

(To be revised)

# THE ADJUDICATION OF HOLINESS BEGINS

## (Daniel 7 – Part 2)

**“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire” (Daniel 7:9).**

The setting of verses 9 and 10 portrays a divine court scene. This is a commentary insert within the scenes of Daniel’s “earthly powers” vision. The sequence, however, of events does follow the little horn antichrist action of verse 8. God is opening records for the court to review. Other thrones surround His, representing saints who are witnesses to this judicial review (cf. Revelation 4:4). Who are these saints? Since this is an event before the Second Coming we must conclude that they are from among the vast throng that rose with Jesus at His resurrection (Matthew 27:52-53, Ephesians 4:8, I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Identifying what judgment is starting is important. This process is ongoing and continues all the way through prophetic messages, ending in Revelation 20:12. Since “all knowledge” is already in God’s hands/mind – why such a legal scene? It must be for one reason only – for others/witnesses to concur with His judicial decisions. This remains a divine legal imperative, even through the Millennium. Clearly, something vast must occur within the divine redemptive plan to separate or identify the righteous from the wicked and to assure that sin will never be mankind’s choice again. A transparent decision-making process is part of heaven’s operations. Decisions as to who will be saved, and a similar process for those lost, are open to a moral review. That is what the Bible alludes to in its simple declaration “the books were opened.”

Where else are those books discussed? Many places allude to them (Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 56:9, 69:29, 139:16; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27). Such review has stunning legal merit when impartial witnesses, who have struggled over those moral law issues, observe and concur. This imagery is one of God making Himself (His character and government) totally vulnerable!

### **“I beheld till the thrones were cast down,” (vs 9)**

There is a KJV translation error in this phrase. The older manuscripts state till “thrones were set up.” Many scholars see this as a heavenly court where angels are on those thrones (I Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1-7; Job 1:6, 2:1). However, in no passage do the angels ever sit on thrones. They **stand** before God to do His biddings (I Kings 22:19). Those beings are unenthroned (Hebrews 1:7, 13-14).

Let’s look closer at the link that describes this in the book of Revelation. This will help explain what **begins** in Daniel 7:9.

- *“And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold” (Revelation 4:4).*

- An “elder” has several Biblical functions. They echo most the 24 earthly sanctuary priestly orders.<sup>1</sup>

“An OT background in 1 Chronicles confirms an identification of the elders as saints. The number twenty-four is perhaps based on David’s organization of the cult of temple servants ... into twenty-four orders of priests (1 Chron. 24:3-19), twenty-four Levitical gatekeepers (26:17-19), and twenty-four orders of Levites commissioned to ‘prophesy in giving thanks and praising the Lord’ by singing to the accompaniment of ‘lyres, harps, and cymbals’ (25:6-31; cf. Josephus *Ant.*7.363-67). These priests **represented** the people of Israel in their appointed service in the temple ... This background may be the best explanation why the elders perform mediatorial functions (e.g., Revelation 5:8) and participate in a heavenly liturgy in a cultic temple setting throughout Revelation (Rev. 4:10; 5:10-14; 11:16-18; 19:4). In addition, ... (‘elder’) is used in Heb. 11:2 of the great OT saints.”<sup>2</sup>

“They must be believer-priests associated with the ‘Great High Priest.’ This priestly office is in agreement with the promises for the saints (Revelation 1:6; 5:10, cf. Ex 19:6).”<sup>3</sup>

- In Revelation they surround God’s throne in **another** judgment phase (Revelation 4:1-4) from that of Daniel. That is distinctly the opening of the **judgment of the living**.

Those on thrones surrounding God’s throne are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 5:9). Again, the weight of evidence suggests that they are part of the firstfruits resurrected with Christ, serving as “kings and priests” (Revelation 1:6, 5:10). An identical symbol in Revelation 20:4 seems to remove any doubt that believers will sit on thrones. The Scriptures reinforce that one of the saints’ roles is associated with judgment (Luke 22:30, 1 Corinthians 6:2, Revelation 3:21).<sup>4</sup>

Within the contextual information provided, this divine courtroom is defined. There is an allusion shortly to another throne when the Son of man comes to the Ancient of Days to receive His kingdom. Prophecy is rich with the Messiah sharing God the Father’s throne (Psalm 110:1; cf. Matthew 22:42-44, 25:31; Hebrews 1:8, 4:16, 8:1, 12:2; Revelation 3:21; 7:17; 22:1, 3). The weight of evidence suggests here that the redeemed saints sit as judicial witnesses for the court in these amazing proceedings. The 24 elders in Revelation 4 are a symbolic explanation of this elevated scene. God is reviewing records and rendering sentences. His judgment is being observed.

