

The God of Justice and the God of Mercy

June 1, 2014

I. Introduction

A. Descriptive Titles of God

(From Richards, L. (2001). Every name of God in the Bible.)

How is God to be described?

In Scripture the two most common functions of God's descriptive titles are to affirm a role of God, such as King, or to portray actions of God, such as "He who forgives."

The descriptive titles of God further enrich our understanding of who God is and our awe at His love and grace.

B. My meditation this week:

1. GOD OF JUSTICE

From Every name of God in the Bible, by Richards,
(See Note at the bottom of study)

2. Names of God -

(from Rafael Gomez; a pastor on the Internet portion of my Logos Bible software program.)

Elohay Mishpat - God Of Justice: (Isa 30:18).

The Powerful One is perfectly just and will bring perfect justice to the world.

El Rachum - The God Of Compassion: (Dt 4:31).

His nature is one of kindness.

The Powerful One is full of compassion and feeling for people.

He is completely free of any cruelty or meanness.

El Chanun - The Gracious God: (Jonah 4:2).

His nature is gracious, giving and generous, even when we don't deserve it.

The Lawgiver and Judge: (Jas 4:12)

Judge - of the living and the dead: (Ac 10:42)

II. The God of Justice - God is Judge (a just judge)

A. God is King, Lawgiver and Judge

Isa 33:22 For the LORD is our judge, The LORD is our lawgiver, The LORD is our king; He will save us

judge ... lawgiver ... king—perfect ideal of the theocracy, to be realized under Messiah alone; the judicial, legislative, and administrative functions as king to be exercised by Him in person.

1. The Lord is our King

(Our study on May 4, 2014)

2. The Lord is our Lawgiver

The Hebrew word for "lawgiver" is a verb (Isa 33:22) and is used 19X
(Ge 49:10; Nu 21:18; Dt 33:21; Jdg 5:9, 19; Job 19:23; Ps 60:7; 108:8; Pr 8:15, 27, 29; 31:5; Isa 10:1; 22:16; 30:8; 33:22; 49:16; Eze 4:1; 23:14)

It is also used as a noun 231 X has a noun and often translated as a statute(s), ordinance(s) law(s) or decree(s).

He is God, He makes the rules, laws and principles that govern His kingdom.
(Job 34:5-10; 40:7-8; Isa 29:16; 45:9- 11; Ezk18:29; 33:17-20; Mal 2:17; Mt 20:11-16; Rom 3:20; 9:19-21)

3. The LORD is our judge

B. Bible verses that show God as Judge

(Ge 16:5; 18:20-21, 25; Ex 20:5; 34:7; Nu 16:22; Dt 4:24; 10:17; 32:4, 35; Jos 24:19; Jdg 9:56-57; 11:27; 1 Sa 2:3, 10; 24:12, 15; 14:14; 22:25-27; 1 Ki 8:32; 1 Ch 16:33; 2 Ch 6:22-23; 19:7; Ne 9:33; Job 4:17; 8:3; 9:15, 28; 21:22; 23:7; 31:13-15; 34:10-12, 17, 19, 23; 35:14; 36:3, 9; 37:23; Ps 7:8-9, 11; 9:4, 7-8; 11:4-7; 18:25-26; 19:9; 26:1-2; 33:5; 35:24; 43:1; 50:4-6; 51:4; 58:11; 62:12; 67:4; 71:19; 75:7; 76:8-9; 82:8; 85:10; 89:14; 90:8, 11; 92:15; 94:1-2, 10; 96:10, 13; 97:2; 98:2-3, 9; 99:4, 8; 103:6; 111:7; 119:137; 129:4; 135:14; 143:2; 145:17; Pr 11:31; 16:2; 17:3; 21:2-3; 24:12; 29:13, 26; Eccl 3:15, 17; 11:9; 12:14; Isa 1:27; 3:13-14; 10:17-18; 26:7; 28:17, 21; 30:18, 27, 30; 31:2; 33:22; 45:21; 61:8; Jer 9:24; 10:10; 11:20; 12:1; 20:12; 32:19; 50:7, 10; Lam 1:18; Eze 14:23; 18:25, 29-30; 33:7-19; Dan 4:37; 7:9-10; 9:7, 14; Hos 10:10; Am 8:7; Na 1:3, 6; Zep 3:5; Mal 3:5, 18; Ac 10:34 17:31; Ro 1:32; 2:2, 5-16; 3:4-6, 26; 9:14; 11:22; Eph 6:8-9; Col 3:25; 2 Thes 1:4-6; Heb 6:10; 10:30-31; 12:22-23, 29; 1 Pt 1:17; 2 Pt 2:9; 1 Jn 1:9; Jude 6; Rev 6:16-17; 11:18; 15:3; 16:5-7; 18:8; 19:2)

1. First mentioned principle -

God tells (prophecy) Abraham, Egypt will be judged when He delivers Israel from her.

Ge 15:14 "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.

2. Abraham's intercession

Abraham intercedes for his nephew Lot - in God's judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:16-33).

