



Ministry of the Word

*Sunday 02<sup>nd</sup> July 2017*

by Vincent Gannon

**Scripture:** Daniel 7:9-12

**Subject:** Chapter 7, Part 23 – Heaven's Court

Daniel's vision makes a transition. After observing the four different beasts, what is one of the rare occurrences in Scripture, he is given an insight into what happens in Heaven. As Daniel considers the last beast in particular, one that was more fearful and complex than the others, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong so much so he didn't liken it to any animal as he had with the previous three, he sees a vision of the 'Ancient of days' and how He will deal with these beasts. This was a forth telling of what will happen, and what has been decreed by the Lord. God is not waiting for things to happen so that He can react as we sometimes do. No! He knows the end from the start because He is outside of time.

I would like to pose a question to you right now, after reading these verses what do you observe from them, what is staring out at you? For me I see a few major things which are of great importance and fundamental statements regarding what the Bible teaches about God. So let's start to probe these verses together.

Verse 9 –

*"I kept looking until thrones were placed and the Ancient of Days took His seat."*

Daniel was looking at the heavenly court which is confirmed in verse 10. This heavenly court is being set up for a specific purpose. The court passes sentence on the beasts' end. The first

thing Daniel notes is the thrones that were put into place and the Ancient of Days taking His seat. So, what are these thrones, whom are they for and who is the Ancient of Days?

### **THE THRONES and WHO SITS ON THEM**

We are not told, here, how many thrones Daniel saw nor if there was anyone sitting on them but remember, at the start of this chapter he did state that he was giving the main facts so we don't really know the details of what he saw then. However, we do get a tremendous insight of these thrones and those who sits on them in Revelation 4 and 5 and in particular chapter 4 verses 4 & 5 –

*“Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightings, thunders, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”*

According to the Amplified version of 1987, it states that it's the “Heavenly Sanhedrin” sitting on the thrones. This is a very Jewish way of thinking. Now before you think I'm going down the road to explain who exactly are these 24 Elders or Heavenly Sanhedrin are, let me just point out that where the Scripture is silent so am I!! No-body is too sure but there are many conjectures.

Remember the Sanhedrin in biblical times where the Chief Priests who upheld the Law of God which is exactly what these 24 elders do. I would also like to point out that from the end of Chapter 3 in Revelation the church has gone, the sudden extraction of the church from the earth has taken place, also known in modern times as the rapture which comes from the Greek translation *parusia* meaning suddenly taken away, which was then translated to Latin ‘*Raptum*’, which is where we get the word rapture from.

What we read here in Revelation 4 is the beginning of the judgment at the end of time, not the judgment of the Church, and this is where the heavenly court assembles for such purposes. The elders on these thrones are there to pass sentence and uphold God's law not to make judgment. God does not need the council of others or help with been fair and just. If that were the case than He would cease to be God. It does however underline that God is a God of order and all in heaven are in complete harmony. This is where justice will be seen by all to take place, even for those who did not get it on earth.

So **WHO IS THE ANCIENT OF DAYS** that takes His sit?

The title ***“The Ancient of Days”*** is seen three times in the Daniel 7 – verses 9,13 and 22. It is used to describe God as being eternal. Daniel was often given the title ‘servant of the living God’ just as we are today. God is Spirit (John 4) but presents Himself as a person in order that His creation can relate to Him. Yes, this refers to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He is not a force or thing. He is omnipresent and all-knowing which is why He can judge in factual truth unlike anything that man has or could ever conceive. Israel the chosen people of God, disregarded this truth not once but many times and pays the price. Do we also forget this? Is it the case that God only becomes real when we need Him to act on our behalf? How well do we know the God we claim to believe in, I wonder? I can’t stress enough the following, God is the only Most-High and living God. He hears and sees all things, He knows, feels, wills, acts, and at the same time He is distinguished from the works of His hands which He formed.

This title ***“The Ancient of Days”*** has been used in hymns and even inspiration for art usually signifying the Creator’s aspects of eternity amalgamated with His perfection. Daniel is not the only place for God to be described as ***“The Ancient of Days”***. In Isaiah 43:13 God refers to Himself existing from ancient of days. The picture of God as King seated among His elders goes further back to Isaiah 24:23.

