

# The True Shepherd-King

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[ 0 : 00 ] But we just had Justin read chapter 23, most of it, because it's a long passage. But I'll be starting in Jeremiah 21. But before I start, let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, we read just now that your word is like a fire.

So we pray that your word would brand your truth onto our minds and our hearts today like a fire. So that we might be conformed to your truth and live according to it.

Lord, we also read that your word is like a hammer that breaks the rock to pieces. So we pray that you would break the hardened places of our hearts with your word this morning. Make us supple. Given, open, Lord, to your influence. Convict us of our sins. And comfort us with your grace. We look forward to hearing from you, Lord.

In Jesus' name. Amen. So in Jeremiah 21. And I have to give you guys a little bit of a background so you can understand what's going on here.

[ 1 : 16 ] To varying degrees. I'm sure all of you have experienced what it's like to have a bad leader. Maybe it's a manager at your workplace.

Or a parent at home. A teacher in a classroom. A politician that represents your city or country. Or a pastor of a church. It can be frustrating and discouraging to have a leader who doesn't know what is best for you.

And someone who doesn't rule justly and treats people unfairly. And one way or another, all of us, every human leader, failed. Because they are sinful.

And the leaders of the kingdom of Judah in particular were failing miserably. And Jeremiah wrote these chapters in response to them. Because the kings who were supposed to be champions of justice were perpetuating injustice.

And the prophets who were supposed to be the voice of truth were spreading lies. And so while the people of Judah had all sinned against God in part because of these leaders, the kings and prophets of Judah who led them astray are come under even greater scrutiny and even more severe judgment by God.

[ 2 : 29 ] And that's what we see here in these chapters. And frequently throughout the book of Jeremiah, the leaders are singled out because of that. But in the midst of God's indictment of these leaders, God also makes a promise to gather his people to himself from their exile and to raise up a king from the line of David who will rule with righteousness.

A king that will never do us wrong. A king that will always speak God's truth and lead us in God. A king that we can trust completely and pledge our total allegiance to. That kind of king. And the main point then of this passage is that the Christ is the true king who fulfills the righteousness of God and speaks the words of God.

Christ is the true king and prophet who fulfills the righteousness of God and speaks the words of God. And so turn with me to chapter 21.

And before I can start there, I'm going to first talk about the unrighteous kings in chapter 21 to 23 verse 8. And then I'll talk about the ungodly prophets from chapter 23 verse 9 to 40.

But just the outline that I'll follow. And Jeremiah's ministry spanned the reign of King Josiah, who as well as three of his sons and his grandson who reigned after him, after Josiah's death.

[ 3 : 47 ] So after Josiah died, I can show you here, his fourth son actually, Jehoahaz, became king. His other name is Shalom. So the number next to the name show what order in which they became king.

So Jehoahaz was anointed king of Judah after Josiah's death. But probably because he was continuing the religious reforms of his father Josiah, the Egyptian overlords, the Egypt that ruled over them, didn't like him ruling.

So they came and Necho intervened and they deposed him and replaced him with Josiah's second son, Jehoiakim. And he was more pro-Egypt. And Jehoiakim tried to appease all the other powers that were kind of over Judah at the time.

So Egypt and Babylon, he tried to appease them both. But when he missed his tribute payment to Babylon one day, Nebuchadnezzar came to invade and besiege Jerusalem.

And while Jerusalem was besieged, Jehoiakim died. And his son, which is Josiah's grandson, Jehoiachin, also called Jeconiah, became king of Judah.

[ 4 : 50 ] But his reign was short-lived because Judah was soon thereafter defeated by Babylon. And the Babylonian ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, replaced Jehoiachin with Josiah's third son, Zedekiah, who ruled under Babylon's supervision.

And so Zedekiah was ruling. He ruled for about 10, 11 years. But soon after, Babylon came again to invade Jerusalem. He besieged Jerusalem. And at that time, in 586 BC, the temple was completely destroyed and the city was burned.

And Judah became a province of Babylon, no longer an independent nation. So that's kind of the background in which chapter 21 is now taking place. And it's important for me to tell you that because we're kind of skipping ahead in the history.

Because in the last chapter, Jerusalem was still intact. It hadn't been invaded. It would be sieged by Babylon. But here, Zedekiah is now inquiring about whether or not they're going to escape this siege that Babylon has placed on them.

And this is because Jeremiah, as a book, is not organized chronologically. It's organized thematically. And so here, we're kind of skipping ahead. And then later, Jehoiakim, who should already be dead by this point, comes back in chapter 36.

