

BECAUSE OF YOUR HARDENED HEART  
UNIT 10 • SESSION 4

# GOD THE JUST KING

DOCTRINE SESSION

MAIN POINT

God's justice is revealed in the gospel.



## ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE **GOD IS JUST**

God establishes standards for His moral creatures that are in accordance with His righteousness, and His moral creatures will be judged according to those righteous standards (see Lev. 11:44-45; Rom. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:10). It would be an injustice if God were not to uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character. Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both just and the justifier of those who place their faith in Christ (see Rom. 3:25-26).

## ESSENTIAL **CONNECTION**

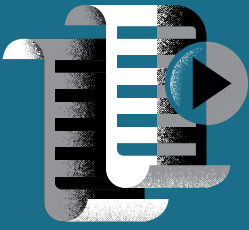
As we've seen in recent sessions, the Israelites wanted a human king to rule over them and protect them. But Saul could not be the king that Israel needed. Only God could justly rule His people, and one day He will rule His people through King Jesus—the King who is both God and man.

## SCRIPTURE **READING**

**ROMANS 2:1-5** • GOD IS JUST TO JUDGE SINNERS.

**ROMANS 3:19-26** • GOD IS JUST TO FORGIVE US BECAUSE OF JESUS.

**AMOS 5:18-24** • GOD IS HONORED WHEN HIS PEOPLE ARE COMMITTED TO JUSTICE.



# DOCTRINE VIDEO

(Videos available for purchase at [gospelproject.com/students](http://gospelproject.com/students))

Within the last two years, we've talked a lot about justice in our world. It seems to be the topic of conversation that's not going anywhere—and rightfully so. There's so much conversation about what justice is and what justice should be, but if we're really looking for answers, the Bible is our best resource. As followers of Jesus, we believe that the Word of God is truth, and it's the clearest way God reveals Himself and all that He wants for us in this life. We all may have our own sense of judgment for those who do wrong things, but God's judgment is higher, better, and more pure than ours. You can't outrun God's justice. Even if earthly justice is not served in the way that we want it to be, God's justice will be. God plays the long game. He is far more patient than we are when it comes to justice because He knows when it will be served and how it will be served. He exercises restraint and patience, ultimately giving people who do wicked things the opportunity to turn away from those wicked things. We live in a broken world—a world where messed up stuff happens, people suffer, good deeds go unnoticed, and evil often goes unpunished. But there is a day coming where the evil and wickedness of this world will all come under the judgment of God and justice will be served. Righteousness will flow like an unfailing stream. All that's wrong will be made right. All injustices will be dealt with either in the cross of Jesus or in eternity because God is just.

## SUMMARY

- The Bible teaches us about the justice of God.
- God is just toward all people everywhere.
- God's justice is primarily revealed through the cross of Jesus.
- God is patient because He desires all people to come to saving knowledge of Jesus before the time of judgment.

## WATCH & DISCUSS

**WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO BELIEVE THAT GOD IS JUST?**

**HOW MIGHT THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S JUSTICE GIVE US PATIENCE?**

**WHAT DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO ABOUT CHRIST'S KINGDOM OF JUSTICE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND PEACE?**



## SCRIPTURE READING

### MAIN POINT

God's justice is revealed in the gospel.

#### 1. GOD IS JUST TO JUDGE SINNERS

## READ ROMANS 2:1-5

We tend to see the faults in others while ignoring our own shortcomings. Therefore, Paul gives a strong warning at the beginning of Romans 2 against holding others to a standard that we ourselves cannot, or do not, keep. Judging others while dismissing our own sin turns out to be a recipe for incurring judgment ourselves (see Rom. 2:1).

### HOW MIGHT GOD'S JUSTICE BE A FEARFUL THING TO CONSIDER?

Paul plainly says that God will judge each one according to the truth (see Rom. 2:2) and we who sin will not be able to escape God's justice (see Rom. 2:3). God's justice is a fearful thing because we know that we have fallen short. We know that we are sinful and deserving of His justice. Those who do not turn to Christ are "storing up wrath" (Rom. 2:5) for themselves in the future.

### ACCORDING TO PAUL, WHY DOES GOD SHOW KINDNESS AND PATIENCE TOWARD US IN THE PRESENT?

All is not lost, for God Himself is kind and extends mercy so that we will turn away from sin and be rescued from its power. His justice is coming on all who reject Him, but God would rather save sinners than condemn them. We should not misinterpret God's kindness as approval of our sin. Instead, we should see it as an invitation and opportunity to be rescued from it.



