

## *Our Righteousness*



*As a kid, what made you say,  
“That is not fair!”?*

**QUESTION 1**

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



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

I have ten grandchildren, and I find myself repeating some of the same things my dad used to 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.

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.

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# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

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## *Jeremiah 33:3-5 (CSB)*

**<sup>3</sup> Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and incomprehensible things you do not know. <sup>4</sup> For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the houses of this city and the palaces of Judah's kings, the ones torn down for defense against the assault ramps and the sword: <sup>5</sup> The people coming to fight the Chaldeans will fill the houses with the corpses of their own men that I strike down in my wrath and rage. I have hidden my face from this city because of all their evil.**

Nearly a hundred years after Assyria had taken the ten northern tribes of Israel into captivity (2 Kings 17:6-18), the nation of 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. Josiah was profoundly moved when he rediscovered the Word of God; as a result, he had restored the temple and revived worship (22:8-13; 23:4-25). Despite all Josiah had done, however, the evil of Judah had angered God to such an extent that He declared the end of the kingdom of Judah (23:26-27). Unfortunately, the revival and reform that had occurred during Josiah's reign ended abruptly after the young king's untimely death (vv. 29-30). Spiritual decline led to rapid moral decay and oppression; violence and political unrest were the order of the day.

We pick up the narrative more than twelve years later, during the reign of King Zedekiah. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was Judah's primary nemesis. Zedekiah sent two priests to Jeremiah asking the prophet to inquire of the Lord on their behalf (Jeremiah 21:2). The prophet's response was an unexpected warning: God was going to use the Chaldeans to bring judgment upon his own people (vv. 4-7). The Lord, who is compassionate and longsuffering, invited Judah to display the fruits of repentance and be restored (22:3-4), but Zedekiah and the people ignored the warning of the prophet and rejected the kindness of the Lord. Zedekiah imprisoned Jeremiah in the guard's courtyard, in an attempt to silence the prophet. Jeremiah told Zedekiah he would soon see Nebuchadnezzar face to face because he would be taken captive to Babylon (32:1-5).

*What captures your attention about God's character in these verses?*

### QUESTION 2

The people of Judah must have wondered how to understand Jeremiah's message in the light of God's promises and purposes for His own people. Had not God promised to establish David's throne forever? (See 2 Samuel 7:10-16.) Yet the people brought this on themselves through their own disobedience and sin.

Still, there was more to God's message for the people of Judah. God would raise up a Righteous Branch from the line of David, a King who would bring judgment and justice to the earth. He would be called "The LORD Is Our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:5-6)—Jehovah-Tsidkenu.

### ***Jeremiah 33:6-8 (CSB)***

**<sup>6</sup> Yet I will certainly bring health and healing to it and will indeed heal them. I will let them experience the abundance of true peace. <sup>7</sup> I will restore the fortunes of Judah and of Israel and will rebuild them as in former times. <sup>8</sup> I will purify them from all the iniquity they have committed against me, and I will forgive all the iniquities they have committed against me, rebelling against me.**

While the first verses contained incredibly bad news, they are eclipsed by the amazing good news that follows. God, who had judged the people for their sin, now would extend mercy to them—mercy that would result in health, healing, and an abundance of peace and truth. Both Judah and Israel would be brought back from captivity and reunited. Additionally, God would deal with their sin. God Himself would bring health and healing, and the past sufferings of the people would be replaced by "the abundance of true peace" (v. 6).

God also promised His people would return to their own land and rebuild the nation as it was before the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah were divided. While God's judgment of sin is just, His mercy and kindness are abundant. His restoration of His people would not be partial; it would be complete. They

***How have you experienced God's restoration?***

### **QUESTION 3**

would not be a divided and desperate people who returned to their homeland, but a fulfilled and united people. Despite the rebellion of God's people, His desire was to forgive and restore.

The problem of our sin and rebellion is a problem that runs throughout the Bible, but alongside it is the testimony of God's desire to redeem and restore us. The absolute depravity of humanity and the universality of sin is clear (Romans 3:10-18), but equally clear is God's solution. Just as He worked among the nation of Judah, He will work among us. He will heal. He will restore. He will lead us to experience an abundance of His peace.

The answer is not in our righteousness, but in the righteousness God provides.

