

## A Study on Jeremiah 23:5-6 and 33:14-16

King James Version

Jer 23: 5 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.

Jer 23:6 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 23:5-6 has been used by both Trinitarians and Oneness proponents as prove that "Jesus is God," or more properly "Yeshua is Yahweh." They reason that (1) this is a Messianic prophecy referencing the coming Davidic Messiah, and (2) he is called by the name Yahweh. Their conclusion is that he (the Messiah) must be Yahweh seeing he is here called Yahweh.

It is interesting to note that in the KJV rendition of the verse (Jer. 23:6) we read the following in the English translation: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. It seems to me that the translators have used capitalization to emphasize their belief that this is focusing in upon "Jesus" being Yahweh.

There is however a very similar passage found in the same book of prophecy in Jeremiah 33:15-16. In this text we find that the exact same name is spoken of (Hebrew = Yahweh Tzidkenu; KJV English = The LORD our righteousness), yet in this instance it is not all capitalized as in Jeremiah 23:6. Here is the text from the KJV:

Jer 33:14 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

Jer 33:15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

Jer 33:16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

I believe that the reason the translators decided not to capitalize the entire name in Jeremiah 33 is because they recognized that this prophecy was placing this name upon *the city of Jerusalem*, and they obviously do not believe Jerusalem is equal to Yahweh in person.

What both texts are actually teaching is that in some sense the name Yahweh Tzidkenu (Yahweh our righteousness) is applied to both Yahweh's Messiah and Yahweh's City. Neither text is saying that the person or place being spoken about is in fact - YAHWEH - but rather that His name is given to a person and a place in some way or in some sense.

Both of these texts are referencing the same time frame, and that is a yet FUTURE time frame when (1) judgment and justice is executed in the earth, (2) Judah and Israel shall be saved and dwell safely, and (3) Jerusalem shall dwell in security. These prophecies are assuredly Messianic in scope, but they are primarily associated with the second coming of Messiah to initiate the Millennium Kingdom rather than the first coming of Messiah, where he came as the suffering servant of Yahweh. Comparable Messianic prophecy texts referring to the same time frame can be found in Isaiah 2:1-4, Micah 4:1-5, Jeremiah 31:38-40, and Isaiah 66:15-24. These are just a few among many others that could be cited.

The main point is that the text in Jeremiah 23:5-6 does not teach that Yeshua the Messiah is Yahweh, but that he will be called at a future time in some sense or in some way "Yahweh our righteousness," as will the city of Jerusalem (Jer. 33:14-16). Let's move from here to the city.

### **A Translation Problem in Jeremiah 33:16?**

Some Bible students in the past (and I suppose now) have a problem with applying this name to the city Jerusalem. For example, notice what commentator Adam Clarke has to say (in part) concerning the prophecy found in Jeremiah 33:14-16:

And this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness - See what has been said on Jer 23:6 (note), which is generally supposed to be a strictly parallel passage: but they are very different, and I doubt whether they mean exactly the same thing. As to our translation here, it is ignorant, and almost impious; it says that Jerusalem, for that is the antecedent, shall be called The Lord our Righteousness. The pronoun לה *lah*, which is translated her, is the masculine affix, in the Chaldaic form, which frequently occurs; and Dr. Blayney translates, "And this is He whom Jehovah shall call our righteousness," or Justification. Perhaps there is a sense which these words will bear far more congenial to the scope of the place. I will give the original, as before: וזה אשר יקרא לה יהוה צדקנו *vezeh asher yikra lah , Yehovah tsidkenu*, "And this one who shall call to her is the Lord our Justification;" that is, the salvation of the Jews shall take place when Jesus Christ is proclaimed to them as their Justifier, and they receive him as such. Instead of לה *lah*, her or him, Chaldaice, the Vulgate, Chaldee, and Syriac have read לו *lo*, him, less ambiguously; and this reading is supported by one or two

MSS. This emendation renders the passage here more conformable to that in Jer 23:6; but if the translation above be admitted, all embarrassment is gone.

One of my own MSS. has לֹה *loh*, with the masculine points, and no mappik on the ה *he*; and for *tsidkenu* has צִדְקֵינוּ *tsidkeynu*, the contracted plural form, our righteousness: but this may be a mistake. The passages in this and the twenty-third chapter were not, I am satisfied, intended to express the same thing. I suppose that above refers to the preaching or proclaiming Christ crucified to the Jews, when the time shall arrive in which they shall be incorporated with the Gentile Church. Dahler translates this as he did that in chap. 23, which is a perfect oversight: but paraphrastic renderings are too often introduced by this learned foreigner.

