

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**August 19, 2012**

**God Promised a Righteous Branch**

Read Jeremiah 23:1-6 and 33:14-18

**Key verse: “The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall...execute justice and righteousness in the land” (Jeremiah 23:5).**

Emil Brunner, the theologian, said: “What oxygen is to the lungs, such is hope to the meaning of life.”

Jeremiah is called “the weeping prophet” because he so often prophesied that, because of their rebellion against God, judgment was coming to the people of Judah. That judgment eventually came in the form of the Babylonian exile and captivity.

To be uprooted from their homeland and taken away as captives—this would be a dark time for the people of Judah. Yet, God’s Word through Jeremiah offered hope even for this dark time.

Jeremiah 23:1-2 speaks of God’s displeasure with Judah’s unfaithful “shepherds.” Here the shepherds are the unfaithful rulers, who have repeatedly failed to lead Judah righteously. Partly because of these unfaithful rulers, the people are to be scattered. Yet, Jeremiah speaks also of hope.

Verses 3-4 give God’s promise to eventually bring His people back from exile. Verses 5-6 give God’s promise to raise up from David’s descendants an ideal, righteous King. This coming King is called “a righteous Branch,” meaning that he will sprout up from the stump of David’s fallen dynasty.

The term “Branch” is itself a messianic title. And this word of hope in the face of judgment looks ahead, ultimately, to the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

The messianic promises of Jeremiah 23:5-6 are repeated in Jeremiah 33:14-16. Then in 33:17-18, Jeremiah adds to the messianic prophecy. The coming King, says Jeremiah, will establish an unending throne (v. 17). And this coming King will establish an unending priesthood (v. 18).

The writer of Hebrews, in the New Testament, speaks of Jesus establishing this new and better priesthood: “Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for His own sins, and then for the

sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered himself” (Hebrews 7:27).

The Babylonian exile would be a dark and difficult time for the Jewish people. God gave to Jeremiah the difficult task of warning about this coming judgment. Yet, even in these warnings, God spoke His word of hope. A new day would come when God would gather the exiles and bring them back to their homeland. An even better day would come when God’s promised Messiah-King will rule on the throne of David.

Christians believe that the Messiah has come, born in a manger in Bethlehem. We believe that this Messiah died on a Roman cross, paying the penalty for the sins of the world. Through His sacrifice, Jesus established a new and better priesthood so that now we can come boldly into God’s presence—forgiven, cleansed, and accepted. And Christians believe that Jesus, the Messiah-King, will one day come again, to rule and reign in righteousness forever!

So, in our dark days, we are sustained by this hope: *Christ has come. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!*

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