

Biblical Social Justice is For all Nations

Let me begin by noting that biblical social justice is not to be confused with Marxist/materialistic/atheistic social justice movements. Although there is always an attempt to shy away from the nomenclature “social justice” due to its perversion in atheistic movements (e.g., liberation theology), we must resist that temptation for two reasons. First, it has a longer history than modern versions of social justice. Second, it saturates the Bible from beginning to end. I have about as much interest in getting rid of social justice because of modern distortions as I do “love” because of modern distortions.

One common objection to biblical social justice is because it is biblical it does not apply to nations outside of the nation of Israel. In other words, God does not hold other nations, which do not have His special revelation, accountable for social justice. However, the idea that social justice is just for biblical/covenant nations is demonstrably false. God holds all nations accountable for social justice.

Biblical principles of justice are not arbitrary rules relevant only for believers. This shows this importance of developing a socio-politico-economic philosophy. That these principles are crucial can be seen in that without them nations become unstable and hotbeds of revolution. Consider how injustice in the form of exploitation of workers inspired Marxism.

God has a basic social order or justice that God wills for all nations. The more faithfully and appropriately any secular society applies the biblical norms on justice in society, the more peace, happiness, and harmony that society will enjoy.

Moreover, God judges those nations outside of Israel, God’s nation, that become unjust. Amos announced divine punishment on the surrounding nations for their evil and injustice (Amos 1–2). Isaiah denounced Assyria for its pride and injustice (Isa. 10:12–19). The book of Daniel shows that God removed pagan kings like Nebuchadnezzar in the same way he destroyed Israel’s rulers when they failed to show “mercy to the poor” (4:27). God obliterated Sodom and Gomorrah no less than Israel and Judah because they neglected to aid the poor and feed the hungry

(Ezek. 16:49). The Lord of the universe applies the same standards of social justice to all nations. This includes the United States, Russia, Canada, and Western European nations.

While many understand that Israel and Judah were judged and sent into exile for their spiritual idolatry, what is not commonly known among many of us conservatives is that they were also judged because of lack of justice for the poor and vulnerable.

God destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. by means of Assyria because of neglect and exploitation of the poor (Amos 2:7; 5:10-15; 6:1-7; 7:11, 17). God judged Judah in 587 B.C. by means of Babylon because of neglect and exploitation of the poor (Isa 2:2; 3:12-10:1-3; Jer. 1:21-26; 5:26-29; 34:3-17).

When Jesus came, He came in the spirit of the prophets and their concern for the poor. In other words, He made it clear that the mission of the Incarnate One included the poor and vulnerable (Luke 4:18-19). Moreover, He warned in the strongest possible words that those who do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoners will experience eternal damnation (Matt. 25:31-46). While we can qualify this judgment in a number of ways (e.g., they were never true believers), may we must never downplay His main point of concern and identity with the poor and most vulnerable: what you do to them, you do to Me.

In His Matchless Grace,
Pastor Don