

God's Justice: Restorative, Not Retributive

Examining Four Types of Justice

Mako A. Nagasawa



THE ANÁSTASIS CENTER
FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & MINISTRY

Outline

- Four Types of Justice
- God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?
- God's Actions toward Israel: Restorative or Retributive?
- God's Presence in Israel: Restorative or Retributive?
- God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?

Outline

- **Four Types of Justice**
- God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?
- God's Actions toward Israel: Restorative or Retributive?
- God's Presence in Israel: Restorative or Retributive?
- God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?

A Vision for Relationship



A Vision for Relationship



A Vision for Relationship of All Types

- Friendships (brother's keeper, sister's keeper)
- Marriage
- Family
- Economic
- Political
- Involving historic injustice

What is the Most Just Way to Treat People? According to...

Select one

Our merits

Meritocratic Justice

Our needs

Distributive Justice

*Our inherent
freedom & liberty*

Libertarian Justice

*A vision for healthy
relationships*

Restorative Justice

What is the Most Just Way to Treat People? According to...

To Republicans

Select one

#2

Our merits

Meritocratic Justice

Our needs

Distributive Justice

*Our inherent
freedom & liberty*

Libertarian Justice

#1 Economic

*A vision for healthy
relationships*

Restorative Justice



What is the Most Just Way to Treat People? According to...

To Democrats

Select one

#3

Our merits

Meritocratic Justice

#2

Our needs

Distributive Justice

#1

*Our inherent
freedom & liberty*

Libertarian Justice

Social

*A vision for healthy
relationships*

Restorative Justice

Why Should Your Definition of Justice Prevail?

Select one

Majority opinion

Minority opinion

Tradition

WE MAKE THE RULES

Theological foundation

Philosophical foundation

There is no "justice,"
only power

I don't care

I don't know

Other

Whose Justice? Which Order?

- Meritocratic: Reward, punish
- Distributive: Baseline wealth
- Libertarian: Maximize freedom
- Restorative: Vision of relationships

- A Foundation? Is your order grounded in something, or fundamentally arbitrary?



Why Should Your Definition of Justice Prevail?

Select one

Majority opinion

Minority opinion

Tradition

WE MAKE THE RULES

Theological foundation

Philosophical foundation

There is no "justice,"
only power

For secularists

I don't care

I don't know

Other

Why Restorative Before All Others?

- Jesus restores God's original creation order for how we:
 - Forgive and reconcile (Mt.5:21 – 26; 6:12 – 15; 18:1 – 35)



Why Restorative Before All Others?

- Jesus restores God's original creation order for how we:
 - Express sexuality and marriage (Mt.19:3 – 12)
 - Monogamous, male-female, lifelong: “Have you not read that He who created them **from the beginning**...Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you... but **from the beginning**...” (Mt.19:4, 8)



Why Restorative Before All Others?

- Jesus restores God's original creation order for how we:
 - Share wealth (Mt.19:13 – 30)
 - Radical generosity: “**In the regeneration...**” (Mt.19:28)
 - Share power and honor (Mt.20:1 – 28)



Why Distributive Before Meritocratic

Mosaic Israel: Land

- Leviticus 25
- Deuteronomy 15, 24
- Isaiah 58

- Proverbs 10:4, etc.



Why Distributive Before Meritocratic

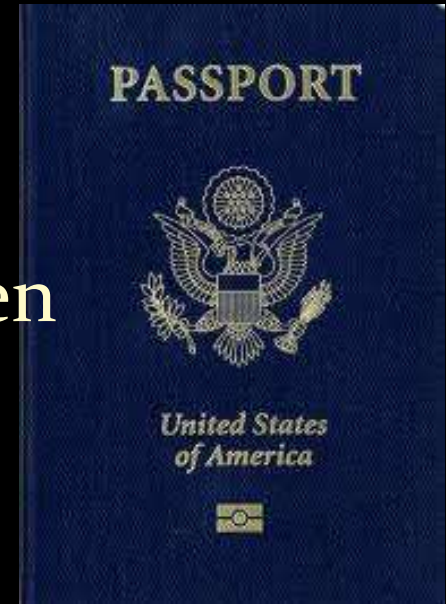


Church: Table

- Matthew 6:19 – 34; 19:13 – 30
- Luke 6, 12, 14; Acts 2, 4, 6
- 2 Corinthians 8 – 9
- 2 Thessalonians 3:10 – 12

