

# LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for July 24: Settle down

July 12, 2011

“For I know the plans I have for you ...” (Jeremiah 29:11) is one of the most endearing statements from God to his people in the Bible. Its message of hope has buoyed the spirits of countless believers across the centuries. The Lord, who excels in his ministry to his people, knows how to speak to them in the midst of their trials.

Jeremiah 29 opens with the notice that many people from Judah had been relocated to Babylonia. The common assumption among the exiles was that the true Israelites remained in the homeland. Actually, the Lord planned to pour his Spirit into the lives of the exiles and raise up from them a people who would be faithful to him. The exiles would be the heirs of God’s promises to Abraham and David and from among them would come the promised Messiah.

The fulfillment of God’s promises still was in the future. Therefore, Jeremiah encouraged the people to settle in their new land. God would lead them to prosper and they would marvel at God’s power working in their lives.

When facing a bleak situation, it is priceless knowledge that one has a promising future. The future, for God’s committed ones, is as bright as God himself. Even today, believers still draw encouragement from Jeremiah’s words. In the midst of chaos and adversity, the knowledge that God has plans for his precious people still calms and steadies their hearts and minds.

**Reestablish normalcy in your new situation (Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7)**

Many of the exiles who originally received this letter from Jeremiah probably thought their lives had been irrevocably ruined. They possibly thought God had judged them and abandoned them among their enemies for the remainder of their short lives. Instinct told them to resist when possible, but Jeremiah encouraged them to “put down roots.”

Amazingly, verse 4 states the Lord Almighty “carried” the people into exile. It is easy to believe God was behind this horrible turn of events, but the encouragement to establish normal lives, have families, seek peace and pray for one’s city was entirely unexpected.

Nevertheless, the wording is “carried,” not “sent” or even “exiled.” God had carried his people as a father carries a child. God had other purposes for the exile. The inspiration that comes from knowing about God’s plan would transform his people’s level of existence. They did not need to view themselves as abandoned on the human scrap heap of life. God was fully focused on them. Their lives were precious to him. Knowing just this much was plenty to lift the people’s spirits.

It is no news that this world destroys lives and consumes people. When worldly circumstances trample lives, many are overcome by disillusionment, disappointment and hopelessness. Many waste away in an unquenchable bitterness.

Life is meant to be different for God’s people. The world still seeks to destroy, but God’s power is greater. God preserves the lives of his people. His presence in their lives testifies to his greater plan for their lives.

Verses 8 and 9

reveal that the power of the popular prophets comes from the people. Such prophets say what the people want to hear. Likely the popular prophets told the exiles something contradictory to Jeremiah’s message in verses 4-7. They probably said their situation was temporary and they would be

returned quickly to Judah.

One of the great dangers in life, of course, has to do with the company one keeps and the counsel one accepts. God's people need to learn how to identify the Lord's timely message delivered through a committed, godly servant.

Curiously, Ezekiel was a prophet among the exiles. Unlike the others who tried to ease the exiles' suffering by promising a quick release, Ezekiel taught that God had brought his people into exile as an act of judgment, yet he also would build his people up and never abandon them. Ezekiel's message thus complemented Jeremiah's message.

### **Remember the Lord is in control (Jeremiah 29:10-14)**

The famous promise of 70 years of Babylonian captivity is found in verse 10. The people would be in exile for a long time. Therefore, they needed to set up homes and families. They needed to seek employment and education. They needed to be reconciled to the Lord and strengthen their commitment to him.

Seventy years is a long time. Therefore, God inspired the tremendous message of verse 11: He was not finished with these people. They have a future ... with him.

How should people respond to this promise? The Lord wants people to seek him—truthfully and wholeheartedly. Verses 12-14 list 10 promises based on seven occurrences of the word “will.” The Lord wants his people to seek him. Those who truly seek him will find him. God will answer their prayers. Then, in time, he will gather his people from among the nations and guide them back to their homeland.

For an exiled people, Jeremiah's words were far more compelling, touching ... and appropriate ... than the people could have ever hoped. God works his

plan for his people. Those who rely on him, and trust his promises, experience the his presence in such a way that hope arises and beckons toward a welcoming future.