



SUNDAY SCHOOL OCTOBER 12, 2025

Prayer:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Old Testament2

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 2

 Jeremiah’s Letter to the Exiles in Babylon 2

 Overview 2

 Biblical Context..... 2

 Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context 2

 Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe..... 3

 Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation With Modern-Day & Grant County Context 3

 Summary 4

Gospel.....5

Luke 17:11-19 5

 Jesus Cleanses 10 Men with a Skin Disease..... 5

 Overview 5

 Biblical Context..... 5

 Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context 5

 Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe..... 6

 Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation With Modern-Day & Grant County Context 6

 Summary 6

Addendums.....7

Symmetry Between Jeremiah 29:1, 4–7 and Luke 17:11–19..... 7

How the Ten Lepers Might Have Known of Jesus..... 8

The Popularity and Growth of Jesus’s Reputation 9



Old Testament

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

JEREMIAH'S LETTER TO THE EXILES IN BABYLON

These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

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; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But 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 find your welfare.

OVERVIEW

Jeremiah 29:1, 4–7 is part of a letter the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. After King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem in 597 BCE, he deported many of Judah's leaders, craftsmen, and officials. Jeremiah's message counters false prophets who were promising a quick return home. Instead, Jeremiah urges the exiles to settle in, build lives, and seek the welfare of the foreign city where they now live.

This passage emphasizes patience, faithfulness, and social responsibility even in unwanted circumstances—encouraging God's people to thrive and do good where they are, trusting that God's plans are still at work.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Jeremiah was a prophet during the late 7th and early 6th centuries BCE, a turbulent time leading up to and following the Babylonian exile. The Book of Jeremiah reflects both his warnings before the fall of Jerusalem and his guidance afterward.

In chapter 29, Jeremiah writes to the exiled elders, priests, prophets, and all the people taken to Babylon. False prophets, like Hananiah (Jeremiah 28), had claimed that God would bring them back within two years. Jeremiah's letter contradicts this false hope and instead presents a theology of endurance and productivity: the exile would last seventy years, so the people should put down roots and contribute positively to their host society.

This teaching foreshadows later biblical themes—especially those in Daniel, Esther, and Nehemiah—about maintaining faith and integrity in foreign lands.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

In 597 BCE, Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar II besieged Jerusalem and took King Jehoiachin, royal officials, and skilled workers into captivity (2 Kings 24). This was not yet the total destruction of Jerusalem—that would occur in 586 BCE—but it marked the beginning of Judah's displacement and loss of sovereignty.

Babylon's policy was to remove the political and economic elite of conquered nations and resettle them to prevent rebellion. These exiles lived not as slaves but as displaced communities within the



Babylonian Empire. Archaeological findings confirm the existence of Jewish communities in Babylon during this period—engaging in trade, agriculture, and daily life.

Politically, this was an era of empire building and cultural assimilation. Yet, Jeremiah's letter provides a theological counter-narrative: God's people could remain spiritually intact while being socially engaged. Rather than resisting Babylon through rebellion, they were to resist by living faithfully and prospering peacefully.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **626 BCE:** Jeremiah begins his prophetic ministry under King Josiah.
- **609 BCE:** Josiah's death; Judah's decline accelerates.
- **605 BCE:** Nebuchadnezzar defeats Egypt at Carchemish—Babylon becomes dominant.
- **597 BCE:** First Babylonian deportation; Jeremiah sends his letter (Jer. 29).
- **586 BCE:** Jerusalem destroyed; second deportation.
- **538 BCE:** Persian King Cyrus allows Jewish exiles to return home.

Thus, Jeremiah's letter falls between the first and second deportations—around **597–594 BCE**—urging the exiles to adopt a long-term mindset during a generation-spanning exile.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Scholars often interpret Jeremiah 29:4–7 as a metaphor for faithful living amid displacement, uncertainty, or moral exile. It conveys the idea that even when we find ourselves in situations beyond our control—economic hardship, political tension, or cultural change—*God calls us not to despair but to build, plant, and seek the welfare of the place we inhabit.*

- **“Build houses and live in them”** – symbolizes stability and responsibility rather than escapism.
- **“Plant gardens and eat what they produce”** – represents investment in the future and gratitude for small growths.
- **“Seek the welfare (shalom) of the city”** – redefines faithfulness not as isolation, but as contributing to the common good, even among those who do not share one's beliefs.

