

This is Our Time to Shine

Jer 29:1-14 ... *“Now 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. (This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the court officials, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.) The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, ‘Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce. 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. 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.’ 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. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,’ declares the Lord.”*

“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. 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. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. 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.”

2 Tim 3:16 ... *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work”.*

While Jeremiah is directly addressing the children of Israel, and there is much prophecy in this book that relates to Israel in the millennium dispensation which is yet to come, it is also written for our instruction. In fact, because we now are born again and have Christ living in us, and have privileges and blessings far greater than they had, we have far greater duty to submit and obey Him who is our life and our all. So there is much we can learn from this passage of scripture.

Why must we shine?

On a bright sunny day you don't need a torch (flashlight), but you do need a light in the darkness of night. So we must shine so that those in darkness can come to the Light.

Matt 5:16 ... *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven”.*

Jer 29:6 ... "multiply there and do not decrease"

Everyone saved by the blood of Christ should covet to be a witness to the lost and to be one who helps them to become "born again" and enter the abundant life we have in Christ.

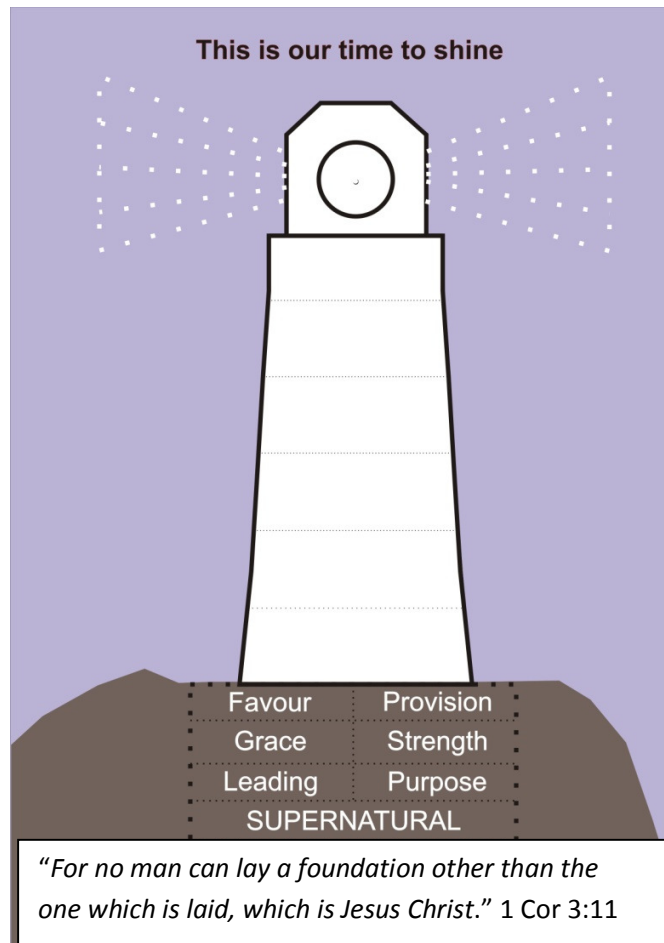
Prov 11:30 ... "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls".

Shiny objects attract attention

I once lost my car keys on the beach. We got to the car before I realised I had dropped the keys. So we had to go back over the sand to the place where we had been sunbathing and search. After walking up and down and all around the place I caught the glint of refelected sun off the tiniest part of one of the keys that was just visible above the sand. The keys, except for one tiny part, were buried in the snd and completely out of sight. Without that glint coming off the key we would never have found them. But we did!

If the Light of Christ shines from you you'll be shiny and be attractive to those around you. People will notice and be attracted to the Light of Life.

The foundation is Christ



He alone is the Alpha and Omega, the Aleph and the Tav. He is our starting point, He is the way in which we continue, and He is the finishing point. There is no other foundation upon which we are to build.

Eph 1:3 ... *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ".*

Col 1:10 ... *"in Him you have been made complete".*

The building blocks



In order for the Light to shine we must be built up in Christ – who is the Light in you.

We now let's look a little closer at the passage from Jer 29:1-14.

