

Sermon on Daniel 7:9-14

Standing before the Ancient of Days

Judgment Sunday

Dear servants of our Savior,

If you were standing before your Savior right now, what would he look like? Let's hear what John says in the Book of Revelation. ***"I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone 'like a son of man,' dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest."***

John tells us that Jesus looks like "a son of man." What was it that Jesus called himself when talking to his disciples or defending himself against the Pharisees? Jesus referred to himself as "the Son of Man." To his enemies Jesus said, "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

In the Old Testament you read that expression a few times, especially in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel. To whom are they referring when they write "son of man"? They are talking about the Messiah, our Savior Jesus Christ. Daniel writes, ***"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence."*** (Daniel 7:13)

When Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man, he is emphasizing the fact that he, the Son of God, became a man in order to suffer in our place and pay the penalty for our sins. As Jesus told his disciples, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" (Matthew 20:17-19)

Yes, our Lord and Savior gave his life into death in order to free us from the penalty for our sins and from death itself. For on the third day Jesus rose from the dead. In his epistle to the Ephesians the apostle Paul writes about how God the Father raised his Son to life again. "That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms." (Ephesians 1:19-20) God raised Jesus to life again and has exalted his Son to his right hand. Now Jesus lives and rules eternally.

So when the apostle John saw Jesus in that vision on the island of Patmos, it wasn't a surprise for John to see Jesus alive. It was more a sense of awe that John stood in the presence of the Almighty Son of God. John fell at Jesus' feet as if John were dead, he was so frightened. And so would we be, if we saw what John saw: ***"His***

head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.” (Revelation 1:14-15) We, too, would fall at Jesus’ feet if we saw him standing before us.

So in the vision which the prophet Daniel sees there is also someone “like a son of man” standing before the throne of God. God himself is the Ancient of Days which Daniel sees. And then the prophet sees the son of man walk into the presence of the Ancient of Days. It’s a potent scene! And what happens next is important for you and me. Daniel writes, “As I looked, thrones were set in place and the Ancient of Days took his seat... The court was seated, and the books were opened.” Ever wonder what is written in those books? It’s best that you know, for what is written there determines your place and mine in eternity.

Now comes the part that most rely on when it comes to eternity. Either they have no fear of God and reply, “I really don’t care. I’m about this life and this time. What happens after this life happens.” The “I really don’t care” attitude doesn’t change what is written in the books. Those books will declare whether a person spends eternity with the Lord in life or spends an eternity of death apart from his or her Maker. And if a person is condemned to hell, that individual would wish he had cared while here on earth.

But then there are those who have at least some respect for the Almighty. But they think that is up to them as to where they will spend eternity. Some have this assumption, that if they try hard enough at being good, then God will overlook their acts of sin and permit them into heaven. But what does the Lord God say? God tells you and me, “Be holy, as I the Lord your God am holy.” That means never sinning, not even once. It means having no sinful thoughts in your head. It means never saying a bad word, not even one. It means being holy, being without sin. And who of us can say that we are without sin?

No, trying harder at being good is not good enough. Only those who come before God in righteousness and holiness will be welcomed into heaven. So in the books that are opened before the Ancient of Days, do you think that your name will be listed among the righteous? You better hope so. How can you be sure? By trusting in the sinless Son of Man, Jesus Christ! He has atoned for your sins with his precious blood. He lived the perfect life that God demands. And He conquered death through His resurrection from the dead. When you believe that Jesus is your Savior from sin, you are then righteous in God’s eyes.

What did John see in his vision of Jesus? He saw the Son of Man standing before him with his head and hair white like wool, as white as snow. It reminds me of what the Lord God says to His believers through the prophet Isaiah: “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be white like wool.’” (Isaiah 1:18) Jesus, our Lord and Savior, whose head and hair are white like wool, takes our

sins and turns those bloody red sins into forgiven sins, made as white as snow and white like wool. If your name is written in the Book of Life, it means that through faith in Jesus you have been holy in God's sight.

One more thing of note: the description which Daniel gives of the Lord God, whom he calls the ancient of Days, is so very similar to what John says in describing our Savior. The prophet declares, ***"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. This throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze."*** What Daniel says of the Ancient of Days reflects what John says of Jesus. Could it be that the Son of God and the Father are the same God?

For you and me to stand before our Judge on Judgment Day, we would stand in fear if we came with a "I really don't care" attitude. We would also stand in fear if we came with the assumption that we tried hard enough to be good. But when you and I stand before the Judge on judgment day and know what it was that Jesus, our Judge and Savior, did for us, then there is nothing to fear. Then we are at peace with God. Then we know that Jesus not only defeated Satan when he died on the cross, but we also know that our Savior has been preparing a place for us in His Father's home, just for us. Yes, when the Ancient of Days opens the books, He will read off the names of those who trusted in His Son and say, "Welcome! Welcome home!"

Amen.