It's my privilege to share a Biblical survey of “righteousness and justice,” related concepts often paired, and to demonstrate their connection to Kingdom of God.

To set the context:

God created in order to fill all things with His glory.¹

Satan rebelled, and God withdrew the light of His blessing, caused Lucifer to self-combust, and the shining-one became the not-shining-one, reduced to ashes on the ground.² “But the earth became waste and emptiness and darkness over the surface of the abyss...” (Gen. 1:2, lit.).

God immediately began to set that right, releasing the light of His nature, separating good light from bad darkness (Gen. 1:3-4), and re-ordering creation.

On the Sixth Day, God created Man in His Image in order to subdue and rule, to stop the enemy and establish the Kingdom of God on earth (Gen. 1:26-28, Ps. 8:2), expanding the temple-space of Eden until it filled the earth.³

But Man sinned and became an enemy, as well (Gen. 3). There became hostility between seed of woman and seed of serpent (3:15). There’s two kinds of people at conflict in the earth: the sons of the Kingdom and the sons of the evil one (Mt. 13:38). That hostility immediately began in Genesis 4 with Cain (the seed of the evil one, 1 Jn. 3:12) killing Abel (the seed of the woman).

The context of the Bible is that stuff is wrong because there’s a spiritual enemy who has infected humans to do wrong against God and against each other. There is a need for justice – for wrongs to be made right. And God promised in Genesis 3:15 the one specific Seed of the woman, one Man, would bruise the head of the serpent and bring justice to victory for the people of God.

My summary of the Bible’s narrative: God is on a mission to glorify Himself by establishing His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven through the One Man, the Christ, and the people in Him.

Therefore, being spiritual does not mean merely being contemplative, heavenly thinking, having an, inner personal experience, without being concerned for this world. This world is where God wants to manifest His rule! His Kingdom is practical. It manifests in earthy ways – in physical actions and relational interactions. God’s Kingdom manifests as righteousness and justice.

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¹ E.g., Num. 14:21; Ps. 57:5, 57:11, 72:19; Hab. 2:14; Eph. 1:23; 1 Cor. 15:28.
³ Gen. 2:15; see “Foundation Class 2011: Session 3,” NewLifeEquip.com/?p=901, pg. 2, section IV.
Psalm 89:14
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

The most basic building block of God’s governing rule is righteousness and justice.

These are two of some of the most theologically significant words in the Bible. Both words are very dynamic and complex, but to simplify to the core:

**Righteousness** = right relationship

Righteousness means what is right, and can be a standard of right, but not a standard disconnected from a Person. Righteousness flows from the holiness of God; it is what is right as determined by relationship with the Righteous God and how He determines that we rightly relate to the rest of creation.⁴

**Justice** = setting right what is wrong

Justice is not only judicial. It’s not only a judge banging a gavel and passing a sentence. It is that, but it is so much more dynamic and holistic:

Christopher Wright:

> In the widest sense, it means ‘to put things right’, to intervene in a situation that is wrong, oppressive or out of control and to ‘fix’ it. This may include confronting wrongdoers, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, vindicating and delivering those who have been wronged. ...That is why the figures in the book of Judges have that name. They ‘judged’ Israel by putting things right – militarily, religiously, legally – with Samuel being the model of all three.⁵

...In the broadest terms ...[justice] is what needs to be done in a given situation if people and circumstances are to be restored to conformity with [righteousness]. [Justice] is a qualitative set of actions - something you do. “As it is frequently used in biblical texts justice is a call for action more than it is a principle of evaluation. Justice as an appeal for a response means taking upon oneself the cause of those who are weak in their own defense....”⁶

We’re already thinking of justice in terms of others, which is wonderful, but let’s be clear from the beginning that no one is righteous by nature. We inherited sin from Grandpa Adam. We come out sinful, and then we do sins.

**Romans 3:10-12**

No one is righteousness, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one (quoting Psalms 14:1-3, 53:1-3, cf. 143:2).

We are all unrighteous, and we do injustices to God and to others. By nature, we are vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction (Rom. 9:22, Eph. 2:3). The righteous God is going to have to bring justice to fix the messed up Image-bearers.

