

Introduction / Review

- God is Just
 - Genesis 18:25
 - Job 37:23
 - Deuteronomy 32:4
 - Romans 3:25-26

משפט (mishpat)

- Has to do with judgment; *To grant or withhold, reward or punish in keeping with the standard set forth by the law.*
- If you want to practice God's standard of justice, if you want to apply biblical justice, then these are some principles that will help you get there.

I. RACISM

Claim A: Racism is a corporate, structural sin, not *necessarily* an individual act or event.

Def: racism

- "When a racial group's collective prejudice is backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control, it is transformed into racism, a far-reaching system that functions independently from the intentions of self-images of individual actors."¹ — Robin DiAngelo

"Racism [is] a system of oppression based on race."² — Jemar Tisby

Def: white supremacy

- "White supremacy is a descriptive and useful term to capture the all-encompassing centrality and assumed superiority of people defined and perceived as white and the practices based on this assumption. White supremacy in this context does not refer to

¹ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 20.

² Jemar Tisby, *How to Fight Racism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2021), 4.

individual white people and their individual intentions or actions but to an overarching political, economic, and social system of domination.”³ — Robin DiAngelo

Applying Justice

Principle: God defines what is sin (Gen. 2:15-17; Ps. 19:9b; Rev. 20:11-13).

- Psalm 19:b — “The **משפטי** (judgments) of Yahweh are true; they are righteous altogether.” It is God’s judgments, the standards of justice that He has communicated to us that are true, not manmade ideas of what is just or not.

Principle: Racism is more properly defined as hatred and/or partiality (Jas. 2:1-13).

- Def: Racism — the practice of despising, belittling, hating, or mistreating others on the basis of their ethnicity.
 - This is practiced by individuals. It can be practiced by a collective group (American slavery, Civil Rights era), but even then, individuals are accountable, not an independent system.
- This has no place in the church. No kind of partiality has any place in the church, not ethnic partiality (racism), monetary partiality, cultural partiality, dietary partiality, etc. all of these things are forbidden by God. We must “accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God” (Rom. 15:7).

Principle: Unjust people (not systems) are responsible for systemic injustice (Mal. 1:6-14; Lk. 20:45-21:4).

- Luke 20:45-21:4 — Jesus identified unrighteous and even at least one unjust practice in this list of sins. Verse 47 highlights the practice of “devouring widows’ houses.” Women who had lost their husbands and all remaining means of provision were forced to give the last of whatever they had left to live on to the religious leadership. Jesus doesn’t blame a nameless, faceless system of injustice, nor does he just blame the practice of devouring widows’ houses (as if it just happens by itself as a self-sustaining practice of injustice). Rather, Jesus names the group responsible for intentionally practicing the injustice. He calls them, “the scribes” (v. 45).

³ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 28.

Claim B: White people practice and perpetuate racism without realizing it.

Jonathan Leeman (Editorial Director for 9Marks) argued at the most recent T4G conference⁴: We are so thoroughly sinful that we will naturally align ourselves with other people and groups to give ourselves an advantage over others. We will naturally make choices that privilege us to the detriment of other people. He appealed to Psalm 51:5 and Isaiah 64:6 and Jeremiah 17:9.

Side note: If this is true, then it must be true of minority people as well.

Robin DiAngelo

Applying Justice

Principle: Sin being unknown is not the same as sin being unknowable (Ps. 19:12-13).

- Notice that even after David exalts the clarity and sufficiency and power of God's word, he still realizes that his sin ("error," "hidden faults") are beyond what he knows as he is penning this psalm! Doesn't this mean that someone can be racist without realizing it? If even David recognized that he was so thoroughly sinful, that his heart is desperately sick, as Jeremiah puts it (17:9), aren't we all capable of being complicit in sins that we are unaware of in the moment?
- Well, yes, in fact, we are capable of that! But if that's the case, what needs to be done about this unknown sin of ours? We need to be shown it. The sin must be biblically defined and then identified in our lives. This implies that the sin of which we are guilty is actually knowable.
- Where would David turn for insight into sin that he is unaware of? Answer: Psalm 19:7b, 8b, 9b). David could be made wise regarding his sin and where he was "simple" in his understanding of his sin, he can gain wisdom. He could have his eyes enlightened by the clear commandment of Yahweh regarding his sin. And he could know the true and righteous standard of God's law. The right passages of Scripture (not the right minority, the right sociological categories, the right experiences), but the Scriptures themselves is still where we must turn to have unknown sin revealed to us.

⁴ Jonathan Leeman, "Identity Politics and the Death of Christian Unity" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMFWy6MIKoo&t=879s>). For an abbreviated summary of Leeman's sermon, see this series of snippets from Woke Preacher Clips on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/WokePreacherTV/status/1352331246370762756>).

- What is being claimed about racism is that, *This is deep. Racism is a complex issue. Understanding racial justice is a journey and we will never be finished learning.* “The process of growing in awareness, relationships, and commitment never ends. You will always be learning, you will always be developing relationships, and you will always be discovering new ways to commit to a life of racial justice.”⁵

Principle: Even hidden sins must be defined and identified biblically.