[ 6 : 03 ] Because again, this is organized thematically, not chronologically. So in any case, what's going on here is King Zedekiah is facing the second Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. And in verses 1 to 2, it tells us that he sent to Jeremiah, So Zedekiah is sending for Jeremiah, hoping for a miracle.

Because he had in mind the time in 701 BC when Jerusalem was once again under siege by Sennacherib of the Assyrian armies. Yet God intervened with his wonderful deed.

He struck down their armies and forced them to withdraw from them. So that's kind of what he's hoping for as he sends a messenger, two messengers in fact, to Jeremiah. But his response in verses 4 to 7 is totally demoralizing.

Read with me. So far, so good, right? But here's the kicker.

I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands and with which you are fighting against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans who are besieging you outside the walls.

[ 7 : 25 ] And I will bring them together into the midst of this city. I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger and in fury and in great wrath.

And I will strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast. They shall die of a great pestilence. Afterward declares the Lord, I will give Zedekiah, king of Judah and his servants, and the people in this city who survived the pestilence, sword and famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of those who seek their lives.

He shall strike them down with the edge of the sword. He shall not pity them or spare them or have compassion. These are shocking words to hear if you're listening from the perspective of God's people.

Because instead of turning back the weapons of Babylon, God is saying, I'm going to turn your weapons with which you are resisting Babylon. God, who they were expecting to fight for Judah, is saying that he will fight against Judah himself with his outstretched hand and strong arm, which is a phrase that is used throughout the Old Testament, referred to God's power, his might, to save his people.

Yet those exact expressions are now being turned around to refer to God's judgment of his people. And those who remembered God's acts of deliverance in the past must have trembled to hear of God's outstretched hand and strong arm coming against them.

[ 8 : 50 ] And during the American Civil War, someone purportedly asked President Abraham Lincoln if he believed that God was on the side of the Union. To which he replied, apparently, Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side.

My greatest concern is to be on God's side. For God is always right. God is not someone we can co-opt to our own agendas.

God has his sovereign purposes, and we can submit to them for our good, or we can resist them to our peril. And even though Israel was God's chosen people, they found themselves on this occasion on the wrong side of God.

They sought the benefits of God while neglecting the worship of God, and God would not be mocked. And so often, it's true of us, isn't it? We seek our own agendas, and then we ask God to bless them.

Instead of seeking God's agenda, which he has already blessed. In every endeavor, we should ask ourselves, are we on God's side? And we should search the scripture humbly in a posture of submission rather than self-justification.

[ 9 : 57 ] And then in verses 12 to 14, God gives the reason why he is opposing Judah. Thus says the Lord, It was customary for kings of Judah to hold court at the city gates, and in the mornings to administer justice to people who came with grievances and wanted justice for themselves.

But they did not execute justice in the mornings. And they did not deliver the oppressed from the hand of the oppressor. And because they did not deliver the oppressed from the hand of the oppressor, they themselves will be handed over to the hand of their enemies, what God is saying. And then if you look at chapter 22, God repeats this charge that the kings of Judah have not taken care of the oppressed. And he says in verse 3, The word justice refers to God's impartial and perfect judgment.

And God condemns evildoers. He always condemns evildoers and acquits the innocent. He cannot be bribed and he cannot be fooled. And the kings of Judah were supposed to render the judgment according to God's justice, but instead they were perverting this justice.

And the word righteousness overlaps with this concept of justice. It refers to the fact that God's the one who knows what is right. He defines what is right and just. And so justice then is an execution and enforcement of God's righteousness.

[ 11 : 57 ] And it's those two things, the neglect of those two things, abuse of those two things, is the primary charge that God's bringing against the leaders of Judah. And it's amazing that God cares for the ones who are marginalized in this context because the prosperity of Judah as a nation is tied up with how they treat their poor.

The power of Judah is tied up with how they treat the powerless among them. And Judah's relationship with God is tied up with how they treat those who have lost all their relations, the resident aliens, the fatherless, and the widow.

And whether Judah will shed its blood in war or not is tied up with whether they have shed innocent blood in their own land. It's easy for people to ignore those without power and means to make their voices heard and make their causes known.

But those who seek to be on God's side must be advocates and champions of justice and righteousness in the land. And if the kings of Judah obey this word, God says in verse 4, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David.

But if not, Judah's dynasty will become a desolation. And then God continues in 22, 6 to 7, So this is metaphorical.

