

From Desolation to Salvation *Matthew 1:12-17*

Introduction

When I was serving at my first church as senior pastor, I would occasionally take my lunch break and travelled to Lake Bisteneau State Park. The first time I took the trip, I anticipated a beautiful break on a beautiful day on which I could read and pray for a bit before heading back into the office. What I found, though, was something different. I had not been keeping up the Salvinia problem and the progress that they were making. For those that have not heard of it, Salvinia is an invasive aquatic weed, which can pretty much destroy a waterway if not addressed. As I pulled back to the launching area where I have vivid memories of throwing tennis balls to my dogs, I found broken, dry ground, with little vegetation. The lake was desolate. The plans were to close the lake that January, drain it with the hope of killing off the weed, and then “pray for rain.”

As I was there, I got to thinking. In many ways, that lake was in a state much like Israel after they enter Babylonian captivity. They were completely desolate. All hope seemed to be gone. Which bring us to our text this morning...

Matthew 1:12-17

After the exile to Babylon:

Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
13 Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,
Abihud the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,
14 Azor the father of Zadok,
Zadok the father of Akim,
Akim the father of Elihud,
15 Elihud the father of Eleazar,
Eleazar the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
16 and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of
Jesus who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

Matthews intends to show his audience that God has brought salvation to them out of the desolation and destruction of captivity through Jesus the Christ. For us, we need to see that God works in our darkest times to bring about the salvation that we long for and need the most. My hope is that you would be encouraged, even in the darkness, to look to the God of hope that brings about our salvation even in impossible situations.

Exposition

Review

Over the past two weeks, we have considered two themes from Matthew 1:

Son of Abraham – Jesus fulfills the promises that were given to Abraham about a descendent that would bless all the people of the earth!

Son of David – Jesus fulfills the promises that were given to David about a descendent that would establish an eternal kingdom and reign forever!

Conclusion – Jesus is the descendent of Abraham and David that brings blessings to all nations and reigns as the eternal King.

What was the Babylonian exile? The Babylonian exile (captivity) refers to the time when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered the people of Judah. After their defeat, the people were deported throughout the Babylonian empire and the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. Two passages from 2 Kings describe some of the details from the Babylonian exile:

2 Kings 24:1-7

¹ During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. But then he turned against Nebuchadnezzar and rebelled. ² The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets. ³ Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD'S command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, ⁴ including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.

⁵ As for the other events of Jehoiakim's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? ⁶ Jehoiakim rested with his ancestors. And Jehoiachin his son succeeded him as king.

⁷ The king of Egypt did not march out from his own country again, because the king of Babylon had taken all his territory, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

2 Kings 25:8-12

⁸ On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹ He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down. ¹⁰ The whole Babylonian army under the commander of the imperial guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ¹¹ 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 deserted to the king of Babylon. ¹² But the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields.

If I were going to illustrate it for us, think about a foreign enemy occupying the USA, destroying all our church buildings, killing some of us, and sending the rest of us to Canada or Mexico. That's the type of situation that Israelites were facing in the Babylonian exile.

What was God doing while His people were in exile?

God was using prophets like Ezekiel to deliver messages of hope to His people so that they would not lose heart during their exile. We see a prime example in **Ezekiel 37:1-14**, which says

¹ The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. ³ He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

I said, “Sovereign LORD, you alone know.”

⁴ Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!’ ⁵ This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶ I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’”

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

⁹ Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’” ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

¹¹ Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ ¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. ¹⁴ I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.’”

How did God eventually bring His people out of exile?

God used the wicked empire of Persia to deliver His people from Babylon, place them back in the land of Judah, and fund the work of rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple of the LORD (see Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

What was life like for God’s people once they had returned from Babylon?

They were free to rebuild the temple and rebuild their homes, but they still lacked a king that would fulfill the promises made to David. They still were not free as God had intended for them to be in the Promised Land. (See Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

What does this have to do with Jesus?

“Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah”

Matthew understood Jesus to be the Anointed One, the Son of David that would lead His people out of captivity and establish His eternal kingdom.

He was the Son of David that would reign forever. He was the Son of Abraham that would bless all nations. He was everything that God's people needed, but they hated Him, mocked Him, and eventually killed Him.

Why did they hate Jesus?

They hated Him because He confronted their sin and hypocrisy (Matthew 23).

Why did they mock Jesus?

They mocked Him because He associated with the lowly and sinners (Matthew 11).

Why did they kill Jesus?

They killed Him because He told them the truth and they rejected Him, just like they had done with the prophets centuries ago (Matthew 26).

But God's purposes would not be stopped! In fact, it was God's plan for the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, the Son of God to come to world and die for the world so that we might go free from our own spiritual exile!

Consider what **Acts 2:22-36** teaches us about God's plans in Christ,

²² "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him:

" I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest in hope,

²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,

you will not let your holy one see decay.

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence."

²⁹ "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

"The Lord said to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand

³⁵ until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.” ’

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

Application

Does your life seem desolate? Meaningless? Hopeless? Dark? Void? Where are you going to turn? Who is going to save you from the Abyss of life?

Are you tired of the bad news? Are you looking for some good news? Are you looking for some hope this morning?

Brothers and Sisters, friends, family, men, women, boys and girls... I bring you glad tidings of great joy! For unto you was born some 2000 years ago in the city of David, a Savior, who is Jesus Christ, the LORD!

He is no longer in a manger! He is no longer on cross! He is no longer in the tomb! He is now reigning in heaven on His throne dispensing eternal life and eternal joy to all who would come and put their trust in Him!

Invitation

Would you come to Him today? Would you find salvation in the midst of your desolation this morning?