Claim C: Secular ideologies are helpful analytical tools for Christians.

The two foremost racial ideologies being used currently:

1. Identity Politics — the practice of appealing to one group or various groups on the basis of victimization and inequality for the sake of political advancement.
 - “Refers to the focus on the barriers specific groups face in their struggle for equality. We have yet to achieve our founding principle, but any gains we have made thus far have some through identity politics.”⁶
 - “Identity politics is an unexpected ally for Christians.”⁷
2. Critical Race Theory — an ideology asserting that societal structures and cultural assumptions regarding race are the primary causes for the social ills in America.
 - Example: “Race as a social construct has profound significance and shapes every aspect of our lives. Race will influence whether we will survive our birth, where we are most likely to live, which schools we will attend, who our friends and partners will be, what careers we will have, how much money we will earn, how healthy we will be, and even how long we can expect to live.”⁸
 - DiAngelo sees problematic but powerful social structures as the primary explanation for these differences among ethnic groups.

⁵ Jemar Tisby, *How to Fight Racism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2021), 7.

⁶ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), xiii.

⁷ Jonathan Leeman, “Identity Politics and the Death of Christian Unity” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMFWy6MIKoo&t=3391s>)

⁸ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 5.

- Southern Baptist Convention 2019, Resolution 9: “RESOLVED, That critical race theory and intersectionality should only be employed as analytical tools subordinate to Scripture—not as transcendent ideological frameworks;”⁹

Applying Justice

Principle: Secular ideologies cannot aid biblical interpretation (1 Cor. 2:1-6, 12-16; Col. 2:3-8; 1 Tim. 6:20).

- Unbelief cannot aid faith. The two are complete opposites. Romans 8:7, tells us that “the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so...”
- Whatever truth the world is able to articulate that is in agreement with God is coincidental. In other words, whatever sliver of truth that might be found in an anti-God system is only due to the fact that they cannot deny all truth all at once, and so what they do get right is for the purpose of furthering some wrong end.
 - Example: If a young child wants to slap his father in the face, he will need to first climb into his father’s lap to do it. But that child should not be commended for momentarily occupying his father’s lap.
- If a pagan philosophy contradicts God’s truth, then it’s false. If the pagan philosophy only affirms God’s truth, then it’s not needed. In the end, it is not the theories of unbelievers themselves that are helpful, but the truth of God communicated perhaps, at times by unbelievers. Those who know and believe their Bibles who are careful to keep a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith will not succumb to vain philosophies or what Paul calls things that are “falsely called knowledge” (1 Tim. 6:20).

Principle: Believing Scripture precedes understanding our experiences (Ps. 119:98, 100, 130; Heb. 11:3).

- Godless ideologies cannot be helpful “analytical tools” because rightly interpreting the world is predicated by rightly interpreting Scripture. We

⁹ On Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality (<https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/on-critical-race-theory-and-intersectionality/>)

must believe God's *word* before we can know how to think about God's *world*.
"The Bible alone explains the state of things that we see in the world."¹⁰

Claim D: America's racist history provides sufficient criteria to explain racism in America currently.

- In attempting to explain why institutions are racist and how systemic injustices have taken on a new form in modern-day America, it seems popular to appeal to undeniable historical facts such as incarceration of blacks after the Emancipation Proclamation for use as slave labor, redlining, segregated churches, etc.
- Almost always, there is a claim that the same racism exists, but in a different form. Because racist attitudes and systems are now more covert, the racist practices are also more subtle so that they continue to disadvantage minorities in a way that is more difficult to detect and, thus, remains hidden, keeping white people in a place of superiority and power.

Applying Justice

Principle: History does not always provide a sufficient explanation for the current state of things.

- Examples: (1) Genesis 3, the explanation for Adam and Eve's sin could not be located in anything about their past; (2) the Christian's conversion does not find its explanation in his personal history (Eph 2); (3) Israel's perpetual unbelief from Egypt even until now cannot be explained by their history before their captivity in Egypt, since, the patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob — were all men of faith; (4) Israel's future national salvation cannot be explained by their national history (Rom. 11:25-29).

¹⁰ J. C. Ryle, *How Readest Thou?* (Moscow, ID: Charles Nolan Publishing), ??.

III. LAW ENFORCEMENT

Event A: Trayvon Martin¹¹

- This was the event after which #BlackLivesMatter (the organization) started.
- Killed on February 26, 2012 by George Zimmerman, a 28-year old hispanic/white man.
- Zimmerman was on the phone with police because, apparently, several break-ins had occurred in his neighborhood recently. Trayvon ran away from Zimmerman who was following in a car and then on foot. After Zimmerman lost sight of him and hung up with police, they engaged in a violent scuffle and Trayvon ended up dead.
- Zimmerman was eventually acquitted of second degree murder.

Applying Justice

Principle: In some cases, the truth necessary for earthly justice is not knowable (Pro. 29:26).

