

IDENTIFYING & UNDERSTANDING OUR PROBLEM WITH ...

WICKEDNESS



**MOREOVER, I SAW UNDER THE SUN THAT IN THE PLACE OF JUSTICE, EVEN THERE WAS WICKEDNESS,
AND IN THE PLACE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, EVEN THERE WAS WICKEDNESS.**

(ECCLESIASTES 3:16 ESV)

TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS EVERYONE FACES IN LIFE "UNDER THE SUN."

- *Wickedness has displaced justice and righteousness.*
- *Everyone will be judged according to this wickedness.*

OUTLINE ... Ecclesiastes 3:16-17

1. **PROBLEM #1: In the “under the sun” world in which we live wickedness has displaced justice and righteousness.**

- (Ecclesiastes 3:16 ESV) Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness.

A. This is a universal (“*under the sun*”) problem that pervades every individual and every aspect of society.

B. The simple truth is that society is corrupt because individuals are corrupt.

Our “problem” began with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden when they rebelled against the Creator and their sin brought death to everyone. This means **from that point on** every person on the planet would be **separated from God and separated from his standard of justice and righteousness**.

- (Romans 5:12 NLT) When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, **so death spread to everyone**, for everyone sinned.
- (Psalm 14:2-3 ESV) The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, **to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.** 3 **They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;** there is none who does good, not even one.

C. All forms of governing bodies in this world are corrupt because the individual threads in the fabric from which they are formed is corrupt.

We must understand that government and all forms of governing—*formal and informal*—have been affected.

EXCURSUS: A better understanding of justice, righteousness and wickedness ...

- (Isaiah 32:16-17 ESV) Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. **And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.**
- (Isaiah 57:20-21 ESV) But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. **There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”**

I. **WICKEDNESS IS WHAT IS WRONG.**

Wicked – raw-**shaw** ... wicked, criminal; a guilty one; wicked (hostile to God); guilty of sin (against God or man).

a. A wicked person is someone who does what is wrong.

- (Exodus 9:27 ESV) Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, “This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people **are in the wrong [wicked]**.”

b. One way to better understand the wicked is to observe the contrast with those who are blessed by God.

Note the phrase “*the wicked are not so*” in the following text. So, in regard to the lifestyle of those who are blessed “*the wicked are not so.*”

- (Psalm 1:1-4 ESV) Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of **the wicked**, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. 4 **The wicked are not so**, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

c. Note the contrasts in the parallelism in the following verses.

- (Proverbs 10:11 ESV) **The mouth of the righteous** is a fountain of life, **but the mouth of the wicked** conceals violence.
- (Proverbs 12:5 ESV) The thoughts of the righteous are just; **the counsels of the wicked** are deceitful.
- (Proverbs 12:26 ESV) **One who is righteous** is a guide to his neighbor, **but the way of the wicked** leads them astray.

II. **JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE WHAT IS RIGHT.**

Justice – mish-**pawt** ... what is right, fitting, proper; a determination of right and wrong on legal matters; a verdict (favorable or unfavorable) pronounced judicially.

Righteousness – tseh-**dek** ... justice, rightness; what is right or just or normal; justness (of weights and measures). For example adherence to what is required according to a moral standard.

Very Important Note: We know from even a quick glance at our society that there are many standards of justice and righteousness. And the basic meanings of the Hebrew words allow for this difference. So to know what is truly just and right we have to go beyond word definitions to how God uses these words in the Bible.

What we learn is both very simple and profound. In reality there is one standard alone that matters—God's standard. And we learn what that is from the word of God alone.

Justice – mish-**pawt** ... what is right, fitting, proper.

a. The wicked do not understand and are incapable of understanding God's justice.

- (Proverbs 28:5 ESV) **Evil men do not understand justice**, but those who seek the LORD understand it completely.
- (Proverbs 4:19 ESV) **The way of the wicked is like deep darkness**; they do not know over what they stumble.

b. In this text YAHWEH calls us to administer true judgments [**mishpawt**] and goes on to describe what true justice looks like to God.

