

Scripture InSight

Bible Society in Northern Ireland

Scripture Reference: Jeremiah 29:4-14

Bible Translation: New Living Translation

This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem:

“Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce. Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare.”

This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let your prophets and fortune-tellers who are with you in the land of Babylon trick you. Do not listen to their dreams, because they are telling you lies in my name. I have not sent them,” says the LORD.

This is what the LORD says: “You will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again. For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you,” says the LORD. “I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land.”

Reflections:

I love this letter to the Israelites captive in Babylon because God gives them a great vision and challenge that echoes with us today. They were living in a land that was hostile to them and their faith and yet God called them to engage fully, to work and pray for the good of all in the city. We are faced with increasing temptations to retreat from the public square, to keep our faith private, or else to engage in conflict with the world around us that operates on different values. But the challenge of this message from Jeremiah is not to back away, nor to engage in open warfare, but to live out our faith in a way that contributes to the well-being of our society and doesn't just seek its own rights. Daniel and his friends obviously took that challenge seriously and had an amazing impact for good, and I want to see a generation of Christians today follow that example of exemplary engagement with our world.



Stephen Cave is the NI National Director of Evangelical Alliance.

