Law and Justice Bible Studies

God delights in justice, but what is it, and what is unjust in His sight? He has given us Biblical laws, but what relevance do they have to life in the twenty-first century? He has instituted governments, but to what extent should Christians submit to their authorities?

In a clear and provocative manner Law & Justice Bible Studies addresses such questions as it explores the Bible's teaching on these key topics, from Genesis to Revelation.

These studies are intended to encourage, inspire and equip Christians, especially Christian lawyers, to seek justice and live righteously from a Biblical understanding of law and justice and an intimate relationship with God.

"What a difference it can make when lawyers realise God's great heart for law and justice! Accessible, and yet enriching. Thoughtful, and practical. We're delighted that a new edition of this book is available to help lawyers connect their faith in Jesus Christ to their study and work in law."

Mark Bainbridge, Executive Director of LCF

Contributors

Mark Bainbridge, Felipe Carvalho, Sir Jeremy Cooke, Robert Horner, Dominic Hughes , Jon Hyde (1980 - 2022), Rosie Hyde, Ian Miller, and Howard Satterthwaite.

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Law and Justice

Bible Studies with Leader's Guide

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Cover image: Mount Sinai

For Jesus and the generation called
to make a gospel impact.

This is what the LORD says:
"Let not the wise boast of their wisdom
or the strong boast of their strength
or the rich boast of their riches,
but let the one who boasts boast about this:
that they have the understanding to know me,
that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness,
justice and righteousness on earth,
for in these I delight,"
declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

The Lawyers' Christian Fellowship

History

The Lawyers' Christian Fellowship (the LCF) is a fellowship because we are centred on a person and a purpose far greater than ourselves. Formed in 1852 as a prayer union in London, and subsequently renamed the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, the LCF has a long history of helping Christians to remain faithful to Jesus and to be fruitful in the legal world.

Today the LCF has a large and growing membership of Christian lawyers, law students, legal academics, and support staff. Through a network of regional and specialist groups spanning the United Kingdom, and with deeply valued international links which are particularly strong in Europe, East Africa and the United States, the LCF seeks to make a difference in the legal world for Jesus Christ.

Vision

The LCF brings together and supports lawyers who trust Jesus as Saviour and follow him as Lord, so they make a gospel IMPACT in the legal world.

Mission Aims

As a fellowship, we seek to fulfil our vision by:

Inspiring legal mission around the world.
Mobilising legal talents to help the wider church.
Prioritising prayer in the legal world.
Applying Biblical truth to lawyers' realities.
Cultivating Christ-centred relationships in the legal profession.
Talking to lawyers about Jesus Christ.

Membership

We rejoice when Christian lawyers shape history with the gospel. If you are a Christian lawyer, legal academic, support staff or law student, and not already a member of the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, please join us in this work today. To find out more or to join online please visit: www.lawcf.org.

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Foreword to the First Edition

Christian thinking on any subject ought to begin with the Bible. All other Christian writings are, or ought to be, just commentaries. I am therefore very grateful to Howard and the team for taking the time and the trouble to put together this series of Bible studies. My book was meant to be an encouragement to lawyers to read the Bible again and to consider how its message has a vital impact on how we think about the law and our responsibilities as *Christian* lawyers. It is wonderful to see how the LCF has taken up the challenge of putting together an insightful and thought-provoking series of studies which will get us all back to the Bible to read it with fresh eyes.

It is very humbling that Howard has chosen to structure the Bible studies around the chapters in my book. I hope that my book will help to stimulate reflections on the Bible passages chosen, and others which I refer to in *A Biblical View of Law and Justice (2004)*. I also pray that as you spend time in the Word of God you will be able to evaluate the arguments in my book and to see where I have understood the Bible's message and where I have got it wrong.

It is my prayer that, as you spend time reading and

studying the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth (John 16:13) and will give you the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16b). If you want to continue the conversation with me, please do not hesitate to send me an email via admin@lawcf.org and I will do my best to give you an answer.

May God bless you!

David McIlroy

Preface to the First Edition

It has long been the desire of the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship that God would birth and bring to maturity a generation of lawyers who passionately preach justice with their lives from a Biblical understanding of law and a deep, intimate relationship with God. It is my hope that He will use these Bible studies to do just that: the world today needs the witness of a radical generation of *Christian* lawyers!

These studies, however, are very much a first attempt and will undoubtedly need improving and revising in the future, hopefully with the benefit of your much valued feedback. They are not intended as a presentation of the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship's theological views, as is hopefully apparent from their style and structure. They should instead be regarded as a platform for exploring and unpacking what it means to be a Christian lawyer in the twenty-first century.

Some words of thanks. I am extremely grateful to everyone who has assisted in the completion of these Bible studies. I am particularly indebted to Rosie Hyde, Sir Jeremy Cooke, Robert Horner, Dominic Hughes, Jon Hyde

and Ian Miller for their outstanding contributions, which have formed the backbone of each Bible study. Special thanks also must be given to Louise Crook for her considerable linguistic and grammar skills and in particular for making sense of my dyslexic idiosyncrasies and to some good friends more learned in these matters than myself for their theological guidance and wisdom. Numerous other members of the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship have provided much appreciated support, particularly Tom Cordrey and Tim Grainger; thank you!

Thanks also go to the students and young lawyers of the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship who were happy to be guinea pigs in the developmental stages of the Bible studies; to The Hon Mr Justice Cooke for writing the introduction; to Dominic Hughes for his advice and support on copyright issues; and to Ian Miller, Mark Mullins, Steve Sanderson, Andrea Minichiello Williams, John Scriven, James Wakefield and The Hon Mr Justice Cooke and many others who have been excellent role models to and supporters of the younger generation of Christian lawyers, including myself.

Not least, I must thank David McIlroy, first for writing *A Biblical View of Law and Justice*, second for being incredibly gracious in allowing me to structure the Bible studies around the chapters in his book (and to plagiarise from it) and third for his enthusiasm and support of the project. His own book has been invaluable for us in outlining God's consistent passion for justice throughout the Bible and its relationship with law. It has provoked thought and deepened the level of discussion among Christian lawyers. As we all

work things through together we will not always agree on every point and particularly when it comes to application there are a variety of positions held by Bible-loving Christians. These Bible studies are not intended to bring either criticism or endorsement of David's own conclusions. More importantly, he has inspired us to search the Scriptures and dig deep into God's word and wrestle for ourselves with what the Bible teaches. Thank you David!

And finally thanks must be given to my family, Chris, Wendy and Hannah and above all to God: thank you Abba for Jesus.

Howard Satterthwaite

Preface to the Second Edition

At a university freshers' fair, when asked about their motivation for studying law, one student replied "I want to sell my soul and make a lot of money." Though candid and cynical, the sentiment of this simple statement reflects the position of many who enter the legal profession in pursuit of status, wealth, and power.

This book aims to counter such a position by providing a biblical framework for understanding the deeper truer role of the legal profession, that lawyers are called to serve as advocates of justice and righteousness, reflecting the character of a just, holy, and merciful God.

The grand vision for this second edition of "Law and Justice Bible Studies," is consistent with the original: to equip a generation of lawyers who are not only proficient in their professional endeavours but who are also committed to making a profound gospel impact in the legal world. As ever, the LCF aspires to cultivate a community of legal professionals who are deeply rooted in a biblical understanding of justice, and who are nourished by a vibrant, personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

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This revised edition seeks to build upon the solid foundation established by its predecessor. We have refreshed the scope of its Bible studies to address new questions and contemporary challenges facing lawyers and law students alike. Our hope is that these studies will continue to serve as a valuable resource, fostering reflection and facilitating professional and personal growth on the intersection of Christian faith, law, and justice in today's world.

A heartfelt expression of gratitude is extended to all the contributors who have generously shared their time, expertise, and insights to make this second edition possible. Your dedication and commitment have been instrumental in enriching the content and enhancing the quality of these Bible studies.

Thanks also to the dedicated team and trustees at the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship. Your unwavering support, encouragement, and guidance have been invaluable throughout the process of creating this revised edition. Your commitment to the vision of equipping and inspiring a new generation of Christian lawyers has been a driving force behind this project, and we are truly grateful for your collaboration.

A special word of gratitude is extended to David McIlroy for his seminal work, "A Biblical View of Law and Justice." His profound insights have served as a guiding light, inspiring us to delve deeper into the Scriptures and explore the rich tapestry of God's justice throughout history.

To the students and lawyers who have already embraced these studies as a tool for learning and growth, we have been inspired by your enthusiasm, curiosity,

and willingness to engage in thoughtful discussion. Your involvement reaffirms our belief in the transformative power of God's word, and we are grateful for the opportunity to journey together towards a deeper understanding of God's call to justice.

In conclusion, we invite you to join us in this exploration, to seek God's wisdom as we discern His priorities, purpose, and passion for justice. May this revised edition continue to inspire, educate, and equip you in your journey as a Christian lawyer committed to making a difference in the world.

Felipe Carvalho

Introduction to the First Edition

It is my privilege to write an introduction to this book, the purpose and ambit of which are detailed in the foreword and preface. I commend it to you as doing (and doing well) what they say it does. Use it well and you will think through many issues which may otherwise trouble you, or should trouble you, as a Christian lawyer.

My advice to you would be to skip this introduction and get on with the book, save that the following will hopefully help you to get the most out of it.

David McIlroy's book, *A Biblical View of Law and Justice (2004)*, should make you work at understanding and thinking about the issues that Christian lawyers face. This book is designed to make that work of wrestling with the Biblical message of law and justice easier. So start at the beginning of this book and follow it through chapter by chapter, ideally adopting this method with your study group (or adapting it to suit your personal study or quiet times). In the week before attending your group, open this book at the relevant chapter and pray. Then read the corresponding chapter of David's book, followed by the material in this book which seeks to unpack and summarise some

of the key points in David's chapters. Take time to think and pray over what you have read. Next, read the Bible material referred to. Think and pray again every time you put this book down.

If you want to be ahead of the game, consider the questions before the group meets. You could always pray too!

At the group, the focus should be on the Biblical material. You should assume that the preparatory material has been read, but there should be an introductory recap from the person leading the study. You can then move on to the questions which will be discussed by the group. This is where your praying and thinking will link in with those of others, and the Lord will renew minds, wills and hearts for His lawyers to serve Him as Christians who understand His ways more fully.

Prepare yourself for working at and enjoying God's word with His lawyers and your fellow workers. You will not pass the same way again.

Sir Jeremy Cooke

01

The Character Of God

What is God like? This is a challenging question. What would your answer be? How would you describe God? Would it be by making Biblical propositional statements about His character or would it be by describing His interactions with His people, including you, throughout your and their history? Take a moment to reflect on how you would answer the question: 'what is God like?'

A.W. Tozer, a man considered by some to be one of the most influential American evangelists of the twentieth century, boldly wrote in his inspiring classic work *The Knowledge of the Holy* that *"[w]hat comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."*[1]

He continues:

> "A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a

1 Tozer, A. W. *The Knowledge of the Holy* (Cumbria: OM, 1987), page 11.

> failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God."[2]

But what relevance does this have to understanding law, justice and the work of a Christian lawyer? Answer: Plenty! In order to know how God feels about human laws and legal systems and the qualities of character and conduct with which He desires Christian lawyers to possess, we need to have a right idea of what God is like. Let's consider this in more detail.

Christian Lawyers

In the legal world today lawyers have a fairly bad reputation. The legal profession is the butt of a constant stream of jokes, such as:

> *Q. What do honest lawyers and UFO's have in common?*
> *A. You hear about them, but you never see them.*

In marked contrast to the ways of a world that is indifferent about injustice and familiar with half-truths, Christian lawyers should reflect the character of God in their lives and work. We should be models of God's character, since we are being transformed and conformed into His likeness, revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). It is important then that we should know what God is like because, as theologian Christopher Marshall explains:

> "It is God's own self who models and gives content to those qualities of character and conduct that are ethically most

2 *Ibidem*, page 13.

> important for God's people, such as holiness, love, justice, mercy and compassion (Micah 6:8)."[3]

The world should therefore not only hear about these radically different Christian lawyers but should also be able to witness their honesty, holiness, love, acts of justice, mercy and compassion. In short they should see God in us because we, through beholding Him as He truly is, are becoming more like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18).

God's Character as Just

The Bible reveals who God is: God is love; God is gracious; God is merciful; God is sovereign; God is compassionate, etc. Importantly for us, the Bible also reveals that God is Just.

> The LORD is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. Psalm 145:17

> He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he. Deuteronomy 32:4

David McIlroy puts it this way: *"God's justice is displayed in his righteous actions to bring about the state of total rightness, shalom, in which the harmony of the created order, and the peace between God and the people he has created is restored. It is therefore characteristic of God's justice that it seeks to restore relationship."*[4]

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3 Marshall, Christopher D. *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime and Punishment* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001), page 260.

4 McIlroy, David. *A Biblical View of Law and Justice* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), page 12.

God's justice also holds human beings accountable for their actions; because God is holy and just, it means that God judges human conduct by an absolute moral standard, namely Himself and His revealed will to all people.

Laws and Legal Systems

God has instituted governing authorities for our good, to approve what is right and punish wrong (Romans 13:1-4). Laws and legal systems are intrinsic to God's design for good government. Because God is loving, just and holy we would expect Him to prefer laws and legal systems which promote these virtues. It follows then that a right conception of God is the Christian lawyer's plumb line to knowing how He thinks and feels about human laws and legal systems.

As David McIlroy writes: *"If the God with whom we had to contend was a war god, like the Roman god, Mars, then we could expect him to approve of a legal system which encouraged strength, aggression and brutality."*[5] It is important then that Christian lawyers advocate laws and legal systems that are in harmony with the character and nature of the God we worship; laws that reveal the beauty of His character and promote His virtues in society.

Knowing God

In short, it is essential that we pursue the knowledge of God. Like the apostle Paul we should declare, *"I want to know Christ..."* (Philippians 3:10) because we desire to know Him more deeply and intimately. In Philippians 3, Paul was not

5 *Ibidem*, page 16.

just expressing a desire for greater intellectual knowledge in the sense of learning facts about God. He uses the Greek word *ginōskō*, which means to have personal knowledge of and personal experiences with another person. Paul's desire was for deep personal intimacy with God.

There is a significant difference between propositional understanding and personal experience. Imagine two distinct ways of knowing Paris. The first experience involves exploring the wealth of information available on the internet. You read articles, watch videos, and browse through various photos. You discover the Eiffel Tower's height, the history of the Louvre, and the best cafés in Montmartre. You familiarize yourself with the metro system, local customs, and even the city's weather. This virtual excursion provides you with a rich, detailed, yet second-hand understanding of Paris.