***“Then the moon will be confounded, and the sun ashamed; for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before his elders he will manifest his glory.”***

Here in these verses in Daniel 7, we can see the Ancient of Days as Judge just like in revelation. Jesus the Messiah is shown with the same power of judgment over His church as the Ancient of Days, as well as having judgment over Israel. Remember God is a triune God. Daniel did not know the name Jesus but he knew that He serve a Triune God and knew Jesus as the “Son of Man” which was a title that Jesus himself used to describe himself many times in the Gospels. We will look at this in more detail when we come to look at verses 13 and 14, a real blessing!!

Daniel’s description of the ‘Ancient of Days’ is not unlike what we read in the following verses:

1 Kings 22:19.

***“Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.”***



Ezekiel 1:26-28

*“And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the colour of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.”*

Matthew 19:28 –

*“So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

This of course was addressed only to His disciples, Judas excluded.

Revelation 20:4 -

*“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a (the) thousand years.”*

Daniel describes God in chapter 7 in more detail than any of the prophets before him or after him in the Old Testament.

Let's read the rest of verse 9 –

*“His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire;”*

This verse shows us God's Glory as well as His righteousness. Here in verse 9 it is speaking about His purity - 'White as snow', 'Pure wool'. In Revelation 1:14-15, a similar description is given of Jesus as He is described as having snow-white hair and blazing eyes. God dwells in inapproachable light because of His Purity and Holiness hence no-one has seen the face of God and lived. Do you remember Moses only seen an outline of God while he was on the cliff of the mountain? This was because God wanted to spare His life. God is indescribable but He is knowable, He is accessible to us as He invites us to come to his throne of Grace as well as perfect Judgment. The description used here in verse 9 to describe God's appearance reminds me of Isaiah 1 verse 18 –

*“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.*

Yes, the Lord covers us in His righteous in spite of our sins when we ask for forgiveness. This is pure grace but also mercy for we do not get the sentence we deserve.

How grateful we should be to God for His loving mercy. We should be always rejoicing and never ceasing to praise Him. Although He is the God of all Glory, he is never far from us as sometimes we can be from Him. God is interested in the affairs of men and will accomplish justice according to His word. As we have said so many times in this study, He is in control of all things. His interest in us is highlighted by the fact that God allowed Daniel insight into what was going to happen so that we can be ready.

The God of the Bible is clearly not the same as the god of the Pantheists who have no existence separate from their creation. He is also not the god of the Deists who is totally separate from His creation, with no input, his creation is left to their own devices with no hope of ever meeting Him. No, the God of the Bible who is the Creator of all things is personally and actively present in the affairs of the universe.

In verse 9 we are told that God sits on a Fiery flamed throne with wheels of fire. The description of the throne in this verse is rich in meaning especially to the child of God. Throughout the Bible we see that fire is used to describe judgement as well as God himself.

Let me give you a quick summary of this, now this isn't an in-depth look just a few examples.

**God uses it as part of punishment -**

- Genesis 3:24            God protects the ways with a fiery sword part of judgement of Adam and Eve
- Genesis 19:24            God uses it in judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah
- Exodus 9:23             God used it as a plague in Egypt
- Number 21:6-8            Remember the fiery serpents that God sent the children of Israel? The same was used in John 3 for a different purpose
- Isaiah 66:16             The judgment of God on Israel and their enemies, powerful and sure

**Then we see it in the Lord's appearance in relation to proving himself before his people -**

- Leviticus 9:24            He consumed the offering and the people bowed their face in worship
- Judges 6:21             Gideon had an encounter with the Angel of the Lord that consumed the meal with fire which was a theophany of the pre-incarnate Christ
- 1 Kings 18:38            God's acceptance of Elijah's offering before the people
- 2 Kings 1                 Fire was used to prove whose God was the living God (Elijah again)

**Did you know that fire was used to describe God?**

Exodus 3:2	The burning Bush
Exodus 13:21	God's presence at night before his people
Hebrews 12:29	God is described as a consuming fire
Revelation 2:18	Describes Jesus himself.
Acts 2:2&3	When the Holy Spirit came upon the followers of Christ in the upper room

**Then it is used as part of the final judgment -**

Matthew 13:50	A sad and horrific description of the sinners' end
Revelation 20:15	Refers to punishment of fire as well as Satan and his follower's end
Revelation 19:20	The beast's end
2 Peter 3:12	The earth's end

