

A Name Like No Other

Session 5

December 31, 2023

The Righteousness of God's Name

The Point: We can know righteousness when we know and walk with Jesus.

Session Passages: Jeremiah 23:5-6; Romans 3:10b-13,21-26

Jeremiah 23:5-6

Connection to The Point: When we know this prophesied king of righteousness, we know righteousness.

The setting for Jeremiah 23. God called Jeremiah to preach a message of both judgment and mercy, of destruction and renewal (Jer. 1:10). One of the main groups God called out through Jeremiah for their sins was the leadership class of Judah. Those who were supposed to shepherd God's people in fact scattered them through their sinful disobedience to Yahweh the Lord (23:1-2). God announced that He would judge the false shepherds (v. 2), gather His scattered people, and raise up shepherds who would truly care for and protect His people (vv. 3-4).

Look Behold (v. 5). The term (*hinneh*), which can also be translated "behold look," is used to shift the reader's focus or, as in this case, to call attention to and emphasize what is about to be spoken.

The days are coming, The days come (v. 5). Jeremiah used this phrase fifteen fourteen times, far more than any other writer in the Old Testament. Sometimes the words introduce prophecies about the fall of Jerusalem (19:6). Sometimes they foreshadow the return from exile (16:14; 30:3). Several times the phrase introduces the messianic period and the coming of the Messiah (31:31).

This is the Lord's declaration, Saith the Lord, Declares the Lord (v. 5). While false prophets preached wealth, prosperity, and deliverance for Judah, Jeremiah preached the Lord's word about His coming judgment and exile of Judah. He had no delight in preaching such dire messages, but he did so because God had called him as His prophet (1:4-10).

Raise up, Raise (v. 5). The reign of David's family line over Judah seemingly would end with King Zedekiah when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 BC, but God intended to *raise up* a Messiah who would truly bring His people hope. God would raise up a new King and Shepherd from the line of David who would establish the Davidic kingdom forever (2 Sam. 7:11-16). God fulfilled this promise through the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Righteous Branch for David, Unto David a righteous Branch, For David a righteous Branch (v. 5). Jeremiah identified the coming Messiah as the *Righteous Branch for David righteous Branch for David righteous Branch for David* (see also 33:14-16). The term for *Branch* (*tsemach*) means "growth" or "sprout." The Messiah would be a branch of David's family tree. Isaiah called Him the "Branch of the Lord" (Isa. 4:2). Zechariah called Him the "Branch" (Zech. 3:8; 6:12).

Reign wisely, Shall reign and prosper (v. 5). As their King, the Messiah will rule the people of God wisely, according to the ways and precepts of God. He will cause the people of God to prosper and have insight into the ways of the Lord.¹

Justice Judgment Just (v. 5). The term (*mishpat*) means a verdict or sentence, either favorable or unfavorable. Unlike the corrupt rulers, priests, and prophets of Jeremiah's day, the Righteous Branch will administer true justice. He alone is the true Judge (2 Cor. 5:10).

Righteousness, Justice, Right (v. 5). The term (*tsedaqah*) has the facets of morally correct thinking and behavior (moral virtue), justice, and prosperity. In addition to being King and Judge, the Branch of David will bring *righteousness justice* and righteousness to the land, something that was not a priority of the faithless kings, priests, and prophets of Jeremiah's day (Jer. 5:1-4,31; see Isa. 11:4-5).

Judah . . . Israel (v. 6). After the death of Solomon, Israel split into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Samaria) and the Southern Kingdom of Judah (1 Kings 12). The people of God will be reunited under His Messiah.

Saved . . . dwell securely, Saved . . . dwell safely, Saved . . . live in safety (v. 6). Peace and security are characteristics of the messianic age (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:6-9).

The Lord Is Our Righteousness, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, The Lord Our Righteous Savior (v. 6). King Zedekiah was the last ruler of Judah before the Babylonian exile. His name means "The Lord is my Righteousness." The Messiah would have the name *the Lord Is Our Righteousness, the Lord Our Righteous Savior*. Zedekiah did not live up to the promise of his name, but the coming Messiah would.