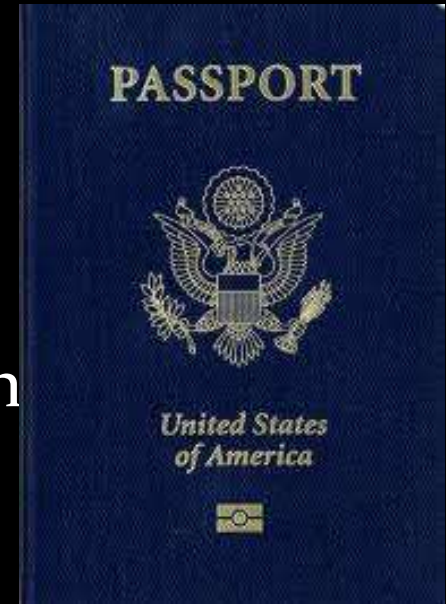
What About Libertarian Justice?

- “Individualism” is not the highest principle
 - Why not sell U.S. citizenship on the open market?
 - Why not secede?
 - Are all relationships really just optional social constructs?



What About Libertarian Justice?

- Some legitimate concerns
 - The individual is important but in a relational context and vision
 - Freedom of religious conscience in Roman 9 – 11: not theocracy but some political pluralism
 - Other-harm vs. self-harm in Genesis and the New Testament



What is the Most Just Way to Treat People? According to... To Christians

Select one

Our merits

Meritocratic Justice

#3

#2

Our needs

Distributive Justice

#4

*Our inherent
freedom & liberty*

Libertarian Justice

#1

*A vision for healthy
relationships*

Restorative Justice



Why Should Your Definition of Justice Prevail?

Select one

Majority opinion

Minority opinion

Tradition

WE MAKE THE RULES

Theological foundation

Philosophical foundation

There is no "justice,"
only power

I don't care

I don't know

Other

Outline

- Four Types of Justice
- **God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?**
- God's Actions toward Israel: Restorative or Retributive?
- God's Presence in Israel: Restorative or Retributive?
- God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?

God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?

- Victim-Centered; the Offender Pays the Cost of Healing
 - ¹⁸ If men have a quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die but remains in bed, ¹⁹ if he gets up and walks around outside on his staff, then he who struck him shall go unpunished; he shall only pay for his loss of time, **and shall take care of him until he is completely healed.** (Exodus 21:18 – 19)

God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?

- Victim-Centered; the Offender Pays the Cost of Healing
 - ²⁹ If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death. ³⁰ If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him. (Exodus 21:29 – 30)

God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?

- Victim-Centered; the Offender Pays the Cost of Healing
 - “An eye for an eye” is an outer limit of proportionality for cases of bodily harm, meant to represent financial compensation (Talmud *Bava Kamma* 83b – 84a) or, in some cases, lashes (*Makot* 1:1)
 - Rabbis’ joke: What if the offender was already blind?

God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?

- Victim-Centered; the Offender Pays the Cost of Healing
 - “An eye for an eye” in Jewish law means “I become your second eye”

God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?

- Consistency with Leviticus 19, Heart of the Law
 - (A) 17 You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart;
 - (B) you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.
 - (A') 18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people,
 - (B') but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.

God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?

- “In fact, the text gives us parallel sets of contrasting parallels... hating one's neighbor (A) is parallel with taking vengeance upon one's neighbor (A') – and both are prohibited; likewise, reproving one's neighbor (B) is parallel with loving one's neighbor (B') – and both are commanded.

God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?

