

How appropriate and beautiful that we have arrived at chapter 23 in our study of Jeremiah, right on the Sunday known as Palm Sunday! This fits perfectly! Why do I say that?

Because in Jeremiah 23, verses 1-8, is the first time in the wonderful book of Jeremiah, that our poor our suffering prophet looked far ahead through the future centuries and this is the first time that Jeremiah spoke about the coming of the One who would fulfill God's ideal of a King. This coming King would fulfill all of God's requirements for justice and godly leadership.

This passage is like a Triumphant Entry passage. It is like a sudden and small glimpse of the type of King that we truly need. This passage stands out like a ray of hope in the middle of a dark section of Scripture. One day the King will reign on the throne of David! But wait, how does that square with the previous chapter, chapter 22?

Let me explain. Remember in our previous study, how God condemned the kings? Out of order chronologically, we saw from chapter 21, that there was condemnation of Zedekiah, who was the last king. Then, in chapter 22, as if speaking to Zedekiah, spoke about the previous three evil kings, Shallum, Jehoiakim, and Coniah.

That section ended with the last verse of chapter 22, which reads, "*Thus says The LORD: 'Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days, for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah.'*"

The kings were bad, but what about the prophecies that Jesus will be descended from the house of David?

Because we can fast-forward to our New Testaments, and we can read ahead, we already know that the New Testament genealogies of Jesus show that Joseph, the stepfather of Jesus, was the son of David through Coniah, or Jehoiachin. What we learn is that a biological son of Joseph, a biological descendant of Jehoiachin, could not sit on the throne. Had Jesus been the natural biological son of Joseph, and the biological descendant of Jehoiachin, then Jesus would not have had the right to be king!

But in God's perfect justice and amazing orderliness, Jesus was the son of Mary. Mary was a descendant of David through Nathan, a brother of Solomon, and so Jesus had the right to rule from the throne of David. We learn that God ties all of history together and that God works in ways that human beings cannot anticipate.

We have to better understand the promise of God about the throne of David, really, what did God promise? That is our main point in this passage - **The LORD God promised to make things right.** And God did make things right.

The kings on the throne of David failed by sinning grievously. They must be dethroned! And yet, God still promised unfailing faithfulness to His promise to David.

In this passage about God's promise to make things right, we will see firstly, how God provided shepherds who care, and they make things right. Secondly, we will see how the true king Himself makes things right. And thirdly, we will see how there is nothing more right than people being home together.

Of course, Jesus is the promised righteous branch. Jesus is the son of Jehoiachin, who reversed the curse on Jehoiachin's line by accepting the judgment the Father sent on Him, just as Jehoiachin accepted his judgment from God. Jesus is the Son of David who now reigns, and everything is right with heaven and everything is right with the universe, and soon our King Jesus Christ will make every single thing right. He reigns, and He will reign forever. He will punish evil, and pour out blessings on His people. Until then, Jesus provides in His church shepherds who care, Jesus is the king who rules wisely and does all things well, and King Jesus is the One who will take us all home to be together with Him forever, where He reigns in the right way.

### **1. Shepherds who care, make things right. (v.1-4)**

Shepherds are Shepherd-Kings. Shepherds are leaders – governmental and religious leaders. The story of humans in this world is the story of bad shepherding – bad leaders in government and bad leaders in religion. Political leaders through human history have enslaved and killed their own people. Spiritual leaders through human history have caused spiritual harm to their followers, instead of healing, gain and growth. We need better shepherds in politics and in the church! A declining church in America is a sign of a declining gospel ministry in America. How many pastors in American are not acquainted with the living Christ? Are these shepherds who care, or wolves who devour? What will Christ do about this problem?

In the first four verses of our passage, God through his spokesman Jeremiah described a future vision of the true Shepherd, the Good Shepherd.

Verse 1 began with a woe oracle about the bad shepherds. Woe to... We later hear this sort of talking in the preaching of Jesus, don't we? "Woe to you, Pharisees" and so on. Here Jeremiah is speaking a Woe on behalf of the LORD God, when Jeremiah wrote, "*Woe to the shepherds...*" Why? Because these shepherds did the 2 exact opposite things from what they should have done. 1) Bad shepherds destroyed the sheep, instead of protecting them. 2) Bad shepherds

scattered the sheep, instead of gathering them together. These are not true shepherds. True shepherds would go to great lengths to take care of their sheep.

In verse 2 God gave consequences to the bad shepherds. Since they did not attend to God's sheep, therefore God would attend to them, for their evil deeds.

The punishment of the bad shepherds signaled the beginning of salvation for sheep.

Verse 3, God Himself will perform the action of the true shepherd, yes, God Himself will gather the sheep. But not all of the sheep. God will gather the "remnant" of His flock out of all the countries where God had driven them. The remnant refers to the faithful people of God who survive the coming judgment, and provide the starter of the rebuilding of God's people. God would bring the remnant back to their fold. God would cause the remnant sheep to be fruitful and multiply.

