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SERIES: Jeremiah, Part 2 (God's Certain Judgment)

TITLE: Program 10 – Plans For Welfare, Not Calamity

FRIDAY

OPEN

Are you familiar with that wonderful verse that people love to quote, Jeremiah 29:11? “**...I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and [to give you] hope.’” (Jeremiah 29:11)** We love it. We grab it; it’s ours. But do we know the context in which it was said? And do we know how the truths of that verse can become ours? We’ll talk about it today.

PART ONE

Isn’t it interesting how we hear a verse and it strikes a chord in our heart? And it’s a dream. It’s a vision. It’s what we want. It’s what we desire. And we grab that verse and we take it to ourselves, and we claim the promise, and then it doesn’t seem to work out that way. So what do we do? Do we just take the verse out of the Bible and throw it away and say: “Hey, it doesn’t work! God has brought calamity in my life. So that verse didn’t promise me that. He had plans for me, for welfare not for calamity. He wants

me to have a future and a hope, and it looks like everything is falling apart. The man, the woman, I love—has walked away from me. The child that I invested my life in has turned its back on me or he has denied me and he hates me and he won't talk to me." And then you think: What happened to that verse? We need to understand the setting in which the verses are said. What is the context? Because context rules over all interpretation, so let's look at it. We are going to look today at Jeremiah chapter 29. And once again, as we do, we're with this prophecy, this prophecy of false prophets, this prophecy of Jeremiah, a true prophet, and the conflict continues, Jeremiah chapter 29, verse 1. **"Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile...."** (Jeremiah 29:1) In Jeremiah 27 and 28, Jeremiah is talking to the people in Jerusalem. He's talking to the visitors also. But here he's writing a letter to the exiles, to the people that have been taken captive, and are living in Babylon; modern-day Iraq. To **"...the priests, [to] the prophets...[to] the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon."** (Jeremiah 29:1) And then he's telling you the timing. **"(This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the court officials, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.)"** (Jeremiah 29:2) So it's got ten thousand or more people in Babylon that he's writing to. **"The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan...."** (Jeremiah 29:3) Shaphan is the one that finds the word of God that's lost in the house of God in the days of Josiah. **"...And Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah...."** Hilkiyah's a friend of Shaphan's. **"...Whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon...."** (Jeremiah 29:3) All right now, he's saying Nebuchadnezzar was sending these two men, and they were righteous men. He probably wanted to get rid of 'em; we don't know. He was sending them to Babylon. And so Jeremiah comes along and he says, "Hey! Hey I've written something out I want you to take it to the exiles, okay? Take this letter." And this is the letter: **"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of**

Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, **“Build houses and live *in them*...plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give you daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease.”**” (Jeremiah 29:4-6) What is he saying? He is saying, “Listen, I want you to settle down.” They’re saying, “But this is the land of our captivity.” He says, “I know, but I want you to settle down and I want you to **“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for...its welfare [its welfare] [you’ll] have welfare.”**” (Jeremiah 29:7) “I’m to pray for my enemy? I’m to pray for these people that are holding me in exile? I’m to settle down? I’m to act like I am to live here for the rest of my life?” Yep. And in praying for their welfare, you will get welfare. If it goes well with Babylon it will go well with you. He says, **“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Do not let your prophets who are in your midst....”**” (Jeremiah 29:8) Okay, so they’re in exile in Babylon. So he’s saying: “Over here in exile, in Babylon, there are prophets in your midst and they are prophesying”. And he says “Don’t listen to them”. Listen, **“...[Don’t] let your prophets...and your diviners deceive you...do not listen to the dreams which they dream.”** (Jeremiah 29:8) It’s very interesting because there’s a footnote in the Bible, and the footnote says literally, “Do not listen to your dreams which they dream.” This is a very solemn warning because many times we go after what we want. Somebody’s going to tell us that we can be prosperous. Somebody’s going to tell us that we should. God wants us drive big cars and God wants us to live in big houses and God wants us to have everything no matter what’s going on in the economy. Others come along and they tell you, “Listen, God doesn’t want you unhappy. Leave your husband. Leave your wife. God wants this for you.” And it’s dreams that we dream. And so they’re giving to me a dream which I have dreamed, which is my dream, and I grab that dream and I grab a lie. And this is what he is

