

Second Sunday in End Time

November 12, 2017

Daniel 7:9, 10

The Ancient of Days is Seated for Final Judgment

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Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

Don't let the white hair fool you. The one in the prophet Daniel's vision is not a jolly grandpa inviting children into his lap with a wink at our foolishness. This notion is a false image of God, the Ancient of Days. Nor is it true that even if God does get angry at us for sin, he will let it slide and not punish.

You and I will stand before God's judgment throne. We are blessed because we have as our Advocate and Mediator Jesus Christ. Daniel's vision in Babylon is not meant to strike terror into our hearts as we await that "day in court." As we see that **The Ancient of Days is Seated for Final Judgment**, the sight assures us God is perfectly holy. The vision gives us trust that God judges on the basis of the books.

Daniel's vision included an overview of the coming centuries of change. One great nation after another, would rise and fall. Something else would stay constant. That constant is the "Ancient of Days." This is the only book in the Bible where the Holy Spirit inspired this name for God. "Ancient of Days" is another way of saying God is eternal. God has no beginning or end. God has no yesterday, today or tomorrow.

God takes his seat on the throne to sit in judgment over all. Psalm 47 verse 8 declares, "God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne." Along with God's eternal nature is his holiness. God is perfectly righteous. This righteousness shines out in the vision, "His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool." God's holy "throne was flaming with fire and its wheels were all ablaze." Doesn't this remind us of Mt. Sinai? The mountain belched smoke and shook violently when God was on the mountain to give his revealed will to Moses. No person or animal could even touch the mountain because of the holy God's presence on it. To do so meant death.

God combines his holiness with his justice in judgment. If I were in court, I would want to know that the judge will abide by the law, be righteous, and render a just verdict in my case. Nowhere do I need this assurance more than in the court of final judgment as God renders the verdict that sends me body and soul into eternity. God's verdict is righteous. Here again that holiness, that hatred for sin and justice against the sinner, appears as fire. "A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him."

The Ancient of Days is seated for final judgment. When he makes that final judgment it will be right. His judgment will be right because God is right. The Ancient of Days' verdict will stand forever and ever. God cannot be bribed or cajoled into anything but justice. God is changeless in nature and in his Word. None of us will be able to argue with God's judgment. In fact, we will know that it is the right verdict.

When in human terms God takes his seat on his throne for the last judgment, we trust we will receive the verdict we having coming. There is evidence for that final judgment. That evidence is written in the books. Daniel's vision gives us trust that God judges on the basis of the books.

The throne of God is not the only thing in Daniel's vision. We see countless holy angels surrounding his throne. "Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten

thousand stood before him.” We and every living person are in court and are seated before him. Then “the books were opened.”

The Bible speaks about books in two senses. First, in the book of life God has written the names of his people, believers in Christ. In Revelation 21:27 we read about “the New Jerusalem” into which not all will enter but “only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

God will judge everyone on that basis alone. Whoever trusts Christ’s righteousness under the law and trusts in Jesus’ sacrifice as our Substitute under God’s righteous wrath against our sin, is in the book of life. Whoever trusts their own righteousness, or does not believe God punished us in Christ on the cross will be sent to hell.

There is nothing to fear from the Ancient of Days seated on his throne for final judgment. He looks at us through Jesus Christ. God the Father listens to our Mediator, the Son of Man, as he pleads our case on the basis of the sacrifice of his blood.

The other sense are books of evidence. Those books could prove problematical. I’m not so sure I would want my life to be “an open book.” How about you? Would you want your inner life, your sinful thoughts and desires to be an open book? Or, what about those sinful words and actions no one sees or knows accept God? To God our sinful hearts and minds and actions are open books.

Thankfully, there is no evidence of our sins. God the Father has wiped our records clean with the blood of his Son, Jesus Christ. He wiped them clean at Jesus’ cross and at our holy baptisms. He wipes them clean through the preaching of Christ and the giving and receiving of Christ’s true body and blood in Holy Communion.

The books Daniel saw opened in the final judgment present the evidence of our faith- works of love done in Christ’s name, that are in fact then, Christ’s works. The Apostle John saw this in the Revelation and wrote in chapter 20, verse 12, “The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.” If anyone’s name has no evidence of faith, is not written in the book of life, “he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Love for God and love for our neighbor are not the reasons for the Father’s verdict of “not guilty” that is our justification. Works of love are the evidence of saving faith that God the Holy Spirit has worked in us through the means of grace. They are the works the Spirit compels. The Holy Spirit has created us “in Christ Jesus to do good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do,” Paul wrote to the Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 10.

This is where the other “thrones” in Daniel’s vision come in. They are ours. Having judged Jesus Christ guilty of our sins, and having declared us not guilty because of his sacrifice, we are seated on thrones to live and reign with the Ancient of Days. Think about that. Because of Christ we will rule with him in heaven. Dressed in white and with gold crowns on our heads we will sit on thrones surrounding God’s throne. Daniel and John saw those thrones. We see the thrones through their eyes.

On this Sunday of Final Judgment, behold the Ancient of Days, holy and just seated on his throne. Look eagerly for the day when the final judgment takes place with Christ, the Son of Man, taking our side. God’s judgment means eternal thrones for us and for all others whose names God has written in the book of life. Amen. <SDG>