

## The Ancient of Days Convenes His Court Daniel 7:9, 10

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. The Word from God through which the Holy Spirit holds before us the eternal majesty of the Lord is Daniel 7

*I kept watching until thrones were placed and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was like white snow, and the hair of his head, like pure wool. His throne was flames of fire, and its wheels, burning fire. A river of fire issued and flowed from his presence. Thousands upon thousands were serving him. Multitudes upon multitudes were standing before him. The court took its seat, and the books were opened. (Daniel 7:9, 10).*

This is the word of our Lord.

Dear friends in Christ, fellow saints washed clean in the blood of our risen Savior:

Chicago, 1920's. Bootlegging, gambling, prostitution, speakeasies, bribery, mob hits. Al Capone had his fingers in it all. Everyone knew his hand's were dirty, but the government didn't have the evidence to convict him. Then Frank Wilson from the IRS ran across a ledger from 1924 that the police had confiscated years early. That ledger, along with other paper trails, revealed payments and profits never reported to the IRS. With the books opened, the court convened, and in 1932 Al Capone was sentenced to prison for tax evasion.

Courts need evidence. Earthly courts struggle with having enough evidence and reliable evidence. But the courtroom of the Ancient of Days has all the evidence, for he has seen all from the beginning of time to the end. It's all recorded in the books. When he convenes his court, there is justice, for the books are opened. He brings sure justice against his adversaries -- part one. And he brings surprising justice for his people -- part two. The Ancient of Days convenes his court.

### **A. He brings sure justice against his adversaries**

"As I looked ...", Daniel writes. The text begins in the middle of the night vision the Lord had given Daniel. What had Daniel seen so far as he watched this dream unfold? He had seen the sea churning and four great beasts coming out of it: a lion with eagle wings, a bear raised up on one side with three ribs in its mouth, a leopard with four wings and four heads, and a terrifying beast with iron teeth and ten horns. Each beast in turn conquered and ruled until the Ancient of Days came.

Later Daniel is told that these four beasts are four kingdoms that would rise from the earth. History shows that they match the character of the Babylonian, Media-Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. Daniel saw this vision during the first of those empires, Babylon. As powerful as Babylon appeared, it would fall. Another empire would rise, but it too would fall. And so on.

Still today nations rise and fall. In our country the political winds shift each election cycle. Political optimism raises our hopes for the future, while a chain of bad news fuels our worries. Budget deficits, debt ceilings, government shut downs, conflicts, and wars. But it's all passing away.

Don't build your hopes on who might be elected president or on tax breaks or refunds. Don't give up if our country goes from bad to worse. Rather remember the Ancient of Days. He is the LORD, the eternal I AM. He does not change. He's beyond time and its limitations. Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears each of us away, but the Ancient of Days remains the same.

He will bring an end to the rise and fall of nations. He's not swayed by the winds of time or the surging seas of political power. He will convene his court and judge. And until then he rules over all from his fiery throne.

"But it doesn't look like he's in control." Looks are deceiving. How did Jesus look compared to the political powers of his day? Picture him standing before Pontius Pilate. Weak, weary, beaten. Pilate appeared to hold all the power in his political hands. But all this unfolded according to the Lord's purpose and good will. From all eternity the Ancient of Days had planned to save sinners in exactly this way: through the weakness of the cross.

Dear followers of the Crucified, take heart. Know and believe that the Ancient of Days reigns. He will convene his court. The books will be opened. The wicked deeds of the nations and their raging against Christ will be exposed. He brings sure justice against his adversaries.

Take heart. When times are good, don't base your joy on the economic prosperity or physical security, which flows to us through our country. For those things are passing away. When times are bad, don't despair no matter how heavily the government presses down on you. Rather at all times, build your hope on what Jesus Christ has already done for you. No political powers can rob you of that joy. Leave your worries in his nail-pierced hands. For he does not change. Be sure of it.

## **B. His brings surprising justice for his people**

Back in 1932 nothing was sure as the prosecutors prepared for Al Capone's trial. In fact, as the day approached Capone was sure he'd get off. He'd gotten to some of the jury members to make sure they wouldn't vote against him. But what a surprise for Al when Judge Wilkerson switched the jury! What's in store for you and me when the Ancient of Days convenes his court? Will it be a surprise?

