



Coffeeville First Baptist Church By Craig Baker, Pastor

This week we begin a study of the Book of Esther. The Book of Esther records for us the account of a faithful young woman named Esther. In doing so, the book reveals to us some of the details of some critical events in the history of the Nation of Judah and how much like Ruth, God used Esther's faithfulness to play a pivotal role in saving His people and the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem.

As we begin our study of the Book of Esther, we must consider the historical and background information to help us understand how the Jews got to this point in their history.

From the prophet Jeremiah we learn of the sin of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The people of Judah had abandoned the One True God for the worship of idols and the pagan religions of those around them. God sent warnings to the people, especially those in Jerusalem, that His judgment was coming upon them and the other godless nations as well. The prophet Jeremiah was tasked with delivering God's message to his apostate people, and for his efforts the people abused and persecuted Jeremiah; ridiculing, beating, ostracizing, accusing, and imprisoning him as a liar and false prophet.

God used the ungodly to accomplish His judgment, sending the Babylonians who in 605 B.C. sieged Jerusalem and car-

ried away many into captivity. The people of Judah continued to defy and disregard God, so He again sent the Babylonians in 597 B.C. who again sieged the city and took more captives. Despite their great losses at the hands of the Babylonians, the people of Judah still refused to turn back to God, so in 586 B.C. God once again sent the Babylonians who destroyed the city of Jerusalem. After the destruction, the Babylonians again carried away many into captivity, especially those who were educated, skilled craftsmen, leaders, and of other values. They killed or left behind most women, very young children, the disabled, common men, and others they deemed worthless to them. Through it all Jeremiah remained faithful and never stopped proclaiming God's message and warning the people of God's judgment. From Jeremiah's writings in Lamentations we get an idea of the destruction and anguish the Babylonians left in Jerusalem as Jeremiah describes his lament and weeping over the starvation, pestilence, death, and utter hopelessness left in the wake of the final Babylonian invasion. No verse more completely sums up the devastation and despair than Lamentation 4:10 where Jeremiah wrote, "With their own hands compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food when my people were destroyed."

The prophet Daniel was one who was taken away from Jerusalem by the Babylonians during their siege of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. From the Book of Daniel, we learn of the hardships he and others faced as captives in Babylon trying to remain true to God. From Daniel we also learn how the Medes and Persians killing the Babylonian King, Belshazzar, and conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. At that time Daniel is a man of 80+ years, but despite his advanced age, Daniel goes on to serve the kings of the Medes and Persians as a high ranking official; living long enough to witness the first group of Jews return to Judah in 536 B.C. to begin rebuilding Jerusalem.

Then there is the prophet Ezekiel who was taken from Jerusalem by the Babylonians about 10 years after Daniel during the Babylonians second siege of Jerusalem in 597 B.C. At the same time God was using Daniel to influence kings and kingdoms in Babylon, He was using Ezekiel to proclaim hope to His people held captive there. The prophetic ministries of Haggai and Zechariah also took place during that time.

The returning Jews left Babylon at various times many years apart with some even choosing to permanently stay in Babylon. Despite strong opposition from the nations surrounding Judah, that first group of Jews who returned in 537 B.C., with the support of the Persian King and under Zerubbabel's leadership, were successful in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem by 516 B.C. The first six chapters of Ezra record the events that took place during the 30 or so years that it took to rebuild the temple, but once the temple was finished, the people seemed content to neglect the rebuilding of the rest of Jerusalem. So, 30




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Lori Gorospe stays in a small camper while working disasters. The wall and ceiling is lined with pictures of people she has encountered at previous disasters.



Lori Gorospe commended Kevin Robertson's work ethic. Kevin has worked alongside of Gorospe during much of her work in the county.



Coffeeville Methodist Church pastor Jim Peterman put out a call for help from multiple Global Methodist conferences.



Rev. Jim Peterman (top left) and Lori Gorospe (bottom right) pose with volunteers from the South Carolina who helped clean up downed trees in countless yards across the county.

From My . . .

(Cont'd. from front page)

"The integrity of the upright shall guide them." — Proverbs 11:3

Jeremiah lived that verse in front of me.

Our Sunday School lesson this week was from Matthew 13 — the wheat and the tares. Jesus said the good seed and the weeds grow together for a time. After the wreck, fear and gratitude grew side by side in me. Shock and thankfulness. Worry and relief. The enemy tried to sow panic, "whatifs," and dread right beside the peace God was trying to plant.

But right there in the middle of the mess, God let a stalk of wheat stand tall.

His name was Jeremiah.

We exchanged numbers, and we've kept in touch. I pray for him — that life gets better, that he never lets the world harden the goodness I saw in him, and most of all, that he knows Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Because I believe God has planted something in him. Something strong.

Something with purpose.

"For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." — Psalm 91:11

Maybe you've had a moment lately that shook you too. Maybe life has spun you around until you couldn't tell which way was forward. If so, take heart.

God still speaks in the spin.

God still steadies trembling hands.

God still plants good

seed in the middle of chaos.

And God still sends people — unexpected, ordinary, extraordinary people — to remind us that goodness is not gone from this world.

"Let both grow together until the harvest..." — Matthew 13:30

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank You for being the God who speaks in the spin, the God who steadies us when fear takes hold, and the God who protects us even when life turns without warning. Thank You for Your angels who watch over us in all our ways, and for the quiet voice that guides us back to safety.

I lift up Jeremiah to You. Bless him, Lord. Strengthen the goodness You've planted in him. Surround him with people who will speak life into his future. Let him feel Your presence in every step he takes, and draw his heart toward the hope and salvation found in Jesus.

And for every reader who has been shaken by something they didn't see coming, I pray Your peace over them. Remind them that You are near, that You are faithful, and that even in the chaos, You are planting good seed. Help us all to see the wheat You are growing in our lives, and to trust You with the rest.

In the name of Jesus, son of the one true God, Amen.

