

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Jeremiah 23:1-6

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, April 13, 2014

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The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, April 13, 2014**, is from **Jeremiah 23:1-6**. Please Note: Some churches will only study **Jeremiah 23:5-6**. This commentary is the first part of a three part Bible Lesson that includes Zechariah 6:9-15 and John 19:1-7. Please Note: some will only study John 19:1-6 or John 19:1-5. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers, discusses the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **[International Bible Lessons Commentary](#)** website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Jeremiah 23:1-6

(Jeremiah 23:1) Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD.

The LORD told the prophet Jeremiah to warn the political and religious leaders and the people of the Kingdom of Judah (the southern kingdom) about His forthcoming punishment if they did not repent of their sins and turn back to God. By their selfish and unjust behavior, the leaders of the kingdom did not care about God's people, about teaching them to obey God, about leading them to obey God's moral laws through the just enforcement of God's laws. Instead, they themselves disobeyed God, robbed God's people materially and spiritually, and led them to worship idols – which eventually led to their destruction.

(Jeremiah 23:2) Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD.

God labels the behavior of Israel's leaders as more than "unjust." God called their actions "evil" (which were of course "unjust"). These leaders did the opposite of what the LORD expected of them and what the people needed from them. The LORD identified himself specifically as "the God of Israel" – the God of all Jacob's descendants – the

“God of the Bible” (as we might speak of the true God today). As Isaiah warned the Kingdom of Israel, the God of Israel punished them through the Assyrian invasion in 722 BC. And as Jeremiah warned Judah, the God of Israel sent the false shepherds and many people of Judah into exile in Babylon in 587-586 BC (except for those who died in battle or by starvation first).

(Jeremiah 23:3) Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.

After 70 years of exile in Babylon, God led His people (those left from the Kingdom of Judah) back to Jerusalem under godly leadership. By the time they returned, all of the evil shepherds had died. Through Jeremiah, God promised to bring “a remnant” or “a small number” (a “remnant” is a small piece of cloth left over from a larger piece of cloth after something has been made; such as, a dress or shirt) of faithful people back to the Promised Land. After 70 years of exile, they had learned to worship the true God only and He led them back home. The descendants of those God drove out of the Kingdom of Israel (the northern kingdom) in 722 BC, will also return home to the Promised Land someday. Some believe God began to bring His people back to begin the complete fulfillment of this prophecy in 1948, when the modern State of Israel was created.

(Jeremiah 23:4) I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.

In beginning to fulfill this prophecy, after their time in exile two good shepherds stand out in the Old Testament. First, Ezra — the *Book of Ezra* describes how he led the Judean exiles back from Babylon to Jerusalem and enforced the observance of God’s laws. Second, Nehemiah — the *Book of Nehemiah* describes how he returned and led the people to rebuild of the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah did not fear others, but trusted in God. He was not dismayed, and he rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem while overcoming much opposition from Judah’s neighbors. Jesus also fulfilled this prophecy, and continues to do so in the lives of those who trust in Him.

(Jeremiah 23:5) The days are surely coming, says 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.

Though verses three and four were substantially fulfilled by Ezra and Nehemiah and Jesus the Messiah when He came the first time, verse five will not be fulfilled completely until Jesus the Messiah comes again. The “righteous branch” would be a descendant of King David. Jesus qualified in this respect (see Matthew 1:1). In all Jesus did in His first coming, He demonstrated the qualities of leadership that verse five describes. Believers now long for His second coming to fulfill this prophecy over all the earth.

(Jeremiah 23:6) In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: “The LORD is our righteousness.”

Jesus came to save His people from their sins. He accomplished this through His first coming by His death and resurrection, and by His sending the Holy Spirit to empower believers to obey His commands and teachings. He is the righteousness of believer's through His cleansing them from sin and His empowering and indwelling them to obey God by His Spirit. When Jesus returns, His people will live in safety because of His righteous leadership and their righteous ways of living through faith in Jesus Christ.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

Since this is the first of a three part lesson series, only 1 of the 5 Study Questions will be asked below.

1. What are some of the ways believers today can proclaim: “The LORD is our righteousness”?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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