



Jeremiah 29

Tape #7295
Jeremiah 29
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Jeremiah, the twenty ninth chapter, as we continue our study through the Bible. Jeremiah titles this chapter for us, so that we know exactly what's happening.

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 the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon; (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 (29:1-2;)

Now in the first siege of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar took many captives. He took Jeconiah the king, and the queen. He took several of the princes. Among those princes that were taken to Babylon, was Daniel. So, this chapter was addressed to Daniel. Daniel no doubt heard it, read it, when it was sent from Jeremiah to Babylon. He was one of the princes that was taken as a hostage by Nebuchadnezzar. Of course we'll be getting to the book of Daniel, as we move through the old testament, and so you can see Jeremiah, he's writing the letter over in Babylon. Here is Daniel with these others who is receiving this letter from Jeremiah.

The letter was sent 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) and this is what the letter says, [So, it was from Jeremiah to those who were taken captive in Babylon, who were taken at the time of Jeconiah, and it was said by these two fellows, Elasah and Gemariah, and they were being sent as ambassadors from Zedekiah to Nebuchadnezzar. So, Jeremiah slipped the letter in and said, "Give this to the captives when you get there".

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; [So the Lord takes the responsibility for their captivity, I am the one that caused them, He said, to be taken as captives.] God's message is to build houses and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take wives and have 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. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that are in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the Lord (29:4-9).

Now, time of sort of confusion, because there were many false prophets, who were encouraging the people to rebel. They were encouraging them to just hang loose. They were prophesying that within two years they would be returning back to the land, and dwelling back again in Jerusalem. "So don't settle down, and it's just a matter of time and we're going to be out of here." And there were the true prophets of God, there was Ezekiel who was one of the captives in Babylon, there was Jeremiah, and they were saying this was not going to get over in a hurry. The message of the Lord was to settle down, build houses, plant gardens, have children, and as your sons grow up, let them marry. In order that you might increase while you're there, rather than be diminished, as far as the population is concerned. And then the Lord said, "Pray for the peace of the cities where you dwell, for in their having peace, it will be to your benefit". In other words, don't rebel against them, but pray for the good and pray for the peace of the city.

Now we are told in the New Testament that we are to pray for those who are in authority over us, or for the rulers and for the kings. The idea for praying for them is that we might live godly, and peaceable lives. Thus we should be praying for those who are in government. That God will guide them in the Legislation that they enact and that the Lord will give us good leadership, godly leadership. We need to be praying for

those even as Jeremiah is saying that they should pray for the peace of the cities where they are. Seek peace there because it will be for your own benefit, really, and don't listen to those false prophets who are prophesying in the name of the Lord, but the Lord said, "I did not send them, they are prophesying falsely to you in my name."

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 (29:10).

In other words, settle down, build houses, plant gardens, because you're gonna be there for seventy years. After seventy years, I will visit you and you will return to this place.

Now if you'll turn to the book of Daniel, chapter nine. Now remember Daniel was one of the princes that was there to receive this message. He was probably only sixteen, seventeen years old, at the time, but he received this letter, heard the letter of Jeremiah. So in chapter nine in the book of Daniel, Daniel said, "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."

So, Daniel is recalling, seventy years later now, Daniel is recalling the words of the prophet Jeremiah, the book or the letter that was sent. That it would be seventy years before they would return, and now those seventy years are up. Daniel is now probably somewhere around eighty seven, to ninety years old at this time, and he realizes that those seventy years that have been prophesied by Jeremiah have now been fulfilled.

If you go back to II Chronicles, the thirty sixth chapter, verse twenty two, we read now, "In the first year of Cyrus the king of Persia, that the word of the Lord, spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, the king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all of his kingdom and put it in writing saying, Thus saith Cyrus the king of Persia, all of the kingdoms of the earth have the Lord God of heaven given me, and he hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah who is there among you among the people the Lord his God be with him and let him go up."

So, here is well, go back to verse twenty one, or even back to verse twenty. Give you the full thing. "And them that had escaped from the sword carried away to Babylon where they were servants to him until the reign of the kings of Persia. To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths, for as long as she lay desolate, she had kept sabbath to fulfill the three score and ten years."

