

In verse 13, a man from the crowd around Jesus asks him to settle an inheritance dispute with his brother. Judging civil cases like this would be an expected duty of a ruler. In Exodus 18, Moses is so overwhelmed by the daily docket of cases that his father-in-law advises him to delegate most of them. And one reasons the people of Israel ask Samuel for a king is to have a place where they can take their legal disputes. “*But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles*” (1 Samuel 8:19-20).

What’s more, it was reasonable to expect the Messiah to fulfill the role of judge. Isaiah 16:5 prophesies “... *then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.*”

But Jesus declines the case. For one, since they have rejected Him as king, He will not let them employ Him

as a judge. Instead, He uses the request as a way to define the character of His kingdom in the following verses.

1 Timothy 1:9 says “*the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners.*” From this we might conclude that the Lord’s future kingdom will include both redeemed and unredeemed persons, the latter being the ones needing an arbiter to decide their claims. As for the redeemed, our new nature should give us the discernment and unselfishness to judge among ourselves without appealing to a higher court. “*When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?*” (1 Corinthians 6:1-2).

Questions:

1. What does verse 12:1 tell us about the Lord’s current level of popularity? How does He respond?
2. What is the leaven of the Pharisees?
3. Explain verses 2-3.

4. According to verses 4 and 5, who are we to fear and not fear?
5. When will the events of verses 8-9 take place?
6. Do verses 11-12 mean you should never prepare for a public defense of your faith?
7. What is the lesson of the parable of the rich fool?
8. What advice is given here to help counter anxiety?