

Introduction: Everything Jesus began in His first coming (advent) will be fulfilled when He comes the second time. For The Church, Advent is first of all an anticipation of Jesus' second coming; and, it is an offering of ourselves to work together IN Him to hasten His return (2 Peter 3:11-14). ** In the early centuries of The Church, Advent was much like Lent. It was a time of fasting and seeking The Lord together in worship, as Christians desired to discern His will for them as His Church in a world experiencing darkness, division and death. *** Today, we still need the hope of Jesus in a world that still has darkness in it. We can only have peace with God through The Spirit of Jesus. We need to realize for ourselves, and help others to see, that the only lasting joy is IN The Bread of Life. Finally, The LOVE all people long to experience, and seek in all the wrong places, is IN The Incarnate Savior. *** Today's text through the prophet Jeremiah tells God's people to continue to live by the teaching of His Words, even when they are disciplined by Him with exile a thousand miles from home, because He has plans for their peace and prosperity IN Him; and, He will bring them back to the place He has given them. This is their hope in His discipline of them. **God plans hope for those who accept discipline.** In the Gospel extract, Jesus commands His followers that they must not be troubled nor have fearing hearts because of the peace He has given. His peace overcomes hopelessness. *** Let's now go deeper into these hope giving truths on this first Sunday of Advent.

I. Jeremiah writes a letter to all the exiles in Babylon giving them God's commands to build homes, build families, and pray for shalom. (Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7, and Jeremiah 25:4-11)

A. The words of the letter Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon who had not listened to Yahweh's prophets and provoked His anger with 'gods' they created. (*Verse 1* and *Jeremiah 25:4-11*)

1. These are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders of the exiles, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile to Babylon. (*Verse 1*)
Elders, priests, prophets: After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and killed many people, he took those who were left of every class of God's people into exile in Babylon, about one thousand miles from Jerusalem.
2. Yahweh had sent all His servants the prophets but they did not listen to the command of the prophets to turn from their evil deeds to live in the land He gave their fathers forever; they went after other 'gods' to serve and worship them, provoking Him to anger. (*Jeremiah 25:4-7*)
Not listen to turn: In His grace, God had commanded them through many prophets to repent of their provoking Him to anger by forsaking Him. But they refused to listen and repent.
3. So, Yahweh will take His servant Nebuchadnezzar, with a multitude of people, to utterly destroy the land, making it a waste and ending joy, gladness, weddings and light. (*Jeremiah 25:8-11*)
Nebuchadnezzar: God is telling His people a mind-blowing truth: He has chosen a pagan king and nation to strongly discipline His people for generations of idolatry and evil deeds done out of hearts that rejected Him to indulge their own desires.

B. Yahweh commands the exiles to build houses, grow their own food, give their sons and daughters in marriage, multiply in numbers and pray for Babylon. (*Jeremiah 29:4-7*)

1. Thus says 'Yahweh of the armies', the God of Israel, to all the exiles I have sent into exile: You all must build houses, and live and plant gardens and eat their produce. (*Verses 4-5*)
Live and eat: Even though God has disciplined them, making them second class outcasts far from home, they are to live as He instructed them to live in the land He gave their fathers. They will make their homes there and grow their own food to eat.
2. They must take wives and have sons and daughters, and do the same for the next generation; they must multiply there, they will not be diminished. (*Verse 6*)
Multiply: This is the same language God used in His 'Creation Mandate' when He created people male and female (Genesis 1:28). He re-affirmed it to Noah and his family after the flood (Genesis 9:1). And, He gave Jacob-Israel the same command for His chosen people (Genesis 28:3).
3. And, they must seek the shalom of the city where He sent them into exile, and they must pray on its behalf to Yahweh, because its shalom will be their shalom. (*Verse 7*)
Seek peace for Babylon: Some six hundred years before Jesus, this command to pray for the wholeness, welfare and peace of their enemies must have shocked God's people. But, He did promise that the peace of their enemies would be their peace. Jesus stated this directly when He said to love and pray for our enemies (Luke 6:27-28).

