

Jeremiah 29

Chapters 27- 29 are a unit. Jeremiah tells Zedekiah and the people of Israel that they will be going into Babylonian captivity. Chapter 27 has God clearly stating that He is all-powerful and does as He wills in the affairs of men. Chapter 28 has the (false) prophet Hananiah confronting Jeremiah, in front of the leaders and the people, claiming that his message was from God and Jeremiah was wrong. In chapter 29, Jeremiah once again confronts false prophets.

- 1 Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon;**
- 2 (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem;)**
- 3 By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) saying,**

Jeremiah sends a letter to the captives in Babylon. As the letter reads, one of the purposes is to make sure that those in exile don't believe the lies of Hananiah (and other false prophets) about a soon return to Israel.

WARNING AGAINST BELIEVING THE FALSE PROPHETS

- 4 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;**
- 5 Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;**
- 6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.**
- 7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.**
- 8 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.**
- 9 For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD.**

If the captivity would last only 2 years there is no need to plant your roots in Babylon. But, since the captivity is for 70 years, Jeremiah, under God's inspiration, tells them to settle in Babylon with homes, jobs, families, etc. so they might prosper.

They are told to seek the peace of the city where they have been taken in order that they could also have peace. Babylon was an ungodly, despotic, murderous country. Yet, the Israelites were told to seek and pray for the peace of the city. To seek peace in the city meant to be law-abiding citizens. Contributors of good to a sinful society.

Finally, don't let false prophets deceive you or to your dreams which you have caused.

“Why Do We Dream?”

Debate continues among sleep experts about why we dream. Different theories⁵ about the purpose of dreaming include:

Building memory: Dreaming has been associated with consolidation of memory, which suggests that dreaming may serve an important cognitive function of strengthening memory and informational recall.

Processing emotion: The ability to engage with and rehearse feelings in different imagined contexts may be part of the brain's method for managing emotions.

Mental housekeeping: Periods of dreaming could be the brain's way of “straightening up,” clearing away partial, erroneous, or unnecessary information.

Instant replay: Dream content may be a form of distorted instant replay in which recent events are reviewed and analyzed.

Incidental brain activity: This view holds that dreaming is just a by-product of sleep that has no essential purpose or meaning.

Experts in the fields of neuroscience and psychology continue to conduct experiments to discover what is happening in the brain during sleep, but even with ongoing research, it may be impossible to conclusively prove any theory for why we dream.” <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/dreams>

Dreams are caused by the emotions and experiences of an individual.

WAIT FOR THE SEVENTY YEARS TO BE FINISHED

- 10 For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.**
- 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.**
- 12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.**
- 13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.**
- 14 And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.**

The captives in Babylon are told to wait on the Lord until His plan is consummated and then He will deliver them and bring them back to Israel.

Verses 11 - 14 are so often used by Christians to refer to what God has planned of individuals. In context, this is a promise to the captive Jewish people in Babylon (and world-wide). God wants to bless them and bring them to the expected end, vs. 11; when God turns their captivity then they will seek the LORD, vss. 12-13; they will return to the land and their Lord from all nations, vs. 14.

What should we understand about application of biblical texts.

1 Corinthians 10:6-11 (bold added) is an example of application.

- 6 Now these things were our examples**, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.
- 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them**; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.
- 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed**, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.
- 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted**, and were destroyed of serpents.
- 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured**, and were destroyed of the destroyer.
- 11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition**, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Also Romans 15:4

- 4** For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

"How do you apply the message of a given biblical text to today? Different answers have been given to this question. Perhaps one of the most common popular conceptions is that every text of Scripture applies to every person (and does so straightforwardly). But clearly, there are problems with this approach. When Paul tells Timothy to bring his coat and try to come to him before winter, how do you and I apply this command? Or how do we apply the passage in the Book of Acts narrating poor Eutychus's fall from the window sill during one of Paul's long preaching sessions? And what about passages that deal explicitly with Israel prior to, or during, one of their exiles, threatening them with divine punishment or promising restoration? Surely we are not in the same situation today, and so any possible application can be indirect at best. This may not ingratiate me with some of you reading this post, but in my opinion it is fairly evident that not every passage of Scripture applies equally to every person today (or at any time of church history), and this does not necessarily entail a low view of Scripture. It is simply an issue of the original context being important and making a difference in application."

