

Bible Study

Is God Fair & Just?



By Craig M. White
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Is God Fair & Just?

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"Now then, let the fear of the Lord be upon you. **Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the Lord our God**, or partiality or taking bribes." (2 Chronicles 19:7)

"They scoff and speak with malice; **loftily they threaten oppression.**

They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth...

until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end." (Psalm 73:8-9, 17)

NB: All Scriptures used in this Bible Study are taken from the ESV unless otherwise stated.

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Our purpose and desire are to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God's message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.

Associated Readings

- *Are Ministers Priests or Elders? Questions and Answers*
- *Church of God History. Tending to the Past. Preserving for the Future*
- *Do Ministers sit on Moses Seat?*
- *Synagogue and Church: Comparative Structures*
- *Was Peter the Leading Apostle?*
- *What is Inspiration?*
- *What is Justice? The Biblical Requirement for Neutral Judiciaries*

Introductory Remarks

Well, is He fair? Is He just? Is He equitable?

Discussions – even arguments – occur to and fro. Because some Scriptures seem to portray Him as fair and others as unfair. That is because we read them out of context.

In this Bible Study we will discover that His character *is* fair and just, but not necessarily in every situation, given the Plan He is working out here, below.

In all of this, some cherry pick those verses they want to use to justify abuses and carnal behaviours – favouritism and even what is tantamount to nepotism, cronyism and corrupt behaviour.

Yet some have weaved into sermons how people think or imagine unfairness and injustice. This was nothing unique, but excuses for abuse or favouring their friends, relatives and inner cliques which formed around them.

Yes, for years I, and others, have been subjected to sermons that seek to convince the hearers that we should accept bad and unjust decisions and abuses as if God would want these to happen. This is cultic and not Godly.

In the first instance, we should realise that in Scripture, justice and fairness are closely related but not exactly identical concepts. The Bible emphasises justice (i, e., righteousness, right judgment, and God's standards) but this is not necessarily the same as the modern notions of "fairness," which often equate with strict equality or equal treatment in every circumstance regardless of merit, need, or context.

Yet God is still fair, just and equitable. He is utterly against nepotism, cronyism, bribes and corrupt abuse of members.

The members are tired of, and many worn out by, the abuses, gossiping about them behind their backs, slander & defamation, bullying, running to others to get support against someone who they are jealous of or who has stood up for the Church, other members and the ruling body against them. Such members should be pushed out they say and think! There will be no peace or growth until this is purged out.

Some become so used to practicing abuse and lying that they become callous to their sins and the consequences. What is wrong with these people that they keep on hardening their hearts?

In other words they are going directly contrary to the Bible by portraying God as unjust and that we must just accept injustices and abuses!

The easy to implement Biblical solutions to implement justice sadly, elude them.

Biblical justice involves doing what is right according to God's character and law - upholding righteousness, defending the oppressed, punishing wrong, and rendering **impartial** judgments without favouritism. In other words with moral rightness in accordance with His commandments, not necessarily sameness for all. After all, He is not a Marxist!

The Hebrew is *mishpat* for judgments/ordinances and *tsedeq/tsedaqah* for righteousness /equity. While the Greek is *dikaionē* for righteousness/justice.

Many researchers note that human ideas of "fairness" can be subjective or focused on equality (e.g., everyone gets the same outcome), while Biblical fairness is objective, rooted in God's wisdom and holiness. God is perfectly **just** and thus truly fair in the sense of impartial and right, but His dealings (like grace in salvation) aren't always "fair" by human egalitarian standards - yet they are always just.

For instance, throughout Scripture He favours Israel over other nations; He calls some to salvation now and others later; He places into Kingdom positions those He knows are the best fit and so on.

Consider this: we are not all equal physically, mentally, in opportunities, talents or rewards. But we are rewarded in how we excel in what we have been given and according to our deeds. We are also treated fairly and are all equal before the Law of God. There is no preference for priests over the commoner; or the king over the people; or rich over the poor. No preferential treatment!

In this God **is** fair!

How unlike humans – even in the Church – they are unfair, biased, involved in corrupt behaviours lacking in fairness and justice. Cronyism and nepotism occur and if one raises the issue, it is shut down with the misapplication of Scripture. Either this is done through theological shallowness and ignorance of the Scriptures; or deliberately twisting the Word and selecting Scriptures that one wants to use to force their view.

