

Series: Who Is God?
Jehovah-Tsidkenu
The LORD Our Righteousness

Last week we started a sermon series, Who Is God? Obviously there's no end to people's opinions about God. Ask 10 different people and you'll get 12 different opinions about the nature and character of God.

But if you think about it, asking us what God is like is kind of like asking ant what a person is like. Over the years researches have discovered all sorts of amazing things about ants.

For instance, Ants farm plants and raise cattle. No other animal outside of human beings does that.

There are species of ants that collect leaves and take them to specially constructed chambers within their colonies where they grow fungus on the decomposing leaves. The fungus is then eaten by the ants.

The growing of the fungus requires a great deal of planning and forethought: an appropriate chamber has to be constructed, the right leaves must be collected, waste must be removed so as not to choke the growing fungus beds, and the leaves must be seeded with the fungus spores. The spores don't grow naturally so the ants must collect the spores and bring them to the leaves.

But ants don't just farm, they raise and keep other insects for food, just like humans raise cattle. Many species of ants will domesticate aphids and act like shepherds by taking the aphids to feed on plants, while protecting them from other insect predators. The ants will then "milk" the aphids by squeezing their abdomens and causing some digested plant juice to be released into the mouths of the ants which will then share this nutritious fluid with the rest of the colony.

Ants have a very complex system of communication that makes all this possible. Ants are pretty smart on the scale of animal intelligence.

Scientists are continuing to make amazing discoveries about the abilities of ants. But there's one thing that never happens. Ants don't make amazing discoveries about human beings.

We can learn how they communicate, how they can build. We know that if you drop a bunch of fire ants into water that they'll immediately grab onto each other and form a raft that can float for days.

But the opposite isn't true. Ants don't know the first thing about people except they're big and usually dangerous. They don't know about emotion, they don't know about creativity and abstract thinking. They don't know about worship.

The difference between us and an ant is immeasurable. Now just imagine two ants hiding out in the grass while we're walking over them with a lawn mower.

Do you really think they have philosophical discussions about the nature and purpose of human beings?

Now multiply that difference exponentially and you begin to have just a bit of an understanding about the difference between us and the God of the universe.

At this point we have no way of transferring any human understanding to ants. We can learn a lot about what ants are like and how they function but we can't communicate the first thing about humans to ants.

Fortunately for us Almighty God has chosen to do 2 important things. Number 1, He created us in His own image. Out of all, created things only human beings are made with the capacity to think and communicate God's thoughts.

We can't come up with them on our own, but we can understand as much as God deems it necessary for us to know about Him.

The second thing He's done is to give us the Bible. Out of all the books that have ever been written, only the Bible is God's inspired word. It's His complete and authoritative message to us preserved through divine oversight.

And every once in a while when somebody who thinks he's smarter than God questions the reliability of the Bible God just allows one more discovery that shows us historically, prophetically, scientifically that the Bible has been right all along.

For years the earliest copy of the Hebrew Old Testament was from around 1000 AD. Critics used to say obviously the Bible had changed over all those years and we had no way of finding out.

Today you can see a unique display of biblical manuscripts we call the Dead Sea scrolls. Many of them are being shown in a special exhibition in Times Square.

In 1947 a Bedouin kid was throwing stones in a cave in an area called Qumran around the Dead Sea. He heard pottery break and when he investigated he discovered the greatest trove of biblical manuscripts ever amassed.

The manuscripts date from 150 BC to 70 AD. Suddenly in an instant we jumped back over 1000 years. This was it. This was the opportunity to show how much people had modified the Bible and made it say what they wanted it to say.

Of course God had the last laugh. We found things like 1Qisa a. That meant it was a scroll of the Book of Isaiah found in cave 1. It's 24 feet long and amazingly preserved. And it shows how God's word didn't change. It's God's message to us, so what did He do? He preserved it.

That's why we're not asking "Who Is God?" and then taking a survey. It's not up to the ant to determine what the guy with the lawnmower's like. It's up to God to reveal His nature and character to us.

