

## RIGHTEOUSNESS AND GENDER, FEDERAL HEADSHIP AND CORPORATE SOLIDARITY IN JEREMIAH 23:5–6 AND 33:15–16

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**Abstract:** *The article addresses two interpretive issues in Jeremiah's parallel prophecies: the dyad of federal headship/corporate solidarity and the different nuances of the masculine and feminine forms of the Hebrew "righteousness" (צדקה and צדק). The issues have gone virtually unnoticed in Jeremiah scholarship, especially in the English-speaking world. Comparative illustrations of the first issue are given from Isaiah and from the annals of Tiglath-pileser I. Exposition of both issues appears in a concluding analysis of both prophecies. Discussion of imputed righteousness/justification also applies but is subordinate to the two issues advanced by the present study.*

**Key words:** *federal headship, corporate solidarity, literary dyad, fluidity of transition, righteousness, righteousness as conformity to God's Being and doing, aseity, Christ as head of the Church, Messiah, Immanuel, the Lord our righteousness, justification, imputed righteousness*

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch [צמח צדיק], and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness [משפט וצדקה] in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness [צדק]'" (Jer 23:5–6, ESV).<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah's prophecy in 23:5–6 and its parallel in 33:15–16 are well known, but their interpretation has neglected two issues that this article hopes to address. The first is sometimes called "federal headship and corporate solidarity." The second is the meaning of the righteousness terms in the prophecy: "righteous" (צדיק), "righteousness" (צדק), and "righteousness" (צדקה; here in the expression, "justice and righteousness," משפט וצדקה). A survey of exegetical and theological commentary on Jeremiah shows that these issues deserve more discussion than they have received. The present article begins to address this need by bringing certain interpretive criteria—that are also applicable elsewhere in the OT—to bear on these closely related prophecies. The criteria are: (1) the dyad of federal headship and corporate solidarity and (2) an arguably clarifying understanding of צדק and צדקה.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Translations are from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> The criteria are applicable though not always applied. The issue of federal headship/corporate solidarity has been helpfully noted with regard to OT prophecy (though not applied to Jer 23:5–6 // 33:15–16 specifically) by Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids:

## I. TWO CRITERIA OF INTERPRETATION

1. *Federal headship/corporate solidarity: two examples.* Some issues that have been noticed intermittently as matters of biblical interpretation in general deserve to be stated afresh and applied to Jeremiah's prophecies, and one of those is federal headship, or corporate solidarity.<sup>3</sup>

Expressed in its most abstract form, this compositional technique involves the application of the same terms or phrases to two distinct entities to show their affinity in some respect or other. Assyria offers examples of this technique applied between two individual parties, namely, a god and a king. We may not want to call this "federal headship/corporate solidarity," strictly speaking, since it is a relationship between two individuals, and not an individual, a "head," and a group, a "body" (but see Longenecker's definition, below). Nonetheless, the literary technique of applying the same terms or phrases to two entities to show their affinity is the same technique we see applied in the Bible to God and his people, and that is truly "federal headship/corporate solidarity." The fact that this literary technique was clearly employed beyond Israel in the ancient Near East could easily form the topic of a separate study. Longenecker has expressed the concept as it appears in ancient Semitic thought and exegesis:

The concept of corporate solidarity comes to the fore in the treatment of relationships between the nation or representative figures within the nation, on the one hand, and an elect remnant or the Messiah, on the other. It allows the focus

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Eerdmans, 1975), 98–99. The significance of the gender difference in the Hebrew terms for "righteousness" has been illuminated by A. Jepsen, "צדקה und צדק im Alten Testament," in Henning Graf Reventlow, *Gottes Wort und Gottes Land: Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg zum 70. Geburtstag am 16. Januar 1965 dargebracht von Kollegen, Freunden und Schülern* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 78–89. Jepsen's pioneering work has been noted by some German theologians but only rarely noticed outside of Germany, despite its inclusion in *TDOT*. In this regard, see *HALOT* 1004–5; *TDOT* 12:256–57; Diethelm Michel, *Grundlegung einer hebräischen Syntax* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1966), 1:66; Bo Johnson, "Der Bedeutungsunterschied zwischen šādāq und šedaqa," *ASTI* 11 (1977–1978): 31–39.

<sup>3</sup> A distinction is made from what theologians typically mean by "federal headship," by which they denote Adam's "headship" over the human race as our first parent and the consequent involvement of all people in original sin. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 221, characterizes it as follows: "Adam yielded to the temptation and committed the first sin by eating of the forbidden fruit. But the matter did not stop there, for by that first sin Adam became the bond-servant of sin. That sin carried permanent pollution with it, and a pollution that, because of the *solidarity* of the human race, would affect not only Adam but all of his descendants as well. As a result of the fall the father of the race could only pass on a depraved human nature to his offspring" (emphasis added). This concept of "federal headship" (Adam as "father of the race") with its concomitant "solidarity" aspect is a staple of Reformed thought. For idea of the first Adam as head of the fallen human household and the Second Adam as head of a redeemed human household, along with other biblical and ancient Near Eastern examples of the household (federal head/corporate solidarity), cf. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* [ANETBT] (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 138–65; Niehaus, *Biblical Theology*, vol. 1: *Common Grace Covenants*, 2nd ed. [BT 1] (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018), 229–32; Niehaus, *Biblical Theology*, vol. 2: *Special Grace Covenants: Old Testament*, 2nd ed. [BT 2] (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018), 36–45; Niehaus, *Biblical Theology*, vol. 3: *Special Grace Covenants: New Testament*, 2nd ed. [BT 3] (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), 8, 82, 169–207 (for "head" and "body" issues in the church).

of attention “to pass without explanation or explicit indication from one to the other, in a fluidity of transition which seems to us unnatural.”<sup>4</sup>

The prophecy quoted above (Jer 23:5–6) and its restatement in a slightly different way not much later (33:15–16) illustrate this literary dyad when taken together. Here the promised “righteous branch” of David is named “the Lord is our righteousness.” There, Jerusalem receives that name. For those who believe the reality of predictive prophecy, the two prophecies taken together may anticipate the doctrine of Christ as head of the church, his body (as articulated in Eph 5:22–33). Both exemplars, Jeremiah’s and Paul’s, can be seen in this way because of the device known as federal headship/corporate solidarity. In this device one party is the “head” and the other party is the “body,” the entity subordinate to the “head.”