saying, he says, “...‘**They prophesy falsely to you in My name....**’”
(**Jeremiah 29:9**) You can turn on Christian television and you can see false prophets prophesying to you in the name of God, giving you dreams which you dream and you buy them, but they’re not in accordance to the whole counsel of God. (See Acts 20:27) He says, “‘**For they prophesy falsely...in My name; I have not sent them,**’ [says] **the LORD. ‘For thus says the LORD, “When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.”**’” (**Jeremiah 29:9-10**) You’re gonna be in captivity for seventy years. Now He told them in Leviticus 26, He told them in the Torah before that, that: When you till your land, every seventh year is a sabbatical year for the land and you are not to sow anything on it. (See Leviticus 26:34) And what he’s going to show them is: “Hey! For four hundred and ninety years you have not given the land its Sabbath. You owe me seventy years of Sabbath. So I’m driving you off the land and you’re gonna be in captivity for seventy years because you disobeyed me.” Now he doesn’t say it here, but if you compare Scripture with Scripture it said—and you see it in other places—listen, God watches over His word to perform it. (See Jeremiah 1:12) That is what He told Jeremiah. [“What do you see?” He says, “I see an almond tree.”] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 1:11) And He does a play on words and He says, “I want you to know this: “**...I [watch] over My word to perform it.**” (**Jeremiah 1:12**) If they had simply sat down and thought, and gone through the Word of God, they would have known that they would be there for seventy years. Now He’s saying, “You’re gonna to be there. You settle down. In seventy years I’m going to come and I’m going to visit you. I’ll bring you back home. I’ll bring the vessels back home just like I said, but you’re gonna be there for seventy years.” (See Jeremiah 29:10) And He says, “‘**For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.**’” (**Jeremiah 29:11**) “I’m not gonna leave you in captivity. I’m gonna bring you home, but I’m going to bring you home in My time. I know the

plans I have for you. I made a promise to you,” and that promise God is going to keep. [He watches over His word to perform it], as he says in Jeremiah chapter 1. (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 1:12) **“Then [then] you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. [And] you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:12-13)** You know, we want God to do our bidding. We want God to fulfill our dreams. We want God to bless us, but we don’t want to search for God with all of our heart. We’re too busy. Just look at the average man sitting in the church and find out how much he studies the Word of God. Find out how much time he is spending digging in the Word of God. I mean, sometimes they say, “Oh, don’t do Precept, it’s too hard,” “Oh, don’t do Precept, you have little children.” That is a lie from the devil. It’s not too hard. It takes time and it makes you think and it makes you work, and we don’t want to do that because we’re not seeking for God and searching for Him with all of our heart. We want to live on the fringes. We want to enjoy the world and life, and we have all sorts of excuses. We’re not seeking for Him with all of our heart. Oh Precious One, He says, [“If you will seek for Me with all your heart and search for me,”] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 29:13) then he says, **“‘I will be found [of] you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places [which] I have driven you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will bring you back to [this] place from where I sent you into exile.’” (Jeremiah 29:14)** Now as you look at this it goes back to the return of the seventy years, but, but...what is the “but”? I’ll tell you when you come back.

PART TWO

Welcome back, Beloved. Before I go any further, I’ve got to tell you about Jeremiah 29:11. **“...I know the plans that I have for you...plans for welfare...not for calamity to give you a future and [to give you] a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)** You say, “You just ruined that verse for me.” Well, I

want to tell you something. You can have that verse. You can have a future. You can have hope. You can know that God desires your welfare, but it's only one way that you can have it, and we are going to study that next week. So don't miss it, don't miss it! You've got to understand the setting and you've got to understand how you can have a future and how you can have hope. But let's go back to the time of Jeremiah and the time of Zedekiah. All right? We come to verse 15 he's writing to the exiles. It's a letter. He says **"Because you have said, 'The LORD...raised up prophets for us in Babylon'—." (Jeremiah 29:15)** "God's given me a prophet here, we don't need you. We don't need this letter. God's given us a prophet in Babylon." Now listen, in Babylon they've got prophets that are saying to them, "Hey, you are going to come home. Don't sit in this city and seek its welfare and build houses and plant gardens. Don't do that." (See Jeremiah 29:5-7) But now listen, he starts the sentence and then he stops. And this is what he says, **"For thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David...,**" so he's pointing back to Zedekiah, **"...and concerning all the people who dwell in this city...,**" in Jerusalem **"...your brothers who did not go with you into exile—." (Jeremiah 29:16)** Now, you have prophets. Yes, but I want you to stop and I want you to reason with me, I want you to think about the king here. I want you to think about the people that were left in Jerusalem. **"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, I am sending upon them the sword, [and] famine and pestilence...,**" those three catastrophes, **"...and I will make them like split-open figs that cannot be eaten due to rottenness. I will pursue them with sword, with famine and...pestilence...I will make them a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse and a horror and a hissing, and a reproach among...the nations where I have driven them." (Jeremiah 29:17-18)** "Let me ask you a question. 'Yeah,' you're saying, 'We've got our prophets, leave us alone. We are gonna come back.' Do you want to come back to that? Do you want to come back to the sword? Do you want to come back to famine? Do you want to come back to pestilence?" He says, "Because I'm