As you can see, Adam Clarke believes that the translation of Jeremiah 33:16 which says that "she" shall be called Yahweh our righteousness is an incorrect translation. He goes so far as to call it ignorant and almost impious. He suggests that it should rather say something like "This one who shall call to her is the LORD our righteousness," which would reference a *person*, Yahweh our righteousness, *calling out to* the city of Jerusalem. I believe Adam Clarke is bypassing the exegetical meaning of the text based upon a presupposition that he has in his mind which will not allow him to believe that the name Yahweh can be applied to a place. In this case, Yahweh's special city, the New Jerusalem.

I have here in my office multiple translations of the Hebrew Scriptures, many of them literal, scholarly translations. Here is a sampling of some of what are considered to be the best available today (on Jeremiah 33:16):

NASB - "In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety; and this is the name by which **she** shall be called: the LORD is our righteousness."

ESV - "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."

HCSB - "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."

NET - "Under his rule Judah will enjoy safety and Jerusalem will live in security. At that time **Jerusalem** will be called "The LORD has provided us with justice."

JPGREEN - "In days these will be saved Judah, and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety and this is the name which one will call **her**, Jehovah our righteousness."

JERUSALEM - "In those days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell in confidence. And this is the name **the city** will be called: Yahweh - our - integrity."

RSV - "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.'"

In each of these translations of this Hebrew text we see that the city of Jerusalem is referenced as being called Yahweh our righteousness (recognizing that behind LORD and Jehovah is the proper name YHWH or Yahweh). In all but three Jerusalem is referenced as a "she" or "her." In the two translations that do not contain "she" (ESV and RSV), they have "it" which is still a reference to the city of Jerusalem. In the other translation that doesn't contain "she" (Jerusalem), the word "city" is used showing that the translators understood the city as being named in the text.

In all fairness, I do have some Bibles that translate the verse a bit differently, not referencing Jerusalem as having the name Yahweh. Here are those translations:

LAMSA - "In those days Judah shall be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name by which they shall call him: The LORD our righteousness."

BERKELEY - "In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely. And this is the name by which He shall be called, 'THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'"

YLT - "In those days is Judah saved, And Jerusalem doth dwell confidently, And this is he whom Jehovah proclaimeth to her: `Our Righteousness.'"

It appears that both the Lamsa translation and the Berkeley version see the text as referring back to the Branch of David spoken of in Jeremiah 33:15. Young's Literal takes somewhat of a different approach by not giving a person or a place the name Yahweh. Young instead says that "Jehovah (more correctly Yahweh) proclaimeth to her (the city): "Our Righteousness." It seems that Young is saying that the term "Our Righteousness" refers back to the Branch of David in vs. 15, and that Yahweh proclaims this Branch to the city or the people dwelling in the

city of Jerusalem. Based upon an exegetical reading of Jeremiah 33:14-16 I believe that the best understanding is that the city is indeed given the name "Yahweh Tzidkenu." Not only do I believe this, but so do the 7 other translations I cited previously. This is also the take that some commentators give on the passage. For example:

**Albert Barnes on Jeremiah 33:15** - "Compare the marginal reference. When the good word was spoken, the name Yahweh our Righteousness was given to the righteous Sprout: here it is given to Jerusalem, i. e., to the Church, because it is her business mediately to work on earth that righteousness which Christ works absolutely. Compare Eph. 1:23."

**John Calvin on Jeremiah 33:16** - "He in the last place adds, *And this is the name by which they shall call her, Jehovah our righteousness* In chapter 23 this name is given to Christ, and to him alone it properly belongs; but it is here transferred to the Church, for whatever belongs to the head, is made common to all the members. For we indeed know that Christ has nothing as his own, for as he is made righteousness, it belongs to us, according to what Paul says, "He is made to us righteousness, and redemption, and sanctification, and wisdom." 1 Cor 1:30. As, then, the Father conferred righteousness on his own Son for our sake, it is no wonder that what is in his power is transferred to us. What, then, we found in the twenty-third chapter was rightly declared, for it belongs peculiarly to Christ, that he is God our righteousness. But as we partake of this righteousness, when he admits us into a participation of all the blessings by which he is adorned and enriched by the Father, it hence follows, that this also belongs to the whole Church, even that God is its righteousness. Hence it is wisely said by the Prophet, that this would be the name of the whole Church, which could not be, except it had put on Christ, so that God might reign there in righteousness, for the righteousness of Christ extends to all the faithful; and Christ also dwells in them, so that they are not only the temples of Christ, but, as it were, a part of him; and even the Church itself is by Paul called Christ, "As there are," he says, "many members in the human body, so is Christ." 1 Cor 12:12. This cannot be applied to Christ personally, but he thus calls the Church by a metonymy, on account of that participation which I have mentioned.