**For the Believer – a very challenging verse -**

1 Corinthians 3:13 Looking how our works will be tested.

The wheels of fire in verse 9 is very reminisced of Ezekiel's vision in chapter 1 when he sees heaven and the wheels within wheels. As we move from verse 9 to the beginning of verse 10

*"A fiery stream issued, And came forth from before Him."*

This is showing us that the Ancient of Days is sitting on his throne of righteous judgment and that judgment will flow from it. So let us look at this solemn truth that God is Judge overall. Do you believe in divine judgment? By which I mean, do you believe in a God who acts as our Judge? Many, it seems, do not. Speak to them about God as a Father, a friend, a helper, one who loves us despite all our weakness, folly and sin, and their faces light up; you are on their wavelength at once. But speak to them of God as Judge, and they frown and shake their heads. Their minds recoil from such an idea. They find it repellent and unworthy. They are more interested in a "happy" god than a "Holy God".

There are few things stressed more strongly in the Bible than the reality of God's work as Judge. 'Judge' is a word often applied to Him. Abraham, interceding for Sodom as God was about to destroy it, cried,

*"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* Genesis 18:25.



Jephthah, concluding his ultimatum to the Ammonite invaders, declared,

*“I have not sinned against thee, but thou does’ me wrong to war against me: the Lord the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon”* (Judges 11:27).

*“God is the Judge”* declared the psalmist in Psalm 75:7 and in Psalm 82:8 it says -

*“Arise, O God, judge the earth”.*

In the New Testament, the writer to the Hebrews speaks of *‘God, the Judge of all’* in Hebrews 12:23.

The reality of divine judgment, as a fact, is set out on page after page of Bible history. God judged Adam and Eve, expelling them from the Garden and pronouncing curses on their future earthly life (Genesis 3). God judged the corrupt world of Noah's day, sending a flood to destroy mankind (Genesis 6-8). God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, engulfing them in a type of apocalyptic storm (Genesis 18-19). God judged Israel's Egyptian taskmasters, just as He foretold He would (see Genesis 15- 14) when He unleashed against them the terrors of the ten plagues (Exodus 7-12). God judged those who worshipped the golden calf, using the Levites as His executioners (Exodus 32:26-35). God judged Nadab and Abihu for offering Him strange fire (Leviticus 10:1), as later He judged Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who were swallowed up in an earth tremor. God judged Achan for sacrilegious thieving; he and his were wiped out (Joshua 7). God judged Israel for unfaithfulness to Him after their entry into Canaan, causing them to fall under the dominion of other nations. (Judges 2:11 & 3: 5 & 4: 1).

Before they ever entered the promised land, God threatened His people with deportation as the ultimate penalty for sinfulness, and eventually, after repeated warnings from the prophets, He judged them by fulfilling this threat; the northern kingdom (Israel) fell victim to the Assyrian captivity, and the southern kingdom (Judah) to the Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 17; 22:15, 23:26). In Babylon, God judged both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar for their sin. The former was given time for amendment of life, the latter was not (Daniel 4: 5). Nor are the narratives of divine judgment confined to the Old Testament. In the New Testament, judgment fell on the Jews for rejecting Christ (Matthew 21:43 and 1 Thessalonians 2:14), on Ananias and Sapphira, for lying to God (Acts



5), on Herod, for his pride (Acts 12:21), on Elymas, for his opposition to the gospel (Acts 13:8), and on Christians at Corinth, who were afflicted with illness (which in some cases proved fatal) by reason of their gross irreverence in connection, particularly, with the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:29-32). This is only a selection from the abundant accounts of divine acts of judgment which the Bible contains. You will have notice that in these example, in the main, God is judging His people. Now what does that mean for us as a church, how about you as an individual? Let me leave that with you to think about it.

