



**Daniel 7:1-28, Part 3**

Since it has been two weeks since we read this passage, let's read part of it again.

**9** *“As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire.**10** A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.*

**11** *“I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. **12** As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.*

**13** *“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.**14** And 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 one that shall not be destroyed.*

Show [video of children](#) describing what Heaven looks like.

These kids gave a pretty decent description of Heaven, don't you think? This morning will be our third week in the seventh chapter of Daniel and we will get a glimpse into Heaven. We will find that the children's descriptions were quite accurate. They listed God, the throne, angels,

clouds, bright lights and other people and these are the essential elements of our text, but of course there is so much more to it than a mere listing of parts of the whole.

Heaven is also so much more than a courtroom for judgment but this is the picture we get in this chapter in Daniel. There are four parts that we need to understand.

1. The Location for Judgment
2. The People who Judge
3. The Standard for Judgment
4. The Encouragement from Judgment

### **The Location for Judgment**

In describing Heaven, in many places Scripture more or less pulls back part of the curtain and gives us glimpses of what it is like. We never see the complete picture because we could not understand it if we did, but like everything else in all of Scripture, the description of Heaven is not exhaustive, but it is sufficient.

That's an important principle all by itself. There are many times we ask hard and painful questions about the Bible and our faith. Many times we ask questions or even, like Job, demand answers from the Lord. Sometimes there are direct answers to our tough questions, but more often than not, we are not told all that we need to know, or at least all that we *think* we need to know. The Word of God tells us what we need to know but it does not tell us all there is to know. In other words, the Bible is sufficient but it is not exhaustive because the knowledge about God is infinite and even in eternity of finite minds will never be able to conceive of infinite knowledge.

Isaiah 6:1-3 is an important passage for understanding Heaven.

*In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"*

What we learn here is that Heaven is not so much a place as it is a person. Heaven is the undiluted, unrestricted presence of God. Do you see in Isaiah's description how God literally fills heaven? He wrote, "The train of his robe filled the temple." Isaiah probably saw exactly what he wrote— an enormous robe that curled around and over itself overflowing throughout the temple. This is obviously symbolic language meant to convey the all consuming nature of God's presence and of his glory.

We talk a lot about glorifying the Lord but we seldom describe what we mean by it. What is God's glory and how do we "bring" him glory? God's glory is not an attribute of God per se, like love, mercy or justice are attributes and descriptions of his character. Rather, glory is the application of all that God is. It is his reputation, his fame, his worthiness, the worship that is due him, the brilliance of his character and our awe inspiring response to his character and being. If this is God's glory, can we increase God's glory by anything we do? Can we add to his reputation or bolster his worthiness by our actions? The answer is an emphatic "No." we cannot add to God's glory, we can only reflect his glory. Sometimes people say that Christians are like

mirrors which reflect God's glory to others so that they can see him. I don't like this analogy because all that a mirror does is reflect. The image on a mirror literally bounces off of the mirror and is sent elsewhere. But the glory of God does not merely bounce off of us because if it did, we would never be changed. The glory of God penetrates into our mind and heart and changes us from the inside out. And it is this change, this transformation that reflects or communicates the glory of God to others. Once we are changed by his glory we can only want others to see his glory. Once we know that he is all sufficient and all satisfying we want others to also know that he is these things.

Verse nine offers a stark picture of the courtroom of heaven. *His throne was fiery flames; its wheels<sup>1</sup> were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before him...* This view of heaven is full of fire but last week Virginia reminded me that Revelation has a different picture. *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city* (Rev. 22:1). So which picture is right—is there water or is there fire flowing from the throne of God? Yes. Both are equally true and I think we are given the picture of fire in Daniel seven because it is a story of judgment and fire is almost always associated with judgment. But the water coming from the throne in Revelation is living water and it takes place in the new heavens and the new earth after judgment is completed.

So we see that judgment is as much a part of God's identity as salvation and healing. In one sense, judgment will never cease, because even though God will not be actively judging in the new heavens and the new earth—at least in the sense of people appearing before him and him pronouncing judgment—his judgment of the unrighteous will continue forever and ever. Judgment flows out of his righteousness and his righteousness can never be diminished.

### **The People Who Judge**

The first person we see in the heavenly courtroom is the Father, called here the Ancient of Days to emphasize his eternal nature. The Father takes his seat on the throne and we are reminded of our earthly judges when they enter the courtroom. What does the bailiff always announce when the judge enters the courtroom? "All rise, for the honorable so and so." When God takes his throne, do you think we will rise to our feet? It's like the MercyMe song.

Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall?

Will I sing Hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all.

I can only imagine.

I think there will be lots of standing, and bowing and prostrating and jumping and dancing and every other expression of possible awe and wonder. But the father is not the only person to whom we will bow. <sup>13</sup>*I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.*

This is the description of the Son of Man which Jesus himself referred to when he testified before the High Priest at his trial.

*But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."*

This was a pivotal moment in Jesus' trial. The High Priest had just asked him to confirm that he was indeed the Messiah, the Christ. The High Priest was asking him for his identity, much like a police officer asks to see your driver's license or a custom's officer asks to see your passport. "Who are you, Jesus? What evidence do you present to prove your identity?"

We know that Jesus could have used any number of proofs from the Old Testament. He could have testified to his creative power in bringing into existence all that is. He could have spoken of his long arm of salvation in rescuing Israel from 400 years of bondage in Egypt. He could have used anything he wished but he chose to focus on this heavenly portrait of the Son of Man from Daniel seven. Jesus used this picture in order to prove his deity.