going to do it.” **“Because they have not listened to My words,’ declares the LORD, ‘which I sent...them again and again by My...prophets; but you did not listen,’ declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 29:19)** “Look, before you say anything, and I know you’ve got your prophets. But I want you to know that these people are suffering because they did not listen so as to obey God. They’ve got the sword, they’ve got famine, they’ve got pestilence and they’re in this land. They didn’t listen. You better listen, Exiles. You better listen to the right prophet.” He says, **“You, therefore, hear the word of the LORD, all you exiles, whom I [God] have sent...from Jerusalem to Babylon. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah and concerning Zedekiah...,”** not the king, **“...the son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying to you falsely in My name....” (Jeremiah 29:20-21)** I know that you’re listening to false prophets in exile, in Babylon. **“...Behold, I will deliver [those two men] into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon...he will slay them before your eyes. Because of them a curse will be used by all the exiles from [who are in] Judah who are in Babylon, saying, ‘May the LORD make you like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire.’” (Jeremiah 29:21-22)** The king of Babylon loved to kill people that way. He says, **“Because they have acted foolishly in Israel....”** This is the false prophet, they act foolishly. **“...[They] have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives and [they] have spoken words in My name falsely, which I did not command them....” (Jeremiah 29:23)** False prophets usually show that they’re false by their lifestyle. **““...And I am He who knows and am a witness,’ declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 29:23)** Then there’s another letter. **“To Shemaiah...you shall speak..., ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts..., “Because you have sent letters in your own name to all the people who are in Jerusalem...,””** Here you are in Babylon, you’re writing to the people in Jerusalem, **““...and to Zephaniah...the priest, and to all the priests....”” (Jeremiah 29:24-25)** And you wrote: **“The LORD has made**

you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, to be overseer in the house of the LORD over every madman who prophesies, to put him in stocks and in the iron collar, now then...have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who prophesies to you?” (Jeremiah 29:26-27) “You’re in charge. Why haven’t you rebuked Jeremiah walking around with this collar on his neck?” “For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, ‘The exile will be long; build houses, live in them...plant gardens and eat their produce.’ Zephaniah the priest read this letter to Jeremiah the prophet.”

(Jeremiah 29:28-29) So he takes Shemaiah’s letter and he says, “Here Jeremiah, this is what I have received from Shemaiah.” And then God says to Jeremiah: “Then...the word of the LORD [came] to Jeremiah, saying, ‘Send to all the exiles, saying, “Thus says the LORD concerning Shemaiah...‘Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, although I did not send him, and...made you to trust...a lie,’ therefore thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I am about to punish Shemaiah...and his descendants; he will not have anyone living among His people, and he will not see the good that I am about to do to My people...’”” He will never come back from captivity; he is going to die. “...‘Because he has preached rebellion against the LORD.’” (Jeremiah 29:30-32) Do you realize that when a man stands up to speak in the name of the Lord, or when you sit down, so to speak, and you sit down across from someone to counsel them as a Christian, do you realize that if you are not telling them what the Word of God has to say, if you’re just giving them the answer to their dreams that they are dreaming and not truth, you are preaching rebellion against God, Beloved, rebellion against God. They are trusting in a lie. And you know what? Rebellion is sin and the wages of sin is death. You don’t want to lead them away from God, you want to lead them to God. O Beloved, how vital it is for us to know the whole counsel of God. (See Acts 20:27) and, to hold forth the Word of truth “...in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation....” (Philippians 2:15) You have truth versus a lie, true prophets versus false prophets. You better know what the truth is and live by it.