

GO CHURCH JOZI – 19 May 2019

Discipleship Pt II – Rebuilding the walls of our City

Jeremiah 29:1-14 - Jeremiah's Letter to the Captives

¹ Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. ² (This happened after Jeconiah the king, the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.) ³ The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying:

Sense of expectancy

- People in exile many years.
- Letter to a traumatized community who had lost everything: their livelihood, their loved ones, their homes, their beloved city Jerusalem, their language and culture in addition to the familiar expressions of their religion connected to the temple that had been destroyed.

Psalm 137

¹ By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept
When we remembered Zion.
² We hung our harps
Upon the willows in the midst of it.
³ For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song,
And those who plundered us requested mirth,
Saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

⁴ How shall we sing the LORD's song
In a foreign land?
⁵ If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget its skill!
⁶ If I do not remember you,
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth—
If I do not exalt Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.

⁷ Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom
The day of Jerusalem,
Who said, “Raze *it*, raze *it*,
To its very foundation!”

⁸ O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed,
Happy the one who repays you as you have served us!

⁹ Happy the one who takes and dashes
Your little ones against the rock

- Knew prophets were ordained by God to speak His oracles, His messages.
- Jeremiah was also renowned as a true prophet, speaking the accurate word of the Lord.
- So letter was of fundamental importance to them.

What could have been going through the minds of the Israelites?

- Just as the God of our forefathers Abraham, Isaac & Jacob just as He heard the cries of our fathers when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh’s rule now is our time.
- Time for our Freedom –
- End of captivity.
- We are going back to Jerusalem the City of the Lord.
- Judgement has now come on Babylon.

Verses 4-7

⁴ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. ⁶ Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. ⁷ And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.

- Return to some kind of normalcy: such as building houses, planting vineyards, celebrating weddings and serves as a powerful testimony to resilience.
- The fact that there is reference to one’s children and one’s children’s children’s weddings suggests that Judah will be in Babylon for the long haul.
- The exiles are hence encouraged by Jeremiah’s letter to make the best of their current situation. To build a life.

- They are also advised to actively work for the wellbeing or peace of their newly adopted city, even praying to God for the city to prosper.

Translate this to our context today:

A letter to Go Church Jozi:

Now these are the words of the letter that Jesus Christ, the son of God sent to Go Church Jozi. To those who had left Centurion to plant a Church in Fairland, to those who had joined this Church (Tried to include everyone here). You live in Johannesburg, Joburg, Egoli, the largest City in South Africa, the 50th largest urban area in the world, the provincial capital of Gauteng, wealthiest province of South Africa. Take dominion in this City, fearlessly spread the Good News of Christ, subdue it, make disciples of this City, be concerned over its welfare, pray for its power centres, watch and pray, wage war over it, wrestle in the spirit and the natural until Kingdom culture reigns in every sphere of this City. Buy property, build businesses, infiltrate every domain, for as it prospers so will you, in its peace is your peace. Do not be disheartened nor despise the day of small beginnings. I will fulfil my word over this City, I will see to an end the work I have begun through you in this City. Increase in numbers and influence and do not diminish. Have a multi-generational vision for it.

Verses 8-14

⁸ For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. ⁹ For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD. ¹⁰ For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you and cause you to return to this place. ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart ¹⁴ I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

BEFORE WE CAN REBUILD THE WALLS OF OUR CITY

There are some important things we need to understand:

1. We need to understand the history of our City

We need to put today's battles in their historical context. A study of history can give us clues as to God's purpose for a city, and it can also reveal the points at which evil gained entrance. What can we do about this today? What can we do now to correct evils that attended our city's birth?

Amsterdam: Netherlands: A citizen of Amsterdam has a right to be proud of the centuries-old tradition of hospitality and tolerance that mark the culture of that city. Amsterdam is a genuine city of refuge, like world-famous Geneva or some of the cities of the Levites listed in the Old Testament. Today, however, it's a city known for tolerating open drug sales and legal prostitution. This is plainly a perversion of a gift. Amsterdam needs a fresh picture of itself functioning in righteousness, an identity rooted in the prophetic vision of its Christian community. And God has begun to raise up dynamic ministries in Amsterdam - one of Europe's darkest cities.

An obvious example would be the spirit of greed which was let loose during the **California** gold rush and still dominates the culture of **Los Angeles and San Francisco to this day.**

Johannesburg:

Began as a 19th century gold-mining settlement. City of Gold. It was established as a small village controlled by a Health Committee in 1886 with the discovery of an outcrop of a gold reef on the farm Langlaagte. The population of the city grew rapidly, becoming a municipality in 1897. In 1928 it became a city making Johannesburg the largest city in South Africa. In 2002 it joined ten other municipalities to form the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. The first recorded discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand was made by Jan Gerrit Bantjes in June 1884, on the farm Vogelstruisfontein. Other farms to become famous later included Langlaagte, Turffontein, Doornfontein and Braamfontein.