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⁴ “Righteousness in the OT is not a matter of actions conforming to a given set of absolute legal standards, but of behaviour which is in keeping with the two-way relationship between God and man” (Horst Seebas, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3, Ed. Colin Brown [Grand Rapids, Mt: Zondervan, 1986] 355). “Righteousness’ (sedaqah) is a term of relationships, denoting that kind of conduct which serves to maintain the established ties” (*ibid.*, 357). “So it comes to mean ‘rightness’, that which is as it ought to be... according to the demands of the relationship or the nature of the situation” (Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004] 256).

⁵ Wright, *ibid.*, 256-257.

Thankfully, Psalm 97 echoes what we read earlier in 89:

**Psalm 97:1-2**
Yahweh reigns… righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

**Deuteronomy 10:18**
He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.

**Deuteronomy 32:3-4**
For I will proclaim the Name of Yahweh, ascribe greatest to our God!
The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice.
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, righteous and upright is He.

**Psalm 146:5, 7-10**
5Blessed is he... 
7who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry.
Yahweh sets the prisoners free; 
8Yahweh opens the eyes of the blind.
Yahweh lifts up those who are bowed down; Yahweh loves the righteous.
9Yahweh watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

**Psalm 33:5**
He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of Yahweh (cf. 11:7).

**Psalm 99:1, 4**
1Yahweh reigns…
4The King in his might loves justice.
You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.

**Isaiah 61:8**
I, Yahweh, love justice.

**Jeremiah 9:24**
I am Yahweh who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares Yahweh.

God is emotionally invested in righteousness and justice. He loves them. Delights in them.

And He created His people to love Him and to love what He loves.
The Purpose of the Election of Abraham

In the context of how God was about to bring justice to Sodom and Gomorrah on behalf of those who were crying out to God for help because of the Sodomites’ unrighteousness, we get this amazing purpose statement for God’s calling of Abraham:

**Genesis 18:19**

For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to *keep the way of Yahweh by doing righteousness and justice*, so that Yahweh may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.

By the way, we are children of Abraham. Not all who have descended from Israel are Israel. Those who have believed into Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham become the sons of Abraham on account of their faith (Rom. 4:11-25, 9:6-8, 9:24-26, 11:17-24, Gal. 3:6-7). *We are the ones destined to be doing righteousness and justice as the blessing to all the families of the earth.*

The Exodus

The people of Abraham ended up in Egypt, and they were oppressed (wronged, injustice) politically, economically, socially, and spiritually.⁷

Ex. 2:23-25, 3:7-9, 3:16-17, 4:31 (cf. 22:23) say (paraphrasing): I have heard their cry for rescue from slavery, because of their taskmasters. I have seen their affliction. I know their sufferings. I have come down to deliver them.

God came down to set right the wrongs of the godless Pharaoh, that seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15).

God did the greatest act of justice in the Old Testament for the glory of His Name.

Thirteen times throughout Exodus,⁸ God repeatedly declared that He was doing this act of justice so that all would “know that I am Yahweh” ...“know that I am Yahweh” ...“know that I am Yahweh when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh” and his army (14:17-18).

This is especially significant because the Exodus from Egypt was the greatest foreshadow of “the exodus [Jesus] was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Lk. 9:31).⁹

Commanded of His People

God formed His people with a great act of justice, and He commanded them to do justice.

**Deuteronomy 16:20**

Follow justice and justice alone.

**Psalm 106:3** (cf. 119:121)

Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!

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⁷ Amended from the four categories of Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007) 50-51. Wright teaches, “In the chain of events we call the exodus, God accomplished deliverance for them in all four areas. ...The exodus, in other words, was an act of holistic redemption that transformed every dimension of Israel's holistic need” (51).

⁸ Ex. 6:2, 5-7; 7:3-5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 16, 29; 11:7; 14:4, 17-18; see also Ps. 106:7-8, 12; Isa. 63:12, 14; Dan. 9:15; Neh. 9:10.

⁹ Because of the exile in Babylon, the prophets looked forward to a new exodus, new covenant, and new creation, all fulfilled in Christ. See Spencer Stewart, “Session 7: The Exile and the Prophetic Promises,” NewLifeEquip.com/?p=901.
Proverbs 21:3
To do righteousness and justice
   is more acceptable to Yahweh than sacrifice (cf. Am. 5:21-24).

