

We as a group tend to read the Bible and either openly or unconsciously feel that in every verse, in one way or another, is about us and the times we are living in. It is true that every verse has a meaning for us to grasp. Sometimes it is to understand a principle and other times it is speaking of history, so that we may not make the same mistake that others have.

A good case in point is 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.*

We often use this verse on graduation cards and use it for assurances that our lives will be without harm and hardship. And when that doesn't happen it can be cause for some introspection.

This scripture by itself is misleading. If one reads the entire chapter of Jeremiah 29 it is clear that God was speaking to the nation of Judah not to us as individuals. And as we read further we see that they went into captivity, hardly a place to prosper and not be harmed. This shows how we tend to take a portion of scripture and make it fit our situation without regards to the complete story. {This is why I am not fond of the cards and calendars that have a scripture a day; too often they don't provide the entire story and leave us with a misconception of what the Bible teaches.}

I am not trying to say that God doesn't have our best interests in His plans for us, but to use this verse to "prove it" seems like a bit of a stretch.

Bible Study is more than reading a verse or a set of verses and going about our day without it directing our path. It requires meditating on the concept and learning who said it, what were the circumstances, what was the outcome, and what is the fundamental principle to be understood.

Some of you can sit down and read a novel in one or two sittings. (I wish I had that talent), but the Bible is not a novel, it is more like an advanced physics book. It cannot be read and understood that quickly. It takes slow methodical reading and jumping back and forth within the scriptures to get a complete understanding of the concept being taught.

We have been saying for a while that the Bible story is all about Jesus. If that is true then are there portions about His plans for us as an individual?

Jesus' plan for each individual that has ever lived is for him or her to follow the instructions He has laid out in our Bibles. Not so that He can

control us but so that we may live within the parameters that we were designed to work in. We too often want to do more and be more than we were created to be. One doesn't ask our family car to drive like a Ferrari, like wise we are not asked to do what only God can do.

We were designed to be with God and to be like Him in character. Jesus' desire is for us to reach that potential.

As Jesus was praying for His disciples for the last time in John 17, He asked that they become one with Him, just as He is with the Father.

<sup>11b</sup> *...Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, **so that they may be one as we are one.***

<sup>13</sup> *"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the **full measure of my joy** within them.*

<sup>15</sup> *My prayer is **not that you take them out of the world** but that you protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.*

Jesus then addresses the rest of humanity by asking for them the same as for His disciples.

<sup>20</sup> *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that **all of them may be one**, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

As you read the whole chapter of John 17, you can see that Jesus does have a plan for each human being to prosper. But that there may be times where it doesn't look like it from our prospective, just as Israel did not see themselves prospering in captivity.

Paul tells us in Romans 8:14-17: <sup>14</sup> *For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."<sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*