



Jeremiah 23:5-8; 30:8-9, 21; 33:14-18

A Righteous Branch of David

Judah was under the dominion of evil rulers, both political and religious during the life of Jeremiah. The Hebrew prophet broke out with a cry, "Woe to the shepherds." Kings and all civil rulers in Israel were referred to as shepherds. They were the civil rulers who had oversight of the affairs of the nation.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The evil shepherds were motivated by their self-interests and therefore "scattered" and drove away the people into Exile (Jeremiah 23:2). Jeremiah executes a beautiful play on words in verse two as The New English Bible brings this out: "You have not watched over them, but I am watching you to punish you for your evil-doings." Moffatt translates: "You scattered my flock and drove them away, you took no care of them; so I will take good care to punish you for the evil you have done." The New American Standard Bible reads: "You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds." Yahweh was actively bringing judgment upon these evil kings responsible for the national life in Judah. The LORD would bring a remnant out of the captivity (cf. Chapters 24, 40-44; Isaiah 1:9; 37:4; Micah 4:7; 7:18).

The LORD declared that He would gather together a "remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and shall bring them back to their pasture; and they will be fruitful and multiply" (v. 3). God will deliver them from captivity and return them to their land in Israel. In contrast to the evil shepherds of Israel God will raise up "a righteous Branch" from David (vv. 5-6). They were all absorbed in the ministry to self. Self-interest groups controlled the government. They sought only their own enrichment, security, comfort, etc. They forgot spiritual realities and trusted in material prosperity. The leaders were trusting in their own cunning rather than the living God.

The last four kings in Judah were evil. Zedekiah was the current evil "shepherd" and he scattered the people. "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!" declares the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:1).

The LORD's intervention would bring good "shepherds" to rule over His sheep.

The good shepherd that Jeremiah longed to see come and deliver his people was realized in the person and leadership of Jesus Christ. He is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14-16; Acts 17:1; Luke 1:78; John 18:37). He is the righteous one from the Branch of David. The Good Shepherd would "act

righteous one from the Branch of David. The Good Shepherd would "act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land" (Jeremiah 23:5). Moreover, He is "the LORD our righteousness" (v. 6). He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21-23), and He will not lose a single one of His sheep (John 6:39; 10:28; 1 Peter 1:5).

THE RIGHTEOUS BRANCH OF DAVID

There were two facets of the doctrine of the Messiah in the Old Testament and rabbinical writings. Both of these ideas are found in verses five and six. We see the Messiah as a person in verse five, and the teaching concerning the Messianic Age in verse six. These facets are also found in Isaiah (11:1-5, 6-16; 9:5-6; 11:1-9; Micah 5:1-5; Amos 9:11; Hosea 3:5, etc.). These and other verses describe the coming New Age when the Messiah would restore David's dynasty.

God promised Jeremiah that He would raise up from David's line a righteous Branch (23:5). The shepherds of Israel have corrupted God's flock. Yahweh will restore the nation from exile and will provide true "shepherds" who will care for His flock. In this passage the LORD promises the coming of the ideal king, "a righteous Branch" in the line of David.

"Behold, *the* days are coming," declares the Lord,
"When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;
And He will reign as king and act wisely
And do justice and righteousness in the land."

This passage in Jeremiah is clearly messianic and was one of many such utterances by the Hebrew prophets that contributed to the developing messianic belief in ancient Israel. Verses five and six are full of messianic thinking as well as 33:15-16. The English word "Messiah" is derived from the Hebrew word *Mashach* meaning, "to anoint." The term Messiah in the sense of the ideal king is not used in the Old Testament even though the idea is clearly present.

It is only through the ideal king Messiah David whose just and victorious rule the hopes of Judah will ever be realized. No other dynasty will have everlasting rule. The Royal Psalms give emphasis to this same idealism (Psalm 2, 4, 72, 89-110).

The "Branch" is a "growth," or literally "sprout" and is used in the ancient Near East to describe the rightful heir to the throne (33:15; Isaiah 4:2; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12). Isaiah uses a different word in 11:1 but with the same idea. This heir will be an ideal king. He will act wisely and do what is just and right. During His reign "Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which he will be called, 'the LORD our righteousness'" (vv. 5-6; cf. 3:17; 33:16; Ezekiel 48:35; 1 Corinthians 1:30).

No matter how gloomy and desperate the present situation was in Judah, Yahweh promised to raise up to David a righteous branch. This one branch of David will sit on the throne forever and He will reign in

David a righteous branch. This one branch of David will sit on the throne forever and He will reign in righteousness. The second David, the Messiah's dominion will last forever. Only the *one* Good Shepherd of Yahweh stands in contrast to evil shepherds in Ezekiel 34:23. This is the one to whom the promise was made to David in 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Chronicles 7. The name of this branch of David is Yahweh our Righteousness.

Ezekiel wrote, "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken" (34:23-24).

Jeremiah says, they will call Him "Yahweh our Righteousness" because He is righteous. He will lead His people into righteousness (Isaiah 11:1; Matthew 2:23). This ruler will spring forth or bud forth as a Righteous Plant. He is the blossom of the Jewish nation that will spring forth from what appears to be an almost dead stump.