Proverbs 31:8-9
8Open your mouth for the mute,
   for the rights of all who are destitute.
9Open your mouth, judge righteously,
   defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Micah 6:8 (to which Jesus alluded when indicting the Pharisees, Lk. 11:42, Mt. 23:23)
“He has told you, O man, what is good;
   and what does Yahweh require of you
   but to do justice, and to love steadfast love,
   and to walk humbly with your God?”

Ezekiel 18 defines a righteous man in terms of practical worship, obedience, and doing righteousness and justice for the needy:

Ezekiel 18:5-17
5If a man is righteous and does what is just and right – 6if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor’s wife or approach a woman in her time of menstrual impurity, 7does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment,
8does not lend at interest or take any profit, withholds his hand from injustice, executes true justice between man and man, 9walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully – he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the Lord Yahweh.
10If he fathers a son who is violent, a shedder of blood, who does any of these things 11(though he himself did none of these things), who even eats upon the mountains, defiles his neighbor’s wife,
12Oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols, commits abomination, 13lends at interest, and takes profit; shall he then live? He shall not live. He has done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself.
14Now suppose this man fathers a son who sees all the sins that his father has done; he sees, and does not do likewise: 15he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor’s wife, 16does not oppress anyone, exacts no pledge, commits no robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment,
17withholds his hand from iniquity, takes no interest or profit, obeys my rules, and walks in my statutes; he shall not die for his father’s iniquity; he shall surely live.

The commendation of David’s reign:

2 Samuel 8:15
So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people.

1 Chronicles 18:14
So David reigned over all Israel, and he administered justice and equity to all his people.

The intention for Solomon’s reign:

1 Kings 10:9
Blessed be Yahweh your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel!
Because Yahweh loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness.
2 Chronicles 9:8
Blessed be Yahweh your God, who has delighted in you and set you on his throne as king for Yahweh your God! Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness.

Knowing God
God commands that His people do righteousness and justice, and these commands are just legalism; they’re about knowing God.

Jeremiah 9:23-24
Thus says Yahweh: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am Yahweh who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares Yahweh.”

To know somebody is to know understand their likes and dislikes. For you to know me, you gotta understand that I like the Bible; I dislike the Book of Mormon. I like playing basketball; I dislike playing baseball. I like KU basketball; I dislike K-State (and Missouri and Oklahoma State). For us to say that we know God, we must understand that God delights in doing righteousness and justice in the earth – and showing covenant love to those He has chosen.

God intensified this soon after, speaking to the evil King Jehoahaz about his father, the good King Josiah:

Jeremiah 22:15-16
He did what was right and just, so all went well with him.
He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well.
Is that not what it means to know me? declares Yahweh.

When I read that in a book by Christopher Wright, I realized there was something missing in my knowing of God and it set my heart toward learning it.

Knowing Yahweh results in doing justice, and doing justice contributes to knowing Yahweh.

And so, not doing justice is found at:

The Root of Judgment in the Prophets
At the core, the people had forsaken Yahweh to worship other gods. When you worship the wrong gods, you do the wrong things. And so the prophets did not just rebuke the people for their idolatry, but for perverting what Yahweh loves: justice.

Proverbs 22:22-23
22 Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate,
23 for Yahweh will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them.

Amos 5:7
O you who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth!

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10 Christopher J. H. Wright, Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1992).
Amos 6:12
Do horses run on rocks?
Do one plow there with oxen?
But you have turned justice into poison
and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood

Isaiah 1:21-28
21How the faithful city
has become a whore,
she who was full of justice!
Righteousness lodged in her,
but now murderers.
22Your silver has become dross,
your best wine mixed with water.
23Your princes are rebels
and companions of thieves.
Everyone loves a bribe
and runs after gifts.
They do not bring justice to the fatherless,
and the widow's cause does not come to them.
24Therefore the Lord declares,
Yahweh of hosts,
the Mighty One of Israel:
"Ah, I will get relief from my enemies
and avenge myself on my foes.
25I will turn my hand against you
and will smelt away your dross as with lye
and remove all your alloy.
26And I will restore your judges as at the first,
and your counselors as at the beginning.
Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness,
the faithful city."
27Zion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent, by righteousness.
28But rebels and sinners shall be broken together,
and those who forsake Yahweh shall be consumed.

