

Election day in our country has come and gone once again. There is always excitement and uncertainty, confusion, and fear when there are changes in power and authority whether at the city, state, or national level. Whether it is America, Rome or ancient Babylon, worry can rear its ugly head; anxiety can rise like steam pouring out a shaking lid of a pot on the stove. If I learned anything from political ads it is this: accusations of treachery, injustice and duplicitousness surround almost every political candidate. Will we get justice? Will this ruler be just? Daniel experienced this more than most in his lifetime living and working among rulers. He had gone from living under a Davidic king in his home of Judah to serve under a pagan king in captivity in Babylon named Nebuchadnezzar, to then serve his son Belshazzar, and the changes in power were not done yet. Darius and Cyrus were yet to come! Can justice be found? Daniel's name means "God is my Judge." Daniel looked to God for justice. God gave Daniel a vision of what would be and will be. God makes it unmistakably clear,

### **The Lord Will Return in Judgment.**

Daniel 7:9- *"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 2011).

Daniel had interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel would interpret the message God sent to Belshazzar from a literal hand writing on a wall. God gave this vision to Daniel for himself and for us. *"As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat."* The awesomeness of what he saw was shocking. *"The Ancient of Days,"* is a name used for God only here in this passage of Daniel. This is our eternal God who has no beginning. He comes on business. He has work to do.

*"Thrones were set in place."* What happens on the throne? The King rules! The King judges! What kind of a king do we have? *"His clothing was as white as snow."* We remember our Savior on the mount of transfiguration – his clothes shined like the light and his face like the sun. This is our holy, pure, and just God. *"The hair of his head was white like wool."* Some people like to point out the gray hairs on certain people's heads, or the white in someone's beard – signs of getting older. But these are also in many, a sign of wisdom and experience. There aren't many rodeos somebody with white hair ain't been to. God's hair is *white like wool*. This king of kings, Ancient of Days, is eternal, holy, and wise. He is the only true ruler and judge of mankind. When Jesus ascended on high, he ascended to the right hand of God – a place of power and authority. Kingdoms rise and fall, but God reigns. Is this applicable in an election year?

Only one sits on the throne. He judges nations, kingdoms, and us. *"His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze."* What a sight! Fire signified God's presence so often in the Old Testament. He is a consuming fire, a jealous God, who will not settle for second place in human hearts. God appeared to Moses in a burning bush. God appeared on Mt. Sinai in fire and billows of smoke. God led the children of Israel through the wilderness as a pillar of fire and cloud. He does not take his eyes off his people. A throne that moves and goes everywhere with wheels of fire. God knows all things – he's omniscient. God is everywhere – he's omnipresent.

*"A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him."* Fire can be used to destroy, to purify, or to prove purity. A fire can consume a whole city in a small amount of time with the right conditions. My sister in Arizona had a brush fire right outside their fence a month ago. Thankfully, volunteers put it out in time. Dangerous! Fire destroys. Those who would face God's just condemnation will be destroyed and suffer in hell. Fire can also purify a precious metal of its impurities, or prove it is pure. Our just judge has fire flowing

out from before him. There is no middle ground with God. Either you will be condemned to hell on judgment day, or you will be counted righteous and pure because of your Savior.

*"Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him."* As God let the servant of Elisha the prophet see the angel armies all over the hills surrounding Dothan and knew that they were saved, so Daniel could see all those who serve the Lord and do his bidding. We have nothing to fear. The just judge has many who will serve him and do what needs to be done for us his people. Daniel starts with thousands and then goes to ten thousand times ten thousand – a perfect, innumerable, and glorious host!

*"The court was seated,"* It is time for the judgment to begin. Just like that it will happen, like a thief in the night on the Last Day. The Lord will return with a trumpet sound, the voice of the archangel, the chaos of these last days will be rolled away and we will be assembled before the throne of God. And what will he do?

### **The Lord Will Return in Judgment.**

*"the books were opened."* We are not told what these books are here, but elsewhere in Scripture like Revelation 20, we know of the books of deeds. My conscience fears the worst. The things I've said behind people's backs or at least thought in my arrogance and insecurity, could be laid bare for all to see and hear. The deeds I've done for which I am ashamed, or the evil in my life I am unaware of could be examined and poured over, "How could you?" "And you called yourself a Christian." All my sin, the long innumerable list of charges would overwhelm and crush me. My sinfulness made me worthy of hell from my very start, but how I've added to it! And my conscience hears these words, **"The Lord Will Return in Judgment"** and my conscience shudders in terror or it should. Justice will be served. Without Jesus, hell is my eternal fate.

But there is another book spoken of in Scripture – and this is the book God will read from for his children, for those who have been washed of their sins in the waters of their baptism, whose sins have been blotted out from the books by the blood of Jesus, whose *sins have been buried in the depths of the sea*, (Micah) to whom God has promised, *"I will remember their sins no more."* (Hebrews) For you, Christian, God will read from *the book of life* and find your name. It will not be tucked away somewhere and need a recount, or someone to search for it. God looks forward to this day, to Judgment Day, when he can welcome you home. But is this unjust?

The record of my sin does not exist in God's courtroom, not found in "the books." All the clear evidence of my sin and the charges against me were reassigned to the sinless Son of God on Calvary+. Jesus took them upon himself and suffered the hell I had coming on the cross and finished it. He faced God's just judgment against me and died for me. He then rose from the grave. Jesus rose to prove that my name is in the book of life and I need not fear the Last Judgment. **The Lord Will Return in Judgment** – and judge me righteous and holy because of Jesus my Savior, and only through him.

How might we spend the days we have left until Jesus returns? Shall we run up more sins in the other books? Should we live in fear about who might rule and how just they are? Should we neglect our faith or our time in God's Word for the pleasures of this world taking our focus off Jesus? By no means. How sad and insane that would be. By the Holy Spirit working through his Word and the Sacraments, you have been made a child of God. Your name is in *the book of life*. Live who you are and who God has judged you to be. Grow in the Grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Seek him where he may be found – his Word. Worship him while he is near – where two or three are gathered in his name, there he is with us. Live to serve rather than be served.

*The Ancient of Days* has seen his people through history, through countless leaders, kings, and rulers. He will see us through. And should we ever become afraid, or wonder if it's worth it, look with Daniel and see your God, *the Ancient of Days*, his *throne of fire*, purifying you through every hardship, every disease, every weakness, every melancholy to see him more clearly and hold his love more dearly, to witness of him more courageously. When *the Ancient of Days* and *the Son of Man* Jesus Christ take that throne in judgment, we will be welcomed into eternal life, judged righteous and pure because of the blood of Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of Jesus, we look forward to the day **The Lord Will Return in Judgment**. Amen.