[ 13 : 30 ] God's comparing Jerusalem to the lush forests of Gilead and Lebanon. And earlier in chapter 21, verse 14, God also said, I will kindle a fire in her forest and it shall devour all that is around her.

And so this is a continuation of that metaphor. How do we know that this is a metaphor? It's because there was no literal forest in Jerusalem. But in 1 Kings chapter 7, verse 2, the royal palace is called the house of the forest of Lebanon because it was built largely with the famous cedars from Lebanon and Gilead.

And so later in chapter 22, 23, God calls Jerusalem an inhabitant of Lebanon, nested among the cedars. So in this metaphorical sense, the royal house and Jerusalem, the city, they soared like these magnificent forests of Lebanon and Gilead with their giant beams and pillars all around them. Yet God says, I will kindle a fire in her mist and the Babylonians will come and cut the temple down like woodcutters and cast them into the fire. So instead of a forest, Jerusalem will be reduced to a desert.

Then starting in verse 10, God gives his commentary and assessment of all the kings of Judah during whose reigns Jeremiah ministered. It's really a compilation of all Jeremiah's prophecies

regarding the kings of Judah.

[14:46] So follow with me in verse 10. First he says, Weep not for him who is dead, nor grieve for him, but weep bitterly for him who goes away, for he shall return no more to see his native land.

This is a little bit cryptic, right? I mean, who is the one who is dead and who is the one who goes away? And whenever you're reading scripture and you find something that's a little bit puzzling, it's helpful to read what comes before and after it because it's explained in the following verses in verses 11 to 12.

For thus says the Lord concerning Shalom, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father and who went away from this place. He shall return here no more, but in the place where they have carried him captive, there shall he die and he shall never see this land again.

So the one who goes away is Shalom, which is the personal name of King Jehoahaz, the first king that took over after Josiah. And he was exiled to Egypt by Pharaoh Necho, and so he's the one who goes away.

So what Jeremiah is saying is that, yes, there was a time to mourn for Josiah who died in battle against Egypt, but that time of mourning is over. What we should really mourn is the exiled one Jehoahaz who was supposed to rule and continue the religious reforms of Josiah, but instead he's now in exile in Egypt.

[16:05] That's the sad reality that you should really mourn, is what Jeremiah is telling his people. And then in verses 13 to 23, God condemns Jehoiakim, the next king that takes over, who was appointed by Necho to rule after Jehoahaz was exiled.

He says in verses 13 to 14, Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbors serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages, who says, I will build myself a great house with spacious upper rooms, who cuts out windows for it, paneling it with cedar and painting it with vermilion.

Again, the two words, justice and righteousness, recurring words here, because they did not execute justice for the powerless and the vulnerable in society. And that's God's sheath and diamond against Jehoiakim.

And he built a luxurious palace for himself in Jerusalem with the cedars of Lebanon. He painted it lavishly with vermilion. For those of you who can only name like seven colors like me, I did your homework for you, and vermilion is a brilliant scarlet red.

It's one of the most expensive colors you can use in the ancient world. And so he colored all these expensive cedars with these expensive paint. And that in and of itself is not what's wrong, what God condemns.

[17:26] The problem is that Jehoiakim built this palace for himself with unrighteousness and injustice. He says he made his neighbor serve him for nothing and did not give him his wages.

This is at the heart of the king's injustice. This is at the heart of all injustice toward one another. Notice what God calls the laborers. He doesn't call them the king's subjects.

He doesn't call them the citizens of Judah. He calls them the king's neighbor. To highlight the fact that Leviticus 19.18, one of God's great commandments in the Old Testament that sums up God's people's obligation to one another was this, love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. That's what he had commanded them. Even though Jehoiakim was a king, even though he was raised above others by virtue of his office and position, in his person, he was equal to all his subjects because they, like he, were created in the image of God with dignity and value. So whenever we're tempted to treat someone unfairly, whether it's someone of another class or race or sex, we have to remember that he is our neighbor, that she is our neighbor, that they are our equal, that they are our fellow man.

[18:48] And God's putting the kings of Judah on notice here. He's saying, Yes, you occupy the throne, but don't you forget that you reign at my behest and for my glory over my people.

So God continues his scathing rebuke in verses 15 to 16 to Jehoiakim. Do you think you are a king because you compete in cedar?

Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy. Then it was well. Is not this to know me, declares the Lord. Living in a luxurious palace made of cedar is not what makes a king. And it's not like God was trying to deprive Jehoiakim of all these comforts and luxuries of royalty. He says, Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness?