Isaiah 5:7
...and he looked for justice,
but behold, bloodshed;
for righteousness,
but behold, an outcry!

Malachi 3:5
Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says Yahweh of hosts.

The Fruit of Repentance
In the midst of these indictments, God spoke through the prophets to define repentance in terms of doing justice, since that is what it means to know and obey Yahweh.
Amos 6:12
...you have turned justice into poison
   and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood

Amos 5:15 (the prophet counseling)
Hate evil, and love good,
   and establish justice in the gate;
it may be that Yahweh, the God of hosts,
   will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph...

Amos 5:21-24 (Yahweh speaking)
21 "I hate, I despise your feasts,
   and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
22 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
   I will not accept them;
   and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,
   I will not look upon them.
23 Take away from me the noise of your songs;
   to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
24 But let justice roll down like waters,
   and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

This should cause us to pause because we just sang songs together. If we’re living in unrighteousness and neglecting justice, then God hates the empty religious rituals.

Repentance manifests in righteousness and justice.

Isaiah 1:16-17
Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
   remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;
   cease to do evil,
   17 learn to do good;
   seek justice,
   correct [the oppressor];
12 bring justice to the fatherless,
   plead the widow’s cause.

Isaiah 56:1
Thus says Yahweh:
"Keep justice, and do righteousness,
   for soon my salvation will come,
   and my righteousness be revealed."

Isaiah 58:6-7
"Is not this the fast that I choose:
   to loose the bonds of wickedness,
   to undo the straps of the yoke,
   to let the oppressed go free,
   and to break every yoke?
7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
   and bring the homeless poor into your house;

12 "Put right the oppressor” is the literal translation, according to J. Alec Motyer (The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993] 47), not correct “oppression,” which alters the Hebrew hamos to hamus.
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Astonishingly, God had spoken to Jeremiah, leading up to the exile, not to pray for Israel (Jer. 7:16, 11:14, 14:11)\(^\text{13}\) because He was wearing of relenting from the wrath they deserved (15:6). He was intent on pouring out His wrath. He said that even Moses and Samuel could not dissuade Him (15:1). And yet, Yahweh proclaimed to the last king of a free Judah that repentance proven in doing righteousness and justice would save them from the judgment through Babylon:

**Jeremiah 21:11-12**

11And to the house of the king of Judah say, “Hear the word of Yahweh, 12O house of David! Thus says Yahweh:

‘Execute justice in the morning,
and deliver from the hand of the oppressor
him who has been robbed,
lest my wrath go forth like fire,
and burn with none to quench it,
because of your evil deeds.’”

**Jeremiah 22:3-5**

3Thus says Yahweh: 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. 4For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people. 5But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares Yahweh, that this house shall become a desolation.”

They did not repent with justice, and God empowered Babylon to destroy Jerusalem in judgment. Then Daniel, an exile prophesying coming judgment to Nebuchadnezzar for his glory-hogging pride, nevertheless counseled the pagan king to seek Yahweh’s mercy by showing mercy and doing righteousness and justice.

**Daniel 4:27**

...break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed....

John the Baptist, the forerunner of the new exodus and the new covenant in Christ, counseled those responding to his message of repentance that the fruit of repentance is righteousness, mercy, and justice to the those in need.

**Luke 3:8, 10-14**

8Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.... 10And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” 11And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” 12Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” 13And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” 14Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

*These passages of condemnation and demands for practical repentance show how dear righteousness and justice are to the heart of Yahweh and how necessary they are for true faith.*

\(^\text{13}\) Jeremiah prayed anyway – for the glory of the Name of Yahweh (14:7, 9, 21). But later, he saw the futility and prayed for his persecutors to be judged with destruction (17:18).
The Role of the Coming Christ
The most significant development to note in a Biblical survey of justice is that justice is the role of the Christ, the one Seed to crush Satan (Gen. 3:15).

