

ESSENTIAL TRUTHS FOR OUR TIMES

GOD'S DESIGN FOR JUSTICE

The theory and exercise of justice have been ardently contested within a twenty-first-century context wherein its ideals have been divided into four structural types: distributive, procedural, retributive, and restorative. Each of these modes express characteristics of biblical justice (i.e., restorative justice concerns itself with healing wounds and repairing the damage done to individuals, families, and communities), but none offer more than an abbreviated system of its truth and responsibility. Biblical justice, however, does not originate from a temporal and pragmatic system. God's design for justice originates from His Word and His nature, both of which are unchallengeable (Hebrews 6:18).

The definition and requirements of justice have been made eternally clear in and through the scriptures, which have not changed and will not be altered (Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:23-24). Further, it must be understood that justice is derived from this reality: God is perfectly just in both His character and His being (Deuteronomy 32:3-4); His judgments are true and righteous (Revelation 16:5-7) – with Him, there is no variation or shifting shadow (James 1:17). Subsequently, justice is initiated and sustained directly from the throne of God. Consider the words of the psalmist: *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne, lovingkindness and truth go before You”* (Ps 89:14). Biblical justice is permanently rooted in His authority and must be continually affixed in persistent submission to His authority. When it is separated from and indifferent to the authority of God, justice is simply a humanistic effort that offers an abridged repercussion upon the social construct (i.e., the four structural types of justice referenced earlier). The efforts of post-modern deconstruction have distorted the truth of justice and reconstructed it to fit the impulse of man. However, biblical justice is a reflection of a just God; as such, it must first pertain to His glory and secondly for the good of mankind.

It has been revealed in both the Old and New Testaments that mankind was designed to live in community, which is why much of Scripture describes how people are to walk with God and with others; biblical justice always correlates with a responsibility to care for society. Micah rendered this concept as a rhetorical question in his Old Testament writings: *“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”* (Micah 6:8). In its most rudimentary description, biblical

justice could perhaps best be described in the words of Jesus: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34). Thus, to *do* justice is to display sincere love (1 Peter 1:22).

The virtue of justice cannot be separated from the love of God, a love for God, or a love which concerns itself with others – not merely with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth (1 John 3:18). Consequently, biblical justice will always have practical outworking (Psalm 82:3-4; Jeremiah 22:3; Matthew 25:34-40; Galatians 6:10; James 1:27). **Moreover, the work of biblical justice is not relegated to one political party or another; it is the work of the kingdom.** To this end, Isaiah prophesied: “*There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this*” (Isaiah 9:7). The government of God is not one dimensional (it knows no end!); that is, it does not *only* affect the spiritual realm. The influence and authority of the kingdom presents social, political, and economical implications, which often require application within the physical realm (Deuteronomy 16:18-20; Psalm 146:7-9; Micah 1:17). The contemporary church maintains a rich heritage of doing justice; accordingly, her message and present activity should reflect the nature of the kingdom of God in which injustice is confronted in every area of life – thereby displaying the power of transformation within society.