

The Just God Rev. 16:5-6

This is a vision patterned along the lines of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. The similarities are striking, as are the differences.

Similarities:

- It involves the outpouring of wrath
- Sores and boils
- Water being turned into blood w/ the death of all that lived in it

Differences:

- It visionary and eschatological not a historical account
- The scope is global not regional
- The recipients are not local Egyptians but trans-national
- It is followed by an angelic theodicy

Theodicy: is concerned to reconcile the existence of a good God with the existence of evil in the world. It is essentially an apologetic for the goodness of God.

The attribute in view is that of the justice of God. **(1)** It is on the lips of the angel and **(2)** reflected in the utterance of the altar. The verbal altar, though in the singular, is likely a reference to **6:9** where John *“saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.”*

They not only cry out in agreement with the heavenly witness of the angel; the designation for God affirms the utter, absolutely sovereignty of God over the historical affairs of His people. They phraseology also reflects the Exodus and is borrowed from **Deut. 32:4**. *“The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He.”*

Clearly what is in view is the outworking of His eternal decree in creation, providence, and redemption.

What do we mean when we speak of the justice of God?

- 1. The nature of His justice.** *What is justice?* It is essential acting in accord with right and rule. Injustice is that which deviates from right and rule. When we think of justice with respect to God several things need to be said.
 - a. It assumes there is an objective standard:** There is a ‘right’ or objective standard that must be adhered to.
 - b. It agrees with and adheres to the standard.** Any deviation constitutes injustice. Tennent, “justice admits of no degrees, for the thing either agrees with the rule of right or not; if the former it is just, if the latter, it is unjust.”
 - c. It differs with respect to God.** There is a critical distinction. Creatures have that rule *prescribed*; whereas the divine nature is a rule of right to God.
- 2. The kinds of justice.** When we think of the justice of God we mean two things:
 - a. There is an essential justice.** This is an essential attribute or quality of His nature. Because He is just His will is a just will. He has a settled will to do right. *“Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just?” Gen. 18:25.*
 - b. There is a declarative justice.** This the outworking of His essential justice in **two regards**:
 - i. His words.** Because His words are expressive of His nature they are words that are always and only true and faithful words.
 - ii. His works.** His actions are also expressive of His nature; they are ‘just’ works. He disposes of every creature in a just way. The laws He prescribes are reasonable and just- perfectly designed and fitted to the situation and circumstances of the creature and its sanctions perfectly enforced. How?

1. **Rewarding conformity.** Rewarding Justice is God's will to reward our compliance. It isn't that our compliance merits anything but that God, out of His goodness has bound Himself by His word to reward those who keep His law.
2. **Punishing breach.** Revenging justice is God's will to execute the threatenings of His law upon the transgressors. He inflicts punishment that fits the crime.

Both are the outworking of the justice of God. Cf. **Ro. 2:6-11.**

3. **The properties of justice.** What are some of the specific qualities of God's justice? **It is:**
 - a. **Impartial.** God is no respecter of persons. *"For we all must 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."* **2Cor. 5:10. Illstr. Moses & David. Cf. 1Pe. 4:17.**
 - b. **Universal.** Not one deed goes un-weighed. Each is rewarded or punished either in the sinner or the substitute.
 - c. **Inescapable.** No amount of pleading will avail in the slightest when the ultimate day of justice arrives. *"Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, declares the LORD GOD, they would deliver neither son nor daughter. They would deliver but their won lives by their righteousness."* Cf. **Ezek. 14:18-20.**
4. **How it is displayed.** There are many exceptions and anomalies in this life. It is fully seen in two places:

- a. **At Calvary.** When Christ made His soul an offering for sin His sufferings were unspeakable. His body was unspeakably tortured. His soul suffered worse suffering. Flavel, "The soul of our Lord's sufferings was His sufferings in His soul."

Tennent, "No wonder the earth's foundation trembled, and the dead awoke out of their long and silent slumbers, and the sun itself, that glorious orb of light and beauty, put on a funeral robe of darkness and obscurity, to testify their surprise and sorrow on so awful an occasion, and to complete the train of mourners."

- b. **In Hell.** The unutterable groans of the damned as they are tormented in the lake of fire for eternity are the display of the justice of God.

5. **Some objections.** Some will complain:
 - a. **How is it just for God to punish His people in Christ?** He was willing under took our guilt and had our sins imputed to Him He suffered as the guilty.
 - b. **How is election not the 'respecting of persons'?** This might be valid if some had earned blessing but were denied it. That would be a breach of justice. But that some were spared damnation is clemency which is a divine prerogative perfectly in accord with justice.
 - c. **Sometimes the wicked prosper and righteous suffer.** This world is not the final court. The scales will be balanced to perfection at the Great White Throne.
6. **Application.**
 - a. **It speaks terror to the ungodly.** How tragic is the case of those on a collision course with the justice of God. Add to the other qualities Incomprehensible and intolerable wrath.
 - b. **It speaks comfort to believers.** In all our troubles we are afflicted less than our sins deserve. Through Christ the justice of God promises ongoing forgiveness, confidence and that we shall be justly acquitted on the last day.