

Message #33**Jeremiah 29:1-32**

I do not think that most people have a clue as to how important the word of God is when you are experiencing low moments in life. Sometimes those low moments are brought on by our own bad choices. But when we find ourselves in those low moments, we need the word of God the most. Many people today, including God's people, who find themselves in low moments turn to anything but the word of God. But it is the word of God that is what is needed in troubling times. That point is very obvious from this chapter.

One of the most famous verses in the book of Jeremiah occurs in this chapter in **verse 11**- "I know the plans that I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope."

This great promise is given to the people of God while they are captive to the Babylonians. God says to His people, I know what I am doing and My plan is to bless My people so you stay faithful to Me. When you find your world has fallen apart, you stay faithful to Me.

Let's set the context of this. **God's people were in captivity and they deserved to be in captivity.** They had persisted in rebellion and refused to turn from their evil so God chastised them by allowing the Babylonians to take many of them captive.

Many of God's people had become forced refugees in a godless city, Babylon, and they were subject to a godless political leader, Nebuchadnezzar. This was all orchestrated by God for chastisement and discipline purposes.

But even though they were being chastised by God, what God decided to do was to send them His encouraging word. They were probably getting wind of the false messages being proclaimed by the phony ministers and the people did not know what to think or believe.

So God had Jeremiah specifically write to the people already in exile in Babylon. He wanted them to know what they should know and what they should do.

GOD SENDS HIS ENCOURAGING WORD TO HIS OWN PEOPLE IN CAPTIVITY BECAUSE KNOWING AND OBEYING GOD'S WORD IS THE KEY TO GETTING HIS BLESSINGS NO MATTER WHERE THEY ARE; AND HIS PEOPLE MUST NOT LISTEN TO MINISTERS WHO TEACH THE OPPOSITE OF THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD.

In fact, God will destroy phony ministers. God's people will never get out of their rut by listening to self-appointed religious people and counselors who don't know what they are talking about. God's people will get out of their emotional rut by carefully listening to and applying the word of God.

Verse 1 says these are the words that Jeremiah sent to the elders, priests, prophets and people in exile.

Nebuchadnezzar had taken these people captive to Babylon and Jeremiah decided to write them a letter.

According to **verse 2**, the letter was sent after Jeconiah (King Jehoiachin) and his queen mother Nehushta (II Kings 24:8/Jer. 13:18) and certain court officials had been taken.

Jeremiah himself was still in Jerusalem. We may safely say this is where the sovereignty of God wanted him to be. He was not there by his own choosing; this was where God wanted him there.

According to **verse 3**, Jeremiah entrusted two men to take his letter to the exiles in Babylon. One was Elasah son of Shaphan. The other was Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah. These two men must have been trusted friends of Jeremiah.

It is possible that Elasah was perhaps the son of Josiah's secretary and scribe (II Kings 22:8). His name was Shaphan. It is also thought that Gemariah may have been the son of Hilkiyah, Josiah's high priest (II Kings 22:4). These were two very reliable men. **They had the responsibility to take the word of God to the people of God.**

There is no greater responsibility on this earth than to take the word of God to the people of God. This point is overlooked. Because the vast majority of God's people don't seem to get this point. The primary audience of the word of God is not the lost world; but the people of God. They are the people who truly need to know God's word.

In **verse 4**, God specifically identifies Himself as the "LORD of hosts" and "the God of Israel." So this is a message God Himself is sending "to all the exiles" that He had sent from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Notice also in **verse 4**, God says, "I have sent into exile." God takes full credit for them being where they are. God says I sent them to Babylon as a judgment for their sin.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe wisely observed, "How should we handle such a depressing situation? Accept it from the hand of God (v. 4) and let God have His way. ... One of the first steps in turning tragedy into triumph is to accept the situation courageously and put ourselves into the hands of a loving God, who makes no mistakes" (*Be Decisive*, p. 140).

What we actually have here are some of the most amazing messages that God could ever give to His people. There are some wonderful encouraging promises made to the people of God who are living in a foreign land.

MESSAGE #1 – Build houses and live in them. **29:5a**

Apparently the people in exile wanted to get back home so God says settle down in Babylon for a while. Build your homes and live in them. It will be a while but I will let you live and enjoy life. He is telling them this as they are under discipline.

MESSAGE #2 – Plant gardens and eat the produce. **29:5b**

God says plant your gardens and eat your produce. These were agricultural people and they certainly knew how to grow food in this climate. God was looking out for them while they were in exile. Their plants would grow and they would have food to eat.

MESSAGE #3 – Continue to marry and produce children. **29:6**

Even while enduring this discipline, God wanted His people to live a normal life. He wanted His people to date, to marry and have children. Certainly this was not a Holocaust situation. They had freedom to select a mate and marry.

God wanted His people to live a normal life, while they were in Babylon. He did not want them to be sour-faced misers.

MESSAGE #4 – Seek the welfare of the city. **29:7a**

Here is an inspired message to foreigners, who go to another country: **do your best to seek the welfare of the country in which you are living. Be good citizens.** Don't go there to see what you can get out of the country, go there to see what you may contribute to the country.

