

I. Intro to Series

- a. It's always amazing to see how busy life gets when situations like this arise. All great things that I enjoy but just keeps you busy. I had a wedding I officiated two weeks ago along with the pre-marital counseling sessions. Just a couple days ago at work, I received yet another hat to wear, quite a large one, more like a sombrero so to speak.
- b. And yet here we are again. It's been awhile since I've been able to share with you and I've missed it, but I have a feeling that over the next four weeks I will get my fix. Nah, I really am excited for this opportunity to do another series as it is different preparing for four weeks as opposed to just one, as you could imagine.
- c. As I was studying and praying while writing these messages, I came across Matthew 10:19 where Christ is talking to his disciples telling them to go teach the Word and He says, *"But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."*
 - i. Now, I'm not saying I feel like I've been thrown to the wolves or anything by any means BUT...haha, nah, I'm only teasing. But that is why I love how God works. He knows I've had a lot going on. He knows I found out about the trip to Africa not too long ago. But the beauty of it is it doesn't matter how much time I have or don't have, I know God will give me the words to speak, the words we need to hear.
- d. Having said that, I gotta say, I'm kinda excited about the next four weeks and seeing where God takes us. As Pastor Herbert and I were talking about this series and what direction it should take, he suggested that I re-work what I spoke on at the conference and write the bible studies for the messages concerning Jeremiah 29:11 and what it means to prosper and by doing this, in essence, I am able to get some material together to take and share with others, which is one of our goals.
- e. As I thought about it and prayed about it and battled the feeling of taking the easy way out by repeating what I just did, I had a peace about it that this is what God wants to share with us. After the conference, while I knew it was the message He gave me to speak, I felt as if it wasn't finished and it needed to be developed a bit more.
- f. And it was interesting, it's been great cause the nfl draft has been on the past few days and yesterday, as it was on in the background while I was re-working the message, on a couple of occasions I heard players make comments concerning God's purpose for their life and the will of God really spoke to me that this is an issue of discussion in all of Christendom. We all have our idea as to what God's will is and what it means to prosper. We are

fascinated with the concept of living a life of purpose—we don't want our lives to be lived in vain. The question we need to ask though is what does God mean when He says He desires for us to prosper.

- g. So, with this series, while it will be familiar in the sense that you've heard the main points, it will be quite different as I have expanded it and it will look a lot different, plus that was three months ago and I don't really remember what I even spoke that long ago.
- h. My goal for this series is twofold.
 - i. One—concerning what I just touched on, I want us to come to a proper understanding of this verse that is quoted throughout Christendom and used as a verse to imply that God wants for you to be rich and wealthy in many Christian circles.
 - ii. I want us to understand what it means to be successful and prosperous according to God.
 - 1. Our team is currently in Africa. I was talking with Rodd from California before he left and we were talking about Africa and how neat it is and how amazing the people are over there.
 - 2. But at one point we were talking about one of the young men I met over there when I went in '06 and I told Rodd how he, and many others think that if they could just get to America their problems would go away.
 - a. If they could come and just get a taste of the 'American Dream' then they would no longer suffer.
 - b. If they could just 'prosper' like Americans, then they could be good Christians, it would be easier to be obedient.
 - c. This is not what God means when He says He wants us to prosper.
 - d. Prospering isn't restricted to certain countries or people groups or job titles. But society has taught us differently. I want us to examine this together as it gets to the root of God's word.
 - 3. And as I've said before, every message I speak, the topic is one God has been teaching me in my life.
 - a. One of the reasons this topic is popular for me is I'm 24 years old, setting out on a journey to find a career. I went to a high school that prepared me to "succeed" and "prosper" (aka, get a good, secure, high-paying job).
 - b. I work in a small business. The world of business intrigues me. In fact, tomorrow, talking about that sombrero, I am going on my first sales appointment. I

have been in the office overseeing the construction phase of the pools and learning more about that aspect of the business. And now, while I will still be doing that, I am getting involved in the sales and design aspect.