This usage appears elsewhere in the Bible; it appears in a kindred form, but with the difference we have noted, in some extrabiblical literature. Comparative study of parallel statements in Isaiah 7–8, and an extrabiblical example from the annals of the Assyrian monarch Tiglath-pileser I, can illustrate the literary device.

a. *First example: Isaiah and “Immanuel.”* The first case, taken from the use of “Immanuel” in Isaiah 7–8, shows the very “fluidity” and ambiguity of which Robinson and Longenecker spoke.

The Lord invites King Ahaz of Judah to ask for any sign he wishes, as an encouragement in the face of military threats from Samaria and Damascus (Isa 7:1–11). Ahaz replies with an apparent religiosity (“I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test,” v. 12; cf. Exod 17:2; Deut 6:16), but Isaiah rejects the king’s *faux* piety: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?” (Isa 7:13). Isaiah’s prior warning may indicate that the king’s response actually shows a lack of faith (cf. v. 9: “If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all”). It can also hardly avoid notice that even Isaiah’s reply illustrates something of the fluidity Robinson and Longenecker noted between individual and corporate entities in ancient Semitic thought, since Isaiah replies to Ahaz, not as Ahaz, but as “House of David” (v. 13).

In response to Ahaz’s rejection of God’s offer of a sign Isaiah gives a prophecy of “Immanuel,” and the phrase (lit., “With us God”), is used three times in Isaiah 7–8. The first is a promised sign from the Lord: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel [עִמָּנוּ אֵל]” (7:14). The second caps a metaphorical description of Assyrian attack portrayed as an overflowing Euphrates: “it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its [or “his,” כְּנָפָיו] outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel [עִמָּנוּ אֵל]” (8:8), in which “Immanuel” can be taken as an address to the people corporately, just as Isaiah later characterizes God’s people as “Israel, my servant, Jacob ... you [sg.] whom I took from the ends of the earth” (cf.

<sup>4</sup> Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 77. Longenecker’s quote is from J. Reumann, “Introduction,” in H. W. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), v.

Isa 41:8–10, in which the nation is addressed in the singular throughout).<sup>5</sup> The third is a witty allusion to the former two uses; it says simply (in a warning to the hostile peoples) that “God is with us *עִמָּנוּ אֵל*, “immanu el” (8:10). That final allusion is characteristic of the sort of wittiness one finds in the OT, but it is the first two statements that imply the concept of federal headship/corporate solidarity, as a comparison may show:

<i>Federal Head:</i>	The virgin shall conceive <i>a son</i> who will be ... <i>עִמָּנוּ אֵל</i> (7:14)
<i>Corporate solidarity:</i>	[Judah is the land of <i>God's people addressed as</i> ] ... <i>עִמָּנוּ אֵל</i> (8:8)

The third use arguably alludes to both statements. The affirmation, “God [is] with us” (8:10, emphasis added) reinforces the apparent identity of “Immanuel” in 8:8, namely, the people whose land Judah is; it also alludes to (and is made possible by) the knowledge that the promised messianic figure will himself be the reality, “God [is] with us.” In sum, Isaiah prophesies a messianic son who will be “Immanuel” and his people will be identified with him and may in a kindred way be foretold to be “Immanuel,” and that will be possible because “God is with us” (“immanu el”). To cap it all, the prophesied son turns out to be Jesus, who will be called “Immanuel” (Matt 1:23, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel,” quoting Isaiah 7:14). The parallel applications of the name “Immanuel” to both the Son and his people in Isaiah demonstrate the concept of federal headship/corporate solidarity and anticipate the doctrine of Christ as the head of his body, the Church. When Christ appears as the head of his body, the Church, that manifestation of “federal headship/corporate solidarity” also appears with no ambiguity.

b. *Second example: Tiglath-pileser I and “Aššur, my lord.”* Literature from the Assyrian royal tradition offers an example that employs the same literary device (the application of the same phrasing to two distinct entities in order to show their affinity, even a dynamic affinity), with a difference.

The difference between the biblical data and the Assyrian material is as follows: (1) the affinity that the mutually applied phrasing is meant to highlight in the

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<sup>5</sup> Though commentators, because of the singular “your land” (*אַרְצְךָ*), routinely take “Immanuel” in Isaiah 8:8 to be a poetical address to the prophesied Son of 7:14, it is more likely to be a poetical apostrophe to the nation. Some evidence in favor of this interpretation is worth noting: (1) it is not unknown for Isaiah to identify God’s people corporately by the name of an individual, or as an individual, as here. So Israel is “Jacob” (as noted above; cf. Isa 9:8, 14:1, 17:4, 49:5, etc.; cf. earlier, Deut 33:10) or “Jeshurun” (cf. Isa 44:1–5; cf. earlier, Deut 32:15, 33:5, 26), and the Lord can say to his people in exile, “I formed you [sg.] from the womb” (Isa 44:2, 25); (2) moreover, Isaiah has already in verse 8 spoken of *the nation in a corporate sense* (i.e., as a body, cf. “the neck [sg.]”), and of Assyria’s king and army together (“the king of Assyria and all his glory,” v. 7) as “the river” (i.e., the Euphrates, v. 7) and as a single bird (“his outspread wings,” v. 8). Finally, a good example of the ambiguity that challenges interpreters of this verse appears in E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Vol. 1* (1965; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 307, who thinks “Immanuel” in verse 8 caps a prayer “addressed to the Messiah,” but ambiguously adds that in this verse “Isaiah ... named the land” after “Immanuel” (n. 18).

