

COURT IS IN HEAVEN

DANIEL 7:9-14 FEBRUARY 6, 2019

We are going to begin at Daniel 7, verse 9 this evening.

The number 1 television show in syndication is? *Judge Judy*.¹ In fact, *Judge Judy* has been top of the list by a wide margin for 5 years straight.² In 2018, second place went to *Dr. Phil*, and coming in at number 3 was *Hot Bench*, another daytime courtroom show, created by Judge Judy herself.³ *Judge Judy*, *The People's Court*, *Judge Joe Brown*, *Judge Faith*...it seems that a lot of folks can't get enough of courtroom drama.

If that's you, then our passage tonight should be right up your alley. In it, the heavenly court comes to order and the Judge makes His verdict. But this is no small-claims court case. This isn't some petty dispute between roommates. What we see is God passing judgment and carrying out the sentence for the final, Godless world empire, ruled by the Antichrist. And then, *finally*, the Lord Jesus will be established as King over all the earth, Whose Kingdom will never end.

When we left off, Daniel had just seen a vision of 4 destructive and grotesque beasts. We learned that they are 4 world empires, spanning from Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, all the way to a Revived Roman Empire under the Antichrist. In between would be Medo-Persia and Greece. This is exactly how history has unfolded, just as the Bible has said. We find ourselves in a *gap* between the Roman empire and the *revived* Roman empire. The distinction is symbolized in chapter 2 through the legs of iron followed by feet of iron *mixed* with clay. In this vision we first see a terrible beast, then a distinct emergence of a little horn (the Antichrist) who speaks pompous blasphemies against the Most High. Though Rome rose up and overtook Greece, a *second* iteration is still on its way.

In verses 1 through 8, Daniel's vision was like a horror movie. In verse 9, he suddenly changes the channel to a courtroom drama. He's no longer seeing things on the earth, now he's looking into heaven. And that's where we pick up.

Daniel 7:9 - "I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire;

He sees a Person and a throne. The Person is identified as "the Ancient of Days." One of the great titles for God. It's only used 3 times in the Bible and all of them are found in *this* chapter. The whiteness of His hair and clothing speak to us of His absolute purity and the magnificent, mature wisdom associated with His timeless existence.

The question is: *Who is this?* The Mormons teach that the Ancient of Days is Adam, who (they say) is the same as Michael the Archangel. You find that lie in their *Doctrines And Covenants*.⁴ Reading the Bible, it's plain and obvious that Daniel is seeing *God*, but commentators disagree over whether the Ancient of Days is *God the Father* or *God the Son*. Some point to verse 22 of this chapter, which seems to reference the *arrival* of the Ancient of Days to deliver the saints from the Antichrist, plus the

¹ <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/top10s.html>

² <https://www.broadcastingcable.com/news/syndication-ratings-judge-judy-wraps-season-on-top>

³ *ibid*.

⁴ <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/27.2?lang=eng>

description of the white garments remind us of the Transfiguration, therefore they conclude that the Ancient of Days must be *Jesus*.

But, in our verses tonight, we'll also see the *Son of Man*, who Jesus specifically claimed to be, standing *before* the Ancient of Days, and so others says that the Ancient of Days must be *God the Father*.

While the debate is important and interesting, this sort of overlap makes sense since our God is a *Trinity*. One God, Three Persons. Jesus said "I and the Father are One." It's not that there's a problem in the revelation, it's that our ability to *comprehend* the Trinity is limited.

We're told that the throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire. In visions of heaven, the throne of God is very prominent. John gives a *lot* of attention to it in the Revelation. Its flames speak to us of God's consuming, holy judgment. In Psalm 97 we told that "Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of His throne." God is love, but His love does not overlook sin. Sin must face the wrath of God one way or another. If you're in Christ, Paul says in Romans 5, that you are therefore justified by His blood and are *saved* from the wrath of God. If you're *not* a Christian, the wrath of God remains on you. And that wrath will, rightly, consume you in fiery judgment.

The references to fire and wheels also draw our thoughts to what we read in Ezekiel. We see wheels like this in chapter 1. And multiple times the Lord speaks to His prophet about "the fire of [His] wrath." And that connection to Ezekiel is a good opportunity for us to remind ourselves that these Scriptures, especially prophetic portions, do not live in isolation from one another. These few verses in Daniel 7 connect either directly or indirectly to Ezekiel, to Revelation, to First Corinthians, to Thessalonians, to the Psalms, to Isaiah, to Acts, to Exodus. That's why we study the *whole* Bible, because it is a *whole* revelation. It's not simply a collection of standalone stories. When we see this passage, it should immediately draw our attention to Revelation 4 and 5 and 20 and Ezekiel 1 and all these other things that God has spoken about in His word. It all connects and is built together.