The second experience is visiting Paris in person. As you walk along the Seine, the city comes alive. You smell the freshly baked croissants. The Eiffel Tower is no longer just a structure but a breathtaking sight. The art in the Louvre evokes emotions, and having coffee in a Montmartre café turns this into a cherished memory rather than a mere recommendation. This personal visit transforms your understanding of Paris from intellectual knowledge to a deeply personal and sensory experience. This is the difference between knowing about Paris through the internet and knowing Paris by being there – one is informational and detached, while the other is intimate and experiential.

These are truths for us as we draw a parallel with our Christian faith. We can read about God in books and learn

about Him in sermons but to truly know Him we need to personally experience Him, to enjoy Him, to live intimately with Him.

Knowing God personally is the most wonderful thing. Our God is the One who reached out to us at the cross, sending His own Son to save us for the wrong we have done. Our God is the One who sent His Holy Spirit as our counsellor and guide in this dark world. And our God is the One who has prepared a glorious future for us with Him – a future that we do not deserve and cannot earn.

And only by knowing God personally and in truth are we truly able to align our legal work with his heart and purposes.

Please read Chapter 1 of *A Biblical View of Law and Justice* pp. 1-16.

Bible Study Questions

01

Read Exodus 6:5-8 and Deuteronomy 4:32-34. What is God like?

02

Read Exodus 33:18-19. How was God's character revealed by reference to His name in these verses?

03

Read John 3:16-17 and consider the lyrics of the second verse of the well-known hymn *Here is Love Vast as the Ocean* penned by William Rees[1]:

> On the Mount of Crucifixion fountains opened deep and wide; Through the floodgates of God's mercy flowed a vast and gracious tide.
>
> Grace and love, like mighty rivers, poured incessant from above, And heaven's peace and perfect justice kissed a guilty world in love.

How does the Cross demonstrate God's characteristics, His justice and mercy for example, working together?

1 "Here is Love Vast as the Ocean" by William Rees, translated by William Edwards.

04

Read Exodus 23:1-9.
How is God's character revealed through the laws and instructions He gives to the Israelites in these verses?

What is the motivation to obey these laws and instructions hinted at in Exodus 23:9?

05

Identify ways that Christian lawyers should reflect and demonstrate God's character (e.g. His holiness, love, justice, mercy and compassion) in their work and with their legal skills?

06

What practical steps do you need to take to grow in your knowledge and love of God?

For most Bible studies in this book, there are more verses here and more questions than you will be able to cover in a short study. Do trim them back to a length that is suitable for your group.



Leader's Guide

01

How do we know what our God is like? The answer in this context is by the way in which He has interacted with us and His people throughout history. His grace, mercy, justice and more are clearly revealed in the acts of which these passages speak. Take some time to reflect on the characteristics of God that are revealed through His rescue of His people from Egypt and the Promised Land.

02

In Old Testament times in particular, the notion of "name" had a significance it does not have today. A person's name was often an expression of some or all of his or her characteristics.

Consider Jacob, whose name figuratively means 'he deceives' (Genesis 25:25-26). His cunning nature was revealed through the way in which he induced Esau to sell

his birthright (25:27-34). In Genesis 27:36, Esau says of his brother, *"Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times."* This point is confirmed in 1 Samuel 25:25: *"May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name – his name is Fool, and folly goes with him."*

The entry for 'name' in the *New International Dictionary of the Bible* explains that:

> "In the Scriptures there is the closest possible relationship between a person and his name, the two being practically equivalent, so that to remove the name was to extinguish the person (Num 27:4; Deut 7:24). To forget God's name is to depart from him (Jer 23:27). The name, moreover, was the person as he had been revealed; for example, the "name of the LORD" signified the Lord in the attributes he had manifested — holiness, power, love, etc."[1]

Reflect on what you can learn about God's character from these verses – e.g. His compassion, grace, faithfulness... God's character has been revealed here by verbal proclamation, as opposed to a description of His interaction (i.e. his saving acts) with His people.

03

McIlroy writes (page 16): *"The characteristics of God must not be seen as if they somehow work against one another. God is no schizophrenic. On the contrary, he is a God of*

1 Taken from *New International Dictionary of the Bible* by Merrill C. Tenney Copyright © 1987 by Merrill C. Tenney. Used by permission of HarperCollins Christian Publishing. www.harpercollinschristian.com.

integrity and integration. His personality is not disintegrating; it is integrated. Any action of God's is inevitably, inexorably, an action of all his characteristics working together...The cross is a demonstration of his holiness, in his judgement on human sinfulness. The cross is a demonstration of his justice, in that sin is not allowed to go unpunished. The cross is a demonstration of his love, in that God paid the price of sin himself."

04

It is helpful before discussing this question to present a brief introduction of the relevance and application of Old Testament law to your group. Here are a few helpful pointers (but note the Mosaic Law is addressed in greater detail later in the third Bible study).

McIlroy writes (page 41): *"The Mosaic Law was given to God's people, chosen and saved by grace, as guidance for right living in relationship with God."* Its provision was an act of His grace: to His chosen people He had revealed His character in the Law and thus revealed the standard by which He would judge all nations – nations who would need to learn of Him through Israel.

The primary reference of the famous verse – 2 Timothy 3:16 – is to Old Testament Scripture: *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..."*

Chris Wright comments:

> "Paul's hermeneutical assumption [in 1 Corinthians 9:7-12] is that we can recognize the moral will of the same God behind the specific, culture-related Israelite injunction and the

> principle that he applies to practical rights and responsibilities within the Christian church..."[2]

The motivation for obeying the law here is gratitude for God's grace towards us (see also Exodus 19:4-6 and Luke 7:36-50). Other motivations for obedience include imitating what God is like (Leviticus 19:2 and Matthew 5:45-48); distinctiveness from other nations (Leviticus 18:3 and Matthew 5:14-16) and our own good (Deuteronomy 4:40, 5:29 and Matthew 23:23).

05

Be alert to the fact that lawyers can sometimes feel pulled in several different directions – they can have duties to their own client, duties to the Court, duties to opponents and duties to others.

In order to reflect and demonstrate God's character in what can be a challenging environment, Christian lawyers will need to read and receive God's Word, and seek His daily help and guidance in prayer to know how best to act; God gives wisdom generously to all who ask Him (James 1:5).

Be aware also that what compassion looks like for a Christian serving in, e.g., the armed forces during a war may be different to what compassion looks like in, for example, a Christian working as a counsellor.

Regular fellowship, study and discussion with other

2 Wright, Christopher. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester: IVP, 2004), page 316.

Christians, through Church and (for lawyers) through organisations like the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, are an important means of learning how to reflect and demonstrate God's character in our work.

06

God has given us key ways to grow in our knowledge and love of Him: regular fellowship, prayer, and Bible reading. With baptism and communion, these are often referred to as the means of grace.

As we seek to know God in a more intimate and fruitful manner, let us remember that the Bible, as originally given, is the inspired and infallible Word of God. It is the written form of special revelation, providing an enduring witness to the work of Christ. The Bible is, therefore, the supreme authority in all matters of belief and behaviour.

02

Law, Creation and the Fall

On 18th October 1945, following the aftermath of WWII, proceedings began in the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg to prosecute prominent members of the political, military and economic leadership of Nazi Germany. It was hoped by many that the Nuremberg trials would be the trials to end all such wars of aggression. Subsequent history, however, now make the aspirations of Nuremberg seem fantastic and naïve. For example, in 2022, the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research observed a total of 363 conflicts worldwide, including 21 wars[1].

We live in a world that is full of conflict. Whether inter-state wars or intra-state conflicts, rising divorce rates or an epidemic of domestic violence, lawsuits or a falling out amongst friends, we are surrounded by conflict. The question is: what is the cause of the conflict we witness and experience in the world today? The answer lies in the first book of the Bible.

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1 Conflict Barometer 2022. Available at https://hiik.de/conflict-barometer/current-version/?lang=en.

In The Beginning

The world that God made was very good (Genesis 1:31). Adam and Eve were the pinnacle of His creative work, His image bearers, originally without fault or blemish. They were truly blessed: God gave them life, dignity, liberty, and the capacity for rewarding work and meaningful relationships; they could want for nothing. But even in its perfect state, as McIlroy observes, *"the world contained a Law"* (page 18). God commanded Adam: *"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."* (Genesis 2:16-17).

Adam and Eve disobeyed. They deliberately and defiantly rejected God's authority and broke His law. They seized God's unique right to be able to determine what is good and evil. They wanted to be the ones to decide right from wrong and good from evil without accountability to anyone else. In short, they wanted to play god. *"From its very beginnings,"* McIlroy writes, *"human sinfulness expressed itself in lawlessness and law breaking"* (page 19).

The repercussions of this rebellion were by no means insignificant. This act of disobedience rendered all of Adam's descendants and therefore all of humankind predisposed to be a law unto themselves and consequently to fail to conform to the moral law of God. Following the first sin, God's image in humanity has been marred, and the result is the distortion of peaceful and respectful human relationships into oppressive, conflict-ridden, and even homicidal attitudes.

The injustice and broken relationships that lawyers routinely deal with are therefore the result of the broken

relationship between mankind and God. Sin is the root cause. It is not surprising then that in a world where billions of people disagree about what is good and right, relationships break down and conflict ensues. It is perhaps more surprising that the world in which we live is not significantly worse than it is.

Common Grace

Things are not as bad as they could be because God, thankfully, is at work in the world restraining the consequences of sin. Theologians term this 'common grace'. Common grace is God's undeserved kindness (abundantly generous, but to a limited measure) to all He has made, irrespective of whether they love or obey Him (Matthew 5:45; Genesis 9:8-17).

An aspect of God's common grace is His law. God's law is a true and clear expression of His nature and righteousness. It was God's fullest ethical revelation prior to His incarnation, that taught people right from wrong, good from evil, pointing them to God's ultimate ethical revelation, which is Jesus. God's law goes beyond natural law, because nature and man's intellect are fallen, to the extent that *"although they claimed to be wise, they became fools."* (Romans 1:22). Natural law is the portion of God's law that any person can discern for himself. However, due to the fallen state of humanity, we require the grace of God and His revelation in Scripture (Biblical law) to fully comprehend His divine will.

Biblical law teaches us how to relate well to one another. It provides an ethical framework that maximises

individual and societal relational well being (also known as shalom). Law then is a form of order that, as McIlroy writes, *"regulates relationships and makes good relationships possible"* (page 31).

It therefore follows that if a nation's laws are in harmony with the ethical principles embodied in God's laws, the level of relational wellbeing of the individual members of that society and hence the society itself will be significantly higher than they would be otherwise.

Christian Lawyers

What relevance does this have to understanding the calling and work of a Christian lawyer? Plenty! A Biblical understanding of law, creation and the fall instructs Christian lawyers to mitigate and restrain the consequences of sin by redeeming God's good gifts, restoring good relationships, and advocating Biblical standards/principles (the latter is addressed in more detail in subsequent studies). This points to the greater expression and work of grace in Jesus Christ.

In many ways redeeming good gifts and restoring good relationships overlap, not least because meaningful relationships are one of God's good gifts. For example, redeeming meaningful work will typically involve restoring the relationship between an employer and an employee. Nevertheless, to help us gain a firmer understanding of the calling of the Christian lawyer, let's consider each of them separately in a little more detail.

Good Gift Redeemers

The good gifts of God given in creation – life, dignity, liberty and the capacity for rewarding work and meaningful relationships – marred by the fall are taken up and redeemed by Christ. McIlroy writes (page 34):

> "Jesus came to give life in all its fullness (John 10:10). In his dealings with people, Jesus treated each and every one with dignity. Indeed, he paid special attention to the weak, the crippled, the blind, the leprous, the social outcasts (prostitutes and tax collectors), demonstrating by his actions and attitudes their value to God. Jesus came to proclaim freedom and he acted to free people trapped by sin and sickness. He declared, 'If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed' (John 8:36; Galatians 5:1). His followers grasped the implications of his teaching as laying the foundations for a new pattern of mutual service that was capable of transforming work and family relations (Ephesians 5:21-6:9; Colossians 3:12-4:1; 1 Peter 2:13-3:7)."

Since we Christians are being conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29), we should work with God, using our privileged position as lawyers to redeem the good gifts He has given in creation.

The redemption of these good gifts should point to, as McIlroy writes, *"the work of God in Christ, a work which will ultimately transcend their limitations: transforming abundant life into eternal life, dignity into glorification, liberty into release from sin, sickness and death into worship, work into Sabbath rest, and relationships into perfect communion with God and the saints"* (page 34).

Relationship Restorers

Good laws, contracts, agreements, etc. and legal skills, such as drafting, negotiating, mediation, are important in preventing relationships between individuals and organisations from breaking down. They also provide a just mechanism by which relationships (where possible) can be restored if (or more likely when) they break down. Christian lawyers therefore have a privileged opportunity to advocate a Biblical model of good relationships in the contexts in which we work.

Please read Chapter 2 of *A Biblical View of Law and Justice* pp. 17-40.

Bible Study Questions

01

Read Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:15-25. What good gifts did God give to humankind before the fall?

02

Read Genesis 3:19 and 23 and Ecclesiastes 2:10-11; and compare them to the passages in question 1. How, if at all, has the good gift of rewarding work been affected by the fall?

03

Read Luke 3:22. God is a relational being. How does the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit help us to understand God's purpose for His law?

04

As lawyers, what impact do we see the fall having on relationships?

05

How can Christian lawyers redeem God's good gifts and restore good relationships in their work as lawyers?



Leader's Guide

01

David McIlroy identifies five good gifts: life, dignity, liberty, rewarding work and meaningful relationships.

Life

God created Adam and Eve and therefore the whole human race, i.e. He gave us life. McIlroy writes (page 21): *"Christianity values life as God's gift, which is why … the commandment says 'Do not murder'"*. A Christian approach to beginning and end-of-life issues such as abortion and euthanasia therefore needs to take into account the value of life as God's gift.

Dignity

God has given human beings dignity by making us in His image. Each and every human being is infinitely valuable because we are made in the image of God. McIlroy comments (page 22): *"The biblical view of justice is not*

utilitarian, in that it seeks the good of each and every one, not just the greatest happiness of the greatest number."

Liberty

McIlroy writes (page 24): *"In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were given the choice to obey God or to eat the forbidden fruit."* God has not created human beings as robots compelled to obey Him but as people with the capacity to make meaningful moral choices and to face the consequences of those choices.

Rewarding Work

Mark Greene writes in relation to Genesis 1:28 and 2:15: *"...God, in his generous love, gives humanity work to do. We are designed for work. And this work is clearly given as a blessing..."*[1]

Meaningful Relationships

De Blois, cited by McIlroy (page 26) writes: *"The first pages of the Bible make clear that people are not created only as individuals to live on their own...people are created in communion with other people. Not only the individual, but also the communities of individuals, such as marriage and families, deserve respect."*[2]

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1 Greene, Mark. *Thank God It's Monday* (Muddy Pearl, 2019), page 29.

