

The Justice of God

The justice of God is an exceedingly praiseworthy part of His Being which may not attract as much attention as other facets of His character, but I'd like to consider a few aspects of this attribute that should lead us to worship, and then consider a closing point of application.

- 1) Exacting justice is ultimately for God alone. The reason for this is that He is Creator of all things. Therefore, any offence against any-thing ultimately reaches back to Him. This can be seen in God claiming justice for Himself, exclusively, when He says, "Vengeance is Mine" (cf. Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30). David seemed to understand this truth, when after committing both adultery and murder he was able to say, "Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment" (Psa 51:4 ESV). "All things..." Paul writes, "are to Him" (Rom 11:36, emphasis added). So, ultimate justice is for God, and God alone.
- 2) The above mentioned point doesn't undermine the fact that there will be times when people are to administer justice—though great caution must be practiced when doing so. Many public officials are appointed by God for this very reason. Paul writes, "For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer" (Rom 13:4 ESV). However, attempting to administer justice, justly, can be an extremely difficult thing to do. This is likely the reason David was prevented from building God's house, "But God said to me, 'You may not build a house for My name, for you are a man of war and have shed blood'" (1Ch 28:3 ESV). Very likely, the "blood" which David shed, was not always done "justly." God's great concern for just "justice" can be seen in God's warning to judges to not have greater leniency with either the popular *or* the poor, "You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit" (Exo 23:2-3 ESV). So, while the final Judge is God alone, He appoints mankind to carry out His justice, as well. Though, this can be exceedingly difficult.
- 3) Perfect examples of justice can be seen in God's direct dealing with mankind throughout Redemption History. We see justice accurately rendered by Him in numerous places. One of those places is when Israel complains against God that their "little ones will become...prey," if they obey God's will and enter the Promised Land as He said. So God, in His justice, responded by having everyone over 20 years of age wander in the wilderness for 40 years until they died off—leaving *only* their "little ones"—the ones that their parents thought would become "prey"—as the ones to enter the land (Num 14:3; 31). A second place we see God's justice is regarding Israel's Sabbatical Year, where God promised to allow such provisions in the agricultural 6th year, allowing the ground to rest on the 7th. Israel's history of being in the land for 800 years amounted to 114 Sabbatical years. Out of those 114 years, they only kept the Sabbatical year 44x's and didn't keep it—didn't rely on God, and fended for themselves—70x's. As a result of this, they would spend a "just" 70 years in captivity. A third example is Adam and Eve's punishment after they ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. After their sin, Eve was disciplined by being essentially "stuck" with the disposition that would attempt to lead her husband rather than be led. While Adam, who didn't protect life by sacrificially leading would, himself, die—and those whom he was commissioned to protect would die as well. On top of these, a specific discipline was given by God to each in their respective spheres, which they weren't fulfilling. Eve's domestic life would be given pain—the pain of child labor. Adam's providing life would be hindered by the land turning against him. In each of these instances of justice, God's perfect remedies were addressing sin—not exorbitant or unreasonable, and yet not too mild or moderate, but *just*.
- 4) We should seek to render justice, when it falls to us in our spheres, just the same. In each of these above mentioned instances, justice was not an *end*, itself, but a *means to a greater end*. Hell will be a just *end*. As C.S. Lewis said, "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, choose it." But the above mentioned instances of justice were meant to be *instructive*. In our daily lives we live with personal sin, and with the sin of those around us—which daily require "just" personal and corporate action. It's in these relationships that we should seek to mirror God's justice when we're called upon to do so. We should have a daily goal of *responding* as He would. In next month's article I hope to give a few examples of what this looks like on a daily basis.