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“For I know the thoughts [plans] that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts [plans] of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Jer 29:11

In this verse, we see ...

1. The omniscience of God—*“for I know”*
2. The sovereignty of God—*“the thoughts [plans]”*
3. The grace/mercy of God—*“thoughts [plans] of peace and not of evil”*
4. The omnipotence of God—*“to give you”*
5. The prophetic plan of God—*“to give you a future and a hope”*

A. A Text Often Abused

This text is most often abused by the charismatics as a blanket-promise to believers. The idea is presented that since God loves His children, He wants every believer to have health, wealth, and prosperity. Nothing could be further from the intent of this passage when it is seen in its biblical, historical, and prophetic context.

B. The Background

1. The unique call of Jeremiah

“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations ... For behold, I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land ... They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you.” Jer 1:5, Jer 1:18–19

- Jeremiah would be resisted at every turn, Jer 1:18–19.
- His own home town sought his life, Jer 11:18–23.
- He was forbidden to marry, Jer 16:1–2.
- Pashhur, the priest, put him in the stocks overnight, Jer 20:1–6.
- The priests tried to impose the death sentence on him, Jer 26:10–14.
- He was publicly humiliated by the false prophet, Hananiah, Jeremiah 28.
- He was lowered into a miry cistern by the princes during the siege of Jerusalem, accused of being a deserter, Jeremiah 37–38.
- Though he was offered a position and care in Babylon, Jeremiah chose to remain with the rebellious remnant in Jerusalem, Jer 39:11; Jer 40:4–6.
- Tradition has it that after being kidnapped by the Egyptian faction (Jeremiah 43), Jeremiah was stoned to death, because his words proved true!

I am astounded when I hear Jeremiah derided as “the weeping prophet,” even mocked by pastors who could not measure up to his ankles! He was a giant of faith and courage, and whatever his personal struggles (see Jeremiah 15 and 20), he never failed to proclaim the truth of God’s Word to a rebellious nation. When Jeremiah cried out to God for the injustices he was suffering from his people, God’s response was:

*“If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you,
then how can you contend with horses?” Jer 12:5*

2. The spiritual state of the nation and call to repentance

*“For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me,
the fountain of living waters, and hewn for themselves cisterns—
broken cisterns that can hold no water.” Jer 2:13*

*“Have you not brought this on yourself, in that you
have forsaken the LORD your God?” Jer 2:17*

*“Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your
God ... Return, O backsliding children ... and I will give you shepherds according to
My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” Jer 3:13–15*

*“Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them,
nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you.” Jer 7:16*

3. The vision of two baskets of figs, Jeremiah 24

This vision was central to what God was about to do in the Babylonian captivity. Those taken captive to Babylon were represented by the good figs (Daniel, his friends, Ezekiel, etc.). They would be chastened, and come to know the Lord in a deeper way, Jer 24:7. The bad figs represented the rebellious factions of Judah who would suffer by sword, famine, and pestilence, Jer 14:15; Jer 21:9.

It was to the captives in Babylon, the “good figs,” that Jeremiah wrote the letter in chapter 29, in which our text is found.

C. The Context of the Letter (Jeremiah 29)

1. The command to the captives, Jer 29:1–9

The leaders of the captives are told by Jeremiah, according to the Word of the Lord, to settle there, build houses, raise their families, and grow crops. They are to seek the prosperity of Babylon, and to reject the lying words of the false prophets.

2. The promise for the future, Jer 29:10–14

The promise anticipates seventy years of captivity before it can even begin to be fulfilled. At that time, they would pray, and God would hear, and they would return to the land. At that time, there would be a revival, in which:

*“you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.
I will be found by you ... I will bring you back ... I will gather you from
all the nations ... where I have driven you ...”* Jer 29:13–14

3. The warning against false prophets in Babylon, Jer 29:15–32

There were a number of false prophets among the captives. Ahab and Zedekiah were burned by Nebuchadnezzar in the fire (cf., Jer 29:21–22 with Daniel 3); “*Shemaiah the Nehelamite*” (Jer 29:24, literally, “the dreamer”) would suffer a similar fate, Jer 29:32. These prophets promised a quick return to Jerusalem and called Jeremiah a “*demented*” man who considered himself a prophet (Jer 29:26).

Note: Both history and archeology show that the conditions of the captives were far from ideal. They were settled in swampland near canals running from the Euphrates River. It was a hot, humid, and mosquito-infested land.

Questions: Of what value was the promise of return in 70 years to the average captive? What is the real import and significance of this promise in Jer 29:11? That is not found until we read “the book of comfort,” as Jeremiah 30–33 has been called.

D. The Future Promise

1. After “*the time of Jacob’s trouble*,” Israel (taken captive to Assyria in 726 B.C.) and Judah (taken captive to Babylon from 606 to 586 B.C.) would be restored and united, Jer 30:1–10.
2. Every nation into which the Jewish people have been scattered will be utterly destroyed, Jer 30:11–24; Jer 46:28. **Here is your prophecy concerning America!**
3. But, before this time, there will be three great events:
 - “A voice [of weeping will be] *heard in Ramah ... Rachel weeping for her children ...*,” Jer 31:15; cf., Mat 2:18.
 - A Son will be born to a virgin, “*a new thing in the earth*,” Jer 31:22.
 - By Him, a New Covenant will be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, Jer 31:31–37.
4. The provisions of this New Covenant will be:
 - To make the Old Covenant “old,” in the sense of “*passing away*” (cf., 2Co 3:11).
 - It will be in strong contrast to that Old Covenant, which was conditional, based on obedience.
 - This New Covenant will be unconditional, dependent on the faithfulness of the Lord Himself, as indicated by the “I will” statements:

- 1) “I will make,” Jer 31:33.
- 2) “I will put My law in their minds ... on their hearts,” Jer 31:33.
- 3) “I will be their God, and they shall be My people ...,” Jer 31:33.
- 4) “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more,” Jer 31:34.
- 5) “I will never forsake this covenant,” as implied in Jer 31:35–37.