examples from Isaiah and Jeremiah is an affinity between God and a group of individuals (his people); (2) the affinity that the mutually applied phrasing is meant to highlight in Assyrian tradition is the affinity between the Assyrian god Aššur and an individual (the king). The annals of Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 BC) provide examples. The king says of his enemies: “The splendour of my valor overwhelmed them.”<sup>6</sup> But he uses almost identical phrasing of his god Aššur: “The splendor of Aššur, my lord, overwhelmed them.”<sup>7</sup> The king’s enemies “fled from my weapons.”<sup>8</sup> But likewise they “fled from the weapons of the god Aššur, my lord.”<sup>9</sup> In the Assyrian inscription the identical phrasing shows the *close affinity of the god to his servant*. Both are involved in the same campaign against resistant enemies. If we want to express this dynamic relationship in terms of a “head” and a “body”: in their warfare, the god Aššur is the “head” over the royal “body” who moves in tandem with the will of the “head,” terrifying the enemies and putting them to flight. The dynamism of the relationship is indicated by the divine “splendor” (*melammu*) attributed to the god and shared by the god with his servant the king.<sup>10</sup>

There is another similarity in this shared literary practice. As the Isaiah examples occur in separate parts of the prophecy, and the same is even more markedly true in the case of Jeremiah 23:5–6 // 33:15–16 to be considered below, so the Assyrian examples occur in several places in flow of the king’s inscription.

Finally, and to be technically clear: we do not apply the phrasing, “federal headship/corporate solidarity” to the Assyrian example, because the Assyrians used identical phrasing to illustrate the close affinity between a god and an *individual* (the king). The point of the Assyrian illustration is to show how, in the ancient world, identical phrasing could be applied to *two entities* in order to show their close affinity and coordinated functioning.

2. **צדק and צדקה**: *Jepsen’s insight*. A. Jepsen (1965) argued that two words for “righteousness,” צדק and צדקה (i.e., the masculine and feminine forms) have different nuances.<sup>11</sup> The masculine form denotes the idea itself, while the feminine form denotes the idea put into action. So one might translate צדק as “righteousness” but צדקה as “righteous action.”<sup>12</sup> Though this nuance of צדקה had been sensed in one biblical passage or another by some interpreters, no one had thought to use it as a governing value until Jepsen’s work. This understandable deficit among commentators before 1965 will appear in the discussion of Jeremiah 23:5–6

<sup>6</sup> Cf. A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859 BC)* (1991; repr., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 17 (*me-lam qar-du-ti-ia ú-se-ḫi-ip-šu-nu-ti-ma*).

<sup>7</sup> Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers*, 15 (*me-lam ʾa-šur EN-ia iš-ḥup-šu-nu-ti-ma*).

<sup>8</sup> Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers*, 14 (*i-na pa-an GiŠ.TUKUL.MEŠ-ia ip-pár-ši-du*).

<sup>9</sup> Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers*, 23 (*i-na pa-an GiŠ.TUKUL.MEŠ sa ʾa-šur EN-ia ip-pár-ši-du*).

<sup>10</sup> For further discussion, cf. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995), 350–53; Niehaus, *ANETBT*, 76–77.

<sup>11</sup> Jepsen, “צדק und צדקה im Alten Testament,” 78–89.

<sup>12</sup> This difference does not appear in the Greek word δικαιοσύνη, which often translates both Hebrew terms in the OT, but the Hebrew difference arguably underlies NT uses of δικαιοσύνη. Jeremiah 23:5 (LXX) renders צדקה as δικαιοσύνη; Jeremiah 23:6 (LXX) takes צדק as a proper name, Ἰωσεδεκ (LXX lacks Jeremiah 33:14–26).

and 33:15–16, and the same deficit will appear in discussions of Jeremiah’s prophecies that have appeared since Jepsen’s contribution.<sup>13</sup>

3. *God as the standard of righteousness.* It has long been understood that “righteousness” in the ancient Near East meant “conformity to a standard.”<sup>14</sup> I have argued elsewhere that biblical righteousness may best be understood if one takes God as the standard. Biblical righteousness, then, would be conformity to the standard of God (to the extent that such is possible for a creature). Another way of putting it would be: “conformity to God’s Being and doing.” If a person is “righteous” (צדיק / δίκαιος), then that person would have “righteousness” (צדק / δικαιοσύνη) as his/her state of being, and that state of being in turn would lead to “righteous action” (צדקה / δικαιοσύνη).

God himself can be the standard of righteousness only if God is righteous. God, then, would have righteousness (צדק) in his Being, and that state of Being in God would lead to his “righteous action” (צדקה). The same triad of terms and the same dynamic will appear as we consider the Messiah of Jeremiah 23:5–6 who will be a “righteous [צדיק] branch” who embodies “righteousness” (צדק) and who performs “justice and righteous action” (משפט וצדקה)—or perhaps with epexegetis, “justice, namely, righteous action.”<sup>15</sup>

I have also argued that God’s aseity may be the most profound example of his righteousness and righteous action, because God in his aseity is always recreating himself (which is “righteous *doing*” on his part) true to what he was before (which was/is his “righteous *Being*”), from imperceptible instant to imperceptible instant seamlessly.<sup>16</sup>

The idea of a divine aseity has also appeared in what theologians call the realm of common grace. Egypt evinced such a concept in the reign of Akhenaton

<sup>13</sup> It is noteworthy that subsequent discussions of OT “righteousness” terminology in theological writings have, likewise, not mentioned or benefitted from Jepsen’s 1965 *Festschrift* contribution.

<sup>14</sup> Note lead definitions in the lexicons, for example, BDB 841: “*what is right, just, normal*”; William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 303: “(what is) right, normal”; TWOT 2:752: “This root basically connotes conformity to an ethical or moral standard. It is claimed by Snaith (N. Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the OT*, Schocken, 1964, p. 73) ‘the original significance of the root *šdq* to have been ‘to be straight.’ But he adds that it stands for a ‘norm.’” See likewise HALOT 3:1004; DCH 7:80. Hans Heinrich Schmid concludes the same: “The concept as a rule denotes that which is right, in order, that which is, as it must be” (my translation). Hans Heinrich Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit als Weltordnung: Hintergrund und Geschichte der alttestamentlichen Gerechtigkeitsbegriffes*, ed. Gerhard Ebeling, BHT 40 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1968), 69. The German text reads: “Der Begriff bezeichnet in der Regel das, was recht, in Ordnung ist, was so ist, wie es sein muß.” Because his *Gerechtigkeit als Weltordnung* has not been translated into English, I offer translations along with the original German wording.