- c. Now, it looks like this is a good, secure, potentially good paying job. But, is that what God means when He says He wants me to prosper?
 - i. I don't think so. I don't think prospering, as God views it, has anything to do with how successful one is in the eyes of the world. And I know we know this is the right answer but I don't think the majority of Christians believe that.
 - ii. Now, I also don't think any of those things are bad, unless they become an idol.
 - iii. But we are going to get into that in more depth, specifically in the third and fourth message after we lay the foundation.
- iii. The second part of my goal is I want to help us learn how to examine the Scriptures. Often we tend to open the Bible, and typically the New Testament, and we read the verses and try to pull out some spiritual truth accordingly.
 - 1. The neat thing with God's Word is that there is wisdom to be gained by reading like this.
 - a. For example, when studying I just opened up my Bible randomly to the passage in John 2 and read about the first miracle of Jesus at the wedding in Cana.
 - b. From this passage we can learn to honor your mother or that God can multiply when man has nothing, or the fact that Christ is not just a man, He is worthy of our faith and trust.
 - c. These are a few practical applications of many that we can take away from this passage.
 - d. And we can do this with numerous scriptures right? Draw out a practical lesson from what we read.
 - e. But the problem with this is that we tend to never realize that this same passage of scripture oftentimes has a deeper meaning.
 - f. Most don't pay attention to the numbering of the days throughout the passage in John.
 - g. Most don't recognize that we are told the wedding took place on the third day and those who do, typically

don't give any significance to it because as a result of not knowing the foundation, they don't know the timeline set forth in Genesis and how this little statement that the wedding took place on the third day is of huge importance.

2. So, as I said, part of my desire is for us to really learn how to study the Scriptures so that we get the full meaning of a passage and are not blinded by the elementary teachings of the Word.
3. When we are constantly seeking practical applications and ignoring the deeper truths, which carry with them practical ways for us to live, I think we are making the Scriptures about us. We are ignoring the design and order God has placed into the Scriptures.
4. I mean, how often do we open up the Bible and read from the Old Testament? I'm willing to guess that it's not all that often and if we do, it's usually the first two books of the Bible or a book like Psalms. We read about this prophecy or that one and we don't really know what's going on so we go to something we feel comfortable with. We figure we'll let someone spoon feed us the meaning of the prophetic passages and how they mix with the rest of Scripture.
 - a. Well, by examining the Babylonian Exile, as we are going to do, we will hopefully have a better grasp when it comes to approaching the Old Testament.
 - b. The Old Testament is broken into 3 categories: Historical, Poetical and Prophetical.
 - c. The prophetic books in the Old Testament are broken down into three categories:
 - i. Of the 17 Prophetic Books, 12 are written pre-exile, 2 during the Exile and 3 post-exile.
 - ii. These books are typically the ones that Christians stay away from, ones we can't pronounce or don't even recognize as books of the Bible.
 - iii. But what we see is the Babylonian Captivity is a crucial event in the history of Israel and is a central point of a large part of the Old Testament. (Exodus, United Kingdom/Divided Kingdom, Exile)
5. When we read these books, we must examine it through something called the "prophetic telescope."

- a. When we read a passage, we read it with different time periods in view, as if looking through a telescope.
(DRAW ON BOARD)
 - i. We see how it relates to the prophet's own day.
 - ii. Then we see how it relates to the time of the Exile and how the prophets are warning of the 70 years of captivity in Babylon.
 - iii. We then see how that passage prophesies concerning the first coming of Christ.
 - iv. Finally, we see at the end of our telescope how the passage may prophesy (-sai) of the second coming of Christ, be it concerning the dealings of Israel and the coming tribulation or something with the Church and how it is an example or type for us in this age.
 - 1. I know this isn't new to us. I know we've examined types. We've taken a look at types numerous times. Types are basically pictures found in the Old Testament that point to doctrines in the New Testament. As St. Augustine put it: The New is in the Old contained; The Old is by the New explained.
 - 2. One of my favorite verses, maybe because it is how I view my life, as if I'm walking beside Christ and He is revealing the Scriptures to me as we walk, is the passage in Luke when Jesus disguises himself and walks with two disciples along the road to Emmaus.
 - a. Luke 24:27 *Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He (Christ) explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*
 - b. Christ is everywhere in the Old Testament but we must build upon the foundation in order to see it.

II. Intro to Message

- a. One of the most important words you should know when it comes to studying the Scriptures is CONTEXT. If you don't know the context of a passage you cannot properly exegete the passage. Exegete is simply a term

used describing drawing out or taking out a meaning as opposed to Isogesis which is when we read a meaning into a passage. We want to exegete and let the Scriptures tell us what is true, not read our thoughts into a passage to make it say what we want it to say.

