

THE "LETTER" OF ASSURANCE

(WHEN YOU FEEL DETOURED OR DELAYED)

Jeremiah 29:1-14



JEREMIAH'S LETTER REVEALS

- ◆ The God of Our Detours
- ◆ The God of Our Delays
- ◆ The God of Our Development
- ◆ The God of Our Destination

"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."

(Jeremiah 29:11)

Bill Kirk

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INTRODUCTION

1. Jeremiah Chapter 29 is a letter from God to His people who are captive in Babylon.
2. In 597 B.C. the Babylonians began to deport the Jews to Babylon.
3. These Jews would be taken captive, detoured from their hometown (Jerusalem) and be held in a pagan society for some 70 years.
4. These Jews (Judah) would be separated from their temple and normal Christian service.
5. The Jews find themselves in a pagan culture, hemmed in by the idolatrous Babylonians.

And God Tells Jeremiah to Write a Letter

Why the Letter?

1. Because God wants His people in exile to know some things.
2. Because God wants you to know the same things (that's why you have this letter in your Bible).
3. Because God wants to speak a word to encourage His faithful people.
4. Because God wants to strengthen you in the midst of difficult situations.
5. Because God wants you to know that He will finish what He starts in you.

Questions:

- ◆ Have you ever lived or worked in a difficult environment?
- ◆ Have you ever made plans and they didn't turn out the way you planned?
- ◆ Have you ever felt betrayed or let down and find it difficult to trust again?
- ◆ Have you ever had to wait, and wait, and wait for answered prayer?
- ◆ Have you ever been jolted by unexpected disappointments?
- ◆ Have you ever been detoured or delayed and didn't know why?
- ◆ Have you ever doubted God's wisdom, that He will complete what He began in you?

Then God Sends A Letter to You.

Question: What's in the letter?

Question: What's the letter say?

Question: What's the word to the people of God?

Three Simple Revelations:

- I. God Is The God Of Your “Detours and Delays” (V. 1-4)**

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon." (v.4)

Question: Who was it that allowed the Jews to be detoured?

Question: Who allowed the Jews to be delayed for 70 years?

Question: Who orchestrated the Jews to be taken into Babylon?

It Was God!

- ◆ And Jeremiah wanted to encourage the exiles in Babylon.
- ◆ And Jeremiah wanted to help them look beyond their captivity to the future God had in store.

Remember Now:

1. These Jews lost everything but their lives.
2. They could only carry a few possessions into Babylon.
3. They lost their freedom and were separated from relatives and loved ones.
4. They faced difficulty adjusting to a pagan society.
5. They needed to hear this encouraging word from Jeremiah.

What's the Good News?

1. That God is the God of your detours.
2. That God is the God of your delays.
3. That God is the God of your direction.

In Other Words

- ◆ Judah's captivity was ordained by God for a higher purpose (unknown to Judah).
- ◆ The things unknown and not understood were the very things ordained and overseen by the Lord.
- ◆ God is God and uses the uncomfortable things to get us where He wants us to be.

In Other Words

1. God's way may seem perplexing, but it is purposeful.
2. God's way may seem wasted, but it is useful.
3. God's way may seem unclear, but God has a plan in mind for down the road.

What's the Danger Here?

- ◆ How did the Jews react to this detour?
- ◆ How did the Jews respond to their delay?
- ◆ What are the two choices for us today?

Psalm 137:1-4

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion." (V. 1)

"We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." (V. 2)

"For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying; Sing us one of the songs of Zion." (V. 3)

"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (V. 4)

Two Choices For Us All When Tested

1. Hang our harps on the willow tree, get sour and foster a spirit of resentment towards God or,
2. Believe that God has a plan, a purpose and will take the things that break our heart and use them for His good down the road!

Remember Some Things:

1. Bitterness is failure to see suffering from God's point of view.
2. God is never surprised with what surprises us.
3. God knows more about our tomorrows than we do about our yesterdays!
4. Worry is accepting responsibility God never intended for us to carry!

What Does The Letter Say?