But there are two other OT passages he wove into his reply. This chapter has Jesus appearing before the Father but does not mention his being seated. Jesus may have had in mind Psalm 110:1. *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."* In this Messianic Psalm we have the Father inviting the Son to sit at his right hand. And did you also notice that this verse concerns judgment? Jesus was to sit "until I make your enemies your footstool." The Father was about to enact judgment of the enemies of Jesus until they were completely subdued. This is exactly what took place in this chapter.

There is one more OT passage to which Jesus referred. Did you notice how Jesus began his defense? "And Jesus said, "I am..." Jesus identified himself as the great I am, the very name that God gave to Moses when he spoke to him through the burning bush. And just so that we don't dismiss this and think, "Well of course Jesus said, 'I am,' because how else would he identify himself. This is just proper grammar after all."

It is much more than good sentence structure because Jesus used what is called an intensified "I am" here. In Greek, our English phrase "I am," a statement of being, is translated as a single word, *eimi*. Jesus could have simply said, *eimi*—I am, but he did not. The word for "I" is *ego* and what Jesus actually said was *ego eimi*, which when over translated would mean "I, I am". That makes for an awkward translation so we simply write "I am," but you see why it is called an intensified "I am."

Therefore, Jesus identified himself to the High Priest using Exodus 3:13 and Psalm 110:1 but Daniel 7 formed the framework on which to hang these two other statements of deity. And we can be certain that he was claiming his own deity from the response of those who heard him. *And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death.*

What is especially disgusting about his trial was that the earthly High Priest was daring to question the Great High Priest and place him on trial. Another irony is the fact that the one who is charged with blasphemy here will one day execute judgment on the ultimate blasphemer—the antichrist. The Judge—the Father— allowed his own Son to be judged by a travesty of a human court. The Righteous One allowed himself to be labeled as a blasphemer in the midst of evidence of his divine nature. Make note of these ironies and tragedies because they will form the basis of point #3—the standard for judgment.

But first, we must finish identifying the rest of the people who are to be part of the judgment of the antichrist. We need to draw our attention back to verse nine. *As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat;* It is important to note that there is not one throne here, but a plurality of thrones. Now you might immediately conclude that this is obvious since the Ancient of Days is sitting on one throne and the Son of Man is sitting at his right hand on the other throne, so of course there was more than one throne. But other Scriptures help to fill in the missing piece.

Rev. 3:21 states, *The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

We read something very similar in Rev. 20:4. *Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

Jesus promised this privilege to his disciples.

*You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Luke 22:28-30).

These three passages clearly imply that some believers will serve as judges on thrones in Heaven but we are not sure if such authority will be limited to the twelve disciples, Christian martyrs or the most faithful believers. But the apostle Paul also weighed in on this topic and opened up the possibilities even more.

*When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! (1 Cor. 6:1-3)*

Paul at least opens up the possibility that all believers will sit on thrones and judge “angels,” which refer to fallen angels. At the very least, the number of thrones in the heavenly courtroom is most certainly more than two and perhaps will include all believers. Most people believe that this will not only take place at the judgment of the antichrist and the fallen angels but also during the 1000 year reign of Christ called the millennium.

Revelation 20 goes on to describe this millennium.

*Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison.* (Rev. 20:5,7) To me, this sounds like all believers will be reigning with Christ during this 1000 years. This is a staggering notion about which we speak very little but it a Biblical truth. Now make sure you don't get the wrong impression about this idea of sitting on thrones. There is

absolutely no worship associated with the thrones of believers. Don't think that because the Father and the Son sit on thrones and are worshipped that somehow we will also be worshipped.

The throne can be a symbol of royalty and supremacy, as it clearly is in regard to the Father and the Son, but the fact that we will be sitting on thrones has to do with our authority. But remember that all authority is a delegated authority on behalf of a sovereign being or a sovereign government. If there was a judge sitting in the congregation and he or she grew tired of my sermon and proceeded and announced to me in an authoritative voice, "Sit don, young man!" I would glance over at him and say, "Excuse me?" But if that man or woman were wearing their robe and sitting in their courtroom as judge and said to me, "Sit down, young man!" I would sit right down and answer, "Yes, your honor." The judge has no authority over me in civilian life but in the courtroom, his word is law. A judge can do that because the county, the state or the federal government has delegated authority to them in that particular situation.

The same would be true for you and I sitting on the thrones reigning with Christ for 1000 years. Our authority is a delegated authority, it is a derivative authority from the One who possesses all authority and has an eternal kingdom. It is hard to fathom that we will reign with Christ and have this kind of authority. But it is not that different from the authority we have already been given. As ambassadors of the risen Christ, we carry this authority with us. It is not a ruling authority but a ministerial authority.

Consider this well known passage from Matthew.

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Notice that the Father is the one who gave authority to the Son. It doesn't explicitly state that the Son has then given us his authority, but it is implicit. Just as back in Genesis God gave mankind authority/dominion over creation, so at the end of the gospels, Jesus gave authority and dominion of the gospel. We have been charged with the stewardship of the gospel, the greatest possible gift.

Rich Maurer  
September 30, 2012

---

<sup>1</sup> "It was common in the ancient Near East for thrones of kings and gods to have wheels." (Miller, S. R. (1994). Vol. 18: Daniel. The New American Commentary (205). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.)