

It Is Written

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One of the Most Misunderstood and Misapplied Bible Verses

By Ken Weliever

Some time ago I read an article in Relevant Magazine where Thomas Turner wrote that Jeremiah 29:11 is “possibly one of our most beloved, yet most misunderstood verses in the entire Bible.”

BibleGateway.com lists it as the second most accessed and read verse on their website, just behind John 3:16!

This verse is popular in various books about your purpose in life, the purpose of the church, and God’s purpose for your marriage and family.

Jeremiah 29:11 even has its own Facebook page!

So, what does it say? Why is it misunderstood? And what is its meaning?

Jeremiah 29:11 says “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

The Context

These words were spoken to the prophet Jeremiah at the time of Judah’s fall to Babylon (609-586 B.C.). Those addressed are clearly stated in verse 4. “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.”

In verses 5-9 God tells them what to do, how to act, who to listen to and who to avoid. In verse 10, God says they will be in Babylon for 70 years. Then he says, “I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.”

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the Jews’ return to their homeland. The reconstruction of the Temple, the restoration of the law, and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

God’s Plan and Promise

The promise goes back to God’s call of Abraham. He promised him a fertile land, to create from his descendants a great nation, and to bring a spiritual blessing to the world through his seed (Gen. 12:1-3). The first two promises were fulfilled when Israel became a great nation and received the land of Canaan.

The third promise was fulfilled in the coming of Christ. Paul affirmed it in Galatians 3:16. “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.”

The faithful remnant who returned to Palestine under the leadership of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel ultimately gave birth to the spiritual Kingdom founded by Jesus Christ (Matt 16:16-19).

Misapplied

Jeremiah 29:11 really does not apply to specific individuals. It’s not about God’s plan for me to attend a special school, marry a certain person, pursue a designed career or move to another city.

Preacher John Piper was right when he said, “First of all, we twist (Jeremiah 29:11) because we make it a promise directly to us when it was a promise made directly to a specific group of people under special circumstances and during a specific time and in a specific place.”

“Secondly, we twist it because we make it for now when it was actually a multi-generational promise. And thirdly, we twist it because we make it for me when it’s supposed to be for us.”

Our Purpose In Christ

The Bible clearly states in the book of Ephesians that God purposed, planned and predestination

salvation in Christ Jesus "before the foundation of the world." We are the chosen in Christ. Adopted as sons of God by Christ. Receive forgiveness of sins in Christ. And enjoy "every spiritual blessing...in Christ" And all of this is to glorify God, our Creator. (Eph. 1:3-10).

God has plans for all of us in Christ! He is our hope of a prosperous future.

Jeremiah 29:11 is a great verse that finds fulfillment today when we accept Christ as Lord, come to him in obedience, and find our place and purpose in serving Him.

Jesus The Intolerant

By Brian Haines

Who Was Jesus? There are many works of art that try to portray Jesus. Most picture Him as a reflection of the ethnicity of the artist himself; therefore, there are many blond haired, blue eyed images of Jesus in Europe and America. We know that these images could not reflect the real appearance of Jesus of Nazareth; but do any come close? In fact, the only statement that is in Scripture as to His appearance is one of prophecy: "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." (Isaiah 53:2). In fact, images of Jesus that portray Him as attractive in appearance are inaccurate if we read Scripture. Is it possible that this is not the only way we have a false impression of Jesus?

If you ask the person on the street about Jesus, they will give you their impression of Him. They might say "He loved sinners", or "He taught us not to judge"; they could say that "He brought peace to all" and "He never hated" and that "He was tolerant of others". Is this the real Jesus? No!

First, we find that He CHANGED Sinners, and would not accept them otherwise. He said "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (Luke 5:32). Jesus insisted that sinners change; that was His mission. He was not a minister of sin (Galatians 2:17)

Second, He never taught us not to judge; in fact, He COMMANDED judgment. If we read Matthew 7:1-5 beyond the first verse, we see just that. Elsewhere He said "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." (John 7:24)

Third, Jesus said He brought THE SWORD. (Matthew 10:34) "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword." (Luke 12:49) "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" His peace was conditional; (Luke 2:14) "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased."

Fourth, He HATED sin, and those who are in Sin are His enemies. He said as much in Proverbs 6:16-19

Fifth, fundamentally and totally, He was INTOLERANT. Consider that Jesus said to cast out: Anyone who did not believe Him (John 8:24). Anyone who did not obey Him (Matthew 7:23). Anyone who did not confess Him (Matthew 10:33). Anyone who rejected His representatives (John 15:20 & Matthew 18:17).

A real image of Jesus is as the Warrior Judge described in Revelation 19:13-16. There we see Him in His true visage, bringing judgment to all men and condemning those in error. Jesus is the one whom Scripture says will judge all men; this means he is sending to Hell anyone who rejects Him.

Who Was Jesus? NOT the one many believe in. A false image still exists in many hearts as to who Jesus was. The real image DEMANDS we change.