Daniel 7:10 - ¹⁰A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.

The fire streamed out. This is not some *figurehead* King. These are not court orders that can be ignored. From time to time you hear about Presidents ignoring court orders or celebrities violating them. People will disregard custody rulings or restraining orders. But not in *this* court. The fire of God's wrath goes out and His judgement cannot be denied. His is a pure and absolute power, not confined to 1 jurisdiction. He is Ruler of *all*, and before Him stands an innumerable host, at least a hundred million, of angels and saints who throng in His presence to hear and to worship the Lord.

I'd have us note this: While we see the raw, unmatched, power of God's holiness and judgment, pouring out from His throne in fierceness and fury, the people *before* the throne are not afraid, they're in awe! You know, if a river of fire started oozing out from underneath the stage here, I think we'd all turn heel and run. But in the Bible we see, and one day we'll see in person, that *this* God is not one to run away from. He is altogether right, altogether true, altogether wise. And *this* God has invited us into His presence, to not only worship His glory, but to be glorified by Him.

Now, here we're told that the books were opened. Couple of things here: First of all, we've taken a break so it's not as fresh in our minds, but remember what immediately preceded all of this. These

gruesome beasts were devouring the world in great slaughter. Who could stand before the lion or the bear or the leopard, let alone the fourth beast, too terrible to describe? Yet, in heaven, there's no rush. No wringing of hands. No recklessness. God isn't surprised or caught off guard by anything that happens in this world, and that includes everything that's going on in your life.

We're told that "the books were opened." Heaven has a library. A pretty extensive one. Of course, we know that there is the Lamb's Book of Life. We first learn about that all the way back in the book of Exodus. There's the Book of the Living in Psalm 69. The Book of Remembrance in Malachi 3:16. In Psalm 56 it says God records our tears in His book. In Revelation 20 we're told that there are multiple books which record the deeds of human beings. And in Psalm 139 we read, "Every day of my life was recorded in your book."⁵

In our text, the books most likely refer to those books we see in Revelation 20. Those whose names are not found in the Book of Life are then judged accordingly. It says, "And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."

Daniel 7:11 - ¹¹ "I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame.

Daniel looks down to earth again. All the while the horn has been boasting and blaspheming against the God of heaven.

It's funny...when you read the first 8 verses, the beast and the horn are alarming and frightful. Now think about this horn in light of the magnificent view we've just seen of the Ancient of Days, in His throne, wielding His power. It shows the extreme *littleness* of the horn compared to the exceeding *greatness* of God. This Antichrist, who will do so many things and cause so much trouble, is just an ugly little *nothing* compared to the Lord.

Daniel saw the whole beast, including the little horn, slain suddenly. In a moment, the whole thing is destroyed by the fire that proceeds from the throne. Now, remember: These beasts symbolize world empires. This 4th beast is a revived Roman empire, ruled by the Man of Sin. When the Lord puts him down, it will be sudden and immediate. You can read how it will happen in Revelation 19.

Daniel 7:12 - ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

Commentators split over whether this verse is referring to the way that each of the previous beasts were overcome historically, *or* if it's speaking of a yet-future event. There's no reason why it can't be both. It's true, when Babylon was dominated by Medo-Persia, the *dominion* was taken, but much of the people and the culture survived for a while. The same was true for Persia when Greece came, and Greece when Rome came. But, when the *last* beast is destroyed, that's it. There's no leftover influence of the Revived Roman empire. However, the Bible *does* indicate that the "lives" of these other nations will continue, in some sense, during the Millennium. We're told that Satan will go out at the end of the 1,000 year reign to "deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth." Even in eternity there remains a distinction between, at least, Jews and non-Jews, and, it would seem from Revelation 21:24 that there will be some sort of *national* identity.

⁵ Psalm 139:16 NLT

Daniel 7:13 - ¹³“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, *One* like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

Back to heaven now. Daniel sees a new figure: The Son of Man. This is a title Jesus loved to use of Himself. He definitely claimed to *be* this Person. In fact, at His trial before the High Priest on the night before His crucifixion, He refers to *this* passage, saying, “You’re going to see Me, the Son of Man, coming on the clouds.” ‘Coming with the clouds’ identifies this individual as the Messiah. John further identifies Him as Jesus in Revelation 1. He says that the One who was pierced and washed us with His own blood is coming with the clouds. He is the Alpha and the Omega, He is the Almighty. So, He is absolutely God. And yet, He is named the Son of *Man*. The Bible clearly reveals Jesus to be the GodMan. Fully God, fully human. He alone is able to bridge the gap between mankind and the Father. The Savior *has* to be God and He *has* to be Man. There’s no other way to deal with the problem of sin in light of the perfection of heaven.

Daniel 7:14 - ¹⁴Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed.