So, in the book of Leviticus, chapter twenty six, the Lord had, in the law of Moses, told the people that when he brought them into the land, they were to allow the land to have a sabbath, even as they observed every seventh day, as a day of rest. Every seventh year the land was to have rest. They weren't to plant anything. They weren't to cultivate the land, they weren't to till the soil, but the land was to have rest. When they came into the land that God would give to them, they were to observe the sabbath, as far as allowing the land to rest.

The Lord then told them in Leviticus twenty six, that if they would not keep the commandments of God, then God would bring His judgement upon them, and He would bring drought, He would bring famine, He would bring pestilences, in order that they might turn their heart to the Lord. If in these things they wouldn't hearken to God, then He would do even more. He told them that He would allow them to be taken captives, as captives, until the land had had its sabbaths.

Now, when they came into the land that God gave them, they did not obey that law. They just planted every year. They did not give the land the rest that God had required under the law. Every seventh year just let the land rest, and sort of rejuvenate itself. Just let things grow, and plow it under, and let the land sort of rejuvenate itself. They did not do that. They had been dwelling in the land for 490 years. From the time that Joshua brought them in, to the time that Nebuchadnezzar came and they were taken as captives to Babylon. Four hundred and ninety years, divided by seven gives you seventy. Thus God said the land has seventy years of rest coming, in which it should not be planted. "You didn't give it its sabbaths, I will give it its

sabbaths. I will give it its rest. And you will be there until the seventy years are expired, and the land has had its sabbaths.” God will extract some way or other, His dues. You may not give them to Him, but God will take them. So, with the land, God said that He would give the land its sabbaths, and thus for seventy years. So, in Chronicles it makes mention of Jeremiah’s prophecy until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths. Daniel makes mention of the fact of the seventy years, as was spoken by the books of Jeremiah. So, here is the place where Jeremiah had sent this prophecy to those in Babylon, which Daniel was one who had received it. Now, “Thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years are accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.” You’re not gonna be coming home for awhile.

Sin has its own inevitable consequence and you do not always escape the consequences of your sin, even though you are forgiven. Many times you suffer for a period of time as the result of the consequence of your sin. The people had sinned against the Lord, they were taken as captives to Babylon, and as they were there in these very harsh and difficult experiences, they called upon the Lord, they repented, but there was still the time they were gonna be there. The seventy years until they really thoroughly, and fully learned the lesson that God had taught, and was teaching them about idolatry.

Idolatry was the basic sin that caused the destruction of the land. The people had turned to idols, and were worshipping idols. Isaiah cried out against it. Jeremiah over and over again cried out against it. It was the idolatry of the people. The violation of the second command. “Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, or any likeness of things that are in heaven or in the earth, and bow down and worship them.” The people were doing that. Thus the captivity, and the captivity was to teach them the evil of idolatry. It is interesting that after they returned from their Babylonian captivity though they were not really sinless, they were never guilty again for the sin of idolatry. That was something that they were thoroughly cured from in that seventy years.

Now, in this harsh condition, in Babylon, there was that feeling that God had turned His back on them. That God was angry with them That God was thinking evil concerning them. It always seems that way when we are going through chastisement. Somehow when we are being chastised, we somehow interpret that as God being angry. God being upset, and God punishing us. If you are a child of God, I do not believe that God ever punishes you. I believe that God in His love, corrects you, and it’s because of His love He does correct you. When you correct your children, it isn’t that you hate them. It’s because they are doing something that could be dangerous to them, something that could hurt them. So, you correct their behavior because you don’t want them to hurt themselves. If they have a habit of just rushing out into the street. If you hated them, you wouldn’t say anything, “Well, go ahead, run! Maybe a car will wipe you out!”, but it’s because you love them that you take what means are necessary, spanking or whatever to teach them that they should not run out into the street. Because you’re concerned for them. You’re concerned for their safety. So, God has a concern for you. We do things that are dangerous, spiritually. We do things that could destroy us. So, God in His love, corrects us.