That is not holy, righteous character development. It is blasphemous misrepresentation of His Word and character. Distorting the Bible is a serious spiritual criminal offence. Those who do so are in terrible peril.

Of supreme importance is this: no one imagines injustices in the Church or to themselves. Making carnal statements that people should not groan about the terrible mistreatment they have suffered is tantamount to partaking in such sinful conduct that can keep one out of the Kingdom if not repented of.

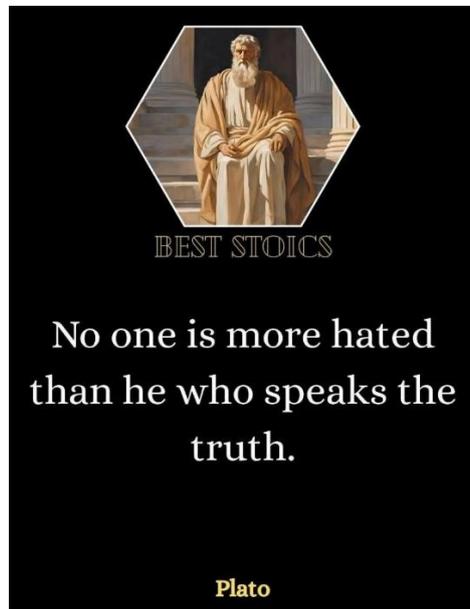
Finally, as we shall discover, fairness and justice are not the same thing – but they are overlapping concepts. Fairness is dealing with a person in the best way for them. Justice is more with using the Law as a basis for judging a situation or person equal to others.

Ancient Philosophers Perplexed by Justice and Fairness

The concept of justice and fairness has confounded humanity for millennia.

I am no expert in Greek or ancient philosophers, but from my readings and research I have found out that numerous ancient philosophers examined the concept of justice with the most significant and systematic analyses emerging from the classical Greek era. Plato, who was Aristotle's mentor, apparently provided the most thorough exposition in his dialogue *The Republic*, where he characterises justice as a state of harmony within the soul (with reason governing spirit and desire) and within the ideal society (where each class - rulers, guardians, and producers - fulfills its designated role without interference, thereby fostering social equilibrium and the common good).

Preceding Plato, the Sophists contested established perspectives, frequently regarding justice as relative or socially constructed rather than an absolute concept.



Socrates (as portrayed by Plato), scrutinised insufficient definitions of justice and highlighted it as a virtue linked to knowledge and the pursuit of the good life, as well as later Hellenistic schools like the Stoics, who regarded justice as one of the four cardinal virtues (alongside wisdom, courage, and temperance).

Aristotle (384–322 BC) stands as one of the most significant ancient Greek philosophers and scientists, acknowledged as a pivotal figure in Western philosophy. He was a pupil of Plato at the Academy in Athens and later as a tutor to Alexander the Great, and established his own institution, the Lyceum.

Aristotle addressed the notion of justice as proportional (as opposed to mere or numerical equality), and in particular corrective justice, which aims to restore equality following transactions or injustices.

They were certainly on to something – after all, mankind has suffered from the lack of justice from the very beginning. And so has the Church. This should be rectified if we are serious about developing holy, righteous character and having a happy, family-like Church for all and not just for one’s relatives and friends who dominate everything and have all the “opportunities to serve” (non-ordained roles), as they put it.

Scriptures that indicate that God is not always ‘Fair’

Below is a list of key Scriptures on the subject which show He is not always ‘fair’ by human standards, but always just.

Matt 15:24-28

“He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.”

And he answered, “It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.”

She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.”

Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.”

And her daughter was healed instantly.”

Comment: In God’s Plan, Israel comes first. Yet He is just! There is nothing in this passage to indicate that He is unjust and does not hear pleas, prayers or complaints.

Romans 9:14-24

"What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?' But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?"

Comment: This passage addresses accusations of Divine injustices, instead showing that God (not man) has the choice in showing mercy to some and hardening others (e.g., Pharaoh). It uses the potter-clay analogy to argue that God doesn't owe equal treatment, which can seem unfair from a human viewpoint. This has nothing to do with judgment and justice and cannot be used as an excuse for abuse or human or corporate abuses and injustices.

Exodus 9:12

"But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had spoken to Moses."

Comment: God actively hardens Pharaoh's heart, leading to prolonged suffering for the Egyptians and Israelites. This intervention in free will raises questions about fairness.