We start with the Context:

The 28 chapters that precede Chapter 29 are all about:

- A people who wilfully rebelled against God and insisted on doing their own thing. ... *“For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water”* (Jer 2:13)
- It's about people who are unjust, unkind, unrighteous, very proud and caring only for themselves. They don't care about the orphans and widows; the poor and needy.
- It's about a stubborn and disobedient people. ... *“Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward”* (Jer 7:24).
- It's about the incongruity of a people that professed great reverence for the “temple” but at the same time persisted in idolatry and evil practices. Their ways were anything but in accordance with the holiness that suited God's house.
- It's about a wicked king who wanted to “use” God for his own good. He wanted divine power but he did not want to submit to the Divine.
- It's about false prophets who did not have a word from God and rather than turning them from sin they encouraged the people in their sinful ways. They were “ear ticklers” telling the people the things they wanted to hear rather than God's truth concerning them. They told the people that it didn't matter if they did this or that wrong, after all God is a God of grace. Yes He is a God of grace and mercy and He does forgive us when we repent and turn to Him (1 Jn 1:9), but more than that He is a God of love. And just as a loving parent wants the best for their wayward child, so He cares for us and will do everything He can to regain our hearts and turn us from the destruction of evil.
- And so it's also a book about the plea from God through Jeremiah to the people calling them to repent and heed God's word, to come to know Him and to walk in His ways so that they can walk in ways of blessing and peace. It can be summed up in the well known words of:

Jer 9:23-24 ... *“Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD”.*

Then we read in:

Jer 10:23 ... *“I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps”*

It's not in man to direct his own paths. God alone has the blueprint or plan for our lives. He has a supernatural purpose for our being, as He says in Jer 29:11.

Jer 29:11 ... *"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".*

So over and over God says to His people, *"Listen to My voice"*. He wants to lead and direct us according to His plan. Prayer is vital. Communication with and listening to God. He has a plan for our lives.

No amount of human effort or good works can change us – only divine intervention can do this. That's why prayer and abiding in Christ is so important. So God's word to us is:

Phil 3:3 ... *"for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh".*

and

Jer 17:7-8 ... *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit".*

Then there are also many warnings in Jeremiah. How needful and important it is for us to ever keep in mind the words of:

Jer 17:9-10 ... *"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds".*

All have a **deceitful** heart; but only those who are not subject to the Word of God have **deceived** hearts. *"But be ye doers of the word and not just hearers who deceive themselves"* (Jas 1:22)

But we can be thankful that God promises His people that He will restore and strengthen us if we submit to Him, abide in Him and obey Him

Jer 24:7 ... *"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".*

Jeremiah also refers to God as the Potter. God is the Potter and we are the clay in His hands. He calls His people to submit to Him, trust Him, allow Him to mould and shape you and conform you to the image of His Son.

And that brings us to Jeremiah chapter 29:

Jer 29:4 ... *"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon"....*

God must make the backslidden in heart eat the fruit of his own devices in order to turn the heart back from its devices to Himself, the source of all blessing. God will use the circumstances and situations in our lives to get our attention and turn our hearts to Him.

Jer 29:10 ... *“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”.*

Why 70 years? This period is very significant. When Israel were about to enter the Promised Land, the Lord told them that every 7th year was to be a Sabbath, in which the ground was to lie fallow (Lev 25). God also promised them assured prosperity if they observed His commandment; they would not lack in the sabbatical year or years after it.

But God also warned them that if they did not observe the sabbatical years that He would punish them and scatter them among the heathen nations.

Lev 26:33-35 ... *“You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste. ‘Then the land will enjoy its Sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies’ land; then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it will observe the rest which it did not observe on your Sabbaths, while you were living on it”.*

For the entire period from the dedication of the temple until it was destroyed, the sabbatical year had not been observed. This was approximately 490 years. That equates to 70 x 7 or 70 Sabbaths that had gone unobserved. So for 70 years they were to dwell in the foreign land while the Promised Land kept Sabbath. (We can read more about this in 2 Chr 36).

Selfish Judah thought that wealth would be more rapidly gained if they kept working the land in the Sabbath year, rather than allowing the land to lie fallow as God had commanded. They had yet to learn the truth of God’s word in:

