
THRONES OF INIQUITY

Contributed by Jim Jordal
Wednesday, 11 April 2007

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By Jim Jordal

Lord, how long will the wicked triumph? They utter speech, and speak insolent things; all the workers of iniquity boast in themselves. They break in pieces Your people, O Lord, and afflict Your heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, "The Lord does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand." Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul would soon have settled in silence. Your mercy, O Lord, will hold me up. Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with You? They gather together against the life of the righteous, and condemn innocent blood. But the Lord has been my defense, and my God the rock of my refuge. He has brought on them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; the Lord our God shall cut them off.

Selected from Psalm 94 (NKJV), emphasis mine

Psalm 94 chronicles David's continuing concern that the righteous are being oppressed by prosperous, proud, callused, powerful persons and groups; while seemingly God takes no notice. He questions how this dreadful state of events can be, and then calls upon God for advocacy and deliverance from these oppressors.

When David speaks of the "throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law," he refers to corrupt judges and rulers who at that time used legal stratagems to harass and oppress the poor and powerless. Their abuse of political and economic power resulted in grief and suffering for the innocent poor; yet the oppressors continued to claim that God did not see or understand the evil they did.

"Thrones of iniquity" is an apt phrase, implying that the persons and groups acting to oppress the poor gained power from their high positions in government and law. The prophet Isaiah faced the same situation when he wrote: "Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees, who write misfortune, which they have prescribed to rob the needy of justice, and to take what is right from the poor of My people" (Isa. 10:1).

Again the same principle: Those who oppress the poor use their high positions to cover themselves with the mantle of law as they practice legalized fraud, manipulation, and injustice. No wonder David is appalled.

The real wonder, though, is that today so many Christians professing to comprehend the will of God ignore and even justify many evil--although legal--actions that prophets in earlier times would have unqualifiedly condemned.

Today we see leaders in government, finance, business, entertainment and other areas using the mantle of religious faith to cover deeds which, according to Scripture, are abusive of the rights--not just of the impoverished--but of many more prosperous groups as well. I speak of tax policies that transfer massive wealth from the lower and middle classes to the super-rich. I speak of financial manipulations like those of Enron, World Com and the likes to rob the public of hundreds of billions. I speak of exploitative business practices such as using commercial law to manipulate balance sheets to the benefit of executive stock options and to the detriment of stockholders and employees. I speak of pension plans abrogated while executives walk away with golden parachutes and perks worth hundreds of millions per individual. And I speak of public entertainment enshrining debauchery and immorality as the preferred style of life.

Yet if you listen to the professions of faith offered by many of the same people, you would believe that God stands behind their shady deeds. That's why David concluded his blast against this evil by asking, "Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with You?" Ask yourself the question: Can persons performing what Scripture clearly calls iniquity rightly claim fellowship with God? Can they use church membership, professions of faith, or even the sacraments to claim justification before God? Can they cover their sin and guilt with massive gifts to charity, as did robber barons Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller? And can we as Christians today escape participation in their sins when we condone their practices by using their products, espousing their ideas, and supporting their politics?

Revelation 18:4, prophesying the fall of the sinful world system labeled Babylon the Great, proclaims: "Come out of her, My people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues." That's still good advice. It's not that we can totally withdraw from evil concepts and practices, for then we would become hermits having no power to influence society. But what we can do is minimize our allegiance to these persons and systems by refusing to give our blessing to their acts. We can be in the world, but not of the world, as the apostle Paul taught.