

One of the Most Misunderstood & Misapplied Verses

by Ken Weliever

Some time ago I read an article in *Relevant Magazine* where Thomas Turner wrote that Jeremiah 29:11 is “possibly one of our most beloved, yet most misunderstood verses in the entire Bible.” BibleGateway.com lists it as the second most accessed and read verse on their website, just behind John 3:16!

This verse is popular in various books about your purpose in life, the purpose of the church, and God’s purpose for your marriage and family.

Jeremiah 29:11 even has its own facebook page! So what does it say? Why is it misunderstood? And what is it’s meaning? **Jeremiah 29:11** says ***“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.”***

The Context

These words were spoken to the prophet Jeremiah at the time of Judah’s fall to Babylon (609-586 B.C.) Those addressed are clearly stated in verse 4. *“This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.”*

In **verses 5-9** God tells them what to do, how to act, who to listen to and who to avoid. In verse 10, God says they will be in Babylon for 70 years. Then he says, “I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.”

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the Jews’ return to their homeland. The reconstruction of the Temple, the restoration of the law, and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

God’s Plan And Promise

The promise goes back to God’s call of Abraham. He promised him a fertile land, to create from his descendants a great nation, and to bring a spiritual blessing to the world through his seed (Gen. 12:1-3). The first two promises were fulfilled when Israel became a great nation and received the land of Canaan.

The third promise was fulfilled in the coming of Christ. Paul affirmed it in **Galatians 4:16**. *“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.”*

The faithful remnant who returned to Palestine under the leadership of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel ultimately gave birth to the spiritual Kingdom founded by Jesus Christ (Matt 16:16-19).

Misapplied

Jeremiah 29:11 really does not apply to specific individuals. It’s not about God’s plan for me to attend a special school, marry a certain person, pursue a designed career or move to another city.

Preacher John Piper was right when he said, “First of all, we twist (Jeremiah 29:11) because we make it a promise directly to us when it was a promise made directly to a specific group of people under special circumstances and during a specific time and in a specific place.”

“Secondly, we twist it because we make it for now when it was actually a multi-generational promise. And thirdly, we twist it because we make it for me when it’s supposed to be for us.”

Our Purpose In Christ

The Bible clearly states in the book of Ephesians that God purposed, planned and predestination salvation in Christ Jesus *“before the foundation of the world.”* We are the chosen in Christ. Adopted as sons of God by Christ. Receive forgiveness of sins in Christ. And enjoy *“every spiritual blessing...in Christ”* And all of this is to glorify God, our Creator. (Eph. 1:3-10).

God has plans for all of us in Christ! He is our hope of a prosperous future.

Jeremiah 29:11 is a great verse that finds fulfillment today when we accept Christ as Lord, come to him in obedience, and find our place and purpose in serving Him.

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