

## *Stop Waiting and Live*

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 (October 9, 2022)

### *Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7*

29These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

<sup>4</sup>Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup>Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup>Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. <sup>7</sup>But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

### *Historical Context*

The narrative setting and context of Jeremiah 29 is the capture and destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army in 586 BCE and a series of deportation and forced migration of Judeans into the Babylonian Empire including the deportation in this passage in 597 BCE. The exile of Judeans into Babylon did not happen all at once, but in waves and phases. Historical sources, including cuneiform documents from the state archives of the Babylonian Empire, indicate that those who were forcibly exiled to Babylonia, and especially those from the royal family and court, were provided for and were given opportunities for meaningful work. So, although their freedom was curtailed, it does not seem that members of the royal family, merchants, craftspersons, and others were permanently incarcerated or mistreated but, rather, many were put to work in productive jobs for the empire. However, this does not mean that life was easy or without great hardship in Babylon.

### *Theme: Stop Waiting and Live*

Stop waiting and live.

This is the main thrust of the message delivered in a letter from the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to those who had been exiled in Babylonia.

The prophetic word in the letter encourages the exilic community not to abandon themselves to despair or to linger waiting for divine deliverance back to Jerusalem in the near future. The exiled Judeans are called to build, plant, eat, marry, have children, and make productive contributions to the city in which they currently live, rather than pining for the now-distant city of their homeland.

In seeking the prosperity and well-being of their city and indeed even their enemy captors, they could still honor and serve God.

In the midst of difficult circumstances, sometimes the call of God is to dig in and find ways to thrive rather than waiting for a change in our current situation.