Psalm 45:4-7 (Heb. 1:8-9, fulfilled in the Son, the God-Man, Jesus Christ)
4 In your majesty ride out victoriously
   for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness;
   let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!
5 Your arrows are sharp
   in the heart of the king’s enemies;
   the peoples fall under you.
6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
   The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;
   7 you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
   with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;

Psalm 72:1-4, 7-8, 12-14, 17-19
1 Give the king your justice, O God,
   and your righteousness to the royal son!
2 May he judge your people with righteousness,
   and your poor with justice!
3 Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
   and the hills, in righteousness!
4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
   give deliverance to the children of the needy,
   and crush the oppressor! ...
7 In his days may the righteous flourish,
   and peace abound, till the moon be no more!
8 May he have dominion from sea to sea,
   and from the River to the ends of the earth! ...
12 For he delivers the needy when he calls,
   the poor and him who has no helper.
13 He has pity on the weak and the needy,
   and saves the lives of the needy.
14 From oppression and violence he redeems their life,
   and precious is their blood in his sight. ...
17 May his name endure forever,
   his fame continue as long as the sun!
May people be blessed in him,
   all nations call him blessed!
18 Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel,
   who alone does wondrous things.
19 Blessed be his glorious name forever;
   may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
   Amen and Amen!

Isaiah 9:6-7
6 For to us a child is born,
   to us a son is given;
   and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
   and his name shall be called
   Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
   Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of his government and of peace
  there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
  with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The jealousy of Yahweh of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 11:1-5
1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
2 And the Spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him,
  the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
  the Spirit of counsel and might,
  the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.
3 And his delight shall be in the fear of Yahweh.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear;
4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor;
  and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
  and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
5 Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
  and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

Isaiah 16:5
then a throne will be established in steadfast love,
  and on it will sit in faithfulness
  in the tent of David
one who judges and seeks justice
  and is swift to do righteousness."

Isaiah 32:1-2
1 Behold, a king will reign in righteousness,
  and princes will rule in justice.
2 Each will be like a hiding place from the wind,
  a shelter from the storm,
  like streams of water in a dry place,
  like the shade of a great rock in a weary land."

Isaiah 42:1-4
1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
  my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
  he will bring forth justice to the nations.
2 He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
  a bruised reed he will not break,
  and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
  he will faithfully bring forth justice.
4 He will not grow faint or be discouraged
  till he has established justice in the earth;
  and the coastlands wait for his law. …
6 I am Yahweh; I have called you in righteousness;
I will take you by the hand and keep you;  
I will give you as a covenant for the people,  
a light for the nations,  
7 to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness.  
8 I am Yahweh; that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to carved idols.  
9 Behold, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth  
I tell you of them."

When Isaiah 40:4 was translated into Greek in Matthew 12:20, declaring that it had been fulfilled in Jesus, it used a strong verb and imagery, “until He thrusts forth justice to victory.” “Thrusts forth” is an emphatic word for “throw,” literally, as though Jesus would throw justice across the finish line for the win.

Matthew 12:15-21 (lit.)
15 Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all 16 and ordered them not to make him known. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:
18 Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen,  
My Beloved with whom My soul is well pleased.  
I will put My Spirit upon him,  
and He will proclaim justice to the nations.  
19 He will not quarrel or cry aloud,  
nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets;  
20 a bruised reed He will not break,  
and a smoldering wick He will not quench,  
until He thrusts forth justice to victory;  
21 and in His Name the nations will hope.”

Isaiah 61:1-4
1 The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me,  
because Yahweh has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor;  
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
2 to proclaim the year of Yahweh’s favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
to grant to those who mourn in Zion –  
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;  
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of Yahweh, that he may be glorified.  
4 They shall build up the ancient ruins;  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.
Luke 4:17-21 (lit.)

17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to **evangelize the poor.**

He has sent me to **proclaim release to the captives** and **recovering of sight to the blind,** to send with release those having been oppressed,

19 **to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.**

20 And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

21 And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

**How did Jesus make justice win?**

Remember, there is no one righteous, no not one. Until Jesus.

