

Shalom,

Dear brethren,

By grace of the Lord, today we will reflect on the lesson which lies behind the 70 years of children of Israel to be in Babylon. One would ask Why did God decide to make it clear that they would stay in captivity for 70 years, and even ask them to build the houses and marry each other in that strange land.

In short God didn't need no petition of anyone to return to Israel at that time , you'll see he didn't even advise them to live as strangers in Babylon, or to rebel against the empire, instead told them to continue with their normal activities just like they used to live in Israel, as if there is nothing wrong with the Babylonian empire . Take a close look at the whole chapter of Jeremiah 29 you will see that.

But the fact is, even if it were you today, something like that happened to you, your whole family is killed, all your properties are lost, your city is burnt with fire, and then taken away into exile and somebody is boldly telling you he would come back to take you home after 70 years have finished, But for now you just live temporarily here build your house in this strange land, live a happily life, fear not? Imagine it were you would you truly live a happy life??

Of course, you won't be happy at all, because, all your thought would have been at home at that moment, not to wait until all 70 years have finished.

Such was the condition of the children of Israel were passing through, when they had transgressed against God, God give up on them, and allowed Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon to take them into exile. While in Babylon false prophets arose and deceiving them that they would spend only 2 years before God bring them back to their land, but God spoke through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah and said they would stay in exile for 70 years with their enemies, they'll always be there. and that is what we even caused the prophet Jeremiah to suffer so much to the point of wanting to be killed by the Jews, for the bad news he brought to them, because it is clear that no one wants to die in captivity,

It is very disappointing in one way or another, remembering the slavery in Egypt of how they were persecuted and today the same thing re-occurs again, they are going to be laboured, to be served, to be whipped.

But this is what the Lord told them.

*Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end".*

Many of us read this verse but for sure we don't know from which source are coming from ... Those words God told the children of Israel when they were taken into captivity, Babylon.

They are actually words of comfort.

### **But what does their story teach us?**

Children of Israel are likened to the children of God now, those who believed in Christ and later turned away from him, those who knew the truth and opposed it.

those whom God has often warned to turn away from their evil ways through the sermons preached daily in churches and streets, but did not want to hear, until they reached a point of drowning into serious problems that they do not know how to get out. some have drifted into fornication and now they have got AIDS,

Let me tell you that, everyone will reap what they sow, probably you have asked God to heal you but you do not see any change, your case is similar to that of the children of Israel.

Now If you have come into a true repentance, I want to tell you that don't be sad to find yourself in that situation for a very long time. As the Israelites found out of their mistake, that is what happened to you. They stayed 70 years but one day they came out.... And don't forget this word that. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

You have been a thief or a rapist and you are now imprisoned, you have truly repented and become a good child of God, you steal no more and you have no plans to it again ... but you wonder why until now you are still in prison God does not yet deliver you there, I want to tell you, forgiveness is one thing, and punishment is also another thing, if you find yourself in such a situation, you just calm down and be a good person in prison, serve your God with all sincerity, do the work of God there, do all the tasks that come before you, as if you neither would you go out today nor tomorrow, For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Now remember when the children of Israel came to Babylon though they repented and there were only many of God's people like Ezekiel, and Daniel,

but he did not let them suffer like the exile of Egypt, he raised up such mighty and wise men as Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, and put them in the royal palace in front of Nebuchadnezzar, and through them the King honoured all the Jews in Babylon with their God, worshiping him in freedom and peace, living in captivity but not as long as slaves there in Egypt, such as Joseph and his brothers Even though they were all in bondage.

And after the 70 years of doom had passed God opened a great door for them to return to their homeland, but they did not return empty handed, God opened the door to receive many gifts from Persian kings, and even those who remained in Babylon and other foreign countries willingly together with those who were spread across the world we see God again raising people like Mordecai and Esther, to Persian seats, who in turn made the Jews worth twice in all the world, feared and revered, even though they were in foreign lands. You see how God's thoughts were good for them at the end of the day, despite serving the punishment but he also infused his purpose into their punishment.

So you who had sinned against God and now met with evil, until now you are in the dungeon, and fortunately you repented of your sins, and left them altogether, it is clear that God forgave you on that day when you changed your mind and your ways. But yet you still in that sinking hole of sickness, or imprisonment, or trouble, or misery, I want to tell you not to be discouraged, continue to serve God in the situation you are in, no matter how long will

take you, weeks, or months or years until it is completely open, but you continue to serve him in the situation you are and He will bless you, He will increase you, He will teach you, He will increase you to where you are, and when His time comes He will open you up directly.

Serving punishment does not mean that God does not love you.

*Isaiah 44: <sup>21</sup> Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.*

*Proverbs 3: <sup>11</sup> My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:*

And also, if you have not repented of your sins for fearing that God will not forgive you ... That is the voice of the devil talking inside you, wanting you to fall to fall down like Judas! God wants you to repent and forgive you all your sins for free because He is merciful God ... He wants you to repent of those excess evil acts you did, He wants you to repent of your superstition and occultism you are in, your murder and fraud, in your prostitution. Repent today and he will forgive you! And change you because he always says.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end

Finally, I want you to end by reflecting on these words:

*<sup>11</sup> For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*

*<sup>12</sup> As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*

*<sup>13</sup> Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*

*<sup>14</sup> For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*

*<sup>15</sup> As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*

*<sup>16</sup> For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

FOR I KNOW THE THOUGHTS THAT I THINK TOWARD YOU.

*<sup>17</sup> But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;*

*<sup>18</sup> To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*

God bless.

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