

Seek the Welfare of the City

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: Jeremiah 29:4-11

In this passage, Jeremiah sent a letter to the exiles living in captivity. The letter contained instructions about how they were to conduct themselves while in exile and explained what they could hope for in the future. Today, we live as exiles in the world. The basic points in Jeremiah's letter are helpful for us as well.

The Background

- The people of Judah were in Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 29:1)
- In Jerusalem, Hananiah falsely prophesied that Babylon would soon be defeated (Jeremiah 28:1-4, 11) – Jeremiah refuted this prophecy (Jeremiah 28:12-14)
- Jeremiah then sent a letter to the captives in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:1-3) – they may have hoped that the prophet was announcing deliverance in the near future; instead, he said they would be in captivity for 70 years (Jeremiah 29:10)

Lessons for the Captives

- Live productive lives (Jeremiah 29:5) – plan to be there a while; be as self-sufficient as possible
- Raise your families (Jeremiah 29:6) – not just survive; they were to focus on the next generation and beyond
- Live at peace with others (Jeremiah 29:7) – had to live among others; the common people were not the “enemy”
- Beware of false prophets (Jeremiah 29:8-9) – may promote rebellion or promise immediate deliverance
- Remember the future hope (Jeremiah 29:10-11) – God has everything planned and under control; trust Him

Lessons for Us Today

- We are like the Jews in captivity – we are strangers and exiles (1 Peter 2:11-12); the lessons they needed to hear are the same lessons we need to hear
- Live productive lives (Ephesians 5:15-16) – this is our ambition as Christians (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12); not to sit around and wait for the Lord to return (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12)
- Raise your families (Ephesians 6:4) – marriage is to be held in honor (Hebrews 13:4); children are still a gift from the Lord (Psalm 127:3)
- Live at peace with others (Romans 12:18) – not always “possible” (cf. 2 Timothy 3:12); but we are to seek to do good to all people (Galatians 6:10)

- Beware of false prophets (2 Peter 2:1-3) – test the spirits (1 John 4:1, 6); beware of those who proclaim a different hope (Colossians 1:5; 1 Corinthians 15:19); search the Scriptures before accepting what some teacher says (Acts 17:11)
- Remember the future hope (1 Peter 1:3-5) – our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20); we are awaiting the day when the Lord returns to bring us home with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Conclusion

- We live as strangers and exiles in this life – but we do not cut ourselves off from the world
- We have a hope of eternal life in heaven – but we do not ignore our responsibilities here
- We are different from the world – but we are not to act in hostility toward those around us
- We do not know how long until the Lord delivers His people (cf. 2 Peter 3:10) – however long that is, let's make sure we are doing that we ought to do in this life and keep looking forward to the next one