His father Josiah did enjoy the perks of royalty. His father ate and drank well like royalty, but he didn't stop with eating and drinking well. He also executed justice and righteousness like royalty should.

[ 19 : 50 ] And that's why it went well with him. But in order to be a true king, he's saying Jehoiakim is failing in this regard. The king must represent God and rule over his people and give righteousness and justice to them.

That's what it means to know God and to be in covenant relationship with him. But in contrast to Josiah, Jehoiakim had eyes and heart only for his dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence.

Therefore, the Lord declares concerning him in verses 18 to 19, they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, my brother, or ah, sister. They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, Lord, or ah, his majesty.

With the burial of a donkey, he shall be buried, dragged, and dumped beyond the gates of Jerusalem. Since he did not treat his subjects as his neighbor, they will not lament his death, saying, My brother.

Nor will they honor him as their king. They will not mourn, saying, Ah, Lord, ah, his majesty. Instead, he will be buried like a donkey, dumped beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

[ 20 : 58 ] Having denounced Jehoiakim, God turns to denouncing the entire city of Jerusalem in verses 20 to 23. We know that the subject here changes to Jerusalem because it's using the second person feminine pronoun, which is what's usually used in prophetic literature for Jerusalem, the city of Jerusalem.

And so in verse 20, that switches. In 22, God ironically says, The wind shall shepherd all your shepherds, and your lovers shall go into captivity. Then you will be ashamed and confounded because of all your evil.

The shepherds are referring, they refer to the leaders and rulers, the nobles of Jerusalem, and they have failed to shepherd God's people, and so now they themselves will be shepherded by the wind, meaning they will be scattered and exiled in captivity.

And then having prophesied about Jehoiahaz and Jehoiakim, Jeremiah's prophecy turns into the next king in the line of succession, Coniah, or Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin.

Sorry, they have so many names as he is elsewhere called in scripture. He says in verses 24 to 25, As I live, declares the Lord, though Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, wore the signet ring on my right hand, yet I would tear you off and give you in to the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

[ 22 : 19 ] So the repetition of the word hand, if you notice, emphasizes the contrast between what Jeconiah is fancying for himself and the divine reality. Because Jeconiah was styling himself as the signet ring on God's right hand.

He's saying, I am the signet ring of God. I represent his rule. I represent his authority. I stand for him, so you better bow before me. And that's how he ruled and styled himself. Yet God says, even if you were my signet ring, it's a conditional statement.

He's saying he's not. Even if you were my signet ring, I would tear you off from my hand and I would give you to the hand of those who seek your life, to the hand of those whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and the hand of the Chaldeans.

Jeconiah will be along with his queen mother will be exiled and they will never return to their homeland from Babylon. And then God further says in chapter 23, verses 1 to 2, woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, declares the Lord.

Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people, you have scattered my flock and have driven them away and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the Lord.

[ 23 : 34 ] Because the shepherds, the kings and rulers of Judah, scattered God's flock. They did not attend to them. And so God now turns that around and says, I will attend to you for your evil deeds.

The shepherds who are inattentive to the care of God's sheep will be attended to by God's judgment. So that's the profile, really, of the unrighteous kings of Judah.

And then the rest of the chapter, we see the ungodly prophets. And I'll return to verses 3 to 8 of chapter 23, but let's turn, skip forward for now to verse 9.

Having addressed the kings of Judah, Jeremiah turns his attention to the prophets of Judah in verses 9 to 10. He says, concerning the prophets, my heart is broken within me.

All my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine because of the Lord and because of his holy words. For the land is full of adulterers. Because of the curse, the land mourns and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up.

[ 24 : 36 ] Their course is evil and their might is not right. Jeremiah is so grieved by the spiritual state of Judah and the Lord's judgment that he's beside himself and he's trembling.

The people of Judah were figuratively adulterous and literally adulterous because they committed idolatry against God and they did commit sexual acts in their worship of Baal and because of that, the curse on the land is now making the pastures dry up and even the land is suffering because of the sins of the people of Judah.

And in verses 11 to 12, God confirms Jeremiah's lament and assessment. He says, both prophet and priest are ungodly. Even in my house, I have found their evil, declares the Lord.

Therefore, their way shall be to them like slippery paths in the darkness into which they shall be driven and fall. For I will bring disaster upon them in the year of their punishment, declares the Lord. It's a shocking revelation that both prophet and priest are ungodly, right? Ungodly does not mean immoral here. It doesn't mean unholy. It means godless.