2 de Blois, M. *"The Foundation of Human Rights: A Christian Perspective"*, in P. Beaumont, (ed.), *Christian Perspectives on Human Rights and Legal Philosophy* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998).

02

Mark Greene writes:

> "...work is not a consequence of the fall but part of the original plan. We were always meant to work – and work was intended as a source of satisfaction and pleasure."[3]
>
> "When humanity rebelled against God the character of work changed. It would never be so easy again: 'By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food' (Genesis 3:19). Nevertheless, this didn't change the command to rule over the earth and subdue it. It didn't change the command to work, nor the essential value of work...although there would be toil, that didn't mean that there would be no satisfaction in work ... The command to work is maintained even if the conditions in which work is done are radically altered."[4]

Greene on Ecclesiastes 2:10-11: *"If we look for our significance in our work, we will come away with empty hearts. Our significance lies in our relations with the Creator of work."*[5]

03

God is a Triune being. He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, relating perfectly with one another. At Jesus' baptism it can be clearly seen that God is fundamentally a relational being (Luke 3:22), by His display of love which flowed from eternity: *"And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory*

3 Greene, Mark. *Thank God It's Monday* (Muddy Pearl, 2019), page 30.

4 *Ibidem*, page 30-31.

5 *Ibidem*, page 32.

I had with you before the world began…you loved me before the creation of the world." (John 17:5, 24b). The eternally and perfectly loving, harmonious relationship of the Trinity is the model for all human relationships.

04

Think through in detail some of the ways you see the fall impacting not only individual relationships (in families or in business) but, also, the way that the fallen wider culture negatively impacts families or business.

It is worth keeping in mind that, by the time a dispute reaches a Christian lawyer, the parties to a dispute may already have fallen out, and very badly so. Sometimes a Christian lawyer might not be able to solve all the issues, but they can often make a real difference in limiting the damage and spread of the dispute, and they can pray for and seek justice and shalom. The Christian lawyer might be the only person in the world praying about that dispute. And the way the Christian lawyer performs their work can help to foster justice and shalom.

05

The idea of redeeming God's good gifts provides a transformative frame of meaning to the work of Christian lawyers. Each and every opportunity to meet with clients, draft documents, resolve disputes, do research, or appear in Court is seen in a different light, that of working with God to restore the shalom that has been broken by the fall.

03

The Mosaic Law

"The law is an ass..." Mr Bumble proclaimed (at the pen of Charles Dickens) in Oliver Twist; and many share his sentiments today! Perhaps this famous and oft-quoted indictment of the law is best explained by humanity's common reaction to a set of rules: resentment at the restriction on freedom that they represent. The Mosaic Law, however, was not given by God to be a burden but a blessing.

God's Law is Good

It is clear that God's Law was not intended to be a burden because it was founded on grace. It was given to a people whom God had already redeemed (Exodus 19:4-6). Gratitude, therefore, was to be a major motivation for obedience (Deuteronomy 6:20-25; 15:12-15).

The people of God regarded His Law as an exceptionally great gift, beyond all material blessings. The Torah (Hebrew word for the 'Mosaic Law'), was intended to be a source of joy and delight for the Israelites and the basis of their thinking about life and their relationship with God (see Psalm 119).

McIlroy writes (page 50):

> "Instead of being an exhaustive written legal code, Torah was intended to be a source of guidance for the Israelites. The priests were to instruct them in it [Leviticus 10:11]; they were to teach it to their children [Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19]; they were to internalise it [Deuteronomy 6:6-9]; to grasp the gist of it; and meditate upon it; and to apply its guidance to the varying circumstances of their lives. ... Obedience to Torah was meant to cultivate character, inform values and teach wisdom, so that a wise man would know how to apply the Torah in each of the circumstances of his life."

The benefits of the Mosaic Law, however, were not intended to be confined to the Israelites. God's plan was for all nations to be blessed through Israel (Genesis 12:1-3). Israel was to be a priesthood in the midst of nations (Exodus 19:6). Israel was meant to be a model, visible to the nations, of what a redeemed people looks like, revealing the best way to operate a society (Deuteronomy 4:6-8).

The Israelites, therefore, were to be different and distinctive from the surrounding nations. They were to be holy like the God who made them, whose character was reflected in His Law and in His instructions on how they were to treat Him and those He had made (Leviticus 18:3-4; 19:2).

God's Law, however, is beneficial not simply because it reveals God's standards/principles, which facilitate a just and righteous society, but chiefly because it points people to Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:24). The standards/principles of God's Law (together with the Holy Spirit) convict people of their sin. We see how far short we have fallen and begin

to grasp the effects of the Fall when we gaze upon the standards/principles of the Law. In short, the Law shows us our need for a Saviour, Jesus Christ.

God's Law is Practical

God's Law is practical. It set certain boundaries and sanctions for failure to adhere to those boundaries. It encouraged good conduct and discouraged misconduct. However, was incapable of doing more than this; law could not and cannot deal with the root problem of sin.

Furthermore, the Law did not fully express God's ideals. It encouraged people to love God, but it could not force them to do so. God's ideals require there to be an element of choice on the part of individuals and society because of the value and respect He accords to free will. The Law, therefore, only sought to mitigate the worst effects of evil, by setting outer boundaries and sanctions, without enforcing God's highest principles and standards. It dealt with those forms of evil that represent the worst outrages against God's pattern for life – accepting that there are some structures and patterns of evil which cannot, as a matter of practice, be outlawed because of the way that society functioned.

The Mosaic Law, then, worked within the confines of the society in which it operated, dealing with evils that were particular causes for concern in that society, and which would destroy that society if left unsanctioned.

God's continuing purpose for law therefore, in our less than ideal world, is that it should recognise and address human sinfulness, seeking to curb sin's worst effects.

God's Law is Relevant

Is God's Law of relevance to us today? Yes, for two reasons. First, in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we read:

> "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

This applies to the Law as much as it does to the whole of the Old Testament.

Second, Jesus himself on many occasions affirms the Law (e.g. Matthew 5:17-20).

Jesus saved us from condemnation under the law, but the indwelling Holy Spirit enables us to live by God's standards as first revealed through the law (Romans 8:1-4). This means obedient living in response to God's salvation, not legalism in an attempt to earn salvation.

God's Law is Applicable

To understand the application of the Law today, it can help to consider the function and purpose of different laws in light of a traditional three-fold division of the Law into moral, ceremonial and civil/social/'separation' aspects, as each aspect is fulfilled in different ways by Christ's coming: His sinlessness, His death and priesthood, and His joining of Jew and Gentile into a new separate 'holy nation' of believers. However, caution should be exercised so as not to assume that each law contains only one aspect; many laws have elements of more than one. For example - the Fourth Commandment, to keep the

Sabbath day holy (Exodus 20:8-11) was a command which made the nation of Israel distinctive from the surrounding nations. Observing the Sabbath separated them from the other nations and bound them together as a people. The Sabbath also had a clear ceremonial aspect: it was the day that was holy to the Lord (Exodus 16:23) when Israel would gather together for worship. But the Sabbath also had a moral aspect: it was a day of rest not only for the rich but also for their servants, their labourers, and even their animals (Deuteronomy 5:14). This aspect of the Sabbath was picked up by Rix LJ in *Copsey v WWB Devon Clays Ltd (2005)*, as *"one of the earliest and closest to universally recognisable texts of employment law in favour of the employee of which we have knowledge."*

Christopher Wright suggests that the Mosaic Law should be viewed as a God-ordained set of rules for a particular society at a particular time; a contextual expression of God's timeless and unchanging principles/standards.[1] The Hebrews were a unique society that experienced significant societal transitions. They moved from a nomadic society to a partly agrarian society on reaching Canaan and to a semi urban one as their conquests took in cities and countryside.

He argues that we should take account of these transitions and look therefore at the principles and reasons behind the Mosaic Law which reflect the character of the God who ordained it. We should look at the system as a whole, observing how each part fits together with the

1 Wright, Christopher. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester: IVP, 2004).

rest to see what God had in mind. We can then seek to apply those God given principles and reasons to a different culture as they reflect what is best for mankind.

Wright suggests that to understand any law, or group of laws, we should ask the following questions:[2]

- What kind of situation was this law trying to promote, or prevent?
- Whose interests was this law aiming to protect?
- Who would have benefited from this law and why?
- Whose power was this law trying to restrict and how did it do so?
- What rights and responsibilities were embodied in this law?
- What kind of behaviour did this law encourage or discourage?
- What vision of society motivated this law?
- What moral principles, values or priorities did this law embody or instantiate?
- What motivation did this law appeal to?
- What sanction or penalty (if any) was attached to this law, and what does that show regarding its relative seriousness or moral priority?

In thinking about the Law's application to our modern context, we should therefore ask:

- What kind of situations or people in our society are comparable to those in the Old Testament Law?

2 *Ibidem*, page 323.

- What should our objectives be?
- How should the principles found in the Law be applied in practical life today – in my own life, in the church, in wider society?
- What, in Christian terms, is our motivation now for responding to God's law in obedience?

This list of questions is not exhaustive, and in each case we need to be sure our answers are guided by Scripture, and don't simply reflect our prior assumptions about how a society should work. There are four contexts in the plan of God, which are essential to consider. In searching for principles behind Old Testament Law we need to recognise the movement of God in time and history and in our world today. When dealing with any ethical question, we should consider creation, the fall, redemption in the Old and New Testaments, and eschatology (the Last Judgement, the Second Coming, etc.). This raises the questions:

- How are the creation ideals to be represented in law?
- How is human sinfulness to be taken into account in framing law in a fallen world? What sins can the law deal with? What can it not deal with? What is to be controlled or enforced? What allowances are to be made for sin?
- How do redemption issues feature? Can hope for a prospect of change be represented in the law? Can there be greater movement back to creation ideals?
- How do eschatological issues of perfection, judgement and future reconciliation of all things

impact on what is feasible now, what God alone can do and on what justice really involves?

In seeking to answer all of the questions outlined above it is *vital* that we fix our eyes on Jesus and how He has fulfilled the Old Testament Law. We should consider how the New Testament illuminates the way(s) in which a particular law points to Christ. In light of this we should seek to apply this law in a way that points to Jesus Christ today.

Please read Chapter 3 of *A Biblical View of Law and Justice* pp. 41-67.

Bible Study Questions

01

Read Exodus 20:1-20. What is the significance of Exodus 20:1-2 in the context of the Ten Commandments which follow?

02

Read Deuteronomy 4:1, 40; and Psalm 19:7-11. What benefits flowed from obeying the Law?

03

Read Deuteronomy 4:5-8 and Deuteronomy 28:1. What does the Law reveal about the nation that keeps it? How do the tenets of that law compare with the laws of other nations?

04

Read Matthew 22:34-40 and 5:17-20. What does Jesus' summary of the Law teach us about Jesus' view of it? How and in what ways has Jesus fulfilled the Law?

05

Read Matthew 19:1-10; Deuteronomy 24:1-5 and Malachi 2:16. How did Jesus address issues arising out of the Mosaic Law?

06

How should Christian lawyers engage with law reform and public policy issues in our society today?



Leader's Guide

01

Rousas Rushdoony on Exodus 20:1-3:

> "In this declaration, God identifies Himself, first, as the Lord, the self-existent and absolute One. Second, He reminds Israel that He is their Savior, and that their relationship to Him ("thy God") is therefore one of grace. God chose Israel, not Israel God. Third, the law is given to the people of grace. All men are already judged, fallen, and lost; all men are under the wrath of the law, a fact which the quaking mountain and the fact of death for unhallowed approach underscored (Ex. 19:16-25). The law is given to the people saved by grace as their way of grace, to set forth the privilege and blessing of the covenant. Fourth, it follows then that the first response of grace, as well as the first principles of the law, is this, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me.""[1]

1 Rushdoony, Rousas. *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Vallecito: Chalcedon/Ross House Books, 2020, vol. 1), page 16.

02

God is good, and he purposes good for His people. Obedience to God by obedience to His Law would result in blessings. Disobedience, equally, has serious consequences (described as curses). In the course of Israel's history, both the indicated blessings and curses came to pass – the most visible of those benefits being their possession of the promised land.

03

Ordinarily, the king was the one to make rules for his subjects on his own. However, the Old Testament emphasises that God Himself is the author of the Laws, not Moses or an earthly authority. In addition, according to the Mosaic Law, every individual was personally responsible to keep its commands. Maintaining order by keeping the law was not just the task of king or government.

The covenant between God and Israel included stipulations that would display the wisdom of the God of Israel to other nations. Israel's example should draw others to follow God and his rules as well.

Hetty Lalleman writes:

> "God's people are to behave in a 'godly' way as an appropriate response to God's redeeming acts. It is therefore clear that Israel does not 'become' the people of God by keeping his commandments. They already are God's people – and that is why they are expected to live like that. They have not been saved by 'works', but by 'grace'. (...) In every aspect of

life people could see that Israel was the people of God: in their food, their clothing, their rhythm of work and rest, their treatment of animals".[2]

04

McIlroy writes (page 48):

> "Jesus summed up the teaching of the Law and the Prophets in the two great commandments: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' and 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Mt. 22:37-40). His analysis was not an alien intrusion into the logic of the Mosaic Law. On the contrary, the commandments he identified as the greatest are to be found in the Old Testament text itself, in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 respectively.
>
> The vertical obligation of 'Love for God' was to be matched by the horizontal obligation to 'Love your Neighbour'. The connection between the two dimensions of holiness was such that, the Sabbath was understood as an obligation and responsibility towards God himself, to be expressed through one's land and one's relationship with impoverished fellow Israelites.' 'You honoured God by keeping a law which benefited your poorer brethren.'"

In His summary, Jesus identifies the two core principles behind the 613 Mosaic Laws; He endorses a principle/core value based approach to understanding and applying the Law. In reaffirming these core principles, Jesus is in effect endorsing the Mosaic Law as a cultural expression of the

2 Lalleman, Hetty. *Celebrating the Law? Rethinking Old Testament Ethics* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), page 32.

unpacking/extrapolation of these core principles for a particular society.

This is confirmed in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus does not only look to the letter of the law but to the reasoning and principle behind the law. In doing so He highlights the limits of the law by advocating a higher law – God's ideals – which the Mosaic Law cannot enforce.

Jesus fulfilled the law by being the embodiment of its values and principles. He was the perfect Israel who never sinned, and so He lived out the perfect righteousness of God. In the Sermon on the Mount He gave the Mosaic Law its fullest meaning by expounding God's ideals i.e. He taught and unpacked the spirit rather than the letter of the law.

Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial element of the Mosaic Law by sacrificing Himself for our sins on the cross. Nowhere do we read that He thought that the ceremonial law was wrong. The ceremonial law revealed that we cannot worship and serve a holy God in our natural state because of our sin. Then praise God that He sent His own Son, so that our righteousness should not come from ourselves but come from Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

05

Jesus begins his answer to the Pharisees' question not by restating the Mosaic Law in Deuteronomy 24:1-5 but by going back to creation principles (Genesis 1:27; 2:24). He starts by stating God's ideal, then He addresses the Mosaic Law. He says that Moses "permitted" a person to divorce

but does not state that this was commanded. This is important because it indicates that divorce was not God's ideal but a concession to mitigate the consequences of sin and man's fickleness in covenant relationships. Therefore, God tolerated divorce but with explicit disapproval.

The law in Deuteronomy 24 was intended to protect women. Prior to the Mosaic Law, a woman who had been "sent away" by her husband was in a very perilous predicament. Her fate could well have been prostitution or destitution.

In Jesus' day this law had been corrupted such that it was interpreted to permit divorce for the flimsiest of reasons. Some rabbis boldly taught that a man had a perfect right to divorce his wife if he found another woman whom he liked better, or who was more beautiful (Mishnah, Gittin, 9 10). As a consequence, terrible injustices were being committed against many women who were being divorced for frivolous reasons.

Jesus dusts off the Mosaic Law here and restores its true meaning. He upholds both God's ideal (life-long marriage) and reinstitutes a measure of justice or protection for women by only permitting divorce on grounds of sexual immorality.

This teaches us that all of God's ideals should be communicated, but not all should necessarily be legislated. Law can only mitigate the worst effects of evil, by setting outer boundaries and sanctions, without enforcing God's highest principles and standards. It may be necessary in certain circumstances to make concessions to God's creation ideals (from a law-making perspective, and as

guided by Scripture) to protect people from the worst effects of human sinfulness, which in this example is by the ability to divorce a marriage partner who has committed sexual immorality.

04

Kingship

In 1887 Lord Acton famously coined the phrase, *"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."* His insightful observation raises an important question: how should power be exercised? An examination of kingship in the Bible is an excellent place to start in answering this challenging issue.

The purpose and function of Old Testament leaders and kings was to maintain "justice and righteousness" (Genesis 18:19 and 1 Kings 10:9). These words have been described as two of the 'biggest' words in the Old Testament and they appear together over and over again in what is known as a hendiadys (a single complex idea expressed through the use of two words). It is worth giving some careful thought to what they mean.

Righteousness or 'Tsedeq(ah)'

Tsedeq(ah) means 'straightness' or conformity to a norm. It suggests 'rightness' – 'that which ought to be', 'that which matches up to the standard'. By way of example, you may have been given an appraisal by your firm and marked out of ten for the way you deal with clients.

The appraiser will have considered whether you match up to the standard required of you, whether you are what you ought to be, whether you should be given ten out of ten.

In the context of human relationships, 'righteous action' is action which is concerned with what is right or expected in the relationship. In the Old Testament, to be righteous was to live in a way which allowed you to respond correctly to the proper values of a relationship (whether spouse, judge, parent, leader, boss, etc.). In the above example of the appraisal, the values a Christian lawyer should be expected to live up to in his/her relationship with clients are honesty, fairness, appropriate charging, dedication etc. The 'righteous' lawyer conforms with these values. The requirements or values of any given relationship in the OT were informed by the covenant between God and His people. It is worth noting that in the OT, righteous living also promoted communal well-being and the peace of the community (shalom).

This concept is vividly illustrated in 1 Samuel 24 where David had the opportunity to take King Saul's life, but he did not do so. Saul was hunting down David in order to kill him and David was hiding in a cave. Saul went into the same cave to relieve himself. David, without Saul noticing, cut off a corner of Saul's robe but was conscience-stricken for having done this and said to his men: *"the LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD."* It is apparent from these words what the relationship between the two was; Saul was David's master and the Lord's anointed one. The demands or values of the

relationship required David to treat Saul as such. David recognised this and rebuked his men for suggesting that he should attack Saul. David's actions were righteous; they conformed to the standard expected in that particular relationship and it is not difficult to see how they promoted the peace of the community. David came out of the cave and told Saul that he had had the opportunity to kill him but had not taken it. Saul recognised the righteousness of David's actions and said: *"You are more righteous than I...You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly."* Despite the fact that David was not guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion, Saul had hunted him down to kill him. His action was unrighteous as it did not conform to the values of the relationship. David had been loyal and therefore Saul should have treated him as such.

The Bible calls us to submit to authorities. Submission is not the same as blind obedience. Submission takes its shape from the proper boundaries of the relationship. An employer has the right to demand that their employees work diligently, but not that their employees cheat customers, evade taxes, abuse others or commit any other wrongs. When an employer is exercising their legitimate authority, submission will lead to obedience. When an employer is abusing or overstepping their authority, a Christian might refuse to comply, challenging their employer to act justly instead.

Justice or 'Mishpat'

The verb 'shaphat' (from which the noun 'mishpat' is derived) is concerned with judicial activity or legal action.

Such action may be taken as a lawgiver, judge, arbitrator or in executing a judgement. Its basic meaning is to treat people equitably. This is why God warns Israel to *"have the same mishpat [law] for the foreigner and the native-born."* (Leviticus 24:22). Christopher Wright writes:

> "In the widest sense, it means to 'put things right', to intervene in a situation that is wrong, oppressive or out of control and to 'fix' it". This may include confronting wrongdoers, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, vindicating and delivering those who have been wronged."[1]

Put together, the two words tsedeq(ah) and mishpat have a distinctive meaning. It has been said that the nearest English expression is possibly 'social justice', but this is perhaps insufficiently dynamic; the Hebrew nouns are, after all, actual things you do, not just concepts that you reflect on.

For instance, in employment, tsedeq(ah), or primary justice, would be a relationship where right standards between employer and employee are maintained—where mutual trust and confidence, fairness and equality, reasonable duties and responsibilities guide their actions and interactions. In that case, there's little need for corrective measures because accepted employment standards prevent most conflicts from arising in the first place.

However, when this primary justice fails, mishpat, or rectifying justice, becomes necessary. If an employer unjustly

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1 Wright, Christopher. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester: IVP, 2004), page 256.

dismisses an employee or an employee breaches their contract, action such as judicial mediation or judgment is needed to rectify the injustice, protect the affected party, and restore equity. In an ideal system where tsedeq(ah) is practiced, mishpat would rarely be needed, as proper relationships would prevent disputes and promote a harmonious workplace.

Please read Chapter 4 of *A Biblical View of Law and Justice* pp. 69-88.

Bible Study Questions

01

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-22. What was wrong about the Israelites' request for a king?

02

Read 1 Samuel 12:12-15. What did Samuel want the king and the Israelites to do, and why? What warnings does this passage hold for us?

03

Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20. What purposes did the prohibitions in verses 16 to 17 serve? What key task was the king to perform and why (verses 18 to 20)?

04

Read 2 Samuel 8:15; Psalm 72: 1-3. Which two nouns are used repeatedly to describe the successful discharge of the king's judicial duties?

05

What do the qualities, characteristics and role of a good king teach us about Jesus, the King of Kings, and His relationship with us?

06

Read Leviticus 19:9-10 and 33-36; Jeremiah 22:3-5. What examples are given of justice and righteousness in action? How might this be relevant and important to practice as a Christian lawyer?

07

Read Proverbs 22:7, 22-23 and Isaiah 10:1-2. What are the consequences of rich and powerful people abusing their power and exploiting the poor? What can the Christian lawyer learn from these passages about their management of poor and rich client relationships?

08

Read 1 Kings 3:5-14. What quality does verse 12 suggest that a king should have? What does this passage suggest should concern us as Christian lawyers?



Leader's Guide

Introduction

The focus of this study is on justice being something active (rather than a state of affairs), relational and covenantal. It should also become clear that God desires obedience to His commands from both His people and the rulers He gives them.

01

The problem with the Israelites having a king was that God was meant to be their King. In seeking a king they had rejected God. The main reason for their request was a desire to be like the surrounding nations – to have a human king who would lead them in battle and guarantee their security (as opposed to trusting in God to do the same).

According to The NIV Study Bible Notes:

> "The sin of Israel in requesting a king (see 10:19; 12:12, 17, 19-20) did not rest in any evil inherent in kingship itself, but rather in the kind of kingship the people envisioned and their reasons for requesting it...Their desire was for a form of

> kingship that denied their covenant relationship with the Lord, who himself was pledged to be their saviour and deliverer. In requesting a king "like all the other nations" (v. 20) they broke the covenant, rejected the Lord who was their King (12:12; Nu 23:21; Dt 33:5) and forgot his constant provision for their protection in the past (10:18; 12:8-11)."[1]

Matthew Henry in his commentary writes:

> "God designed them a king, a man after his own heart, when Samuel was dead; but they would anticipate God's counsel, and would have one now that Samuel was old. They had a prophet to judge them, that had immediate correspondence with heaven, and therein they were great and happy above any nation, none having God so nigh unto them as they had, Deut. 4:7 (...) God reigns over the heathen (Ps. 47:8), over all the world, but the government of Israel had hitherto been, in a more peculiar manner than ever any government was, a Theocracy, a divine government; their judges had their call and commission immediately from God; the affairs of their nation were under his peculiar direction. As the constitution, so the administration of their government, was by Thus saith the Lord; this method they were weary of, though it was their honour and safety, above anything, so long as they kept in with God. They were indeed so much the more exposed to calamities if they provoked God to anger by sin, and found they could not transgress at so cheap a rate as other nations could, which perhaps was the true reason why they desired to stand upon the same terms with God that other nations did."[2]

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1 Barker, Kenneth. *NIV Study Bible Notes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), page 379.

2 Henry, Matthew. *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), page 396.

Samuel warned the Israelites that kings (not acting as God's vassals) would demand land, labour, military service, taxes and ultimately they would become slaves.

02

God agreed to the Israelites' demands, but the office of king was to be different to the surrounding nations. Kingship was given by the Lord to His people and was to function as an instrument of His rule over them. Samuel, therefore, was concerned that both the king and the Israelites would fear the Lord, serve and obey Him and not rebel against His commands (verses 14 and 24). Although human kingship had been established, the people of God were to continue to recognise the Lord as their king. Failure to do so would result in the Lord being against the people of Israel, and eventually they would be 'swept away' (verses 15 and 25). God would permit the Israelites to suffer the devastating consequences of living out their lives as a law unto themselves in wilful ignorance of what is truly right and wrong.

03

This question takes a step back in time, and shows that God had made provision for a king even before one had been requested. The king was to be single-mindedly devoted to God (verses 16 to 17), to revere Him, and to be obedient to Him (verse 19). He was not to consider himself better than his brothers (verse 20). He was also to

complete the task of writing a copy of the law. This was not only to remain with him but also to be read every day of his life, as a sign and act of submission to the Lord as his king and as a guide for his kingship. The consequences of doing this are clearly set out in verses 19 to 20. McIlroy writes (page 76):

> "Deuteronomy 17:16 states that the king must not 'acquire great numbers of horses for himself', i.e. he must not trust in military strength for his nation's security. Horses were the military equivalent of tanks at the time. God's people were to rely on the Lord for their protection...Deuteronomy 17:7 warns that the king must not 'take many wives or his heart will be led astray'. There are probably two thoughts here. One is that the king will become preoccupied with sexual pleasure and with family intrigues; the other is that marriage was often used as a political tactic. Marriage to foreign wives usually led to an importation of their gods..."

05

Jesus is the one who fulfilled the royal messianic promises of the Old Testament. "Christ" is a translation of the Hebrew term for Messiah (the Anointed One). In the words of the angel who spoke to Mary: *"He [Jesus] will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end"* (Luke 1:32-33). McIlroy writes (page 87):

> "The Old Testament therefore, contains a clear vision of the king as (1) the upholder of the covenant; (2) the administrator of justice and (3) defender of the rights of the weak and poor."

Jesus fulfilled the law and the prophets and lived a perfect, righteous life. He delivered His people from their greatest enemy – sin – through His death and resurrection. He came the first time, and He is coming again, as the King over all kings. He is ready to save all who receive Him as Saviour and King.

06

The aim of this question is to identify the requirements of justice in the relationships characterised in these passages: relationships between kings/governments/society at large and foreigners, widows and orphans (Jeremiah 22:3), and between officials/traders and people/consumers (Ezekiel 45:9-12). Consider how these relationships should operate:

- Leviticus 19:9-10 on providing for the poor;
- Leviticus 19:33-34 on treatment of the foreigner;
- Leviticus 19:35-36 on honest weights and measures when trading.

07

The financial inequality between rich and poor, lender and borrower creates an imbalance of power that is capable of being abused. The king was to mitigate this injustice, to be the defender of the rights of the weak and poor. McIlroy writes (page 84):

> "Central to Proverbs' argument that judges must dispense justice impartially is the assertion that rich and poor alike have

> an equal right to expect it because 'The Lord is the Maker of them all.' Oppression or mockery of the poor is abominable, because it amounts to contempt for their divine Maker...The Bible is not so naïve as to be mono-causal in its approach to poverty. However, the biblical writers recognise that it is sometimes (perhaps often) the result of injustice and oppression by the haves of the have-nots. Proverbs 13:23 says, in words which could be a direct condemnation of contemporary Western food subsidies and tariff barriers, 'A poor man's field may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it away'."

In worldly terms a wealthy or powerful client may have a lot to offer. Christian lawyers and judges are called upon to be impartial and fair (Leviticus 19:15) and to guard against oppression by the powerful against the weak. We should heed the wisdom of the writers of Proverbs and give special attention to the poor by, for example, facilitating access to justice, perhaps by offering pro bono services. However, the poor are not entitled to judgement in their favour simply because they are poor; this would not be justice but bias. Hence Leviticus 19:15 includes a warning not to show partiality to the poor as well as warning against favouritism to the great.

Keeping faith with those who have the least to offer in return is a true test of character and demonstration of loving-kindness.

08

Solomon sought/asked for wisdom (3:9) and God gave him a *"wise and discerning heart"* (v.12). The list of things Solomon could have asked for (v.11) but did not are as

much of a temptation to contemporary lawyers as they must have been to a king in OT times. This is a stark reminder of what should matter to the Christian lawyer and a warning of the temptations which need to be resisted. McIlroy writes (page 82):

> "The very opening of the book of Proverbs makes clear its purpose. It is expressed to contain: 'The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel...for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair...'. The emphasis on wisdom leading to an understanding of what is right (tsedeq) and just (mishpat) and fair (meyshar) is repeated in Proverbs 2:6, 9...The implications for a king of possessing wisdom are spelt out in Proverbs 8:12-21..."