When we turn from Bible history to Bible teaching — the law, the prophets, the wisdom writers, the words of Christ and His apostles — we find the thought of God's action in judgment overshadowing everything. The Mosaic legislation is given as from a God who is Himself a just judge, and will not hesitate to inflict penalties by direct providential action if His people break His law. The prophets take up this theme indeed, the greater part of the recorded teaching consists of exposition and application of the law, and threats of judgment against the lawless and impenitent. The Old Testament prophets spend more time preaching judgment than predicting the Messiah and His kingdom! In the wisdom literature, the same viewpoint appears: the one basic certainty underlying all discussion of life's problems in Job and Ecclesiastes, and all the practical maxims of Proverbs, is that *'God will bring thee into judgment', 'God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil'* (Ecclesiastes 11: 9, 12:14). This is a benefit to us. While this is an exercise to live Holy lives especially in light of this solemn truth, it should also encourage us that we should seek after God's blessing and that the things we do in secret will be rewarded just as much as when you are wrongly ill-treated, God will take care of that in a just way.

People who do not read the Bible correctly, assure us that when we move from the Old Testament to the New, the theme of divine judgment fades into the background; but if we examine the New Testament, even in the most cursory way, we find at once that the Old Testament emphasis on God's action as Judge is far from being reduced, instead it is actually intensified. The entire New Testament is overshadowed by the certainty of a coming day of universal judgment, and by the problem thence arising: how may we sinners get right with God while there is yet time? The New Testament looks on to 'the day of judgment', 'the day of wrath', 'the wrath to come', and proclaims Jesus, the divine Saviour, as the



divinely appointed Judge. *'The judge'* who stands before the door (James 5: 9), *'ready to judge the living and the dead'* (1 Peter 4:5), *'the righteous judge'* who will give Paul his crown (2 Timothy 4:8), is the Lord Jesus Christ *"He is the one who has been designated by God as judge of the living and the dead"* (Acts 10: 42, NEB).

Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17:31 that *"God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world by that man whom he has ordained"*;

and to the Romans he wrote,

*'God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel'*  
(Romans 2: 16).

Jesus Himself said the same.

*"For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son"*- 22

*"For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man."*- 26&27, So the Father *has* given him authority to execute judgment

*"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."*-28&29 (NEB has 'will rise to hear their doom')

*"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me."* – 30

Jesus, who is the world's Saviour, is also the world's Judge. So what are the characteristics of the God being a perfect *judge*? Here are a few thoughts.

### **1. God has ultimate authority – He made the Law and administers it.**

As our Maker, He owns us, and as our Owner, He has a right to dispose of us. He has made laws for us to abide by and He said that He will reward us according to whether or not we keep them. Unlike modern laws in most countries, the legislature and the judiciary are divided, so that the judge does not make the laws he administers; but not so with God. He is both the Lawgiver and the Judge.



## **2. God is a person identified with what is good and right in mercy, grace and love.**

The modern idea that a judge should be cold and dispassionate has no place in the Bible. The Lord lay down the standard of judges to love justice and fair play, and to loathe all ill-treatment of man by his fellow-man. An unjust judge, one who has no interest in seeing right triumph over wrong, is by biblical standards a monstrosity. The Bible leaves us in no doubt that God loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and that the ideal of a judge wholly identified with what is good and right is perfectly fulfilled in Him.

## **3. God is wisdom and knows all things**

God does not need to cross-examine or try to detect lies when judging nations or person as He is perfect in wisdom and all knowing. The Bible tell us that He searches the heart and knows the facts. Nothing can escape Him; we may fool men, but we cannot fool God. He knows us, and judges us, as we really are. When Abraham met the Lord at the oaks of Mamre, He revealed to Abraham that He was on the way to Sodom, to establish the truth about the moral situation there.

*'The Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know' Genesis 18:20.*

His judgment is according to truth; factual truth, as well as moral truth. He judges 'the secrets of men', not just their public facade. Paul said,

*"we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ"*  
(2 Corinthians 5: 10, RV).

## **4. God is long-suffering, fair and merciful in judgment**

We see this time and time again. God continually warned the people of Israel to turn so that they would not fall under judgement. Even with Nineveh, He sent Jonah the prophet to warn them. God will ensure justice but He is not hungry for revenge as man is often, He is not vindictive. 2 Peter 3:9 show us this -

*"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."*



God is a Just Judge which is important from a doctrinal point of view but also as a believer who knows and loves the Lord. It may not be on our mind 24/7 but it should be in our heart governing our lives in true holiness. It becomes clear that the Bible's proclamation of God's work as Judge is part of its witness to His character. It confirms what is said elsewhere of His moral perfection, His righteousness and justice, His wisdom, omniscience, and omnipotence. It shows us also that the heart of the justice which expresses God's nature is *retribution*, the rendering to men what they have deserved; for this is the essence of the judge's task. To reward good with good, and evil with evil, is natural to God. So, when the New Testament speaks of the final judgment, it always represents it in terms of reckoning. God will judge all men, it says, '*according to their works*' (Matthew 16:27; Revelation 20:12). Paul amplifies:

*"God ... who "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honour, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God."* (Romans 2: 6-11).