Have students think through this scenario: they are the coach of a team or a leader of a band. Have them list out the standards they would want for their team or group. How much practice time would be required? How would one go about joining the team or group? How would they earn your trust as their leader? Etc. Get students to talk about their expectations. In today's session, God is right to judge people for our sinful conduct and hearts, but in His mercy, He judged Christ on our behalf so that we might be saved. Because God is just in all of His ways, we are to live justly and righteously before all people as an act of worship to our God.



## ROMANS 2:1-5

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**2:1-2.** “Paul begins by pointing out that those who engage in the luxury of condemning others are putting themselves in jeopardy, for in doing so they condemn themselves.”<sup>31</sup>

**2:1-5.** “God’s judgment is based on truth. It is impartial and makes no distinction between rich and poor, king or pauper.”<sup>32</sup>

**2:1-5.** “God, whose judgments are absolutely fair and just (v. 5), will render to every person on that day of final reckoning that which is appropriate in accordance with his or her deeds (v. 6). Here we have a basic principle of divine judgment.”<sup>33</sup>

## ROMANS 3:19-26

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**3:19-20.** “Law encourages effort. But human effort inevitably falls short of the divine standard.”<sup>34</sup>

**3:21-26.** “After building a case against all people, showing their universal sinfulness and therefore their universal need of salvation, Paul then spelled out the only way for them to be brought into a right standing with God.”<sup>35</sup>

**3:21-26.** “We underestimate the hopelessness of our sinful state. At best, any righteousness by works would be desperately inadequate. By God’s grace we are granted a right standing with him. The basis for this redemptive process is Christ Jesus. The gospel centers in the atoning work of God’s unique and only Son. Redemption is found in him and him alone.”<sup>36</sup>

**3:24-26.** “In setting forth his Son as an atoning sacrifice, God demonstrates his justice.”<sup>37</sup>



## ENGAGE OPTION

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Give each student a note card and pen. Discuss a time when you were mistreated. Did you take matters into your own hands? Did you appeal to an authority? Did the authority act on your behalf immediately, or did you have to wait?

It is one thing for us to consider God’s justice in theory, but it is another thing to consider how that relates to us personally. Come up with some scenarios in which your students might be mistreated. Have each student write down what they think would be the best response to being mistreated in one of the scenarios. What steps of action should they take to resolve the situation? How could they trust God’s justice even when they don’t get the result they are seeking at first?





### 2. GOD IS JUST TO FORGIVE US BECAUSE OF JESUS

## READ ROMANS 3:19-26

### HOW IS IT ENCOURAGING TO KNOW OUR SALVATION DOES NOT DEPEND ON US?

Paul wrote, “No one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law” (Rom. 3:20) and “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Each person breaks God’s law and falls short of His righteous standard. Therefore, no one will be rescued from judgment by their own works.

### HOW DOES GOD FORGIVE OUR SINS THROUGH JESUS?

Jesus was a substitute for sinners. He was the atoning sacrifice, taking the judgment that we all deserved. Jesus was treated like we deserve so that we could be treated as He deserves—as sons and daughters of God. God did this “so that he would be just and justify the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). God does not give up His justice to show mercy. It is just for Him to show mercy because of the cross.

### 3. GOD IS HONORED WHEN HIS PEOPLE ARE COMMITTED TO JUSTICE

## READ AMOS 5:18-24

In Amos 5, the Israelites were hoping for God’s justice to visit them, thinking wrongly that it would signal their rescue. But God warned them that His visitation of justice would be dreadful for them since they had been evil in His sight. They were very religious (see Amos 5:21-23), but their lives did not reflect God’s justice.

### HOW CAN YOU HONOR GOD WITH YOUR LIFE?

God told Israel to “pursue good and not evil” (Amos 5:14), to “establish justice at the city gate” (Amos 5:15), and to “let justice flow like water, and righteousness, like an unfailing stream” (Amos 5:24). God’s demands were simple: not more singing or services, but more justice. His people ought to promote goodness and oppose evil.

### HOW MIGHT A NEGLECT OF JUSTICE UNDERMINE THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH?

The gospel is a message about how God’s justice has been satisfied through Jesus. It’s a story about how Christ has triumphed over evil. It tells of how God plans to deal with human sin and restore the goodness of His original creation. But when Christians do not care about justice for our neighbors, we discredit our witness. When there is a disconnect between our message and our lives or our message and the things we care about in our communities, we do not bear witness to the love that is found in the gospel.



