

Jeremiah 26:7-8

7 The priests, the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speak these words in the house of the LORD. 8 But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die!"

Exile of Judah in 586 BC

- Babylon (modern-day Iraq) invades, defeats and deports Israelites
- extracted the most influential
- took them 700 miles east
- Jeremiah writes Lamentations as poetic reflection on the exile

"Exile is the worst that reveals the best. 'It's hard believing,' says Faulkner, 'but disaster seems to be good for people.' When the superfluous [unnecessary] is stripped away we find the essential – and the essential is God. Normal life is full of distractions and irrelevancies. Then catastrophe: Dislocation. Exile. Illness. Accident. Job loss. Divorce. Death. The reality of our lives is rearranged without anyone consulting us or waiting for our permission. We are no longer home." – Eugene Peterson

Jeremiah 29:1

This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

What does God expect of us while we're there?

- embrace current reality for what it is

Jeremiah 29:4-7

4 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

"Do you mean to tell me I can live a holy life there [in Babylon]? If you cannot, the grace of God is fiction. External surroundings make no difference to our inner life, but our inner life makes a telling difference on our external surroundings." – Oswald Chambers

- exercise discernment in finding wise counsel

Jeremiah 29:8-9

8 Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. 9 They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the LORD.

- expect an extended stay

Jeremiah 29:10

This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place."

Why this, why now?

- to shift the kingdom in our lives

Jeremiah 29:11-14

11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."