



June 28, 2015

2 Kings 23

*"God Has Not Forsaken His People"*

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Pastor Gary's message this week centers on Josiah's three sons and a grandson, who were the last four kings of Judah: Jehoahaz (16<sup>th</sup> king of Judah), Jehoiakim (17<sup>th</sup> king of Judah), Zedekiah (19<sup>th</sup> king of Judah), and Jehoiachin (18<sup>th</sup> king of Judah). All four of these men were wicked, and under their leadership, just like the majority of kings before them, the nation slipped further and further away from the Lord.

The Bible tells us, that except for a few very brief periods of righteousness in the land during the days of the kings, from the time of David until the last king of Judah, the nation had been testing the Lord's patience for approximately 500 years! At this point, the Lord had had enough of their rebellion, immorality, and idolatry. So the Lord used the Babylonians to punish Judah by allowing them to besiege Judah in the same way he allowed the Assyrians to besiege the northern kingdom of Israel 120 years earlier. [2 Kings 24:20](#) explains, from the Lord's perspective, the reason this took place: *"It was because of the Lord's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence."*

In this study, we'll learn about the Lord's faithfulness to bring a message of warning, as well as his promise to never forsake his people, and his promise to draw near to every suffering soul.

### Historical Background

1. When the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, they not only deported thousands of people, they confiscated the sacred articles from the Temple of the Lord.

2. [2 Kings 24:13-14](#) - *“As the Lord had declared, Nebuchadnezzar removed all the treasures from the temple of the Lord and from the royal palace, and took away all the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the Lord. He carried into exile all Jerusalem: all the officers and fighting men, and all the craftsmen and artisans - a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest of the land were left.”*
  
3. [2 Kings 25:8-12](#) - *“On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, and official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He set fire to the temple of the Lord, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down. The whole Babylonian army, under the commander of the imperial guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had gone over to the king of Babylon. But the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields.”*
  
4. The result was that the Jews were:
  - a. Displaced from their homes and their land.
  - b. Taken far away from everything that would have been familiar and comfortable to them, because they were prisoners of war.
  - c. Forced to travel a distance of approximately 1,000 miles from Judah to Babylon.
    - i. Pastor Gary said that’s the equivalent of walking from Leesburg, Virginia to Miami, Florida!
  
5. The Babylonian siege against Judah took place in three phases over a period of approximately 20 years (from 606 BC until Jerusalem fell in 586 BC).
  
6. In 606 BC, Daniel and his friends were among the first of the Jewish exiles that were sent to Babylon.
  
7. King Jehoiachin of Judah and 10,000 leaders, officers, and prominent citizens, including the prophet Ezekiel, were sent to Babylon in 597 BC.
  
8. In 586 BC, the Babylonians not only burned the city of Jerusalem and tore down the city walls; they also put out the eyes of King Zedekiah and carried him in chains to Babylon with more than 832 other prisoners.

## Despair, Discouragement, and Despondency

9. Imagine how much your life would have been changed forever if you were one of the exiles!
  - a. You would have been forcibly removed from your home, your land, your friends, and your family.
  - b. You would have been sent to a foreign land that had a different culture and way of life.
  - c. Life would never be the same again!
10. **Psalm 137** was borne out of the pain and sorrow these people felt, and it records the lament of the Jewish people who were now living in Babylon.
  - a. **Psalm 137:1-4** - *“By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion!’ How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?”*