**John Gill on Jeremiah 33:16** - "the same with the Messiah's name, Jer 23:6, he is Jehovah; and he is our righteousness; the author of it, by his obedience, sufferings, and death; and which becomes ours by being wrought out for us, bestowed on us, imputed and applied to us. The Targum renders it here, as in the other place, "this is the name wherewith they shall call him;" and so the Vulgate Latin version; but this is contrary to the Hebrew text, which has "her", and not "him". R. Joseph Kimchi reads it, "and this who calls her *is* the Lord our righteousness"; which is followed by some Christian writers<sup>1</sup>. Some interpret it, who calls her by his Gospel to the salvation promised and performed; others, who calls her to dwell safely; others render it, "this *is the name* with which he *the Lord*

shall call him, for her", for the sake of the church, the Lord our righteousness; but David Kimchi and Ben Melech take the sense to be this, "the holy blessed God shall call Jerusalem the Lord our righteousness;" and certain it is that this is the name imposed on the church here meant, as Hephzibah and Beulah, in Isa 62:4; and why may she not be as well called "Jehovah Tzidhenu", the Lord our righteousness, as "Jehovah Shammah", the Lord is there? Eze 48:35. She is called "Jehovah", not as deified by him, but as united to him; and our "righteousness", as justified by him. Christ and his church are one, as head and members are; and therefore are called by the same name: hence the church is called Christ, 1 Cor 12:12; they are in a marriage relation; Christ is the husband, and the church is his spouse; and as husband and wife bear the same name, so do Christ and his church; moreover, not only Christ is made righteousness to his people, but they are made the righteousness of God in him; his righteousness is put upon them, and imputed to them, so that they are righteous as he is righteous, 1 Cor 1:30.

Each of these commentators believe that Jerusalem is being referred to as having been given the name "Yahweh our righteousness" in Jeremiah 33:14-16. They do spiritualize Jerusalem in the text to refer to the Church (a point which I do take issue with), but that is not the purpose of this article. I quote the commentators only to show that there does exist those who believe that there is no blunder or ignorance in the translation "this is the name that SHE shall be called."

### **The Name Yahweh Placed Upon Locations**

To the avid Bible student this really should not be problematic. I say this because there exists other passages that clearly show the name Yahweh being applied to a particular place or location. For example, we have the account of Abraham going to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22. The Angel of Yahweh stops Abraham from doing so before the act is completely carried out, and Abraham finds a ram caught in the thicket that Yahweh had provided as a sacrifice instead of Isaac. Genesis 22:13-14 records for us:

Then looking up, Abraham saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. Abraham took the ram and offered it as a burnt-offering in place of his son. Abraham called this place 'Yahweh provides', and hence the saying today: On the mountain Yahweh provides. [Jerusalem Bible]

Take special note that Abraham called the PLACE by the name Yahweh. Transliterating from Hebrew to English the name would be: YHWH Yireh, or "Yahweh has provided." Abraham was NOT saying that the place he was standing WAS Yahweh, he was simply naming that particular location after Yahweh, because of the great provision that came directly from Yahweh upon that mountain.

We see another instance of this in the prophetic text of Ezekiel, specifically Ezekiel 48:35. If one takes the time to read that last chapter of Ezekiel (48) you will see that there are striking similarities with it and Revelation 21. I believe it is a reference to the culminating Kingdom of Yahweh, whether in the Millennium or the New Heavens and New Earth. The very last sentence of vs. 35 states the following (KJV): "And the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there." In Hebrew this is YHWH Shammah, meaning "Yahweh is there." This text is extremely significant in relation to Jeremiah 33:14-16 because of (1) its Kingdom context, and (2) its speaking of the New Jerusalem. I would say that Ezekiel 48:35 is somewhat of a parallel passage to Jeremiah 33:14-16. I also find this passage in Revelation as complimenting these two texts:

#### King James Version

Re 21:9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Re 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from [the Almighty]

Re 21:11 Having the glory of [the Almighty]: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Here the holy Jerusalem descends out of heaven from Almighty Yahweh, and it has the glory of the Almighty. I believe that having the glory of the Almighty can be equated to being called by the name Yahweh, just as in Jeremiah 33:16 and Ezekiel 48:35.