II. God Is The God Of Your "Development" (V. 5-7)

"Build houses and plant gardens." (V. 5)

"Get married and have children and grandchildren." (V. 6)

"Seek peace with your enemy and pray to God for it." (V. 7)

Fact: It would be easy for the Jews to resist, fight and resent their pagan captors.

Fact: It would be easy for the Jews to become bitter against Babylon.

Fact: It would be easy to allow the pagan culture to infect the Jews and contaminate them.

But Jeremiah said:

1. "Get along and make the best of it."
2. "Be a peacemaker and give an increase."
3. "Don't carry a chip on your shoulder."
4. "Don't squander the opportunity to be productive."
5. "Pray to the Lord and flourish where God has placed you."

What is God Saying Here?

- ◆ That, while in the midst of heathen captors,
- ◆ That, while in the midst of a pagan culture,
- ◆ That, while in the midst of a dark, dreary, nasty and painful season,
- ◆ **God is going to increase you for what He has in store:**

..that ye may be increased there, and not diminished." (V. 6)

In Other Words:

- ◆ Our lot in life will be very much what we make it for ourselves. (Repeat)
- ◆ We can nurse our sorrows and waste them, or redeem them for God's glory by loving the One who does all things well!

Fact: You may live in a housefull of unsaved people.

Fact: You may work on a job full of unsaved people.

Fact: You may attend a school full of unsaved pagans.

Fact: You may be married and receive zero spiritual support.

But what does Jeremiah reveal?

1. That you can flourish exactly where God finds you today. (Repeat)
2. That although your present field may be limited, you are not limited by your field. (Repeat)
3. That God is big enough to sustain you and grow you strong (regardless of your surroundings and environment).
4. That if we will build a house of devotion with God (in secret) He will build a place of ministry for us (in public)
5. That if we will wrestle with God in secret, we will never have to lower ourselves to wrestle with men in public.

What Does The Letter Say?

III. God Is The God Of Your Future "Destination" (V. 8-14)

"I will visit you and perform my good toward you, in causing you to return to this place." (V. 10)

"I will give you an expected end." (V. 11)

"I will bring you again into the place when I caused you to be carried away captive." (V. 14)

Fact: The false prophets convinced the Jews that their stay in Babylon would be a brief one.

Fact: These prophets didn't want the Jews to settle down and resume a normal life.

Fact: The enemy wanted the Jews to faint in their captivity.

Why the warfare?

- ◆ Because out of this Jewish remnant in captivity,
- ◆ Would be the group to return to Jerusalem,
- ◆ Which would give birth to Jesus and provide for our salvation!

Question: What is the Word of the Lord to the Jew on hold in hostile territory?

Question: What is the Word of the Lord to you today?

“I will give you an expected end.” (V. 11) (Or)

1. It was God’s wisdom to be in Babylon.
2. It was God’s wisdom to be confined for a season.
3. It was God’s wisdom to be “temporarily inconvenienced”.

But Be Sure:

“That God will give you an expected end.” (Or)

- ◆ Your future has already been provided for.
- ◆ Your deliverance has already been secured.
- ◆ Your final destination is a sure guarantee.

Questions

1. Have you experienced a detour in your plans?
2. Have you been delayed in your journey?
3. Have you had a season of darkness and despair?
4. Are you anxious over things outside of your control?
5. Are you worried about ending well in the plan of God?
6. Is your environment less than ideal with temptation surrounding you?
7. Have you resisted or resented the place or path that God has placed you in?

**Then Get Alone With God Today
And Hear Him Say...**

“It’s going to be okay.”

“I will visit you and prove true.”

“I will complete what I’ve begun in you.”

“I have your ultimate good always in mind.”

Read the letter!

- ◆ It has your address on the envelope!
- ◆ It has your name on the envelope!
- ◆ It had you in mind when it was written!

And Remember

Two quotes from Brother Bartholomew on October 15, 1996 at Prayer Mountain, East Aurora:

1. “Something is happening in your life, yes, but God is doing something else.”
2. “If you do the known will of God today, He will reveal the unknown will tomorrow.”

Amen!
Bill Kirk