



# *Advent: A Season of Hope*

Advent 1 - December 1<sup>st</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Jeremiah 29:10-14

Tuesday 6am @LW - Tuesday 5:15pm @AV

Wednesday 10am & 6:15pm @LW - Sunday 10:30am @AV

## **A Letter to the Exiles - Jeremiah 29:1-32 Life Application Notes**

### **Jeremiah 29:4-7**

**29:4-7** Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:4-23 is the letter) instructing them to move ahead with their lives and to pray for the pagan nation that enslaved them. Life cannot grind to a halt during troubled times. In an unpleasant or distressing situation, we must adjust and keep moving. You may find it difficult to pray for those in authority if they are evil, but that is when your prayers are most needed (1 Tim. 2:1-2). When you enter times of trouble or sudden change, pray diligently and move ahead, doing whatever you can rather than giving up because of fear and uncertainty.

**29:10** Scholars differ on the exact dates of this 70-year period in Babylon. Some say it refers to the years 605-538 B.C., from the first deportation to Babylon to the arrival of the first exiles back in Jerusalem after Cyrus's freedom decree. Others point to the years 586-516 B.C., from the last deportation to Babylon and the destruction of the temple until its rebuilding. A third possibility is that 70 years is an approximate number meaning a lifetime. All agree that God sent his people to Babylon for a long time, not the short captivity predicted by the false prophets.

**29:11** We're all encouraged by a leader who stirs us to move ahead, someone who believes we can do the task he has given and who will be with us all the way. God is that kind of leader. He knows the future, and his plans for us are good and full of hope. As long as God, who knows the future, provides our agenda and goes with us as we fulfill his mission, we can have boundless hope. This does not mean that we will be spared pain, suffering, or hardship, but that God will see us through to a glorious conclusion.

**29:12-14** God did not forget his people, even though they were captive in Babylon. He planned to give them a new beginning with a new purpose-to turn them into new people. In times of deep trouble, it may appear as though God has forgotten you. But God may be preparing you, as he did the people of Judah, for a new beginning with him at the center.

**29:13** According to God's wise plan, his people were to have hope and a future; consequently they could call upon him in confidence. Although the exiles were in a difficult place and time, they should not despair because they had God's presence, the privilege of prayer, and God's grace. God can be sought and found when we seek him wholeheartedly. Neither strange lands, sorrows, frustration, nor physical problems can break that communion.

**29:21** These false prophets, Ahab and Zedekiah, should not be confused with the kings who had the same names. Their family connections clearly identify them.

**29:24-28** These verses describe the reaction of Shemaiah, a false prophet exiled in 597 B.C. who had protested about Jeremiah's letter. To discredit Jeremiah, Shemaiah accused him of false prophecy. Although Jeremiah's message was true and his words were from God, the people hated him because he told them to make the most of

the exile. But Jeremiah's truth from God offered temporary correction and long-range benefit, while the false teachers' lies offered only temporary comfort and long-range punishment.

1. How do you respond when someone who is supposed to speak for you expresses an opinion or idea that is not your own?
2. How did God want the Israelites to think about and react to the foreign country in which they lived? (29:7)
3. By whom were the exiles in danger of being deceived? (29:8-9)
4. What was the nature of God's plans for Israel? (29:11)
5. Why was it important for the exiles to know that God planned to prosper them and not to harm them?
6. What emotional reaction would most people have if asked to pray for the prosperity of their captors?
7. How does God's promise of a hope for the future enable you to persevere through the current difficulties in your life?

Bible Memory Verses: “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.” Jeremiah 29:11