

What COVID-19, Black Lives Matter, and 'Woke' America is Revealing About the Church

Biblical Justice v. Social Justice

Cultural engagement without cultural discernment leads to cultural captivity.

– Ken Meyers

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

– Colossians 2:8 (ESV)

Part 1: How far does the Bible take us?

An over-arching _____

A comprehensive _____ based on _____

An all-encompassing message of _____

A new and better _____ led by a good and perfect _____

A final and complete revelation of _____ and _____

This is a dangerous moment. If current trends continue, the evangelical church will be rapidly syncretized into a profoundly destructive and unbiblical ideology that will do incalculable harm to its mission and witness in this world. Justice is one of the most important words in the Bible. It is one of the most important concepts in any culture. If the Bible-believing church abandons genuine justice in favor of a destructive cultural counterfeit, who will be left to uphold and defend the truth?

– Scott Allen

Why Social Justice Is Not Biblical Justice: An Urgent Appeal to Fellow Christians in a Time of Social Crisis (p. 16)

Part 2: What do we mean when we say "justice"?

Examples:

"reproductive justice"

"climate justice"

"no justice, no peace"

"if we don't get it, burn it down"

"It's no good having the same vocabulary if we're using different dictionaries."

– John Stonestreet, Colson Center for Christian Worldview

Scott Allen:

"The Latin word *justus*, according to Webster's 1828 Dictionary of the American Language, means "straight, or close." Like a plumb line, *justus* refers to a standard or basis for morality. Justice is alignment to a standard of goodness. In fact, goodness, or righteousness, is synonymous with justice. Antonyms are injustice or evil. An action can be said to be unjust if it is out of alignment with a moral standard."

A moral standard is commonly referred to as a _____ ...

Sometimes justice requires we _____ manmade laws ...

How do we know which laws are just and which are not?

America's most famous civil rights leader was arrested and jailed in 1963 for violating a court order forbidding him from protesting racial injustice in Birmingham, Alabama. In his famous Letter from a Birmingham Jail King wrote to fellow clergy who had criticized his "willingness to break laws."

One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are just laws, and there are unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "An unjust law is no law at all."

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law, or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law.

Part 3: (Biblical) Justice

A higher law than man's law is _____ law.

"The law over everything and everyone" (Greg Koukl)

How do we discover this transcendent standard?

We find it in _____.

³ For I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God!

⁴ "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, **just and upright is he.**

– Deuteronomy 32:3-4

The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!

² Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; **righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.**

– Psalm 97:1-2

God is RIGHTEOUS and JUST ...

How does God reveal His standard?

He reveals it _____.

¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ...

- Romans 2:14-15

"human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it."

- C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

He reveals it _____.

¹⁸ And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, **written with the finger of God.**

- Exodus 31:18

Allen:

"This summary of God's moral law is one of His greatest gifts to humanity, because it provides the only true, unchanging foundation for justice in human history."

What are the implications of (biblical) justice?

Justice requires living in right relationship with others – with God, and with human beings made in His image. It defines how we ought to treat others – what kind of behavior is good and right, and what is not.

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to **do justice**, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

- Micah 6:8

Gary Breshears, theology professor:

"a life in which all relationships—human to human, human to God, and human to creation—are well-ordered and harmonious."

Kevin DeYoung, pastor:

"following the rule of law, showing impartiality, paying what you promised, not stealing, not swindling, not taking bribes, and not taking advantage of the weak because they are too uninformed or unconnected to stop you,"

Living out justice in everyday relationships is called _____ justice. This is the duty of ALL people.

But there is also _____ justice.

Allen:

"Distributive justice is reserved for God-ordained authorities—including parents in the home, pastors in the church, and civil authorities in the state. Distributive justice demands that authorities render judgments fairly, treating everyone equally before the law, because that is how God—the supreme authority in the universe—treats us."

¹⁷ For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. ¹⁸ He executes justice ...

- Deuteronomy 10:17-18a

In this sense, justice demands that _____ be _____.

Image: "The scales of justice"

Idea: Those who commit injustice incur a _____ against their victims and the scale is out of balance. Justice demands that the balance be _____ - the debt must be repaid.

Justice = Conformity to God's moral standard, particularly as revealed in the Ten Commandments and the royal law: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (James 2:8).

Part 4: (Biblical) Justice and the Gospel

If justice means treating others in conformity with God's perfect moral standard, then we must admit that injustice is pervasive in our fallen world.

But we have a problem - Our _____. This has many effects:

In a word, we are all _____.

We have wronged others and wronged _____. (cf. David in Psalm 51:4)

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin ...

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...

- Romans 3:9, 23

And because God is righteous and just, He must respond:

¹² For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. ¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. ¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight. (Psalm 72:12-14)

God is fully committed to dealing with evil and injustice.

No injustice will be overlooked – not yours, mine, or anyone else’s. Every lawless act will be accounted for.

⁶ The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty ...

- Exodus 34:6-7a

Love ...

Mercy ...

Grace ...

Justice ...

How are these attributes reconciled?

²¹ For our sake he made **him** to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- 2 Cor. 5:21

¹⁸ For **Christ** also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God ...

- 1 Peter 3:18a

Surely **he** has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- Isaiah 53:4-6

_____ is God’s ultimate solution for dealing with the evil and injustice in this world.

Jesus made justice _____, but it won’t be fully _____ until _____. God delays the final judgment for the moment, knowing full well that evil and injustice will continue. He delays it, not because He is powerless over evil nor because He lacks compassion for its victims. He delays it for the sake of _____:

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

- 2 Peter 3:9

But His _____ won’t last forever. When Jesus returns, He will be the _____. On that day, perfect justice will be done. Evil will be punished, wounds will be mended, tears will be wiped away, and the world will be made right again.

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- Revelation 20:11-15

So ... what are we to be doing until that day comes?

Next Week: **The Church and Justice**