

## God's Certain Judgment (Daniel 7:9,10)

- 1) He has the majestic power
- 2) He has the final say

As I'm sure many of you do, I like to listen to the news on my morning commute. I tend to listen to NPR<sup>i</sup> since they cover the big stories in local, national, and world news. By the time I want to listen to music instead, I'm usually pulling into Grace Lutheran anyways. These past few months I've noticed that there is a continual theme of uncertainty. It started with the slew of hurricanes we've had – Harvey in Houston,<sup>ii</sup> Irma in Florida,<sup>iii</sup> Maria in Puerto Rico.<sup>iv</sup> More recently we've had senseless shootings in Las Vegas<sup>v</sup> and Sutherland Springs, Texas.<sup>vi</sup> As if that's not enough, there was a man running down others in a truck up in New York City.<sup>vii</sup> Why are all these things happening? What will come out of all this? There is certainly a lot of uncertainty in the world right now. And as Christians rightly do when they are uncertain, we look to God's Word for his timeless certainty. In Daniel chapter 7, God gives the prophet Daniel a vision about what is to come at the end of these uncertain times with this scene of God's certain judgment. The prophet Daniel writes, **“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. 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.”**<sup>viii</sup>

There is a lot of imagery and meaning packed in these 2 short verses.<sup>ix</sup> There is the majestic courtroom where God will read off his certain judgments on the Last Day. In the center is God, the Ancient of Days, who has always been around. Before the creation of the world, God was. During the uncertain times of all ages, God is. After the Last Day and life as we know it is no more, God will always be. As God is timeless, so he is perfect like snow-white clothing and hair as white as wool. After looking at God himself we get the sights surrounding him. He is sitting on a chariot throne ablaze with fire.<sup>x</sup> Fire, the Bible's consistent image to communicate God's certain justice which punishes unbelievers but preserves the believer. From God's throne flows a river of fire bringing his certain justice to all it touches. Step further back and you see the thousand thousands angels standing and attending the Ancient of Days. But our focus remains on the center – God on his majestic throne ready to dispense certain judgment on friend and foe alike.

As you compare Daniel's description of God's majestic power with the uncertain times we live in now, do you see a disconnect? If God is as timelessly powerful as Daniel says, then where do we see his majestic power today? As I read the uncertain headlines from the news, I know that for some of you those tragic events are not isolated incidents. You know people and the places affected. All of us have our own troubles that make life uncertain. Sure our troubles may not make the headlines of my morning commute. But they sure do touch our hearts and shake our trust in God's majestic power. It's so easy to think, *"If only God would give us a sign, a small little glimpse, of the power he'll show on the Last Day. Then we could be certain in these uncertain times!"*

It's true that God does not perform obvious miracles today as he did in the times of Jesus and the Old Testament prophets. It's true that we don't expect to receive divine visions as Daniel did to see what new things God has to say. But God is still certainly powerful and working on our behalf in these uncertain times.<sup>xi</sup> Every medical procedure that goes according to plan, we see God's majestic power taking care of us through modern medicine. Every time we open our fridges and think, *"What's the next thing to go bad?"* instead of *"What is there to eat?"* we see God's timeless love providing for the needs of believers and unbelievers alike.<sup>xii</sup> When we read those troubling headlines and see the numbers of the hurt and dead, we see God's majestic power keeping a limit on sin. Yes those lost and hurt lives are tragic, I don't want to discount that in any way. But at least there weren't more people hurt by the hurricanes, sidewalk driving, or sinful shootings.

The power that we often see in hidden ways will be on full display on the Last Day – when the Ancient of Days comes to judge the living and the dead and deliver God's certain judgment. Daniel tells us **"The court was seated, and the books were opened."**<sup>xiii</sup> When God prepares to deliver his certain justice, he will consult all the information before him and give the final say. God will have 2 sets of books before him – the book of deeds and the book of life.<sup>xiv</sup> The book of deeds will have all that we have ever done, good and bad, recorded in its pages. The book of life? Those who believe that Jesus is their Savior.