Gen 18:25 "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"

3. God reveals Himself to Moses as a just judge

Ex 34:5-7 The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. 6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

Dt 32:3-4 For I proclaim the name of the LORD; "Ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He.

C. The purpose of the Law:

1. To close every mouth

Rom 3:19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

2. To make the world accountable to God.
Rom 3:19 and all the world may become accountable to God.
3. To bring knowledge of sin.
Rom 3:20 ... for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin (Rom 7:7).
4. To bring about wrath.
Rom 4:15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.
5. To increase sin.
Rom 5:20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,
6. To make sin alive.
Rom 7:9 I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died;
7. To give sin power.
1 Cor 15:56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;
8. To make men unjust.
Gal 2:16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified (Gal 3:11; Rom 3:20)
9. To put you under a curse.
Gal 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them."
10. To make you imperfect.
Heb 10:1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. (Heb 7:19)

D. Six things the Law could not do

1. Justify
Rom 3:20 by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; (Rom 3:28)
2. Take away sin.
1 Cor 15:56 the power of sin is the law;
3. Could not make us walk in the requirements of God's law.
Rom 8:3-4 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
4. Make us righteous
Gal 2:21 "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."
5. Impart life
Gal 3:21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.
6. Make perfect

Heb 10:1 For the Law ... can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. (Heb 7:19)

III. The God of mercy

A. Because the Lord is a God of justice, He longs to show mercy, grace and compassion.

Isa 30:18 Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.

Ps 33:5 He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.

B. God's justice and mercy are satisfied in Christ's sacrifice!

Isa 53:4-6 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

Ro 3:21-26 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

C. God's justice declares (shuts us up) us condemned so that we may experience His mercy!

Ro 11:32 For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

Ro 5:6-11 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

D. Salvation is based on His mercy.

Eph 2:1-10 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Tit 3:4-5 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

Eph 2:4-7 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

1 Pt 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

E. His mercy leads to repentance (Rom 2:1-4).

Rom 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

F. In the new covenant we have come to -

God - the Judge of all (Heb 12:18-24).

Heb 12:22-24 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

NOTE: GOD OF JUSTICE

(From Richards, L. (2001). Every name of God in the Bible.)

One of the roles that Scripture ascribes to the Lord is that of doing justice. This role is intimately linked to God's role as Ruler of the universe He created and maintains.

Two Hebrew verbal roots are important in helping us understand the implications of this title. The first root, *sapat*, incorporates all functions of government, including the judicial. Justice deals with a person's rights and duties under law, and to give God the title "God of justice" means in part that He establishes those rights and duties as Lawgiver (Is. 33:22). God also functions as Judge (Ps. 7:11) and metes out justice.

The other Hebrew root is *sadaq*, and words constructed on this root are translated by "right" and "righteous" as well as by "just" and "justice." The underlying idea is that moral and ethical standards exist and that our actions can be and are measured against them. Actions that are in harmony with the standards are "just," while those that violate the standards are "unjust." As God of justice, the Lord not only establishes the standards, but also His own actions are always in full harmony with them.

The New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words makes several important points about God and justice.

Ultimately our understanding of justice has its source in the person of the one who gave mankind his law. "He is the Rock, his words are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he" (Dt 32:4). God's historic punishments of Israel for deviation from the revealed norms are also an aspect of justice. Again and again Israel was forced to admit, "In all that has happened to us, you have been just" (Ne 9:33; cf. 2 Ch 12:5-6).

Justice, then, is rooted in the very nature of God, and his character is the true norm or standard. All his acts are just and right, even those we may not be able to understand. But in Scripture, God has given us norms that we can grasp. These standards, expressed in the OT in the Mosaic Law and in the Prophets, take justice from the realm of the abstract and make it a practical issue indeed.

The great mystery in Scripture's portrait of the Lord as God of justice is that there is also room for mercy. Isaiah 30:18 combines the themes of mercy and justice.

Therefore the LORD will wait,
that He may be gracious to you;
And therefore He will be exalted,
that He may have mercy on you.
For the LORD is a God of justice;
Blessed are all those who wait for Him.

The mystery is that while strict justice calls for punishment, the Lord, as God of justice, encourages His people to rely on His grace and mercy. Isaiah 30:18 clearly links God's gifts of grace and mercy to His role as God of justice.

The Old Testament does not explain how the conflict between justice and mercy can be resolved. But the New Testament Book of Romans reveals how God dealt with this apparently irresolvable moral dilemma.

Now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:21-26).

Since all have sinned, divine justice demands that all be condemned. But Jesus paid the penalty justice required, freeing God to be just while offering sinners a salvation received by faith. In the death of Christ on the cross, God at last revealed how He could be gracious to Old Testament saints whose sins He seemed to have ignored. Before the beginning of time, God knew that to create the human race and to give people moral freedom would ultimately cost Him the life of His Son.

Truly the God of justice has been exalted! In His commitment to do what is right, He not only maintained His integrity through Calvary, but also through that same act poured out grace upon an undeserving humankind.

The following References were used in this study:

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