

## Saints Judging Angels?

The apostle Paul has just delivered a stinging rebuke to the believers at Corinth. The reason is their division and selfishness and their ability to allow immorality in the church. Now Paul addresses the problem of Christians going to court before non-Christians. Paul shames them because instead of going to the world for judgment between Christians the church will judge the world. 6:2. Paul doubles down and adds that we are to judge the angels. 6:3 Paul is using an argument from the greater to the lesser. If they will one day judge the world and the angels, shouldn't they be capable of handling relatively minor disputes among themselves?

Paul seems to assume his readers are already aware of their role in the final judgment given the double rhetorical question. He twice asks the rhetorical question, "Do you not know?" How many Christians today know of this future reality. As we have said, Eschatological Beliefs Expresses Themselves in Ethical Behavior! "Belief Determines Behavior" KM

### 1. Judgment by Example

The faith of the believer/ Church will condemn the world by its example. Jesus makes a similar point when he declares that the Ninevites and the queen of Sheba, who responded with repentance and wisdom in their day, will rise up at the judgment to condemn the wickedness of his contemporary generation. However, this is not the same as being a direct judge. Many in the early church held to this view.

### 2. Judgment by Proxy

This view is favored by certain contemporary commentators like Anthony Thiselton. "It emphasizes Paul's teaching on the believer's union with Christ: just as we share in his death, so will we share in his resurrection power and authority (Rom 6:3-11, I Cor 15:49). Thus we can say that when Christ returns to judge the world, we who trust him will also share in his judgment—in the derivative sense that we participate spiritually in all his saving acts, since he is our federal head acting on our behalf."

### 3. Judgment by Delegated Authority

Believers will have an active, delegated role for believers in the final judgment. In the Old Testament believers have a role in the final judgment as seen in Daniel's vision of the Son of Man: "And judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom" (Dan 7:22) Jesus spoke of a similar role in Matt 19:28. "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Also, Jesus told of this concept in the parable of the talents, "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much'" (Mat 25:21)

None of these passages speaks of believers judging *angels*. However, there are a number of other passages that speak of a future condemnation of fallen angels (Isa 24:12, Matt, 24:21, 25:41, 2

Peter 2:4) In these passages God himself is the judge. However, might it be possible that there is a delegated role for the believer?? I Cor 6:3

#### 4. Kingdom Reversal?

This interpretation, originated by Oscar Cullmann, is now articulated by Michael Heiser, in his book, *The Unseen Realm*. God had temporarily allotted jurisdiction of the pagan nations to a ruling class of angels, known as the “sons of God” in the Old Testament.

“This idea finds support in Deuteronomy 32:8: “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God” (cf. Dan. 10:13, 20). God then pronounces condemnation on these angels because of their unjust rule: “I said, ‘You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince’” (Ps. 82:6–7).

Part of God’s redemptive plan is to overthrow these demonic kingdoms and replace them with the kingdom of his Son, with believers ruling as co-heirs (2 Tim. 2:13; Rev. 2:25–28).

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According to Heiser, “Once the nations are restored to Yahweh through the gospel, believers will displace the divine beings who presently dominate the nations and rule in their place as Yahweh’s children and co-rulers” (311).” (Kyle Dillon)

#### **The Corinthians Catastrophe:** Putting Present Problems in Perspective

If Paul had this view in mind, then we can see the tragic irony in the behavior of the Corinthian believers. They would one day judge the very heavenly powers behind their earthly rulers, so why would they appeal to these same earthly rulers to judge their affairs?