- “Repaying harm for harm and injury for injury in due measure... does not fulfill God’s intent for his covenant people. Not retribution but reproof fulfills the righteousness that God wills; not hate but love is the holiness that God desires.”
 - Darrin W. Snyder-Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (2012), p.408

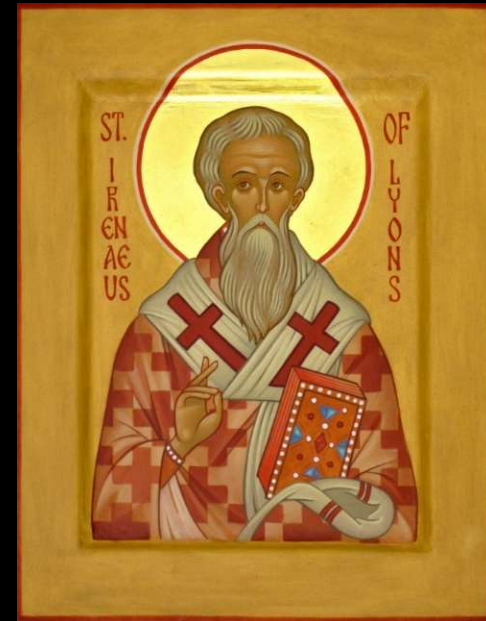
Outline

- Four Types of Justice
- God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?
- **God's Actions towards Israel: Restorative or Retributive?**
- God's Presence in Israel: Restorative or Retributive?
- God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?

God's Acts: Exile and Death from Eden?

“Wherefore also He drove him out of Paradise, and removed him far from the tree of life, not because He envied him the tree of life, as some venture to assert, but because He pitied him, **[and did not desire] that he should continue a sinner for ever, nor that the sin which surrounded him should be immortal, and evil interminable and irremediable.** But He set a bound to his [state of] sin, by interposing death, and thus causing sin to cease, putting an end to it by the dissolution of the flesh, which should take place in the earth, so that man, ceasing at length to live to sin, and dying to it, might begin to live to God.”

- Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3.23.6 (2nd century)



God's Acts: Exile and Death from Eden?

“In order, then, that man might not be an undying or ever-living evil, as would have been the case if sin were dominant within him, as it had sprung up in an immortal body, and was provided with immortal sustenance, God for this cause pronounced him mortal, and clothed him with mortality... For while the body still lives, before it has passed through death, sin must also live with it... For the present we restrain its sprouts, such as evil imaginations, test any root of bitterness springing up trouble us, not suffering its leaves to uncloset and open into shoots; while the Word, like an axe, cuts at its roots which grow below. But hereafter the very thought of evil will disappear.”

- Methodius of Olympus, *Discourse on the Resurrection* 1.4 – 5 (3rd century)



God's Acts: Exile and Death from Eden?

“For the Word, perceiving that no otherwise could the corruption of men be undone save by **death as a necessary condition...**”

- Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation* 8.1 (4th century)



God's Acts: Exile and Death from Eden?

“Yet here too he makes a gain, namely death and the cutting off of sin, **in order that evil may not be immortal**. Thus, his punishment is changed into a mercy, for it is in mercy, I am persuaded, that God inflicts punishment.”

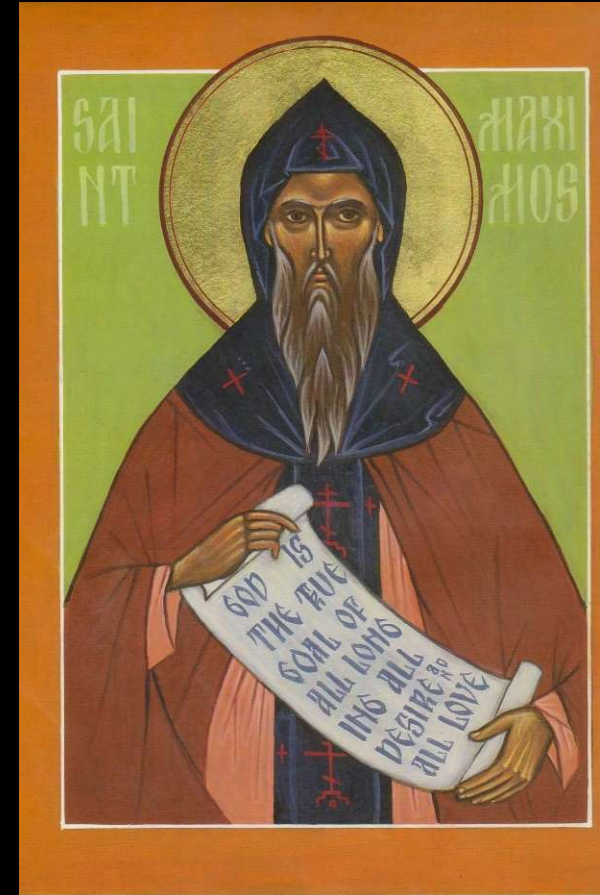
- Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 45* (4th century)



God's Acts: Exile and Death from Eden?