Because of the virgin birth and the perfect submission of the Son to the Father, Jesus Christ is the only human to be righteous. Jesus was sinless, perfect – tempted in every way as we are, but without sin (Heb. 4:15; Jn. 8:46, 14:30-31). In multiple places in the NT, **Jesus is called the Righteous One** (from Isa. 53:11; Acts 3:14, 7:52, 22:14; 1 Jn. 2:1). He is the only One in right relationship with the Father based on His own righteous living.

In His righteousness, Jesus submitted to the ultimate act of righteousness and justice: **dying on the Cross for the glory of God in defeat of the enemy and in the redemption of sinners. The ultimate wrong in the universe is rebellion against God, unbelief that denies the glory of God in Christ. Jesus received God’s judgment against every sin, every act of unrighteousness and injustice. God the Father poured out His wrath and fury against every sin onto His Son, hanging on the Cross. That's what it means when you see your Bible say that big word “propitiation” (Rom. 3:25, Heb. 2:17, 1 Jn. 2:2, 4:10). It means Jesus was the atoning sacrifice that satisfies the wrath of God.**

**Jesus took that justice to give us righteousness and God glory.**

The Exodus was the great show of justice in the OT, and Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension is called “His exodus” in Luke 9:31.14 In the Exodus from Egypt, God’s judgment freed His people from slavery to Pharaoh. In Jesus’ exodus, He became the true Passover Lamb15 to receive the judgment of God and free His people from slavery to sin, Satan, and death.16 In the Exodus from Egypt, the justice of God was ultimately purposed for the glory of His Name. Jesus said of His exodus:

**John 12:27-28** (lit.)

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ But I came to this hour on account of this: ‘Father, glorify Your Name!’” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I both glorified it, and I will glorify it again!”

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14 See footnote 9.


16 Rom. 6:7, 22, 8:2; Rev. 1:5; Heb. 2:14-15; 2 Tim. 1:10; Col. 2:15; Jn. 12:31, 16:11; 1 Jn. 3:8
One of the ways the crucifixion of Christ glorified God is that it showed God is righteous:

**Romans 3:25-26 (HCSB)**

25 God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. 26 He presented Him to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.

Remember righteousness means right relationship (to God and to Man). The Cross showed that God was rightly related to Himself – in the past he was passing over sins, even though His holiness demanded that those sins receive the full penalty of His wrath – but then, at the Cross, God gave full vent to His wrath, aimed at Christ. And that proved God is still rightly related to Man – faithful to His covenant promises to redeem us.

The Scriptures say that the crucifixion was an act of righteousness (Rom. 5:12-19), and Jesus was resurrected so God could declare us righteous (4:25, cf. 3:26). If we repent and believe that Jesus is God in flesh, who took the wrath we deserved because of our sins and was raised again, then the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness, the Judge declares us righteous because of faith in Jesus, and God credits the righteousness of Jesus to our account.

Not only that, but when we believe the Spirit of the Righteous One comes to live inside of us, so that we can know the God who loves justice, and so we can express Him, doing righteousness and justice for the glory of His Name.

**Until He Comes Again**

The justice and righteousness He accomplished in His first coming will be consummated at His Second Coming, which is soon, very soon. What Jesus will do then is possible because of what He has already secured (see, e.g., Rev. 5:5-10).

Jesus is coming back soon to judge the world in righteousness (Ps. 96:13, Acts 17:31). Jesus is coming back soon to set everything right.

With the breath of His mouth, He will kill every enemy who hates Him and wars against His reign. He will

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17 A substitutionary, atoning sacrifice that satisfies the wrath of God.

18 Seeing “justification” or “justify” in translations may lead us to think, because of the English, that it represents the concept of justice, but it actually shares the Greek root for “righteous” and “righteousness.” The connection would be better portrayed to English, non-Greek readers by translating “God justifies” as “God declares (or pronounces) righteous” and “justification” as a “declaration of righteousness.” Also, translating someone or something as “just” confuses English justice with what it really means: “righteous.”