05

The Prophetic Call to Justice

The message of the Biblical prophets is a gift from God to His people albeit a stern wake-up call for many of us. Life as a Christian lawyer offers as many distractions as it does challenges. It is all too easy to become preoccupied, for example by the pressures and demands of work/study, and/or our career development/personal ambition. Our priorities can get distorted and we can end up majoring on minors and minoring on majors, indifferent to the injustice that surrounds us. The Biblical prophets call our attention back to God and challenge our priorities. They awaken our consciences to behaviour and practices , in our lives and the societies in which we live, that are abhorrent to God in our lives and the societies in which we live. They inspire us to speak out and awaken the consciences of others by living righteously and acting justly as we walk humbly with God.

The Role of the Prophets

The Biblical prophets were guardians of the covenant, the relational contract God had made with the Israelites. They spoke in the name of God and applied the covenant standards to the events of their time and the lives of their people.

The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3; 18:18-19) revealed God's plan to bless all nations through Israel. Israel was intended to be a model, visible to the nations, of what a redeemed nation looked like: a society of justice and righteousness (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). The Israelites were to be holy like God whose character is reflected in the Law. The Law provided the standard by which the Israelites should live and act toward one another. It was to this standard that the Old Testament prophets held kings, rulers and the people of Israel to account. The sad reality however was that kings, rulers and the people failed to live up to their responsibilities. Bribery, oppression, favouritism, violence and iniquity were commonplace.

Into this context God sent His prophets. Some of the prophets, like Elijah, saw it as their role to monitor the king's obedience to the covenant to remind him that he ruled subject to God's designation and was accountable to God for his actions. Other prophets, like Elisha and Isaiah acted as advisers to the king and indicated the godly course of action in given situations and the consequences of disobedience (2 Kings 3:11-19; Isaiah 37:1-7). Whilst others, like Amos, also spoke to the people.

The Prophetic Call to Justice

A major concern of the prophets was injustice. Isaiah strikingly said of Judah and Israel: *"And he [God] looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress"* (Isaiah 5:7). The prophet's concern for God's standards and justice is plain in other prophetic writings (see for example Jeremiah 7:5-11, Ezekiel 22, Micah 3:8-12,

Amos 5). Over and over again the prophets condemn those who oppress the weak and vulnerable by abusing power (whether by bribery (for example Micah 3:11), by seizure of property (for example Micah 2:2), depriving them of justice in the courts (Amos 5:12) and depriving them of food (Amos 5:11) to mention but a few examples). The prophets frequently admonish God's people and its leaders to act justly (for example Micah 6:8, Amos 5:15, Isaiah 1:17) and in so doing reflect the fact that a concern for justice is inherent in God's nature.

The prophets were called to pronounce the judgement which God's just nature requires on sin and injustice. Whenever they pronounced God's judgement, however, it was always in the hope that it would lead to repentance (1 Kings 21:17-28; Amos 5:15). The prophets therefore held out a vision of God's mercy and fidelity, and of the new life that is possible on the other side of judgement.

The Prophetic Call to True Worship

Another prime concern of the prophets was the relationship between God and His people. Repeatedly, the prophets' criticism of the lack of social justice mirrored a break down in the Israelites' relationship with God. The prophets teach us that unless the purpose of our lives is righteousness expressed in justice then our worship and devotion to God is not acceptable to Him. The right worship of God cannot exist without loving justice (Micah 6-8).

Indeed, if we fail to carry out justice, we do not have the true God as the object of our worship and devotion.

David McIlroy quotes H.E. Freeman as follows:
"God... considers worship divorced from right conduct, an abomination."[1]

Judgement against the Nations

Although the focus of the Old Testament prophets was on the Israelites, they did not stay silent about the practices of the surrounding nations. Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Nahum, Obadiah, Zephaniah and Zechariah all spoke out against the neighbouring nations, demonstrating God's sovereignty over the whole world, not just Israel.
"*The main reason*", McIlroy writes, *"for judgement against the nations expressed in Ezekiel [27:3; 28:2, 5-6], Jeremiah [48:7, 29-30, 42] and Isaiah [10:12-19; 13:11b, 19] is their pride, self-confidence and worship of false gods. It is their failure to acknowledge the Lord which was identified as their prime error"* (page 111).

He continues:

> "But alongside this, emerge other themes. In Ezekiel, the prophet condemns the kings of Tyre for his pride and wealth gained by dishonest trade [Ezekiel 28:16, 18]. He offers another explanation, alongside that of sexual perversity [Genesis 19:24-25; Jude 7], for the destruction of Sodom: 'arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them' (Ezek. 16:49). Isaiah prophesies against Babylon for the oppressive and aggressive nature of its empire [Isaiah 14:2, 4-6]. Nahum

1 Freeman, H.E., *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody, 1968), page 185.

> condemns Nineveh as 'the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims!' (Nah. 3:1)."

These prophetic discourses also highlight that the worship of false gods, turning to idols, social injustice, greed, violence, sexual immorality and pride are all interlinked. The latter are typically outworkings of the former; almost invariably human beings become like who or what we worship.

Prophets pointing to Jesus

The prophets had an important role in the Bible, not only by proclaiming God's word to the people of Israel and other nations, but ultimately by pointing to Jesus, who fulfilled the law and the prophets. After Jesus' resurrection, as two of His followers were still trying to make sense of His death and empty tomb, Jesus came alongside of them and *"beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he [Jesus] explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself"* (Luke 24:27).

The prophetic call to justice inspires us, with a lawyers' mind and skills, to confront the injustice, corruption and exploitation of our time. Moreover, like the prophets who called Israel back to God and to their neighbour, the Christian lawyers' responsibilities go beyond the mere provision of technical advice. Their role requires ethical evaluation of their work responsibilities, including the relational context in which it is delivered. In this way, reflecting the prophets' ministry, Christian lawyers can share God's Word, encourage moral reflection by others, and demonstrate God's purpose for humanity and His heart for justice.

As we consider how we measure up to the prophetic call for justice as Christian lawyers we will be all too painfully aware that we ourselves have fallen short, perhaps by staying silent instead of speaking out. Praise God that In His love He sent His son Jesus Christ to pay the price for our sin and injustice: as David McIlroy puts it *"...through the atonement, God's justice was satisfied."*

Please read Chapter 5 of *A Biblical View of Law and Justice* pp. 89-113.

Bible Study Questions

01

Read Amos 2:4-7.
Why did Judah deserve judgement? What do you think is at the heart of the criticism of Israel in 2:6-7 (see Exodus 23:6-8 and Deuteronomy 15:7-8)?

02

Read Amos 5:10-15.
What themes emerge from these verses? What characteristics of God are apparent from the criticism expressed in these verses?

03

Read Isaiah 1:23, 5:8, and 5:22-23. In light of these verses and your answer to question 2, with what practices/attitudes did God take issue? Consider: (a) why it is they trouble God; (b) whether they are issues which arise in your or other societies; (c) what dangers/temptations might arise out of any of these issues for the Christian lawyer; and (d) how the Christian lawyer might overcome these dangers/temptations.

04

Read Amos 5:7 and 6:12. What happened to the concepts of 'righteousness' and 'justice' in Amos' time?

05

Read Amos 5:21-24 and Matthew 23:23. Burnt offerings, grain offerings and fellowship offerings were all prescribed in the book of Leviticus (chapters 1-3) – why were they unacceptable to God in this instance? What was it God desired from the Israelites (see Amos 5:14-15)? What warning is there for the Christian lawyer in these verses? What can Christian lawyers do to avoid falling into the same trap?

06

What do you think Amos would say to the leaders and people of the world today, in the UK, the US or Africa for example?

07

How might Christian lawyers steward their legal skills and abilities in obedience to the prophetic call to establish justice?



Leader's Guide

The main focus of this Bible study is on the book of Amos. It is worthwhile, therefore, taking some time to consider the context of Amos' message before getting stuck into the questions.

Amos carried out his prophetic ministry c. 760-750 BC. It was a time of peace and plenty. The northern kingdom of Israel under the rule of King Jeroboam II had risen to the pinnacle of her prosperity. Dramatic social change had taken place, predominantly brought about, as John Marsh in his commentary on *Amos and Micah* writes, by: *"...the cynical opportunism of the nouveaux riches in expropriating the small peasant farmer whenever occasion presented itself, as it would, for instance in a year of bad or mutilated harvest. The Israel that Amos came to know was thus a state where large fortunes were being quickly made, great estates being developed, summer houses and winter residences being built in fabulous luxury for the wealthy, and where, at the same time, there was quite a new class of poor, who were virtually, and sometimes actually, slaves of their rich landlords."*[1]

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1 Marsh, John. *Amos and Micah* (London: SCM Press, 1972), pp. 25-26.

What is distinctive about Amos is that whilst the majority of the Old Testament prophets emphasised Israel turning to other idols, Amos' message highlighted the moral and social decline that results from people turning away from God. Israel had grown hard and callous in her dealings with others; Israelite society had exchanged a Godly compassion for a form of selfish and decadent existentialism. Amos teaches that God in His mercy offers an escape from punishment but this demands a reformed lifestyle and a return to Godly standards of justice and right conduct in public as well as private life.

01

The idiom *"For three sins...even for four..."* suggests that three transgressions would have been sufficient for judgement but the fourth puts the matter beyond doubt. The fourth sin was, to use an Arabian proverb, the straw that broke the camel's back.

Judah deserved judgement for (at least) two reasons: rejecting God's righteous laws and His decrees and following false gods. Whereas the nations in 1:3 to 2:3 were judged for things their consciences had warned them not to do, Judah and Israel were judged for abandoning revealed truth. The people of Judah had turned their backs on the Covenant and God's word. What Amos makes clear about Judah is that it had not only turned its back on God's law but on God Himself (they had been "led astray by false gods").

Verse 6

Matthew Henry in his commentary on this verse writes:

> "This was the sin of those who were entrusted with the administration of justice, the judges and magistrates, and all parties concerned. They made nothing of selling a righteous man, and his righteous cause when it came to be tried before them, for a piece of silver; sentence was passed, not according to the merits of the cause, but the bribe always turned the scale, and judgement was set to sale by auction to the highest bidder. They would sell the life and livelihood of a poor man for a pair of shoes, for the least advantage to themselves that could be proposed to them; give them but a pair of shoes, and the cause of a poor man, who could not give them as much as that, should be betrayed, and left at the mercy of those that will have no mercy...For a piece of bread such a man will transgress. Note, Those who will wrong their consciences for any thing will come at length to do it for next to nothing; those who begin to sell justice for silver will in time be so sordid as to see it for a pair of shoes, for a pair of old shoes."[2]

Verse 7a

What Amos is addressing here is the incredibly callous and oppressive treatment of the poor, treating them like dust, denying them justice.

Verses 7b

These verses relate to adultery and shrine prostitution (Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 23:17). An aspect of Canaanite religion was shrine prostitution which was a fertility ritual supposed to stimulate the god Baal to make humans, animals and the land fertile. In summary, disregard

2 Henry, Matthew. *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), page 1504.

of the Covenant, the law, God's word and His holy standards went hand in hand with turning away from God Himself.

02

Some of the common themes which emerge are:

- God's judgement on those who perpetrate injustice (disregarding God's Word and His Law);
- God's concern for the needy, oppressed, weak, poor and righteous (those in the right before the law);
- God's concern for truth; and His hatred of evil and love of good.

Some of the characteristics which are apparent are: God's just nature; His love; His mercy (on the poor etc.); His compassion; His truthfulness; His goodness and His holiness.

03

A non exhaustive list of issues: theft/stealing; bribery; unwillingness to represent the interests of the poor/lack of compassion (perhaps equating to an unwillingness to undertake pro bono cases in today's society); the suffering of the poor and needy; ostentatious materialism; obsession with wealth and acquisition; excessive drinking; and pride.

This question is designed to prompt discussion about how it might be that Christian lawyers (who may be successful, powerful, wealthy etc.) start to trust in themselves, their intellect, their status or their possessions, rather than God. It is also designed to prompt discussion on the pressures that exist in our culture, especially secular humanism

which supremely believes in and preaches dependence on ourselves. Furthermore, it should be an aide to identifying and understanding the unique calling of the Christian lawyer and our distinctiveness from non-Christian lawyers.

04

These concepts, which were meant to be at the heart of Israelite society, were disregarded and ignored in Amos' time. Justice was turned to bitterness and righteousness cast to the ground (5:7). In 6:12 justice is described as having been turned into poison (presumably because of the perverse manner in which it was being implemented (2:6-8, 5:12-13)) and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness. You will recall from the last study that righteous living was supposed to promote communal well-being and the peace (or 'shalom') of the community. Instead of communal well-being and peace, ungodly behaviour resulted in bitterness and poison and broken relationships.

05

God would not accept Israel's religious practices despite the fact they were ordained by Him. They had isolated the ritual of sacrifice and marginalised obedience that makes the sacrifices necessary and meaningful. Their rituals constituted disobedience as the people disregarded the essence of the law—love for God and love for others. What God sought was justice and righteousness. He desired His people to

establish justice in the gate, the place where court was held (Amos 5:15). His desire has not changed.

06

In answering this question critically consider the keynote address of Bono (the lead singer of U2) at the US National Prayer Breakfast in 2006. Standing before the President of the United States of America and a room full of distinguished guests at the White House he challenged his audience to act justly towards thousands of Africans dying every day of preventable poverty-related causes:

> "This is not about charity in the end, is it? It's about justice... justice is a higher standard. Africa makes a fool of our idea of justice; it makes a farce of our idea of equality. It mocks our pieties; it doubts our concern, and it questions our commitment. Six and a half thousand Africans are still dying every day of preventable, treatable disease, for lack of drugs we can buy at any drug store. This is not about charity: this is about justice and equality...Preventing the poorest of the poor from selling their products while we sing the virtues of the free market, that's not charity: that's a justice issue. Holding children to ransom for the debts of their grandparents, that's not charity: that's a justice issue...And while the law is what we say it is, God is not silent on the subject. That's why I say there's laws of the land and then there's a higher standard. And we can hire experts to write them so they benefit us, these laws, so that they say it's okay to protect our agriculture but it's not okay for African farmers to protect their agriculture, to earn a living. As the laws of man are written, that's what they say. But God will not accept that."

06

Christ and Caesar

In the early eighteenth century Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte dominated Europe. His military record speaks for itself: 17 years of war, 40 victories in battle and six million Europeans dead. He was, without doubt, the modern embodiment of a 'Caesar'.

