

First Corinthians

VERSE-BY-VERSE



roger feenstra | ministries
Hope Now Cambodia | Hope Now Bible Church

In our last Session (17) we looked at the word **saints** in verse 1. The proposition was given for us to consider that whenever the word **saints** is used in the New Testament it always refers to the redeemed Jews, and not the body of Christ, or the Church in which we belong. It makes a difference as to who the **saints** are when we interpret other passages in the New Testament. For example, verse 2:

Verse 2–

In light of the previous passage, where the proposition was made that the Saints are redeemed Jews. If true, we come upon this statement which we may have misapplied. Many Christians have been taught that the *Church* will rule and reign with Christ. But is that teaching correct?

Do you not know, in other words, *you all know what I am about to tell you*. **That the saints shall judge the world?** If we interpret this as *all believers in Christ shall judge the world* (i.e., the Church), we might have a problem with other parts of the Bible. There are many Old Testament passages that specifically tell us who will judge.

Since the Church was a mystery in the Old Testament and was not revealed until the apostle Paul, the following passages must pertain to Israel, not the Church.

- **Daniel 7:18** | 18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.
- **Daniel 7:22** | 22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.
- **Psalms 149:5-9** | ⁵ Let the saints be joyful in glory: Let them sing aloud upon their beds. ⁶ Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand; ⁷ To execute vengeance upon the heathen, And punishments upon the people; ⁸ To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron; ⁹ To execute upon them the judgment written: This honor have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord.
- **Zechariah 14:5** | 5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; For the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: Yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah: And the Lord my God shall come, And all the saints with thee.

Some churches equate the Church with Israel. They say all the promises for Israel (such as the ones above) now apply to the Church. This is called replacement theology and we should reject that. The Church is not Israel.

And if the world shall be judged by you. If it is not the Church who *rules and reigns* with Jesus Christ, then what will the Church be doing in eternity? The honest answer is, we don't know, except to say *we shall ever be with the Lord* (1 [Thessalonians 4:17](#)). Isn't that enough?

Are ye unworthy to judge in the smallest matters? Paul's point in chapter six is, "Look, you are going to judge the world and you can't even decide the smallest legal matters among yourselves in the church?"

Verse 3–

Paul makes a second assumption (see vs. 2), **Do you not know that we shall judge angels?** If we go with the same proposition as in verses 1 and 2, that the use of the word saints means the redeemed Jews, then Paul is stating that the redeemed Jews will judge the world, and they will **judge angels**. But what does he mean? A couple of passages show us that angels will be judged:

- **Jude 6** ⁶ And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

- **2 Peter 2:4** ⁴ For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.

These verses give us no indication that Jews will be doing the judging; only that angels will be judged. Nonetheless, Paul says they will judge angels. His point I think is, "It's going to be a bigger deal to judge angels, why then can't you judge the **things that pertain to this life** among yourselves rather than going before a secular court?"

Verse 4–

Is Paul using hyperbole? Hyperbole is exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally. Paul does this a lot in his writings. Of course, we all do it from time to time. Hyperbole is part of normal conversation. Some people don't *get* hyperbole which causes them to take something as literal when it should be understood figuratively.

Paul says to **set them to judge who are the least esteemed** in the church. This seems like an odd thing to say. Remember the golden rule of interpretation?

WHEN THE PLAIN SENSE OF SCRIPTURE MAKES COMMON SENSE, SEEK NO OTHER SENSE.

In this case, the **least esteemed** may mean those who are utterly despised or those of no account. That does not make common sense; to set the most despised person in the church as a judge. A foolish person would not have any clue how to judge righteously. Therefore, he may be using a figure of speech and this is not likely a command for the church to follow in **judgments of things pertaining to this life**.

Why use this hyperbole? (Hyperbole = an exaggerated statement used to make a point).

Verse 5–

In verse 4 we understood Paul as using hyperbole when he said, *set a despised person over you as judge!* Why say that? He answers our question, **I speak to your shame...** He continues to develop the case for not going before the secular court of law to have their disputes in the church decided.

Is there not a wise man among you? No, not one? There must be at least one wise person in the church who can sit and **judge between his brethren**. Paul's point? Remember who you are! Are you telling me you can't find one wise person in the church? Look around you! Somebody can do it!

Where does real wisdom come from? From the Holy Spirit: 1 Corinthians 2:13.

Verse 6–

It would have been difficult to be the pastor and to worship in the Corinth church. There was so much contention as **brother goes to law against brother**. We get the idea that it wasn't a few, but several in the church were taking each other to court **before unbelievers**. This new church was a poor example to the community, and it is doubtful anyone was being saved.

When we get caught up in the world, we have no time to share the good news. Who would listen to us anyway?

Contrast this church with the new believers in Thessalonica. They were "examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia [and they] sounded out the word of the Lord...in every place." (1 Thessalonians 1:7,8).

Verse 7–

Whether they win or lose their case, **there is utterly a fault among you**. They are already defeated. No one wins in the long run. Plus, this church has failed in other ways. In chapter five, they ignored the sin of fornication, and in fact, boasted, but now they are going to court on lesser charges.

Why do ye not rather take wrong? It is not that we should roll over and passively accept being wronged, but we do need to think it through. What will fighting back do to our testimony for Jesus Christ? **Why do you not rather suffer yourselves be defrauded?** He's probably writing rhetorically (to produce an effect). There is nothing wrong with trying to have a judgment go in your favor. He is not saying we should let people walk all over us. Even Paul appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:11).

Verse 8-

There is no softer way to put it, **you yourselves do wrong and defraud** (cheat). The word **wrong** is to *act unjustly or wickedly*. Paul uses the same word **defraud**, ἀποστερέω, *apostereo* in [1st Timothy 6:5](#) to refer to one who does not teach the sound doctrine, but rather has a mind **destitute** (*apostereo*) of truth.

Both of **these things** are being done in the church **to your brethren!**

Remember, Paul is writing this to Christians!

"I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you are carnal...and walk as men." ([1 Corinthians 3: 2-3](#))

Keep in mind the context of Paul's letter. There is a problem with pride, leading to contentions, in the church.

When Paul first arrived in Corinth, in [Acts 18](#), he spent eighteen months teaching and instructing; giving this baby church **milk** so they could grow. By now, the church should have been eating **meat** and should have been able to chew on solid spiritual food, but they were still in the nursing stage of their Christian lives.

Pride had stunted their spiritual growth. The opposite of pride is humility. As we humble ourselves, and take our eyes off others and think of the cross of Christ, we can then begin to become more spiritually minded and grow stronger in our Christian walk. Pride was a destructive force in this church.