

# A New Judiciary

Just before Jesus' ascension from a hill overlooking Jerusalem, his disciples put to him the question most pressing on their minds - "*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" - **Acts 1:6**. The reply of Jesus, and the subsequent message of the angels, did not call into question the restoration, only the timing, which will be at Christ's return. The message of the angel Gabriel to Mary shows that it will be David's kingdom that will be restored - "*You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end*" - **Luke 1:31**.

The constitution of David's kingdom was the Law of God - see **1 Chron. 15-16, 23-26**. So also will the restored kingdom be, under Jesus. While we are accustomed to separate legislature, executive and the judiciary, they were combined in David's kingdom. An example of the combined function can be seen in Solomon's notable court decision in a child custody dispute between two women - **1 Kings 3**. Being under the law of Moses, the case would have begun with a local judge, and then been referred up the line - **Deut. 17:8-20** - until it reached the Supreme Court, presided over by the King.

The apostle John, being given a vision of "*things which must shortly take place*", saw the redeemed exclaiming of Jesus, "*You ... have made us kings (executive) and priests (worship and judicial) to our God; and we shall reign on the earth*" - **Revelation 5:10**. This arrangement fits in with Christ's parable of the Talents in **Matthew 25**, where the faithful are given differing levels of responsibility in his government. All will be made immortal, but their positions for the first 1,000 years will be decided by their behaviour in this mortal life. This will help us to understand the reaction of Jesus to the request of James and John for the top positions in Christ's kingdom - **Mark 10:35**. They had not yet understood that "*from everyone who has been given much*" ability to serve "*much will be demanded*" in mortal service "*and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked*" - **Luke 12:48**.

In the example of Solomon's judgement there were no lawyers mentioned. Under the current system, the level of justice is often seen to depend on the ability to afford legal counsel - and the better (higher priced) the counsel, the more hopeful one is of winning a case. But the law of God was arranged for a maximum of four players in the courtroom: the accuser, the accused, witnesses and the judge. God's law was essentially simple, straight-forward and was to be taught to everyone. Under the presiding of the judge the facts of the case were to be laid out and the decision plainly seen by all to be just.

The law of God makes no mention of prison. The law was centred on restitution. Instead of being locked up or paying a fine to the state, the wrongdoer must compensate the victim. The first choice was direct payment by the culprit. If unable to pay, he must work off his debt up to a maximum of six years - **Exodus 22:3**, etc. At the end of his compulsory service, he was to be given an honourable discharge and a grub-stake to get back on his feet in public life.

Any who failed to comply with the court order was sentenced to death - **Deut. 17:12**. That the death penalty will be brought back is shown in **Isaiah 66:23**. Under the law of Moses murder was a capital offense - **Num. 35:31**, which we should expect to be the case in Christ's kingdom, when the spirit-guided judges will never condemn the innocent. And so, the judiciary of the Kingdom of God will accomplish much to promote public peace and tranquillity everywhere - see **Psalms 72**. Next time, God willing we will look at some more features of "*the law which will go out of Zion*".