

Justice (Judges)



In the Eastern countries, there are three kinds of justice available. There are the judges, the Elders at the Gate, and the daysman. Now we will focus on judges.

Since there is no divorce and very little juvenile delinquency, the judges, which are federally appointed, are located throughout the land at widely separated locations. They handle major cases. This is the type of judge referred to in Matthew 5:25:

Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

This refers to the fact that since the courts are far apart, one usually must travel many miles to reach them. Suppose that you and I had a disagreement - about land encroachment. If we could not settle the matter in our village, we must go to the court, which is 300 miles away. When the summons comes, we all travel together; you and I, our witnesses and our lawyers. We put all our belongings on the same ox-cart and start out. But while we are on the way, perhaps the second day out, the witnesses have been talking among themselves. "It is disgraceful for Godly people to go to court, which results in fines and punishment. If we can settle this matter along the way, it would be a saving of both time and money, and more pleasing to God."

So they talk it over and come to a compromise. They present this proposed settlement to you and me, and if we can agree, then all of us can turn around and go back home (except for the lawyers, who go ahead and tell the judge that the matter has been settled out of court.)

This is why Jesus says, "Agree with thine adversary quickly while on the way." Even if you lose a few dollars agree quickly.

Throughout the East religious people think it is shameful to go to court. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians, [I Corinthians 6:1-5]:

Dare any of you, having a matter against another go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

Know ye not that we shall judge the angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are at least esteemed in the church.

I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

Justice used to be traditionally harsh in the East. The penalty for stealing was to have one's hand cut off, If you saw a man walking around with his hand cut off in the East, you knew of a certainty that he was convicted of thievery. In America you cannot tell who is a thief and who is not; everyone looks the same. In America, the punishment for stealing is a warm bed, good food, and an easy life without working for a period of time. It seems to me this method would only encourage stealing. I can tell you, there was very little stealing in India, for no one wanted to have his hand cut off!

The verse, "If thy right hand offend thee cut it off" Matthew 5:30 indicates "I would rather cut off my right hand than to steal with it". I have heard Americans say, "I'd cut off my right arm if I could do such-and-such" but I have not seen any of them do it!

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