<sup>15</sup> These and related topics form the subject of a three-volume work in progress: *Righteousness* (vol. 1, *Righteousness: History of Interpretation*; vol. 2, *Righteousness: Old Testament*; vol. 3, *Righteousness: New Testament*), projected to appear in 2024. For epexegetis with the copula, see the classical study by Archibald Hamilton Bryce, *Notes on Virgil, Original and Selected, from Heyne, Wagner, Thiel, Forbiger, Gossrau, Ladweig, Henry, and other Eminent Commentators*, vol. 2 (London: Richard Griffin and Co., 1857), 287.

<sup>16</sup> The argument depends on possible vocalizations of the divine self-naming in Exodus 3:14, one of which could yield the translation, “I will make/produce what I will be.” Cf. Niehaus, *BT* 2, 180–82, 224; *BT* 3, 57–62, 369–70; Niehaus, “Righteousness and the Created Order: Appreciation and Critique of a Novel Idea,” *JETS* 63.2 (2020): 252.

(1353–1336 or 1351–1334 BC). The “Hymn to Aton” says of the sun god: “You make millions of transformations of yourself.”<sup>17</sup> Assyrian theology developed a similar concept of their chief god, Ashur, as an inscription of Sennacherib (705–681 BC) shows. One temple inscription speaks of “Assur, king of all the gods, *creator of himself*, father of the gods.”<sup>18</sup> Both gods—after being around for awhile—were at some point elevated and endowed with aseity, which includes the ability to create not only oneself, but all things.

How do these pagan statements relate to biblical truth? Any answer can only be presuppositional, and so we propose the following.

The aseity of God is arguably the background and ultimate source of any pagan concept of divine aseity, whenever it might have been stated. That is so because God preexisted the universe and was the embodiment and beneficiary of his own self-existence before he created anything outside himself. Any concept of divine aseity must therefore have its source in him (because no other case of aseity *existed*, or for that matter does exist), however the idea may have come to people at some time or other, in God’s providence. But we have also said that God’s aseity is the foundational manifestation of his righteousness.

If righteousness is conformity to a standard and God is the standard of righteousness, and if God is righteous, then God is in conformity to his own Being and doing. He is righteous (צדיק) and embodies righteousness (צדק), and his righteous action (צדקה) constantly recreates himself true to the standard of what he was before. Another way of saying this is that God is always true to the standard of himself—or, God is always “true to himself”—and the primordial and eternal example of this is God’s self-existence or aseity. This is the standard of righteousness that we will apply to the two prophecies in Jeremiah.

## II. A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLING OF INTERPRETERS

Detailed examination of every commentator would exceed the limits of an article, but a few may be considered as illustrations of the issues discussed above. For the most part, in what follows, commentators are noted in the course of exploring the two prophecies with (1) the federal headship/corporate solidarity issue and (2) the righteousness gender issue in view. Issues of imputed righteousness and justification are also noted as they occur in commentaries. However, one interpretation deserves special attention. H. H. Schmid is the only modern scholar who has produced a distinctly novel understanding of the name “the Lord is our righteousness” in these prophecies. Schmid’s proposal is interesting because of its ingenuity, even if one may disagree with it.

1. *H. H. Schmid and Jeremiah 23:6 and 33:16.* H. H. Schmid has proposed a unique understanding of the parallel prophecies in Jeremiah 23:6 and 33:16. His

<sup>17</sup> William Kelly Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 282.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel David Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib*, OIP 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), 149, emphasis added (šar kiš-šat ilāni<sup>pl</sup> ba-nu-u ram-ni-šu ab ilāni<sup>pl</sup>).

argument is very well documented and well thought through. It deserves attention as an interesting attempt to explain, by way of ancient Near Eastern analogies, Jeremiah's messianic name, "Yahweh is our righteousness." He argues that Hebrew צדק is sometimes actually a god, *Ṣādāq*.

Schmid begins by documenting occurrences of *ṣdq* in personal names from the ancient Near East. Two familiar ones from the Bible are Melchizedek (cf. Gen 14:18; Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6) and Adoni-zedek (Josh 10:1–3). It would be natural to take צדק in these names as verbal or adjectival, telling us that the designated individual (the "king" or "lord") is "righteous," or perhaps better, "legitimate," that is, he legitimately holds his position, a possibility that Schmid acknowledges.<sup>19</sup> But Schmid believes it more likely that the names are theophoric. So he takes Melchizedek as "Malk is *ṣdq*" or (more likely) "*Ṣādāq* is king" and Adoni-zedek as "Adoni (God) is *ṣdq*" or (more likely) "(my) Lord is *Ṣādāq*."<sup>20</sup>

Schmid adduces other evidence of a deity named *Ṣādāq*, in addition to the occurrence of the element *ṣdq* in personal names. He cites a couple of examples from Philo of Byblos that mention a deity, Στυδύχ, in theogonies. For example:

But one of the Titanides came together with Στυδύχ, which means "righteous" (δικαιος), and gave birth to Asklepios.<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly Schmid wants to see the god *Ṣādāq* behind a number of statements of צדק in the Psalms (Pss 17:1; 85:11, 12, 14; 89:15; 97:2) and prophets (Isa 1:26; Jer 31:25; 23:6 = 33:16). Of the two Jeremiah prophecies being considered here he says:

If according to Jer. 23:6 = 33:16 the Savior-King is called "Yahweh is our צדק," and Isa. 60:17 formulates:

"I will produce שלום for your (Jerusalem's) authorities and צדקה in your government,"

then there not only appears, again therein, residues of the veneration of a god *Ṣādāq*, but it also becomes clear that this god—in the Canaanite space—must have been venerated, in particular, in Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup>

A point to note as one considers this summary is that Schmid makes no use of the valuable distinction made by Jepsen between צדק and צדקה (for example, in

<sup>19</sup> Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit*, 75.