Romans 3:10b-13

Connection to The Point: If we do not know this prophesied king of righteousness, we do not know righteousness.

The setting for Romans 3. Paul wrote the letter to the Romans while he was in Corinth between AD 56-57. He had not yet traveled to Rome, so he wrote this letter as an introduction and summary of the gospel that he preached. The first section of Romans describes the sinfulness of humanity, setting the stage for Paul's explanation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, through which sinners can receive salvation by faith in Christ.

The purpose of Romans 3. Paul explained that both Jews and Gentiles were under sin. Therefore, Jews had no advantage over the Gentiles when it came to their relationship with God. All were deserving of God's judgment for their sins. However, salvation is available to both Jews and Gentiles through faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ, God's Messiah.

Righteous (v. 10b). Paul quoted Psalm 14:1-3 to explain the universality of sin. The psalmist called godless people fools because they did not recognize the existence of God, and they were corrupt, not doing good. Paul declared both Jew and Gentile were unrighteous. The Greek word for *righteous* (*dikaiois*) refers to a person who is just or law-abiding. Because every person's nature is fallen, they are incapable of perfectly keeping God's law.

Understands, Understandeth (v. 11). Humanity outside of Christ may be intelligent in the ways of the world, but they remain ignorant of the ways of God. The cross is foolishness to them (1 Cor. 1:18). In this context, the Greek word for *understands, understandeth* (*sunemi*) does not focus on knowledge itself but rather on an understanding of God's Word that leads to living a life of holiness.

Seeks God, Seeketh after God (v. 11). All humanity, both Jews and Gentiles, possess a fallen nature that does not seek after God. Without God seeking us (Ezek. 34:16), we would be without hope. Jesus stated His mission in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Turned away, Gone out of the way (v. 12). The entirety of humanity have turned away from the Lord (Pss. 14:3; 53:3; Isa. 53:6). The Greek word for *turned away, gone out of the way* (*ekklino*) means "to shun" or "to avoid" someone. It pictures the fallen individual's total desire to ignore the Lord.

Become worthless, Become unprofitable (v. 12). Apart from a relationship with Christ, a person cannot bear spiritual fruit acceptable to God (John 15:1-8). In and of ourselves we have nothing to offer the Lord, and we do not live in the way that God intended. However, that does not mean that people lack value, dignity, and worth. All people are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). God so loves sinners that He sent His one and only Son to die for them (John 3:16-18; Rom. 5:8).

Good (v. 12). Because of sin, fallen humanity is unable to do good in the eyes of God. All are enslaved to sin (John 8:34; Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:5-10). The word for *good* (*chrestotes*) means “moral excellence of character,” “gentleness,” and “kindness.” Interestingly, the term can also mean “usefulness.” Fallen humanity can offer nothing of use or worth to God that would put them in a right relationship with Him.

Their throat is an open grave, Their throat is an open sepulchre, Their throats are open graves (v. 13). Those apart from Christ have mouths that spew words of death like an open grave, open sepulchre (grave). Psalm 5:9 compares the throat of the wicked person to an open grave. Jesus declared that because of their hypocrisy the Pharisees were like beautiful, whitewashed tombs filled with dead men’s bones and every kind of impurity (Matt. 23:27-28).

Their tongues (v. 13). Those outside of Christ often use their speech to speak lies and engage in deception. James noted the power of the tongue. “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell; Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (Jas. 3:5-6).

Deceive, Have used deceit, Practice deceit (v. 13). To *deceive*, use *deceit practice*, *deceit* is to misrepresent the truth and engage in fraud. Such people take advantage of others for nefarious purposes.

Their tongues (v. 13). Those outside of Christ often use their speech to speak lies and engage in deception. James noted the power of the tongue, “So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how a small fire sets ablaze a large forest. And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among our members. It stains the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (Jas. 3:5-6).

Vipers’ venom, The poison of asps, The poison of vipers (v. 13). The Bible compares the speech of the godless to the venom of snakes, which when they strike injure and even kill people (“Brood of vipers Generation of vipers,” Matt. 23:33; Luke 3:7).