The Messiah is here called Yahweh and He is our righteousness. The righteous Branch obtains our righteousness (Romans 5:18; 3:22; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Mark 10:18; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 10:4; Philippians 3:9). Jesus Christ is the Righteous One (Acts 3:14; Hebrews 1:8, 9; Romans 3:22).

The meaning of "saved" is "rescued," "delivered," "liberated." This ideal king would provide safety for His people. Jeremiah will develop the idea of salvation in chapters 30-31.

The righteous "shoot" (*semah*) appeared to be dead, but it was not. This dynasty of David's tree would burst forth like a shoot. Most of our English translations read "Branch" or literally "Sprout" in the margin. During the postexilic times Branch became the technical term for the expected ideal king (Zechariah 3:8; 6:12). This true shoot that comes from the line of David will be a wise ruler. "He will reign as king and act wisely." Literally, "and a king will rule and act wisely." He will "act wisely" and "have success." He will ably reign in contrast to the current ruler.

How can a man be just with God? The answer is in the Lord that men are justified. Is it the Lord their righteousness that righteousness resides; the Lord Himself is their righteousness. This is the high point in the Old Testament revelation respecting justification.

It is from the writings of the Old Testament that we come to understand the full meaning of the apostle Paul's teaching on the righteousness of God. In Paul's mind the Lord Himself is our righteousness, and it comes from faith to faith (cf. Rom. 1:17; 3:21, 22; 10:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). His mind and heart were saturated with the lofty theology of the Hebrew Scriptures.

THE NEW AGE OF THE MESSIAH

The Righteous Branch, the Messiah, would usher in the New Age.

Jeremiah says the coming "second Exodus" would be much greater than the first Exodus from Egypt (23:7-8). "Therefore behold, *the* days are coming," declares the Lord, "when they will no longer say, 'As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but, 'As the Lord lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from *the* north land and from all the countries where I had driven them. Then they will live on their own soil.'"

Jeremiah builds on the same idea in Jeremiah 30:8-9, 21. The context is panic and terror because the awful Day of Yahweh has arrived. Other prophets mention this same event (Amos 5:18-20; Isaiah 2:12-21; Zephaniah 1:14-18). Imagine, Jeremiah says, men having birth pangs! It is a great day of distress. On the

Zephaniah 1:14-18). Imagine, Jeremiah says, men having birth pangs! It is a great day of distress. On the backdrop of this chaos we find another messianic promise (vv. 8-9). The shift is from judgment to deliverance. The purpose here is the nation willingly serves the LORD under the leadership of their new king (v. 9). Verse 21 doesn't specifically mention the messiah king; however the magnitude of such a restoration visualized can only lead to the greater David.

These verses like Isaiah chapter eleven have a distinctive messianic ring. No human Davidic king ever regained the throne after the Exile. Therefore, these events have not yet taken place. However, the Davidic king is the key to the day of the Lord.

The Hebrew prophets always speak of the Day of the Lord as near at hand (Isa. 13:6), much as the New Testament speaks of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In the book of Revelation, the apostle John gives prominence to the concept of the Day of the Lord and brings it to its magnificent glorious fulfillment.

The focus of the New Testament writers is to show that Jesus is the Christ from the family of David. He is the eternal Son of God, and therefore the fulfillment of the promises of a Davidic king that were first made to David (2 Samuel 7). Some Jews have individually accepted Christ as the fulfillment of these great messianic promises.

Jeremiah 33:15-17 is a parallel messianic passage based upon 23:5-6. Here the focus is on both Israel and Judah and the "good word" the LORD will perform (v. 14). The ideal king, Messiah, will rule justly and rightly. He will deliver or "save" Judah, and Jerusalem will "dwell in safety." Again the emphasis is on "righteousness." He will "be right, straight, just, righteous in dispensing justice, upright." Righteousness is that which is right and is essential to truth. "Yahweh is our righteousness" (v. 16). He will "cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth" (v. 15). His very name reveals God's method of restoration.

"For thus says the Lord, 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel'" (33:17). This is the same promise given to David in which a throne would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Despite the judgment and exile God's promise to David still stood true. This strengthened the Messianic ideal. Again, the prophet takes us back to the original promise of the LORD to King David. The division of the kingdom after Solomon was not a part of God's will. David's son will sit on the throne, and the Levitical priests will serve Yahweh (v. 21). An ideal king will come who is the essence of righteousness and He will be a king who is to be a priest and He will sit on a throne of David. He will be a King-Priest.

Let keep in mind the consummation has not arrived. Literally and locally Jerusalem has never been rebuilt as described by Jeremiah. Judah has never known these marvelous conditions. Israel has not yet dwelt in peace by the side of Judah, as said the prophet that she should. Every week the news from the Middle East describe the very opposite. However, the Branch has come, the King-Priest has appeared; and God is still moving with certainly, quietly, with focused determination toward that goal.

Jesus Christ fulfilled all these grand promises to Jeremiah. Before He was born the angel told Mary, "you shall name Him Jesus." You will call Him Yeshua, "salvation." He is Yahweh saves. But he went on, "He will be great, and will be called the son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:32-33). For further study: Luke 1:69; Acts 2:30; 13:23, 34, 38; Revelation 5:5; 22:16; Romans 11:25-26).

Jesus Christ alone is the fulfillment of this prophecy of Jeremiah. He is our righteousness. He rules forever as the heir of the promises of David.

Is He your righteousness?

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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