

# **SERVING GOD IN EXILE**

**Jeremiah 29.1-14; 1 Peter 2.11-12**

2100 BC – God promised Abraham a people in a place under His blessing and rule (Genesis 12.1-3).

1450 BC – Israel was miraculously delivered from Egypt on its way to the Promised Land (Exodus 33.1; Deuteronomy 34.4; Joshua 1.1-4).

1000-950 BC – David and Solomon rule Israel, the Temple was constructed (1 Kings 5-8).

627-586 BC – Jeremiah served the Lord as a prophet (Jeremiah 1.1-3).

605 BC & 597 BC – Babylon invaded Israel in waves (Daniel).

586 BC – Babylon destroyed the Jerusalem Temple and took God's people back to Babylon (Ezekiel). They are displaced exiles until 539 BC.

## **God gives His people purpose in exile**

God exiled Israel to mature them spiritually (Jeremiah 29.4, 11). Verse 11 is one of the most misapplied verses in the Bible. People claim it to lay-hold of base desires. In context, it is God speaking to His people about their moral refinement in tough circumstances.

In exile, Israel was to carry-out the cultural mandate. They were to use their skills, establish households, get married, and have children (Jeremiah 29.5-6).

As a “kingdom of priests” they were instructed to use their talents to cultivate a civilization.

God instructed them to seek the welfare of Babylon. The word for welfare is the technical Hebrew word *shalom* – usually translated peace (Jeremiah 29.7).

God warned Israel to listen to the right voices (Jeremiah 29.8-9). The previous chapter is Jeremiah's invective against the prosperity preacher Hananiah.

Prior to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, God taught Israel that He was their dwelling place.

“The eternal God is our dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33.27). “Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations” (Psalm 90.1). “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 91.1).

## **The church ministers as an exiled and sojourning people**

Peter refers to the church of Christ as “sojourners and exiles” (1 Peter 2.11; 1.1, 1.17; Cf. Philippians 3.20). Why is this the case? Given the fallenness of the world, Christians feel somewhat displaced.

In the same way that Judah was to seek peace in Babylon, so the church promotes the good in our own setting. How are we to do this? By carrying out the cultural mandate as Christ followers.

We should do our jobs with excellence. We should use our homes for Kingdom advance. We should assemble as a church and love one another. We should marry strong Christians and be open to having children.

**Key Idea:** Christian exiles promote the welfare of our city.

### **Application Questions:**

Note the places where we see God’s sovereignty in Jeremiah 29.1-14.

How were the Israelites to behave in exile? What was their mission?

What perspectives on suffering do we gather from Jeremiah 29.1-14. How is this verse abused? What is its true meaning?

In what ways are Christians exiles in the world (1 Peter 2.11-12)?