

Jeremiah 23:1-6^{iv v}

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD. The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

^{iv} About Jeremiah 23:1-6

Jeremiah's prophetic ministry to Judah began about 627 BCE and ended about 580 BCE. His career thus spanned the period of political turmoil that culminated in Judah's final defeat by the Babylonians, the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the temple, and the exile of the major part of the population.

Today's reading is preceded by oracles against the three immediately previous kings of Judah (22:11, 18, 24). But as Jeremiah comes to Zedekiah, the weak-willed reigning monarch whose treachery brought about the final downfall of Jerusalem (chaps. 37-39), he does not name him directly. Instead he gives the Lord's judgment on all the "shepherds," the leaders of Judah (Ezekiel 34).

God will raise up for them a king who will fulfill all the promises of the covenant with David (2 Samuel 7:5-16; Psalm 89:3-4, 19-37, 132:11-18). The “Branch” (v. 5) became a technical term associated with the expected Messiah (Zechariah 3:8, 6:12). Jeremiah makes a play on Zedekiah’s name (which means “the Lord is righteous”). Instead of the unjust Zedekiah, one will come who will accomplish the Lord’s righteousness.

ᵛ Psalm 23^ᵛ

The LORD is my shepherd; *

I shall not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures *
and leads me beside still waters.

He revives my soul *

and guides me along right pathways for his Name’s sake.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I shall fear no evil; *

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; *

you have anointed my head with oil,

and my cup is running over.

Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, *

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.