- b. As I was talking to Rodd it was neat cause we were talking about how awesome it is that we are sending people from here to go teach other groups, no longer is it just Pastor Herbert.
 - i. We need to train up and learn ourselves and then get to the point where we are able to share with others, teach the word to others so they may obtain the salvation of their soul.
 - ii. Doesn't mean you have to go to another country or even state. Could be for that one person you work with.
 - iii. But if you don't know how to properly study the Scriptures then first of all, you will find it difficult trying to live your life according to God's Word as you can't be certain of what you hear on a Sunday and whether it is true or not.
 - iv. And if you can't do that then you certainly won't be able to share the truth with others. People know when you are regurgitating on them, they know when you are telling them what you heard on Sunday morning but don't fully understand yourself.
 - v. And once again, you shouldn't study just so you can share with others, you must first have the discipline to study and apply it to your own life, so you may obtain the salvation of your soul.
 - vi. But then you come to a point where you have opportunities to share the truth of the Word with others and we must be prepared for when that time comes.
 - vii. And that's why it's exciting to see us on this journey together and how we've grown over the years to be able to send different teachers to these different groups.
 - viii. To hear some of the conversations you all have had with others you've run into and how instead of shying away for fear of not actually understanding what we've been learning.
- c. So, as we get into our passage, we are going to use our telescope in order to get the full meaning out of our text.
- d. Today, we will examine the historical context of the passage, and see how what Jeremiah prophesies, concerns the exile of Judah. Next week we will see how it relates to the future of Israel and what prospering will look like for them.
- e. The third and fourth weeks we are going to see how what we learn from Israel is a type for us and how we can take truths from this passage as they relate to the Church in this age and how we then apply those lessons to our lives here in this day.

III. Intro to Topic

- a. One of the perks of working in the pool industry is you're always around water, typically in warm climates, particularly when conferences are held. My brother and I were on one of these such conferences at a resort with a gorgeous pool this past new years and for those of you that don't know, given the current state of the country, the pool industry hasn't been doing so swimmingly the past few...years.
- b. Not talking we've had a couple of bad months and now can re-coop. I'm talking it's been a draught in the sales for a few years now.
- c. So here we are in a dinner hall filled with pool builders from all around the country who are struggling, particularly financially and as we are at the opening dinner for the conference, the president of the company that supplies the product we use and who puts on the trip as a thanks to us and who is a Christian man, had a pastor give thanks for the meal.
- d. The pastor stood at the podium and gave thanks and then claimed that old trusty verse Jeremiah 29:11 *"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."*
- e. That ring a bell to any of you? Of course it does.
- f. Most of you have heard this verse on numerous occasions. It's a favorite to put in high school yearbooks from parents who are hoping their children will grow up and get a successful career and make plenty of money.
- g. It's a great verse when you are down, when that guy or girl you just knew was meant to be your soulmate, dumps you, it gives you hope that God only wants the best for you and well that person just wasn't good enough.
- h. It's a great verse even when you are going through a horrible economy and business is bad or things at work are rocky.
- i. Evan Almighty is a movie about a man who becomes a congressman as he wants to change the world for the better so God appears to him and tells him to build an ark. Well, he has a mantra he repeats whenever he is facing a difficult or trying situation.
- j. He repeats to himself, "I am successful, powerful, handsome, happy."
- k. Well this verse, like this mantra is widely used almost like a good luck charm-you just quote it over and over and then things will be good and you will who knows, win the lotto.
- l. And at times, it is the perfect verse to use as an excuse to pursue the things of this world, I mean, after all God wants us to prosper in this life now, doesn't He? I'm not saying pursuing a successful career that pays top dollar is a bad thing. But when it becomes our focus, we use this verse to justify our actions.
- m. But the truth of the matter is God does want us to succeed and prosper; the problem is in our definition of succeed vs God's definition.