Attracted a lot of migrant workers from other cities in the country as well other regions.

2. Understand the personality of your City

A city is a human institution, and like all institutions it develops a personality that is greater than the sum of its parts. Any astute observer can see that certain cities seem to embody a central dream, and there is usually both a good and evil side to that dream. Each metropolis has unique characteristics when compared with other cities. New York City is a hub of trade and a center for world leadership. But it is more than that - it symbolizes a life-style dream. The dream of wealth and power draws people

to New York, and they are seduced by the success-fantasy for which New York has become a giant metaphor.

And sometimes most Christians see only the negative influence of the city. But how does God see New York? Does He have a plan, a purpose for the city? Originally it was the gateway of hope to the land of liberty. These are strong and godly qualities that suggest God's redemptive purpose for this great urban center.

We need to put today's city battles in their historical context. A study of history can give us clues as to God's purpose for a city, and it can also reveal the points at which evil gained entrance. What can we do about this today? What can we do now to correct evils that attended our city's birth?

Johannesburg:

Fast paced. Making money. People from different countries across the continent. Centre for learning and entertainment for all of Africa. Home of big corporates, some of them global companies. Embodies this dream of success...to make it in your business or career you have to be Joburg that is where it happens.

3. Understand the purpose of your City

Many Christians think cities are by nature evil places. If they were asked, they would say the city is a curse, not a blessing. Determining your city's redemptive gift is even more important than discerning the nature of evil principalities. Principalities rule through perverting the gift of a city in the same way an individual's gift is turned to the enemy's use through sin. Satan is not a creator. He cannot originate anything. He can only turn created things and people to his own purposes.

Los Angeles: There are two truths in tension: On one hand, it is a technological tower of Babel, polluting the world with its communications and entertainment industry. On the other hand, it is a city with a gift in communications. Los Angeles is a city blessed by God with certain resources that can either be perverted - or converted. Even the name of the city speaks of its destiny: "Los Angeles" is Spanish for "The Angels." As we have already learned, angelos is Greek for "messenger." Could it be that God wants Los Angeles to be a messenger, communicating the good news in the midst of an end time harvest.

Indeed, this plan of God has already enjoyed success several times in history: In 1906 through the Azusa Street Revival; in 1949 through an evangelical renewal leading to the birth of such groups as Campus Crusade For Christ and the launching of the Billy Graham Crusades as a national ministry; and in 1972 with the beginning of the Jesus Movement. Today the city is torn by violence, and it pumps pornography into the minds of millions.

Johannesburg:

We have to seek God in prayer and ask that very question: What is Johannesburg's redemptive gift?

Given the vibrant industrial activity, could it be that God wants the City to express and fulfil His heart for business and commerce?

Given its diversity in races, cultures, nationalities, could its purpose have something to do with expressing God's heart for the unity of the nations and yet the enemy has sought to pervert this through evil attacks such as xenophobia.

4. Key Facts to understand:

- which sects are there;
- which false religions are active and are there any temples or places of worship;
- what specific social groups are in the city;
- what the population composition is like;
- what social welfare tendencies are observable;
- who are the influential people in the City? Who calls the shots? Who might just stand in your way?
- which bodies, or persons are in charge of the city's economy?

How do we know that God is for Cities?

Isaiah 62

¹ For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace,
And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,
And her salvation as a lamp *that* burns.

² The Gentiles shall see your righteousness,
And all kings your glory.
You shall be called by a new name,
Which the mouth of the LORD will name.

³ You shall also be a crown of glory
In the hand of the LORD,

And a royal diadem
In the hand of your God.

⁴ You shall no longer be termed Forsaken,^[b]
Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate;^[c]
But you shall be called ^[d]Hephzibah, and your land ^[e]Beulah

For the LORD delights in you,
And your land shall be married.

⁵ For as a young man marries a virgin,
So shall your sons marry you;
And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
So shall your God rejoice over you.

⁶ I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem;
They shall ^[f]never hold their peace day or night.
You who ^[g]make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent,
⁷ And give Him no rest till He establishes
And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

⁸ The LORD has sworn by His right hand
And by the arm of His strength:
“Surely I will no longer give your grain
As food for your enemies;
And the sons of the foreigner shall not drink your new wine,
For which you have labored.

⁹ But those who have gathered it shall eat it,
And praise the LORD;
Those who have brought it together shall drink it in My holy courts.”

¹⁰ Go through,
Go through the gates!
Prepare the way for the people;
Build up,
Build up the highway!
Take out the stones,
Lift up a banner for the peoples!

¹¹ Indeed the LORD has proclaimed
To the end of the world:
“Say to the daughter of Zion,

'Surely your salvation is coming;
Behold, His reward *is* with Him,
And His [lab](#)work before Him.' "

¹² And they shall call them The Holy People,
The Redeemed of the LORD;
And you shall be called Sought Out,
A City Not Forsaken.

Isaiah 58:12

Those from among you
Shall build the old waste places;
You shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach,
The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.