**3:19-26.** “Rarely does the Bible bring together in so few verses so many important theological ideas: the righteousness of God, justification, the shift in salvation history, faith, sin, redemption, grace, propitiation, forgiveness, and the justice of God. Here, more than anywhere else in Romans, Paul explains why Christ’s coming means ‘good news’ for needy, sinful people.”<sup>38</sup>

### AMOS 5:18-24

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**5:18-24.** “The Lord’s rejection of this religious activity could not have been expressed more strongly: ‘I hate, I despise,’ ‘I cannot stand,’ ‘I will not accept,’ ‘I will have no regard,’ and ‘I will not listen.’ God rejected every aspect of Israel’s worship. They were inundating him with rivers of religiosity when he wanted rivers of righteousness and justice (v. 24).”<sup>39</sup>

**5:18-24.** “Israel’s rejection of justice and righteousness in the social order made inevitable God’s rejection of their worship activities . . . God’s will was for justice and righteousness to prevail in Israel’s social order as an outward sign of their religious devotion. Here justice would mean ‘reparation for the defrauded, fairness for the less fortunate, and dignity and compassion for the needy’; righteousness would entail ‘attitudes of mercy and generosity, and honest dealings that imitate the character of God’ as revealed in the law of Moses. Amos’s point was that ‘the way people behave in the marketplace or how they judge in the gate’ are as much a part of worship as singing and sacrifice.”<sup>40</sup>

**5:24.** “Justice is not an optional trait that one can choose to practice; it is a key value that must characterize the behavior patterns of those who claim to love and follow God.”<sup>41</sup>

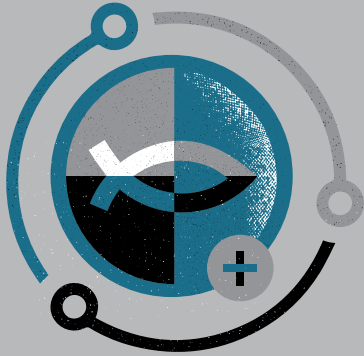


## BIG QUESTION

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### HOW CAN I TRUST GOD WHEN HE LETS SOMETHING EVIL HAPPEN TO ME?

When we personally endure tragedy or evil, we may be tempted to doubt God’s justice and question His love. Even the greatest believers have at times found it difficult to trust God’s wisdom and presence in their lives. David prayed, “Lord, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide in times of trouble?” (Ps. 10:1). But we press on to trust God when we remember that God has subjected Himself to the worst of human evils in the cross of Christ. He has not stood far away at a distance, unmoved and indifferent. He endured the greatest evil to redeem us from evil forever. And Jesus has shown us how to trust God through our pain. Peter said Jesus “entrusted himself to the one who judges justly . . . So then, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good” (1 Pet. 2:23; 4:19).

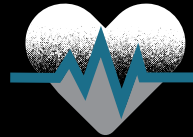


## CHRIST CONNECTION

Sin plagues all of humanity, evident in everyone's rebellious conduct and hard-heartedness. God is just, and therefore He cannot allow sin to go unpunished. But God, who is rich in mercy and grace, provided Jesus as the means of salvation. Jesus paid the punishment we deserved, bringing forgiveness to those who trust in Him while preserving God's righteousness.



HEAD



HEART



HANDS

## **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING OF JUSTICE TO BE ROOTED IN THE SCRIPTURES?**

If our definition of justice does not come from the Scriptures, good and evil will be defined by whoever has the loudest microphone or most power. When good and evil are not rooted in God's Word, we may even be in danger of calling good evil and evil good. But God's Word has much to teach us about establishing "justice at the city gate" (Amos 5:15). We must be humble enough to listen to God's Word and courageous enough to promote it in our world.

## **HOW MIGHT GOD'S JUSTICE BE AN ANCHOR OF COMFORT AND HOPE?**

God's justice is fearful when we consider our sinfulness, but it is also a source of comfort. When it appears that evil is winning and the wicked are prospering; when it seems like goodness is being trampled and the righteous are suffering; God's eternal justice is there as an anchor of hope. We can trust that God will sort it all out in the end and that no injustice will remain when He returns.

## **HOW SHOULD GOD'S JUSTICE HELP US FORSAKE REVENGE AND "GETTING EVEN"?**

When you trust that God will do what is right and that evil will be dealt with, you don't have to take matters into your own hands. You are free to forgive, to love, and to shine God's light. Vengeance is the Lord's (see Rom. 12:19), so we can love our enemies and conquer evil with good (see Rom. 12:20-21).