What we're doing is using compound names of God that we find in the Hebrew Bible. Last week we looked at Jehovah-Raah, the Lord is my shepherd.

Today we want to check out another Jehovah compound, Jehovah-Tsidkenu. Or the Lord our righteousness.

Open your Bibles to Jeremiah 2 pg 737

Our of all the prophets called by God to bring His message to His people Jeremiah stands out as one of the most faithful.

In 626 BC God commanded Jeremiah to preach to the people. He took the job and for 42 years he exhorted, wept, pleaded, and warned Judah about impending destruction.

The people of God had actually split into a northern and southern kingdom. They had their own separate kingdom called Israel in the north with Samaria as it's capital and Judah in the south with Jerusalem as it's capital.

Jeremiah prophesied to the southern kingdom of Judah. He started out under a king named Josiah who tried to reform the nation but things went down hill from there.

God used Jeremiah to speak during the reigns of a succession of 4 godless kings who led the country deeper and deeper in rebellion.

It's kind of hard for us to wrap our minds around what things were like then, but in a lot of ways they weren't too different from today. God gave His laws to protect and direct His people. The people decided that their ways of living life were superior to God's direction.

They cheated each other, oppressed widows and orphans, practiced every imaginable type of sexual immorality. So God used Jeremiah to warn for 4 decades that He would bring the ungodly nation of Babylon in and take them captive.

Jeremiah did everything he could to turn the nation around but in all of those 42 years no one listened. Instead he was rewarded with oppressions, beatings, and imprisonments. Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. And even though he tried to resign his post a number of times, He stuck with it until the end.

He even wrote a book that follows Jeremiah called Lamentations. It's Jeremiah's lament after Jerusalem finally falls.

This morning we want to follow through with 3 different ideas that blend together.

I. God's Desire Is Always Blessing of Nations And People

Read 2: 1-6

Somehow we always tend to think that we deserve something from God. God better do life the way we want Him to or we're going to get upset with Him.

In the Bible it's the other way around. God chose out a people for Himself out of all the rebellious people on the planet. God promised to bless them and make them great.

Over and over they had to have it their way instead of God's and eventually God used judgment to try to bring them to where they needed to be spiritually.

It's always been that way. God blessed Adam and Eve and they rebelled. God blessed the Gentile nations and they did everything they could to reject His truth. God chose the Jewish people and gave them His wisdom and truth and they rubbed it in His face.

How many of us have had time after time when God delivered us out of trouble, blessed us with material stuff that would make most of the rest of the world drop their

jaw in amazement, give us access to His truth and we smeared His blessing in His face and said, “Don’t worry God, I don’t need you. I’ve got it covered.” And yet down through the centuries God continues to draw people to Himself.

That’s what He was doing in Jeremiah’s day.

Here’s a paraphrase of those beginning verses of Jeremiah 2: *God's Message came to me. It went like this: "Get out in the streets and call to Jerusalem, 'God's Message!*

*I remember your youthful loyalty, our love as newlyweds.
You stayed with me through the wilderness years, stuck with me through all the hard places.*

*Israel was God's holy choice, the pick of the crop.
Anyone who laid a hand on her would soon wish he hadn't!"*

Hear God's Message, House of Jacob! Yes, you—House of Israel! "What did your ancestors find fault with in me that they drifted so far from me?

It never occurred to them to say, 'Where's God, the God who got us out of Egypt, Who took care of us through thick and thin, those rough-and-tumble wilderness years of parched deserts and death valley?'

Isn’t amazing how quickly we forget God’s blessing?

I. God’s Desire Is Always Blessing of Nations And People

II. Even When He Has To Judge God Is Still Calling Us Back

Turn to Jeremiah 29

This is after decades of warning and the rejection of everything Jeremiah had to say. Nebuchadnezzar was about to slam Judah with his invading army.

