

Take God Wherever You Go

July 7, 2024

I've entitled this "**Take God Wherever You Go,**" because sometimes things don't always go as planned in life, and the one thing you never want to forget to do is to put God first in your heart and mind. By the way, God is always with you, we just have to remember He's there!

The Babylonian captivity is a significant period in Biblical history. It began when the Babylonians, under King Nebuchadnezzar, laid siege to Jerusalem and ultimately burned the city and destroyed The Temple. The siege lasted 20 years. In that period of time, Nebuchadnezzar took many of the inhabitants of Judah captive to Babylon. The captivity lasted a total of 70 years.

In the twenty-year period of the seige, there were 3 major deportations. Jeremiah had warned the house of Judah that this sort of destruction was coming, but he was dismissed by the hierarchy as a kook and a liar. Many false prophets had the ear of the people of Judea and ear of the king and said that Jeremiah was not telling the truth and that he was just trying to cause trouble. As it turned out, **he was telling the truth!** Jeremiah stayed in Judea until the very end of the deportations. His ministry lasted a total of 41 years. God gave him revelation to tell those in captivity about a few key points. Those who had ears to hear would listen.

He told them to first of all, **stay calm, settle down and thrive:** Jeremiah encouraged them to settle down in Babylon, build houses, plant gardens, and seek the peace and prosperity of the city where they were living. This was to ensure their own well-being and that of their descendants.

Jeremiah 29:4: 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; 5 Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; :6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. 7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

Instead of praying to fight in the battle and pray for weapons, he told them to pray for the peace of the city you are living in! That's quite a message! Probably the opposite of what most people would think about doing. Their initial response was probably that they did not want to be in Babylon. There might be a tendency to make trouble, and argue and fight with their captors. Instead, God told them: **Enjoy your life where you are! Don't lose your mind over this! Be blessed.** Next, God, by way of Jeremiah warned against false prophets who fought him in Judah, and would continue their arguments in Babylon. Warning them about these false prophets who were giving them false hopes and encouraged them to ignore such messages from Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 29:8-9: For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams [false hope] which ye cause to be dreamed. 9 For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD.

Very important! Don't listen to these yo-yo's, these false prophets! They are giving out bad info such as doubt, worry and fear. Don't listen to them. God said that He did not send them. Next, **God told them how long they would be there.** The false prophets claimed a quick return to Jerusalem, but God gave them the real skinny on the matter.

Verse 10: For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

The next part of the revelation from Jeremiah to the people of Judea in captivity was: ***God's plans for their wellbeing and prosperity***. Jeremiah reassured them that God had plans to prosper them and not to harm them, plans to give them hope and a future

Verse 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.

And lastly, Jeremiah urged those in captivity to ***seek God with all their hearts***. He assured them that when they sought God sincerely, they would find Him, and He would restore their fortunes.

Jeremiah 29:12: Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. 14 And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

Overall, Jeremiah's message was a mix of practical advice for their immediate situation in Babylon. It also spelled out spiritual guidance... to ***seek God earnestly***, and a reminder of ***God's sovereign plans for their ultimate welfare and restoration***.

In the first deportation of people from Jerusalem to Babylon, a young man named Daniel was taken there from Jerusalem. (BTW - It also included Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego). Daniel and company would have heard these messages from Jeremiah and had taken them to heart. These men needed and heeded Jeremiah's message. But let's see how God worked with Daniel and these men when they arrived in Babylon.

Daniel 1:1: In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. 3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; 4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

Imagine being taken to this land that you were totally unfamiliar with! They had to learn to speak a new language. They probably had to learn to wear new clothing, and learn to eat different food. The housing was different. The weather was different. It was culture shock!

5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. 6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

Wow, they couldn't even keep their names! This must have been a mind-blowing experience! The king brought these guys through University of Babylon, home of the "Fighting Camels!" By the end of the education, they had their finals before the king.

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love [kindness & compassion] with the prince of the eunuchs. 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

You know they could have really compromised on this subject of food. "Well, we're captives so I guess we have to eat what we are given to eat." Nope, they put God first and refused to eat anything offered to idols. As we shall see, God honored that commitment!

11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse [vegetables, fruits, grains] to eat, and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. 14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. 16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

That sure beats the South Beach Diet! This was their commitment to do everything they could be faithful to the true God. This 10-day trial established how God would work with them for the next 3 years. They came through this trial with flying colors!

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers that *were* in all his realm. 21 And Daniel continued *even* unto the first year of king Cyrus.

This record is so fantastic in that God continued to give them wisdom and revelation, and as a consequence of that, they were very, very successful and thrived like Jeremiah described many years before that time. If the king needed anything, he looked to these men. It also changed the life of Nebuchadnezzar, and he eventually came to worship the one, true God. (See Daniel 4:34,37)

In Daniel 6, Cyrus is depicted as the ruler who conquered Babylon and established the Persian Empire. After the fall of Babylon to the Persians, Cyrus issued a decree allowing the exiled Jews, including Daniel, to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. This decree is seen as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah, who had foretold that the captivity in Babylon would last seventy years as we read in Jeremiah 29:10-14.

Specifically, in Daniel 6 after Daniel overcomes the ordeal of the lion's den during the reign of Darius the king, it is recorded in verse 28:

Daniel 6:28: So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Daniel not only lived through the transition from Babylonian to Persian rule but also continued to thrive and serve faithfully in the Persian court under King Cyrus. Daniel carried out what God / Jeremiah had mentioned to all of the Judeans after they went into captivity. Daniel did not forget to take his God with him anywhere and everywhere he went. As a result, he prospered in Babylon and God took good care of him and those who stood with him.

We have the same God today! Like Daniel, God is with us, and we must remember to take Him with us wherever we go. Of course, God is Omnipresent = He is EVERYWHERE! But just remember that He is there with you to help you, to guide you, to lead and comfort you! Put God first in your heart and mind. Meditate on God's Word, Listen to God, and Love with the love of God, and you will be with Him, and He will be with you.

Hebrews 13:5: *Let your conversation* [manner of life] *be without covetousness* [greed and avarice]; *and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*