In a **modern Grant County, Indiana** context, this passage could serve as a call to civic engagement and hope amid economic and social challenges. For example:

- *As industries change and populations shift, Christians are reminded to build and plant—invest in local schools, neighborhoods, and small businesses.*
- *The phrase “seek the welfare of the city” aligns with supporting local initiatives—whether that's the YMCA, housing projects, or food assistance programs—not as charity alone, but as spiritual practice.*
- *It encourages cooperation across political or ideological divides. Just as the exiles were to pray for Babylon's prosperity, Grant County residents are invited to pray and work for the flourishing of their community, even when times feel uncertain or divided.*

This passage thus speaks to a timeless spiritual maturity: living faithfully and compassionately where we are, not just where we wish we were.



SUMMARY

Jeremiah 29:1, 4–7 records God’s directive to the exiles in Babylon: to settle down, build homes, plant gardens, and seek the welfare of their new city. Through Jeremiah, God teaches that exile is not the end but a chapter of growth, faith, and purpose. Rather than yearning for immediate rescue, the exiles are to live constructively and contribute to their surroundings, knowing that God’s plan unfolds through patience and peace.

For today, especially in communities like Grant County, this scripture serves as a reminder that faith thrives not in escape but in engagement—that our calling is to strengthen and bless the place we call home, trusting that God’s long-term work is always at play, even in our most unsettled seasons.



Gospel

Luke 17:11-19

Jesus teaching and healing on his final journey to Jerusalem

JESUS CLEANSSES 10 MEN WITH A SKIN DISEASE

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.

As he entered a village, 10 men with a skin disease approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.”

And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’s feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.

Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine? Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?”

Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

OVERVIEW

Luke 17:11–19 tells the story of **Jesus healing ten lepers** while traveling toward Jerusalem. Only one—a Samaritan—returns to thank Him. The passage illustrates **gratitude, faith, and spiritual awareness**, emphasizing that physical healing is not the same as spiritual wholeness. Jesus commends the Samaritan’s faith, declaring that it has made him whole.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This passage occurs during Jesus’ final journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51–19:27), where Luke focuses on teaching moments and miracles that reveal the **inclusive nature of God’s kingdom**. Leprosy in biblical times represented both a **physical ailment and a social exclusion**—those afflicted were considered unclean and lived apart from society.

Luke, a Gentile physician, often highlights **outsiders and marginalized people**—women, Samaritans, the poor, and lepers—as recipients of God’s grace. This story continues that theme. While 10 are healed, only one, the foreigner, demonstrates the heart of true discipleship: gratitude and recognition of divine mercy.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

At the time, **Samaritans and Jews were bitterly divided**, stemming from centuries of religious and political hostility. The Samaritans descended from Israelites who had intermarried with foreigners after Assyria’s conquest of the Northern Kingdom (722 BCE). Jews viewed them as heretics and impure.

Leprosy, meanwhile, covered a range of skin conditions and carried enormous social stigma. Lepers were required by Mosaic Law (Leviticus 13–14) to live outside community boundaries and announce their uncleanness when approached. Healing from leprosy was rare and seen as **a divine act**, thus explaining why Jesus sent them to the priests—only priests could certify a person as “clean” and restore them to society.



Politically, the Roman occupation fostered divisions among religious groups (Pharisees, Sadducees, Samaritans, Zealots). Jesus' inclusion of a Samaritan as the sole grateful one subtly **undermines nationalist and religious prejudice**, showing that faith transcends boundaries imposed by law and politics.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Setting:** Late in Jesus' ministry, around 30–33 CE.
- **Location:** The "border between Samaria and Galilee." This geographic detail is symbolic—it represents a **threshold place**, where social and ethnic boundaries blur.
- **Cultural Practices:** Healing miracles were deeply tied to notions of ritual purity and priestly authority.
- **Theological Shift:** Jesus' words "Your faith has made you well" mark a pivotal transition from **ritual law to relational faith**—a core message of Luke's Gospel and early Christianity.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Scholars often interpret this story as a **parable of gratitude and perception**. The physical healing represents God's grace freely given to all, but the act of turning back to thank Jesus reflects **spiritual insight**—the ability to recognize the source of that grace.