Job 1:8-12

"And the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?' Then Satan answered the Lord and said, 'Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.' And the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.' So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord

Comment: God permits Satan to afflict the righteous Job, despite Job's blamelessness, to test his faith. This allowance of undeserved suffering can appear arbitrary and unfair, especially since Job isn't being punished for sin. But God has a plan for each of us and in the end He knows what He is doing. This has all to do with testing one and developing holy, righteous character – it has nothing to do with judicial decisions, cronyism and nepotism.

2 Samuel 12:15-18

"Then Nathan went to his house. And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, 'Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm.'"

Comment: God strikes David's innocent infant son with illness and death as punishment for David's sins and subsequently the child suffers for the father's wrongdoing, which challenges notions of fairness. This has to do with God training humans to develop character and not to do with justice in a judicial sense. God is training us for positions and service in His eternal Kingdom and thus He knows how to go about such. As such, these decisions by God are for us to accept, but not to emulate.

Ecclesiastes 7:15

"In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evil-doing."

Comment: This observes that the righteous sometimes die early while the wicked thrive - moral fairness doesn't always apply!

Ezekiel 18:25

"Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?"

Comment: The people accuse God of injustice in His judgments. This verse acknowledges the human perception of unfairness in God's dealings, even if it defends His justice.

Habakkuk 1:2-4

"O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted."

Comment: The prophet questions why God allows the wicked to oppress the righteous without intervention. There seems to be a delay or inaction in Divine justice that feels unfair.

Malachi 1:2-3

"'I have loved you,' says the Lord. But you say, 'How have you loved us?' 'Is not Esau Jacob's brother?' declares the Lord. 'Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.'"

Comment: God declares preferential love for Jacob over Esau can seem like unearned favouritism.

People misunderstand God and can actually falsely accuse Him! Or they don't understand they He may choose positions or roles for individuals as pleases Him – after all He is God and knows what He is doing.

He chose Israel. Does that make Him unfair? Or is that because He has a Plan and covenant He adheres to? THAT does not permit humans to be unfair, does it?

Let me make this clear: all unfairness is not injustice. On the other hand, all injustice is unfairness.

So, giving someone a job instead of another person due to ability is not unfairness. One having better abilities or education or natural talents is not unfairness. It is simply being human.

It is unfair when it is nepotism, cronyism or members 'wining & dining' ministers for advantage or positions. Such behaviours are a form of corruption and bribery.

Of course, one can be born into or experience and unfair situation such as to parents, place or situation that disadvantages one. This is not due to God, but to the system we live under influenced by Satan.

God is Fair & Just!

The fairness of God is weaved into the very fabric of the Bible because it represents the very mind of God. He is completely fair and just. The Scriptures emphasise God's inherent justice and lack of bias or corruption.

Key verses highlight this:

Old Testament:

Genesis 18:25

"Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

Leviticus 19:15

"You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor."

Comment: Impartial judgment in righteousness - no favouritism and victimisation.

Deuteronomy 16:20

"Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

Comment: Pursue justice single-mindedly. In one's life, but also corporately – in the case of the latter, a policy-based system is required. One with rules based on the Bible. A 'wily nilly' approach is unsystematic, lacks cohesion and results in different application and outcomes in different congregations. The excuse is to "just accept" as God is inspiring all of this.

Deuteronomy 32:4

"The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he."

Deuteronomy 10:17

"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe."

Deuteronomy 32:4

"The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he."

Comment: God's ways are perfectly just/righteous. We are supposed to strive for this and the commandments on the subject give us the foundation on how to do so.

2 Chronicles 19:7

"Now then, let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the Lord our God, or partiality or taking bribes."

Comments: Bribes includes 'wining & dining' ministers when other members don't or cannot afford to. This leads to favouritism and unfair preferences and advantages.

Job 37:23

"The Almighty—we cannot find him; he is great in power; justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate".

Psalm 7:3-5, 11

“O LORD my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, if I have repaid my friend with evil or plundered my enemy without cause, let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it, and let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust. *Selah* ...

"God is a righteous judge, a God who displays his wrath every day"

Comment: God is a fair judge! Are we? When ministers take sides or victimise God's children or pin things on members accusing them falsely claiming that they are “above the law of the land” and such like, you are heading into deep trouble and a broken church.