<sup>20</sup> Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit*, 74. For other possibly theophoric *ṣdq* names from the Canaanite, Akkadian, Phoenician, and old Arabic, see pages 74–75.

<sup>21</sup> "Mit Στυδύχ aber, was 'gerecht' (δικαιος) heißt, kam eine von den Titaniden zusammen und gebar den Asklepios." Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit*, 75. Philo of Byblos (AD 64–141) was a Greek antiquarian perhaps best known for his *Phoenician History*. Cf. Harold W. Attridge and Robert A. Oden Jr., *Philo of Byblos: The Phoenician History: Introduction, Critical Text, Translation, Notes* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1981).

<sup>22</sup> "Wenn nach Jer. 23, 6 = 33, 16 der Heilskönig 'Jahwe unser צדק' heißt, und Jes. 60, 17 formuliert: 'Ich will שלום zu deiner (Jerusalems) Obrigkeit machen und צדקה in deiner Regierung', dann zeigen sich darin nicht nur wieder Reste der Verehrung eines Gottes *Ṣādāq*, sondern es wird auch deutlich, daß dieser—im kanaanäischen Raum—besonders in Jerusalem verehrt worden sein muß." Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit*, 76–77.



Schmid's comments on Isaiah 60:17), even though Schmid had otherwise noted Jepsen's contribution.<sup>23</sup> He also does not note or discuss the federal headship/corporate solidarity aspect that arises when one compares Jeremiah 23:6 and 33:16. The statements of those two verses are not simply equal (as he says, "Jer. 23:6 = 33:16").<sup>24</sup> However, Schmid takes the ancient Near Eastern evidence as his hermeneutical key for these OT passages, as he does in his overall work on "righteousness" as *Weltordnung*.

Schmid's argument has a certain attractiveness and plausibility given the examples he has marshaled. Nonetheless a more straightforward way of reading these OT passages probably has greater explanatory power. For one thing, given the way the OT prophets railed against any hint of polytheism, it is remarkable that none of them ever accosts Israel for worshiping the god, צדק (*Ṣādāq*), and perhaps even more remarkable that Jeremiah, who was caustic against Judah's idolatry, should prophesy a Davidic king whose name would be "Yahweh is our *Ṣādāq*."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, every passage Schmid adduces as OT evidence can be simply and powerfully understood if צדק/צדקה are taken in the sense we are proposing—conformity to God's Being/doing—as the following discussion should demonstrate. Finally, despite Schmid's evidence for a god *Ṣādāq* in the ancient Near East, the only OT evidence he employs is a collection of passages that can quite naturally be understood differently and—one could say—in a less *recherché* manner. Like Schmid's case for "righteousness" as *Weltordnung*, the case he advances regarding צדק in some OT passages (and Jer 23:6 and 33:16 in particular) is novel and engaging but does not appear to be the best explanation.<sup>26</sup>

2. *Commentators from Calvin to the present.* Many scholars have taken more traditional approaches to these prophecies; those of a more critical bent have discounted traditional views. Traditionally, the prophecies have long been thought to imply justification, so a brief consideration of the justification issue in these prophecies introduces and accompanies the following discussion.

a. *Jeremiah 23:5–6 and some commentators.* A sampling of commentators begins with Jeremiah 23:5–6. Justification and imputed righteousness appear (or do not); the two issues that form the main concern of this article do not appear at all.

The introductory consideration is the identity of the "righteous branch" (v. 5). In Jeremiah 23:6 the expression, "His days," refers to the future days of the prom-

<sup>23</sup> See further discussion in Niehaus, "Righteousness and the Created Order," 233n1.

<sup>24</sup> This apparently casual equation is not idiosyncratic on Schmid's part. Cf. John Piper, *The Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 118n25. Perhaps remarkably, considering his interest in justification, N. T. Wright (who might be called Piper's opponent in debate) never mentions Jeremiah 23:6 or 33:16 in his *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009). He makes only one brief footnote reference to Jeremiah 33:14–18 in the context of discussing the "two Messiah" expectations in Jesus's day, in his *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 311n91.

<sup>25</sup> Unless (on Schmid's interpretation of צדק as *Ṣādāq*) Jeremiah did so ironically as part of a polemical mention of *Ṣādāq*—a possibility that Schmid does not mention.

<sup>26</sup> For a more detailed critique of Schmid's concept of righteousness as world order (*Weltordnung*) understood in terms of pagan—and especially Canaanite—thought, see Niehaus, "Righteousness and the Created Order," 240–54.

ised king (the “righteous Branch,” צמח צדיק). The prediction is messianic but not only so. The “name” of the future savior points to our justification. To say the LORD is a person’s righteousness is to admit that the person *has no righteousness of his/her own* apart from him who is “our righteousness.” God *gives* his people this identity; it is an identity they cannot win by their own work, cleverness, or power. They cannot win it by conforming to some standard of their own—that is, by human righteousness (cf. Isa 64:6). And because he will come among a people who are fallen and who cannot achieve God’s righteousness on their own, the only way they can have it is to receive it from him as a gift.<sup>27</sup> When they receive it, they are not instantly *made* righteous, but may nonetheless say, “We are righteous, because the Lord *is* our righteousness.” In other words, that righteousness is credited to them or imputed to them when they are not yet righteous, and that is their (our) justification.