E. Signed, Sealed, and Delivered (Jeremiah 32)

The significance of Jeremiah’s land purchase is too often overlooked. It is a “sign” to the captives of the present hope found in the promised New Covenant.

It is critical to remember that the book of Jeremiah is **not** in chronological order. Previous to his land purchase, he had sought to go to claim this property (Jer 37:11–13) and was arrested on the charge that he was defecting to the Chaldeans. It was this circumstance that first landed him in prison.

Now, he is “*shut up in the court of the prison*” (Jer 32:1–2) while the siege of the city is in progress. The word of the Lord prepares him for the coming of Hanamel, and the purchase of his family property (Jer 32:6–15). The deed is signed, sealed, and placed in an earthen vessel, “*that they may last many days*” (Jer 31:14).

When Jeremiah questions the Lord of the value of buying land when the land is about to be destroyed (Jer 32:16–25), the Lord responds, “*Behold I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard (literally “wonderful”) for Me?*” (Jer 32:27).

He then begins to explain to Jeremiah the wonderful truth that faith now—even in this present crisis—has consequences into the eternal future. Though the city and land would be destroyed, yet “*for the good of **them and their children** after them ... I will make an everlasting covenant with **them** ... Just as I have brought all this great calamity on **this people**, so I will bring on **them** all the good that I have promised **them**.*” (Jer 32:39–42, emphasis added).

This covenant would be based on the coming and work of the promised Messiah, see Jer 33:14–18 with Jer 23:4–6. Here “*the Branch of righteousness*” is “*THE LORD (Jehovah) OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*” Note that the Messiah is called “Jehovah,” thus an undeniable Old Testament reference to the deity of Christ. Furthermore, “*branch*” in the Hebrew is *netzer*, which Matthew refers to in Mat 2:23. This prophecy of the “*Branch*” is also found in Isa 11:1, Zec 3:8, and Zec 6:2, for which reason Matthew says “*that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets*” (plural), Mat 2:23.

Archaeological Note

Excavations taking place in the City of David **at this very hour**, have found two names associated with Jeremiah; they are also searching for the land title-deed, which they feel sure is in that location. Whether they find it or not, it will be found at the Second Advent, and Jeremiah

will likely settle on the farm he purchased during the siege of Jerusalem! (See Yishai Fleisher, *Excavation of City of David*).

What are the Implications of the Promise for Us?

Does Jer 29:11 have any implications for us today? Consider the following:

1. Daniel was given the prophecy of the “seventy weeks,” the most critical prophecy regarding end times, as a result of reading Jeremiah’s prophecies, Dan 9:1–3, Dan 9:20–27.
2. Jesus anticipates/announces the New Covenant at the Last Supper, Mat 26:26–29; Mar 14:24; 1Co 11:23–26 (Paul received information from the Lord), cf., Exo 24:8.
3. Paul was the first to draw contrast between the Old and New Covenants, 2Co 3:7–18.
4. The author of Hebrews both introduces and concludes his introduction of the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ with New Covenant provisions, Heb 8:1–13; Heb 10:16–18. Note that the emphatic point is “*their sins and lawless deeds* [iniquities, NASB] *I will remember no more,*” Heb 8:12; Heb 10:17.
5. The truth is that every believer in Jesus Christ, regardless of circumstances, is already living in the fulfillment of Jer 29:11!
6. Finally, “*the thoughts* [plans, NASB] *I have for you ... [plans] of peace ... to give you a future and a hope*” are fully expounded by the Apostle Paul in Eph 1:3–14.
 - a. We are recipients of “*every spiritual blessing ... in Christ,*” Eph 1:3.
 - b. We are chosen “*in Him before the foundation of the world,*” Eph 1:4.
 - c. We were “*predestined ... to adoption as [adult] sons,*” Eph 1:5.
 - d. We are “*accepted in the Beloved,*” Eph 1:6.
 - e. We are living in the “*mystery ... the dispensation of the fullness of times,*” Eph 1:9–10, “*which He purposed in Himself.*”
 - f. We are possessors of an “*inheritance*”—just like Jeremiah, Eph 1:11!
 - g. Our “seal” by the Holy Spirit is the “*guarantee of our inheritance,*” Eph 1:14.

Conclusion

When Jeremiah was instructed by God to redeem his land/farm, it seemed all to no purpose. The prophet had already been told repeatedly that Jerusalem/Judah would fall to Nebuchadnezzar and that the captivity would last for 70 years. At this time, the prophet was at least 60 years old. What hope did he have of seeing the return?

Yet, God was causing the prophet to look beyond this present life, to have assurance that in the future Kingdom, he would be a real person, owning real estate, which he would plant and harvest and enjoy—forever! We need to hold to that same assurance since ...

prophetically, the U.S.A. must be destroyed ... Jer 30:11; Jer 46:28.

Don’t give in to gloom as you observe the decline of this nation (now ranked 20th in the world for freedom). Look beyond the present storm, and rejoice in the glorious future we have in Christ Jesus—King of kings and Lord of lords!