

The Imagery of the Law Court

Zech. 3:1-5

Introduction:

1. God often uses legal imagery in His description of His relationship with His people.
2. 1 Jn. 3:4 says, "Sin is lawlessness."
3. Isa. 33:22 says, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king; He will save us." This passage is especially interesting for me because it combines the concepts of judge, lawgiver, king and savior. Most often when I think of the court of God I think of being as guilty, but this text brings salvation into the picture.
4. But so does Zech. 3.
 - a. Joshua the high priest stands before the angel of the Lord.
 - b. Satan stands to accuse him. He is the prosecutor.
 - c. The Lord rebukes him and defends Joshua as a brand plucked from the fire.
 - 1) He is clothed with filthy garments representing his iniquity.
 - 2) But the Lord removes his filthy garments from him saying, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes."
 - 3) Then he adds, "If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts."
5. 1 Cor. 6:2 speaks of the saints judging the world. So the people of God go from being judged to judging the world.
6. So what can we learn about ourselves, about God, and about our relationship with Him from this imagery?

Discussion:

- I. The context and the problem presented in Zech. 3.
 - A. Zechariah's prophecy comes in the eighth month of the second year (520 B.C.) of the reign of King Darius of the Persian Empire.
 1. Darius became God's instrument of encouragement to the Jews returning to Jerusalem to complete the rebuilding of the temple.
 2. BUT there was a problem. Once it was completed who could serve as High Priest to make atonement for the sins of the people?
 3. Joshua was officially the high priest, but he was not worthy!
 - B. The legal imagery of Zech. 3 presents him as unfit because of his iniquity.
 1. Satan, the accuser, is the prosecuting attorney.
 2. Joshua is guilty as evidenced by his filthy garments.
 3. God, the judge, in what would seem to be a radically unexpected move, solves the problem by taking away his iniquity. "Has the judge been bribed? Is he just unfair?"

What is happening here?"

4. Joshua is clothed with festal robes (cf. Lk. 15:22). A clean turban is placed on his head. He is promised to have charge of God's courts (in the temple). The one who was unworthy is made worthy!
- C. Verses 8-10 define how it is possible.
 1. Joshua and his friends (probably the Levitical priests) are a symbol.
 2. God's servant, the Branch, will become the means by which these changes will take place.
 - a. The Branch had been identified by the prophets as the Messiah (Isa. 11:1ff; 53:2; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-18; Zech. 6:11-15).
 - b. Joshua, the high priest and his friends are a symbol of the Branch who will build the temple of the Lord and be its High Priest and its King for he will "rule on His throne" (Zech. 6:13).
 - c. Probably the seven eyes of 3:9 represent God's seeing into the future and removing the iniquity of the land in one day.
 3. It will be a day of peace and prosperity as represented by sitting under the vine and the fig tree with the neighbors (3:10; Micah 4:4).
 4. It is all made possible by our High Priest who sprinkles His blood in the Most Holy Place and thus makes atonement for our sin. He is our Advocate, our Intercessor (paracletos, called to our side to help) like our defense attorney, who not only pleads our case, but is the payment for our penalty, and sent as agent of the Judge, who has put all judgment into His hands.

II. "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31b-34).

- A. Verse 33b says, "God is the one who justifies."
 1. This word "justifies" and its word family (Gk. *dikē*) often translated "justice," "justification," "justifier," "justify," and often "right," and "righteousness."
 2. It is a legal term.
 3. In our context here in Rom. 8:33 God is the justifier.
 4. Rom. 3:21-26 elaborates.
 - a. The righteousness of God is revealed in the Law and the Prophets.
 - b. Namely, that He justifies those who have faith in Jesus Christ, who is the propitiation for our sins.
 - c. It is His blood that satisfies justice and pays the penalty for our sins.
 - d. Thus God is both just and justifier.
 - e. Faith (trust in what He has done) is the only appropriate response.
- B. Seen through the lense of Zechariah 3.
 1. While Satan accuses of sin and there is guilt.
 2. Nevertheless the Lord justifies because He has the right to.
 3. He has paid the penalty.

4. Amazingly our attorney and the judge are in cahoots with one another. Both are on our side. The judge and our attorney have paid the penalty for our sin.
 5. Although Satan accuses and we are guilty there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Rom. 7:25; Col. 2:13-15).
 6. Like Joshua we are plucked from the fire, clothed in festal robes and made priests to serve in the house of God (1 Pet. 2:9).
- C. “If God is for us, who is against us?”
1. The whole experience is transformational.
 2. From “guilty” to “not guilty.” From darkness to light. From death to life.

III. The transformation is evident in the scenes of the final judgment and of Christians judging the world.

- A. In Matt. 25:31ff the transformation is evidenced in seeing “the King” in others and so demonstrating kindness and compassion to them.
 1. It’s only appropriate in light of what the King has done for us that we do the same for others.
 2. It’s the faithful thing!
- B. Judgment is according to deeds reflective of the transformation (Rev. 20:11-15).
 1. Such deeds are not meritorious.
 2. But they are reflective of an appropriate response to the “not guilty” verdict achieved by our judge, and our advocate.
 3. Such deeds are a faithful response to the gift of salvation given to us.
- C. In 1 Cor. 6:2-3 Paul sees Christians judging the world and angels and reasons that they should be able to constitute the smaller law courts of this life.
 1. I am not sure I really understand how we will judge the world and angels.
 2. What I do understand is that I have been taken from being a guilty convict condemned to death and now I have been made a judge in the court of God.
 3. How incredible the transformation!

Conclusion:

1. So what do we learn from the imagery of the law court in Scripture?
2. We learn that the Lord is an unusual judge. He forgives the guilty!
3. He does it by paying for their sin Himself.
4. The charges brought against us, though they are true, will not be effective.
5. Our judge and our attorney have paid the penalty for us. Thus we are made righteous by the righteousness of God placing our trust in what He has done.
6. Transformed, we act in ways that are consistent with His action toward us.