Thrones set up (7:9) – judicial scene

Ancient of Days – did sit – His throne (7:9) – judicial scene

Thrones like fire (7:9) – judicial activity

<sup>1</sup> Gregg, Steve; *Revelation – Four Views – A Parallel Commentary* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN –1997), pp. 88-89.

<sup>2</sup> Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 324 (emphasis added).

<sup>3</sup> Noel, Ted, M.D.; “I want to be left behind,” Draft, Chapter 4, *Tribulation, Great Tribulation, Wrath*, October 2, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, Stephen R.; *The New American Commentary*, vol. 18 (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), p. 204.

From Him issued fiery stream (7:9) – judicial response  
Thousand thousands ministered to him (7:10) – courtiers  
Ten thousand times ten thousands stood before Him (7:10) too large to count  
Books were opened (7:10) – proceedings validated through “discovery” – records

The entire picture portrays a vast legal courtroom scene with millions of courtiers assisting in this judicial review. The imagery suggests that final decisions are being made. ***This clearly must occur before the Son of man can receive His kingdom.*** Thus, we are invited to observe this sequence just as the missive presents. Since He receives His kingdom after these proceedings, the evidence insinuates that this review must be “making up the citizens for that kingdom!”

When the word “throne” is plural, it is used in conjunction with judgment (Psalm 122:5). Here, there are multiple thrones and “the court was seated.”<sup>5</sup>

Interestingly, the apostles were promised that they would sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). “*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them*” (Revelation 20:4; cf. Revelation 4:2, Colossians 1:16). The court of the Ancient of Days is seated for judicial review (Daniel 7:10, 26). Select saints are there as witnessing reviewers to the proceedings.

The immediate context of Daniel’s judgment scene suggests that it is against the little horn and his empire (followers) (cf. vss 11-12). But – it does ***not*** say that. The “books” that were opened appear in a broader, global review context.

### **“and the Ancient of days did sit,” (vs 9)**

God is not explicitly mentioned by name – but virtually all expositors recognize this being as God the Father – the eternal God.<sup>6</sup> He is presiding over a court (a being distinct from the “Son of man” in verse 13).<sup>7</sup> He is God made visible (cf. Ezekiel 1:26).

The “ancient one” means “one advanced in days” (*attiq yomin*) – an “old man.” This echoes God’s eternal existence (cf. Psalm 9:8, 29:10, 90:2; Job 36:26; Isaiah 41:4).<sup>8</sup>

The little horn antichrist, speaking against God, is suddenly contrasted with the supreme ruler of the universe – the “Chief Justice” of the cosmos! Sitting on a throne is a posture of reigning or judging. When a throne is “set” or put in place, as here and in Revelation 4:2, a judicial proceeding is intimated. The imagery suggests that the “supreme potentate” is sitting in final judgment upon the world.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Collins, John J.; *Daniel* (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN – 1993), p. 301.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Whitcomb, John C.; *Daniel* (Moody Press; Chicago, IL – 1985), p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> Hartman, Louis F. and Di Lella, Alexander A.; *The Book of Daniel* (Doubleday, New York, 1977), pp. 206-218.

<sup>9</sup> Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 226.

Daniel 7:9 – is the **onset** of a divine judgment scene.

Revelation 4:2 – is the **culmination** of that scene in a new and final phase.

Regardless of how rampant evil seems (seen here in the fiendish hatred by the antichrist), everything will be weighed and judged from the Sovereign throne – the center of the universe.<sup>10</sup>

- *“God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.... Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations”* (Psalm 82:1, 8).
- *“And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left”* (I Kings 22:19).