Now the nation of Judah was not being forsaken by God, though they were carried away as captives to Babylon, and they were going through these harsh experiences. They had the thought that God hates us, God doesn’t love us, His thoughts of us are evil, and so the Lord speaks to them and He said:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, [You think that I’m thinking, I know what I’m thinking towards you] saith the Lord, they are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected [or a desirable] end (29:11).

“I know what I’m thinking. My thoughts are peace. My thoughts are to bring you back into this land. My thoughts are to establish you again here. I know my thoughts. They’re not evil thoughts. They’re thoughts of peace. I’m concerned with your peace, and I’m concerned with the end result. That you come back and that you serve me, here in the land.” So God said, “I know my thoughts”. God’s thoughts concerning you are those of peace. They’re of good not of evil. God never thinks of you in the terms of evil, but always in the terms of your benefit and your welfare. He is always concerned in the end result. God is always concerned with the eternal benefit. As far as God is concerned, the most important thing for everyone of you is that you spend eternity with Him. The end, the expected end, is eternity with Him. God is always dealing with your

life with eternity in view. Now we are very short sighted. We are always thinking in terms of my present happiness, my present comfort, my present well being. If I'm in an uncomfortable situation, I'm squirming, and I'm saying "God doesn't love me! Look what's happening to me! I don't like this!". Many times we are complaining about those very things that God is using to mold us and shape us for eternity. So we find ourselves complaining many times. "The Lord has forgotten us", or "The Lord is just laying this heavy one on me, and He must be angry with me, because look at what's happening to me." And in reality whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth. And the chastening processes of the Lord are always for your benefit, for your good. Thus the scripture exhorts us, "Don't despise the chastening of the Lord." We are prone to do that. "But whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." And He scourges, whips, every son He receives. You get a spanking from God, and it's not pleasant, it isn't comfortable, but at least it proves you're His son. He said, "You don't spank your neighbor's son, a stranger's son. You spank your own children, thus when God sees it necessary to chasten us, it is a proof that we are His children. He doesn't really chasten those that aren't His children, He punishes them. But the chastening is a correction process.

[So, then after the seventy years] *Then shall you call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And you will seek me and find me when you shall search for me with all your heart.*

"After the seventy years, will call upon me you'll pray, and I will hearken, I will listen."

Now let's go back to Daniel, chapter nine, because again, remember this is tied with Daniel, he was the one, one of those who had received this letter. After he speaks about, "In the first year of the reign of Darius, I understood by the books the number of years, where the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish the seventy years." So, what did Daniel do? Jeremiah said, "In that day you will seek me, and I will pray, and I will hearken unto you." So, Daniel said, "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer, and by supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." So he was really seeking the Lord with all of his heart. He put on this uncomfortable sackcloth. It was a robe that was made out of a camel's hide, but the hairy, prickly, hairy side was turned inward. So you have this itchy, prickly, camel hair against your skin. The whole purpose was to be uncomfortable. It was to afflict you. It was to make you uncomfortable.

They had, several years ago, in Santa Ana, a sackcloth evangelist. That was his gimmick, and Keith Ritter was new to the church at the time, and he said, "I've never been to a Pentecostal church. I'd like to go to a Pentecostal church". I said, "Okay, I'll take you to one." I saw an ad in the paper for a sackcloth evangelist. So, we went up to Santa Ana to see this sackcloth evangelist. Sure enough, he wore this sackcloth, a burlap sack, kind of a robe that he wore, but I said to Keith, I said, "He's cheating! Look! It has silk lining." That's not really what sackcloth is all about. It's to make you miserable and uncomfortable. And as a sign of mourning, they would wear sackcloth and they would put ashes on their head.

So, Daniel was seeking the Lord with fasting, wearing sackcloth and ashes, and he was praying. So, as Jeremiah said, or the Lord said, through Jeremiah,

"After the time is accomplished, you will call upon me, and you will pray, and I will hearken to you. [So, Daniel is responding. He is praying. He is seeking the Lord.] The Lord said, And you shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all of your heart (29:12-13).