“The phrase, ‘And now, lest he put forth his hand and take from the Tree of Life and live forever,’ providentially produces, I think, the separation of things that cannot be mixed together, so that evil might not be immortal, being maintained in existence by participation in the good.”

- Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassios Question 44.5* (7th century)



God's Actions: Restorative or Retributive?

- Israel's Opponents
 - Flood on Noah's Contemporaries
 - Fire on Sodom and Gomorrah
 - Death of the Egyptian Firstborn
 - Conquest of the Midianites, Canaanites

God's Actions: Restorative or Retributive?

- Israel's Opponents: Restorative
 - Protected Israel so Jesus could eventually be born
 - Rationale: No Israel, no Jesus, no redemption
 - Attacking Israel was equivalent to suicide
 - A Pause Button: Jesus offered himself to those who died before his coming (1 Pet.3:18 – 19; 4:6; creeds; icons);
“Holy Saturday”

God's Actions: Restorative or Retributive?



God's Actions: Restorative or Retributive?

- God's Judgments on Israel
 - Vulnerability to Enemies
 - Captivity and Exile by Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome

God's Actions: Restorative or Retributive?

- God's Judgments on Israel: Restorative
 - Restorative justice: Offenders must participate in undoing the harm they do
 - Partner with God to heal the human heart
 - “Circumcise your hearts” (Dt.10:16)
 - “Write the law on your hearts” (Dt.6:4 – 9; Prov.3:3; 7:3)
 - Faithless parents had to instill faith in their children
 - Wilderness: first to the second generation (Num.13 – 14); Moses to Joshua (Num.20; Dt.1ff.)
 - Babylonian Exile: “to the third and fourth generation” (Ex.20:5)
 - Children benefited, parents did not

God's Actions: Restorative or Retributive?

- God's Judgments on Israel
 - God intended
 - Exile from the garden land, retelling Adam and Eve's exile
 - Foreign rule, revealing idolatry (e.g. Josh.23:12 – 13)
 - River-based empires to over-extend themselves (Isa.7 – 20)

God's Actions: Restorative or Retributive?

- God's Judgments on Israel
 - God did not intend all the harm Israel suffered
 - Warfare: Even David was a 'man of blood' (1 Chr.28:3); God responded to prayer (Chronicles)
 - The kings concentrated wealth in Jerusalem, making it a target (e.g. Solomon; Hezekiah in Isa.38 – 39), then the kings defended Jerusalem militarily
 - Jerusalem has received “**double**” for her sins (Isa.40:2)
 - “But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was **only a little angry, they furthered the disaster.**” (Zech.1:15)

God's Actions: Restorative or Retributive?

- God's Exile of Adam and Eve: Restorative
- God's Protection of Israel from Enemies: Restorative
- God's Judgments on Israel: Restorative

Outline

- Four Types of Justice
- God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?
- God's Actions towards Israel: Restorative or Retributive
- **God's Presence in Israel: Restorative or Retributive?**
- God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?

God's Presence in the Sanctuary

- Is God bloodthirsty? Or a blood-donor?
- Was God retributive? Or restorative?