In metaphorical terms:

- The 10 lepers represent humanity's universal need for mercy.
- The one who returns symbolizes the person who **sees beyond blessing to the Blessor**.
- The other nine illustrate how easily we can accept divine gifts without spiritual transformation.

In modern-day terms, this story challenges both individuals and communities—like those in **Grant County, Indiana**—*to look at gratitude not just as politeness but as an awareness of interdependence*.

- **In community life:** Gratitude can heal divisions—political, social, or denominational—just as Jesus healed across ethnic lines.
- **In local context:** Just as Jesus crossed into the borderland between Samaria and Galilee, churches and civic groups in small rural areas often stand on "borders" too—between old and new ways, between suspicion and inclusion. The lesson is that **grace often happens in the in-between spaces**, not in centers of power.
- **Spiritually:** True faith is shown not by claiming belief, but by living with gratitude that transforms perspective—seeing God's work even in ordinary moments.

SUMMARY

Luke 17:11–19 portrays Jesus healing 10 lepers, but only one—a Samaritan—returns to give thanks. The passage teaches that divine mercy extends to all, yet spiritual wholeness belongs to those who recognize and respond with gratitude.

Jesus' question—"Were not 10 cleansed? Where are the nine?"—is less an accusation than an invitation for reflection: How do we respond to grace? The Samaritan's gratitude becomes a form of worship, affirming that faith is not about ethnicity, purity, or religious title, but about recognizing God's hand in one's life and returning that awareness in love and service.



Addendums

Symmetry Between Jeremiah 29:1, 4–7 and Luke 17:11–19

At first glance, Jeremiah's letter to the exiles and Jesus' healing of the ten lepers seem unrelated—one deals with communal endurance in a foreign land, the other with personal healing on the margins. But both share a **central truth about faith lived out amid displacement**—whether physical, social, or spiritual.

1. Living Faithfully in the In-Between.

- In **Jeremiah 29**, God's people are in exile—caught between the home they remember and the promise yet to come.
- In **Luke 17**, the lepers live in social exile—banished from their community and forced to cry out from a distance.
- ***Both groups receive the same message: don't wait for perfect circumstances to live faithfully. Healing, peace, and purpose begin where you are.***

2. Seeking and Acknowledging God's Presence in Unlikely Places.

- Jeremiah urges the exiles to **seek God's presence in Babylon**, a place they believed God had abandoned.
- The Samaritan leper recognizes **God's mercy in Jesus**, even outside the temple or the priestly system.
- ***Each story reveals that God's grace extends beyond borders—political, religious, or cultural.***

3. Gratitude as an Act of Witness.

- The exiles' obedience—building, planting, praying for the city—becomes their **witness of trust** in God's plan.
- The Samaritan's return to thank Jesus becomes his **public testimony** of faith and restoration.
- ***Both teach that genuine gratitude is not a passive feeling, but an active expression of faith that blesses others.***

4. A Modern Reflection for Grant County, Indiana.

- For local believers, these passages together encourage a posture of **faithful gratitude right where we are**—even when life feels uncertain or divided.
- ***Just as the exiles were told to build and bless Babylon, and the healed leper returned to give thanks, we too are called to engage our community with hope, gratitude, and prayerful participation. Faith grows strongest not in comfort, but in commitment to the welfare and renewal of the places we inhabit.***



How the Ten Lepers Might Have Known of Jesus

Scholars have examined both *how* the 10 lepers might have known about Jesus and *how rapidly* his reputation spread before his crucifixion.

Geographical Clue

Luke 17:11 notes that Jesus was “on the border between Samaria and Galilee.” This is significant: it was a **travel corridor**, connecting northern Galilee (where Jesus was well-known) to Jerusalem. Travelers, pilgrims, and traders regularly passed through this region, carrying **stories and news**.

