

## Jer.23:5-6 (WCF 11:1,3) “The Lord Our Righteousness”

**For the Children:** When I was in Australia recently, I went to a chocolate factory with my brother. He had a card giving him a discount and \$10 off due to his recent birthday. He let me buy the chocolate using his discounts. When I left his house, instead of a discount I gave him all the rubbish from my suitcase, so he could deal with it for me. Similarly, the Lord Jesus has taken all the rubbish of our sin and dealt with it by dying on the cross. He also gives us, not a discount card where we pay something to God and Jesus pays the rest; rather, all of the Lord Jesus' obedience is counted as ours, as if we have done everything as perfectly as He has. That is how the Lord makes us righteous in His sight. **Questions:** Who is the “Righteous Branch”? How is He better than any other leaders? In what way is He “our righteousness”?

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### Introduction:

#### First Point: He Who Brings Righteousness

- 1) A King in Contrast: The Righteous Branch stands in contrast to the kings of Judah. The previous chapters show that the king, the people and their shepherds were all going astray. Zedekiah's name means “My righteousness is Yahweh,” but God promises a King who will be righteous, do righteousness and be His people's righteousness. The term “righteous” refers to standards that derive from God's character. Both His laws and His saving work reflect that unchanging character.
- 2) The Identity of the King: We are told that this King will act wisely and do justice and righteousness. In 1 Cor. 1:20 we learn that Christ is the wisdom and righteousness of God. He is the “righteous branch from David” – descended from David and “for” David as the fulfillment of the promise to David in 2 Sam. 7. See also Is. 4:2, 11:1f; Zech. 3:8. 6:12-13. The “Branch/Shoot” language is applied to Christ in Rev. 5:5, 22:16. He is the great Priest as well as King (Zech. 6:12-13, Ps. 100, with Heb.1:13, 7:21),

#### Second Point: How He Brings It

- 1) Righteousness in Salvation: God's standard of righteousness is also seen in His saving work (Is. 1:27, 46:13, 41:10). For example, God's justice and mercy are both seen in the way Christ bears the sins of His people for our justification. See also Rom. 3:26. Jer. 23:5-6 also connects His righteousness to the salvation and preservation of Israel. We are saved and secured because the Branch's Name is “The Lord (is) our righteousness.”
- 2) Alternative Ways: WCF 11:1 mentions some alternative ways of viewing our justification (how sinners are made right with God). Roman Catholicism sees Christ as *infusing* righteousness into His people, by use of the sacraments. The doing of good works enhances this righteousness. God then justifies us on the ground of what we do in the process of becoming righteous. Arminianism views the sinner's work of faith as righteous, in place of complete obedience to the Law. Both views combine the Branch's righteousness with the sinners works – whereas Jeremiah speaks only of “The Lord our righteousness.”
- 3) The Lord Alone Our Righteousness: The Reformed view involves that imputation of our sin to Christ, who then pays for it with His satisfaction of God's justice. This payment is imputed (credited, or reckoned to the elect, counted as ours). Christ's perfect obedience to the Law and to the Father's will that He die on the cross, is also imputed to us. The Lord does so freely, without any deserving on our part. It is once-for-all, not a gradual process like sanctification. The result is that God declares us forgiven and righteous in His sight. The gift of faith is the instrument by which we receive these benefits, not the sacraments or our good works. Only by this view can we consistently maintain that the Lord alone is our righteousness. Only by this view can we have a guarantee that all who are effectually called will be justified – because it depends on the Lord's righteousness, not ours.

### Conclusion: