

Session 6

April 15, 2018

OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jeremiah 33:3-8;14-16

Jeremiah couldn't get a break. His own people had so fallen into idolatry that God's patience was wearing thin. For the first several chapters of Jeremiah, the "Weeping Prophet" warned the people of coming judgment (for example, see chapters 19 and 20). The Babylonians would invade, and the Babylonians would win. Needless to say, the rulers of Judah didn't want to hear that, and in chapter 32, we find the prophet imprisoned by his own king for proclaiming the truth! But like the apostle Paul in the New Testament, God spoke to His man even while in prison. The news was not good; but even so, the Lord gave His prophet some important promises.

Promise #1: God will indeed judge His people (vv. 3-5). Many of us have memorized Jeremiah 33:3 "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." While we marvel at that promise, we unfortunately forget the context. There are some positive things brought up later, but for now those "great and mighty things" involve God's devastating wrath poured out on His own rebellious people! The imagery is striking: homes have been destroyed and pushed against the city walls to help fortify it. But it's a useless gesture. Those who fight in defense of the city will fail, and the houses remaining will be filled with their corpses. God will use the Babylonians (or *Chaldeans*) to exercise His judgment. But make no mistake: the Lord declared it would be *His* wrath and *His* rage that brought destruction to the city because of "all their evil" (v. 5).

Promise #2: God will eventually restore His people (vv. 6-8). As devastating as God's judgment was, it wouldn't last forever. The God who judges His people is the same God who will restore them. Six specific claims are made about Judah's restoration. The Lord promised to bring them (1) health and healing, instead of the death and dying the Babylonians would bring; (2) an abundance of peace and truth, in exchange for their painful warfare and years of idolatry; (3) prosperity in place of the awful destruction the invading army wrought; (4) renovation, in place of the utter ruin Jerusalem would face; (5) purification in exchange for their wicked, rebellious sin; and (6) gracious forgiveness in place of devastating judgment. Interestingly, the seventy years of Babylonian captivity finally cured God's people of the sin of idolatry, for we don't see it appear in their history again. But what a terrible cure it was!

Promise #3: God will ultimately redeem His people (vv. 14-16). This section nearly restates the words of Jeremiah 23:5-6, where the promise is made to the nation. The major difference here is the promise is applied to the Holy City. In either case, three points are clear. First, the prophecy is future, for "the days are coming..." How far in the future is revealed in the second point: the prophecy is Messianic. Only the Lord Jesus fits the description given. Old Testament commentator R. K. Harrison rightly points out, "Jeremiah does not reveal as much about the coming Messiah as Isaiah does, but nevertheless provides glimpses of Christ as the Fountain of living waters (Jeremiah 2:13), the good Shepherd (Jeremiah 23:4; 31:10), the righteous Branch (Jeremiah 23:5), the Redeemer (Jeremiah 50:34), the Lord our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6) and David the king (Jeremiah 30:9)." Third, the emphasis is on His righteousness. The coming judgement would be ruinous...but the coming judgment was also rightly deserved. Only when the people submitted to a righteous judge would Judah be saved, and Jerusalem secure. While nothing would hold back the coming captivity, God promised His people a future restoration and an ultimate redemption, because His Messiah is our Righteousness.