

Series: Misunderstood: Hearing what Jesus is actually saying

Part 4: Jeremiah 29:11

INTRODUCTION

In Jeremiah 29:11 the Lord says to Israelite exiles in Babylon, “I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future.” Those are comforting words, but for those originally receiving these words, all they could hear in the moment was that they would be buried in Babylon. This begs the question: Are God’s plans still good when they mean life long exile and not life-giving restoration?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Talk about a time when something did not go according to plans. What was most funny or most disappointing about your experience?
2. Read Jeremiah 29:11. For many, this verse is near and dear to their hearts. Has this played an important part of your faith journey in the past? When you read this verse without its context or see it on a sign, what do you think it’s promising?
3. Read Jeremiah 28:1-4 and Jeremiah 29:1-14. The false prophet Hananiah said the Israelites would return from their exile in Babylon to their homeland in Israel within two years. Jeremiah, the true prophet of God, said it would take 70 years! How do you think you would have felt knowing that your people wouldn’t be able to return home for another 70 years? What questions, thoughts or fears do you think you may have had?
4. When we read Scripture, it’s important to understand that the Bible was written “to” people living thousands of years ago, but that it was also written “for” our benefit today. How is knowing that the Bible was written “for you,” but that it wasn’t written “to you,” and that it’s not “about you,” be helpful as you seek to understand and apply the Bible to your life?
5. When have you been tempted to doubt God’s goodness, His plans, and the future that you have in store? How could God say through Jeremiah what he did in Jeremiah 29:11, when almost all of the people to whom He wrote those words were buried in Babylon?
6. What would it take for you to seek God with all of your heart? What would God need to strip away that’s been keeping you from making Him your heart’s deepest desire and life’s most passionate pursuit?

MOVING FORWARD

Read 1 Peter 2:4-12 and 4:19. God used the Israelites’ exile in Babylon as a part of His good plan to eventually preserve a people for Himself, so that eventually He could return them to Jerusalem to set the stage for the life and ministry of Jesus. Today, followers of Jesus are called to live as exiles, knowing that our true citizenship is in the Kingdom of God and not in the countries of this world. How might God be asking you to live as a faithful exile today?

CHANGING YOUR HEART & MIND

God, thank you for Jeremiah 29:11 and that you do know the plans You have for your people. Help us to trust You, even when walking faithfully with You means going through hardship.

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good (1 Peter 4:19).

