

God as Judge and Lawgiver

Isa. 33:22 – “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.”

The LORD is Our Judge

In what senses is God a Judge?

1. Punishment - God can pronounce guilt and punishment for violation of his laws

This is judgment in a punitive sense. It is seen in God’s ultimate judgment of sinners, and the judgment of believers before the judgment seat of Christ, and even now as he brings judgments upon individuals and nations. We probably think of this primarily when considering God as Judge, but there are additional, more positive ways to think of it.

2. Arbitration - He can be an impartial judge between conflicting parties.

Gen. 31:53 (Jacob and Laban) “The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. ...”

He also gives wisdom to human judges to determine who is right or wrong in conflicts.

1 K. 3:9 – (Solomon) “Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”

Knowing that God is our judge gives us comfort when we face false accusations and slander.

3. Protection - to keep his people safe from their enemies

1 Sam. 24:12, 15 – (David vs. Saul) “The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. ... The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.”

In earthly courts this can take the form of “restraining orders”.

Ps. 10:17-18 – “LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.” God stands up for those who are powerless against their enemies.

4. Vindication - He will vindicate his people against false and malicious charges.

Ps. 35:19-25 – When your enemies rejoice over you, wink the eye, and hate you without a cause, devise deceitful matters, accuse with their mouths, and say “Aha, Aha, our eye hath seen it”, then we call on God as our judge, that they would not rejoice over us.

Mt. 5:11-12 We are to rejoice when reviled, persecuted, and lied about (because God is our judge).

5. Vengeance - He will bring punishment on those who afflict others wrongfully.

David was not only asking God to deliver him from Saul, but to avenge him. (1 Sam. 24:12)

Ps. 94:1-4 – “O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. ...”

Jer. 11:19-20 – “... But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.”

We are not to avenge ourselves, but to leave that in God’s hands. Rom. 12:19-21, Heb. 10:30

The LORD is Our Lawgiver

God was the great lawgiver for Israel in the wilderness, through Moses. The law had strict commandments requiring strict obedience, and also provided a provisional remedy for sin through the various forms of sacrifice and ritual. This law was never intended to save, but to expose sin and ultimately lead us to Christ.

Rom. 3:20 – “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Rom. 7:12-13 – “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”

The law of Moses was a “schoolmaster” to bring us to Christ. Gal. 3:24

Being justified by faith in Christ, we are freed from the OT law – we are “dead to the law” and redeemed from its curse.

Gal. 2:16 – “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Gal. 3:10-13 To be under the law is to be under its curse, but “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law”.

So what can Isa. 33:22 mean to us? How is God our lawgiver, if not in the way of Mt. Sinai?

1. There is a law of conscience written on the heart, even of the unbelievers. Rom. 2:14-15
2. There is a new kind of law – not a set of external commandments, but his law written in our inward parts, whereby our sins are forgiven and we actually know God (Jer. 31:33-34). It is called:
 - The law of faith.
Rom. 3:21-28. Verse 27 says “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by **the law of faith.**”
 - The law of the Spirit
Rom. 8:1-4 – “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”
 - The law of liberty
Jas. 1:25 – “But whoso looketh into **the perfect law of liberty**, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”
Jas. 2:12 – “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by **the law of liberty.**”
 - The law of Christ
Gal. 6:2 – “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill **the law of Christ.**”
1 Cor. 9:20-21 – “... To them that are without law, as without law, (being not not without law to God, but under **the law to Christ,**) that I might gain them that are without law.” This phrase is variously translated as “of”, “to”, or “toward” Christ.

God is absolutely holy and righteous, and will judge all men against the standard of himself. This can be called the “Law of Righteousness”, in the sense that he requires true righteousness from men. The Law at Mt. Sinai required absolute obedience, and therefore no man (but Christ) could keep it. So if we expect to attain to righteousness by that law, we will necessarily fail. But by the law of Christ, of faith, of the Spirit, the law of liberty, we can attain to a real righteousness that pleases and satisfies God.

Rom. 9:30-32 – “What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness, Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law ...”