### ***Jeremiah 33:14-16 (CSB)***

**<sup>14</sup>“Look, the days are coming”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“when I will fulfill the good promise that I have spoken concerning 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 sprout up for David, and he will administer justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely, and this is what she will be named: The LORD Is Our Righteousness.”**

By announcing, “the days are coming” (v. 14), Jeremiah declared the time was near at hand when the people would see the fulfillment of “the good promise” (v. 14) for both the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The promise concerned the restoration of the Davidic line. God would make things right!





***How is God's good promise (v. 14) fulfilled in Jesus?***

#### QUESTION 4

Righteousness is not just a description—it is a Person. “The LORD Is Our Righteousness” (v. 16). God would “cause a Righteous Branch to sprout up for David” (v. 15), who would “administer justice and righteousness in the land” (v. 15). Of course, this “Righteous Branch” referred to the coming Messiah.

Under the leadership of the Righteous Branch, Judah would be saved, the people would dwell securely, and the city would be renamed “The LORD Is Our Righteousness.” The name of God that affirms His righteous character will also become the name of Jerusalem because the city will take on His character. Jerusalem would be restored and become what God had always intended it to be—a city marked by righteousness (Isaiah 1:26; 62:2-4; Jeremiah 3:17).

Paul, a former Pharisee, spoke of his own “righteous” accomplishments based on his strict adherence to the law. In Christ, he saw those accomplishments as mere rubbish (Philippians 3:4-7). Why would this religious and morally upright man consider his own righteousness as rubbish? “Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith” (vv. 8-9). Jesus is our Righteousness!

On those days where life goes from bad to worse—when life does not seem fair—trust that God will ultimately make all things right. He is righteous, and He will bring His righteousness to bear on all things. As followers of Jehovah-Tsidkenu, we must allow Him to express His righteousness through our lives.

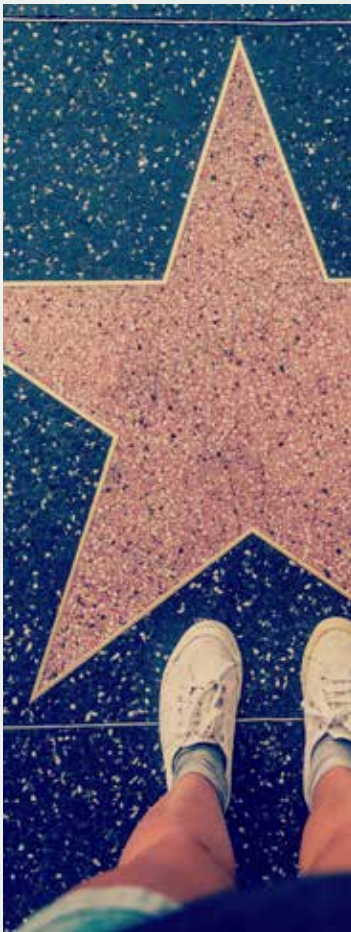
**How can our actions and attitudes demonstrate that we follow God, who is our Righteousness?**

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

**QUESTION 5**

1 JOHN 1:9

## GOD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS



**During this study, we have learned six different names of God. Next to each name, list a corresponding promise that gives you hope. An example has been done for you.**

God our Provider

God will meet my physical and spiritual needs.

God our Healer

God our Banner

God our Peace

God our Shepherd

God our Righteousness

## LIVE IT OUT

God is our Righteousness. How will you let that truth make a difference in your life?

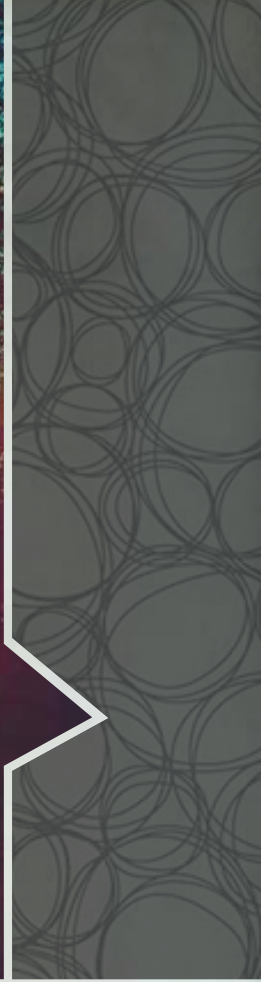
- » **Memorize 1 John 1:9.** Commit this verse to memory. As you do, pause to thank God for His grace and mercy.
- » **Trust God to handle those things that seem unjust.** Even when it feels like the wrong side is winning, God will have the final say. In the meantime, trust Him. He loves you, and in His righteousness, He will make things right.
- » **Invite someone else to experience the righteousness Christ offers.** Who needs to know of the grace Christ offers? Over the next week or two be ready for an opportunity to tell them about the forgiveness we're offered in Christ. Be sure to communicate that the peace and mercy Jesus gives can't be found in anything or anyone else.