It was at this time that Daniel was waiting upon the Lord, and it was a period of time that he was waiting upon the Lord, that the Lord sent Gabriel the angel, who gave to Daniel one of the most glorious and exacting prophesies of the time of the coming of the Messiah. But, God said that, "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all of your heart".

I think that many times that we are guilty of seeking the Lord in a half-hearted way. That we are not really seeking the Lord with all of our hearts. And I think one of the real perils of the present day, in which we live, is that we are truly living in desperate days. If you look at the conditions of our nation. The conditions of our economy. The conditions of the social issues that we're faced with. The gang wars, the drugs, and these things. We are living in really desperate days. These are very desperate days, and yet the church is not really desperate in prayer before God. We take things rather lightly. We don't really seek the Lord with all of our hearts. When we read something horrible in the paper, we may say, "Oh God, you know, change things", and then we just sort of pass it off. It isn't really seeking God with all of our heart. And the

Lord said, "You will find me when you search for me with all of your heart". I think that God sometimes sort of waits until we really get desperate, before Him.

There have been a few times in my life when I have really gotten desperate before God. Where I really sought Him with all of my heart. And God came through. I saw the work and the hand of God in marvelous ways. But, I'm as guilty as the next person of, so many times, just sort of casually asking the Lord, rather than feeling that urgency and that desperation.

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 from whence I caused you to be carried away captive (29:14).

So, the promise of the Lord, the expected end, the desired end. "I'll bring you back into the land. I will return you from your captivity". But the Lord is saying,

But because you have said, The Lord hath raised us up prophets in Babylon; Know that thus saith the Lord, the king that sits upon the throne of David, and of all of the people that dwell in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity; Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will send [Now, He's talking about those who are still living in Jerusalem. Zedekiah, and the others who have not yet been carried away to Babylon, those who are still here in the land. You think you're coming back to the land right away, and you're gonna be back here, but those that are still here, that haven't been carried away captive yet.] Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like rotten figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and I 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: Because [And this is the reason] they have not hearkened to my words, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by my servants and the prophets, who rose up early and I sent them; but they would not hear, saith the Lord (29:15-19).

So, don't believe those prophets that say you're going to be coming right back, and the land's going to be restored, and you're gonna be, the one's that are here, they're gonna be suffering famine and pestilence, and they're gonna be carried away captives, and they're gonna become a cursing and a hissing to the people. It's because they wouldn't listen to the word of God.

So hear ye therefore the word of the Lord, all of you who are in captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon: Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Koliah, 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 Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes; [These two false prophets. God says, "They will be slain right before your eyes."] 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 (29:20-22);

Now couple of things here. Number one, these two false prophets were going to be killed by Nebuchadnezzar, that would become the further sign, they were to be roasted in the fire. Now that takes us back to the book of Daniel again. Where you remember that in the book of Daniel, when the three Hebrew children refused to bow before the great idol that Nebuchadnezzar had made. Nebuchadnezzar called them in and he told them that he would give them one more chance to bow, and if they did not, he would throw them into the burning, fiery furnace. "And what God", he said, "is able to deliver you from the burning fiery furnace?" And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, said, "Hey, we're not even careful in how we answer you concerning this matter, because our God is able to deliver us from your burning, fiery furnace, and even if He doesn't, we're still not going to bow down to your image." Made ole Nebuchadnezzar so angry, he ordered the furnace to be heated up seven times hotter than it had ever been heated before. "I'll teach you guys!" And so, he had them bound and thrown into the burning, fiery furnace and it was so hot that the soldiers that threw them in, were scorched to death. Then Nebuchadnezzar looked into the burning, fiery furnace, and he saw four walking around inside the furnace. And he said, "How many did we throw in there?" And they said, "Three!" and he said, "How come I see four?", and the fourth one looked like the Son of God, and he called into the furnace, and he said, "Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-Nego! Come out of there!"

And they came out! The only thing that was burned were the ropes by which they were bound. Their hair was not singed, there wasn't even the smell of smoke on them. Nebuchadnezzar made a proclamation, "There's no God like the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who is able to deliver out of the burning, fiery furnace!", you know. And he ordered a reverence to God, but that must of been Nebuchadnezzar's way of terrifying people. When someone had done something that was displeasing to him, he would cremate them alive. He would throw them into this burning, fiery furnace. So, these two false prophets, they got roasted in the fire. They didn't have God's protection. They were killed by Nebuchadnezzar in the burning, fiery furnace.