My conclusion on Jeremiah 23:5-6 and 33:14-16 is that at the *second coming* of the Messiah, the name Yahweh Tzidkenu will in some way be applied to both Yeshua and Yerushalayim (Jerusalem). Jeremiah 23:5-6 is not teaching us that the Messiah is Almighty Yahweh, nor that the Messiah's personal name is Yahweh. It is rather teaching us that Yahweh's name is bestowed upon the Messiah in some way at a future time. The same goes for the city Jerusalem. Jeremiah 33:14-16 is not teaching us that the city itself is Almighty Yahweh, but rather that Yahweh's name is bestowed upon the city in some way. Remember, Yeshua is Yahweh's Messiah, and Yerushalayim is Yahweh's City.

#### **More on Jeremiah 23:5-6**

I would now like to look at a related, yet secondary issue concerning Jeremiah 23:5-6. This text is sometimes used as a proof text for teaching that when the Messiah came the first time, he was to be called Yahweh or at least have Yah

within his name. I have already given a reason why I do not accept this understanding, that being that the prophecy is Messianic, but it is a reference to *the second coming* rather than the first coming of the Messiah. The Messiah came the first time to deal with sin as the suffering servant of Yahweh. At his second coming there will be a ruling and reigning of Messiah in a literal, earthly Kingdom, with its headquarters in Jerusalem, Israel. This is the time when the two sticks of Israel and Judah will become as one in the hand and land of Yahweh. Jerusalem will then dwell securely, and there will be no war or rumor of war upon the earth. Please see the aforementioned section where several texts are cited as references to this future period of time.

I would like to now further the point that Jeremiah 23:5-6 is not a prophetic text telling us what to call the Messiah when he is born in Bethlehem. It rather finds similarity with another Messianic prophecy found in Isaiah 7:14 where there we are told that his name (the one born of the virgin) is to be called Immanuel.

It is interesting that Jeremiah 23:5-6 is nowhere quoted in the New Testament as pertaining to Yeshua the Messiah. I believe it is about Yeshua the Messiah, but it is not quoted by any New Testament authors. However, Isaiah 7:14 is quoted by the Apostle Matthew in Matthew 1:23 as a specific reference to the first coming of the Messiah. I personally have no problem with the view that takes Isaiah 7:14 as being fulfilled first at the time of Isaiah 8 when Isaiah went into his wife the prophetess and conceived a son. Through the birth of Isaiah's son the people of Israel knew that "Elohim was with them" (see Isaiah 8:1-10 specifically verses 8 and 10 where the Hebrew word Immanuel is used). According to the Apostle Matthew (and more specifically the Angel of the Lord that appeared to Joseph in the dream recorded in Matthew 1), the Isaiah 7:14 prophecy finds a dual fulfillment in the birth of the Messiah. Through this child's birth the people of Israel would know that "Elohim was with them" in an even mightier way than the first fulfillment in Isaiah 8. (*You may consult my sermons and written studies on the virgin birth at my website for further information on this.*)

With that being said, think about something... no one calls the Messiah Immanuel. The majority of Christianity calls the Messiah Jesus because that is the name most given for the Messiah in the English versions of our Bibles. As a matter of fact, just two verses before Matthew 1:23, in Matthew 1:21 the Messiah is given the name Jesus, at least in the English translations we have today. How is it that he is given the name Jesus in vs. 21, yet vs. 23 quotes Isaiah 7:14 as saying his name shall be called Immanuel?

The answer lies in understanding the difference between a primary name by which people knew him and called him, and a secondary name or title of sorts that described something that would happen through his life. The Messiah was given the primary name "Yeshua" (of which we have the English derivative in our Bibles today: Jesus). This (Yeshua) is the name he was called by all through his life as is evidenced by simply reading the New Testament and recognizing that our Messiah was a Hebrew with a Hebrew name. However, in some sense, the name Immanuel is applied to the Messiah because through his life and ministry, Yahweh Elohim (ImmanuE) would be with the people of Israel.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 functions similarly to Isaiah 7:14, with the exception that Jeremiah was prophesying about the second coming while Isaiah was prophesying about the first coming. Neither text is giving us the name that Yeshua was to be known by as a human being among other human beings. They are simply giving us names that will be applied to the Messiah at particular times in his life and ministry.