Word of Mouth

In the ancient Near East, especially among marginalized groups like lepers who lived near village outskirts, **oral communication was the main news network**. Lepers were outcasts, but not uninformed. They likely gathered where roads crossed or travelers passed, asking for food—and hearing stories in return.

By this point in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus had:

- **Healed a leper earlier** (Luke 5:12–16),
- **Fed thousands**,
- **Healed paralytics and the blind**,
- **Raised Jairus’s daughter**, and
- **Sent out 70 disciples two-by-two** (Luke 10:1–24) — which means His name was being *intentionally* proclaimed across Galilee and Samaria.

So, when Luke 17:13 says, “*They called out in a loud voice, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’*”, it implies they already recognized both His **identity and reputation**. The Greek word used for “Master” is respectful, similar to “teacher” or “chief,” and is used only in Luke—always by Jesus’ followers—suggesting even outsiders were beginning to use disciples’ language.

The Leper Network Theory

Some scholars also note that healed lepers, once reintegrated into society, likely **spread testimony themselves**. In Luke 5:15, after another leper’s healing, it says “the news about Him spread even more.” Thus, this group of 10 could easily have heard from someone formerly ostracized like them.



The Popularity and Growth of Jesus's Reputation

Jesus's ministry, based on most Gospel chronologies, lasted about **three years** (roughly 27–30 or 30–33 CE). Within that short span, His notoriety grew **extraordinarily fast**, especially considering the era's communication limits.

Key factors behind that rapid growth:

- Unlike private philosophical teaching, Jesus' miracles were **visible, communal, and retold quickly**. Healing a paralytic in Capernaum or calming a storm on Galilee created stories people *wanted* to share—similar to how “viral” content spreads today.
- **Jesus traveled constantly**—Galilee, Decapolis, Samaria, Judea—**preaching in synagogues, on hillsides, and in villages**. His mobility created multiple overlapping circles of followers, much like small, self-sustaining communities.
- Public confrontations with Pharisees and temple elites (like healing on the Sabbath or forgiving sins) made Him a **controversial figure**, which ironically **amplified His visibility**. Even opponents contributed to His fame.
- The sending of the 70 (Luke 10) shows a **decentralized communication strategy**—His message was being spread simultaneously in multiple towns. This would have been remarkably effective in pre-literate societies.

Historical/Scholarly Insights

- **Josephus**, the Jewish historian (c. 37–100 CE), doesn't mention Jesus directly in surviving texts until the *Testimonium Flavianum* (which some believe later was edited), but he *does* describe other miracle workers and prophets who drew large followings quickly in the same period. This indicates the environment was **fertile for rapid fame**.
- **Roman historians** (like Tacitus and Suetonius) writing decades later note that Jesus' followers were already spread across the empire by the mid-1st century—evidence of remarkable early momentum.
- **Sociological studies** (e.g., Rodney Stark's *The Rise of Christianity*) suggest that Jesus' combination of **inclusivity (women, foreigners, lepers)** and **healing compassion** created a **movement appealing to the marginalized**—a vast audience often ignored by other teachers.

History-Meets-Theology

This is one of those fascinating “history-meets-theology” topics where the social sciences, archaeology, and scripture line up remarkably well. Let's explore how far and how fast Jesus' reputation spread **before His crucifixion**, using data and reasoning from biblical scholarship, Josephus, and sociological modeling (especially Rodney Stark and other historians of early Christianity).

Most scholars agree Jesus' public ministry lasted **about three years (c. 27–30 CE)**. In that span He:

- Traveled roughly **2,000–3,000 miles on foot**, covering all of **Galilee**, parts of **Samaria, Judea**, and areas east of the **Jordan (the Decapolis)**.
- Drew attention across every social layer—peasants, women, Roman soldiers, tax collectors, and synagogue leaders.

News in that region spread astonishingly fast because:

- **Trade and pilgrim routes** funneled thousands toward Jerusalem several times each year.



- The population was only about **500,000–600,000** in Galilee and **700,000–1 million** in Judea—so word of mouth could cover a province in weeks.
- **Storytelling culture** meant memorable events—especially healings—were repeated and exaggerated in retelling.

So, by Luke 17's timeframe (the last months before Jerusalem), Jesus would have been **widely known by name** even among people who never saw Him.

