



5: How Do We READ It RIGHT? (Part 2)

Today we study the 2nd rule of how we read the Bible right:

Author & Audience before Application.

See how an often quoted verse is ripped out of context, then learn how to read it right, and apply it to real life.

beourguest

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teachingnotes

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VISUAL NOTES

RULE #1: Never read a Bible verse.

When you only hear a *PIECE* of the story, you might not get the *POINT* of the story.

👉 **Context** is the **KEY** to **understanding** what the text **means**.

RULE #2: Author & Audience before Application.

☀ **Dr. Wayne Stacey** "I try never to forget that the Bible was the word of God to somebody else before it was the word of God to me."

The Scriptures weren't written *TO US*, but the Scriptures were written *FOR US*.

Cultural Differences

The original author & audience spoke a different language and lived on a different continent over 2000 years ago. We must place ourselves in THEIR context instead of transporting them to OUR CONTEXT.

Literary Differences

Is it *POETRY*, *HISTORY*, or *METAPHOR*? We read *POETRY* in a different way than we read *HISTORY*, and what about *METAPHORS*? We don't take metaphors in a wooden literal way, but try to understand what the metaphor means.

- "Cowboys Scalp the Redskins." "It's raining cats & dogs." "I have butterflies in my stomach"

Often Quoted Out of Context

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) 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.

Many of us are quick to point to **Jer 29:11** as a "life verse". Why? Because we LIKE it! Let's back up to verse 10.

Jeremiah 29:10 (NIV) This is what the LORD says: "**When seventy years are completed** for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill **my good promise to bring you back to this place.**

Why don't we memorize & quote THAT? Here's why: We DON'T LIKE IT.

After 70 years, *WHO* is going to be taken from Babylon and WHERE are they going to be taken?

Who is YOU?

Jeremiah 29:1 (NIV) This is the text of the letter that the prophet **Jeremiah** sent from Jerusalem **to the surviving elders** among the exiles and to the **priests**, the **prophets** and **all the other people** Nebuchadnezzar **had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.**

WHO is the author? Jeremiah

WHO is the audience? Jews exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon. Anytime we see YOU in this passage, we understand that YOU is referring NOT TO AN INDIVIDUAL, but to a GROUP OF JEWISH PEOPLE TAKEN CAPTIVE TO BABYLON.

Always Ask: "WHO is YOU?"

2 Timothy 4:13 (NIV)

When **you** come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

Who is YOU? Timothy. We wouldn't take *YOU* to mean *us*, otherwise we have to travel 2000 years back in time and attempt to get Paul his cloak & scrolls.

WHERE did they come from and where is God promising to return them (Jer 29:10)? Back to Jerusalem.

Who is YOU?

Jeremiah 29:4-11 (NIV) This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says **to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon**: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for **your** sons and give **your** daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried **you** into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, **you** too will prosper." Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the LORD. This is what the LORD says: "**When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you** and fulfill my good promise to **bring you back to this place**. 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."

>This is not BIBLE BUFFET, where you take what you like (v11) and leave what you don't like (v10). **Jer 29:11** is NOT a promise to **YOU**, and it's certainly not a promise that God gives that you will be healthy, wealthy, and wise.

🔍 Think about it. *The apostles of Jesus NEVER quoted this passage in that way.* God's plan for most of them was not long life nor financial prosperity, but persecution and poverty.

☀ **Eric Bargerhuff** writes: "We have no right to hold God hostage to a promise that we have misunderstood."¹

God promised to take the exiled Jewish people back to Jerusalem in 70 years. That means that most of the audience hearing this...WOULDN'T make it back, but their family would.

Who is YOU?

Jeremiah 29:12-14 (NIV) Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. **You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.** I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring **you** back from captivity. I will gather **you** from all the nations and places where I have banished **you**," declares the LORD, "and will **bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.**"

• There ARE some *PRINCIPLES* here that apply to all who seek the Lord, but the PROMISE to return people back to Jerusalem is NOT your promise.

• "**YOU**" was written to the Jewish captives who God had not forgotten. "**YOU**" isn't about YOU and ME.

"If this isn't a promise for ME...then why should I read it?"

The Scriptures tell us about our *FAITHFUL GOD*! God *DID* send the Jews back to Jerusalem after 70 years! God didn't forget his people, even though they had been unfaithful. God has been faithful in the PAST and He will be faithful in the FUTURE!

What can we lean and APPLY from Jeremiah 29?

1. **God punishes those who continue in disobedience.** This is true for all people, at all times, in all places. God ripped the Jewish people out of their land and exiled them to Babylon for 70 years! He won't give our disobedience a free pass (1 Thes 4:3-8; Rev 3:19).
2. **God's promises can be trusted.**

Hebrews 10:23 (NIV) Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for **He who promised is faithful.**

God's promises ALWAYS prove true.