The names that are only found in the book of deeds are those who live according to the law. *"Do this and you'll receive that. Live a perfect life and heaven is yours!"* These are true statements and, if anyone could keep God's law perfectly, they would indeed have life in heaven.<sup>xv</sup> Using the book illustration, imagine that you had your own page in that book of deeds. God demands a life that

is full of obedience without a single mistake in any way – a page in that book that only shows good deeds. If there is even only 1 sin on our permanent record, God will judge us guilty of death in hell. Do our pages only have good deeds? My doesn't. Yours doesn't. No one does for sinners is who we are and sin is what we do.

Except Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man. He came into this world without a single blemish to his name and kept every one of God's laws. He never doubted God's majestic power in uncertain times. He never hurt another person or failed to follow through on a promise. As the Son of Man, he was subject to the same laws that condemn us. As the Son of God, he kept the its demands and would receive its promise of life eternal in heaven. His page had only good deeds. But Jesus didn't keep the reward of the law for himself. He shared it with all those who believe in him for their salvation. That's why he went to the cross and chose to die on it. To receive God's punishment for our sins and, in exchange, give us his reward for living a perfect life. It's through faith in Jesus we have the forgiveness of sins. It's through faith in Jesus we have the promise of life in heaven. It's through faith in Jesus that our names will be found in the book of life.

It's the book of life that gives us confidence to face the day of God's certain judgment. It won't matter how depressing our page is in the book of deeds. If our name is in the book of life, God will certainly judge us not guilty for our sins. To say it in another way if you believe that Jesus is your Savior from sin, you will live in heaven after this life on earth. No matter what our lives or consciences say, it's God who has the final say about our eternal resting place. And that's a certainty.

As we look out in this world and read the headlines, we see a lot of uncertainty – natural disasters, senseless violence, and sinful choices. *"Where is the justice?"* we ask. *"What will God do about all this?"* we wonder. I can promise you, God has not abandoned us. He preserves and protects us in these uncertain times with his majestic power. And on the Last Day we will see his certain judgment on the living and the dead. Every eye will see the Ancient of Days shining with perfection and seated on his fiery throne of judgment. He will consult his 2 sets of books – the book of life and the book of deeds. You, I, and every believer can take comfort knowing which book God will find our names. The book of life. And he will certainly judge us not guilty because of what our Savior Jesus has done for us – writing our names in the book of life with the blood he poured out on the cross.

Pastor Timothy Patoka

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As you approach the day when God will judge you for your faith, don't be afraid of God's certain judgment. Your name is in the book of life through faith in Jesus. Treasure that certain judgment of not guilty you have. Take every effort to protect and strengthen that blessed judgment for yourself. And share this peace with others by telling others the good news of Jesus so that they too make look forward to the day of certain judgment as the day of certain salvation. Amen.

## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> National Public Radio.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.npr.org/tags/546035713/hurricane-harvey>. Accessed November 10, 2017.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.npr.org/tags/548496964/hurricane-irma>. Accessed November 10, 2017.

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.npr.org/tags/551747980/hurricane-maria>. Accessed November 10, 2017.

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.npr.org/tags/555310364/las-vegas-shooting>. Accessed November 10, 2017.

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.npr.org/tags/562350475/sutherland-springs>. Accessed November 10, 2017.

<sup>vii</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/11/01/561304014/suspect-in-new-york-city-truck-attack-worked-as-commercial-truck-uber-driver>. Accessed November 10, 2017.

<sup>viii</sup> Daniel 7:9,10. All biblical quotations are from the 1984 edition of the New International Version unless otherwise stated.

<sup>ix</sup> The People's Bible section on these verses were very informative and helpful.

<sup>x</sup> The prophet Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel's, likewise saw God's presence in connection with a chariot throne ablaze with fire. See Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10.

<sup>xi</sup> Romans 8:28.

<sup>xii</sup> Matthew 5:45.

<sup>xiii</sup> Daniel 7:10c.

<sup>xiv</sup> Revelation 20:11-15 has the fuller explanation on these two categories of books. The book of life is specifically mentioned in Exodus 32:32 and Psalm 69:28.

<sup>xv</sup> Jesus essentially says this in Luke 10:25-28.