- n. Before we get any further, I want to read this verse from the NASB. You see, it is this word translated “prosper” in the NIV that throws us off. It typically carries with it the idea of being financially well-off. One is rich and prosperous, right? Well, it does in our language mean that, but it also can just mean to “thrive and succeed.”
- o. Now let’s look in the NASB. It reads, *“For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”*
 - i. Now we get the notion of welfare, meaning *“the state of doing well especially in respect to good fortune, happiness, well-being, or prosperity”*
 - ii. The word translated prosper is one of the most used Hebrew words in Scripture-Shalom.
 - 1. Completeness, wholeness, harmony, fulfillment. . . . Unimpaired relationships with others and with God.”
 - a. completeness, soundness, welfare, peace
 - b. peace, quiet, tranquility, contentment
 - c. with God especially in covenant relationship
 - 2. To us, the word translated prosper mainly infers financial well-being with a little bit of happiness and welfare thrown in the mix.
 - 3. In Hebrew, the word Shalom mainly infers whole and complete relationship with God or others with a little bit of other peace and welfare thrown in.

IV. Transition

- a. This verse is written in church annex’s across the country. One church we went to started expanding and making renovations and they re-did the front of the church. When you came in, there was a large welcome area but on the wall straight ahead, this verse was written in large letters so you couldn’t miss it.
- b. I’m not saying there is anything wrong with this, in fact, it is a great verse and helps us maintain proper focus, especially in the situations I described earlier, when things are down.
- c. But unfortunately, most Christians do not understand what the verse is actually saying. Unfortunately, we do not delve deeper to understand the verse rather, we take it for what we think is “face value” and accept what we have grown up thinking it means.
- d. Well, fortunately, we have the opportunity to take a closer look at this verse and examine the context and see what this verse is describing.
- e. And as I said earlier, context is the key when exegeting a passage.
- f. Today, we will examine its literal meaning.

- g. Next week its prophetic meaning and how it relates to the same people of Israel in the future.
- h. And then we'll see its figurative meaning and how it relates to the Church. So, let's begin by taking a look at the time in Jewish history known as the Babylonian Captivity.

V. Historical Context Babylonian Captivity

- a. What we will find is that the context for this verse is historically describing a period of time known as the Babylonian Captivity.
- b. To give a brief overview, Israel got comfortable in the land and was doing their own thing, as they often had and they were not heeding the words of the prophets.
- c. Around 606, God sent Nebuchadnezzar and the nation of Babylon to take some of Judah into exile in Babylon while others remained in Israel.
- d. We see God does this in order to have his people return back to him.
- e. Some will and some won't return but they have reached a point where something had to take place.
- f. They had to be reigned in and disciplined before they went entirely off the deep end. Eventually, in 536, Cyrus of Persia defeated the Babylonians and sent them home.
- g. Before we get into the verse, I want to say a brief bit about Jeremiah and who he was.
 - i. Jeremiah 1:4-5 *⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ⁵"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."*
 1. Here we read that God consecrated Jeremiah and appointed him to be a prophet.
 2. In the time of Jeremiah, there were tons of prophets who were going around prophesying a similar message to what is taught today, a message that has been taught in every age.
 - a. A message of wealth and prosperity.
 - b. A message that pleases the soul of a man, instead of convicting him.
 - c. They were encouraging the people in their sinful ways and even when taken to Babylon, they told the people it would only be a short time before they returned, maybe two years tops, taking their focus off why they were in exile and what they needed to be doing- correcting their way.

3. But then we have Jeremiah. He had quite the daunting task. His message was simple yet potent, similar to the message we hear each Sunday here.
 - a. He proclaimed to the people of Israel a message of repentance. He told them for twenty some years that their actions were not pleasing to the Lord and if they would not repent of their sin and live according to the Word, God would allow the nation of Babylon to destroy Jerusalem, burn the temple and take them out of Israel to a foreign land.
 - b. Now, picture with me for a minute. You have Jeremiah, proclaiming this same message for years, proclaiming the destruction of Jerusalem, calling for their exile and enslavement by Babylon if they do not repent of their sin.
 - c. But in the midst of this message, he inserts our verse, Jeremiah 29:11. It is but a small part of the message he had for Israel.
 - i. It was not a message of prosperity and wealth and living an easy life, not having to endure persecution-which was the message the other prophets were proclaiming.
 - ii. This verse is included at this point as he wanted Israel to realize their inheritance, he wanted them to understand that their actions were not worthy for heirs of God, those who were to inhabit the land promised to Abraham.
 - iii. You see, being an heir has responsibilities.
 1. Jeremiah 17:10 *I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.*
 - d. And now imagine the response false prophets would get when they came along and proclaimed that the exile would soon end.
 - i. When they encouraged the people in their ways, saying they were doing no wrong.
 - e. Israel, as we saw in the Exodus as they wandered through the wilderness, continued to be a stiff-necked people.
 - f. In contrast to Jeremiah's message, the entire message of the false prophets was Jeremiah 29:11 and didn't

include much of the surrounding message, there was no call for accountability.

