

Jeremiah's Messianic Prophecies

Jeremiah 23:5-6: *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.*

Compare with the following:

Isaiah 9:7: *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*

Isaiah 11:1: *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*

Micah 5:2: *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

From the Pulpit Commentary: *Behold, the days come. The use of the analogous phrase, "And it shall come to pass in that day," would lead us to suppose that this verse describes a fresh stage*

in the progress of events, as if the faithful shepherds (ver. 4) were to precede the "righteous Branch" (ver. 5). Such a view, however, is not very plausible, for the Messiah, according to prophecy, is to appear in the darkest of times. The prophet simply means to impress upon us the greatness of the revelation which he is about to communicate. I will raise unto David. The promised Messiah, then, is certainly to be of the family of David (comp. Isaiah 9:7; Isaiah 11:1; Micah 5:2). A righteous Branch; rather, a righteous Plant: the root means "to bud, or sprout." This is the first time in which the title the Plant is unmistakably applied to the Messianic King (possibly, but less probably, to the Messianic kings). It indicates that this great personage stands in connection with the divinely ordained and ancient royal family, but that he is in some way unique, and far surpasses his human ancestors. He "springs forth;" therefore he is not a sort of meteoric appearance, without any natural home among men, but rather the blossom of the Jewish nation, the embodiment of its highest qualities. And yet there is something extraordinary about him, for Jehovah himself will "raise" this Plant from the almost worn-out stock of David.

Benson Commentary: *I will raise unto David a righteous branch — The house of David seemed to be quite sunk and ruined by the threatening pronounced against Jeconiah, (Jeremiah 22:30,) that none of his seed should ever sit upon the throne of David: but here we have a promise which effectually secures the honor of the covenant made with David, notwithstanding that threatening; for by it his house will be raised out of its ruins to a greater luster than ever, and shine brighter than it did even in the days of Solomon. We have not so many prophecies of Christ in this book as we had in that of the Prophet Isaiah. But here we have a very illustrious one. Of him, doubtless, the prophet here speaks, and of no other person. Even the Jewish doctors, as well as Christian interpreters, understand this as a prophecy of the Messiah, who is called the branch: Isaiah 4:2; Isaiah 53:2; and the man the branch, Zechariah 3:8. And here he is termed the righteous branch, not only because he himself was righteous, but because he makes his people righteous; and a king that shall reign and prosper — Not like kings that now were of the house of David, going backward in all their affairs, but one that shall set up a kingdom in the world, which shall be victorious over all opposition; one to whose hands the good pleasure of the Lord shall be committed, and under whose care and management it shall prosper; one who shall execute judgment and justice in the earth — All the world over, Psalm 96:13. The present kings of David's line were unjust and oppressive, and their affairs therefore did not prosper; but this king shall break the usurped power of Satan, institute a perfect rule of holy living, and in due*

time make all the world righteous. In his days — That is, under his dominion, when his kingdom shall be set up and established upon earth; Judah shall be saved, &c. — The people of God, typified by Judah and Israel, shall be saved with a spiritual and eternal salvation, a salvation from the guilt and power of sin, into the favor and image of God here, and into the kingdom of his glory hereafter. At which kingdom, till they arrive, God will be a special protection to them, their refuge and strength, and very present help in trouble; so that they shall dwell safely — Confiding in the care of their strong helper and preserved in perfect peace. And this is his name whereby he shall be called — Namely, by his people, and by God; the name whereby he shall be known, and which shall at once be descriptive both of his person and office. THE LORD, Hebrew, JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS — Though of the seed of David according to the flesh, he shall indeed be JEHOVAH, God in human nature, and OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; namely, justifying us by his merits, sanctifying us by his Spirit, and directing us in every part of our duty by his doctrine and example; the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth in him with a faith that worketh by love.