When we understand this as well as what we have learned about Jeremiah 33:14-16, we should see that Yahweh is not the Messiah's personal, proper name, no more than Yahweh is the personal, proper name of Jerusalem. Yeshua can still be called Yeshua, and Yerushalayim can still be called Yerushalayim. At the same time Yeshua carried a secondary name at his first coming (Immanuel) and both Yeshua and Yerushalayim will carry a secondary name at his second coming (Yahweh our Righteousness).

### **Further Light on Jeremiah 23:6 in the LXX (Septuagint)**

To end this small study on these two prophetic Messianic texts in Jeremiah, I would like to offer some additional insight to Jeremiah 23:6 based upon the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Tanak (Old Testament). Here is how the Septuagint (LXX) renders Jeremiah 23:5-6:

Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and understand, and shall execute judgment and righteousness on the earth. In his days both Juda shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell securely: and this is his name, which the Lord shall call him, Josedec among the prophets.

Here we see what seems to be a GIGANTIC leap from the Hebrew Scriptures rendering of Jeremiah 23:5-6, specifically with the name "YHWH Tzidkenu" in the Hebrew, and "Josedec among the prophets" in the Greek. What do we make

of this change of the text in the Septuagint? When I look at the Greek text of the *New Testament*, I do not see any name such as Josedec therein, but I do see names with similar beginnings, such as the following:

G#2498

**Ἰωσαφάτ** **Iosaphat** *ee-o-saf-at'*

of Hebrew origin (3092); Josaphat (i.e. Jehoshaphat), an Israelite:—Josaphat.  
See Hebrew 3092

Here we have a name (occurring twice in Matthew 1:8) that contains the exact same first three letters as the name Josedec in Jeremiah 23:6. Here are those letters:

**Ἰωσ**

If you will notice that these letters are transliterated into English as "Jos" in the name Josaphat (Mt. 1:8) and Josedec (Jer. 23:6). Looking at the above definition for the name Josaphat we find that the longer form of that name is Jehoshaphat, and that it is of Hebrew origin stemming from #3092 in the Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon of Strong's Concordance. Looking up the Hebrew #3092 we find the following:

H#3092

**יְהוֹשָׁפָט** **Yehowshaphat** *yeh-ho-shaw-fawt'*

from 3068 and 8199; Jehovah-judged; Jehoshaphat, the name of six Israelites; also of a valley near Jerusalem:—Jehoshaphat. Compare 3146.

Take note that this name in Matthew 1:8, "Josaphat" is actually the Hebrew name Yehoshaphat which begins with the three Hebrew letters:

**יהו**

These letters are taken from the Sacred Name of the heavenly Father: YHWH. The name Yehoshaphat actually carries the meaning: YHWH has judged. This lets us know that in all probability the name in Jeremiah 23:6 given as Josedec is more properly rendered as *Yehosedec*, containing the same first three letters in Hebrew as the name Yehoshaphat. What then does the name Yehosedec mean?

When I first ran across this name, my mind soon traveled over to my knowledge of the Hebrew word for righteousness: *tsadeek*.

H#6662

צַדִּיק *tsaddiyq tsad-deek'*

from 6663; just:—just, lawful, righteous (man).

See Hebrew 6663

This is a word that is used in Scripture of righteous people (Gen. 7:1) as well as embedded within the names of men such as Adonizedek, Zedekiah, and Zadok (Joshua 10:1; 1 Kings 22:11; 2 Sam. 8:17). You have also probably heard of the priest of the Most High Elohim named Melchizedek (Gen. 14). Each occurrence carries with it the meaning of "just, right, righteous, righteousness, etc. It appears then that the Septuagint translators saw the phrase "YHWH Tzidkenu" (Yahweh our righteousness) and contracted it into a transliterated proper name "Yehosedec" (or "Yeho-zedek) meaning "Yahweh our righteousness."

This goes to show that the Septuagint translators did not see the Branch of David prophesied about in Jeremiah 23:5-6 as being Almighty Yahweh. They rather saw him as carrying within his prophetic name **Yehosedec**, the name Yahweh. Thus they rendered the Greek as Yosedec (later, Josedec).

For further information about the Messiah's personal, proper name "Yeshua" please visit the article section of my website, and look for the study titled "Yeshua vs. Jesus."

Thanks for reading...

*Matthew Janzen (7.2013)*