Now, they became a curse, if you didn't like someone and you wanted to sort of curse them, you'd say, "Well may the Lord make you like Zedekiah!". The guy who was roasted in the fire. So, it was a curse. You hate someone and you get angry with them and you want to say something really mean, you'd say, "May God make you like Zedekiah!". You know. "May you be roasted."

But God allowed them to be destroyed because, they committed villainy in Israel, they were corrupt guys. They were going around saying that they were prophets of God. They were going around disguising themselves as God's prophets. Pawning themselves off as the prophets of God.

And yet, they were guilty of villainy. They had committed adultery with their neighbor's wives, and they were speaking lying words, in the name of the Lord, which He did not command them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the Lord (29:23).

False prophets have always been around. They're around today. There are many people supposedly speaking in the name of the Lord, who are false prophets. They are guilty of villainy, they are guilty of adulteress relationships, and they are speaking lying words in the name of the Lord. They cannot really have the fear of God in their hearts and do the things that they do. They are deceivers and they are only ripping people off. And God will take care of them, just like He took care of Zedekiah and Ahab.

So, thus the Lord said, Shalt thou also speak too Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying, Thus saith 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, [Now this is a letter that this character Shemaiah had sent. He sent the letter to the priest. The letter said...] The Lord has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, that you should be officers in the house of the Lord, and for every man who is mad, [or insane] and who makes himself a prophet, that you should put him in prison, and in stocks. Now therefore why have you not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which makes himself a prophet to you? For he sent this letter unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity will be for a long period, so build houses and live in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And Zephaniah, the priest, received this letter from this false prophet in Babylon, and he read the letter to Jeremiah the prophet (29:24-29).

The guy is saying, you know, "You're a priest and as the, with the authority of a priest, you ought to be putting the prophets who are mad and saying these crazy things, you ought to put them in stocks. You ought to imprison them! Why have you allowed Jeremiah to go free? Why haven't you shut this guy up? Because he wrote this letter to us here in Babylon, saying it's going to be a long time before we come home, build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat the fruit".

So the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying, Send to all of the captives, 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: [One of the sad byproducts of false prophets, is that they caused people often to trust in a lie to their own destruction.] Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his posterity [his seed], and 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 (29:31-32).

So the punishment was that he was to be cut off. His family was to be cut off. They would not see the fulfillment of God's promise. They would all be dead by the time the seventy years captivity was over, and they would not see the work of God in restoring the people from their captivity.

So, gives you a little kind of insight to the "in" fighting that was going on between Jeremiah and the false prophet, as Jeremiah was attempting to bring the people the word of the Lord, and as the false prophets

were contradicting his message, and seeking really to have him imprisoned, and quieted.

So, next week we will move on in to chapter thirty. These are prophecies that happened in different periods. Each one is sort of dated for us, and they are not really in chronological order, but just sort of selected prophecies of Jeremiah that we will be studying. Very interesting though. He gets into some very fascinating things in these prophecies, that come actually down to the present day. And the prophecy next week, we will come on into the present time and the coming great tribulation period. So, a lot of interesting stuff ahead for us as we continue through Jeremiah.

Shall we stand. Now with the holidays behind us, we sort of settle down to begin the new year, and I pray that in this year to come, we might truly seek the Lord with all of our hearts. That we will really find ourselves on our knees, before the Lord, more and more, as we pray for our leadership, and as we pray for the conditions of our nation, of our community. And I pray that the Lord will draw you unto Himself. Into a deeper commitment to the things of God, than you've ever experienced before. That you'll realize how empty and unfulfilling are the things of this world, and you will devote your life to those things that are eternal. That we'll be brought into harmony with God, and the purposes of God, which are always eternal, and that we will begin also to live for the eternal values.

May the Lord be with you, watch over you this week, and draw you unto Himself, in rich fellowship. In Jesus' name.