<https://www.biblicalfoundations.org/application-the-hardest-part-in-interpretation/>

"What other imperatives might legitimately be drawn in the same fashion from those very same Old Testament narratives?

Trust God to provide your needs in difficult circumstances (Exodus 16).

Do not quarrel with your spiritual leaders (Exodus 17).

Entrust the care of God's flock to capable leaders who share the burden (Exodus 18).

Give to the work of God (Exodus 25:1-9).

Do not fear what appear to be overwhelming odds against success in claiming what God Himself has promised (Numbers 13-14).

Obey the Lord exactly as He demands—do not modify His imperative by your impatience, anger, or unbelief (Numbers 20)."

William Barrick,

<http://www.parkingspace23.com/implication-application-legitimate-make-applications-biblical-narratives/#.YLj0>

In a very general sense this can be applied to believers. But, it is the obligation of the reader and interpreter to first identify and reveal who this is speaking about. After this, and only then, it can be cautiously applied.

Israel = will be brought back to the land from the nations of the world and dwell in peace and safety under the rule of Messiah. This is their "expected" (promised, certain) end.

Believers = will be brought to heaven one day where they will dwell in peace and safety under the rule of Messiah. This is a believers expected (promised, certain) end.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, (rah רָע) to give you an expected end."

The Hebrew word for "evil", "rah", is used in many different ways in the Bible. In the KJV Bible, it occurs 663 times. 431 times it is translated as "evil." The other 232 times it is translated as "wicked", "bad", "hurt", "harm", "ill", "sorrow", "mischief", "displeased", "adversity", "affliction", "trouble", "calamity", "grievous", "misery", and "trouble." So we can see that the word does not require that it be translated as "evil." This is why different Bibles translate this verse differently. It is translated as "calamity" by the NASB and NKJV; "disaster" by the NIV; and "woe" by the RSV.

When God creates "evil" it is not talking about God being the agent/cause of sin and moral evil. The word "rah" used here means He allows or even causes natural disasters or sorrows as the result of sin.

Does God promise that believers today will have no misery, adversity, trouble, sorrow, harm, etc.?

Absolutely not. So, an erroneous application would be that God only intends believers to have peace in this world.

WARNING AGAINST THE FALSE PROPHETS IN BABYLON

- 15 Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon;**
16 Know that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity;
17 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.
18 And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:
19 Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.

The people rejected the message of Jeremiah because they believed God had raised up prophets for them in Babylon. The "king that sits on the throne of David" is Zedekiah. Those who had not yet gone into captivity would follow those already in Babylonian captivity. Don't believe the lies of the false prophets in Jerusalem or Babylon that the people are returning to Jerusalem soon.

WARNING AGAIN TWO FALSE PROPHETS - AHAB and ZEDEKIAH

- 20 Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon:**
21 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes;
22 And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;
23 Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD.

False prophets are a curse upon a nation. Ahab and Zedekiah would die at the hand of Nebuchadrezzar. Jeremiah specifically names these false prophets. Paul mentions false teachers by name.

1 Timothy 1:19-20

- 19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:
20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

GOD CONDEMNS SHEMAIAH

- 24** Thus shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying,
25 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying,
26 The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldst put him in prison, and in the stocks.
27 Now therefore why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you?
28 For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long: build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

Shemiah, another false prophet, has asked Zephaniah the priest to put Jeremiah in prison in order to silence him. Shemiah believed Jeremiah was a false prophet.

SHEMAIAH IS PUNISHED BY GOD FOR HIS FALSE PROPHECIES

- 29** And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet.
30 Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,
31 Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie:
32 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.

Instead of putting Jeremiah in prison, Zephaniah read the letter of Shemaiah to Jeremiah and God then tells Jeremiah to send a letter to all the exiles (vs. 31) that Shemaiah was a false prophet and as punishment he would have no descendants and not see the blessings that was promised to the people of Israel.