



## SESSION 6

# OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

### ▶ **The Point**

Because God is righteous, He will ultimately make all things right.

### ▶ **The Passage**

Jeremiah 33:3-8,14-16

### ▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

I have ten grandchildren, and I find myself repeating some of the same things my dad would say to me. For example, I'll sometimes hear one of them complaining about something that happened at school, and I'll hear: "That's just not fair!" In those moments, I echo what my father said to me: "Who said life would always be fair?" I'm guessing you've heard that too. And if you're a parent, I'm guessing you've also said it. Life isn't fair! It's frustrating when we see people with poor character and questionable morals seem to get ahead in life; meanwhile, those who seek to do right often fall behind. Such events might cause us to think that God is not fair. *Why doesn't He punish the unrighteous and reward the righteous?* We are not the first ones to raise that question. God showed us much about Himself through the prophet Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 33, God revealed Himself as Our Righteousness; in so doing, He helps us deal with those "unfair" moments.

### ▶ **The Setting**

The word of God came to Jeremiah in the last days of the kingdom of Judah. Because Jeremiah predicted the fall of Judah, neither he nor his prophecies were popular. Nor was his popularity helped by his call for the people to surrender to the invading Babylonians. Because of his prophecies Jeremiah had been confined to the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace. But while God had given Jeremiah a message of judgment to proclaim to Judah, He also gave Jeremiah a message of hope as well. God's judgment was not His final word against Judah. Judgment would be followed by hope and healing for the people of Judah and all of God's people.

# What does the Bible say?

**Chaldeans** (v. 5)—Tribe of people living in southeast Mesopotamia who achieved dominance over Babylonia in 626 BC, establishing the Neo-Babylonian Empire (626–539 BC).

**Righteous Branch** (v. 15)—A reference to God’s Messiah; God foretold that He would raise up a messianic king from the line of David. (See also Jer. 23:5.)

**The LORD is our righteousness** (v. 16)—In the Bible, the giving of a new name reflects a change in status. God foretold He would one day make Jerusalem (His chosen people) righteous.

## **Jeremiah 33:3-8,14-16**

**<sup>3</sup> Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.**

**<sup>4</sup> For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah that were torn down to make a defense against the siege mounds and against the sword:**

**<sup>5</sup> They are coming in to fight against the Chaldeans and to fill them with the dead bodies of men whom I shall strike down in my anger and my wrath, for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their evil.**

**<sup>6</sup> Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security.**

**<sup>7</sup> I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first.**

**<sup>8</sup> I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.**

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**<sup>14</sup> “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.**

**<sup>15</sup> In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.**

**<sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’”**

# GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes



Notes

**DISCUSS: Question #1** on page 67 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **“As a kid, what made you say, ‘That’s not fair!’?”** Allow time for each person to respond.

**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):** On a white-board or large sheet of paper draw four squares and label them: right, wrong, right-wrong, and wrong-right. Ask group members to give examples of right things to do, wrong things to do, right things

done for the wrong reasons, and wrong things done for the right reasons. Ask: “Which of these things pleases God?” Say: “Because God is righteous and we are not, we have a hard time with this if we don’t look to Him for our standard.”

**GUIDE:** Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 68 of the PSG. Introduce the key theme of God as our Righteousness by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

**GUIDE:** Call attention to “The Point” on page 68 of the PSG: **“Because God is righteous, He will ultimately make all things right.”**

**PRAY:** Transition into the study by asking the Lord to show us His righteousness. Thank Him for imparting His righteousness to us and for helping us understand our Bible study today.

Dotted lines for taking notes.



# STUDY THE BIBLE

## Notes

### Jeremiah 33:3-5

***<sup>3</sup> Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. <sup>4</sup> For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah that were torn down to make a defense against the siege mounds and against the sword: <sup>5</sup> They are coming in to fight against the Chaldeans and to fill them with the dead bodies of men whom I shall strike down in my anger and my wrath, for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their evil.***

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud Jeremiah 33:3-5 on page 69 of the PSG.

**RECAP:** Read the first paragraph after the Scripture on page 69 of the PSG.

Nearly a hundred years after Assyria had taken the ten northern tribes of Israel into captivity (see 2 Kings 17:6-18), Judah also stood on the brink of collapse. Jeremiah was God’s spokesman during the latter part of these tumultuous years. His ministry began during the reign of the good king Josiah, who was profoundly moved when he rediscovered the Word of God. As a result, Josiah restored the temple and revived worship. (See 22:8-13; 23:4-25.) Unfortunately, the revival and reform which occurred during Josiah’s reign ended abruptly after the young king’s untimely death. (See 23:29-30.) Spiritual decline led to rapid moral decay and oppression; violence and political unrest were the order of the day.

**GUIDE:** Use the last two paragraphs of the Commentary on the next page of this Leader Guide to offer additional information on how God’s revelation to Jeremiah meant judgment for Judah.

**DISCUSS: Question #2** on page 69 of the PSG: **“What captures your attention about God’s character in these verses?”**

**TRANSITION:** God will display His wrath against evil. In the next verses, we’ll see that He also purifies and forgives His children.