Event B: Mike Brown and Ferguson¹²

- Mike Brown an 18 year old, black teenager was killed by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014. This was the event that mobilized the BLM organization, from which they later began forming local chapters in various cities.
- Initial story (Dorian Johnson): Mike Brown (6'4", 292lbs) was gunned down by Officer Darren Wilson. Mike Brown was supposedly assaulted had his hands up, pleading with Wilson, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" Several witnesses claimed to hear and/or see Mike Brown this way.
 - Where protestors got the phrase, "Hands up! Don't shoot!"
- Video and forensic evidence eventually revealed a much different story: Mike Brown had just robbed a local corner store. Officer Wilson responded to the call about the theft. When Officer Wilson engaged Brown and Johnson, Mike Brown, apparently, had

¹¹ Wikipedia page, "Shooting of Trayvon Martin" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_Travon_Martin#Background_of_the_shooting)

¹² Wikipedia page, "Shooting of Michael Brown" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_Michael_Brown#Evidence)

reached into the police officer's car and they wrestled for the gun (it fired twice). Officer Wilson pursued Brown on foot and eventually shot Mike Brown six times.

- Evidence: autopsies revealed that the entry and exit wounds of the bullets were through the top of Mike Brown's arms and out the back of his arms, indicating that his arms were down, not up in the air. Mike Brown's DNA was found on the gun as well.

Applying Justice

Principle: Do not render a verdict based on insufficient evidence (Pro. 18:13, 17).

- Resource: ["A Compassionate, Counter-Cultural, Christian Response" by Kevin Huang](#) (pastor at TES Winston-Salem campus)
- Resource: ["Silence is Wisdom, not Weakness - 3 Principles for #Ferguson" by Jesse Johnson](#)

Principle: Render just judgments once the facts are in (Pro. 17:15).

Principle: Truth is not determined by majority vote (Mat. 27:1, 15-26; Acts 4:24-28).

Event C: Breonna Taylor¹³

- Breonna Taylor was a 26 year-old black woman who was fatally shot by police officers in her apartment in Louisville, KY on March 13, 2020. Taylor and her boyfriend were under investigation by local law enforcement because of their drug dealing operations.
- When the officers used force entry into the apartment and her boyfriend Kenneth Walker engaged in a shoot out with the police, Taylor was, unfortunately, caught in the cross fire.
- This was not an instance of injustice (that she was shot), though it was tragic.

Applying Justice

Principle: Those who keep company with foolish companions risk sudden disaster (Pro. 24:21-22).

¹³ Wikipedia page, "Shooting of Breonna Taylor" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_Breonna_Taylor). Also, see Brandon Tatum's exclusive report on Breonna Taylor [here](#).

Event D: George Floyd¹⁴

- Killed on May 25, 2020 by a white police officer, Derek Chauvin. Officer Chauvin had his knee on Floyd's neck on the ground for over eight minutes. Autopsies reported that Floyd, though he had Fentanyl, methamphetamines and cannabinoids in his system, asphyxiation due to physical restraint seems to have been the primary cause of death.
- Floyd was a career criminal, having had multiple run-ins with the law in the past and was detained by Chauvin and other officers because it was reported that he had passed a counterfeit \$20 bill at a store moments earlier.
- In the video, Floyd is refusing to submit to simple instructions of the officers. This does not justify the brutal treatment, obviously, but it does remind us of some pertinent biblical principles.
- Was this racial? This is unknown. Floyd and Chauvin had had prior personal run ins at clubs in the past.

Applying Justice

Principle: Guilt is not grounds for excessive punishment (Deut. 25:3)

Principle: Lawlessness is suicidal (Pro. 1:8-19).

Principle: Foolishness invites calamity (Pro. 1:29-31).

¹⁴ Wikipedia page: "George Floyd" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Floyd)

IV. LAMENT¹⁵

Claim A: Church leaders and members ought to practice biblical lament with minorities who are grieving racial injustices.

Applying Justice

Principle: Proper grief requires knowledge (Pro. 19:2).

- Corporate lament, an expression of love for others (Rom. 12:15) requires knowledge of some kind. Perhaps, at a minimum, godly lamentation requires knowledge of what is making others sorrowful (Job 2:11-13). If the sorrow being experienced by others is not in keeping with the truth, gentle timely instruction may be needed.

Principle: Sorrow and suffering does not exempt us from instruction, correction, or even rebuke.

- Biblical examples:
 1. Job (Job 32:1-37:24)
 2. Rachel (Gen. 30:1)
 3. Jacob (Gen. 43:1-10)
 4. Aaron (Lev. 10:1-3)
 5. David (2 Sam. 19:1-8)
 6. Jesus' disciples (Lk. 24:13-27)
 7. Thessalonian church (1 Thess. 4:13-5:11)

¹⁵ For examples of teachings on lament and race, see Mark Vroegop's articles: "[How Lament Can Help with Racial Reconciliation](#)," "[Repentance for the Sake of Racial Reconciliation](#)," and "[How to Grieve Racial Violence through Lament](#)" and Thabiti Anyabwile "[Why We Never 'Wait for All the Facts' Before We Speak](#)". The fatal flaw in these articles is that they assume the validity of those who are grieving, and in so doing, miss the opportunity to instruct Christians to grieve for right reasons and from a clear conscience.