These numbers are not precise counts but scholarly reconstructions from Gospel data and early church demographics:

| Stage | Approx. Date | Estimated Followers / Hearers | Supporting Clues |
|---|--------------|--|---|
| Early Galilean phase (Capernaum, Nazareth) | 27 CE | Dozens → Hundreds | Luke 4–6 shows crowds filling synagogues and hillsides. |
| Miracle & teaching peak (Feeding 5,000) | 28 CE | 5,000 men + women & children = 10–15 k total | All four Gospels note this as a mass event. |
| Traveling ministry across Galilee–Samaria–Decapolis | 28–29 CE | Thousands region-wide | Mark 3:8 lists crowds from Idumea to Tyre—roughly a 100-mile radius. |
| Jericho & Judean period (Bartimaeus, Zacchaeus) | 29 CE | Large processional crowds | Luke 19:1–10 implies pilgrimage-level gatherings. |
| Entry into Jerusalem ("Palm Sunday") | 30 CE | Several thousand supporters locally | Josephus estimates ~2 million pilgrims in Jerusalem for Passover; even a small percentage recognizing Him = major visibility. |
| Post-Crucifixion nucleus (Upper Room) | 30 CE | ~120 core disciples (Acts 1:15) | Tight inner circle remains after dispersion. |
| Pentecost expansion | Weeks later | 3,000 converts in one day (Acts 2:41) | Demonstrates latent awareness and readiness among visitors from many nations. |

So, within three years, Jesus' **name recognition likely reached 10–20% of the population** of Roman Palestine—exceptionally fast for the era.

Healing stories functioned like today's viral content—shared because they promised **hope for the hopeless**.

- Formerly marginalized people (lepers, demoniacs, beggars) became **walking testimonies**.
- Each healing created a new circle of witnesses radiating outward.

The **Twelve** and later the **Seventy** acted as field communicators. That multiplied Jesus' exposure geometrically—think of seventy teams preaching simultaneously across dozens of towns.

Public clashes with Pharisees and temple authorities drew attention. Even critics spread His name ("Have you heard of this Galilean?").



Jesus' ministry coincided with:

- High **messianic expectation** under Roman rule.
- **Relative peace** (Pax Romana) and good roads—perfect for mobility.
- A strong **oral memory culture**, which preserved sayings verbatim.

By the time of His death:

- **Pontius Pilate** considered Him enough of a political risk to execute.
- **Herod Antipas** had already heard reports (Luke 9:7).
- **Roman centurions** and **Samaritans** knew His name.

This all suggests He was no obscure figure. Even before the Resurrection narratives, His reputation had crossed social, geographic, and ethnic lines.

Scholarly and Historical Cross-Checks

- **Josephus**, *Antiquities* 18.3.3, written ca. 93 CE, refers to Jesus as “a wise man... a doer of wonderful works.”
- **Pliny the Younger** (ca. 112 CE) reports that Christians were already widespread in Bithynia (modern Turkey), indicating explosive early growth.
- **Rodney Stark's modeling** (*The Rise of Christianity*, 1996) suggests a **compound annual growth rate of ~40%** from 30 CE to 300 CE—plausible only if Jesus' name started with strong early traction.

Theological Implication

The 10 lepers recognizing Jesus fits naturally into this context. By then, He was “**the healer from Galilee**”, a name passed from caravan to village, from synagogue to marketplace. Their plea—“Jesus, Master, have mercy”—shows they already saw Him as **divinely empowered** before meeting Him.

Faith, in Luke's narrative, often begins not with firsthand proof but with *hearing*. “Faith comes by hearing” (Romans 10:17) captures that dynamic perfectly.

In community life, reputation still travels the same way:

- One act of compassion, one person's transformation, can ripple through **local networks**—churches, diners, Facebook pages, farmers' breakfasts.
- Jesus' fame spread not through marketing, but through **changed lives**; the same dynamic applies when grace or goodness becomes visible in small-town settings.
- Like those ten men, people may first **hear** about hope long before they experience it directly—reminding us how *word of mouth* still evangelizes more powerfully than any formal campaign.



PARDON MY PLANET

