

“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. (NIV 84)

Theme: A Worry-Free Trial.

The Bailiff makes the announcement for everyone to rise. The judge enters the courtroom and the court begins its session. You're on trial. You've been accused of committing some crime. When that judge enters the courtroom and the trial begins, how do you feel—what's going on in your mind? You're nervous. And you're afraid. You aren't quite sure what is going to happen. You aren't quite sure what the jury will believe, or what rules the judge will make. You could be vindicated, but on the other hand you could be sent to prison. So you fear what might happen—your future depends on what other people decide. It doesn't matter what you are on trial for, there will always been an uneasy feeling when you are on trial. Especially if you actually did commit that crime.

But you knew this day was coming. So you prepared for it. You hired the best defense attorneys you could afford. They meticulously studied the law. They poured over all the case documents. They know the evidence against you; they have a good idea of the case that the prosecution will make against you. And together you've come up with a plan. You have a great idea of how things will play out. You're studied, you're prepared. You're ready to defend yourself. And yet, you are still a little afraid of what might happen.

But what if you could stand trial at any time for anything? How would you feel then? What if the police could come and take you away for any reason and take you straight to the courthouse to face the judge and go on immediate trial? You would have to defend yourself against any and all accusations—no matter how many and varied they might be. If you think that you'd be afraid to stand before a judge in a

normal setting—how much more would you be afraid to instantly face judgment?

But that is exactly what Judgment Day will be like. The Lord will come with his angels in his full glory. And he will come suddenly—at any time, in the twinkling of an eye. Everyone will be going about their everyday business, not suspecting a thing, when Christ will suddenly appear in the sky. Like a thief in the night, the Lord will can come at any time and when you least expect it. As he says in Matthew 24, **You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.** He will send his angels throughout the world to gather all people before him. And there is no escaping this judgment—not getting away from his angels. And then the Lord will judge the whole world, including you.

Daniel described what he saw in a vision of the Last Day. First he saw the Lord in his full glory. He saw the Lord, the Ancient of Days, and, **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.** Here Daniel is describing God the Father and his throne surrounded by angels and believers in heaven. He is in his full divine glory.

When the Lord took his spot on his throne, **the court was seated, and the books were opened.** What exactly are those books? In Revelation 20 John describes what he saw, **I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened...The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.**

These books record the life of everyone. Your thoughts, your words, and your deeds are known by God. You can't hide anything from this judge—he knows every single thing you did, both good and bad. And he has inscribed everything in these books. Everything you have done and failed to do are announced—out in the open before all. You know you are guilty of many horrible things. Who wouldn't shudder? You start thinking of excuses. You try to rationalize your actions—you didn't know any better, you tried your hardest, you were better than many of your friends and family. But it doesn't work. The judge doesn't fall for any of those excuses. You deserve to be punished—to

be condemned forever. You're guilty and now you will pay for it. There is really only one thing to do: beg and plead for mercy.

But were you paying attention? Look again at what Daniel saw when the Ancient of Days took his spot on his heavenly throne, **As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat.** Notice that Daniel saw thrones—multiple thrones, more than one. God the Father, wasn't judging alone. Who else was there? Jesus. Jesus is referring to himself on the Last day when he says in the beginning of our gospel, **When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.**

And it isn't just Jesus and the Father. The Apostles also sit on thrones. Jesus told them in Matthew 19, **I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

Jesus himself is there on his throne. That's like having the world's best defense attorney on your side as a judge. And not only that. But Jesus lived and died for you. He took all your sins upon himself and he gave you his perfect life. He paid for your sins through his suffering and death on the cross; he removed them and turned your hands—stained blood-red with guilt, as white as snow. He clothed you in his white robe of righteousness through when the waters of baptism which washed away your sin and guilt. So when God looks at you and reads from the book he doesn't see all that you have done wrong. Because they have been erased and paid for. Instead he sees you as pure and innocent, just like Jesus. And so he declares you not guilty on account of Christ.

You see, we have Christ pleading our case. As both God and man, he serves as the mediatory between us and God. He intercedes for us. He reminds the Father of his perfect life which he credited to us. As Paul points out in Romans 8, **Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.** Where God looks to condemn, Jesus steps in for us on our behalf. So the God who judges us in the one who suffered and died for us. The one we stand before in judgment is the one who intercedes for us.

And what do the Apostles have to do at the Last Judgment? They are those that preached the gospel of Jesus Christ—him crucified and risen for our forgiveness and eternal life. They taught and shared the gospel of salvation by God's grace through faith apart from works. They are there to call us part of their Church—to confirm that we believe in the gospel that they taught. And that faith worked in our hearts through the gospel that the Apostles spread receives the forgiveness and eternal life that Christ won for us.

And there is another book on the Last Day. John tells us in Revelation 20, **Another book was opened, which is the book of life...If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.** In this book are the names of God's elect—the ones he has chosen to believe in him and join him in heaven. Unbelievers are judged by their wicked deeds; but believers, are judged by the fact that their names are written in the book of life.

Case closed. You're guilty of sin—of going against God's Word again and again. Yet Christ took away your sins and gave you the gift of eternal life. And now he sits on his heavenly throne and intercedes for us. On account of Christ you are declared not guilty. Your name is written in the book of life and you and all the other sheep are taken to heaven to live forever with God in his full glory.

God, the judge could come at any time. And he will judge you for everything you have done. Yet there is no reason to fear—you will have a worry-free trial. There is no reason to be afraid of what might happen. For you know the result—eternal life forever, a perfect life with your Savior. So instead of being afraid, instead of worrying, we long for Christ to come again. We look forward to that Day of Judgment. Not because we're innocent but because through Christ we are declared not guilty. Amen.