The classical understanding of this prophecy can (and should) be affirmed as far as it goes.<sup>28</sup> It has not been noted by some more recent commentators.<sup>29</sup> To our

<sup>27</sup> Calvin identifies the “righteous Branch” as the Messiah and sees our imputed righteousness in him: “Christ is made our righteousness, and we are counted the righteousness of God in him” (151), but without recognizing federal headship/corporate solidarity per se, and without exploring the meanings of “righteousness.” John Calvin, *Commentary on Jeremiah and Lamentations*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1999), 3:144–45. A. W. Streane comments: “The Messiah is called the Lord and also our righteousness, because through His merits and death we are justified from sin.” A. W. Streane, *Jeremiah together with the Lamentations* (Cambridge: University Press, 1881), 160. Charles Lee Irons quotes approvingly the view of Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669): “The righteousness which is given from God, and of which God himself is the cause.... For this reason he is called ... ‘God our righteousness (Jer 23:5–6; 33:15–16).’” Charles Lee Irons, *The Righteousness of God: A Lexical Examination of the Covenant-Faithfulness Interpretation*, WUNT 2/386 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 27–28.

<sup>28</sup> Contrast Charles L. Feinberg, who, after a brief review of interpretations, accepts the divinity of the Davidic “branch,” but rejects any view of imputed righteousness: “At this point the concept of forensic imputed righteousness with all its implications, as elaborated in the NT, must not be injected. It is sufficient that Messiah is presented as the righteous King, as deity, and as redeeming his people.” Charles L. Feinberg, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 163.

<sup>29</sup> William L. Holladay does not mention justification or the federal headship/corporate solidarity issue in this verse or its counterpart at Jeremiah 33:16. William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1—25*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 619–20; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26—52*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1990), 228–29. He also does not discuss what “righteousness” might mean, either here or in Jeremiah 33:16, but he does observe more generally that “the future king will embody the faith of the whole people in the realization of righteousness that has its source only in Yahweh” (*Jeremiah 1*, 620). He thinks the passage containing Jeremiah 33:16 was not a prophecy by Jeremiah but has its setting “in the postexilic period” (*Jeremiah 2*, 229). Walter Brueggemann is one of many who think the name is a play on the name of Israel’s king, Zedekiah. He comments: “This king will embody righteousness, to which his very name will attest. It is perhaps intentional and ironic that the ‘real king’ anticipated is called ‘Yahweh is our righteousness’ (*Yahweh tsidqenu*), while the last king of the line up to 587 is Zedekiah (‘Yahweh is righteous’). The coming king will be genuine ‘righteousness’ (*tsedaqah*), whereas the remembered King Zedekiah is not at all an embodiment of righteousness. That king bore the name; the coming king will embody the reality. The proposed name for the new king indicates a governance that brings well-being through justice.” Walter Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down, A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1–25*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 200. Since Jepsen’s work, we understand that צדקה is not something that the promised king (or anyone) can “be.” Rather, it is “righteous action” (צדקה) that may be done by someone who “embodies” righteousness (צדק). It should be added that Jeremiah said the

point, however, whatever view commentators take on the meaning of this prophecy, the interpretive possibilities available in (1) the federal headship/corporate solidarity perspective (clarified by Longenecker in 1975) and (2) the gender distinction between צדק and צדקה (noted by Jepsen in 1965) have gone unmentioned in discussions of Jeremiah 23:5–6. The same is true of commentators on 33:15–16.

b. *Jeremiah* 33:15–16. The traditional (and appropriate) understanding of justification applies equally well to Jeremiah's second prophecy, which says:

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch [צמח צדקה] to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness [משפט וצדקה] in the land. 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 [צדק]’ (Jer 33:15–16).

Commentaries on this prophecy are similar to those on 23:5–6.<sup>30</sup> Those written before Jepsen's work naturally do not show his insights, but the same is true of those written after 1965. The same may be said of Longenecker's 1975 contribution.

### III. THE TWO CRITERIA APPLIED

The time has come to apply to the two Jeremiah prophecies the criteria of (1) federal headship/corporate solidarity and (2) the gender distinction between צדק and צדקה.

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promised king would be “righteousness” (*tsedeg*) and not “righteousness (*tsedaqah*)” (v. 6). R. E. Clements comments more abstractly: “It is simply taking the last king's name as a prophecy, not about this king himself but about the royal dynasty he represented.” R. E. Clements, *Jeremiah*, Int (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), 139. Tremper Longman III notes the possible wordplay on the name Zedekiah but offers no discussion of the meaning of צדק and implications for justification or of the issues addressed in this article; he treats Jeremiah 33:15–16 similarly. Tremper Longman III, *Jeremiah, Lamentations* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 160, 222.

<sup>30</sup> Calvin identifies the “Branch of righteousness” (v. 15) as Christ, and Judah and Jerusalem as the redeemed people of God, adding as an interpretive gloss: “‘Having been justified,’ says Paul, ‘we have peace with God’ (Rom. 5:1),” but without speaking exactly of federal headship and corporate solidarity, and without defining צדק or צדקה. Calvin, *Commentary on Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 4:259, 261. Connop Thirlwall says the name “Jehovah is our righteousness” implies “that in the Messianic times Jehovah is to be the righteousness of Jerusalem, to bestow righteousness upon her with all its attendant blessings.” Connop Thirlwall, *Remains Literary and Theological of Connop Thirlwall*, vol. 3, ed. J. J. Stuart Perowne (London: Daldy, Isbister & Co., 1878), 471. Similarly, Streane says the name may be understood as: “He by Whom the Lord grants us righteousness, just as in xxxiii. 16 Jerusalem, as representing the repentant and restored Church, is called by the same name, as being that through which the Lord will work righteousness.” Streane, *Jeremiah*, 160. Philip Graham Ryken sees the promise as messianic: “The goodness, integrity, and moral perfection of the Righteous Branch would belong to God's people. His righteousness would be credited to their account. All these promises have been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Philip Graham Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: From Sorrow to Hope* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 342; cf. 512. Clements does not see the name connection as messianic, but he says: “It is not messianic in the same sense that such an adjective implied for later Judaism, although it proved to be an important step in the growth of the messianic hope.” Clements, *Jeremiah*, 201. As noted, Holladay only surmises that Jeremiah 33:15–16 was not given by Jeremiah but was a postexilic insertion. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 229.