**ALTERNATE QUESTION:**

***When have you seen the benefits of discipline?***

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## Jeremiah 33:3-5 Commentary

**[Verse 3]** After God had freed the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage, He gave them the Law to guide them in how to worship and honor Him. He promised great blessings if the people would obey His Law. (See Deut. 28:1-14.) However, God is just, and He will display His wrath against evil. So, He also promised terrible judgments if they refused to obey Him. (See vv. 15-68.)

The final siege of Jerusalem occurred around 588 BC, when King Zedekiah and the people of Judah rebelled against the Babylonians. As a result, the Babylonians invaded Judah and surrounded Jerusalem. Jeremiah 32–34 details the prophet Jeremiah’s ministry during the last days before Jerusalem fell and was destroyed.

King Zedekiah had ordered Jeremiah to be confined because he had disliked Jeremiah’s prophecy that Jerusalem would fall to the Babylonians and Zedekiah would be taken to Babylon as a prisoner. Jeremiah had also pronounced to the people the futility of fighting against the Babylonians. (See Jer. 32:3-5.) While Jeremiah was confined, God gave him two important messages. In the first message (see vv. 6-15), God emphasized both that Judah would be punished for their disobedience and that after the time of judgment God would in His mercy also restore the people to their land.

God spoke to Jeremiah a second time. (See 33:1.) After emphasizing His authority as Yahweh, the sovereign Creator (see v. 2), God invited Jeremiah to ask for a divine revelation; the answer would be too **great and hidden** for mere mortals to know. God was describing to Jeremiah knowledge that is too difficult for human beings to attain on their own.

**[Verses 4-5]** Without waiting for Jeremiah to ask, God delivered His revelation to Jeremiah. The first part focused on the utter destruction that was coming to Jerusalem. God prefaced His revelation with the phrase, **“For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel.”** Even though destruction was coming upon Judah at the hands of a foreign army, ultimately the judgment was that of Yahweh, the God of Israel, on the nation for its sins. The Chaldeans had been attacking the walls of Jerusalem perhaps for as long as a year. (See 2 Kings 25:1.) The people of Jerusalem would demolish parts of their own **houses** and even the **houses of the kings of Judah** so they could fill holes and reinforce the walls. However, all their efforts ultimately would prove to be useless. Because of their sins, God had **hidden** His face and refused to answer their prayers for deliverance from their enemies. God was filled with **anger** and **wrath** against them because of their sins. God pronounced Judah’s doom, saying that it was He who would strike down the defenders of Jerusalem. Since the city was under siege and all the cemeteries were outside the city, there would be no way of burying the dead during the battle. Therefore, **the dead bodies** of the city’s defenders would fill up what was left of their houses. The reason this would happen was **because of all their evil**.



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## **Jeremiah 33:6-8 Commentary**

**[Verses 6-7]** Though the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BC, and the destruction of the Southern Kingdom of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians was assured by God's word, God promised redemption and restoration for all His chosen people (**Judah** and **Israel**). Although He had visited them with judgment, God would purify and forgive His children. God stressed that He would provide **health** and **healing** to Jerusalem. His people would experience true peace. Peace would mean not only the absence of war but also personal well-being, the opportunities to work, worship, and raise families.

**[Verse 8]** At the core of God's healing process would be His forgiving and cleansing of His covenant people from the guilt of all their sin. God did not downplay the seriousness of their disobedience. In fact, in the original Hebrew three different terms are used to emphasize the scope of their wrongdoing. The first term (**guilt**) in verse 8 translates a Hebrew word referring to something that is twisted, bent, or distorted. The people had twisted and distorted their relationship with God. The second word (**sin**) translates a Hebrew word that pictures an archer missing his intended target or a person missing the way. The people's aim should have been a life of holiness before God. (See Lev. 11:44). The third term (**rebellion**) translates a Hebrew word that stresses the deliberateness of their sinful actions. Though they had the Law and its warnings, as well as God's prophets calling them to repent and return to God, they still refused to obey.

In spite of all their sins, God promised that He would **cleanse** and forgive His people. God knew that one day His people would confess and repent of their sinful ways. (See Neh. 1:4-7; 9:1-3.) God is always ready to heal and purify His people when they confess and repent. (See 1 John 1:9.) Though the overarching theme of God's word through Jeremiah was the coming judgment that would mean destruction and exile, God's message also included forgiveness and renewal based on a new covenant. (See Jer. 31:31-34.)

Instead of a city filled with corpses, Jerusalem would become a place filled with joy, praise, and glory. (See v. 9.) Though one day soon Jerusalem and the surrounding cities would become "a waste without man or beast" (v. 10), God would eventually restore the people and their land so that they would hear the "voice of mirth and the voice of gladness" (v. 11), and shepherds would be able to graze their flocks in peace and security. (See vv. 12-13.)

God's message of judgment and hope has never changed. For those who refuse to acknowledge their sin and rebellion and put their faith in His Son Jesus, He promises condemnation (see John 3:18) and death. (See Rom. 6:23.) But for those who confess their guilt and repent, through His new covenant of grace, He offers forgiveness and eternal life. (See John 3:16; Eph. 2:1-9.)





