

Responding to Injustice

A Biblical Perspective

Mark Vincent, August 2020

From the author of *THE STRANGE DEATH OF EUROPE*

THE MADNESS OF CROWDS

GENDER, RACE AND IDENTITY

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Bad Ideas are Setting
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'Wise and scrupulous'
THE ECONOMIST



Getting to the Root Cause...

A Deeper Need for Change

“The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart—and through all human hearts.” (Alexander Solzhenitsyn)

“We cannot say ‘never again’ as a consequence of the memory of the Holocaust, because we do not understand the Holocaust—and it is impossible to remember what has not been understood. We do not understand the Holocaust, because we do not comprehend ourselves.” (Jordan Peterson)

What Does God Think about (In)justice?

The Law...

- “And the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.” (Gen 4:10)
- “During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.” (Ex 2:23-25)
- “For I have singled him out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of YHWH, by performing righteousness and justice” (Gen. 18:19)
- “For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Dt 10:18-20; cf Ex 22:21-24; Dt 24:17 etc)

What Does God Think about (In)justice?

The Writings...

- “For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.” (Ps. 33:4-5); “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne...” (89:14)
- Many proverbs, eg: “Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.” (21:13); “Open thy mouth, judge righteously, And plead the cause of the poor and needy.” (31:9 KJV)
- Psalm 82
- Psalm 58

God (elohim) standeth in the congregation of the mighty (el);
He judgeth among the 'gods' (elohim). (AV)

“How long will you judge unjustly
And show partiality to the wicked? Selah
Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;
Maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.
Rescue the weak and the needy;
Deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
They walk about in darkness;
All the foundations of the earth are shaken.
I said, “You are ‘gods,’ (elohim)
Sons of the Most High, all of you;
Nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.”
Arise, O God (elohim), judge the earth;
For you shall inherit all the nations! Psalm 82 ESV)

Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?
Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?
Yea, in heart ye work wickedness;
Ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.

< . . . >

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance:
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous:
Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

(Psalm 58:1,2,10,11 KJV)

What Does God Think about (In)justice?

The Prophets...

- “If you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow ...” (Jer. 7:5–6)
- “Render true judgements, show kindness and mercy each to his brother; do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart” (Zech. 7:9–10)
- Refrain from oppression, from seizing pledges, from theft, from usury, and from performing injustice (Ezek. 18:7–8, 12–13, 16–17). But primarily do good: giving bread to the hungry and clothing to the naked (Ezek. 18:7, 16)
- “What does the Lord require of you? ... To do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:)

What Does God Think about (In)justice?

The New Testament...

- “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” (Jas 1:27).
- ““Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ... ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’” (Mat 25:34-40)
- Two great commandments / the good Samaritan / love your enemies...

Something Changes

Between the Old and New Testaments...

What Changes?

Old Testament

- Individual responsibility (SAME)
- Character of God (SAME)
- Outrage at sin (SAME)
- Political responsibilities (YES)

New Testament

- Individual responsibility (SAME)
- Character of God (SAME)
- Outrage at sin (SAME)
- Political responsibilities (NO)
 - Did Jesus / the apostles protest the political system or social justice?
 - Did they seek to collaborate or revolutionise?

The Kingdom of God is Gone...

But a New Kingdom has Arisen...

“And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.” Ez 21:25-27

“The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth fruits thereof” Mt 21:42-45

Now there is a new kingdom, not of this world; we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2); we are citizens of heaven, of a heavenly Jerusalem and we have one primary allegiance - to him.

The Kingdom of God is Gone...

But a New Kingdom has Arisen...

“The old political Israel, defined within its political boundaries promised to it by God, was now being replaced by a ‘nation’ made up of people from all nations, living in any country whatsoever, for whom geographical boundaries no longer had any meaning. Christian believers, members of the new, true Israel of God, might from now on be found anywhere on earth, on either side of any political boundary which might be drawn, so that the idea of a country to be defended, and local laws to be administered, was for such believers from now on utterly outmoded. Members of God’s kingdom people now belonged to an international community, and ordinary political administration, and ordinary military defence, ceased to have any significance for them. // This was an entirely new situation, and required an entirely new attitude on the part of those implicated in it.” Alfred Norris, *The Gospel and Strife*. p19

Our Response

To injustice against us

- Love your enemies / turn the other cheek
- Live peaceably / do not strive
- Not rendering evil for evil
- Blessed are the persecuted
- Expect injustice
- Behaviour determined by God not circumstances or others

To injustice against others

- Love what God loves / hate what He hates
- Relieve suffering where we can
- Behave rightly in our sphere of influence / set an example
- Talk to others / preach to show a better way
- Pray for and preach the kingdom

Our Response

To the System

- Live respectfully and lawfully
- Honour the powers that be, but recognise that ‘the whole world lies in sin’ and these powers may be ‘beastly’ and ‘demonic’
- Render to Caesar and render to God; live as a citizen of heaven
- Spread the message about sin and its answer, Christ’s great victory, and the coming kingdom (Paul’s example)
- Be outraged at sin; take Christ’s approach (kingdom vs social change)
- Set a personal example to all

Christ's Example

- Those whose blood Pilate mingled with the sacrifices and those on whom the tower of Siloam fell
- Jesus, moved with compassion, healed the sick and cared for those who were broken, outcast and hated - he knew this was temporary relief, but he gave it anyway
- He preached the gospel of the kingdom and the good news about himself; he gave his very life as a sacrifice for others; this is beyond 'social justice' - it is something only he could give and we can share

Extras

Three Contexts

Understanding 'Justice and Righteousness' in the OT

1. Personal responsibility
2. The responsibility of kings, rulers, judges and religious leaders
3. The work of the future Messiah and King

Salvation by Social Change or Revolution

A Link to Neo-Marxism?

“The commonality... between the evolved Marxism and its predecessor is the dangerous tendency to read the world through a single lens: that of social oppression. Where Marxism located this oppression in a world-historical economic conflict between social classes, the new Marxism focuses its analysis on race and gender, and formulates its campaign accordingly. In both cases, the problem is the same. Human beings are deluding themselves through a sometimes self-flattering scapegoating of others...”

Baker, H. (2020). Jordan Peterson the Counter-Revolutionary: Marxism, Postmodern Neo-Marxism, and Suffering. In R. Dart (Ed.), *Myth and Meaning in Jordan Peterson: A Christian Perspective* (pp. 31–32). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.