (wē'ammî 'āhēḇû kēn) reveals voluntary deception—people prefer lies to truth. The sobering question: 'and what will ye do in the end thereof?' (ûmah-ta'āšû lē'aḥrītāh) warns of inevitable consequences. When crisis comes, false prophets' promises will fail and people will face reality. This demonstrates that truth suppression and preferring comfortable lies leads to catastrophic consequences. The New Testament warns similarly: 'the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine' but 'heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears' (2 Timothy 4:3).

Historical Context

False prophecy plagued Judah's final decades. Hananiah falsely prophesied Babylon's quick defeat (Jeremiah 28), Shemaiah opposed Jeremiah from exile (Jeremiah 29:24-32), and unnamed false prophets promised peace (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11, 14:13). These messages were popular because they confirmed people's false confidence in temple presence and covenant status. True prophets like Jeremiah faced persecution, imprisonment, and death threats for declaring judgment (Jeremiah 20:1-2, 26:7-11, 37:15-16, 38:6). Within two decades, Babylon besieged

Jerusalem, validating true prophets and exposing false ones. The 'end' Jeremiah warned of came literally—destruction, exile, famine. This historical vindication confirms that popularity doesn't validate teaching; conformity to God's revealed word does. Modern application emphasizes testing teaching against Scripture (Acts 17:11, 1 John 4:1) rather than accepting popular religious messages uncritically.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you evaluate whether teaching is biblically sound or merely popular and comforting?
2. What will you 'do in the end' if you've built your faith on comfortable lies rather than biblical truth?

Interlinear Text

הַנְּבִיאִים	נְבִיא וְ	בִּשְׁקֶר	וְהַכֹּהֲנִים	יִרְדּוּ וְ	עַל	יְדֵיהֶם
The prophets	prophecy	falsely	and the priests	bear rule	H5921	by their means
H5030	H5012	H8267	H3548	H7287		H3027
וְעַמִּי	אֶהְבֶּה	כִּי	וְמָה	תַּעֲשׂוּ		לְאַחֲרֵיתָהּ:
and my people	love	H3651	H4100	to have it so and what will ye do		in the end
H5971	H157			H6213		H319

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 13:6 (Parallel theme): They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.

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.

Micah 2:11 (Prophecy): If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

Isaiah 10:3 (Parallel theme): And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?

Deuteronomy 32:29 (Parallel theme): O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

Ezekiel 22:14 (Parallel theme): Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, and will do it.