[ 25 : 48 ] Both the prophets who are supposed to speak for God to his people and the priests who are supposed to speak for his people to God are godless. They are alienated from God.

They don't know God. And God says about these prophets in verse 18, who among them has stood in the counsel of the Lord to see and to hear his word? Or who has paid attention to his word and listened?

The implied answer to this rhetorical question is no. None of these prophets of Judah had stood in the counsel of the Lord to see and to hear his word, which is why they were prophesying nonsense and speaking their own minds instead of speaking the mind of the Lord.

So God says to them in chapter 23 verses 21 to 22, I did not send the prophets, yet they ran. I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.

But if they had stood in my counsel, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people and they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds.

[ 26 : 53 ] Even though God never sent these prophets, they ran like they were commissioned by God with some urgent, important message. Even though God never spoke to them, they spoke for God as if they had heard from him.

A true prophet must be one sent of God and they had to be spoken to by God, yet these prophets of Judah were neither. And for that reason, God condemns them for not warning the people of their evil deeds as he wanted to do.

And these prophets thought that they could get away with what they were doing, but God says in verses 23 to 24, Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away?

Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him, declares the Lord? Do I not fill heaven and earth, declares the Lord? God is both a God who is far away and God who is near. God fills the entire heavens and the earth, yet he is with you in the privacy of your own room. He saw all the wicked deeds of these false prophets.

[ 27 : 58 ] They were claiming, as verse 25 says, I have dreamed, I have dreamed, but these dreams were figments of their own imagination and they were lies and deceits of their own hearts. And so God says in 28 and 29, let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully.

What has straw in common with wheat, declares the Lord, is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.

Even though these false prophets were saying, declares the Lord, in truth, they were declaring their own words. The dreams of prophets, no matter how grand or plausible, are like straw or chaff that is blown away by the wind and sifted and separated from the grain, the wheat.

Words of men are just chaff, but the word of the Lord is like fire and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces. Do you believe this, church?

Do you believe, really, that God's word is like a fire that can brand your soul with the truth of God and leave an indelible mark, an imprint of himself on your mind?

[ 29 : 14 ] Do you really believe that God's word is like a hammer that can shatter the illusions and lies of this world and break even the most hardened hearts? Do you really believe that if we did, would we not listen to his word and read his word and search his word hungrily and desperately?

In verses 33 to 40, God brings his denouncement of Judah's prophet to a close. He says, When one of this people or a prophet or a priest asks you, What is the burden of the Lord?

You shall say to them, You are the burden and I will cast you off, declares the Lord. This whole last passage hinges on a wordplay of the Hebrew word for a burden because the burden is kind of a technical way of referring to the word of the Lord, the prophecy and utterance of a prophet.

And so people would often ask prophets, What is the burden of the Lord? What does the Lord require of us? What is the word of the Lord for us? But God turns that expression around on its head and says, and commands Jeremiah to say, You want to know what the burden of the Lord is? You are the burden and I will cast you off. What good is it for these people to ask God for the word, to know what the Lord requires if they do not obey and follow him?

[ 30 : 35 ] So God says, Stop asking about the burden of the Lord. You yourselves are a burden to me and I will cast you off. These are severe judgments that reflect the severity of the people's sins.

And these judgments reflect the severity of our sins as well because in these sins of Judah, we see ourselves. We see our, it's a mirror to our own soul. But I don't want this to be a discouragement to you.

And I don't think that's what God wants this word to accomplish either. And as Augustine, who is a North African Christian theologian and pastor from the 4th century, he wrote this in his autobiography.

He says, The recalling of the wicked ways is bitter in my memory, but I do it so that you may be sweeter to me. seeing the severity of our sins helps us to see the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ.

Seeing the severity of our sins helps us to appreciate the depth, the magnitude of God's grace. Seeing how much we deserve God's wrath helps us to see how undeserved and wonderful God's mercy toward us is.

[ 31 : 52 ] That's what God wants us to see. And moreover, as it has been the pattern throughout Jeremiah, after pronouncing the severest judgments, God always pronounces his most gracious promises.

If we read these chapters quickly, we might even miss this, but sandwiched between God's denouncement of the kings and his denouncement of the prophets is a message of hope. Return with me to chapter 23, verses 3 to 4.

God says, I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.

I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more nor be dismayed. Neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord.

This statement, God promised to bring back the remnant of his flock, those who still remain among his people. He will gather to his fold so that they shall be fruitful and multiply once again, and he will put shepherds over them.