II. Yahweh says: Do not be deceived, I plan hope and peace, pray with all your heart and I will bring you back; and,

Jesus says He is giving peace in trouble. (Jeremiah 29:8-14; John 14:27)

A. 'Yahweh of the armies' warns about false prophets promising a quick return; but, after seventy years, they will experience His plans of hope and peace. (*Jeremiah 29:8-11*)

1. Thus says 'Yahweh of the armies', the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets among you all deceive you all and your diviners, and do not listen to your dreams you all are making; because a lie they are prophesying to you all in My Name – I did not send them declares Yahweh. (*Verses 8-9*)
False prophets: These false prophets were telling God's people He would let them stay in the land despite their rejection of Him with idols. They were denying the discipline of God's Word to Moses for unrepentant idolatry (Leviticus 26:27-39).

- Because thus says Yahweh, when seventy years are fulfilled in Babylon, I will visit you all and I will raise up to you all My good Word – to bring you all back to this place. (*Verse 10*)

Seventy years: Yahweh spoke this through Jeremiah around 605 BC. Around 538 BC Daniel was reading this passage in Babylon and realized the seventy years were almost over. He was motivated to pray to Yahweh, his God that it be fulfilled (Daniel 9:1-19).

- Because I have known the plans which I have for you all, declares Yahweh: Plans for shalom and not evil – to give you all a future and a hope. (*Verse 11*)

Future plans: When the seventy years of discipline are over, Israel will have a future and a hope. After Daniel prayed, Yahweh sent the angel Gabriel to him to announce an end to sin for his people and to give the date Messiah would be ‘cut off’, but not for himself (Daniel 9:20-26a), but for our sins. May we understand and accept that God’s discipline of us is hope for our ultimate peace and restoration to Him – true prosperity IN Jesus while we wait for His second coming. So, don’t fight His discipline – surrender to it.

God plans hope for those who accept discipline

- When you all have sought Me, I will be found by you all, and you all will be brought back to Jerusalem. (*Jeremiah 29:12-14*)

- You all have called upon Me and have gone and prayed to Me, and I have heard you all; and you all have sought Me and found Me, because you all will seek Me with all your heart. (*Verses 12-13*)

Four responses: Because God knows everything, He speaks of the future hope as if it has happened. When their hope is fulfilled in Messiah, His people call on Him, go to Him in prayer, seek Him and find Him because He knows His people will seek Him with all their heart. This is the same Word He spoke to Israel beside the Jordan River (Deuteronomy 4:26-29). We must not be deceived by lies, but rather seek God in prayer to find Him.

- I have been found by you all declares Yahweh; and, I have restored your captivity and gathered you all from all the nations and all the places I have driven you all declares Yahweh; and, I have brought you all back to the place from which I caused you all to be taken into exile. (*Verse 14*)

Restoration: After seventy years they will come back to their Covenant God and He will remember His covenant with them through Moses (Leviticus 26:40-45).

Future plans: After a lifespan of discipline towards the exiles of His people and two generations born in captivity, Yahweh will give them a future and a hope by bringing them back to the land He promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:8-21). They will live there until Messiah comes the first time.

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- Jesus speaks of the peace He is giving and commands His followers to not be troubled. (*John 14:27*)

- Peace I am leaving to you all, My peace I am giving to you all; not as the world is giving, I Myself am giving to you all. (*Verses 27a-b*)

Peace of Jesus: Jesus, as God’s Savior Son, is giving His Peace to His followers, leaving peace to them even as He returns to His Father in heaven. His peace is an eternal hope for them until He returns.

Not as world: The world is now lying in the evil one (1 John 5:19). The peace he gives is both deceptive and temporary, unlike the peace of Jesus.

- The heart of you all must not be troubled, neither must it be afraid. (*Verse 27c*)

Two commands: Believers united in The Savior-King have His one united heart. Therefore, as long as they are IN Him by grace through faith, they will be neither troubled nor afraid. We must have faith that God will restore us to Him IN His Son, free from trouble and fear in the hope of the peace Jesus graciously gives while we wait for His return.

The hope of His second advent allows us to live and work for Jesus in a dark world IN His peace.

The peace of Jesus overcomes hopelessness

Conclusion: God speaks through His prophet Jeremiah to His people, who are being disciplined in exile because they had rejected Him for idols – for us, its our consumer culture. He told them they must build homes, grow food and have children in hope because He has plans of peace for them. When they seek Him they will find Him and He will restore them. Today, we need revival in the church and an awakening in our nation. Some six hundred years later Jesus tells people His peace overcomes their fears and troubles that can lead to hopelessness.

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