

# Speaking to the soul



## Citizen of heaven

**This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem: "Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce...And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare." Jeremiah 29:4,5,7**

God's people refused to listen to Jeremiah. They continued in their sinful ways, and in 597 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Jerusalem and took over 3,000 people into exile. This was total humiliation for the self-confident and godless people of Jerusalem. To be transported to a foreign country about 1,000 miles from home was a horrific form of punishment, but Jeremiah wanted the people to know that God still had good plans for them.

In his letter, Jeremiah told the people to accept their new home. They needed to settle down and bring up their families there. As they did so, they were not to fight against their new homeland but to pray for it. If they listened to God and obeyed him, then, after 70 years, they would have the opportunity to return to Jerusalem. God's words to them were: "For I know the plans I have for you. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

In the New Testament, we are often told that we too are exiles. This world is not our true home because, as Paul wrote: "we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives" (Philippians 3:20). Paul often spoke of his longing to get to his true home, but in the meantime, we have responsibilities here on earth. Like the exiled people in Babylon, we shouldn't sit here counting the days, but should give ourselves wholeheartedly to whatever God wants us to do.

## **QUESTION**

How does the fact that you are a citizen of heaven affect your daily life?

## **PRAYER**

God our Father, we thank you that you have good plans for us both in this life and in the one to come. Amen