

## **Bite Size Bible Study** **God's Lawsuit #200 By Pastor Lee**

In Bite Size Bible Study #66 I wrote about the role of the prophet. The next few paragraphs are from that study.

In ancient Israel there were four main sources of governances. We usually think the king is the top of the pyramid but that was not this case even though some kings thought and acted as though they were.

The way God set it up was for **God**, (the suzerain King) at the top of the pyramid, to speak to the **prophets** and tell them what He wanted the people to do.

Once the **prophet** had spoken the words of God, the **king** (vassal king) was charged with seeing that those words and actions were carried out. His ability to stir the people to the proper action was his main responsibility, in fulfilling the desires and commands of God.

The **priests** were then to lead the people in worshipping God through the liturgy given to them by God through the prophet. Their job was to lead the people in thanking God for his leadership and protection and to teach them the correct ways to worship Him.

This made a perfect circle of events: God speaks to the prophets – the prophets tell the king – the king leads the people to action – the priests lead the people to worship God.

In Isaiah chapter 1 we find God presenting a “Covenant Lawsuit”, thru Isaiah, the prophet. He is challenging Israel to prove that they are fulfilling the covenant. We find these lawsuits of God in many of the prophetic books. Israel was frequently breaking the covenant, so God was presenting the lawsuit to get them to correct their behavior. (Read Isaiah 1 before you go any further.)

### **The Covenant or Prophetic Lawsuit**

{This is Hebrew Poetry, so these do not necessarily  
come in order or in separate verses}

#### **1 Summons to the offending party** (Isa. 1:2-3 NIV all)

*<sup>2</sup> Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth!*

*For the Lord has spoken:*

*“I reared children and brought them up,  
but they have rebelled against me.*

*<sup>3</sup> The ox knows its master,  
the donkey its owner's manger,  
but Israel does not know,  
my people do not understand.”*

#### **2. Recitation of the suzerain's generous acts given in former times to the offender** (Isa. 1:2-3 see above)

#### **3. Accusations against the offending party** (Isa. 1:4-17 – selected verses)

*<sup>4</sup> Woe to the sinful nation,  
a people whose guilt is great,*

*a brood of evildoers,  
children given to corruption!  
They have forsaken the Lord;  
they have spurned the Holy One of Israel  
and turned their backs on him.*

*<sup>13</sup> Stop bringing meaningless offerings!  
Your incense is detestable to me.  
New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—  
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.  
<sup>14</sup> Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals  
I hate with all my being.  
They have become a burden to me;  
I am weary of bearing them.  
<sup>15</sup> When you spread out your hands in prayer,  
I hide my eyes from you;  
even when you offer many prayers,  
I am not listening.  
Your hands are full of blood!  
<sup>16</sup> Wash and make yourselves clean.  
Take your evil deeds out of my sight;  
stop doing wrong.  
<sup>17</sup> Learn to do right; seek justice.  
Defend the oppressed. {Correct the oppressor}  
Take up the cause of the fatherless;  
plead the case of the widow.*

**4. Lament (Isa. 1:21-23)**

*<sup>21</sup> See how the faithful city  
has become a prostitute!  
She once was full of justice;  
righteousness used to dwell in her—  
but now murderers!  
<sup>22</sup> Your silver has become dross,  
your choice wine is diluted with water.  
<sup>23</sup> Your rulers are rebels,  
partners with thieves;  
they all love bribes  
and chase after gifts.  
They do not defend the cause of the fatherless;  
the widow's case does not come before them.*

**5. Call to witnesses of the covenant/treaty (Isa. 1:2)**

*<sup>2</sup> Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth!  
For the Lord has spoken:  
“I reared children and brought them up,  
but they have rebelled against me.*

**6. Promised restoration (Isa. 1:18-20)**

*<sup>18</sup> “Come now, let us settle the matter,”  
says the Lord.*

*“Though your sins are like scarlet,  
they shall be as white as snow;  
though they are red as crimson,  
they shall be like wool.  
19 If you are willing and obedient,  
you will eat the good things of the land;  
20 but if you resist and rebel,  
you will be devoured by the sword.”  
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.*

First, I think that it is necessary to note that God is not suing Israel for past damages but petitioning them to change directions and follow the agreed covenant. Also, it is not that He has them in a corner and is going to get every “ounce of blood” out of them, because they broke the covenant.

Unlike lawsuits in our culture, God is asking for a change in behavior, not damages. He even has a portion of the lawsuit where He laments their past behavior and is troubled by it. He is sorry that they have had to suffer the consequences of their aberrant behavior.

In this lawsuit we can see God's *Hesed*. His unfailing love. A love that will intervene and rescue those whom He loves. This lawsuit shows that He has a deep abiding love for Israel and wants the best for them. His love (*hesed*) is faithful, reliable, loyal, and available to those who will accept it.

But you say that this is the nation of Israel, we are not Israel. But Israel is made up of individual people. Doesn't that love extend to each of them? He created each of them, doesn't it follow that His love reaches to each part of His creation? Even to you and me?

Each of us has acted against His instructions (Law).

*22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.* Romans 3:22-24 NIV

If God were to bring a lawsuit against us, as individuals, what could we expect from it?

1. We would be confronted by witnesses that we had sinned.
2. We would be reminded of all the good things God has done for us.
3. We would be reminded of all the things we had done that were not according to His instructions as we understood them.
4. He would be sorrowful for all that we have had to endure because of our misguided actions.
5. We would see the promise of restoration and a bright future.

In short, we would be defended and rescued by God for a future we cannot even imagine.

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