

## Session 5

December 31, 2023

### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD'S NAME

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

When I served as a missionary in Brazil, I struggled with their word for righteousness. Their term was basically the same as their word for justice. But while justice and righteousness are related, they certainly are not the same thing. The root idea of righteousness is “rightness” or “straightness.” So, how do you know whether something is “straight” or not? If it’s a doorway you are building, you could string a plumb bob down to check for straightness (if you are less than 50 years old, you’ll have to Google it to know what I am talking about...). If you are hanging a picture, you could use a level to check it. Or if you are trying to draw a straight line, you might reach for a ruler to check your work. What do all of these examples have in common? To measure straightness, you must have a standard with which to compare. In the case of God’s righteousness, He sets the standard of “rightness” by which all things are measured. And in many ways, He Himself IS the standard.

**A coming king (Jer. 23:5-6).** Jeremiah was God’s prophet to Judah up to and during the nation’s fall to Babylon. At that time, God’s people had been apathetic toward the things of God and less than enthusiastic when Jeremiah proclaimed their need to repent. Interestingly, more than 40 of Jeremiah’s 52 chapters focus almost entirely on the coming judgement. Yet scattered throughout are bright glimpses of hope. Here is one example. The passage is clearly prophetic and clearly Messianic. Unlike their horrific past and present kings, there was one coming who would reign in righteousness (v. 5), for He Himself would be righteous; a new and living branch rising from the root (lineage) of David (see Is. 9:6-7). Unlike mere human kings, He will reign wisely and justly. Although the northern kingdom of Israel had already been overrun, and the southern kingdom of Judah soon would be, a day of restoration had been scheduled by God; a day when the two would again be united; when deliverance and security would be provided for all of God’s people. This, of course, points to the millennial reign of Jesus Christ, who is “The Lord Our Righteous Savior” (v. 6). For reflection: Read Jer. 33:15-16. Note how the same name is applied to the city of Jerusalem. Why do you think this is?

**A corrupt people (Rom. 3:10-13).** In this section of Romans 3, Paul quotes from Psalms and Isaiah to paint a harsh (but accurate) picture of just how terribly corrupt humanity apart from God really is. Here, the standard of His righteousness is held up alongside the perversity of man’s sinfulness. Notice the universality of human depravity. Four times the writer uses the phrase “no one” to compare us to God. No one is righteous; no one understands; no one seeks God; no one does what is good. Twice, he uses the word “all;” all have turned away from God; and all have become “useless” (think “worthless”). Twice, the emphatic is used: “not even one” (or as the KJV puts it, “No, not one”). The descriptions given in verses 13 through 18 then illustrate the realities previously expressed. Once we understand how corrupt humanity really is, we can see the futility of our attempts to somehow please God on our own (see v. 20a). For reflection: Read Isaiah 64:6 and consider why Dr. Adrian Rogers used to say, “The worst form of badness is human goodness.”

**A consecrated Savior (Rom. 3:21-26).** If God sets the standard of righteousness (see Matt. 5:48), and mankind is so desperately wicked, how can we ever be made “right” in His eyes? This section explains it. Human works cannot save us (see Gal. 2:16). Keeping the law cannot save us (see Rom. 8:3). Only Christ, by His substitutionary death on the cross, can save us. This is what has been called the Divine Exchange: Christ took on our sin, so that we might take on His righteousness. Paul put it this way in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” For reflection: Think about the idea of exchange. What else did holy Jesus exchange with sinful man? How should we respond to that?