

Saints Shall Judge The World

"Dare any of you, having a matter against his neighbor go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? or know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (2 Cor. 6:1-3).

Paul has reprimanded the Corinthians for their divisions (1 Cor. 1:10); for being puffed up regarding the brother who had taken and was living with his father's wife (1 Cor. 5:1-3). Now he turns his attention to their civil suits and squabbles. The Corinthians' church members were carrying matters of litigation to courts of unbelievers, a scandalous thing, said the apostle. He tells them to suffer wrong, if need be; but not to defraud and wrong their brother (6:1-8). Whatever ills Jews had in the first century; they were not guilty of this wrong. They settled their problems before their own courts, not heathen one. Christians should have done the same.

It is a sad, yet true fact that through the ages brethren have ignored this command given by the Holy Spirit. In the past two centuries, quarrels among churches have often been settled by courts of the world. There are notable instances when the possession of church buildings were left to the courts to decide. Because so many congregations opposing human societies in the late 1800s and early 1900s were forced to give buildings they had built to a majority which later came to be a part of them, it became a common practice that churches would write a "restriction in their deeds" that forbade the church to have "ladies' aids," missionary societies, etc. The church building in Apple Springs, Texas was sold a few days back and the funds given to the "nearest congregation" that opposed the innovations of the "progressives" (as the apostatizing churches were wont to describe themselves). The Hope, New Mexico church which has the oldest building among brethren in that state, displays the deed to their property, written in the very early 1900s, which forbids their property to be used for the additions which divided the church in the 1800s and early 1900s. Paradoxically enough, the great-grandchildren of some of these early pioneers, now hold and practice in the property of their ancestors, the additions an earlier generation opposed. On the other hand there have been examples where brethren have publicly yielded property to innovators, rather than "go to law" with their brethren.

"Or know ye not that saints shall judge the world?" There is no difficulty understanding the apostles instructions regarding lawsuits, but his statement that saints shall judge the world is not so easily perceived.

Some take the statement literally, that at the final day, saints will join with Christ in "*judging the world.*" Those who take this stance cite Mt. 29:22:28f as proof. "*Those who have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*" This passage does mention disciples judging, but these disciples were the apostles. And those who the apostles "judged" were the twelve tribes of Israel, not the world. Matthew 19:28 is not proof that sometimes Christians shall judge the world.

Some see the judgment is through the examples Christians give in the lives that just as light condemns darkness; for good condemns evil. That is true, but is that the point the Holy Spirit intended to make? The word does say that "*we shall judge the world.*" This seems to tell us there is some sense in which saints shall judge the world. When our Lord comes again, He will tell us exactly when He meant by that. Till then, we must not be contentious over this statement, obviously hard to understand.

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