Gill's Exposition of the Holy Bible: In his days Judah shall be saved.... In the days of the Messiah, the righteous Branch, and reigning prosperous King, not only the people of the Jews, God's elect among them, but all that truly embrace him, and confess him, as Judah's name signifies, shall be saved from all their sins; from the law, its curse and condemnation; and from wrath to come; and from all their spiritual enemies. In the latter part of his days all Israel shall be saved, Romans 11:26;

and Israel shall dwell safely; without any fear of enemies, being saved from them; being in that city, the church, which has salvation for walls and bulwarks; angels encamping about them; the Lord as a wall of fire around them; the Spirit lifting up a standard against their enemies, when they come in like a flood; and the Messiah their rock and refuge, and strong tower, their strength and righteousness; as follows: for all the salvation and safety of the Lord's people are owing to the righteousness of Christ; the effect of which is peace, quietness, and assurance forever:

and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; because he is the author of righteousness to his people, and is only so; no creature could be the author of it; unrighteous man cannot be the author of righteousness; and the righteousness of an angel is of no advantage to man; and indeed neither of the other divine Persons is the Lord our righteousness; for though they are both Jehovah, the Father and the Spirit, yet not our righteousness: the Father appointed and sent Christ to work it out; he approved and accepted of it, when wrought out; and imputes it to his people; but is not the author of it: so the Spirit convinces of the need of it; reveals it, and brings it near; works faith to receive it; and applies it, and pronounces a person justified by it; but is not the author of it; that the Son of God only is; who is become so by his obedience to the law, and by bearing the penalty of it; and who, having been delivered for our offences, rose again for our justification: and this righteousness, which he has wrought out to the satisfaction of law and justice, becomes "ours"; it being signed for us, and wrought out for us, by a free gift of it is given to us; ours through the imputation of it to us by the Father, and in virtue of our union to Christ, and interest in him; and through the application of it to us by the Spirit of God; who puts it upon us, and clothes us with it, and enables us to lay hold upon it, and claim interest in it; and which may be meant by Christ being "called our righteousness"; for the meaning is, not that he should commonly go by this name; but only that he should be that unto us which it signifies; and that we should by faith, even every true Israelite, every believer, call him our righteousness; say that we have righteousness in him make mention of that continually, and express our desires to be found at one in it; for so the words may be rendered, "and this is the name he calls him, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"; and a sweet name to a sensible sinner it is; to one that has felt the guilt of sin in his conscience; seen his need of a righteousness, and the worth of it. That the Messiah is meant is acknowledged by the Jews, ancient and modern.

As explained by the commentators, the prophecy clarifies that the Messiah, though coming from the House of David, will be so much more than even the greatest of the Davidic Kings. God will cultivate this smallest seed, so exemplified by the identification of the Messiah with Bethlehem, thus showing that God's salvific work defies our own worldly assessment of how that likely will take place. The implication is that the Messiah, when He comes, will be largely misunderstood and defied by those who should be the most receptive to Him. No doubt, Jeremiah sees

himself as a forerunner of this aspect of what the Messiah will do. Being misunderstood and defied by so many, the Messiah Himself will be a man of lamentations. His victory will come from His defeat and His strength from His weakness. Moreover, the Messiah not only comes from a very specific Branch, but He will also be the King of a very specific Branch, namely people who are righteous to the extent that they are gathered up into His Righteousness. The lineage and the title tell us as much about the Kingdom over which the Messiah will rule as about the Messiah Himself: He is the King *of a people*, and so the interconnection of His work with the Kingdom will be intrinsic to His identity and His purpose. We shall call Him THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS for the specific reason that His righteousness will be imputed unto us and, as such, we shall be righteous as well. His Name – THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS – presupposes an interconnectedness between the Messiah and the People of the Messiah that makes sense fully only in the context of the Trinity of God. The Father sends forth the Son to impute His righteousness unto the lost, the Holy Spirit makes it possible for the lost to receive this righteousness, but it is the Son who most specifically has this interconnected relationship with the lost by whom this imputation happens. This implies a substantial interconnectedness between Messiah and People of the Messiah, which is to say, not only a symbolic interconnectedness, and so we see here a prophetic hint of God's Incarnation. God becomes man so that man in and through Christ Jesus may be able to call Him THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. This is the same idea in The Lord's Prayer: For how may we call God "Our Father" except that God the Son became a man and, therefore, gathered us up into Him and His relationship with the Father? That the Messiah is so named disqualifies anyone but God Himself as the Messiah, so the Jew who looks for a non-divine Messiah must deny the plain meaning of Jeremiah's prophecy. The Jew who interprets this as referring instead to an ill-defined "Messianic Age" must deny the specific identification of an Age/Kingdom with a King. The identification of the Messiah with the "Root of Jesse" means that the Messiah will be a man in the formal and literal sense, just as the Kings in the Davidic line were men in the formal and literal sense. His Kingdom will not be exclusive to a narrow tribal bloodline, though, nor will it be restrained to a particular time and place. In this sense, the "Messianic Age" idea speaks to the radical openness of the Messianic Kingdom to all people who are baptized into it, but the failure to identify this expansive Messianic Kingdom to a particular man in history nevertheless is very clearly a denial of Jeremiah's prophecy. For Jeremiah's words are not so open-ended as to speak to a vague "Messianic Age," but rather to the culmination of the history of Judah *in this world*.

