

November 9, 2014
Last Judgment

"Ready for the Last Judgment"

DANIEL 7:9-10

As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. ¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

Some of you sitting here have experienced serving on a jury. Remember how you listened to the evidence presented by the attorneys and then met to decide if the accused was guilty or not guilty.

Daniel received a vision from the Lord in which he saw people standing in courtroom before God in the final judgment. There is no jury. God does the judging from books that recorded the deeds of their lives. Trials can go on for weeks even months before a decision is made. This final judgment will happen in a moment, the blink of any eye.

The most important issue or question or challenge facing us in life is this: Are we ready to meet the Lord when he comes in clouds of glory and brings on this final judgment? If your hope is based on having done enough good to compensate for the bad you have done, then you are hopelessly lost. However if your hope of being pronounced not guilty on the last day depends on Christ and what he has done for you, then you can say, "I am ready to meet the Lord and face him in the final judgment." Today we want to speak to you about being ready for the last judgment.

You will stand before God in all his glory

Daniel had a vision. He saw God in all of his glory. "As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat." He sees the Lord God as the Ancient of Days, the eternal God who does not change with the passing of time.

Prior to seeing God in all of his glory Daniel received visions of vicious animals representing great kingdoms rising and falling. He saw a lion with wings, and a bear with ribs in its mouth, and leopard with four wings like a bird, and finally a beast with iron teeth that could devour its victims. When he asked the Lord what these beasts were, the Lord told him they were great kingdoms that would rise from the earth such as the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. The beast with the iron teeth had ten horns. One of the these horns was small, but it had the eyes like a man and spoke blasphemous words about the name of the Lord. The most violent rulers and kingdoms of the world are not as dangerous as false teachers who rise up to speak blasphemy and lies about the true God and the teachings of the Holy Bible. Swords and guns and bombs can destroy a human body, but the incorrect and blasphemous teaching of God's Word can destroy a human life for all eternity.

Far above these mighty nations rising and falling and the false teaching of God's Word, Daniel sees the Ancient of Days taking up his position on the throne in the Final Judgment. What you read in the news this week, or what you read in history books, or what may be coming in the future is not nearly as important as that great single event when our God, the creator of the universe, will take up his position as judge in the final judgment. Everything else is temporary and fleeting, here today and gone tomorrow. What happens when the judge renders the final verdict lasts forever. "It is appointed unto man, once today and then comes the judgment."

No one can stand before this Ancient of Days because of his purity and holiness. "His clothing was white as snow, the hair of his head was white like wool." I am holding before you, a black piece of paper and a white piece of paper. If I take this black circle and put it over the black paper, you will not be able to see it because it blends in. If I put the black circle on the white paper it is highly visible because of the contrast. If I think that I can stand before God in the final judgment on how I measure up to other people in the neighborhood, I blend in as fairly decent and loving person. But if I measure myself to God's standards of purity and holiness, I realize I am far short of his glory. The words of Isaiah 59 tell us, "So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness but we walk in deep shadows." I can only stand in God's presence if someone removes the guilt and shame of sin. Jesus did that for me personally and for all people.

Daniel saw more than the Ancient of Days with clothing white as snow and hair as white as wool. He saw the throne of God flaming with fire. The wheels of the throne were ablaze. There was a river of fire flowing from the throne. Have you seen the molten lava flowing from the Kilauea volcano in Hawaii? The 2000 degree river of molten lava destroys everything in its path. The book of Hebrews calls on us to worship our God with reverence and awe because our God is a consuming fire. Jesus spoke of a place of eternal torment, a fire reserved for the devil and his angels. Scripture speaks clearly about a place of eternal punishment and a lake of everlasting fire for those who do not have the Lord Jesus Christ to clean up the books that will be opened up on the last day revealing all their sins.

Daniel sees the glory of God enhanced even more by thousands upon ten thousands of holy angels surrounding the throne. "Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." In the Revelation John had a similar vision of the throne of God. "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

The only ones worthy to stand around the throne of the Lamb and join the angels were those who had been washed clean by the blood of the Lamb. John saw another vision of the saints who had been washed in Jesus' blood: "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and held palm branches in their hands. John was told, "These are they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Today as we join together in worship with Christians all over the world, we are surrounded by God's angels

who rejoice over just one sinner who repents. How eager these angels are to have us join them around the throne of the Lamb when judgment day comes.

As you are sitting here this morning, your heart is pumping blood throughout your body. Every heart beat of time finds you closer to that day when Jesus will return in glory. The signs are flashing all around us that the end is near. There are wars, rumors of wars, nations rising against nation, diseases like Ebola, volcanoes, earthquakes and false teaching in the church.

When Christ comes in glory everyone will be raised to life, the just and the unjust, and everyone will stand before the Lord in the final judgment. Those who die with Christ will hear the words, "Come you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Those who die without Christ will be raised to hear the verdict, "Depart from me you who are cursed into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Are you ready to have the ledger book of your life opened up? That's the most important question of life facing each one of us. That's the most important issue facing the people you know and love.

You will have the book opened

Daniel sees the books opened. "The court was seated, and the books were opened." Did you know that everything you did in your life is known to God? He does not need large books to keep a record of your life and mine. He does not need super computers that can store huge amounts of information. The God who knows when you lose a hair from your head. He also sees everything you ever did wrong. He knows every lie you ever told, every evil and hurtful and lustful thought that entered your mind. God even knows the many missed opportunities in your life when you should have done something right but failed. God knows, yes God knows, when we allow things of this life to become more important than him. Psalm 139 says, "O Lord, you have searched me and know me. You are familiar with all my ways."

We hear our politicians say they want to be more transparent. All of us have secret sins that we hide which would shame hell itself. I heard one man say, "God knows me for what I am." I think he meant that God knew all of his faults and shortcomings. Yes, God knows me for what I am. All my sins and transgressions and falling short of his glory are written in his book. Any page in that book or even any line or single entry offers more than enough evidence to proclaim me guilty. There is no human way to cook the books or change the entries or erase them. How frightening judgment day would be if the books were opened and I did not have Jesus.

Jesus changes everything. He came to this earth to save you and me from what is written in the books against us. Jesus took our sins upon himself. He took them from the book and paid for them at the cross. When he cried out from the cross, "It is finished" he announced our sins were paid for completely. Listen to this amazing verse from Colossians, "He forgave us our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." What happened to all the entries in the book? They were all placed on Jesus and nailed to his cross. Your sins were expunged from the record. Because of Jesus the book of your life

changes. It contains nothing of your past sin. It does have entries, but they are the perfect things Jesus did in his life which are now yours. Romans 5 say, "Through the obedience of the one man, many will be made righteous."

Oh, how we long for judgment day to come! How we long to have our books opened up? How we long for Jesus to say to us, "Come you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world." Amen.