Daniel remembers & expects the promise from Jeremiah 29 to be fulfilled shortly

Daniel 9:2 (LEB)..I, Daniel, observed in the scrolls the number of the years that it was *that were* to be fulfilled *according to the word of Yahweh to Jeremiah the prophet* for the devastation of Jerusalem—**seventy years.**

WE are awaiting CURRENT & FUTURE PROMISES that God will be faithful to fulfill

- Jesus will **love us**, never leave us, & will **provide for our needs** (Rm 8:31-39; Mt 28:20; Heb 13:5-6; Mt 6:25-34).
- Jesus will **return & reunite** us with believers who have died before us (1 Thes 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:50-58).
- Jesus will **bring us salvation** & bring **judgement** to those who disobey Him (Heb 11:39-40; 2 Thes 1:6-10).

¹ Bargerhuff, Eric J.. The Most Misused Verses in the Bible, Surprising Ways God's Word Is Misunderstood (p. 41). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

3. **God LOVES to restore those who repent** (1 Jn 1:9; Acts 3:19)! God forgave and restored the Jewish people when they turned from their sin and turned to HIM. This is the heartbeat of God & the focus of the gospel of Jesus - to restore people to God.

✓ **God does have a plan & purpose for your life** and you don't need one verse from Jeremiah to prove it. **You have the whole of Scripture.**

PASSAGES THAT APPLY TO ALL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS! (Hebrews 11 & Romans 8:31-38)

- Reading Hebrews 11, you can see that many of God's people from the past leaned on and trusted God **for a different kind of future and hope** than most people think of when they quote Jer 29:11.
- The future and hope they looked forward to wasn't referring to health, wealth, wisdom, and a guarantee of blessings on this side of eternity. In fact, many of them suffered horribly in this life, and yet they lived by faith with the hope of a fuller salvation in a future that they could not yet see. This same HOPE the AUTHOR points His ancient audience to is to be applied to ALL who follow Jesus!

Hebrews 11:13-16 (CSB) These all died in faith, although they had not received the things that were promised. But **they saw them from a distance**, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth. Now those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they were thinking about where they came from, they would have had an opportunity to return. But **they now desire a better place—a heavenly one**. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

All of the people in this passage *TRUSTED* God when the future was uncertain, and ultimately looked to more than just an *EARTHLY HOPE*, but to an *ETERNAL HOPE*.

Receiving God's Promises & Protection THIS SIDE of Eternity

Hebrews 11:32-35^a (CSB) And what more can I say? Time is too short for me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, **obtained promises**, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the raging of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength in weakness, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead, raised to life again.

NOT Receiving God's Promises & Protection THIS SIDE of Eternity

Hebrews 11:35b-38 (CSB) Other people were tortured, not accepting release, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and on mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

These people would have NEVER quoted **Jer 29:11** as a promise that wasn't for them. But they **DID claim** the promises that God gave to ALL who follow Him - **the FUTURE ETERNAL HOPE promised by God to His faithful people**.

Receiving God's Promises & Protection ON THE OTHER SIDE of Eternity

Hebrews 11:39-40 (CSB) All these were approved through their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, since **God had provided something better for us**, so that they would not be made perfect without us.

An Encouragement to ALL Followers of Jesus

Romans 8:31-38 (NIV) What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If **God is for us**, who can be against **us**? He who **did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all**—how will he not also, along with him, graciously **give us** all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. **Christ Jesus** who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also **interceding for us**. Who shall separate **us** from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things **we** are more than conquerors through Him who **loved us**. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

❓ **Does God have a hope and a future for you? Yes!** Our current and future hope is the fact that Jesus died for us! We can trust Him and rest in His promise that nothing can separate us from His love!

Many contemporary people approach following Jesus with an attitude like this:

“Jesus, I’ll follow you *IF*...if you protect me and my family, *IF* you give us long life, *IF* you give us not only want we need - but what we WANT. I’ll follow you *IF* you keep me from facing tough times and persecution from others.”

The first followers had a different approach:

“Jesus, I’ll follow you *EVEN IF*...*EVEN IF* you don’t protect me and my family, *EVEN IF* you don’t give us long life, *EVEN IF* you give us only want we need - but NOT what we WANT. I’ll follow you *EVEN IF* you keep me from facing tough times and persecution from others.”



Bend your beliefs to fit what the Bible means, then graciously help others to do the same.

Become familiar with the context of the passages we studied today and get prepared to respond to others (with grace and truth) who misuse them,.

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives**: Alan & Christy Androski (850-464-1428), Freddy & Joyce Howard (850-973-0047), Tim & Joni Hughey (850-464-1156), Mark & Dot Mancil (850-253-5405), Boss & Amelia Mulkey (850-464-6717), Jim & Derita Pinkard (850-464-6188), or Tom & Martha Waddail (850-973-0011).

discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. How did reading these passages IN CONTEXT challenge your view of what the authors actually meant?
2. What are the dangers of bypassing the author & audience & moving directly to personal application; and why are we quick to jump to personal application instead of digging to consider the author & audience first?
3. Share with another believer how you have misinterpreted or mishandled a Scriptural text in the past. How were you corrected and how long did it take you to change your view?
4. Recognizing that God was patient and gracious to correct us, what are some practical ways we might extend the same kind of patience and grace to others who are misinterpreting the Scriptures?
5. Why is it so important to read the Scriptures regularly? Are you doing that and/or what are your plans to read consistently this week? Who is checking on you this week?
6. Share prayer thanks & needs. Then pray for one another.