A time came, however, after Napoleon's capture and exile to the British Island of St Helena when the "*good Providence of God*" as Henry Parry Liddon describes it "*had chained down that great but ambitious spirit to the rock of St. Helena; and the conqueror of civilized Europe had leisure to gather up the results of his unparalleled life, and to ascertain with an accuracy, not often attainable by monarchs or warriors, his own true place in history.*"[1]

The conclusion of Napoleon's enquiry speaks volumes:

> "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I myself have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him..."[2]

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1 Liddon, Henry Parry. *The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus* Christ (London, Oxford and Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1867), page 222.

2 *Ibidem*.

The uniqueness of Jesus' kingship and His kingdom with its lack of military force and coercion, have and continue to surprise many.

Messianic Misconceptions

In the time of Christ it is estimated that eight million Jewish people lived in the Roman Empire, with roughly a quarter in Palestine itself. The people of Israel were not unfamiliar with foreign occupation. The Romans were just the latest in a long line of foreign powers to whose oppressive rule the Jewish people were subject. Philip Yancey in *The Jesus I Never Knew* describes their plight:

> "Romans branded Jews "atheists" for their refusal to honour Greek and Roman gods, and regarded them as social misfits because of their peculiar customs: Jews refused to eat the "unclean" food of their neighbours, eschewed all business on Friday evenings and Saturdays, and disdained civic office...In many ways the plight of Jewish leaders resembled that of the Russian churches under Stalin. They could cooperate, which meant submitting to government interference, or they could go their own way, which meant harsh persecution."[3]

It is not surprising then that the Jewish people longed for liberation. They longed for the chains of foreign rule to be broken. They longed for emancipation...and this is precisely what God had promised them.

However, many Israelites at that time misunderstood the nature of this emancipation. They diligently studied God's promises of liberation in the Old Testament but did so with an errant bias. They mistakenly believed that the

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3 Yancey, Philip. *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), page 61.

Messiah would come in violent conquest destroying *their* enemies (the Romans) to restore *their* pre-eminence on the earth (Jeremiah 30:8-11). They expected the coming of the Messiah to inaugurate a golden age of peace and prosperity (Isaiah 9:7; 11:1-10) by leading them in bloody vengeance on those who oppressed them and mocked their faith (Isaiah 63:1-6).

To a large extent, the Israelites had, amongst other things, permitted a history of oppression and occupation to influence their interpretation of what Scripture says about (i) to whom the blessing of God's Kingdom would come and (ii) how God's Kingdom would be inaugurated. As to point (i), God had never been solely concerned with the nation of Israel; although He chose and blessed them, His intention was always to bless the whole earth through them (Genesis 12:2-3). As to point (ii), the Biblical texts taken together gave a vision of not just a Messiah who would reign in glory, but also one who would suffer and die. McIlroy writes (page 122): *"The visions in Isaiah of the Davidic prince who would reign forever had to be taken in conjunction with the Servant Songs of Isaiah 42:1-4; 50:4-9; 52:13 – 53:12."*

Accordingly, Jesus the Messiah did not establish His authority over the earth through violence by forcing everyone to worship Him. Instead, He demonstrated that real leaders are servants (Luke 22:25-27) and that real kings *serve* their kingdoms and their citizens. Jesus' garments were not covered in the blood of His enemies but His own blood. McIlroy writes (page 122) that His was *"a more costly, more profound, more holistic mission of*

redemption…he was the Messiah whose mission ended with the failure of a criminal's execution, yet who made a public spectacle of his real enemies [sickness, sin, demons and death] at his own execution (Colossians 2:15)."

Kingdoms in Conflict

Given the primacy of God's Kingdom, how does His Kingdom relate to the kingdoms of this world? How should Christian lawyers relate to the secular authorities to whom we are subject? What should a Christian lawyer do when there are conflicting demands between the secular government and the teachings of Christ?

The tension epitomised by these questions has troubled the Church since its beginnings, and opinions have differed widely. Some, such as the Anabaptists, have advocated a complete withdrawal from secular government (although surely this is too great a retreat by the Church from secular affairs). Others, such as Martin Luther at one time, argued for an almost antithetical division between spiritual matters for which the Church was responsible (characterised by grace) and temporal matters which was the sphere of the State (characterised by law). Still others, such as John Calvin, thought that there was no such antithetical distinction to be made and that the State should serve the cause of the gospel by enforcing Biblical morality and Christian truth, while allowing the Church to freely determine its doctrine. Many have discussed whether he perhaps failed to distinguish correctly the differences between the role of nations today, the role of the Church, and the role of Israel with its unique position.

In attempting to answer these difficult questions a good place to start is Matthew 22:15-22. Here, Jesus is challenged over the issue of paying taxes to Rome. He asks the Pharisees to show him a coin used for paying the tax. Jesus' affirmation, *"Whose image is this? And whose inscription? … So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's"* suggests that He recognised that some authority had temporarily been given to the Romans. In fact, the verb Jesus uses at verse 21 (often translated *"render"* or *"give"*) literally means *"to give back"*. It is the verb for paying a bill or settling a debt. Therefore it is clear that Jesus thought the tax was rightfully owed to Caesar by the Jews. Jesus, unlike many of His listeners here, clearly saw no conflict in principle between a duty to obey the State and a duty to obey the will of God. Jesus recognises that the taxes should be paid and that there is a legitimate place for civil government (see Romans 13).

However, the second half of His answer takes the discussion much deeper. Man is made in God's image and wherever he goes and in whatever sphere of life, he is to honour God by reflecting His image. As humans are not divided, so human life is not divided. There can be no sacred/secular distinction so as to exclude 'secular' from His demands. God doesn't just want our money. We have been created in His image and therefore no part of human activity is exempt from His demands. This means that God demands that human political life should reflect Him too.

If Jesus recognises the sphere of government, and if He also demands that all human life is to reflect God's image – we must ask by what means Christ chooses to reach

this result. Jesus says *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"* (Matthew 28:18). Does this mean we should use external force to impose His authority? McIlroy writes (page 132) that immediately after this statement Jesus *"did not then go on and tell his disciples to conquer kingdoms and seize political power [i.e. establish a theocracy by force], but rather to 'go and make disciples of all nations.' (Mt. 28:19)."*

The Kingdom of God is not an earthly geopolitical force that will forcibly and coercively subdue secular governments and people. Instead, it grows within the various environments in which it finds itself, slowly but noticeably altering them, like salt or yeast in a batch of bread (Matthew 5:13; 13:33). The goal of taking political power and exercising it coercively is too limited for God's redemptive plan for humanity, a plan that cannot be fulfilled by the use of force. In marked contrast God is driven by His love and He desires a response, love, which cannot be produced by any external force.

This love, however, will not be true love unless it is characterised by obedience, and obedience will have a public face, which will eventually transform public life, including political life. It would therefore be an entirely appropriate (and in fact much needed) fruit of the Great Commission to find Christians seeking to serve God in places of political influence and governing according to His Law. The point is not that God's Kingdom cannot be shown by political activity but that it cannot be advanced *coercively* by political power, military might or any other means. The gospel is the power for change, and the Christian

faith impacts upon every sphere of society. To disengage with politics would be detrimental and damaging to the advancement and proclamation of the Gospel of the kingdom of God.

Please read Chapter 6 of *A Biblical View of Law and Justice* pp. 115-141.

Bible Study Questions

01

Read, Isaiah; 42:1-4; and Acts 1:6. What misconceptions did many first century Israelites have about the Messiah and why did they hold them? How might we fall into the same trap(s) today?

02

Read Isaiah 61:1-2 and Mark 4:30-32. How does the Kingdom come? What characteristics of the Kingdom can we see reflected in these verses?

03

What do the 'means' by which the Kingdom of God comes communicate about the kingdom itself? What is the danger if we attempt to use the wrong 'means'?

04

Read Matthew 5:13-16. How can Christian lawyers exercise the qualities of salt and light in the Kingdom?

05

Read Luke 22:24-30 and Philippians 2:5-8. What model of leadership does Jesus teach and embody? In what way(s) does it differ from worldly leaders?

06

Read Luke 10:25-37. In what way(s) can engaging with politics (e.g. law reform initiatives) be an outworking of our duty to love our neighbours as ourselves?

07

In light of your answers to questions 2-6, how should Christian lawyers use their position and influence to advance the Kingdom of God in the practice and making of law? In what way(s) can Christian lawyers use their influence to serve others?



Leader's Guide

01

McIlroy writes (page 122):

> "Jesus stood the expectations of his contemporaries on their heads. He rejected the facile interpretations of the Old Testament prophecies in favour of a more costly, more profound, more holistic mission of redemption...The problem with the messianic expectations of Jesus' day, as with many heresies, was not what they affirmed so much as what they denied... Jesus took hold of the Old Testament prophecies as Lord over them, and fulfilled and combined them in a way that was wonderful beyond any of the guesses of the people of his time as to the true nature and extent of the Messiah's mission."

In a similar way, the minority status of Christians in the UK and the dominance of a secularised government can often make us feel marginalised, longing for the rise of Christian values and morals in society. In such circumstances we might be tempted to take Scriptures out of context to justify adopting worldly strategies to advance the Kingdom or

seize political power (e.g. the Zealots in the first century AD and BC). Rather, we should be seeking to influence government and society by promoting Biblical values and morals through principled persuasion, political activism and, most importantly, integrated with them all, evangelism: to live and proclaim the good news of the Christ who is Lord over it all.

02

In *Good News to the Poor,* Tim Chester writes:

> "The coming of the kingdom is a secret given only to some (Mark 4:11). It has come in a hidden way. In Mark 4:30-31 Jesus likens the kingdom of God to a mustard seed. A mustard seed was proverbially small. In the same way the kingdom of God appears small and insignificant. Nor is it simply the case that the kingdom comes secretly, it is actually opposed. And that is the exact opposite of what we expect. We expect the kingdom of God to come in glory and triumph, but here the kingdom is despised and rejected. In a sense, though it is hidden, it is revealed in persecution, opposition and rejection."[1]

The Kingdom comes through the Word of God. In the Parable of the Sower the farmer sows the word (Mark 4:14) and the growth of the Kingdom comes when people hear the word and accept it (Mark 4:20).

The true greatness and power of the Kingdom, despite its small beginnings, will one day be seen by all (Mark 4:32).

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1 Taken from *Good News to the Poor: Sharing the Gospel Through Social Involvement* by Tim Chester, © 2013. pp. 80, 85. Used by permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, www.crossway.org.

03

The 'means' or ways in which the Kingdom comes reveal to some extent the nature of the Kingdom itself. The Kingdom comes graciously and this shows that the Kingdom will be a place in which God's grace is eternally experienced.

The danger of human beings using the wrong means in an attempt to bring God's Kingdom is perhaps best illustrated by the crusades (1095–1291), most of which were sanctioned by the Pope in the name of Christendom. These bloody conquests had the goal of recapturing Jerusalem and the sacred "Holy Land" from Muslim rule. They have, in the opinion of many, severely undermined Christianity as a force for good and portray an eternal kingdom of violent and oppressive rule.

04

Salt is typically invisible to the human eye when used as an ingredient in cooking or as a preservative. It is only noticeable in such circumstances by our taste buds and because it can make us thirsty. Christian lawyers therefore should act discreetly as anti-rotting agents in society, preserving Biblical truth and justice and enhancing the quality (or flavour) of life for others, creating a thirst to know more about God and His Kingdom.

While the salt image speaks of the subtle invisible effect of preservation, light is highly visible, and Christian lawyers therefore should be intensely "burning individuals", i.e. on fire for God, causing others to see God's truth, moral

beauty and perfect justice, whilst exposing and opposing darkness, e.g. injustice.

05

It is important to note at the outset here that everyone is in a leadership position. We are all leaders to some extent because we all have varying degrees of influence over others, e.g. our families, workmates, fellow students, clients, etc.

The *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary (1999)* on Luke 22:24-27 states that:

> "Jesus replies by reminding the disciples of two objectionable characteristics of secular rulers. First, they "lord it over" others, an attitude Peter later warns elders of (1Pe 5:3). Second, they are given the title "Benefactor." In Mt 23:7, Jesus disapproved of a similar kind of status seeking. Actually he himself is the true "Benefactor" (a similar word is used of Jesus in Acts 10:38).
>
> In v.26 "but you" is emphatic. Jesus makes two points about true greatness. First, one should not seek the veneration given aged people in ancient Near Eastern society but be content with the lower place younger people had. Second, one should not seek the position of the person sitting at a dinner table who had a higher social position than the waiter, who was often a slave. This illustration recalls the example of the Lord Jesus, who washed his disciples' feet as they reclined at the table of the Last Supper (Jn 13:12-17)."[2]

2 Barker, Kenneth L.. and Kohlenberger III, John R. (Eds.) *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary: Volume 2: New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), page 278.

Jesus wanted His followers to demonstrate a distinctly different model of leadership from the self-seeking, self-serving, and domineering style of leadership often found in the world. Servant leaders should motivate and mobilise others to accomplish a task or to think with creativity, vision, integrity and skill for the benefit of all concerned. Leadership is about investing in the development and well being of others so that tasks can be accomplished together for God's glory.

06

Jesus underscores that genuine spirituality is demonstrated through love towards the creation and the people around us. Through the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus illustrates that the scope of neighbourly love knows no bounds, even encompassing those regarded as enemies. Hence, involvement in institutions that directly affect the lives of our neighbours—particularly those who are most disadvantaged and vulnerable—can serve as a meaningful expression of genuine obedience to the command to love both God and our neighbours.

07

Law and the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is all too often the forgotten person of the Blessed Trinity. And yet He is indispensable. His activity in the world is essential, as Dwight L Moody (a man some claim to be the greatest evangelist of the nineteenth century) taught:

> "The work of the Spirit is to impart life, to implant hope, to give liberty, to testify of Christ, to guide us into all truth, to teach us all things, to comfort the believer, and to convict the world of sin."[1]

It is vital for Christian lawyers in particular to have a firm grasp of the work of the Holy Spirit, in order to understand the following conundrum: "if the Old Testament law given via Moses was good (Nehemiah 9:13), why didn't the Mosaic Law establish justice on the earth?" The answer to this difficult question is important because it will have a significant impact on our view of the relationship between Christianity, law, politics and the State.

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1 Moody, Dwight L.. *The Secret of Success in the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), page 58.

Obedience to an External Code

During the 1960s, law students at one of America's top law schools – George Washington University – dressed casually like many students today. Dissatisfied with their 'unsuitable' appearance, however, the University Administration attempted to make the students dress more appropriately by issuing a decree that all male students must wear a shirt and a tie to seminars and tutorials. The students protested. Exercising their legal ingenuity, they complied with the letter of the law by wearing ragged cut-off shorts and tattered T-shirts with a matching tie. They even abandoned their socks. The Administration soon realised that dress codes could be written with ever increasing stipulations that students would circumvent and hastily repealed the decree.