Further Up

- Moses ascends Mount Sinai
- Purpose: God purifies Moses and stabilizes the Sinai covenant with him



Further In

- High priest enters the Holy of Holies
- Purpose: God purifies Israel and renews the Sinai covenant



Further Up

- Mount Sinai:
Three Vertical
Levels
 - Base: People
 - Mid-Level: Elders
 - Top: Moses (w/
Joshua)

Further In

- The Sanctuary:
Three Horizontal
Levels
 - Outer Court: People
 - Holy Place: Priests
 - Holy of Holies: High
Priest

“...make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain” (Ex.25:40; 26:30)

Further Up

- Divine Fire on the way to the top of the mountain
- From base to middle: “Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire...” (Ex.19:18)

Further In

- Fire in the bronze altar on the way into the Holy of Holies
- Outer court: “The altar shall be most holy, and whatever touches the altar shall be holy” (Ex.29:37)

Further Up

- Divine Fire on the way to the top of the mountain
- “I was standing between the Lord and you... for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.” (Dt.5:4 – 5)

Further In

- Fire in the bronze altar on the way into the Holy of Holies
- The priests partition the animal (sin offering) in the outer court
 - Flesh
 - Liver, kidney, intestinal fat
 - Blood

Further Up

- Middle: Moses, Aaron, and 70 elders ate and drank (Ex.24:9 – 11)

Further In

- Holy Place: Bread of the Presence, for the priests to eat (Lev.24:5 – 9)

Further Up

- Middle to Top:
Moses was probably guided by divine light through the cloud

Further In

- Holy Place: Gold lampstand with seven candles (Ex.25:31, 37) – recalling the burning bush?

Further Up

- Middle to Top:
Divine cloud on
the mountain
(Ex.24:15 – 16)

Further In

- Holy Place:
Golden altar of
incense ‘in front
of the veil’
(Ex.30:1 – 8)
creates the
smoke, retelling
the cloud

Further Up

- Middle to Top: Towards the mountaintop, all is sky (Ex.24:10 “pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself”)

Further In

- Holy Place and Holy of Holies: The gold-covered walls (Ex.26:29) create an *infinite mirror* effect, where all is sky



Further Up

- Top: Moses sees God “face to face” and yet not
 - God as pillar of light and fire (Ex.33:17 – 34:9)

Further In

- Holy of Holies: The high priest sees God
 - God as pillar of light above and between the two cherubim on the lid of the mercy seat (Ex.25:17 – 22)

“At the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword” (Gen.3:24; Rev.1:12 - 18)



Further Up

- Top: Moses goes to meet with God
 - “You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the Lord, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin” (Ex.32:30).
 - “So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights” (Ex.34:28)

Further In

- Holy of Holies: The high priest enters once a year, on Yom Kippur (Lev.16)
 - The veil hides him from sight
 - He renews the covenant by making atonement by his active obedience and faithfulness, not his passive suffering

Further Up

- Top: God renews the broken covenant with Moses (Ex.33:15 – 18), not by punishing him, but by purifying him

Further In

- Holy of Holies: God renews the broken covenant with Israel, not by punishing the high priest, but by purifying him
 - Wears linen
 - Burnt offering for himself (Lev.16:4, 6, 11)
 - Two goats for Israel: sin offering and scapegoat
 - Uncorrupted blood sprinkled

Further Up

- Top: The effect of the covenant renewal
 - God remains present with Israel
 - God leads Israel into the garden land

Further In

- Holy of Holies: The effect of the covenant renewal
 - God remains present with Israel
 - God renews the garden land
 - God regifts the garden land to all His children on the Jubilee on Yom Kippur (Lev.25:8 – 12)

God's Presence in the Sanctuary

- God and Israel retold/recapitulated Moses' ascent
 - Moses mediated the covenant via active obedience
 - Moses' face shone – God's restored His vision of the human (partial transfiguration/purification)
- In the sanctuary, God was acting like a dialysis machine



God's Presence in the Sanctuary

- God is not bloodthirsty; **God is a blood-donor**
- God was not retributive, but **restorative**



Outline

- Four Types of Justice
- God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?
- God's Actions towards Israel: Restorative or Retributive?
- God's Presence in Israel: Restorative or Retributive?
- **God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?**

God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?



