

Quarter One: God's Love and Justice

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Lesson 6—God's Love of Justice

Monday: God Is Entirely Good and Righteous

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- **Last Week:** "The Wrath of Divine Love"
 - The cycle of rebellion
 - God's love & His wrath against evil, coexisting
 - Jesus' righteous indignation
- **This Week:** "God's Love of Justice"
 - Difference between pagan gods & our God
 - gods were fickle, immoral & commanded atrocities
 - Our God is consistent, good, love, fair & just
 - The God of the Bible is deeply concerned about evil, suffering, injustice & oppression

Memory Text: "'But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight' says the Lord" (Jer 9:24, NKJV)

The week in brief:

- 1. **Sunday:** Love and Justice (John L)
 - Multiple Scriptures – God love & justice are inseparable; righteousness & justice being the foundation of His government; His concern with injustice in the world
- 2. **Monday:** God Is Entirely Good and Righteous (Jill)
 - Multiple Scriptures – Who our God is & His character
- 3. **Tuesday:** God's Changeless Character (SQ)
 - Multiple Scriptures – the changeless nature of God's character; the essence of who He is; the certainty of His promises
- 4. **Wednesday:** A Repenting God? (Daniel)
 - Multiple Scriptures – does God repent? Does He ever change His mind?
- 5. **Thursday:** Hold Fast to Love and Justice (James)
 - Multiple Scriptures – God's perfect love & mercy, combined with His justice

Monday: God Is Entirely Good and Righteous

Ex 33:18, 19; Deut 32:4; Ps 5:4; 7:11; 9:7, 8; 25:8; 92:15; 129:14; 145:9 – 17; Zeph 3:5; Hab 1:13; 1 John 1:5; James 1:13

- What happens when we say one thing and do another?
 - Don't practice what we preach?
 - Claim to love others – gossip behind back
 - Talk about purity – engage in pornography
 - Ask forgiveness of God – refuse to forgive others
 - Teach the Bible – yet lie or cheat or hate others

- Our God is consistent – stands back of every promise He made
 - He is loving & love
 - He is just
- Take 2 verses from the lesson & build lesson on that
 - 2 neighboring books from the Minor Prophets

Study in Contrasts

• 1. Zephaniah's story

- Zephaniah – emphasizes a single theme: the coming day of the Lord
 - Brings both justice (to the wicked) & mercy (to the righteous)
- **Outline:**
 - The day of the Lord brings judgment
 - The entire world
 - The enemies of Judah
 - Philistia, Moab & Ammon
 - False gods
 - Cush & Assyria
 - Especially God's people
 - Judah & Jerusalem are special targets of divine punishment
 - People invited to repent
 - God Himself preserves a remnant
 - From the nations and Judah
 - He rejoices over His people
- **God:** Zeph 3:5 – “The Lord is righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness, every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, but the unjust knows no shame.”
 - God is righteous & holy
 - It is impossible for Him to be unrighteous
 - God is just
 - As opposed to the unjust
- **God's people:** Jerusalem is wicked
 - Vs 2 – “She (Jerusalem) has not obeyed His voice, she has not received correction; she has not trusted in the Lord, she has not drawn near to her God.”
 - A failure of leadership (religious & civil) leads to moral breakdown among God's people.
 - Refused to obey
 - Refused to accept correction
 - Refused to trust the Lord
 - Refused to draw near to God
 - Jerusalem's leadership is corrupt
 - God denounces the 4 leading social classes
 - Princes / officials
 - Judges / rulers
 - Prophets
 - Priests

- Vs 3 – “Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning.
 - Leaders have an appetite for violence & oppression
 - Vs 4 – “Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.”
 - Amp, “Her prophets are reckless and treacherous men; her priests have profaned the sanctuary; they have done violence to the law (by pretending their word is God’s word).
 - The religious leaders have sinned
 - Polluted the sanctuary
 - Held their man-made rules above God’s law
- **Contrast:**
 - God is righteous
 - His people are sinners
 - God is holy
 - His “leadership team” polluted the sanctuary & made their own laws
 - God is just
 - His leaders oppress others & commit injustice
 - Yet, God is merciful & will preserve a remnant
 - Both the nations & His chosen people – who repent & turn back to Him
 - Zeph 3:17 – “The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save, He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.”
 - Restoration of His people
- **2. Habakkuk’s story**
 - Habakkuk = a theodicy (a response to the Q of God’s silence in the face of evil)
 - Job questions God’s fairness by speaking against the injustice of the divinely permitted tragedies he’s enduring
 - Habakkuk questions God’s fairness by demanding that He send judgment on the wicked
 - Job wants God to show His justice by removing negative judgment from the righteous
 - Habakkuk wants God to show His justice by sending negative judgments on the wicked
 - Habakkuk’s Q’s center on
 - God’s character
 - God’s government
 - God’s judgments
 - God’s care for His people
 - **Outline:**
 - Habakkuk’s 1st Q: Why do You allow injustice to exist in Judah, God?
 - God’s answer: judgment is coming from the Babylonians
 - Habakkuk’s 2nd Q: Why the Babylonians, God? They’re so wicked. (he complains about the injustice of God’s answer)
 - God’s answer: trust Me, and judgment will come on the Babylonians, too

- Habakkuk's reflects:
 - God has saved His people in the past
 - I will wait with patient trust in this God, even if I don't understand
- (we learn, it's not wrong to question God – it can even lead to deeper faith)
- **First Q:** Hab 1:2 – “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, ‘Violence!’ and You will not save. (3) Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; there is strife, and contention arises. (3) Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds.”
 - Why do you allow the wickedness to continue amongst Your people?
 - Judah is wicked
 - The people are wicked – they steal & hurt & destroy
 - There is great injustice & oppression
 - Vs 3 – despite the incompatibility between good & evil, God appears to tolerate evil
- **God's answer:** the Babylonians will punish Judah
- **2nd Q:** Hab 1:13 – “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness, why do You look on those who deal treacherously, and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours a person more righteous than he?”
 - Why are the Babylonians the ones who will punish Judah?
 - They're so wicked, God
 - God is righteous & holy, how can He look on while wicked Babylon punishes “righteous” Judah?
- **God's answer:** I will punish the Babylonians
- **Habakkuk's reflects**
 - Hab 3 - God has saved His people in the past
 - The Exodus
 - The Covenant at Sinai
 - The conquest at Canaan
 - The coming Anointed One (the Messiah)
 - Hab 3:17 – 19 – “Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fall, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—(18) Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. (19) The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.”
 - Habakkuk went from theological crisis to triumphal faith
 - Grew from doubts to full trust in God
 - I will wait with patient trust, even if I don't understand
 - One of the best confessions of trust in the Old Testament
 - Despite everything, he will still cling to God – and even rejoice in Him