There’s a lot of interesting stuff here. First of all, it’s clear that Daniel believed that the Messiah was *God*. We know that because of what we hear Nebuchadnezzar and Darius say *about* this character. We talked about this a number of weeks ago. Darius uses some of this *same language* in the tract he sent throughout his kingdom. So did Nebuchadnezzar. They had, obviously, spoken with Daniel *about* God and some of the visions he had. And when those kings wrote about *this* figure, the One whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, they said that He was the Most High, Living God, the King of Heaven who reigns forevermore. The Messiah *cannot* be a created being, He is God Himself.

Second, it’s worth noting *how* the Messiah receives His dominion. We’re told He comes before the Ancient of Days and then dominion and a kingdom *was given* to Him. Meaning that the *people* on the earth did *not* give Him dominion. It’s given from Heaven’s throne. This is significant because in the way of thinking called Postmillennialism, the Kingdom “will be brought on the earth by a long process of the preaching of the Gospel with subsequent transformation of society.”⁶ The problem is, this view (and by extension the amillennialist position as well), not only doesn’t line up with *history*, it doesn’t line up with what we’re reading here. Just as 4 world empires flowed in an *order*, so will the coming of the Messiah come *as described* in Bible prophecy: At the culmination of human history, to defeat the Antichrist, immediately destroying his kingdom and then establishing a global Kingdom that is *just* as real and literal as the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome have been.

The great difference is that the *Lord’s* Kingdom is everlasting, it shall not pass away, it can not be destroyed, and *we* have been invited to not only become citizens of that Kingdom, but to rule and reign *with* the Messiah, who wants to include us in that wonderful inheritance.

Those who hold the postmillennial view or the amillennial view, we love them, they’re brothers and sisters, but their positions simply just don’t coalesce with what Bible prophecy says. You read these visions of Daniel or the Book of the Revelation, even a passage like First Corinthians 15:24-28 and you have to do all kinds of wild modification to come to these other conclusions. If we’re in the Kingdom now, then why are God’s people still subject to death? Why doesn’t every knee bow and

⁶ John Walvoord The Millennial Kingdom

every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord? Why hasn't God put "an end to all rule and all authority and power"? If the Church is meant to establish the Kingdom through the preaching of the Gospel, which will eventually cover the whole earth in righteousness, then why does the Bible talk about a great apostasy, a "falling away" before the coming of the Lord?

We're given the broad strokes of God's plan. Many of the details are still a question mark, but the Bible is very plain about what is coming. What we can be sure of is that God will win, His people are secure and heaven is waiting for those who are in Christ.

The question might arise in our minds, "Ok, then what does *this* passage matter for me?" Of course, the general answer is that God *wants* you to know these things and prophecy is profitable for the Gospel and for Christian living. But in a specific sense we do have some points of application from our verses tonight.

First of all, this vision shows us the kingdom of the beast and the Kingdom of the Lord. Which one has issued you your passport? Can you say that you would be numbered among the 10,000 times 10,000 there before the throne, gathered to worship and adore the God who saved you? If not, then the fire of God's judgment is going to consume you and your fate will be the same as the little horn. If you are convinced you'd be safe in heaven, what is that based on? The Bible explains that the only way to be justified and saved from the wrath of God is through faith in Jesus Christ. We're not given access to heaven because we do charitable things or because we're not as bad as the guy next to us. Access into God's grace is by *faith alone*. Anyone who is willing *can* be numbered among that multitude in verse 10, but only those who confess with their mouths and believe in their hearts that Jesus Christ is Lord and God has raised Him from the dead.

The second point of application is this: What does *your* book say? It's somewhat scary to come to terms with the fact that the Bible says everything we do is written down in the library of heaven. I remember back in 2010 there was big news that the Library of Congress was going to archive *every single tweet* that was sent on Twitter. Which means I have a bunch of stupid things stored in our capital. They stopped doing that in 2017, by the way. But, you know, people talk about how "anything on the internet lasts forever." It's true. But, now think about these *heavenly* books. Your life, your thoughts, your tears, your actions, your choices, your days, all watched and recorded so that the Lord might reward you who are believers for what you've done. One day those books will be opened. The record will be brought out. We'll stand before God Himself and give account.

Every biography has its own style and feel. Some are shorter, others are thousands of pages. The difference is, in this life, people don't get the luxury of living *in order* to tell the story of their biography, if that makes sense. They live their lives, and the biographers go back and study the story and write it up. *We know* that our story is being written and can choose accordingly. Daniel would advise us to fill our books with worship and service and faithfulness to our King. We can't wait to minister to the Ancient of Days when we're there before the throne. We're called to that life now and are told exactly how to do it as we open up God's word, read what it says and obey by the power of God the Holy Spirit.