

A Better Future Starts Today – Matthew 2 & Luke 1 - Biblical Discussion

We stand on the threshold of a new year. Most people generally look at the New Year as a fresh beginning, as an opportunity to kind of start over, to overcome a habit, or do a better job of something they see as important and that needs improvement. It may be parenting, being a better spouse, losing weight (which, by the way, is the number one resolution according to polls taken). It may be developing different priorities, using our time better, or a whole host of things that people would like to change.

So, we usually hear a lot about New Year's resolutions, resolutions which are usually broken in a matter of weeks. Many people are very pessimistic about the whole issue of making resolutions, and rightly so, because so many good intentions are followed by a history of past failures.

But the New Year is a time to reflect and think about what the past year has brought and what the New Year could bring. It is a time to stop and analyze, to take stock of our priorities, values, pursuits, and goals. We need to ask questions like "Who am I, what am I doing with my life? What should I be doing as a Christian with my life and the stewardship God has given me?" After all, according to the Word of God, all of life is a stewardship--a stewardship of our time, talents, treasures, and God's truth. In other words, since God's plan and our stewardships revolve around and through the life of His Son, Jesus Christ, we need to each ask "How well am I responding to the Savior and the spiritual life that He has given me?"

The New Year is upon us. It's a time when people begin to think about starting over or trying something new. Any time you're prepared to begin again, it's a great time to remember that God has promised you hope and a future.



1. How long did Jeremiah tell the people they would be exiled?
2. What kinds of situations make us feel as though we are exiled today? (Think about things that you do yourself as well as things you have no control over) (See **Matthew 2:13-23**)
3. We can't always control or even know how long we will be in "exile," but we can know that God promises to bring us back to a place where we feel "at home." How does that fact make you feel?
4. What comes to mind when you think that God "knows the plans" He has for you?
5. What kind of hope does it give us to realize that God knows exactly where we are, the fact that He has a plan for us and promises to bring us home?
6. What do you think of when you hear the word prosper?
7. What the first thing you think of when you think about your future? Do you believe that God can and/or will make you complete and give you an unimpaired relationship with him in your future?
8. What would your life "complete and whole" look like?
9. What do you think they might have done to keep their hope alive in spite of the fact their "future" was at least 60 years down the road?
10. What can you do this week to increase your outlook in a bright future?

Jeremiah 29:10-14

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰This 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. ¹¹For 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. ¹²Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴I 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."