Their lips (v. 13). Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 12:22), and lying lips bring shame and loathsomeness (13:5). The lying lips of Ananias and Sapphira brought shame and death to them, serving as an example for the early church (Acts 5). **Their lips** (v. 13). The Lord detests lying lips (Prov. 12:22), and lying lips bring shame and disgust (13:5). The lying lips of Ananias and Sapphira brought shame and death to them, serving as an example for the early church (Acts 5).

Romans 3:21-26

Connection to The Point: God’s righteousness has been fully revealed in Jesus.

But now (v. 21). In contrast to the fact that all, both Jew and Gentile, are sinners before God, Paul would now explain a new way of righteousness, of coming into a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

The righteousness of God (v. 21). The meaning of this phrase is debated. It could be referring to righteousness as an attribute of God. Another suggestion is that it is God's way of righteousness, His justifying activity through which sinful people who put their faith in Christ are put into right standing before Him. Finally, it could refer to the result of God's justifying activity—the believer's righteous standing before God.

Apart from the law Without the law (v. 21). The law is God's law, which is holy (7:12). The law of God instructs how to live in right relationship with God and other people. Jews put their hope in their own ability to keep the law, but Paul announced a pathway to righteousness that came apart from their ability (or rather inability) to keep the law.

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Revealed, Manifested, Made known (v. 21). No one can come to know God on their own. God had to reveal Himself to the world. While He did this primarily to the Israelites in the Old Testament, in the fullness of time God revealed Himself and His plan for salvation available to all through Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:4-5).

The Law and the Prophets, The law and the prophets (v. 21). Lest anyone think what he was expounding was in opposition to God's Word, Paul declared that the Law and the Prophets, the law and the prophets (meaning the Old Testament) bear witness to God's way of righteousness. After His resurrection, Jesus instructed the disciples He met on the road to Emmaus. "Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures, And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

Through faith in Jesus Christ, By faith of Jesus Christ (v. 22). The key to attaining God's righteousness is not doing our best but rather having faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus is both the object of our faith and the means of our righteousness; to receive salvation sinners must trust in His atoning work accomplished for them at the cross.

Believe (v. 22). To *believe* (*pisteuo*) is the act of having faith (*pistis*). In this context, to believe is to have faith in Christ.

No distinction, No difference (v. 22). The gospel is available to all but not effective for all. God makes *no distinction*. In God's eyes there is *no difference*—He makes no distinction among sinners. He does not accept them based on race, culture, or their efforts to overcome sin. However, He does give salvation to "all who believe, all them that believe." Though God makes no distinction in who can receive salvation, He does not automatically accept everyone, a belief system known as universalism. Faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross is what is required to receive salvation.

Sinned (v. 23). The Greek word *hamartano* means to miss the mark or to err, particularly in a moral sense. All humanity has sinned.

Fall short, Come short (v. 23). The Greek term *hustereo* means "to be inferior," "to fail," or "to lack something," in this context the perfect obedience that God requires from human beings. All humanity has fallen short in this respect.

The glory of God (v. 23). Both Jews and Gentiles (all humanity) are sinners before God, and therefore they do not measure up to the perfect *glory of God*. Sin has separated all people from the glory of God. Paul was about to reveal how that glory became available to all sinners.

Justified (v. 24). The word *justified* (*dikaioo*) means that God has declared a person righteous in a legal sense (Rom. 5:1,9; 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11). At the moment of salvation God exchanges our sin for Christ's perfect righteousness. The believer is permanently placed in the position of right standing before God. "In Christ one becomes all that God requires (2 Cor. 5:21; cp. Rom. 4:6,14)." ²

Freely (v. 24). The righteousness of God comes as a free gift in Christ.

Grace (v. 24). Those who have experienced salvation cannot boast of earning it themselves. It is an act of grace on God's part; repentant sinners receive salvation by faith in Christ as a free gift (Eph. 2:8-10). What sinners could not do for themselves; God did for them through Jesus Christ. We do not and cannot earn salvation.

