

Discussion Questions

August 11, 2024

Acts 7:59-8:4

When Following Jesus Brings Hardship and Pain



1. Read Acts 7:59-8:4

Summarize the passage in your own words. Discuss what it would have been like for thousands of Christians to flee Jerusalem for the surrounding regions.

2. Read Jeremiah 29:11

If you have heard this passage repeated before, what usually was the context it was used in?

3. Read Jeremiah 29:1,4-10

From the context, what message is God telling the Israelites in verse 11?

In what ways is this message in context significantly more powerful than just pulling out the single verse and applying it to our lives directly?

4. James spoke about how there is a temptation today for us to replace us serving Jesus and His will, with Jesus serving us and our will - where our focus is upon building personal kingdoms rather than His eternal Kingdom..

Discuss in what ways you have seen this lived out and what the implications are. Discuss how the early church avoided this temptation.

5. Read Acts 8:4 again.

What do you think enabled them to keep sharing about Jesus even after all they had gone through?

6. Using the example from Jeremiah 29 as told in the sermon, share an example of a time when you felt like you were in "Babylon," where God felt distant, there was hardship or pain, etc. and you just wanted to get back to "Jerusalem."

7. What does it look like to pursue Jesus even in the disappointment or suffering, and not just wait until circumstances change?

Acts 7:59 - 8:4 (NLT)

As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died.

Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen.

A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria. (Some devout men came and buried Stephen with great mourning.) But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison. But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.

Acts 1:8 (CSB)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Matthew 6:33 (CSB)

But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:1 (NIV)

This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Jeremiah 29:4-9 (NIV)

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 29:10-11 (NIV)

This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Acts 8:4 (NLT)

The believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.