Verse 4, God will set over the sheep shepherds who will care for them. This shows a godly leadership is coming in the future. What is the result? The sheep will fear no more. The sheep will be dismayed no more! None of the sheep will go missing!

## **2. The true king makes things right. (v.5-6)**

Verse 5, the phrase "the Days are coming" was a phrase that showed a vision and promise of a better future. What would make the future better? God Himself would raise up a David ruler. A righteous branch. The branch comes from the idea of the people of God like a tree that has been chopped down, leaving only a stump. From the cut down promise will grow God's salvation, starting with the first sign of growth from that stump. What is good about this future ruler? Four good characteristics are listed about this future ruler. 1) He shall reign as king 2) he shall deal wisely and 3) he shall execute justice in the land 4) he shall execute righteousness in the land.

Verse 6, discusses salvation for Judah and secure dwelling for Israel. All of this is crowned with a name for this ruler. 'The LORD is our righteousness.' That does not feel like much of a name to us. That feels like a whole sentence. But it is a name. JEHOVAH JIREH. THE LORD PROVIDER. JEHOVAH ZEDEK. THE LORD RIGHTEOUS. What did you hear when I said it? Zedek. It is a play on the name of the last king of Judah. King Zedek - iah. Zedekiah. Zedekiah is not the righteous king. Another ruler will come in the future who will truly make things right. Zedekiah was not the true king. The True king was yet to come.

## **3. Nothing is more right than being home together. (v.7-8)**

In verse 7, again we get this phrase from God through his spokesman Jeremiah, "*Behold, the days are coming...*"

What days were coming? Days when people will change what they say. They used to say – what a great action of God to bring His people out of slavery in

Egypt through the miracle of parting the waters and having His people come through on dry ground. But that God is going to do something even greater. Are you ready for what that future action of God will be? Verse 8, God will bring His people back from exile. When in the future, God brings His people back from exile, it will be such a wonderful salvation that they will, in comparison, practically forget their deliverance from slavery Egypt. Wow.

On the day of Jeremiah's prophecy, this was a promise of such huge proportions that it was hard to even imagine.

1) That there would be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Exodus.

2) That the 2<sup>nd</sup> Exodus would be even greater than the first exodus!! Wow.

What is the message? Christ is going to care for them.

Christ is the True King, and He will take care of His people.

God will not only rescue His people from exile, but then after they are brought out of exile, God will always look out for them.

What is so great about this, that makes it even greater than the Exodus?

What did the people do after the first exodus? They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

What did the people do after the 2<sup>nd</sup> exodus, that is after they came out of exile?

Let me read our last verse, and listen for what is so great about it. Specifically, listen for what the people did after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Exodus, after the exile. Verse 8, *"but 'As the Lord lives who brought up and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where He had driven them.' Then they shall dwell in their own land."*

They get to go home!

To their own land.

SI - Many years ago in England a circus elephant named Bozo was very popular with the public. Children especially loved to crowd around his cage and throw him peanuts. Then one day there was a sudden change in the elephant's personality. Several times he tried to kill his keeper and when the children came near his cage he would charge toward them as if wanting to trample them to death. It was obvious he would have to be destroyed. The circus owner, a greedy and crude man, decided to stage a public execution of the animal. In this way, he could sell tickets and try to recoup some of the cost of losing such a valuable property.

The day came and the huge circus tent was packed. Bozo, in his cage, was in the center ring. Nearby stood a firing squad with high-powered rifles. The manager, standing near the cage, was about ready to give the signal to fire, when out of the crowd came a short, inconspicuous man in a brown derby hat.

"There is no need for this," he told the manager quietly.

The manager brushed him aside. "He is a bad elephant. He must die before he kills someone."

"You are wrong," insisted the man. "Give me two minutes in the cage alone with him and I will prove you are wrong."

The manager turned and stared in amazement. "You will be killed," he said.

"I don't think so," said the man. "Do I have your permission?"

The manager, being the kind of man he was, was not one to pass up such a dramatic spectacle. Even if the man were killed, the publicity alone would be worth millions.

"All right," he said, "but first you will have to sign a release absolving the circus of all responsibility." The small man signed the paper.

As he removed his coat and hat, preparing to enter the cage, the manager told the people what was about to happen. A hush fell over the crowd. The door to the cage was unlocked, the man stepped inside, then the door was locked behind him. At the sight of this stranger in his cage the elephant threw back his trunk, let out a might roar, then bent his head preparing to charge. The man stood quite still, a faint smile on his face as he began to talk to the animal. The audience was so quiet that those nearest the cage could hear the man talking but couldn't make out the words; he seemed to be speaking some foreign language. Slowly, as the man continued to talk, the elephant raised his head. Then the crowd heard an almost piteous cry from the elephant as his enormous head began to sway gently from side to side. Smiling, the man walked confidently to the animal and began to stroke the long trunk. All aggression seemed suddenly to have been drained from the elephant. Docile as a pup now he wound his trunk around the man's waist and the two walked slowly around the ring. The astounded audience could bear the silence no longer and broke out in cheers and clapping. After a while the man bade farewell to the elephant and left the cage.