We all have plenty of examples of life not being fair. **Thankfully we know all will be made right in the end by Jehovah-Tsidkenu, God our Righteousness.**



My thoughts





# ATTRIBUTES OF GOD | HE IS HOLY

BY LAUREN CHANDLER

“Exalt the LORD our God;  
bow in worship at His holy mountain,  
for the LORD our God is holy”  
(Psalm 99:9).

What is holiness? How would you sum it up in a simple phrase? Struggling to come up with something substantial? You’re not alone. Unfortunately, the word “holy” has gone the way of a junk drawer-full of words in our day. We *love* our husbands and children, but we also *love* the Dallas Cowboys and Tex-Mex. We “*literally* can’t believe he did that!” But, is it possible to *figuratively* believe he did that?

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Words are subject to the pot roast principle (although my husband claims it was a ham). The story goes that a young girl asked her mom why she cut the ends off the roast. The mother wasn't really sure but her mother had always done it. The daughter asked her grandmother and received the same answer. Going to the source, she asked her great-grandmother, who admitted that she never had a pan large enough to fit the whole roast.

**We may hear the phrase, "God is holy," and even nod our heads in agreement, but do we know what it means?** Have we stopped and asked ourselves what exactly makes God holy? Or, do we cut the ends off and toss the words into an oversized pan?

To call God holy is to speak of His majesty and purity. He is "utterly distinct from his creation and exercises sovereign majesty and power over it."



The Lord is wholly other. Although we are made in His image, He is still far above and beyond us. As the psalmist writes in Psalm 99:1-2, "He is exalted above all the peoples." His throne is "above the cherubim". He sits above even the most powerful, otherworldly creatures. **The Lord is perfectly pure. He is separate from sin, evil, and the defiled.** Nothing can taint Him. He is incorruptible.

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majesty and purity.

While the holiness of God rightly causes trembling in the earth and His people, we would be in grave danger if this were anything but true. **The Lord isn't a better version of us. How dismal would that be?** While we have the capacity to do good and be awe-inspiring (we can't deny our celebrity-consuming culture), we are corruptible and limited. We disappoint. We are selfish and prone to laziness. We can be bought.

Few have felt our inadequacy in the presence of a holy God like the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah 6, he described seeing the Lord sitting on a high and lofty throne. His robe filled the temple, and angels stood above Him crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts; His glory fills the whole earth" (v. 3). The prophet's first words were "Woe is me" (v. 5). Modern translation: I am in big trouble. He felt

to his core how utterly unworthy he was to “have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts” (v. 5). Who could Isaiah call to help him? Who could stand beside the prophet, pat him on the back, and say, “it’s OK, you’re not that bad!” Reality sank in that no one could help him. God is holy—there is no one higher or purer.

**Since He is so holy—transcendent and perfect—only He can bridge the great divide between us.** Only He could send the seraphim to Isaiah with a burning coal from the altar to touch his lips, removing wickedness and atoning for sin. Only He could hold mercy and justice in perfect balance. Only He, in all His holiness, could step into our skin and make peace with us by the cross. Instead of our sin tainting His perfection, His perfection paints us holy.

So as we lift our voices among the gathering of the faithful declaring Him holy, holy, holy, perhaps we pause to consider the weight that word holds. Maybe we refuse to trim the ends and rather savor the beauty, majesty, purity, and transcendence of a holy God who chose to be the God with us.

"Holy, holy, holy is  
the LORD of hosts!"



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1. Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort (editors), *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 608.