Jeremiah 33:15-16: *In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.*

Compare with the following:

Exodus 12:13: *And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.*

Ezekiel 9:4: *And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.*

Ellicott's Commentary: *This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness. —It will be noticed that, while this reproduces the language of Jeremiah 23:6, it does so with a remarkable difference. There the title, "The Lord our Righteousness," is given to the future King, and the passage has accordingly been used as a proof of the full divinity of the Christ, who is that King. Here it is given to the city, and, so given, can only mean that that name will be, as it were, the motto and watchword of her being. She will be a city marked by a specific righteousness which will be the gift of Jehovah; He will inscribe that name on her banners, and, grave it on her portals. It is obvious that this throws light on the meaning of the King's title.*

So, Jerusalem will also be named "The Lord Our Righteousness," such will be the intrinsic and eternal identification of the Messianic King with His Kingdom. This is an apocalyptic reference to the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of the

faithful in Christ Jesus when Heaven and Earth have passed away. What characterizes this Kingdom is not only who is King but what purpose that it serves, namely, as the final and perfect refuge from sin and death for those living inside of it as subjects of the King. The identity and the objective of the Messiah will be the same: To save the people from condemnation under the Law, to provide them refuge from sin and death, and so to make them acceptable before the Father. We who are the citizens of this Kingdom are marked, which is to say, ordained or set aside from others. We are not the same as we were before being ordained or set aside by God (note the name change from Abram to Abraham, Judah to Israel, Simon to Peter, and Saul to Paul, among others). Nor are we indistinguishable from the rest of humanity which in large part accounts for the faithful being persecuted by the world. Set aside, the Angel of Death leaves us untouched. The executioners about to ravage Jerusalem due to her many abominations do not inflict their wrath upon us. Just as there is a tangible and real-world ramification for falling away from God's order, so there is a tangible and real-world salvation set aside for those who embrace God's order and allow themselves to be marked by that same order.

Jeremiah 31:33-34: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Compare with the following:

Deuteronomy 6:5: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

2 Corinthians 3:3: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

Hebrews 10:1: For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary: The difference, therefore, between the old and the new covenants consists in this, that in the old the law was laid before the people that they might accept it and follow it, receiving it into their hearts, as the copy of what God not merely required of men, but offered and vouchsafed to them for their happiness; while in the new it is put within, implanted into the heart and soul by the Spirit of God, and becomes the animating life-principle, 2 Corinthians 3:3. The law of the Lord thus forms, in the old as well as in the new covenant, the kernel and essence of the relation instituted between the Lord and His people; and the difference between the two consists merely in this, that the will of God as expressed in the law under the old covenant was presented externally to the people, while under the new covenant it is to become an internal principle of life. Now, even in the old covenant, we not only find that Israel is urged to receive the law of the Lord his God into his heart, - to make the law presented to him from without the property of his heart, as it were, - but even Moses, we also find, promises that God will circumcise the heart of the people, that they may love God the Lord with all their heart and all their soul (Deuteronomy 30:6). But this circumcision of heart and this love of God with the whole soul, which are repeatedly required in the law (Deuteronomy 6:5; Deuteronomy 10:12, Deuteronomy 10:16), are impossibilities, unless the law be received into the heart. It thus appears that the difference between the old and the new covenants must be reduced to this, that what was commanded and applied to the heart in the old is given in the new, and the new is but the completion of the old covenant. This is, indeed, the true relation between them, as is clearly shown by the fact, that the essential element of the new covenant, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," was set forth as the object of the old; cf. Leviticus 26:12 with Exodus 29:45. Nevertheless the difference is not merely one of degree, but one of kind. The demands of the law, "Keep the commandments of your God," "Be ye holy as the Lord your God is holy," cannot be fulfilled by sinful man. Even when he strives most earnestly to keep the