But look at this promise: Read verses 11, 12

Now look at chapter 33 read verses 7-11

As hard as it is for us to grasp, God’s plan for us is good. God actually wants what’s best for us. He wants us to experience His joy and peace and He’s willing to use whatever it takes to get us there.

His ways aren't our ways and sometimes we don't understand them. Sometimes His ways are painful. They certainly were for Judah.

But the exciting thing is, God's still calling us back.

Judah strayed from God big time. Sometimes it seems like we've straying in this nation despite all of God's mercy and blessings. Who knows what else we'll face economically, politically, or even militarily.

But now I want you to see where all this was headed. Here's what God was promising. Here's why God could make promises for the future.

Jeremiah 33:15-16

Last week we pointed out that when you see the English word LORD in our Bibles it's a translation of Jehovah, the covenant name of the God of Israel. In this case it's a compound word Jehovah- Tsidkenu. Tsidkenu means "what is right or just."

Judah would be saved and Jerusalem would dwell in safety because God is right and just. They'd pay a heavy price for their rebellion but God will always fulfill His promises.

Over 400 years before this God promised King David that he would always have a descendent sit the throne of Jerusalem. To Israel's greatest king God had made two irrevocable promises:

Psalm 89 promised that the throne of David would be everlasting.

II Samuel 7 promised David that his physical descendant would sit on his throne.

David was unconditionally promised that lineal descendants of his would be preserved to sit on the throne.

A thousand years later enter Joseph and Mary. When you read the genealogies in Matthew and Luke it's obvious that they're different. That's because Matthew traces Jesus' genealogy though Joseph and Luke through Mary. But interestingly both Joseph and Mary were descendants of king David. They were distantly related, not close enough to be a problem, but they were related.

Living in poverty and obscurity like Joseph and Mary did I'm sure that they both clung to this little shred of dignity and fame.

They were descended from the king. There was royal blood in their veins. That was why Joseph had to go back to Bethlehem for the census.

Turn with me now to Matthew 1 page 945

Matthew gives Joseph's genealogy from Abraham forward.

Read vs 6

The Bible tells us that David had several sons, but the legal right to sit on the throne only passed through one of them - Solomon. So only those of the kingly line (though Solomon) inherited the right to the throne. To put it another way, it was possible to be a physical descendent of David and yet to have had no legal right to sit in leadership in Israel.

Joseph was in line for the throne because he could trace his blood line back through Solomon to David.

Before the Roman general Titus destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD the Jews had the most detailed system of genealogical records in the world.

But now look with me at verses 11+12

The 14th descendent of David in the royal line was a king called Jeconiah (sometimes called Coniah).

Now go back to Jeremiah 22 page 764

Read verses 28-30

It wasn't that Jeconiah would have no children. He would have descendants. But he was to be counted as childless. In other words as if he had no children to carry on his line because none of his descendants could occupy the royal throne.

Now when it comes to the birth of Jesus Christ it seems like we have an unsolvable problem. How is Jehovah our righteousness going to provide a Savior?

Joseph, the husband of Mary, was a direct descendent of Jeconiah. that means that although Joseph inherited the legal right to the throne of David because he was of the

kingly line of Solomon, he couldn't sit on the throne because of the curse placed on the descendents of Jeconiah.

Now understand, if Jesus had been the physical son of Joseph He would have been disqualified by that same divine curse.

Three main conditions had to be met for LORD our righteousness to raise a righteous branch from David:

1. Jesus had to be the lineal descendent of David to fulfill God's promise to David that his seed would sit on the throne.
2. He had to be the legal son of Joseph in order to inherit the right to sit on the throne.
3. And yet, He couldn't be the physical son of Joseph without coming under God's curse on Jeconiah.

That really makes the great prophesy in Isaiah 7:14 *Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son...* crucial. Jesus was the legal son of Joseph through adoption and therefore inherited the legal right to the throne.

But he wasn't the physical son of Joseph so he didn't come under the curse.