First, consider how the text describes the Ancient of Days. "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. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him" (Daniel 7:9, 10 NIV84).

He judges justly, for he is holy. The white clothes and hair symbolize that holiness. Picture a blinding blaze of sunlight bouncing off fresh snow. So pure. So white. So unapproachable. We can't look. We have to cover our eyes. Such holiness!

He judges justly, for he burns with zeal. He's not a half-hearted judge simply putting in a day's work. He doesn't tire out, wear down, or overlook any evidence. Rather the greatness of his might and the heights of his wisdom flow out from him like a river of fire, zealous for good. A burning fury against all that's evil consumes him like fiery flames. Nothing can stop his justice.

What is recorded in the books about you and me? Can we stand and plead our own case in this courtroom? Dare we demand justice from him? Nothing is hidden from the Ancient of Days. He lays bare your heart with its every spot and blemish. All have sinned. All fall short of his approval. None can escape. No one is left with any excuse at all.

Will you plead your own case before the Ancient of Days, or will you leave it to Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, to speak in your defense? He's not your typical attorney. He enters your full confession into the record. Then he pleads: "I, Jesus, sacrificed myself for all these sins. For I carried the sins of the whole world to the cross, appeasing your righteous

anger, satisfying your justice, atoning for all sins. Their guilty record has been washed clean with my blood.”

So, dear friend, justice has been carried out, but what a surprising justice! The cross publicly demonstrates that God is just, for there he has punished every sin without compromising his holiness or righteous zeal. The guiltless One for the guilty. And you, dear sinner, “are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). So God is both “just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

But what about the books? What about the evidence of our deeds that stands against us? Since those books record the sins of all that are damned by the Ancient of Days, what about our sins?

If we plead our own works, our efforts, our good intentions, we each stand equally damned. Rather plead the Lord’s promise. He declares, “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more” (Isaiah 43:25). He erases them from the books for the sake of Jesus Christ, who canceled your debt of sin nailing it to the cross.

What’s more, Jesus fulfilled the law for you. He gave perfect obedience, so that his righteousness is yours. His record counts for you. Plead Jesus’ merit before the Ancient of Days. Point to his record as yours.

As your faith and mine daily plead God’s promises, we offer all that we do as spiritual thank offerings acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. We love others even as Christ loved us. We serve even the least, for in serving them we serve our Redeemer. And though our sinfulness corrupts even our Christian love and service, the blood of Jesus, God’s Son, purifies our deeds. These acts of Christian love and service, washed clean in Jesus, are the visible evidence of faith burning within you. Jesus will present this evidence from the books for all to witness when he comes to judge. He will say to you: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world” (Matthew 25:34 NIV84). And our acts of service in this life that flowed from faith in Jesus will shine in heaven forever. For the Scriptures declare: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ... they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them” (Revelation 14:13).

And don’t forget that one-of-a-kind book. The Book of Life. What a surprise! That book does not list any deeds or actions, only names. And it has your name and mine. What a surprise!

But how could my name or yours be in that book? We began our existence outside of God’s family, as foreigners and ruthless rebels warring against him. We were marching headlong toward death and hell. But this book is “the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain” (Revelation 13:8). Yes, washed by the blood of the Lamb, we were reborn into God’s family, no longer foreigners or rebels, but his children.

This was the plan of the Ancient of Days from before time, for the names have been written in the book of life from the creation of the world (Revelation 17:8). His good will delighted to work out our salvation to display the glory of his grace. Due to the blood of the Lamb, your name and mine stand written in the Book of Life, exactly as his grace planned it. According to his determined purpose and gracious will, he made known to us this saving

plan and adopted us into his family.

When doubts trouble your faith and Satan questions how God could save someone like you, remember the Book of Life. From the creation of the world, before you ever existed, the Lord wrote down your name in the blood of the Lamb. Boldly live as his child serving your Lord, for you know the verdict when the Book of Life is opened. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.