



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Session 12: Just

Suggested Week of Use: August 20, 2023

Core Passage: Jeremiah 50:11-20, 33-34

News Story Summary

In 1988, 19-year-old Cathy Swartz was murdered in her apartment in Three Rivers, Michigan. Unfortunately, evidence such as fingerprints, blood, and footprints found at the brutal crime scene did not yield any suspects. Years later, the police entered DNA from the case into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), but there was still no match. Last year, the Three Rivers Police Department and the Michigan State Police used forensic genetic genealogy (FGG) to crack the cold case. This technology led authorities to a family of four brothers. Then, backed by DNA testing and other evidence, they arrested Robert Waters, 53, of South Carolina. After the arrest, Waters was awaiting extradition to Michigan for trial, but he committed suicide in a South Carolina jail earlier this summer.

While the death of Waters leaves a lot of questions unanswered, particularly his motive in the killing, law enforcement authorities are confident the case was solved. For decades, Waters had avoided having his fingerprints taken or his DNA collected. He had even settled down, married, and operated a successful business in South Carolina. But the forensic genetic genealogy provided the key to unlocking the mystery surrounding Cathy Swartz's murder.

For more about this story, search “Questions remain in Michigan cold case.”

Engage

To replace the Engage activities, ask the group if they like TV shows about cold cases. Ask: *Why are these shows so popular?* Acknowledge that we like seeing people brought to justice for their crimes, even if it takes decades to happen. Share the story of how authorities finally cracked the cold case of Cathy Swartz's murder. Say: *After 35 years, Cathy's family and friends now know who killed her.* Discuss how that kind of closure might help them deal with their loss. Explain that this session emphasizes that God always brings justice on those who reject Him. Note that it might not happen as quickly as we would like, but He operates in His perfect timing and according to His perfect plan.

Challenge

To replace the Challenge activities, remind the group of the arrest of Robert Walters after 35 years. Ask: *How do you think Robert Waters felt about escaping judgment for so long?* Note that, like Babylon, he might have felt confident that he was safe. Emphasize that God pursued justice against Babylon with even more intensity than the police pursued justice against Waters. Ask: *How can the promise of God's judgment against Babylon bring hope to us today?* Close with prayer, asking God to help believers confidently trust His timing and His justice.