1. *Federal headship/corporate solidarity.* The parallelism between Jeremiah 23:6, in which the promised “branch” will be called “The Lord is our righteousness,” and 33:16, in which Jerusalem is called “The Lord is our Righteousness,” makes perfectly good sense if seen through the lens of federal headship/corporate solidarity. The same arrangement as was used for Isaiah 7:14 and 8:8 can be applied:

Federal Head:	The branch (v. 5) will be called ... יהוה צדקנו (Jer 23:6)
Corporate solidarity:	Jerusalem will be called . . . יהוה צדקנו (Jer 33:16)

The intimate relationship or affinity between the individual and the group—in this case, the Messiah and his city/land/people—is brought into focus when the two prophecies are compared and their parallelism is allowed to show itself in its simplicity. Interpreters have not spoken of this parallelism in terms of federal headship/corporate solidarity, though some have come close.<sup>31</sup>

When he creates this parallel, Jeremiah uses a well-known ancient Near Eastern literary device according to which the same phrase is applied to two different entities in order to show their affinity or intimate connectedness. When he applies the same phrase both to the future savior and to the savior’s people he also foreshadows a relationship of federal headship and corporate solidarity that will exist between them—“the mystical oneness,” to use Feinberg’s phrase. The great New Testament statement of this idea is Paul’s characterization of Christ as the head and the church as his body (Eph 5:22–33). Paul also affirms Jeremiah’s statement when he declares of God, who chose the lowly things of the world to “nullify the things that are” (1 Cor 1:28): “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness [δικαιοσύνη], holiness, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). That is hardly an exhaustive list of what Christ has become for us, but it does affirm Jeremiah’s statements that “the Lord [is] our righteousness [צדק].”

2. *Righteousness and gender:* צדק and צדקה. Two terms for “righteousness” are used in both prophecies: צדק and צדקה. Jepsen has understood that these terms, while closely related (both involving “conformity to a standard”), are also different in an important way. Following Jepsen, we translate צדק as “righteousness” (the quality *an sich*), and צדקה as “righteous action.” Both terms occur in Jeremiah 23:5–6 (once each) and in 33:15–16 (צדק once and צדקה twice). The latter case presents

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<sup>31</sup> Feinberg does come close, and in doing so seems to contradict his earlier refutation of imputed righteousness (see his comment on Jeremiah 23:6, above): “‘The Lord Our Righteousness’ refers to Jerusalem. She can have the same name as the Messiah because she reflects that righteousness the *Messiah bestows on her*.” Feinberg, *Jeremiah*, 235, emphasis added. He rejects identification of “Jerusalem” with “the NT church,” but he adds: “She has the same name as Messiah because of the mystical oneness between them” (236). Ryken appropriately notes: “The righteous name of the righteous King belongs to everyone who lives in the righteous city. This promise, too, has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.” Ryken, *Jeremiah*, 512.

what may at first appear to be a conundrum, which can best be explained by comparing the relevant phrases:

Jer 23:5      for David a righteous Branch [צמח צדיק]  
Jer 33:15      a righteous Branch [צמח צדקה] ... for David

The difference between צמח צדיק in 23:5 and צמח צדקה in 33:15 could seem to present a text-critical problem. Its resolution may lie, however, not with textual criticism but with lexicography and syntax. On the understanding that צדקה means “righteous action,” the phrase צמח צדקה would mean “a branch [i.e., “Davidic Messiah”] characterized by *righteous action*” (with צדקה as an adjectival genitive). On this understanding, Jeremiah now gives a slightly nuanced version of the earlier prophecy that the Lord would raise up for David a “righteous [צדיק] Branch.” The earlier prophecy revealed that the Branch would be “righteous” (צדיק), that is, possessing “righteousness” (צדק). The later prophecy nuances that revelation by revealing further that the Branch would be characterized by “righteous action” (צדקה). In other words, the Messiah’s actions or *doing*, being righteous, would be *conformed to his Father’s doing*. This is exactly what Jesus, who fulfilled both prophecies, shows us. He was “Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1; cf. צמח צדיק, Jer 23:5), and he said, “For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise” (John 5:19; cf. John 5:36, 10:37; cf. צמח צדקה, Jer 33:15).<sup>32</sup>

#### IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The best way of summarizing the results obtained thus far may be to display the parallel statements and review what they mean in light of the two interpretive criteria discussed in this article.

1. *The Davidic Branch.* Jeremiah’s twin prophecies promise first a Davidic Branch, who is usually seen as the Messiah:

Jer 23:5 I will raise up for David a righteous Branch [צמח צדיק]

Jer 33:15 I will cause a righteous Branch [צמח צדקה] to spring up for David

The parallel indicates that the Davidic Messiah will be “righteous” (צדיק, 23:5), and his implicit “righteousness” (צדק) will be apparent by his “righteous action” (צדקה, 33:15). His “righteousness” will be his conformity to his Father’s *Being* (cf.

<sup>32</sup> Irons, one of the very few scholars writing in English who appreciates Jepsen’s contribution and uses it, doubts that it applies in this case. He notes the possibility that צמח צדקה is an adjectival construction: “One possible instance of the feminine form functioning as an adjectival genitive is Jer. 33:15: ‘Behold the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch (צמח צדקה).’” He suggests, however, that צמח צדקה in 33:15 is a text-critical problem: “But the BHS text-critical apparatus indicates textual uncertainty here, noting that the parallel passage in Jer 23:5 uses the adjective (צמח צדיק).” Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 110n7. BHS understandably sees צמח צדקה in Jeremiah 33:15 as a matter of “textual uncertainty” because it would seem to conflict with צמח צדיק in 23:5. We think Irons’s initial intuition is right in this case, and we see 33:15 not as a textual distortion but as a genitival construction: the Davidic “Branch” will be characterized by “righteous action.”

“I and the Father are one,” John 10:30). His “righteous action” will be his conformity to his Father’s *doing* (cf. “For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise,” John 5:19). As for his “righteous being,” Jesus also claims to partake of the divine aseity: “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself” (John 5:26).

