

God Promised a Righteous Branch

Key Verse: *“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.”*
—**Jeremiah 23:5**

Selected Scripture:
Jeremiah 23:1-6;
33:14-18

IN TODAY’S LESSON, GIVEN through the Prophet Jeremiah, God proclaimed a coming judgment upon Judah, because its leaders did not properly guide and protect the people. “Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.”—Jer. 23:1,2

Through unfaithfulness, various leaders had encouraged idol worship instead of obedience to their one true God, eventually resulting in the nation being taken captive by Babylon. Not all of the Jews perished by the sword while in Babylonian captivity. When Cyrus gave the edict that permitted a return to their land to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem, a few responded to the call, but many chose to remain in exile. Jeremiah’s prophecy goes on to say that there would arise good shepherds who would feed the people so they would not be lacking.

(vs. 4) Even though there were some, such as Nehemiah and Zerubbabel, who enacted righteous laws for those who returned to their homeland, there was still fear and dismay. This indicates that the larger fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy related to a future time.

Israel was the only nation the Heavenly Father recognized and with whom he had entered into a covenant. However, because of their failure to repent, as a nation they were not of the proper heart condition to accept their Messiah at his First Advent. When Christ declared their house to be desolate, their typical arrangements and system of sacrifices were repudiated and their priesthood was no longer recognized by God. Eventually, the Romans destroyed their Temple and later razed the city of Jerusalem to the ground. The effect of this utter devastation was to scatter the Jews into every corner of the globe.

Our Key Verse describes a coming kingdom in which all Israel will be united together again as one people. This prophecy, relating to Christ and his church, as the heir of David's throne, indicates that they will be a righteous "Branch" and "King," who will establish a just government which will last throughout eternity. This government will not only unite all of Israel, but eventually will encompass all the nations of the earth.

Throughout the reign of sin and death, the human family has been starving for a ray of hope that things might be better for them. What joy they will experience as they return from the tomb and come into harmony with God's arrangements. That time long foretold by the prophets will have arrived, and there will be great appreciation and praise rendered to the Heavenly Father.

How wonderful is our God, who not only has great riches in store for the faithful members of the body of Christ during this Gospel Age, but has provided blessings for each member of the redeemed race, that they may come to a full appreciation of their Creator and worship him forever. ■