Redemption (v. 24). The process of *redemption* (*apolutrosis*) in Greco-Roman culture involved the freeing of slaves by the paying of a price. We are enslaved to sin—all humanity, both Jews and Gentiles (6:6,20). "The idea of ransom suggests the heart of Jesus' mission (Mark 10:45). His life and ministry culminated in His sacrificial death. His death served as the ransom to liberate sinners from their enslaved condition." ³

The mercy seat (v. 25). The *mercy seat* (*hilasterion*) was a slab of pure gold that sat atop the ark of the covenant. It was surrounded by two cherubim (a type of angel) and symbolized the throne of God (Lev. 16:2; Num. 7:89). The high priest sprinkled blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement by which God would forgive the sins of the nation of Israel (Lev. 16:15). This action was repeated every year and foreshadowed the ultimate, once for all atoning sacrifice of Jesus (Heb. 10:12).

By his blood (v. 25). Refers to the atoning death of Christ on the cross, the basis and process by which a person's sins are forgiven (Col. 2:13-14), they are justified, reconciled to God (Rom. 5:1,9,10-11; Gal. 2:16-17; Col. 1:20), and receive eternal life (John 3:16).

Through faith (v. 25). *Faith* in Jesus is the only way to receive salvation. **Propitiation** (v. 25). This term refers to the way in which God's holy wrath has been appeased, in this case through the atoning death of Christ on the cross.

Through faith (v. 25). *Faith* in Jesus is the only way to receive salvation.

In his blood (v. 25). Propitiation was achieved through the sacrifice of Christ, by His blood, on the cross. It is the basis and process by which a person's sins are forgiven (Col. 2:13-14), they are justified, reconciled to God (Rom. 5:1,9-11; Gal. 2:16; Col. 1:20), and receive eternal life (John 3:16). **Sacrifice of atonement** (v. 25). Christ's *sacrifice of atonement* (propitiation) was achieved by His blood on the cross. It is the basis and process by which a person's sins are forgiven (Col. 2:13-14), they are justified, reconciled to God (Rom. 5:1,9-11; Gal. 2:16-17; Col. 1:20), and receive eternal life (John 3:16).

By faith (v. 25). *Faith* in Jesus is the only way to receive salvation.

Passed over the sins previously committed, For the remission of sins that are past, Left the sins committed beforehand unpunished (v. 25). There is some uncertainty as to the meaning of this phrase. It could refer either to the past sins of those who put their faith in Christ, or the sins committed before the time of Christ.

To demonstrate his righteousness, To declare . . . his righteousness (v. 26). The shift from law-based righteousness, which really was no righteousness at all but only served to reveal a person's sins (7:7), to the righteousness of God in Christ happened at "the present time; this time" The Roman believers were witnesses to this demonstration of God's righteousness. He could have left everyone in their sins, but God made a way for sinful human beings to receive salvation through Jesus.

He would be just, He might be just, So as to be just (v. 26). God is *just* both in forgiving the sins of those who put their faith in Christ and in pouring out His wrath upon those who reject His gift of salvation through Christ.

Justify, The justifier, The one who justifies (v. 26). Because Jesus is fully God and fully man, He was able to live a perfect life free from sin (Heb. 4:15) and serve as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of humanity (2 Cor. 5:21). When a person puts his faith in Jesus, God justifies him by exchanging the believer's sinfulness for the perfect righteousness of Christ. This forever places the believer in right standing with God.

The one who has faith in Jesus, Him which believeth in Jesus, Those who have faith in Jesus (v. 26). Salvation is offered to all, but the only way to receive salvation is through faith in God's Messiah Jesus Christ (John 14:6). "The obligation is to believe, to trust in the redemptive work of Christ. The good news is good only to those who receive it."⁴

1. F. B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah Lamentations*, vol. 16, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 212.
2. Jeff Mooney, "Righteousness," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* [HIBD], gen. ed. Chad Brand, rev. (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 1367.
3. Stan Norman, "Redeem, Redemption, Redeemer," in HIBD, 1339.
4. Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 118.