

Kingdom Judicial System
Matthew 18:15—19

There are several names used to describe the remnant of Israel. There have always been only a portion of Israel who are considered true believers. In 1 Kings 19 Elijah was encouraged to know there were 7,000 in Israel who have not bowed their knee to Baal (probably less than 1% of the population). In fact, all through prophecy we can see God dealing with only a remnant. They are often called the Believing Remnant, Scattered Sheep or Little Flock, (Luke 13:32) and, I believe, Christ also refers to them when He talks about the Little Children or Little Ones (Matthew 10:40—42). When Jesus compared the Remnant Believers to a child He was saying they were humble as a child. Luke 17:2 makes it clear that the Little Ones were actually Remnant Believers and not literally children just as John 13:33 clearly points to the Disciples as being Little Children.

There will be a remnant of Jewish believers who come through the Tribulation (Isaiah 4:3). It is this group who will have endured unto the end (Matthew 10:22; 24:13) and everyone in this group will be saved (Romans 11:26). These aren't the only Jewish believers who are saved since there will be many who have given up their life in the name of God during the Tribulation (Revelation 6:9). All of these Jewish believers are part of the remnant who will inherit the Kingdom (Isaiah 10:20—22). John is writing to these "Little Children" in 1, 2 and 3 John. He is imparting to them how to discern believers from unbelievers and to be assured that they themselves are truly believers.

In this age there is still a remnant of Jewish believers but according to Grace instead of according to the Kingdom (Romans 11:5). The Remnant Believers mentioned above are Kingdom believers while the people Paul refers to are Jewish believers saved under the Gospel of the Grace of God.

The Righteous Kingdom

The Millennial Kingdom will be filled with both righteous and unrighteous people. Those who come through the Tribulation and those who are brought back to life to live in the Kingdom will be righteous having been given a renewed heart (Ezekiel 11:19). There will also be many more who will be born whose heart is still evil because sin has not been done away with. They will all be ruled by a perfect Ruler, Jesus Christ. Along with Christ, David will be ruling (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23—24) and the Disciples will be under him sitting on thrones ruling from Jerusalem (Matthew 19:28). Christ will be ruling in righteousness and fairness (Isaiah 11:4) protecting those who are poor and afflicted, something that human governments are unable or unwilling to do.

Righteous Rulers

Although the Millennial Kingdom will be characterized by righteousness and fairness it will be populated by people with a sinful nature necessitating a legal system to contend with those who break the law. This law will be similar to the Mosaic Law and I believe it is described in Ezekiel 44—46. Ezekiel gives the instruction that the Levites are to judge according to God's ordinances. King David divided the Levites into 24 orders of priests (1 Chronicles 24). There is a possible connection with these priests and the 24 elders sitting on thrones around Christ's throne as mentioned in Revelation 4:4. I believe they will form a part of the legal system since they will be hearing disputes and ruling on them according to Ezekiel 44:23—24.

Handling Disputes (Verses 14—17)

Most people understand this passage as being instructions for churches to follow in the case of a dispute within the church. What they don't explain is how this could be for the church today if the church had not even been formed? According to most people the Church came into existence on the Feast of Pentecost.

These are not necessarily bad steps to take for someone who has sinned within a congregation but the actual interpretation of these verses have to do with the legal system that will be set up in the Millennial Kingdom. I believe the first step has application for us in this Age of Grace and involves going to the person who has been sinning. Some versions include the stipulation of the sin being against you but I believe it is proper to see this in a broader light allowing us to confront people who we know are publically sinning. This is a private conversation with the sinner, gently pointing to his sin and showing them from Scripture that he is in the wrong. As Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16 Scripture is to be used for correction and we are to approach him in a spirit of gentleness (2 Timothy 2:24). Within Israel, the Jewish brother was to respect the sinner in the same way.

If this does not correct the sinner then you were to bring two or three witnesses to verify what you are saying is truth. This was not an arbitrary number but was doing exactly what the Mosaic Law said needed to be done. Deuteronomy 17:6 calls for two or three witnesses to condemn someone. It took two false witnesses to condemn Jesus (Matthew 26:60). Even Paul follows this rule in the church (1 Timothy 5:19).

If the two or three witnesses fail to resolve the issue then the final step is to take it to the assembly. The Greek word for assembly is ecclesia. This word is usually interpreted to mean church and is usually understood only in today's connotation of the word. The actual definition of ecclesia is a called-out group. This can be the nation of Israel (Acts 7:38), an angry mob (Acts 19:32), the Hebrew (or Kingdom) church (Matthew 18:17), the Millennial Kingdom assembly of believers (Matthew 16:18) or a church assembly (Acts 20:17). In this case the view is the Millennial Kingdom and the assembly refers to the leaders who are ruling. I believe this assembly acts as the Supreme Court of the world and would likely be this group of 24 elders from the tribe of Levi.

Their rulings will be perfect because they are receiving their information from God. Just as Peter was able to discern that Ananias and Sapphira had told a lie to the Holy Spirit, those who will be acting as judges in the Millennial Kingdom will have perfect knowledge through the Holy Spirit.

Bound and loosed (verse 18)

This has nothing to do with the believer praying for Satan to be bound nor has it anything to do with forgiving or retaining sins (John 20:23). In context, this has to do with the verdict in the court of law in the Millennial Kingdom. Since Peter was given the keys to the Kingdom he and the other Disciples will have ruling authority, what they bind will have been bound in heaven and what they loose will have been loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). It's possible that the Disciples and the 24 elders will be working hand-in-hand administering justice. Since they will be judging perfectly through the power of the Holy Spirit, the decision was already determined in heaven. Therefore what was bound on earth (the man was found guilty) it had already been bound in heaven and what was loosed on earth (the man was innocent and set free) had already been determined in heaven.

Ask and it shall be done (verse 19)

This is a common verse that is so often taken out of context and used every time only a few show up for prayer meeting. The whole context of the Millennial Kingdom judicial system precludes the interpretation to mean that if two or three people get together and pray to God that it will be done for them. These two or three were previously mentioned in verse 16 and relate to witnesses in a court of law. If these two or three witnesses (or judges) agree with each other about a verdict (to bind or loose the man) then Christ is there with them in agreeing to their verdict. Christ may physically be there or He is there in Spirit. Either way, they will rule perfectly because they will know what God's will is. This is why the Disciples were given the power to forgive or not forgive sins. They were acting in the authority of Christ who put them in that position.

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