2. *“Justice and righteousness.”* The Davidic Branch/Messiah will accomplish for all God’s people what the Lord had in mind when he chose Abraham.<sup>33</sup> Of the Davidic Messiah we read:

Jer. 23:5      He ... shall execute [עשה] justice and righteousness  
                    [משפט וצדקה] in the land.  
Jer. 33:15      He ... shall execute [עשה] justice and righteousness  
                    [משפט וצדקה] in the land.

The word pair “justice and righteousness [משפט וצדקה]” (or better, “justice and righteous *action*”) deserves separate study in light of Jepsen’s criteria because it occurs quite often, especially in Isaiah and the Psalms, and because it has a masculine counterpart, “justice and righteousness” (משפט וצדק).<sup>34</sup> For now it is enough to note that the Davidic Messiah will “execute” justice and righteousness, with attendant peace and salvation (Jer 23:6a // 33:16a), and that the use of a verb of doing (עשה) suits Jepsen’s proposed understanding of צדקה as “righteous action.”<sup>35</sup>

3. *Federal headship/corporate solidarity.* The final parallel in these two prophecies does not explicitly state the doctrine of Christ as head of the church but adumbrates it by means of “federal headship/corporate solidarity”:

Federal Head:           The branch (v. 5) will be called ... יהוה צדקנו  
                                    (Jer 23:6)  
Corporate solidarity:   Jerusalem will be called ... יהוה צדקנו  
                                    (Jer 33:16)

<sup>33</sup> “For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing [לעשות] righteousness and justice [צדקה ומשפט], so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him” (Gen 18:19).

<sup>34</sup> The word pair occurs in the following cases: Gen 18:19; Deut 33:21; 2 Sam 8:15 // 1 Chr 18:14; 1 Kgs 10:9 // 2 Chr 9:8; Job 37:23; Pss 33:5a; 36:6; 72:1–2, 99:4, 103:6; 106:3; Prov 8:20; 16:8; 21:3; Isa 1:27; 5:7, 16; 9:7; 28:17; 32:16; 33:5; 56:1; 54:17; 58:2; 59:9, 14; Jer 4:2; 9:24; 22:3, 15; 23:5 // 33:15; Ezek 18:5, 19, 21, 27; 33:14, 16, 19, 45:9; Amos 5:7, 24, 6:12; Micah 7:9. The word pair with the masculine form צדק occurs in the following cases: Lev 19:15; Deut 1:16; 16:18, 20; Pss 9:5, 8; 35:23–24; 37:6; 89:14; 94:15; 97:2; 119:7, 62, 75, 106, 121, 160, 164; Job 8:3; 29:14; 35:2; Prov 1:3; 2:9; Ecc 3:16; 5:8; Isa 1:21; 16:5; 26:9–10; 32:1; 51:4–5; 58:2; Jer 22:13; Hos 2:19; Zeph 2:3. These cases are discussed in Niehaus, *Righteousness*, vol. 2: *Righteousness: Old Testament*.

<sup>35</sup> It is noteworthy that the same verb, עשה, occurs with the first occurrence of the word pair (Gen 18:19): “righteous action” is what Abraham’s descendants are to *do*.

The Davidic Branch/Messiah will be called “The Lord is our righteousness,” and this name will also apply to Jerusalem.<sup>36</sup> By having the same name given her by God, she is identified (implicitly by “corporate solidarity”) as the body that responds to the head. This OT portrayal—which so well illustrates what the author of Hebrews wrote: “God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the proph-ets by *divers portions and in divers manners*, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in *his Son*” (Heb 1:1–2, ASV, emphasis added)—adumbrates the NT doctrine of Christ as head of his body, the Church.

## V. POSTSCRIPT

The interpretive issues addressed in this article have to do with two outstanding prophecies (or rather, if we include Isaiah 7–8, two sets of prophecies) that have long been understood to be messianic. The issues have been (1) the idea of federal headship/corporate solidarity, and (2) the important difference between the masculine and feminine nouns for “righteousness” in the OT.

The use of federal headship/corporate solidarity is not a commonplace phenomenon, though it is well attested in the Bible (with some interesting parallels in a literary practice that applies the same phrasing to two entities to show their affinity or coordination in the ancient world).

The use of gender differences in Hebrew righteousness terminology is much more common: צדק and צדקה appear (and are nuanced in various ways) in many Old Testament contexts. In turn there is a long modern history of “righteousness” interpretation that deserves study in its own right, especially since it has led to serious disagreements as to what “righteousness” means for God and his people under any of the divine-human covenants.<sup>37</sup> The same issue applies in New Testament studies because the difference between צדק and צדקה is somewhat masked by the one Greek word δικαιοσύνη, which nonetheless entails the translation possibilities found in its Hebrew counterparts.<sup>38</sup> The matter of gender difference in the Hebrew terms appears to deserve a special focus, since it seems to have received less attention than might be desirable in modern studies.

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<sup>36</sup> Affirmation that the Bible is “God-breathed” makes biblical theology possible. It consequently makes possible a recognition that the “Jerusalem” that is blessed in Jeremiah 33:16 is, arguably, later identified as the city of God. Cf. “Mount Zion ... the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and ... innumerable angels in festal gathering, and ... the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and ... God, the judge of all, and ... the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (Heb 12:22–23).

<sup>37</sup> A good start has been made by Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 10–60 (esp. 29–60). His study does not devote much attention to the “righteousness” gender issue addressed in the present article. Irons mostly focuses on interpretations of “the righteousness of God,” including scholarship that has led to the “New Perspective.” That emphasis suits his goal, which is to show the inadequacy of the “covenant-faithfulness” view of “the righteousness of God.”

<sup>38</sup> Pagan use of δικαιοσύνη and associated terms (especially noteworthy in, for example, Plato’s *Republic* and *Theaetetus*) also has more of a role to play in the conversation. Cf. Niehaus, *Righteousness*, vol. 1, chap. 7 (“C. L. Irons: צדק as *Iustitia Distributiva*”) and Appendix (“Antiquity — Reformation”); vol. 3, Afterword (“The Righteousness of God and the Righteousness of Faith”).