commands of the law, he cannot satisfy its requirements. The law, with its rigid demands, can only humble the sinner, and make him beseech God to blot out his sin and create in him a clean heart (Psalm 51:11.); it can only awaken him to the perception of sin, but cannot blot it out. It is God who must forgive this, and by forgiving it, write His will on the heart. The forgiveness of sin, accordingly, is mentioned, Jeremiah 31:34, at the latter part of the promise, as the basis of the new covenant. But the forgiveness of sins is a work of grace which annuls the demand of the law against men. In the old covenant, the law with its requirements is the impelling force; in the new covenant, the grace shown in the forgiveness of sins is the aiding power by which man attains that common life with God which the law sets before him as the great problem of life. It is in this that the qualitative difference between the old and the new covenants consists. The object which both set before men for attainment is the same, but the means of attaining it are different in each. In the old covenant are found commandment and requirement; in the new, grace and giving. Certainly, even under the old covenant, God bestowed on the people of Israel grace and the forgiveness of sins, and, by the institution of sacrifice, had opened up a way of access by which men might approach Him and rejoice in His gracious gifts; His Spirit, moreover, produced in the heart of the godly ones the feeling that their sins were forgiven, and that they were favored of God. But even this institution and this working of the Holy Spirit on and in the heart, was no more than a shadow and prefiguration of what is actually offered and vouchsafed under the new covenant, Hebrews 10:1. The sacrifices of the old covenant are but prefigurations of the true atoning-offering of Christ, by which the sins of the whole world are atoned for and blotted out.

Saint Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, Chapter 27:

This grace hid itself under a veil in the Old Testament, but it has been revealed in the New Testament according to the most perfectly ordered dispensation of the ages, forasmuch as God knew how to dispose all things. And perhaps it is a part of this hiding of grace, that in the Decalogue, which was given on Mount Sinai, only the portion which relates to the Sabbath was hidden under a prefiguring precept. The Sabbath is a day of sanctification; and it is not without significance that, among all the works which God accomplished, the first sound of sanctification was heard on the day when He rested from all His labors. On this, indeed, we must not now enlarge. But at the same time, I deem it to be enough for the point now in question, that it was not for nothing that the nation was commanded on that day to abstain from all servile work, by which sin is signified; but because not to commit sin belongs to sanctification, that is, to God's gift through the Holy Spirit. And this precept alone among the others, was placed in the law, which was written on the two tables of stone, in a prefiguring shadow, under which the Jews observe the Sabbath, that by this very circumstance it might be signified that it was then the time for concealing the grace, which had to be revealed in the New Testament by the death of Christ — the rending, as it were, of the veil. Matthew 27:51 For when, says the apostle, it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. 2 Corinthians 3:16.

In essence, when Jeremiah prophesies that the law will be written into the hearts of God's people what he is saying is that the veil will be lifted ("rent in two"), thus freeing the faithful to see the reality that had been only hinted at in the Old Testament. The prefiguring shadows exist only for the purpose of setting the stage for the new dispensation in which the impediment to vision will be removed by the efficacious work of grace. Remember that the word "apocalyptic" means to reveal by removing all obfuscations, to lay bare, to make clear in a way that is incontrovertible, so Jeremiah's prophecy is apocalyptic (see 1 Corinthians 13:12: "*For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face*"). Everything about the fulfillment of God's salvific work is apocalyptic in time (see Luke 12:2: "*For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed*").