

Justice and righteousness as standards for performance measurement in the kingdom of God

Isaiah Chapters 7 through chapter 35 say a lot about righteousness and justice as they relate to the coming King, Son of David and his Kingdom

It begins with the sign of the Emmanuel and the birth of the child king in Chapter 9:7 his kingdom of righteousness and justice where they neither harm nor destroy, where the wolf lives with the lamb, the leopard lies down with the goat and the lion eats straw like the ox; through chapter 32 where in his kingdom he reigns in righteousness, rulers rule with justice ending with the joy of the redeemed in chapter 53..

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” (Isaiah 9:6–7, NIV84)

“Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches?” (Isaiah 10:1–3, NIV84)

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord— and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth ...” Isaiah 11:1-5

It is noteworthy that the impact of the knowledge of the Lord on society is and should be the restoration of Righteousness and Justice.

“In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.” Isaiah 11:10

The unfruitful vineyard becomes fruitful

“The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.” (Isaiah 5:7, NIV84)

“In that day— “Sing about a fruitful vineyard: I, the LORD, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. I am not angry.” In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit.” Isaiah 27:2,3,6.

The fruit the Lord was looking for were righteousness and justice.

“In that day the LORD Almighty will be a glorious crown, a beautiful wreath for the remnant of his people. He will be a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, a source of strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.” (Isaiah 28:5–6, NIV84)

*“So, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: **“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line;** hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place.”* (Isaiah 28:16–17, NIV84)

So, when the Kingdom of God built on Christ as the Chief Cornerstone and Cap Stone justice becomes the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line.

Chapter 33 describes those who will be part of this kingdom, live with King and affirming that in his kingdom the LORD is the Absolute Sovereign.

“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us.” (Isaiah 33:22, NIV84)

The section ends with the Joy of the Redeemed as they return to Zion.

Jeremiah took a similar line when he stated the basis set by the LORD for any form of boasting

“This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9:23–24, NIV84)

He demonstrates that righteousness and justice are the key determinants of anyone’s knowledge of the LORD.

““Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor. He says, ‘I will build myself a great palace with spacious upper rooms.’ So, he makes large windows in it, panels it with cedar and decorates it in red. “Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? 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 the LORD. “But your eyes and your heart are set only on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood and on oppression and extortion.” (Jeremiah 22:13–17, NIV84)

When Christ came the Stone in Zion, (Matt.21:42, 1Pet.2:4 – 8) precious cornerstone for a sure foundation was laid.

He made it clear that righteousness and justice are the standards for performance measurements in his kingdom in the **Sermon on the Mount**. Matt.5:20. He state to the **Rich Young Ruler Matt.19:16 – 21**, that righteousness and justice are the marks of perfection.

“Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” (Matthew 19:21, NIV84)

The word perfect here **telios** is the word Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount when he said, *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* (Matthew 5:48, NIV84). It is the mark of godliness and religion.

Jesus and John the Baptist. Matt.11:1 - 6

John’s question; “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” had a measurement element. The reply of Jesus was to measure it in terms of what is being done for the poor, the weak and the vulnerable – righteousness and justice.

Jesus and the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law Matt.23:1 – 28

Jesus denounced them and their legalistic and ritualistic righteousness which was void of justice and mercy in recognition of these as the benchmark for performance measurement.

The Sheep and the Goats Matthew 25:31 – 46.

Jesus distinguished the people based on those who practiced righteousness and justice and those who did not.

If justice and righteousness are the standards for performance measurement in the kingdom then it is not enough to measure our work by the number of responsive people that we have recruited but whether we are actively involved in acts that increase social justice and in works of mercy.

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