[ 32 : 57 ] Many times throughout the Old Testament, God himself is described as the shepherd king of Israel, and that's why he calls his people the people of my pasture, the sheep of his pasture.

And God himself is a shepherd who cares for his sheep and in the future he will appoint shepherds who will rule in his stead and actually care for them. And verses 5 to 6 hone in on an even more specific aspect of this promise.

Read with me. It says, Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

In his days, Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely and this is the name by which he will be called. The Lord is our righteousness.

There will be one particular king that will rise up from the Davidic line and he's described as a righteous branch. And from the root of David will spring a king who will execute justice and righteousness that all the kings of Judah had failed in totality to do.

[ 34 : 12 ] And he is called by the name the Lord is our righteousness. This is a wordplay on the name Zedekiah. Remember the last king that was mentioned. Zedekiah was the king appointed by Judah, by Nebuchadnezzar, and his name means the Lord is my righteousness.

So Jeremiah is making a very pointed statement and prophecy. King Zedekiah is not the one who will bring God's righteousness to bear on Judah.

No, there will be another king. Another king in the future, the righteous branch who will truly bring forth the righteousness of God. The people of Judah could put their hope in Zedekiah, but he failed to deliver on the promise of his name.

Who do you look to in this world for righteousness? righteousness. Who do you turn to for justice for yourself and for this world?

Is your hope in the politicians? Is your hope in your lawyers or judges? Is your hope in the law enforcement officials? Is your hope in the social justice warriors of our culture?

[ 35 : 26 ] However well-meaning they might be, none of them can in any ultimate sense execute the justice and righteousness of God in the land as God intends because they are all sinners and they will fall short.

They are all Zedekiahs of our age who promise righteousness but cannot deliver. But who then can deliver us?

Isaiah 53 6 said, All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us.

Oh, this is a prophecy about the Messiah, the coming king. All of us are sheep that have gone astray. Each of us have turned to his own way and a sheep that has gone astray does not know how to find its way back on its own.

The shepherd must go and retrieve the lost sheep. Have you ever been lost before? I don't mean like driving a tickle wrong turn but hey, I have my GPS on my phone so I can find my way back.

[ 36 : 30 ] Not that kind of lost. Like I'm in the middle of nowhere and there's no self-reception lost. I'm hiking and the sun has set and I don't know the way out of the forest lost.

It's terrifying to be lost like that. To feel viscerally that you might not make it home. That's how spiritually lost we all were.

We were hopelessly lost and helpless to save ourselves. We were lost sheep in a land far from the flock and the shepherd bleeding helplessly as the night fell and the predators drew in but thanks be to God, God did gather us to himself and he sent the good shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep.

It says in John 10, 14 to 16, Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me just as the father knows me and I know the father and I lay down my life for the sheep and I have other sheep that are not of this fold and I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. Jesus is the prophesied shepherd and king who gathers God's people to himself from all the places where they were lost and he is the one that executes the righteousness and justice of God and let's not be deluded in thinking that he's giving us justice that we deserve.

[ 38 : 12 ] God sent Jesus to execute the justice and the righteousness of God to vindicate God and to show his righteousness and justice because if God were to give us the justice and righteousness that we deserved we are all morally speaking the all of humanity vermin deserving to be burned by the wrath of God yet God cherished us he cared for us and so that he can save us he sent Jesus to die in our place so that his righteousness can be counted as ours so that we can in God's eyes be declared not guilty do you know this Jesus I once was lost but now I'm found I was blind but now I see do you know the meaning of that statement in your heart if you don't you can because

Jesus the good shepherd is still calling out to his sheep and his sheep know his voice and if you are hearing his voice today you must repent of your sins and respond to him with faith and this salvation is the greatest salvation that people of God have ever seen let me read in closing verses 7 to 8 therefore chapter 23 therefore behold the days are coming declares the Lord when they shall no longer say as the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt but as the Lord lives who brought up and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them then they shall dwell in their own land God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt was spectacular and amazing and he was gracious and kind but even that is eclipsed overshadowed by the salvation that God works in bringing his people back from exile and

restoring them to their homeland and this theme of exile and restoration in the Old Testament points to our spiritual exile from which Jesus rescues us and is now leading us to that homeland of our heavenly father that's what he's doing will you follow him all the kings and leaders of this world will disappoint but unlike the unrighteous kings and the ungodly prophets of this world Christ is the true king and true prophet who fulfills the righteousness of God and speaks the word of God let's pray fullness wells and ■ wordsarn ■ Richym