"He'll be all right now," he told the manager. "You see, he's an Indian elephant and none of you spoke his language, Hindustani. I would advise you to get someone around here who speaks Hindustani. He was just homesick." And with that the little man put on his coat and hat and left. The astounded manager looked down at the slip of paper in his hand. The name the man had signed was Rudyard Kipling.

We are citizens of heaven. We get so disappointed with the leaders here on earth, that we get agitated. We need to hear the voice of our King, the voice of our Shepherd, from our heavenly home. We want to sing the songs of Zion. We want to worship The King of Heaven, who is also the King of all nations, and the Head of the church. We are homesick for heaven. Our King makes things right.

**Conclude:**

*Rejoice in the present reign of the High King of Heaven, Jesus Christ.*

There are two reasons to rejoice 1) that Christ the King is ruling over everything now for us, and 2) that at the end, the King will take us home to heaven.

The term “my people,” occurs more than 40 times in the book of Jeremiah. This theme occurs in our passage as ‘the sheep of my pasture’ (v.1), ‘my people’ (v.2), ‘my flock’ (v.2), “my flock” (again in v.3), shows us that we belong to God. One aspect of Palm Sunday, and one aspect of the Kingship of Jesus is that I belong to Him. We belong to Him. Think of it. Even after all of our sins, and all the sins of our leaders, our shepherds, our kings, our pastors and our elders, we still belong to God. We are the people of God, and we rejoice in the reign of our King.

So, with regard to bad leaders, remember that The King makes things right.

This passage is a beautiful and welcome shaft of light. It is like Palm Sunday that shows up after a long dark Winter, and gives us all hope and brightness of how things will be better and better because of our God fulfilling His promises to us.

Maybe you are discouraged because of bad leaders in the government. We are taught to remember that Christ makes things right.

In Romans 13:4, Paul wrote in particular about our perspective on every government ruler, that “*he is God’s servant for your good.*” We must accept political rulers as God’s “servants,” as they rule for a brief time under Christ the true King and Christ the Son of David.

The same is true for every other sphere of our lives. Bad leaders in the workplace, in the military, in the hospital, in the laboratory, in the schools, in the universities.

Christ has already begun to reign at His resurrection. Acts 2:36, “*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*” Jesus rose again, and He is both Lord and Christ.

Wait, is Jesus really in control in countries that are at war, and countries that are passing bad policies and bad laws, and countries that are putting people on the Supreme Court that do not hold to Biblical laws and Biblical definitions? Yes. Jesus is in control. What is Jesus going to do about it? Jesus the King is the one who makes things right. Hebrews 2:8, about God the Father putting everything in subjection to Jesus Christ, we read this further truth, “*...in putting everything in subjection to Him, He left nothing outside His control.*”

God fulfilled the promises in Christ Jesus our King.

We shall be fruitful and multiply, which fulfills the creation command given to Adam and Eve.

The land of Israel would be like paradise regained, filled with the people of God, each in their proper territory, a place where they belong.

Those people of God would be ruled by good leaders, good shepherds, good kings, who would be under the leadership of the Good Shepherd Himself, as he said in verse 4. They would tend God's sheep the way that a shepherd should.

These promises were all fulfilled when God brought His people back from exile in Babylon. God appointed good men over His people, men like Ezra and Nehemiah, who actually cared for God's sheep. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah have complete lists of all the names of the exiles who returned from captivity, showing that God's promise came true – not one was missing.

These promises had another fulfillment again later. The Lord fulfilled them again in the later arrival of Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said, "*I am the Good Shepherd.*" John 10:11. When Jesus said that, Jesus was claiming to be the fulfillment of everything that Jeremiah 23 promised about good shepherds.

Jesus is the Head of the Church today, the Chief Shepherd, who gathers the remnant of His sheep from all nations. He calls His own sheep by name, and calls them out of the world. John 10:3

Jesus said to Peter 3 times in John 21 – feed my sheep. Jesus was telling Peter and telling all pastors and elders that your job is to shepherd and truly care for the precious people of God. Believers are not redeemed by the parting of mighty waters, and not redeemed by a mighty return from exile, but rather, believing people have been redeemed by the death of Jesus our Shepherd-King, followed by His mighty resurrection. This bears your reflection this coming week.

1 Corinthians 1:30, "*...you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.*"

We rejoice in the present reign of the High King of Heaven, Jesus Christ. He is the King who makes things right. Especially, that He made us right with God. Our salvation that we celebrate on Good Friday and on Resurrection Sunday is an event of such magnitude that the liberation from Egypt and the return from exile in Babylon are nearly forgotten, in comparison to the redeeming work of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21, "*For our sake God made [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*"