

Judge! Judge not! Which? Who? and When?

God judges, Genesis 6-9; 18:25;

God sent not His son to condemn the world but that the world though Him might be saved, John 3:17.

God gave the Man Christ Jesus authority to judge, John 5 22, 27, 30.

The Lord gave the assembly and later the apostles authority and responsibility to judge among believers, Matthew 18:18, 20, John 20:23.

The apostle Paul coached the Assembly at Corinth in the responsibility and use of this authority in ch 5:3-5.

The apostle used his personal authority directly (1Timothy 1:20) and in conjunction with the Assembly in 1Cor. 5.

The Assembly does not have authority to judge those without, whether claiming to be believers or not, 1Corinthians 5:12-13.

The Assembly's authority to judge sin in its midst is limited, in this age, to putting the person away. We cannot impose punitive judgement (punish a person). Putting away and shunning is the most severe thing we have authority for, 1Corinthians 5.

An individual believer, other than an Apostles, is not given authority to put others away from the assembly, 3John 9-10.

Individual believers are given responsibility as to their associations and as to whom they welcome into their homes, 2John.

Neither the assembly or individual believers have authority to examine or judge another's service for the Lord, ch 4:1-4; Romans 14:4, 13.

The Assembly is responsible to recognize the presence of spiritual gift in an individual and to fellowship with individuals or groups seeking to serve the Lord, Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-27; 15:40; 1Timothy 4:14; 5:17; Philippians 2:19-20; 29-30; 3John 5-8, 12 .

Other assemblies and individuals are responsible to receive and assist those commended, 3John 5-8, 12.

Believers will reign with Christ and judge men and even angels, ch 6:1-3; 2Timothy 2:12; Revelation 2:26-27; 20:6.

God will judge those who corrupt or destroy His temple (the assembly), ch.3:16-17.

All believers will appear before the judgement seat of Christ, and give account of ourselves to God, Rom 2:14; 14:10-12; 1Corinthians 4:5; 2Corinthians 5:9-11; 2Timothy 4:8; where our actions and service will be evaluated and rewarded, that what was unprofitable stripped off.

The Lord will reward those who labor for Him and build with good materials, and destroy the works built with inferior materials, ch 3:12-15.

The believer is not to take disputes with another believer to a court of justice. We are not to sue one another! Ch 6.

[Doesn't this seem to prevent a believers going to court against a spouse to get a divorce?]

However the believer is to be subject to the powers that be, Romans 13:1-7; 1Peter 2:13-17; unless authorities order us to disobey God, Acts 3:17-20; 4:26-29.

We can defend ourselves in civil or criminal court if falsely accused by an unbeliever or the authorities. The Apostle did and the Lord Himself witnessed a good confession before Pilate, Acts 6:16:36-39; 25:10-11; 1Timothy 6:13; 2Timothy 4:16-18; but we must depend upon God to deliver us, Acts 12:1-19; Philippians 1:19; Philemon 22.

If we have a dispute, or have been damaged by another believer we can often just take it with a forgiving spirit. If beneficial to the one who harmed us we can mutually ask a local brother or sister in the local assembly to decide between us, ch 6.

The civil government, national, state, local or even public schools ("the powers that be are established by God") have authority to punish evil (even by death.), Romans 13:1-4.

If a believer commits a crime he is to be subject to the laws and penalties without complaint, or lying to plead not guilty.

If a believer is a crime victim, or becomes aware of a crime, he should report it to the appropriate authorities if the law requires that. He may forgive the perpetrator but does not have the right to thwart justice, although if given the choice may decide not to press charges.

HOWEVER: Neither the Assembly or an individual believer has the right to pass judgement on another's person. Christ has died for our sins. We cannot be judged for them. We are justified in God's sight and counted righteous before Him, Romans 3:24-26.

Only God knows the heart. We are responsible to know others by their deeds, conduct, manner of life and confession of Christ, Matt 7:15-20; 2Timothy 2:19. We are to beware of imposters, wolves in sheep's clothing, who attempt to creep in and destroy, Matthew 7:15-20; Acts 20:28; Galatians 1:6-9; 2:4; 2Peter 2:1; 1John 2:18-19; 4:1-2; 2John 7, 10; Jude 4, 10-13; Revelation 2:2; 2:14; 2:20.

We preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to any we are in doubt of.

By Ron Canner, March 12, 2003