19 Because of God’s commitment to His people, His “righteousness” comes to represent His saving acts (see, e.g., the parallel in Isa. 46:13). “Thus the righteousness of God appears in his God-like dealings with his people, i.e. in redemption and salvation (Isa. 45:21; 51:5 f.; 56:1; 62:1). His righteous acts are extolled from the earliest times onward (Jdg. 5:11; 1 Sam. 12:7; Isa. 45:24; Mic. 6:5; Ps. 103[102]:6; Dan. 9:16). He who longs for redemption calls upon God’s righteousness, i.e. he pleads for God’s intervention (Pss. 71[70]:2; 143[142]:11). …In the early period of Israel’s history God’s righteousness seems only to have been spoken of in connection with his help against outside enemies. Yahweh watches over the ‘justice’ of his people in that he safeguards their existence by his victories over their foes, and Israel’s triumphs in war are therefore proofs of the righteousness of God... (... cf. Jdg. 5:11; 11:27; Mic. 6:5; 1 Sam. 12:7; 2 Sam. 18:31; Deut. 33:21)” (Seebas, *ibid.*, 355-356).

20 Rom. 10:9-13, Mt. 3:2, 4:17; Lk. 5:8-11, 14:25-33; Mt. 10:37-38; Mt. 16:24, Mk. 8:34, Lk. 9:23

21 1 Jn. 1:7, 9

22 See footnote 18 with verses like Rom. 5:1.

23 Rom. 3:21-22; Rom. 4 (esp. vv. 3, 5, 22-24), 5:17; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9

24 Isa. 11:4; 2 Th. 2:8; Lk. 19:14, 27; Rev. 17:14, 19:21 (cf. 19:11-16)
throw the Antichrist and the False Prophet into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20). He will throw Satan, the
architect of the world’s injustices, into the Lake of Fire to be tormented day and night into the ages of the
ages (20:10).

Every unbeliever will be raised and gathered to His great white throne,\textsuperscript{25} and because they did not receive the
righteousness of Christ by faith, they will be judged for every act of unrighteousness and injustice that they
committed in their lives (e.g., Rev. 22:12). Among them will be people who thought they were Christians,
attended church, and did good Christian things,\textsuperscript{26} but they will be surprised to find out that their “righteous
deeds” were like filthy rags (Isa. 64:4) because they did not truly believe into Christ as Lord in the repentant,
submissive, obedient way that is the mark of real faith. They will all be thrown into the Lake of Fire to be
tormented day and night into the ages of the ages without rest (Rev. 14:9-11; 20:10, 15).

Then King Jesus will lead us in restoring the ruined cities and the devastations of many generations, and we
will renew the earth, so that God the Father can come down and tabernacle with us forever, saturating all
things with His glory and goodness.

Everything that is wrong will be made right. Thanks to Jesus.

The new, heavenly earth is called the place where righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13).

\textit{Genuine, holistic justice cannot come through Bono or any political party or world leader, except for King}
Jesus. \textit{And the only ones who will benefit eternally from Jesus thrusting justice to victory are those who
had become His disciples.}

So, while we wait for His glorious appearing, we receive His Kingdom (like little children), and we manifest His
Kingdom – which means, most basically, we manifest righteousness and justice through the Spirit. We see
this commanded in the Sermon on the Mount and modeled by the early Church and the apostolic priorities.

Personal holiness, relational righteousness, and acts of justice are the inevitable fruit of real faith. They
are the true evidence of whether or not you have the Righteous, Justice-winning Christ living in you.

For over one hundred years, at least, the church has been debating whether or not to do acts of mercy and
justice in the Name of Jesus for the glory of God, and the debate has come back to the surface recently as
the Lord has been waking up His Church to justice.\textsuperscript{27} Should justice be done for the sake of the poor and
needy, or for the sake of the poor and needy unto the glory of God in the preeminence of Christ? The
Scriptures in this survey have carried us right to the debate, seeing that (1) rebellion against God is the
ultimate wrong, (2) Jesus is the justice-winning Christ who proclaims justice and evangelizes the poor, and (3)
the only ones will benefit eternally from justice are Jesus’ disciples.

To me, it’s really simple. God does everything for His glory,\textsuperscript{28} and He demands that we do everything for His
glory in the Name of Christ. God wants Christ to be preeminent in all things (Col. 1:18), because that is how
the Father is glorified (see, e.g., Phil. 2:10-11).

