

# Living Creation-Community in God's World Today

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## Putting Down Roots in a Broken Land

*Scene I.* The city is under siege. No reprieve in sight. With access to their fields blocked, their supplies are running out, as is the hope of the people trapped inside the walls. The empty promises of deliverance uttered by the false prophets are wearing thin. The end is near. So Jeremiah, instructed by God, proceeds to do what anyone in his right mind would do before it all goes up in flames and is taken over entirely by invading troops: he buys a plot of land! Yes. That is what he does: he weighs out the money, signs the deed, gets witnesses, and seals the deal. Was he being foolish? Rash? Naively hopeful? Jeremiah matter-of-factly proceeds to store the deed in an earthen pot and, while the enemy armies batter down the walls, he publicly—and against all obvious reason for hope—declares: “Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land” (Jer 32:15).

*Scene II.* They received a letter from home. They had been torn away from their families, their houses, and their land and dragged off by Nebuchadnezzar's army. They were nobodies in the foreign land of Babylon, forced to work for strange people whose language was unintelligible to them and whose customs often affronted their Jewish sensibilities.

They dreamed of the day they would return home to their kin and their own place. Imagine their shock when they received the words of Jeremiah:<sup>1</sup>

*Thus says...the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:*

God sent us here? This is God's doing! Incredible. We are here because Nebuchadnezzar is powerful. God had nothing to do with this: he forgot us long ago!

But the letter continues:

*Build houses and live in them;*

Well, our tents are plenty fine, thank you very much. We do not intend to stay that long, you know! We are counting the months till we go home!

*Plant gardens and eat their produce.*

Plant gardens and wait for them to yield! You mean put down roots in this foreign land? You mean we're here to stay for quite some time? You mean we're supposed to make this place our home?

The letter is not over:

*Take wives and have sons and daughters.*

Looks like we *will* be here for quite some time...

*Take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters.*

But this means generations! We are to expect grandchildren in this land?!

*Multiply there and do not decrease.*

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references in this article are from the English Standard Version. The passages in this section are from Jeremiah 29:4-7.