



## Week 15 - December 23rd

### The God Who Rules – God Has Plans for You

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (BP) – Through the smoldering, black ash of what was left of the home of Mike Foscolos of San Bernardino his flashlight caught site of a paper fluttering through the air just hours after the flames consumed his home. As he stepped on it with his foot to catch it, he realized it was a singed page from his Bible.

“It was the first Bible I received as a new Christian and I had saved it in the garage,” said Foscolos, who evacuated his home on Saturday afternoon, October 25, and returned that evening to find it destroyed. “I couldn’t believe it was the page with Jeremiah 29:11-13 on it.”

The passage reads: “‘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. 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 seek me with all your heart.’”

Foscolos said he is having the page framed to keep in his rebuilt home as a testimony.

“To me, it means God is in control and His promises are true,” said Foscolos, who manages the bookstore at Immanuel Baptist Church in Highland, Calif. Another 15 members of the church lost their homes and one deacon died, suffering a heart attack after evacuating his home. “It’s a reminder that God has a purpose for everything. We may not know why something happens but it’s not our place to ask Him.”

Source: Kelli Cottrell, BP, 2003

In today’s illustration, Mike Foscolos was gripped by the Prophet Jeremiah telling us that God has a specific purpose in life for each of us. Today’s Scripture reading approaches this subject from a slightly different perspective. It is from the Book of Ecclesiastes which was written by Solomon about 400 years before Jeremiah.

#### Scripture

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

#### Discovery Questions

1. Did you find yourself trying to sing along to Solomon’s words, as if you might have heard them in a song? If so, you’re probably thinking of Pete Seeger’s song “*Turn Turn Turn*” which was popularized in the 1960s by *The Byrds*. Why do you think that secular writers sometimes find their material in Scripture?
2. We have already learned that God has a purpose for each of us in this life. From today’s reading, do you see how each phase of your life has its own distinct purpose and focus?
3. From verse 1, do you get a sense that everything that we do in life is temporary? Does this fact encourage you or discourage you? Why?
4. Verses 2 to 8 each contain two parts and each of those parts is a contrast of two opposite actions or concepts. Does this help you to see a larger frame work for your life than you might have had previously? Does this help you to see that God brings things into your life purposefully and not accidentally?

5. From this passage, we get a glimpse that God has designed our lives to have a great degree of variety. It seems that we are always going to be doing something new and interesting. God wants us to be engaged in what He is bringing our way. Does this knowledge help you to embrace whatever role God provides for you?

### **Journaling**

Which verse spoke most powerfully to me? Why?

**Prayer:** Spend some time in prayer conversing with your God. Use the following ideas as a potential guide to your prayer time.

- Lord, help me to see that the big picture for my life is truly in Your hands.
- Help me to understand and embrace the changes that You send my way. Help me also to appreciate the variety of roles that You have already designed for my life.
- Dear God, help me to embrace and learn from the painful parts of life, realizing these too do not last forever, even though it might seem that way.
- Lord, speak directly to my soul and help me to embrace the changes that You send. Help me to see that they are all part of Your larger plan for my life.