## Jeremiah - God's Messenger Of Warning

11. The Lord is faithful in that he repeatedly sent warning messages.
12. **Jeremiah 22:8-12** - *“People from many nations will pass by this city and will ask one another, ‘Why has the Lord done such a thing to this great city?’ And the answer will be: ‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and have worshiped and served other gods.’ Do not weep for the dead [king] or mourn his loss; rather, weep bitterly for him who is exiled, because he will never return nor see his native land again. For this is what the Lord says about Shallum [Jehoahaz, the 16<sup>th</sup> king of Judah] son of Josiah, who succeeded his father as king of Judah but has gone from this place. ‘He will never return. He will die in the place where they have led him captive; he will not see this land again.’ ”*
13. **Jeremiah 22:18-19** - *“Therefore this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim [17<sup>th</sup> king of Judah] son of Josiah king of Judah: ‘They will not mourn for him: Alas, my brother! Alas, my sister! They will not mourn for him: Alas, my master! Alas, his splendor! He will have the burial of a donkey - dragged away and thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem.’ ”*
14. **Jeremiah 22:24-27** - *“ ‘As surely as I live,’ declares the Lord, ‘even if you, [Jehoiachin 18<sup>th</sup> king of Judah] son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, were a signet*

*ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off. I will hand you over to those who seek your life, those you fear – to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to the Babylonians. I will hurl you and the mother who gave you birth into another country, where neither of you was born, and there you both will die. You will never come back to the land you long to return to.’ ”*

### Forsaken, Abandoned, Estranged

15. Like the people of Jerusalem and Judah, we sometimes we feel as though we've been forsaken, abandoned, or estranged from the Lord.
16. Sometimes, through no fault of our own, the circumstances of life leave us feeling alone or rejected by God.
17. David felt this way when he wrote [Psalm 22](#).
  - a. [Psalm 22:1-3](#) – *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel.”*
  - b. Jesus, who had done nothing wrong, quoted [Psalm 22:1](#) from the cross.
18. Sometimes, we are responsible for the distance we feel exists between God, and us, and this was the case for Judah; their sin against God resulted in their distance from God.
19. [Isaiah 59:2](#) – *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”*

### The Lord Is Faithful

20. [Jeremiah 23:1-6](#) – *“ ‘Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!’ declares the Lord. Therefore this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: ‘Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done.’ Declares the Lord. ‘I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,’ declares the Lord. ‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will raise up*

*to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness.”*

21. In the midst of all of these wicked kings (“shepherds”) who had abdicated their responsibilities and harmed the people of God, due to their poor leadership and sinful example, God promises to send another king whose name is *“The Lord Our Righteousness”!*
22. **Psalm 30:5** – *“For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.”*
23. It’s important to remember, that if God would do this for a people who deliberately, maliciously, intentionally, and immorally sinned against him, how much more will he do for us who have done the same or for those who, through no fault of their own, have felt distant from God?
24. The Lord predetermined 70 years of exile, which really is a long time, but 70 years isn’t that bad when you consider they had been in disobedience for 500 years!
25. **Jeremiah 29:10-14** – *“This is what the Lord says: ‘When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. 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. I 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.’ ”*
26. Isn’t it remarkable that before the Lord allowed them to be taken away to Babylon, he promised to bring them back and give them a future and a hope!
27. The Lord did not forsake his people and he will not forsake us either.
28. The Lord will welcome back every sinner, and he will draw near to every suffering soul.
29. **Jeremiah 31:3** – *“The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.’ ”*

30. [Psalm 22:19](#) - *“But you, O Lord, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me.”*
31. [Psalm 22:24](#) - *“For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [2 Kings 23:30-32; 23:36-24:2; 24:8-12, 18-20](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they've had concerning times when they had feelings of despair, discouragement, and despondency.
4. Read and discuss [Jeremiah 22:8-12, 18-19, 24-27](#).
5. What are some of the ways the Lord was faithful to bring messages of warning to you, concerning sin in your life?
6. Read and discuss [Psalm 22:1-3](#).
7. Have there been times in your life when, through no fault of your own, you've had feelings of being forsaken, abandoned, or estranged from the Lord?
8. How did the Lord minister to you in these times?
9. Read and discuss [Isaiah 59:2](#).
10. Spend time talking about the times when you were responsible for the distance between yourself and the Lord.
11. Read and discuss [Psalm 30:5](#).
12. What are some of the ways you've experienced the Lord's promise to restore your relationship with him, and in so doing, you received his promise for a *“hope and a future”*?

13. Read and discuss [Jeremiah 31:3](#) and [Psalm 22:19, 24](#).

14. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).