Law, as this story illustrates, is limited. This is also true when the law in question is a great law as opposed to something as trivial as a law about dress codes. Six hundred years before Christ, King Josiah instituted a series of great laws with a view to reforming the kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34-35). He purged Judah and Jerusalem of idolatry and all its accompanying paraphernalia. He restored the Temple, reinstituted the Law and ensured the Passover was observed again. Despite his noble efforts to reform the law, the people obeyed only superficially; they did not return to God with all their heart and only pretended to do so (Jeremiah 3:6-10). Consequently, McIlroy writes (page 150), *"The depressing conclusion of the first half of Jeremiah is therefore that, 'The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure (*Jeremiah 17:9*).'"*

Something greater than an external code was needed.

The Law Inside Out

Jeremiah realised that as human beings we ourselves are incapable of changing our hearts. He even says that it is as difficult for us to change our hearts as it is for a leopard to change his spots (Jeremiah 13:23). A cure was needed which only God Himself could provide and thus, in His grace, God gives Jeremiah a vision of a new covenant. No longer would the moral law be written on tablets of stone, it would be written in the hearts of God's people:

> "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart." (Jeremiah 24:7)

> ""This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people"" (Jeremiah 31:33)

This prompts McIlroy to write (page 151):

> "The revelation which Jeremiah received was that the moral law could only be obeyed in the power of the Spirit and under the guidance of the Spirit. The true meaning of the Torah can only be grasped, not by treating it as an external written code but by meditating on it under the internal guidance of the Spirit."

A Christian's unity with Christ means, by faith alone in Him, His fulfilment of the Law is credited to and enjoyed fully by them. The application of that which is true of Christ to the lives of the believers is a supernatural action of the Spirit. Therefore, for those who are 'in Christ' (Romans 8:1), the purpose of the Mosaic Law is now fulfilled by the Spirit.

This is how the apostle Paul expresses it:

> "For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:3-4)

Once Christ returned to the Father, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Church. It is the Holy Spirit who enables Christians to love and obey God's law, not as means of salvation, but because they love God, recognizing that the Law is an expression of God's character and purpose for His Kingdom. Grace brings us to love God, and if we love God, we long to keep His commands (John 14:23-26).

Please read Chapter 7 of *A Biblical View of Law and Justice* pp. 143-156.

Bible Study Questions

01

Read John 14:26 and 16:7-15. How does the Holy Spirit impact: (a) the individual believer and (b) the world?

02

Read Isaiah 11:2-4a and Ephesians 1:17. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit from these passages?

03

Read Romans 7:14 and Nehemiah 9:13-20 and 30. What do these verses teach us about the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Mosaic Law?

04

Read 2 Corinthians 3:5-8 and Romans 7:6. What do these passages teach us about the Mosaic Law and its limits? Why was the Mosaic Law limited in this way?

05

Read Ezekiel 11:19-20, and Romans 8:3-4.
How should Christians approach the Mosaic Law under the New Covenant? Why is it essential that evangelism is not neglected alongside the proclamation of God's Law?

06

Read 1 Corinthians 2:12-16 and Luke 11:9-13.
How dependent are you on the Holy Spirit? As Christian lawyers how should we live and work recognising our very real dependence upon the Holy Spirit?





Leader's Guide

01

Most, if not all, Christians will appreciate that the Holy Spirit indwells the believer. The aim here, however, is to see that, although the world rejects Him, He nonetheless impacts the world. To take two important examples: He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8-11) and makes Christ known (John 16:14).

02

The Holy Spirit is a spirit of wisdom, understanding, revelation, counsel, strength, knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Note the relationship between being filled with the Spirit and acts of righteousness/justice. The Holy Spirit gives wisdom to undertake wise purposes and empowers them to be carried out.

We are to be acquainted with the mind and will of God so we know how to administer the affairs of His spiritual

Kingdom in all its facets, including the administration of justice on earth.

03

McIlroy writes (page 145):

> "In Romans 7:14, Paul describes the Mosaic Law as *ho nomos pneumatikos estin*. The Torah is *pneumatikos*, spiritual. In Paul's usage of the word *pneumatikos* functions as an adjective for the Holy Spirit, referring to that which belongs to, or pertains to, the Spirit. What Paul is saying is that the Torah belongs to and was given by the Spirit! It is his Law."

The verses in Nehemiah also show that the Holy Spirit was responsible for giving the Mosaic Law. Furthermore, they show that the Spirit was at work through the prophets, challenging the people's unfaithfulness to the Torah.

04

The Mosaic Law came with glory. Its nature and moral content is excellent, yet it was a ministry of death to the human race. The problem with the Old Testament law was human nature. The law is powerless in the face of human sinfulness.

Any law treated as an external written code of rules will be inadequate. This is not just because people disobey it outright. It is also because of superficial and hypocritical obedience to the letter of the law when in reality the Spirit of the law demands genuine heartfelt obedience alongside higher moral standards. The Holy Spirit is needed to move God's people to follow His decrees.

McIlroy writes (page 151):

> "...through his life, his teaching and his legacy Jesus fulfilled the new covenant promises to Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Quite simply, Jesus turned the Law inside out. Whereas Torah observance focussed on external purity, Jesus made it clear that it was not what was on the outside that made a man pure, but rather what was in his heart [Matthew 15:11, 16-20]. Jesus taught that at the heart of the commands 'Do not murder' and 'Do not commit adultery' was an obligation not to cherish anger or lust in our hearts."

05

The answer to the first part of this question should flow from the question above and the McIlroy quote (page 151) in the introduction to the study:

> *"The revelation which Jeremiah received was that the moral law could only be obeyed in the power of the Spirit and under the guidance of the Spirit. The true meaning of the Torah can only be grasped, not by treating it as an external written code but by meditating on it under the internal guidance of the Spirit."*

Since Paul believed in the Mosaic Law (Acts 24:14), it would be a mistake to presume that his theology of the Holy Spirit nullified the Torah. Paul's theology echoes Ezekiel's prophecy that God would put His Spirit in us and move us to follow His decrees and laws (Ezekiel 36:27). Paul explains that the Holy Spirit has been given to us is so that "*the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us*" (Romans 8:4).

08

Submission to Authorities

> "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God." (Romans 13:1)

What do governments and governing authorities have a mandate to enforce? What should not be enforced by human laws? How do we discern which Biblical values and principles governments should promote? What role should Christian lawyers play in holding governments accountable to their God-given mandate?

These are important questions for Christian lawyers to address because they assist us in identifying and understanding how best we can steward our legal skills and abilities for God. It should be emphasised at the outset, however, that these are challenging and to some extent controversial questions. Accordingly, it is essential we examine and discuss these issues with a spirit of grace and humility.

The Role and Purpose of Government

At the 2001 Lawyers' Christian Fellowship Annual Dinner, Dr Brian Mawhinney, the keynote speaker, suggested three functions of government emerging from Romans 13:

(1) the preservation of order; (2) the promotion of good and the punishment of evil; and (3) the raising and spending of taxes in the interest of the common good.

The Preservation of Order

Order and justice are intrinsic to who God is. Consequently, human laws and governments should endeavour to promote and uphold both order and justice. *"However,"* McIlroy writes (page 179), *"the relationship between order and justice is not so straightforward. Injustice creates insecurity. And ultimately it creates insecurity not only for the oppressed but also for their oppressors…Poverty, especially in the midst of gross inequalities of wealth, is a breeding ground for riots, revolts, terrorism and revolution."*

The Promotion of Good and the Punishment of Evil

One of the central roles of governments is to promote the things that God has said are good (e.g. marriage) and to discourage the things that God has said are bad (e.g. sexual immorality). But there is a major problem. At the fall mankind seized God's unique right to be able to determine what is good and evil. Accordingly, ever since this time perceptions of what is right and wrong have widely differed. Thankfully, however, the good that governments should promote and the evil they should punish can be discovered from two sources: nature/creation (general revelation) and Scripture revealed through the Spirit (special revelation). McIlroy writes (page 163):

> *"Both general and special revelation are objective* [based on fact, i.e. not influenced by personal feelings or interpretations and

> therefore capable of being known]. *General revelation refers to the objective realities of the created order; special revelation to the objective reality of the incarnate Christ and the objective truth revealed in the Bible. Right and wrong are therefore not, in the Christian conception, sociological constructs nor is right derived from or dependent on state authority, although it may need the backing of state force."*

In seeking to discern what is good from nature/creation alone great caution should be exercised. Although nature/creation reveals God's invisible qualities (Romans 1:20), they have been deeply affected and spoilt by humanity's fall. Furthermore, man's intellect itself is fallen, to the extent that *"although they claimed to be wise, they became fools."* (Romans 1:22). The supreme revelation of what is good and evil can only be found in the Scriptures, illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

The Limits of Government

Governments are, however, limited in what they can achieve. Governments alone cannot create just societies. A just society can only be formed if individuals and groups within it act justly. Although laws can be made, administered and enforced, if the population as a whole does not adhere or buy-in to a particular law (for example, speeding on motorways) then it will not be obeyed.

Government is limited because it cannot wield its law-making powers to force non-Christians to become Christians. Coercion is emphatically not God's chosen method for dealing with His human creatures. The only Christian faith that is worthy of the name is faith that

is freely chosen as a voluntary response to God's love. Christianity, rightly understood, is inherently opposed to coercive totalitarianism, since one of the major principles upon which it stands is the value of human liberty, one of the good gifts of God given to all human beings.

Government has no authority to demand the worship of idols, to prohibit or restrict the spreading of the gospel, or to impose laws that are directly contrary to God's standards of justice. These are clearly coercive and do not serve the common good of mankind. In this context the obligation on a government is not to interfere. Instead, it should facilitate the creation of a social space in which people can live *"peaceful and quiet lives"* in accordance with their private conscience, thereby establishing suitable conditions in which they can *"come to a knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:1-3).

The Christian Vision of a Just Society

McIlroy writes (page 176):

> "The Christian vision of a just society is therefore one in which government works for the common good, that is to say, for the good of all. It is one in which people acknowledge their solidarity with one another, based on their common humanity. It is one in which every person and family has access to the necessary resources to be able to earn a decent living and participate as dignified members of their community. It is one in which people are socially rich, with sufficient time and resources to be able to enjoy good relationships. It is a society in which the poor and powerless are considered. It is one in which government recognises its duty to do justice and yet acknowledges that its role should be one of facilitating rather than controlling, allowing

smaller unions and institutions within society to function relationally, enriching the social capital of society."

Holding Governments Accountable: The Role of *Christian* Lawyers

Government has the potential to be used by God to promote good and punish evil. It also has the potential for great evil, as Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, Apartheid South Africa and Mugabe's Zimbabwe aptly demonstrate. Christian lawyers have an important role to play in challenging and resisting governments whenever they step outside of their God-given authority. Holding governments accountable to act for the common good of all, especially the weak, is part of our duty to love our neighbours.

Christian lawyers have a clear mandate for the constructive criticism of human laws since we have a higher standard of justice by which to criticise them. We should therefore actively engage in politics and Christian interest litigation by graciously arguing for Biblical values and principles to be upheld and/or maintained in the law, and thereby pointing people to Christ.

When Christians advocate for Christian standards to be reflected in a nation's laws, people can sometimes wrongly characterise this as Christians "wanting to impose their standards" on others. However, it is important to appreciate that all laws (whoever drafts them) inevitably impose a set of standards on others. So the question really is whether the standards that are reflected in a country's laws are in line with God's objective standards or whether they are, instead, in line with somebody else's standards.

Challenging the law

We are to be subject to the authorities over us, and not only when we agree with them, because their power is a derivative power from God himself. Christians are called to be model citizens and should seek to be obedient to human laws and government whenever possible. However, what if the authorities command us to do something God forbids?

This is how R. C. Sproul responds:

> Whom do you obey when there is a direct, immediate and unequivocal conflict between the law of God and the rule of men? At times, human rulers require people to do things that God forbids, or forbids them from doing what God commands. The principle is very simple. If any ruler – a governing official or body, school teacher, boss or military commander – commands you to do something God forbids or forbids you from doing something God commands, not only may you disobey, but you must disobey. If it comes down to a choice like this, you must obey God.[1]

Challenging the law can take various forms. Lawyers challenge bad laws when they ask a Judge to depart from a bad precedent. They can also 'challenge' the law by participating in Government consultation exercises.

As sinful people, we are prone to distort things in our favour, and may be far too ready to challenge the rules. Careful reflection is required before we challenge the authorities God has appointed, and we should prayerfully

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1 Sproul, R. C. *What is the relationship between Church and State?* (Reformation Trust Publishing, 2014), page 53.

examine our motives and method, and evaluate the implication of our challenge to the spread of the gospel. Ultimately, as David McIlroy reminds us (page 185), "...Christians should always be citizens of heaven and, if push comes to shove, strangers on earth (Phil. 3:20)."

Please read Chapter 8 of *A Biblical View of Law and Justice* pp. 157-188.

Bible Study Questions

01

Read Romans 13:1-7. What is the source of authority for earthly leaders, and what is the role of government based on these verses?

02

Read Acts 5:27-33. In what circumstances is it right to challenge authorities?

03

Read Romans 1:20; 2:14-15 and 1 Corinthians 2:6-12. How can good and evil be discerned by Christians and non-Christians? What is the difference between general and special revelation? Why is this distinction significant?

04

What Biblical values and principles should Christian lawyers seek to uphold and/or maintain in the law today? How would you seek to persuade your government and society to uphold and/or maintain these values and principles?

05

Read Romans 12:9-10 and 13:8-10. Why does Paul emphasise that love fulfils the law in the context of his teaching about submission to authorities?

06

Read Article 5 of the Lausanne Covenant on Evangelism and Christian Social Responsibility:

"(...)Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless, we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgement upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead"[1]

Which is more important, upholding, reforming, and challenging the law (social justice/making the social order more Christian) or evangelism (making people Christian)? What is the relationship between them? Can you have one without the other?

07

What one thing would you change about the way you live your life as a result of what you have learnt/ discussed?

1 Available at https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant.



Leader's Guide

01

Paul, a Roman citizen, suffers both physical beating and false imprisonment under Roman officials who do not uphold the law. Nevertheless, he was unequivocal in his teaching in Romans 13:1-2. First, he taught that everyone must submit to the governing authorities even when at great personal cost. Second, he taught that there are no authorities except those that have been established by God. This teaching can be hard to understand especially where, as in Acts, the governing authority seems to be trying to stifle the spread of the Gospel. However, Paul also publicly challenged the authorities when they acted unlawfully, as seen in Acts 16:19-39 and Acts 22:23-29, where he averted a flogging by asserting his rights as a Roman citizen. This shows that while Paul emphasized submission to authorities, he also recognized the importance of holding them accountable to the law. Paul used every opportunity for the advancement of the Gospel, and

many were converted as a result. This nuanced approach can be particularly relevant for brothers and sisters living in oppressive regimes, illustrating that submission does not preclude seeking justice and using legal rights to further the mission of the Gospel.