- g. So you can imagine, the message of Jeremiah was not the popular message and consequently, it left him in a tough spot.
- h. He was arrested, whipped, chained, thrown in a mud pit. The people did not heed his prophecy.
 - i. Even the King, Jehoiakim, would not heed the words of Jeremiah
 - 1. Jeremiah 36:21-24 *²¹Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and he took it from the chamber of Elishama the secretary. And Jehudi read it to the king and all the officials who stood beside the king. ²²It was the ninth month, and the king was sitting in the winter house, and there was a fire burning in the fire pot before him. ²³As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a knife and throw them into the fire in the fire pot, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the fire pot. ²⁴Yet neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words was afraid, nor did they tear their garments.*
 - 2. Complete and utter disrespect for God. The king of the nation of Israel was not even seeking the face of God.
- h. So, we have a good idea as to what is going on. Israel is living in sin, not living according to the law of Moses, doing what they view is right.
- i. I want to read through a good chunk of Jeremiah 29 as it will be beneficial for us.
- j. I had never really viewed the entire chapter in this way before as I just assumed this verse was in the middle of some happy prophecy, I mean, it's about prospering people and giving them hope, how would there be any other type of message surrounding it? This is why context is crucial.
- k. So, I know this may be a bit lengthy but listen, read along and pay attention to what is going on here and you will see there is more to this verse than we tend to give to it.
 - i. Jeremiah 29:1, 4-20
 - 1. *¹Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the*

exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. ⁴"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon,

- a. Jeremiah is addressing the exiles here, those who were taken from Judah to Babylon
2. *⁵'Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶'Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. ⁷'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 have welfare.'*
 - a. This is why Jeremiah wasn't the most popular prophet.
 - b. He is telling the exiles to settle down and set up camp cause it's gonna be awhile before they leave.
 - c. The Israelites did not want to even take the time to build a house because they believed the false prophets who proclaimed the end of the exile would come soon.
 - d. Jeremiah is telling them to learn how to live in this new world but to still seek the face of God and to stay true to Him.
3. *⁸"For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. ⁹'For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,' declares the LORD. ¹⁰"For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. ¹¹'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.*
 - a. He tells them they will be in exile for 70 years, hardly a short period of time.
 - b. God says that once the time is complete, he will remove them from Babylon and take them back to the land promised to their forefathers.
 - c. God has a plan for them (to return them to their inheritance).
 - d. This is to be their hope as they are exiled.

- e. While they are living in this foreign land, they are to think of their home and be encouraged knowing that the day will come when God returns them to their land.
4. *12"Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. 14'I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'*
 - a. Here we see those who have been in exile, some call upon the Lord to save them.
 - b. They repent and search for Him with all their heart.
 - c. When this happens, the nation of Israel prospers.
 - d. God restores their fortunes and gathers his people and brings them back to the land of promise.
 5. *15"Because you have said, 'The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon'-- 16for thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your brothers who did not go with you into exile-- 17thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, I am sending upon them the sword, famine and pestilence, and I will make them like split-open figs that cannot be eaten due to rottenness. 18'I will pursue them with the sword, with famine and with pestilence; and I will make them a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse and a horror and a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, 19because they have not listened to My words,' declares the LORD, 'which I sent to them again and again by My servants the prophets; but you did not listen,' declares the LORD. 20" You, therefore, hear the word of the LORD, all you exiles, whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon.*
 - a. Here we see that those who were not taken into exile will actually receive “The sword, famine and pestilence” because they did not listen to the prophets God sent.
 - b. During the time between 606 and 536 the Babylonians raided Israel and destroyed the temple and many were put to death.
- l. Are we beginning to see what this verse is describing concerning the immediate context? Are we able to see a little better what prospering means to God?

m. Let's take a look at another passage which will help us understand a bit more.