God did not want His people forming some resistance protest movement that was a drain on society. He did not want His people causing uprisings in the city, but to seek to get along with people in the city. This is solid advice for any who live and work in a non-Christian environment.

He encourages His people to get involved in city life and establish themselves as positive members of the city. As Dr. Wiersbe said, the “exiles were to be peacemakers, not trouble-makers” (*Ibid.*, p. 140).

It seems to me that we Christians, including myself, have done everything we can do to get out of the city. God wants his people having and making an impact on the city in which they live.

We are not just called to a job, but we are also called to a location and we have a responsibility to do what we can to reach that location for the Glory of God.

From a personal note, it seems that we have tried to do that via radio in this Kalamazoo area. That certainly is something that does please God.

MESSAGE #5 – Pray for the welfare of the city. 29:7b

F. B. Huey points out that this is the only place in the O.T. where God tells His people to pray for the welfare of heathen cities and heathen people. We know from New Testament doctrine that we have the responsibility to pray for our government leaders (Rom. 12:21; Titus 3:1-2; I Pet. 2:18). It stands to reason that if Babylon prospered, so would the people of God.

MESSAGE #6 – Do not be deceived by false prophets and demonic dreamers. 29:8-9

This is such a critical text of Scripture. True hope and stability comes from knowing the word of God, not from listening to self-appointed prophets or those who claim to get visions and dreams and messages from God.

The false prophets were telling people that they would not be in Babylon long. They were telling people just the opposite of settle down and enjoy life. God says don't be deceived by them and do not listen to them. They are not telling the truth and I did not send them.

MESSAGE #7 – After being in captivity 70 years, I will bring you back to Jerusalem. 29:10

God says you will be here more than just a couple of years. You will be in captivity for 70 years.

This passage plus Jeremiah 25 (25:12) were exact passages Daniel was studying while he was in Babylon.

MESSAGE #8 – I have a great future in store for My people. 29:11

God tells His people you may be certain that I am working out My plan for My people. My plan is not for future calamity, but future blessing. You have a hope for the future that I am working out My plan right now.

MESSAGE #9 – After the 70 years, you will pray to Me and I will listen to you. 29:12

I am convinced that this very verse was what prompted Daniel to pray his powerful prayer in Daniel 9:1-19. Actually, if we obey God's word and turn from evil, He will listen to our prayers.

MESSAGE #10 – After the 70 years, you will seek Me and you will find Me. 29:13-14a

The fact that God says, "you will seek Me and find Me" clearly teaches that God is accessible to His people even after they have failed. He may discipline them but they may still seek Him. If God's people obey Him, He will let His people seek and find Him.

Many have used this verse for evangelism purposes to reach the lost. But in its context it is addressed to the people of God. God can actually shut down His accessibility from His own people. But He had not done so with these people in Babylon.

This will be a time when you will seek God with all your heart.

MESSAGE #11 – I will completely restore your fortunes. **29:14b**

God has wonderful future plans for His people. Now this message not only was encouraging for the exiled Jews, but for all exiled Jews to this day. God did restore Israel back to Jerusalem as revealed in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

But there is a promised day coming when God will gather Israel from “all the nations” where He has scattered them and they will be blessed with all the blessings of God. Some believe that 1948 was a critical moment when the process has begun.

MESSAGE #12 – Those who do not listen to My words will be punished. **29:15-19**

Jeremiah knew there were prophets and leaders who would not like him or his message. There were people in Jerusalem claiming that Zedekiah the King was still there and they were still there who did not go into exile.

God wanted the exiles in Babylon to know that He was going to destroy the rest of them. They were rotten and He would send sword, famine and pestilence against them for their rottenness.

MESSAGE #13 – You will see two false prophets executed by Nebuchadnezzar. **29:20-23**

Just as soon as Jeremiah sent these words of God to the people, they were opposed. Jeremiah names two men who were misleading the people. We don't know anything about them except what we learn here.

They were adulterers and they did not tell the true words of Jeremiah. They preached lies to the people and they lived godless, immoral lives.

Ahab was the son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah was the son of Maaseiah. Jeremiah revealed that Nebuchadnezzar will put them to death publicly right before their eyes.

MESSAGE #14 – God will punish the false prophet Shemaiah. **29:24-32**

Jeremiah learned that a false prophet in Babylon whose name was Shemaiah, had sent a letter to Zephaniah, who had been elevated chief priest.

In the letter he told Zephaniah that he should put Jeremiah in stocks and an iron neck collar because he was acting like a mad man by telling the people to build houses and plant gardens.

Clearly Shemaiah heard and understood the message and he did not like what he heard. He had no clue as to God's plan and program.

The priest showed Jeremiah the letter so in **verses 30-32**, God had six messages for Shemaiah.

- 1) Shemaiah did proclaim a prophesy to you. He said he had a message from God. **31a**
- 2) Shemaiah was not sent by me. **31b**
- 3) Shemaiah prophesied a lie to you. **31c**
- 4) Shemaiah and his family will be eliminated by Me. **32a**
- 5) Shemaiah and his family will not see the good I will do to My people. **32b**
- 6) Shemaiah actually preached rebellion against the LORD and word of God. **32c**

Shemaiah would not see God do anything good for him or his family. He would die in Babylon and never see his home land again.