Matthew is very careful to point that out *And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.* (Matthew 1:16)

Through Matthew's entire genealogy you read so-in-so begot so-in-so who begot so-in-so and on and on. Until you get to Joseph because he didn't beget Jesus.

Instead he says *of whom* (and that word *whom* happens to be feminine in Greek, referring to Mary) *of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.*

There's still one condition that's a problem. The prophets of Israel predicted that Messiah would be a lineal descendent of David. An adopted son isn't a lineal descendent.

Luke presents Jesus genealogy through Mary starting with Jesus and working back.

Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph. (Luke 3:23,24)

You'll notice instead of using the word *begat* Luke uses the phrase *the son of*. Actually all the way through in Greek it just says *of*, not *the son of*. That is except for Joseph. There it uses the Greek word υιος, or *son*. That shows that the parenthesis in verse 1 should include Joseph. *Jesus as was supposed the son of Joseph*.

Jesus wasn't the son of Joseph, he was just thought to be. The next name *Heli* was Mary's father or grandfather.

Now listen to verse 31 *the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, (Luke 3:31)*

Mary was also a descendent of David but not through Solomon. That means that the curse on Jeconiah didn't affect her or her son, but Jesus was still the lineal descendent of King David.

I. God's Desire Is Always Blessing of Nations And People

II. Even When He Has To Judge God Is Still Calling Us Back

III. The Basis For God's Blessing Is Always His Righteousness

Whether it's a nation or just plain old one of us, God always wants us back. The thing is His holiness stands in the way of just saying, "No problem. We'll just forget about all that sin and rebellion stuff. Who cares if you've broken the commandments and lived your own way. We'll just forget about all that."

We think we'd like it that way but the truth is we really wouldn't. We wouldn't want a God who isn't right or just. We wouldn't want a God who doesn't have any standards of truth. You couldn't trust a God like that.

We want a righteous God who does what He says and sticks to it.

So here's what it took for God to act in righteousness. He had to punish sin. He had to punish the sin of Judah. He had to punish your sin and mine. Wrong had to be dealt with.

But instead of us suffering the pangs of divine judgment for our sins Jehovah-Tsidkenu made the righteous payment Himself. All of the Old Testament promises to David and Israel. All the stuff about Joseph and Mary and the genealogies was all part of His amazing plan to restore us.

I want you to see how this applies to us personally.

The Bible says, *All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.* (Psalm 14:3 NIV)

The Bible says, *We are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.* (Isaiah 64:6)

It says, *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23)

The Bible couldn't be any clearer. We've born false witness, we've coveted, we've put other gods before God. We're guilty sinners. We're undone.

But now look at this...

Turn to Colossians 3 page 1156

Read verse 3

When we place our faith in Jesus Christ as savior we're new people. We've died to sin and our life is hidden with Christ in God. Our sins are covered because Jehovah-Tsidkenu paid the price and He has become the righteous covering for our unrighteousness.

Listen to how Isaiah the prophet put it. This is so beautiful.

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. (Isaiah 61:10)

Because of the cross, Jehovah Himself is our righteousness.

So we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved. We're covered with a robe of righteousness. We have a new life in Him by faith, now what?

Read Colossians 3:8-10

Jehovah our righteousness calls us to live out the new life we have in Him. Positionally we're in Christ. That's the only way a righteous God could accept us. But practically our lives can be far from righteous.

That's why God judged Judah and that's why God repeatedly tells us in the Bible to put off and put on. Put off the old and put on the new. Put off the confused way of thinking of our culture and put on God's way of looking at life.

Put off the old habits, thought patterns, actions, and attitudes and replace them with God's view of life.

So here's what we do. It sounds so simple and yet it's a constant battle. Live up to who and what you truly are in Jehovah our righteousness.

Here's the steps:

Confess and admit your sin. Thank God that you are forgiven. Every day, get up and say, "I am righteous in God. And then move out to let God's Spirit work through you to serve God and others. To bring worship and honor and glory to Jehovah our righteousness.