

Psalms 94:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?

Analysis

Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? This rhetorical question poses one of Scripture's most penetrating challenges to corrupt governance and legal systems. The Hebrew word *kissē* (קִסֵּ, "throne") signifies not merely a seat but the authority, power, and legitimacy of rulership. When coupled with *havvot* (הַבּוֹתָ, "iniquity" or "destruction"), it describes a government fundamentally opposed to God's righteous character.

The phrase "frameth mischief by a law" is particularly striking—the Hebrew *yotser 'amal 'aley choq* literally means "fashioning trouble upon statute." This exposes the perversion of using legal mechanisms themselves as instruments of oppression. Rather than law protecting the innocent and restraining evil, corrupt authorities weaponize legislation to codify injustice. This describes systems where legal structures serve power rather than justice, making wickedness appear legitimate through official sanction.

The question "shall [it] have fellowship with thee" uses *yechabareka* from the root *chabar* (חַבֵּר), meaning to join, unite, or be allied with. The psalmist asserts the absolute incompatibility between God's holiness and systematic wickedness dressed in legal garments. God cannot be allied with or supportive of regimes that institutionalize oppression, regardless of their claims to authority. This verse stands as a perpetual warning against conflating human legal systems with divine justice.

Historical Context

Psalm 94 likely emerged from Israel's experience with corrupt judges and rulers who exploited their positions for personal gain. The Law of Moses explicitly commanded righteous judgment (Deuteronomy 16:18-20), making judicial corruption a direct violation of covenant obligations. The prophets repeatedly condemned leaders who "decree unjust decrees" (Isaiah 10:1) and "build up Zion with blood" (Micah 3:10).

Ancient Near Eastern law codes like Hammurabi's Code (c. 1750 BCE) claimed divine authorization, but often protected the privileged while oppressing the poor. Israel's law was revolutionary in demanding equal justice regardless of social status. When Israel's rulers violated this standard, they faced prophetic denunciation. The post-exilic community, having experienced oppression under foreign powers, would have found this psalm's challenge to unjust authority particularly relevant.

This verse has profound implications for understanding governmental authority throughout history. From Roman persecution of early Christians to modern totalitarian regimes, it establishes that no human government holds absolute moral authority when its laws contradict divine justice.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How can believers discern when human laws conflict with God's justice, and what is our responsibility when they do?

2. In what ways might modern legal systems, even in democratic societies, 'frame mischief by law' through unjust structures?
3. What does this verse teach about the limits of governmental authority and the Christian's ultimate allegiance?
4. How should the church respond when cultural or legal norms contradict biblical principles about human dignity and justice?
5. What comfort does this verse offer to those suffering under oppressive or corrupt governmental systems?

Interlinear Text

בְּ יִתְבָּרֶךְ	כִּי אַ	כִּי וְתַ	יְצַרְתָּ	שְׁמַעַל
have fellowship	Shall the throne	of iniquity	with thee which frameth	mischief
H2266	H3678	H1942	H3335	H5999

לְבָנָי : לְבָנָי
 H5921 by a law
 H2706

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 58:2 (Parallel theme): Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.

Isaiah 10:1 (Parallel theme): Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed;

John 11:57 (Word): Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.

Micah 6:16 (Sin): For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

Psalms 50:16 (Parallel theme): But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?

Ecclesiastes 3:16 (Sin): And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.

Ecclesiastes 5:8 (Parallel theme): If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

John 9:22 (Word): These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

Amos 6:3 (Parallel theme): Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

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