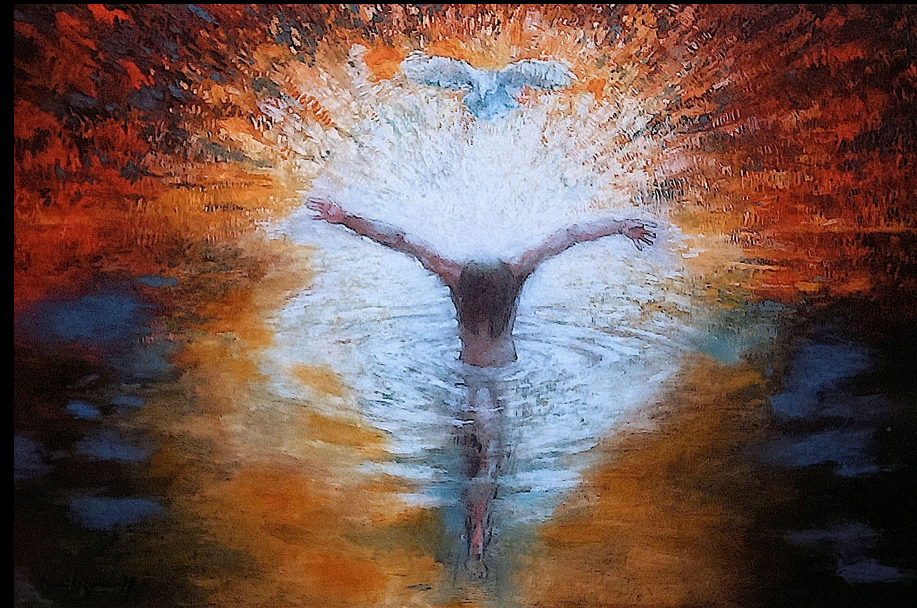
- “Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him... The heavens were opened...



God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?



- “...and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’



God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?



- “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he then became hungry.” (Mt.3:13 – 4:11)



Israel

- Water
 - Red Sea
- Wilderness
 - 40 years
- Deuteronomy
- Temptations:
Failed

Jesus

- Water
 - Jordan River
- Wilderness
 - 40 days
- Deuteronomy 3x
- Temptations:
Victorious

God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?



- Jesus retold Israel's story
 - Israel's vocation:
 - To circumcise the heart (Dt.10:16; Rom.2:28 – 29)
 - To return to / restore the garden land, with a circumcised heart (Dt.30:6)



God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?



- Jesus retold Israel's story
 - “When He had made purification of sins...” (Heb.1:3)
 - “He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey Him” (Heb.5:8 – 9)



God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?

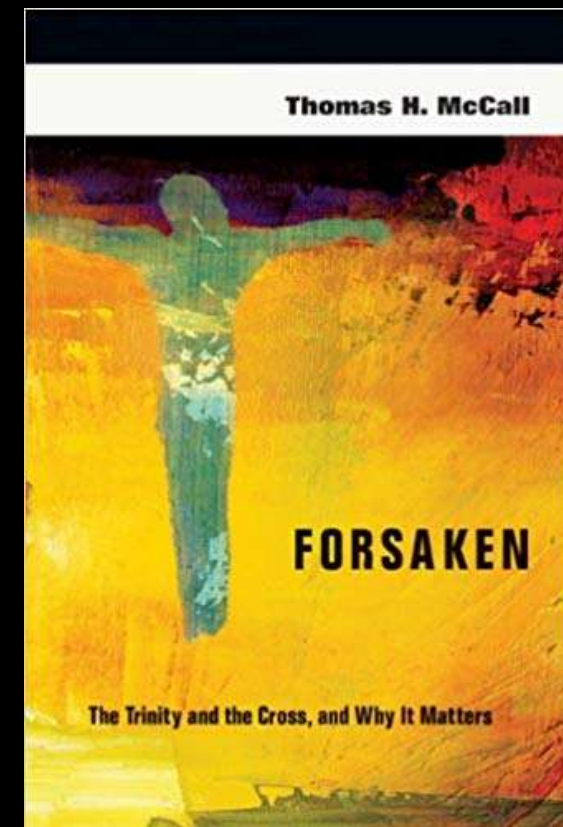


- Jesus retold David's story, too
 - David's vocation
 - To lead the nations in worship
 - Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" to retell David's story
 - God's restorative justice
 - Not retributive justice, not abandonment



