

WHITFIELD PARISH
St James' Church † St Luke's Church

LIFE Group Notes w/b Sunday 16 November 2008

Read Jeremiah 29.1-14

1. What strikes you about this passage? Is there anything you don't understand?

Judah experienced a partial exile before the final destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (you can read about it in 2 Kings 24-25, but don't do it now – it will take too long!. Jeremiah was one of the prophets speaking God's Word throughout this period. In this chapter, he gives a prophecy in a letter to the Jewish community in exile in Babylon.

2. How might the exiles have felt in their new home in Babylon? How might their faith in God have changed?
3. God's word to them seems very clear: 'build houses and settle down'. Why might this guidance have been difficult for them?
4. Verse 7 is an amazing instruction. Babylon was the centre of political, economic and religious power; later in the Bible, it became synonymous with ungodliness. Yet the exiles are told to seek its peace and prosperity, because their peace and prosperity would be found in it. How might they have put this command to work?

It can feel as if the Church in the UK is in exile. We have lost social influence in recent decades and our numbers have dwindled. We can easily retreat into nostalgia, Christian ghettos or shallow triumphalism

('Revival is coming!'). Jeremiah 29 challenges each of these attitudes.

5. The Jewish community had to learn how to live, work and worship in Babylon itself. There would undoubtedly have been pressure points. Where are the pressure points for you in your life, work and worship in a culture that doesn't know God?
6. How might you seek the peace and prosperity of the places to which God has called you?

In vv10-14 God's instructions to the exiled community are placed in the context of his loving purpose for his exiled people. These familiar words often bring comfort and joy to Christians today.

7. God's instructions in vv4-9 are more than a 'coping mechanism' for the 70 years of the exile; they are part of God's purpose for his people. God has a similar plan for us today. How might our positive participation in the world around us advance God's plan for his Church in this nation?

To finish, spend some time praying along the lines suggested in v7.