

Jeremiah 23:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

This verse contains one of the Old Testament's clearest Messianic prophecies. The 'righteous Branch' (tsemach tsaddiq, צֶמַח צְדִיק) refers to a descendant from David's line who will perfectly fulfill the kingly calling that Judah's recent rulers had catastrophically failed. The Branch imagery appears elsewhere in Isaiah (4:2; 11:1), Jeremiah (33:15), and Zechariah (3:8; 6:12), always pointing to the coming Messiah.

The description is comprehensive: He will be 'raised unto David' (fulfilling the Davidic covenant), He will be 'righteous' (in contrast to corrupt kings), He will 'reign and prosper' (exercising successful sovereignty), and He will 'execute judgment and justice in the earth' (establishing true righteousness). This King will accomplish everything Judah's failed monarchs could not. The emphasis on righteousness and justice directly contrasts with leaders who perverted justice and practiced wickedness.

Reformed theology recognizes this as a prophecy of Christ's first and second advents. At His first coming, Jesus was born of David's line (Matthew 1:1; Luke 2:4) and began His reign, though rejected by His own people. At His second coming, He will establish His kingdom fully, executing judgment and justice throughout the earth. The Branch has already been raised; His kingdom is growing; His final victory is certain.

Historical Context

When this prophecy was given, David's line seemed finished—Jehoiachin (also called Coniah or Jeconiah) was cursed so that none of his descendants would prosper on David's throne (22:30). Yet God's promise to David was unconditional (2 Samuel 7:12-16). The solution came through the virgin birth: Jesus was David's descendant through Mary (legal heir through adoption by Joseph, biological descendant through Mary), thus fulfilling both the promise and bypassing the curse on Jeconiah's line.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus fulfill each aspect of this Messianic prophecy—righteous, reigning, prospering, executing judgment and justice?
2. What does it mean that Christ is the 'Branch' from David's line—something that grows from what seemed dead?
3. How should we live now in light of the certainty that Christ will return to establish His kingdom fully?

Interlinear Text

הַיּוֹם	יָמֵי	בָּאִים	נָאֻם	יְהוָה	וְהִקְמַתִּי	לְדָוִד
H2009	Behold the days	come	saith	the LORD	that I will raise	unto David
	H3117	H935	H5002	H3068	H6965	H1732
צֶמַח	צֶדֶק יִקַּח	וְלֹא	מֶלֶךְ	וְהִשְׁכַּח יֵל	וְעָשָׂה	
Branch	a righteous	shall reign	and a King	and prosper	and shall execute	
H6780	H6662	H4427	H4428	H7919	H6213	
מִשְׁפָּט	וְצִדִּיקָה	בְּאֶרֶץ:				
judgment	and justice	in the earth				
H4941	H6666	H776				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 4:2 (References Lord): In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

Isaiah 52:13 (Parallel theme): Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

Isaiah 9:7 (Righteousness): Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Zechariah 3:8 (Parallel theme): Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.

Isaiah 53:2 (Parallel theme): For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

Zechariah 9:9 (Righteousness): Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Revelation 19:11 (Righteousness): And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Jeremiah 23:6 (Righteousness): In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Jeremiah 30:9 (Kingdom): But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

Jeremiah 30:3 (References Lord): For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

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