



## HIGHEST PRAISE APOSTOLIC CHURCH FALL CURRICULUM

# SERIES: WHAT IS TRUTH?

### RELATIVISM VS. THE WORD OF GOD

## LESSON: WHAT IS JUSTICE?

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST: ULTIMATE MANIFESTATION OF JUSTICE

**SERIES FOCUS:** This series focuses on examining relevant, significant topics that the modern-day church, and believer, faces almost daily. In our geopolitical climate, there are many questions that the world is asking. Not everyone who asks these questions asks with the motive of facilitating learning and understanding. Instead, many influential voices in this world, are challenging the tenets of the Gospel and are trying to cause confusion around these issues. The purpose of this series is to bring clarity to the believer by examining these questions with a biblical lens and bringing the truth of God's Word into the light.

**SERIES SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:** John 18:33-38

**LESSON FOCUS:** This lesson aims to explore the concept of biblical justice and how the gospel of Jesus Christ serves as the supreme embodiment of justice. Often times Christians find themselves believing in justice and the gospel. However, often times it is more difficult to make the connection between the two. In this lesson, we will delve into the biblical stance against injustice and discover how the gospel brings about transformative and redemptive justice.

### LESSON SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:

**Isaiah 53:4-6 (ESV)** – "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 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. 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."

## INTRODUCTION

The topic of justice wasn't always a controversial one. In fact, all throughout the scriptures, we see the theme of justice. Either the people of God are looking for peace in the midst of suffering or God is enacting justice on the unjust. More recently, culture has used the term "social justice" to promote a certain political agenda. The problem with using the term "justice" in this way is that it belittles the true meaning of what justice actually is.

As followers of Christ, we must be careful with the terms that we use. We have to recover a biblical definition and understanding of biblical justice and work to embody that in the world around us. Let us look over some crucial points on this important subject.

## THE BIBLICAL STANCE AGAINST INJUSTICE

**Amos 5:24 (ESV)** – "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

The people of Israel had a tendency to think highly of themselves and their religion. Eventually, the motives behind their worship became sinful. They were more concerned with showing off their traditions to the neighboring pagans than they were with true worship.

What does worship have to do with justice? Well, God saw their insincere worship and harshly rebuked them.

**What did God want instead?** The answer is found in Amos 5:24.

God wanted to see the His people to embody justice to the world around them, not show off their prestigious ceremonies. He wanted true worship as expressed through loving action, not mere pomp and circumstance.

The Bible consistently upholds justice as a fundamental value in God's kingdom. Injustice goes against God's character and design for His creation. Let's look at various Old and New Testament passages that denounce injustice and highlight God's desire for righteousness and fairness in all aspects of life.

- **Old Testament:**

1. **Proverbs 21:3 (ESV)** - "To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice."

2. **Jeremiah 22:3 (ESV)** - "Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place."

○ **New Testament:**

1. **James 2:13 (ESV)** - "For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

2. **Luke 4:18-19 (ESV)** - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

## THE GOSPEL OF JESUS AS ULTIMATE JUSTICE

**Romans 3:23-25 (ESV)** – "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."

What does this mean?

The gospel narrative reveals the ultimate demonstration of justice through Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection. By bearing our sins and offering redemption, Jesus exemplified both God's justice and His mercy. This point will delve into how the gospel reconciles humanity to God and restores justice through forgiveness and grace.

Did you know that the cross is the best picture we have of justice and injustice? Why do you think that is the case?

Jesus, being the atonement, meant two things at the cross:

1. First, it meant that He would be punished. He was the chosen sacrifice spoken of from the beginning (Genesis 3:15) that would be punished for all of the injustice in the world, past and present.
2. Second, it meant that only He was Holy enough to justify and pay for the sins of His people.

Here's the point, Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross is where we should derive our understanding of justice. Everything else flows from here.

When we give to the poor, when we show compassion to the needy, we do so as a response to what God has done for us on the cross. Christ's work of atonement is finished, but the work of embodying justice to the world continues through God's people.

## TRANSFORMATIVE AND REDEMPTIVE JUSTICE

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)** – "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

What does this mean?

The gospel doesn't just provide a legal acquittal; it offers transformative and redemptive justice. As believers, we experience personal transformation through Christ's work, which empowers us to pursue justice in our lives and the world around us. This point will explore how the gospel equips us to be agents of change, working to address societal injustices and promote God's kingdom values.

What are some of the hot topics on the day? Let's look at one in particular: **racism**.

**Racism has no place in the church.** As believers, we do not divide the people of God by ethnicity. Instead, we view every person with equal value and dignity.

**Galatians 3:28 (ESV)** - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Still the world is pushing the idea that there is an inherent racism within certain ethnic groups. While we do acknowledge that racism is still a problem in the world, we do not espouse the idea that a person can be racist merely because the color of their skin. Racism is an injustice that needs to be resolved not by blind accusation, but rather by the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus.

Racism, along with all other forms of injustice, dies at the feet of Jesus.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *How does the biblical concept of justice differ from worldly notions of fairness? How does the gospel redefine our understanding of justice?*
2. *In what ways can we actively stand against injustice in our daily lives? How does our faith in Christ motivate us to engage in acts of justice?*
3. *Reflect on the concept of redemptive justice. How has the gospel transformed your life, and how can you extend this transformative power to those around you who may be experiencing injustice?*