\textbf{1 Corinthians 10:31 (lit.)}  
Therefore, if you are eating, or if you are drinking, or if you are doing anything, be doing all things for
the glory of God!”

\textbf{Colossians 3:17}  
And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.…

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Rev. 20:11-15, cf. 3:21, Jn. 5:22-30}
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Mt. 7:21-23 (cf. 25:41), 25:1-13; Lk. 13:22-30}
Matthew 5:16
Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

1 Peter 2:12
Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Merely seeing a believer's good deeds or receiving an act of physical justice cannot enable an unbeliever to glorify God on the day of visitation. The unbeliever must repent and believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and how can he believe unless he has heard? 29

Jesus said He was anointed with the Spirit to evangelize the poor (Lk. 4:18), and so are we. That's what He did. Jesus fed the hungry and healed the sick to demonstrate the benefits of the Kingdom of God and to build a platform of credibility for His message of how to enter the Kingdom of God. 30

Imagine that I come across a boy who is dying because he's been drinking deadly water (like 1 billion people are drinking). That's wrong. That's not what God wants. I'm commanded by the righteous, justice-winning Christ in me to bring justice to that. If I don't get clean water to him to save his life, then I have wronged him. I have done injustice to him.

Imagine that boy is old enough to believe in Jesus, but he doesn't. He is living in rebellion against God, denying the glory of God in Christ. That's wrong. That's not what God wants. I am commanded by the righteous, justice-winning Christ in me to bring justice to that. If I don't share the Gospel of King Jesus with that boy to save his eternal life, then I have wronged him. Then I have done a greater injustice to him than if I had not shared water, because unbelief is a worse wrong than dying from dirty water. Don't you agree that being an enemy of God is worse that dying from dirty water? It's the infinite difference between what God deserves and what that sinner deserves. For that boy, it's the infinite different between temporary suffering and eternal suffering.

For that boy, the difference between dying from dirty water and dying in unbelief is the infinite difference between temporary suffering and eternal suffering.

No one should misunderstand me for a second: I'm not suggesting that we only give aid to those who say they'll believe. Give a cup of clean water in Name of Jesus to everyone who needs it, even if they don't believe in the Name of Jesus. Love on them! What I am saying is that it's not wholly loving them if we don't also try to persuade them to escape the coming wrath of God by believing into Jesus to praise of the glory of His grace!

It's not either/or. It's both. We gotta get him clean water and the message of the water of life!

The whole of Scripture presents the Gospel as the greatest and most needed act of justice, and everybody must respond to it before the final judgment.

Isaiah and Jesus made it clear that evangelism fits under the category of justice. Evangelism is an act of justice: turning a wrong, rebellious sinner to right relationship with God through faith in Christ.

27 After preparing this manuscript, a brother drew my attention to John Piper's addressing this issue at the Third Lausanne Congress last fall in Cape Town, South Africa: http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/a-defective-view-of-hell-or-a-defective-heart
30 E.g., Jn. 2:23, 3:1-8, 5:20, 5:36, 10:25, 10:38, 11:45, 14:6-11, 15:24; Lk. 7:18-23
I hope and pray that this message has stirred your heart to a greater appreciation of the Gospel of justice. I pray the Spirit uses it to motivate you to proclaim justice and to do justice: setting right physical and spiritual wrongs.

**Isaiah 32:1-2**

1 Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice.
2 Each will be like a hiding place from the wind, a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.”

That’s a beautiful metaphor for how refreshing we will be to those who need the justice we bring.

The reality is that now King Jesus is reigning in righteousness!

We have been recreated to be the people of Abraham who bless all the families of the earth by following and imitating the Way of Jesus, doing righteousness and doing justice in the earth (Gen. 18:19).

We are recreated to be these “princes” with the King of righteousness living in us to subdue and rule in justice.

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31 Acts 2:34-35; Heb. 1:13, 10:13; 1 Cor. 15:25; Mt. 26:64; Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22; Heb. 1:8-9; Rev. 3:21

32 The first epistle of John emphasizes the actions of, literally, “doing the truth” (1:6), “doing the will of God” (2:17), and “doing righteousness” (2:29, 3:7, 3:10).