Jesus' Use of Psalm 22 on the Cross

- **Every** patristic writer commenting on Jesus' "My God, my God..." **denies** that the Son was separated from the Father, e.g.
 - "Neither can the Lord be forsaken by the Father, who is ever in the Father, both before He spoke, and when He uttered this cry."
 - Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Arianos* 3.56
 - "Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me"
 - Jesus in John 16:32



David

- Faithful woman, barren
 - Hannah
- Prophet born supernaturally
 - Samuel
- Prophet anoints a new king
 - Samuel, David

Jesus

- Faithful women, 'barren'
 - Elizabeth, Mary
- Prophets born supernaturally
 - John the Baptist, Jesus
- Prophet anoints a new king
 - John the Baptist, Jesus

David

- Fights a giant in the wilderness
 - Goliath
 - Later, David saw Bathsheba from his palace, desired, then raped her
- Builds a new kingdom while persecuted by King Saul

Jesus

- Fights a giant in the wilderness
 - Satan
 - “a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory... ‘All these things I will give You’”
- Builds a new kingdom while persecuted by Jewish and Roman leaders
 - Quoted 1 Samuel 21 (Mt.12:3 – 4) about the bread

David

- Anointed to be king, yet on the run
- Enters God's sanctuary
 - Took 5 loaves from 12
 - Left 7 loaves behind (1 Sam.21)



Jesus

- Anointed to be king, yet on the run
- Becomes God's sanctuary
 - Took 5 loaves, left 12 baskets full (Mt.14:13 – 21)
 - Took 7 loaves, left 7 “large baskets” full (Mt.15:29 – 39)



Jesus' Pre-Enthronement Life

- Jesus' Bread Multiplication Miracles Expressed
 - A Claim to Be the King
 - “they intended to come and make him king by force” (Jn.6:15)
 - A Claim to Be the Temple of God's Presence
 - “something greater than the temple is here” (Mt.12:6)



Jesus' Pre-Enthronement Life

- Jesus' Entrance into Jerusalem
 - David fled Jerusalem with two donkeys (2 Sam.16:1), abdicating the throne
 - Jesus entered Jerusalem with two donkeys (Mt.21:6), claiming the throne



Jesus' Pre-Enthronement Life

- Jesus Suffered Like David Suffered
 - Persecuted by the reigning Jewish powers
 - Driven into the hands of the Gentiles
 - If David suffered to build the kingdom, how much more the greater David? (Mt.27:37 – 46; Mk.15:29 – 34)

Jesus' Use of Psalm 22 on the Cross

- Quotes Psalm 22:1 for others, not himself
 - Jesus was still anointed by the Spirit to be king, like David (1 Sam.16:13)
 - Jesus was forsaken *to the Gentiles*, like David
 - Jesus still saw the face of God *favor* him, like David did (Ps.22:24; Jn.16:32)
 - “Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me” (Jn.16:32)

Jesus' Use of Psalm 22 on the Cross

- Quotes Psalm 22:1 for others, not himself
 - Mockers quoted Psalm 22:8 first
 - Chief priests, scribes and elders said, 'He trusts in God; let God rescue him now, if He delights in him' (Mt.27:41 – 43; ironically quoting Ps.22:8)
 - 'Those who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him *with the same words*' (Mt.27:44)
 - Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 *in response* (Mt.27:46)

Outline

- Four Types of Justice
- God's Laws: An Eye for an Eye?
- God's Actions toward Israel: Restorative or Retributive?
- God's Presence in Israel: Restorative or Retributive?
- God's Act in Jesus: Restorative or Retributive Atonement?

God's Restorative Justice in Christ

- “Man, who had sin in himself... was liable to death. For it behooved Him who was to destroy sin, and redeem man under the power of death, that He should Himself be made that very same thing which he was, that is, man; who had been drawn by sin into bondage, but was held by death, so that sin should be destroyed by man, and man should go forth from death... Thus, then, was the Word of God made man... God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man, **that He might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify humanity...**”
 - Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3.18.7

Dominant Evangelical

- Legal
- Guilt, legal standing
- Retributive justice
- Jesus died to absorb divine retribution, abandonment
- Hell is a prison

Classical Early Christian

- Medical
- Corruption in human nature
- Restorative justice
- Jesus died and rose to heal human nature, with Father, by Spirit
- Hell is an addiction to something else