Psalm 19:7-9

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”

Psalm 25:8

“Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.”

Psalm 33:5

"The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love".

Psalm 67:4

“Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.”

Ps 73:8-9, 17

“They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression.

They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth.

until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.”

Psalm 89:14

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you."

Comment: Justice and righteousness form the basis of God's system. Yet this is almost totally ignored and bad decisions justified.

Isaiah 30:18

"Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him."

Comment: God is a God of justice, balancing with mercy.

Isaiah 61:8

"For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing".

Micah 6:8

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Comment: A core command is to do justice. We can perform that in our lives, but it needs to be put into practice as a Church – and only a systematic approach with impartial investigation panels and independent judiciaries will ever solve the problems we suffer from.

New Testament:

Matthew 5:45

"... For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

Acts 10:34-35

"So Peter opened his mouth and said: 'Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.'"

Comment: No favoritism in justice, though there is in blessings. In this case, many gentiles are grafted into Israel spiritually and are called to receive eternal life. The verse above is not open slather to everyone on earth.

Romans 2:11

"For God shows no partiality."

Comment: In judgment, nor should we.

Romans 3:26

"It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

Comment: God is just/righteous while justifying sinners through faith - demonstrating justice in salvation.

Romans 9:14

"What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!"

Comment: God's nature is one that exhibits mercy and justice.

Ephesians 6:9

"...knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him."

Colossians 4:23-25

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality."

Hebrews 6:10

“For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.”

Comment: Compare 2 Timothy 4:8.

2 Thessalonians 1:6

"... since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you,"

Comment: God justly repays evil.

James 2:1-13

“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in,

and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,”

have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?

But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?

Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.

But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.

For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.

For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

These verses collectively show that God is fair: He judges righteously, without favouritism toward any person or group, rewards according to deeds, and punishes injustice equitably.

Aspects of God’s Fairness:

Attempting to understand His fairness and justice, one needs to look at many of most of the Scriptures associated with the topic and dissect them accordingly per the above.

In so doing, one can assemble the information as follows:

Impartial Judgment:

God judges without favouritism, regardless of background (Romans 2:11).

Righteous Standards:

God's laws and judgments are based on perfect righteousness (Psalm 9:7-8).

Fair Reward/Punishment:

God is fair in distributing justice, recognising both good and evil actions (Romans 6:23, Hebrews 6:10).

The Death of Christ: Romans 3:26 demonstrates that God is both just (punishing sin) and the justifier (offering salvation) through Jesus.

All Christians should strive to emulate Him in judgment, justice and fairness.

All Church organisations should also emulate God by putting into place policies, training, systems and structures to implement the Biblical laws, requirements and principles in this regard.

This includes:

- Impartial panels to investigate serious issues such as abuse and not fulfilling the office of elder or being in breach of contract.
- Impartial judiciaries (with independent and neutral juries) to undertake a proper and mature court process resulting in fair and just outcomes.

Justice can only be achieved by using God's justice process and system.

This unscriptural assertion that one does not need such a process or structure because they are inspired of God and thus do not have to implement His system; and that they are above the law of the land is heresy and causing division – let alone continuing the abuses. They can circumvent His commandments due to their inspiration – that is what some have said for decades.

Conclusions

It is clear from a casual read of the fairness aspects of the Word that Scripture does not use "fairness" as a standalone moral category in the modern sense (e.g., equal outcomes for all), though some argue God is just but not always "fair" by human expectations (e.g., grace given unequally in timing of His calling humans to salvation (1 Corinthians 1:26); or parables like the workers in the vineyard in Matthew 20, where all receive the same wage despite different hours worked).

Yet God is never unjust - He is perfectly righteous and impartial.

From all that can be made out, justice in Scripture (impartial, right judgment), but it goes deeper: it's in accord with God's righteous character, often involving mercy, equity for the vulnerable, and rectification of wrongs rather than mere equality.

Clearly there is overlap between fairness and justice. All Biblical justice in a judicial sense is fair. But not all fairness is to do with justice. For God can use and treat people differently according to His overall, big plan; or for His plan for the individual.

Finally, it is self-evident from the Bible that God is described as just, righteous, impartial, and without favouritism ("no partiality" or "no respecter of persons"). He judges without bias based on status, wealth, nationality, or externals, and His ways are upright and equitable.



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"For God shows no partiality." (Romans 2:11)