i. Jeremiah 24: 1-10 *1After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the officials of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths from Jerusalem and had brought them to Babylon, the LORD showed me: behold, two baskets of figs set before the temple of the LORD! 2One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, and the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten due to rottenness. 3Then the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad figs, very bad, which cannot be eaten due to rottenness." 4Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 5"Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans. 6'For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. 7'I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart. 8'But like the bad figs which cannot be eaten due to rottenness--indeed, thus says the LORD--so I will abandon Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials, and the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land and the ones who dwell in the land of Egypt. 9'I will make them a terror and an evil for all the kingdoms of the earth, as a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse in all places where I will scatter them. 10'I will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence upon them until they are destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their forefathers.'"*

1. Here we see figs, a symbol used throughout the Scriptures to refer to Israel and we see a basket of good figs and one of bad figs.
 - a. And we are told that the good figs are those who are taken into exile.
 - b. Jeremiah prophesied that the hope of Israel would lay in this group of people.
 - c. It is this group, those exiled, who would return to God with their whole heart as a result of being in exile and at that time God would bring them back to the land promised to them and God would build them up.
 - d. The group not taken into exile however, experienced much tribulation under the hand of Nebuchadnezzar

and they were destroyed ultimately for their unbelief and unrepentant hearts.

2. I think by looking at these passages, we get a good sense of what prospering looks like to God. We prosper when:
 - a. We are whole. But we can't be whole when we are filled with sin.
 - b. We have an unimpaired relationship with God. But we can't have fellowship with God when we are filled with sin.
 - c. We have peace and tranquility. But we can't have complete peace when our minds are worried and stressed over our sin or we are focused on ourselves.
 - d. We prosper when our whole heart is turned toward God.
 - i. Not when we win the lottery.
 - ii. Not when we get some big corner office with a view of the ocean.
 - iii. But when we turn our whole hearts to God as we focus on the hope He has given us, the future He has for us if we would be obedient.
- n. The last key that I want to note is in Jeremiah 25:11-13 as it will help us with our telescope in the coming weeks.
 - i. *¹¹'This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹²'Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation. ¹³I will bring upon that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations.*
 1. We see here the exile of Judah for seventy years but at the end, God says he will punish the king of Babylon and the nation of Babylon for what they have done to the people of God and He ultimately destroys the nation.
 - a. It's interesting to note in Daniel 5 we read that the king of Babylon at the end of the prophesied 70 years, Belshazzar, miscalculates the number of years and as he thinks the prophecy did not come true, he throws a big feast and puts on display all the things Nebuchadnezzar took from the Temple.
 - b. And as they are celebrating, a giant hand writes a message on a wall but no one can read it.

- c. They summon Daniel who is able to read the message and it says in essence *“God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end ... your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”*
 - d. Here the nation which enslaved Israel was brought down and the Babylonian empire was replaced by the Medo-Persian empire, just as God said.
- o. So, let’s see what pieces of this puzzle we have so far as this will help us see the picture more clearly at the other end of our telescope and will help us understand how this relates to the future of Israel as well as the Church.
 - i. We see God, out of His love, use Nebuchadnezzar and the nation of Babylon to bring about His will.
 - ii. We see the king of Babylon and the nation of Babylon judged for their actions against Israel.
 - iii. We have the people of Israel, living in sin and unrepentant.
 - iv. We see the people of Israel living in a land that is not their own until the time has come for them to be brought back out of exile into their inheritance.
 - v. We have numerous prophets distracting the people from what they should be focused on by proclaiming a message of health and wealth, not a message of repentance and accountability.
 - vi. We see those taken into exile, a part of the whole, turn their whole hearts back to God while others were destroyed by the nation of Babylon as they chose to not repent.
- p. Understanding these points are crucial to our understanding what we will be examining the next few weeks.
- q. So I know it was a lot of history and a lot of paraphrasing at that, but this is all part of properly exegeting a passage of Scripture.
- r. This is part of the process that as we will see when we get to the end, one cannot afford to skip because it is dry or not interesting but often times is the part that we don’t like to do as it requires us to study deeper.
- s. But now that you have some background of the Babylonian Exile, I encourage you to read through some of the prophetic books in the Old Testament this week and have this context in mind.
- t. Israel is in exile for the purpose of repentance.
- u. God in his mercy, knowing what is at stake for Israel, does not give them wealth and prosperity in the sense that we would view it, but he enslaves them so that they may come to a point where they prosper, a time when they are relationally whole and complete with God. This has enormous impact on what prospering means for us today and we will get into that in later weeks. Let’s pray.