02

The Sanhedrin, using its delegated authority from the occupying Roman powers charged (issued an injunction to) the apostles not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. The apostles recognised that they could not submit to this demand. When authorities and God's instructions conflict, there is no doubt that it is God we must obey. Daniel is a good example of this (see Daniel 6).

This does not undermine Paul's teaching in Romans 13, but rather recognises the limitations upon governments not to make laws that prohibit or restrict the preaching of the Gospel. In these difficult situations, the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) overrides our duty to submit to authorities as demonstrated by Peter and John's response when they were ordered by the Jewish Council to stop preaching the Gospel in Acts 4:19-20: "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

There are lots of ways that Christians can respectfully and rightly challenge authorities, such as when Paul averted a flogging by saying, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?" (Acts 22:25).

Similarly, when for example Christian lawyers make submissions on law reform, or ask for precedents to be overturned, these are legitimate means by which they can challenge authorities.

03

The distinction between general and special revelation reveals a helpful but not exclusive method that Christian lawyers can employ to reform laws with reference to Biblical standards/principles. In our democratic society we can, by principled persuasion, articulate and demonstrate the supremacy of God's standards/principles from nature/creation to those who do not accept the authority of Scripture whilst making it clear that the highest revelation of these standards/principles is contained in Scripture. By proclaiming God's law in this way we reveal His character and point people to Christ (Galatians 3:24).

04

Discuss one or two of the following examples, and the extent to which they should or should not be upheld in a nation's law today:

- The prohibition of murder (Exodus 20:13), oppression (Isaiah 58:6-12) and cruelty (Ephesians 4:32).
- The preservation of life (Exodus 20:13), the love of offspring (Ephesians 6:4) and abortion.
- The prohibition on stealing (Exodus 20:15).
- Bible passages dealing with sexual and marital issues (e.g. adultery, divorce, same-sex activity (Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:26-27, Exodus 20:14, 17, Matthew 19:1-10)).

- Taking care of the poor and sick (James 2:15-17).
- Prohibition of corruption and bribery (Lev 19:15, Deut 10:17; Amos 5:12)
- Prohibition of dishonesty and false testimony (Lev 19:16, Prov 6:16-19)
- Taking care of the oppressed, widows, orphans and aliens (Isaiah 1:17, Deut 10:18-19, Prov 14:31)
- Prohibition of idolatry and witchcraft (Deut 18:9-13, Gal 5:16-25)

05

Notably, Paul's teaching on submission to authorities has been placed between two passages concerned with love for our neighbours. McIlroy writes (page 160): *"Christian political responsibility is an expression of the love which is 'the fulfilment of the law' (Rom. 13:10)."*

06

In Good News to the Poor Tim Chester sums up his chapter on social involvement and proclamation as follows:

> "In describing the relationship between evangelism and social action, we have seen that:
>
> - evangelism and social action are distinct activities;
> - proclamation is central; evangelism and social action are inseparable, especially in ministry among the poor."[1]

1 Taken from *Good News to the Poor: Sharing the Gospel Through Social Involvement* by Tim Chester, © 2013. pp. 80, 85. Used by permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, www.crossway.org.

09

The Last Judgement

What do you see when you look at the world around you? Do you see it getting better or worse? In June 1963 John F. Kennedy boldly declared in his Commencement Address at American University: *"No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable - and we believe they can do it again."* Is his optimism (with the benefit of more than seventy years of hindsight) justified? Can it be reconciled with global warming, famine, racial hatred, viruses, depression and family breakdown?

In the Old Testament, the writer of Ecclesiastes considered the state of the world around him. He was not comforted by what he saw:

> "...I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed – and they have no comforter..." (Ecclesiastes 4:1)

Are things really any different now? The peoples of the world still do not deal with one another justly. In every continent there is a desperate need for justice, for intervention, for deliverance. Those with power often remain

intent on maintaining their positions of privilege rather than acting to rescue the poor and oppressed. In many countries, legal systems that should be in place to protect the powerless and bring justice to the oppressed have become part of the problem. Justice is not being done.

The Question

In the light of such circumstances it is only natural to ask questions like: Will things always remain this way? Will some crimes go unpunished, and some miscarriages of justice never be redressed? The Bible's answer to such a question is clear: no. Things will not always remain this way. One day, justice will be done completely, perfectly and finally.

The Last Judgement

The Old Testament prophets looked forward to the 'Day of the Lord'. That day had two components to it: salvation for God's people and judgement for God's enemies. *"From their perspective"* McIlroy writes, *"the Old Testament prophets taught that these two bits would go together."* Isaiah 61:1-2 says:

> "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour and the day of vengeance of our God..."

At the beginning of His ministry on earth, Jesus quoted these words. Yet He ended His quote before *"the day of*

vengeance of our God" and declared *"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"* (Luke 4:21). It is clear from Jesus' teaching here and throughout Scripture that He came to earth first as Saviour and that He will return a second time as Judge. We now live in the 'in between times', the time between the first coming and second coming, in what the New Testament refers to as 'the last days'.

When Will the End Come?

The question of when Christ will return is something over which many have speculated. If you were to type 'end of the world' into a search engine (not recommended), you would find lots of different theories and predictions.

The truth is that we do not know when the end of the world will come. In Mark 13:32 Jesus tells his disciples: *"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* Passages in the Bible may tell us about things that must happen before Christ's return but they do not provide us with a date.

What Will Happen at the Second Coming?

In the Bible, Jesus' second coming is referred to as an 'apokalypsis', an 'unveiling' or a 'disclosure'. It is referred to as such because when Jesus returns a number of things will be revealed which, to some extent, are now veiled.

A Revelation of Jesus' Kingship

Consider this true story. A Christian lawyer (who for the purposes of this study shall be known by the pseudonym Mr Denning) was having coffee with friends on Hampsted

Heath. A cute two year-old girl came over wanting to play with him and his friends, followed, a few minutes later, by her young Mum. Mr Denning had a pleasant conversation with her about her child whilst the friends he was with remained conspicuously quiet. It was only after she had gone that Mr Denning was informed that the lady with whom he had been talking was an Oscar nominated Hollywood actress (who for the purposes of this study shall be known as Lady Justice).

Now, if Mr Denning had seen Lady Justice surrounded by an entourage of people, or on a movie set, he would undoubtedly have recognised her. But on a Saturday morning with her two-year-old child, dressed in ordinary clothes, doing ordinary things, he, despite having seen Lady Justice on a cinema screen, did not recognise her.

When Jesus came to earth He 'laid aside' the glory and majesty that came from being God and, instead, was *"found in appearance as a man"* (Philippians 2:7-8). Although Jesus was still fully God, He was also fully man. Because of Jesus' appearance as a man, when He came to earth the first time many didn't recognise who He was: God.

When Jesus comes a second time He will return *"with great power and glory"* accompanied by his full entourage of angels (Mark 13:26-27). When Jesus returns all people on earth will see His glory. His kingship will be revealed. All peoples will see that Jesus is God and will recognise His rightful authority over them. On that day "every knee should bow" and "every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:10-11).

A Revelation of Our Sin

At the last judgement, when the Lord comes, He will bring to light the things that are now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart (1 Cor. 4:5). This has profound implications for each of us; we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, when each of us will receive what is due for what they have done in this life, whether good or evil (2 Cor. 5:9-10). This will be the ultimate moment of truth. For believers, whether and to what extent they have lived well for Christ will be revealed, and they will be rewarded (commended) accordingly. This truth should motivate Christians to live to please God, and restrain sin in their lives. For those who have not trusted in Jesus as their Saviour and followed Him as their Lord, the last judgement will reveal their sinfulness, their rejection of Jesus' rule over their lives, and the verdict for them will be 'guilty'. This should serve as a warning to those who are not Christians to turn (repent) from their sin and turn to Jesus as the only Saviour. It should also motivate Christians to tell others the Good News about Jesus Christ.

A Revelation of God's Justice

In 2 Peter we read that the 'Day of the Lord' will be a day of judgement, disclosure, fire and the destruction of ungodly men. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 Paul warned:

> "...when the Lord Jesus is revealed...He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might..."

These are dreadfully sobering words, which we communicate cautiously with trembling. However, those who reject Jesus' rightful rule over their lives in this life do not deserve to be part of God's Kingdom in the next life. This is justice. It is God ensuring that a person gets what they deserve and what they desire. The One who alone knows the full facts and can see into the hearts of men will impose true and perfect justice.

God, however, is as just as He is merciful. *"On the mount of crucifixion,"* mercy, grace and love met *"as heaven's peace and perfect justice kissed a guilty world in love"*.[1] At the cross God's unfathomable commitment to justice is demonstrated. God's justice is meted out on Jesus instead of us. In sending His Son to endure the punishment our sins deserve we see, in perfect harmony, God's mercy and justice in action. McIlroy writes (page 196): *"Destruction and damnation are not God's preferences; they are not something he desires to do to his sinful human creatures. He would much rather embrace rebels who have laid down their arms and have surrendered to their rightful king."*

Why the Delay?

It is now two millennia since Christ first came to earth. Why the delay in His second coming? The answer is simple: God is giving as many people as possible as long as possible to turn to Him for salvation before Jesus returns in judgement (see 2 Peter 3:9).

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1 From the Hymn "Here is Love Vast as the Ocean" by William Rees, translated by William Edwards.

Our Response?

Many people's response to the second coming is rather like their response to retirement and pension provision: even though it is something that will happen to them, it remains a vague and future event that has little impact on how they live today. This should not be the case for Christian lawyers. Instead, given that Christ's return is a certainty, we should live in the light of it and allow it to affect our lives in at least two ways:

Making God's Future Justice Known

There is only a limited time for people to respond to God's mercy made available to all before Jesus returns. Therefore, we should strive to make known this coming event and the need to respond to God's mercy to as many people as possible.

Working for God's Justice in the Present

One day God will hold court and dispense ultimate justice on all that has gone before. He will hold each of us accountable for how we use the power and influence He has given us in this life. As Christian lawyers we have power and influence in the implementation of justice. Therefore, we should work to establish just laws and a righteous administration of justice. By working whole-heartedly for justice now we make God's future justice known. Let us not lose sight of God's mercy as we seek to do this. In Jesus, God offered restorative justice. Christ's death on the cross made possible a judgement that pro-nounced justice and mercy; a judgement that enables us

to be brought back into a right relationship with God. We should work then to facilitate justice that seeks to rebuild damaged and broken relationships.

Please read Chapter 9 of *A Biblical View of Law and Justice* pp. 189-203.

Bible Study Questions

01

Read 2 Peter 3:8-9.
Why is God delaying the Second Coming? How should this affect our actions and behaviour?

02

Read Psalm 10:13-14, and 2 Peter 3:3-7.
What is the world's attitude to the Second Coming of Christ? What impact does this have on (in)justice?

03

Read Ecclesiastes 8:11 and Isaiah 59:15.
In what ways is human justice imperfect? How should this affect our expectations for justice in our own and other societies?

04

Read 1 Corinthians 13:12.
Can the legal systems we participate in be recognised as a reflection or a shadow of divine justice or are they merely a parody of it? What can be done to facilitate a greater reflection of divine justice?

05

Read Isaiah 1:17 and Proverbs 31:8-9.
Why is human justice nonetheless important? Why not simply wait for ultimate, perfect justice?

06

Read Mark 13:32-37 and 2 Peter 3:10-14. How should we live as Christian lawyers in light of Jesus' impending return? What specific things do you need to do/not do?



Leader's Guide

01

Peter provided two reasons for the apparent delay in Jesus' return. First, God's timetable differs from ours (verse 8). What seems long to us, might not be long from the perspective of the eternal God. Second, God is patient toward sinners, giving humanity time for repentance (verse 9). Though we may long for Jesus' return and for His everlasting kingdom, God has allowed the last days to continue so that more people can turn towards him in faith and repentance.

02

If human beings believe that they will not be held to account for their sins they are released to act in their own interests perpetuating injustice. This is in accord with man's sinful nature (see Genesis 3) to throw off the 'shackles' (as he sees them) of moral restraint (Psalm 2:3).

03

Human justice is imperfect in several ways. For instance, it can be swayed by personal biases, prejudices, and partiality. Human justice is also limited because humanity lacks complete knowledge and understanding of every situation. Unlike God, who is omniscient, humans can only judge based on the evidence presented to them, which can be incomplete or misleading. Our expectations for justice should be tempered by the understanding that complete and perfect justice is beyond human capability.

04

McIlroy writes (pages 199-200):

> "Human justice is a shadow of divine justice, an incomplete and sometimes indistinct image, but one that brightens as the light of the good news about what God has done in Christ is shone upon it...human laws and legal systems should promote and protect the value of human life, human dignity, human liberty and provide opportunities for their subjects to enjoy rewarding work and meaningful relationships...Human justice is imperfect. Human fact-finding mechanisms are imperfect. We lack omniscience. Human judgements are imperfect. We lack perfect wisdom. Human laws are inadequate. We lack perfect foresight of the future."

05

According to these verses, pursuing justice is a direct command from God. Acting justly is part of our obedience

and worship, demonstrating our commitment to His values. Furthermore, by pursuing justice, we can address immediate needs and alleviate suffering, reflecting God's love and compassion. While perfection is unattainable, improvement is always possible. Striving for justice also upholds human dignity and rights, affirming the value of each person as created in God's image.

06

Matthew Henry in his commentary on Mark 13:32-37 writes:

> "Our Master is gone away, and left us something in trust, in charge, which we must give account of, Mark 13:34. He is as a man taking a far journey; for he is gone to be away a great while, he has left his house on earth, and left his servants in their offices, given authority to some, who are to be overseers, and work to others, who are to be labourers. They that have authority given them, in that had work assigned them, for those that have the greatest power have the most business; and to them to whom he gave work, he gave some sort of authority, to do that work. And when he took his last leave, he appointed the porter to watch, to be sure to be ready to open to him at his return; and in the mean time to take care to whom he opened his gates, not to thieves and robbers, but only to his Master's friends and servants. Thus our Lord Jesus, when he ascended on high, left something for all his servants to do, expecting they should all do him service in his absence, and be ready to receive him at his return. All are appointed to work, and some authorized to rule."[1]

1 Henry, Matthew. *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), page 1809.

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