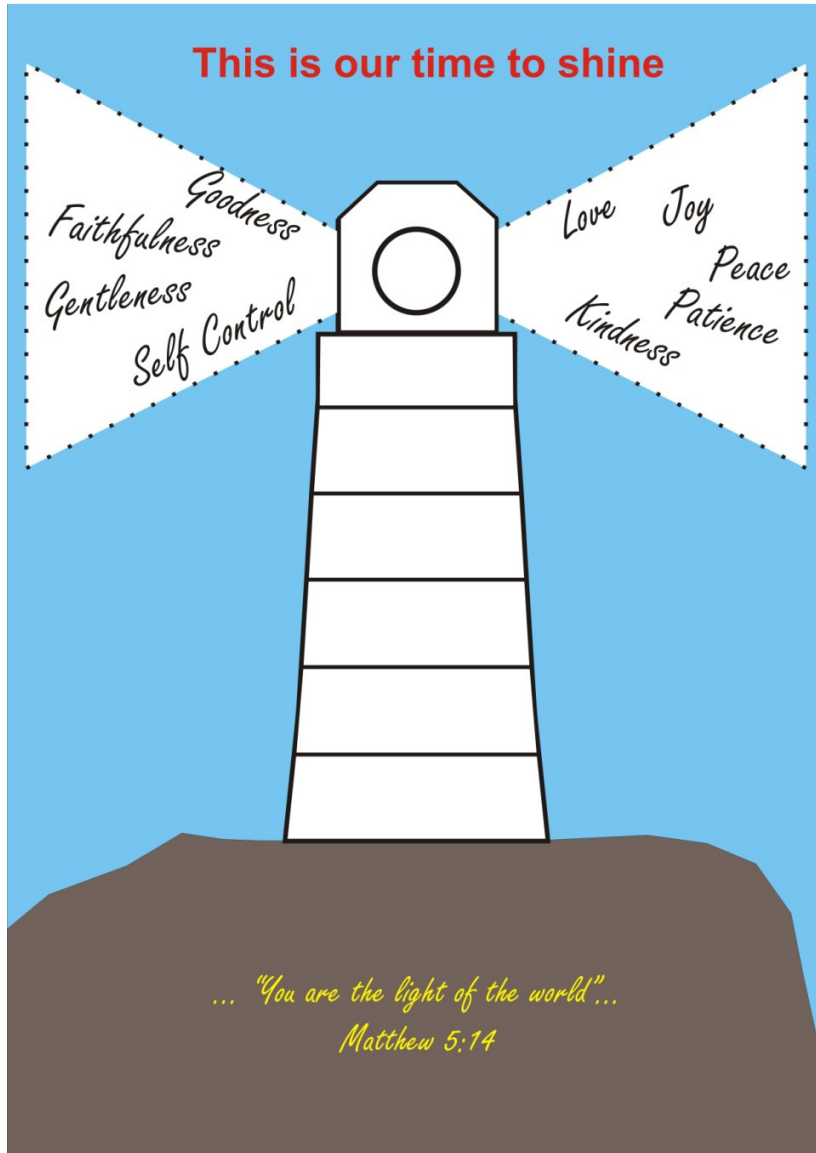
1 Sam 2:30 ... *“for those who honour Me I will honour, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed”.*

This unfortunately is the way of many of God’s children today, who consider time spent in waiting upon God as wasted time. Many are too busy to give God His portion of their time. Business, pleasure, and all things to do with self must come first; leaving little of no time for God.

But because God loves us He will allow us to face the unpleasant circumstances and situations, the Babylons, that have resulted from the simple reason that God has been crowded out and neglected while we were doing our own thing, and He will see to it that our days in “captivity” will be turned into days of great fruitfulness. It was in their subjection to the Babylonian yoke that Judah learned to abhor idols. Never since then have the Jewish nation offended on the grounds of idolatry. The seasons of the Lord’s chastening are not lost time.

Heb 12:11 ... "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness".

The Light we are to shine



As we abide in the Vine His fruit will be produced in us, and be ready for the picking by those around us.

Conclusion

Let us learn from the mistakes of the people Jeremiah was addressing.

Let us not be rebellious, but rather be those who:

- "listen to God" – spend time in prayer conversing with Him, getting to "know Him"

- “abide in Him” – learn to rest in Him and His word and let the fruit of His Spirit be formed in you
- Obey His word and leading
- Have an open heart before Him – that he may remove any of the “old ways” and give you His heart for the needy and the lost
- Be accountable and able to look into His eyes with confidence that you are walking in His ways
- Be thankful – “in everything give thanks” knowing He cares for you and is building you up in Christ in the midst of even the most formidable set of circumstances

As we do these things and are built up in Christ, so will His light shine from us.

We will be radiant bearers of the fruit of His Spirit and those in darkness will come to the Light and partake of the fruit – and the fruit of Love never fails!

Wherever you are, whatever your circumstances, submit to the Holy Spirit as He teaches you Christ and learn to walk in Christ and let the Light of Christ shine from you – for:

- **IT’S OUR TIME TO SHINE**
- **It’s our time to be the Light in dark places**
- **It’s our time to be fruitful and multiply**