God is the Judge, so justice will be done. We can see this very clearly in verses 11 and 12 of Chapter 7. The four Beasts are judged and their final sentence will be ultimately carried out in God's times and they will eventually be destroyed by fire. Remember the reference to fire being used as part of judgement earlier on?

Let's go back to verse 10 of our reading.

*"A fiery stream issued, And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him."*

Let's just stop there and consider this. Daniel saw a great multitude in heaven, an innumerable amount ministering before God. Heaven is for all those who are born again of God's Spirit and from this verse alone, the amount of those who are saved and worshipping God is unimaginable to us. The scene must have been breath-taking. In Revelation 4, John sees firstly the elders then in verse 11 of chapter 5, he beholds the angels but it's not till chapter 7 verse 9 that John beholds the crown of God's creation, 'The Redeemed', who are

without number there. The grandest theme of all that man can sing. “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the Throne, and onto the Lamb”. The angels can’t sing that but they do cry “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty!”

I know that in Revelation Chapter 5 verses 11-13 that all in heaven and earth will declare and state

*“Blessing and honour and glory and power, Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”*

In Revelation 7 the focus is solely on the saints as in Daniel 7. We can only for a time imagine the scene and as we do it fills the souls, hearts and minds with joy and wonderment. One day, we will stand in the blessed court, around the throne and we will be praising the Lord as part of the *“Ten thousand times ten thousand”*. Our hands lifted up and singing in harmony and tune. No more self-conscious of our weaknesses, embarrassed like so many on earth, afraid to lift their voice to God in praise, to lift their hands in surrender to God. No! we will behold Him who has always loved us and demonstrated that love by life, death and resurrection. Do you know something magnificent? We too will love Him with perfect love and our joy will be complete. The anointed meeting without end and it gets better as Heaven receives all the Saints, Old Testament, New Testament, Early Church, End Time Church and all those in between who are saved. Your problem won’t be trying to keep up praising quite the opposite, it will be trying to stop. In God’s presence there is fullness of joy and peace forever more. What on this earth can do that? We have a lot to look forward to! Keep your eyes on the prize!

Finally, moving on to the last part of verse 10, Daniel sees

*“The court was seated, And the books were opened.”*

In Revelation 20 verses 12 – 15, we have an explanation of these books in Daniel’s vision. From the Book of Life (verse 12) your deeds will be accounted for. How you interacted with people, how you reacted to people, the things you done and said, and the things that you did not do that you should have done or did not say and should have. These actions or lack of them, which are continually recorded while you are alive, you will have to account for.

Imagine the world is completely ignorant of this truth that God not only judges the ‘action’ but also the motive behind it. This is something that no-one can escape. Doing the best you can, can be commendable, but it is not salvation.



Those who are followers of Christ, their names are inscribed into the Lambs book of Life. Hallelujah! You will only enter heaven if your name is found in it. If your name is not there than you will have to face the just punishment because God is Judge and Holy and cannot look at sin. The records by the way is for us not God, and on that day there will be no argument or disagreement, it will be all set out.

If our works were to be judged only by the commandments, if we were to look at the famous 10 commandments then probably by the first one, we would be gonners, with no chance. We have broken His law countless times, and as James 2:10 says

*“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”*

Hence the tremendous gift God sent us when He sent Jesus our Redeemer, to take our place of punishment so that we don't have to face the second death, but for those of us who believe on His name get an inheritance of eternal life with him as well as rewards for the things that we have done. Thank God for the certainty we have in Christ, that we will not be standing in a long line when we die, hoping that we will make into Heaven. No, not at all, because God is faithful and true to His word and He promised that whosoever believes in Jesus shall have eternal life and Paul confirmed that believers who are absent from the body are present with the Lord! If you know that your name is in these books, you have great reason to Praise God!

*Amen.*