

## **Who Made Me a Judge?**

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**From the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus refused to become a judge. Early on He refused to arbitrate an inheritance dispute between brothers, saying, “Who made me a judge or a divider over you?” (Luke 12:14). The Pharisees engaged Jesus in a series of debates seeking to discredit and destroy Him. “Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” Christ’s answer, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's,” avoided endorsement of a tax revolt against Rome (Mark 12:14, 17).**

**The Pharisees also tempted Jesus to act as a judge to condemn the woman caught in adultery in keeping with God’s Law (Deuteronomy 17:7 & 22:22). Unlike Moses (Exodus 2:11-15), Jesus skillfully resisted this temptation to become a judge prematurely. Unhappily, some cite this case as a divine repeal of the death penalty. Yet, Jesus plainly warned his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount “ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy . . . one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18).**

**Accordingly, Jesus did not in any way annul Mosaic Law in this encounter. Yet, the accusing witnesses were not authorized by Jesus to start stoning the adulteress. Why? They were stopped by His stern stipulation. “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” Her Pharisaical accusers, “being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one . . and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst” (John 8:7, 9). With no accusers left to start the execution, Jesus dismissed the woman with the strict admonition to “go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).**

**Since sinless men do not exist (Romans 5:12), we may infer that the woman’s accusers recused themselves because of their several sins of adultery. Jesus’ writing in the dust, may well have prodded the conscience memories of these would-be witnesses. Each feared that Jesus knew of his own rendezvous. This would also help explain the peculiar fact these hypocrites somehow failed to seize an adulterous man when they caught the woman “in the very act.” It is arguable in this contrived “kangaroo court” that some of the accusing witnesses were also customers of a known prostitute who had helped set up a sexual “sting” with her.**

**All of them, however, were as hamstrung in judicial duty by sexual sin as was King David, reduced to ineffectual outrage when Prince Amnon raped Tamar, Absalom’s sister (II Samuel 13:1-21). Two years later, Prince Absalom murdered his brother Amnon to avenge Tamar’s rape, in fulfillment of Nathan’s prophetic curse upon David (II Samuel 12:10 & 13: 22-39). Eventually, Absalom rebelled and tried to kill David. He was counseled in his doomed enterprise by Ahitophel, the embittered grandfather of Bathsheba and patron of her murdered husband Uriah (II Samuel 11:3 & 23:34).**

**Paul declares, “we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully” (I Timothy 1:8). But, it is not to be used to exact personal vengeance (Romans 12:19). In fact one is to avoid taking intra-church disputes into secular courts. In absence of church courts, “Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” (I Corinthians 6:7).**

**Finally, since Samuel anointed King Saul, the ministry (authority) of the State has been divorced from prophetic, priestly ministry (authority). Both King Saul and King Uzziah intruded**

**unlawfully into priestly functions and were duly punished (I Samuel 13:7-14; II Chronicles 26:16-21). Similarly, Elijah's unauthorized execution of baby-killing priests of Baal (I Kings 18:40) snatched defeat from the jaws of victory on Mt. Carmel. Elijah was later directed to anoint Jehu as Israel's King, who in one fell swoop ruthlessly purged Israel of Baal worship (II Kings 10:18-28).**