- (Zechariah 7:9–10 ESV) Thus says the LORD of hosts, **Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.**

c. More definition by contrast.

- (Deuteronomy 24:17 ESV) **You shall not pervert the justice** due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge.
- (1 Samuel 8:3 ESV) Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. **They took bribes and perverted justice.**

d. Note how justice extends to our business practices.

- (Proverbs 16:11 ESV) **A just balance and scales are the LORD's**; all the weights in the bag are his work.
- (Micah 6:11 NLT) How can I tolerate your merchants who use dishonest scales and weights?

Righteousness – tseh-**dek** ... justice, rightness; what

is right or just or normal.

e. Note here that both **tsehdek** and **mishpawt** are defined by contrast in **not** showing partiality, **not** slandering, etc.

- (Leviticus 19:15–16 ESV) You shall do no injustice in court. You shall **not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness [tsehdek] shall you judge [mishpawt] your neighbor.** 16 You shall **not go around as a slanderer** among your people, and you shall **not stand up against the life of your neighbor**: I am the LORD.

f. Here tsedek [righteousness] is translated as "**just**" demonstrating how closely related these terms and concepts are.

- (Leviticus 19:36 ESV) You shall have **just** balances, **just** weights, a **just** ephah, and a **just** hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

g. Back to the concept of what is fair and right in everyday life.

- (Deuteronomy 25:13–16 ESV) **You shall not have in your bag two kinds of weights, a large and a small. 14 You shall not have in your house two kinds of measures, a large and a small. 15 A full and fair [tsedek] weight you shall have, a full and fair [tsedek] measure you shall have, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. 16 For all who do such things, all who act dishonestly, are an abomination to the LORD your God.**

–END EXCURSUS–

2. **PROBLEM #2: God will one day judge everyone according to their wickedness.**

- (Ecclesiastes 3:17 ESV) I said in my heart, **God will judge the righteous and the wicked**, for there is a time for every matter and for every work.

A. God will judge everyone according to his standard of justice and righteousness.

Justice and righteousness are displaced in this world but never in God's kingdom.

- (Psalm 9:7–8 ESV) **But the LORD sits enthroned forever**; he has established his throne for **justice**, 8 and he judges the world with **righteousness**; he judges the peoples with uprightness.
- (Psalm 89:14 NLT) **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne**. Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants.
- (Psalm 119:160 ESV) The sum of your word is truth, and **every one of your righteous rules endures forever**.

B. Each of us will one day give an account to God for what we do with our lives.

- (Hebrews 4:13 ESV) And no creature is hidden from his sight, **but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account**.
- (1 Peter 4:5 NLT) **But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead**.

C. God will judge the righteous—the saved—for every matter and for every work.

- (Romans 14:12 ESV) **So then each of us will give an account of himself to God**.
- (2 Corinthians 5:10 ESV) **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

D. God will judge the wicked—the unsaved—for every matter and for every work.

- (Revelation 20:11–12 ESV) Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. **And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done**.

3. SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF WICKEDNESS: A reversal in the status of an individual by displacing wickedness with the justice and righteousness of God.

Our status is reversed when the righteousness of Christ is put to our account.

- (Romans 3:22–23 ESV) **The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe**. For there is no distinction: 23 **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**.

We fall short of the glory—the standard for God's justice and righteousness. But the problem is also that we are so far separated from God that we cannot even fathom his holy standard for glory and righteousness.

- (Philippians 1:11 NLT) May you always be filled with **the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ**—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.
- (Philippians 3:9 ESV) And be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own** that comes from the law, **but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith**.

Our status is reversed through the reconciling work of God through Jesus Christ.

- (Romans 5:10–11 ESV) For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled to God by the death of his Son**, much more, now that we are **reconciled, shall we be saved by his life**. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God **through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation**.
- (2 Corinthians 5:17–18 ESV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 **All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.
- (Colossians 1:21–22 ESV) **And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds**, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.