## Jeremiah 33:14-16 Commentary

**[Verses 14-15]** God's promised judgment came to pass in 586 BC when the city of Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed by the Babylonians. Although some of God's promises were fulfilled when the Jews later returned to Judah and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, God spoke of a yet future time when a specific promise would be fulfilled. God declared that He would fulfill His **promise** spoken through Jeremiah to both **the house of Israel and the house of Judah**.

God would cause to **spring up** someone from the house of King David, identified as a **righteous Branch**. This Righteous Branch, a king from the line of David, will reign over God's people with **justice** and **righteousness**. He will also rule with wisdom (see Jer. 23:5) and His kingdom will endure forever. (See 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Jer. 33:17.) God fulfilled this prophecy of the promise of the Righteous Branch when He sent His Son Jesus, born of the line of David (see Matt. 1:1), into the world to live a perfectly righteous life and to die on the cross in order to provide complete atonement for our sins. (See Heb. 9:11-14.)

**[Verse 16]** Again echoing the future nature of this prophecy, God foretold that the Righteous Branch would restore Judah and Jerusalem, guaranteeing the safety and security of their inhabitants. Jerusalem would also be given a new name: **the Lord is our righteousness**. In Jeremiah 23:5-6, the same title is given to the coming Davidic ruler, the Righteous Branch. **LORD** is the English translation of the Hebrew name for God usually transliterated as *Yahweh*, the name of God by which He revealed Himself to and established His covenant relationship with Israel. In the Bible, when a person or place was given a new name, the name would reflect some change in the status of that person or place. The only one who could change the people of Jerusalem and make them righteous before God is God's Messiah, that is, Jesus the Christ.

Some Christians believe that the final fulfillment of this prophecy will come when Jesus returns and sets up His millennial kingdom in Jerusalem. Old Testament prophecies, such as Isaiah 60:11-22, reflect the concept of a restored and righteous Jerusalem. The Book of Ezekiel ends with a description of this restored city's dimensions and gates and concludes with the promise that "the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD Is There" (48:35). Other Christians believe that these prophecies will be fulfilled in "the holy city, new Jerusalem" that comes down from heaven after the final judgment and the creation of the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:2). Whenever and however God chooses, one day Jesus will return and will bring perfect justice and righteousness to all the world. This time of perfect righteousness will include all of God's people, those who have trusted in Him. Until Jesus returns as King to reign over all the earth (see Rev. 19-22), we are to allow the Holy Spirit to continue to transform us into Jesus' image so that we can reflect His righteousness and His glory. (See 2 Cor. 3:18.)



# FOUR QUESTIONS GROUPS SHOULD ASK ABOUT PRAYER REQUESTS

BY DWAYNE MCCRARY

In almost every Bible study group, prayer requests are shared. In fact, we may even feel cheated if prayer requests are eliminated from our group! Unfortunately, gathering prayer requests is as far as it usually goes. But what if we saw a prayer request as an opportunity?

Here's what I mean: some prayer requests require ministry action. For example, if a couple uses the prayer time to announce that they are expecting a baby, passing that information along to the Preschool Sunday School leaders would be important. Deacons and other ministry leaders could be informed about hospital stays, family crises, and deaths of family members. In this way, the prayer request becomes an opportunity for ministry action, reaching all areas of the church.

Prayer requests also represent opportunities for church leaders. By knowing needs, leaders can make wise choices when they plan events, host fellowships, and train leaders. The pastor could better understand the needs of the church and prepare sermons that meet the needs expressed in the prayer requests. Being aware of specific needs makes him a better pastor.

**How can we efficiently gather accurate prayer requests?** Notice the two words, efficiently and accurate. A Bible study group could spend the majority of their time gathering requests, but that would compromise their time of actually studying the Bible. For me, making a sheet of paper available during the study time for people to record their requests has been the most efficient. The second element is accurate. We want to make sure that the requests shared are up to date. There is nothing worse than telling someone that you are praying for their loved one, only to find out that the loved one passed away a month ago.

**How do we communicate the requests?** This question involves both form and medium. How we word something is very important. If someone requests prayer for a nephew who hates his job and is looking for a new one, that request could be worded when shared with others as a request for a nephew who needs wisdom about his future. We don't know who may read the requests, so we need to be careful. Hospital stays and other events requiring time away from home become important information if it falls into the wrong hands, which brings us to the medium: should we post all our requests on social media? What are the risks of making a request public? Do we really want everyone on social media to know about Dave having surgery and being in rehab for six weeks? How we communicate is important.

**To whom should we communicate these requests?** We have already mentioned sharing requests with the pastor and other church leaders. Who else needs to know about the prayer request? We mentioned a couple announcing an addition to their family earlier. Who all needs to know about that particular request, and why?

**How can we encourage those making a specific request?** Gathering prayer requests is certainly about being aware and knowing how to pray intelligently, but it is also about encouraging those for whom we are praying. There is nothing like getting a note from someone who is praying specifically for you. Those notes lighten the load and help us face whatever challenge we are facing. Part of this is celebrating God's answers as well. Both the one being prayed for and the one praying are encouraged by answered prayer, so finding a way to include answers to requests is also important.

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