### **“whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool:” (vs 9)**

In Revelation 4 John does not describe the one seated on the throne except through the light and glory He emanates. Here, a personal description is given. We assume by the way Daniel expresses this that the hair-like “pure wool” must also be white and brilliant.

This picture reflects holiness – “absolute purity”<sup>11</sup> – which His people will also have (Daniel 11:35, 12:10). This is an extension of Isaiah a century before:

- *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isaiah 1:18).
- cf. 61:10, II Corinthians 5:4, Galatians 3:27

So important is this imagery that the exalted Christ also has hair “white like wool, as white as snow” (Revelation 1:14), seated on a “white” cloud (Revelation 14:14), a “white” horse (Revelation 6:1-2; 19:11) and a “white” throne (Revelation 20:11). The redeemed will receive “white” garments (cf. Revelation 3:4-5, 18; 4:4; 7:9, 13-14).<sup>12</sup>

Because He is holy, He can judge sin. Because Christ and the saints represent holiness on earth, they will judge the wicked (Daniel 7:22, Revelation 20:4)!

### **“his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire” (vs 9)**

Fire represents, within a theophany, several things:

1. Purification (Zechariah 13:9, Malachi 3:2-3; cf. I Corinthians 3:11-15)
2. Final judgment upon sinners (Deuteronomy 4:24, Psalm 18:9-14, 21:10, 50:3, 97:3, Daniel 7:11, Revelation 19:20, 20:10)
3. God’s glory (Revelation 4:5) – His holiness (Ezekiel 1:4, 13, 27; 8:2; 10:2, 6-7)

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<sup>10</sup> Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

<sup>11</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

<sup>12</sup> Steinmann, Andrew E.; *Daniel* (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis), pp. 352-353.

#### 4. Exhibition of His power (Exodus 19:16-18, 20:18, 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:36)<sup>13</sup>

Biblical theophanies are often associated with fire: burning bush (Exodus 3:2), Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18), speaking out of the midst of fire (Deuteronomy 5:4), fire goes out before Him (Psalm 97:3). Daniel's imagery is relevant to Ezekiel: *"And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire"* (Ezekiel 1:4).

The imagery of the Ancient of Days' throne represents all four of these. Something is being reviewed related to a standard of purity and holiness.

The wheels on the throne echo Ezekiel's vision of "wheeled Cherubims" supporting God's throne (Ezekiel 1:15-21). The picture, when associated with Ezekiel, portrays harmony of heavenly agencies working together.

"To the prophet, the wheel within a wheel, the appearance of living creatures connected with them, all seemed intricate and unexplainable. But the hand of Infinite Wisdom is seen among the wheels, and perfect order is the result of its work. Every wheel, directed by the hand of God, works in perfect harmony with every other wheel."<sup>14</sup> *Holy harmony* is an elevated view!

A very interesting issue emerges at this point. The throne of God is the center of all this judicial process. Though the information within Daniel 7 is limited, elsewhere are unique, related insights that expand heaven's drama.

John the Revelator is given an image of this same throne in Revelation 4:2: *"And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne."*

The Greek word used for "set" is *ekeito*. Its use is varied – but, there, it means the throne was set in place.<sup>15</sup> That throne is also portrayed in a judicial setting. If God's throne was positioned or set up for judicial review purposes, where was it positioned from? Are we given any information of His throne being moved or in motion elsewhere?

Again, Ezekiel 1 and 2 is one of the Bible's most graphic pictures of God's throne of glory in motion. There, shortly, two judgment scenes are characterized: (1) related to a scroll (book) of lamentations; (2) containing "live coals" which will be poured onto **God's church**. The throne will finally come to the temple and withdraw God's eternal Shekinah glory. Key Ezekiel observations:

1. Four living creatures (cherubims) with four heads – man, lion, calf, eagle, support a platform of glory, all moving in total freedom.
2. On that platform is God's throne of indescribable glory.
3. The platform appears to move with wheels within wheels to a new location.
4. There are burning coals in the center of the living creatures (Ezekiel 1:13).

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<sup>13</sup> Goldingay, John E.; Daniel – *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 30 (Word Books, Publisher – Dallas, TX), pp. 165-166; Steinman, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

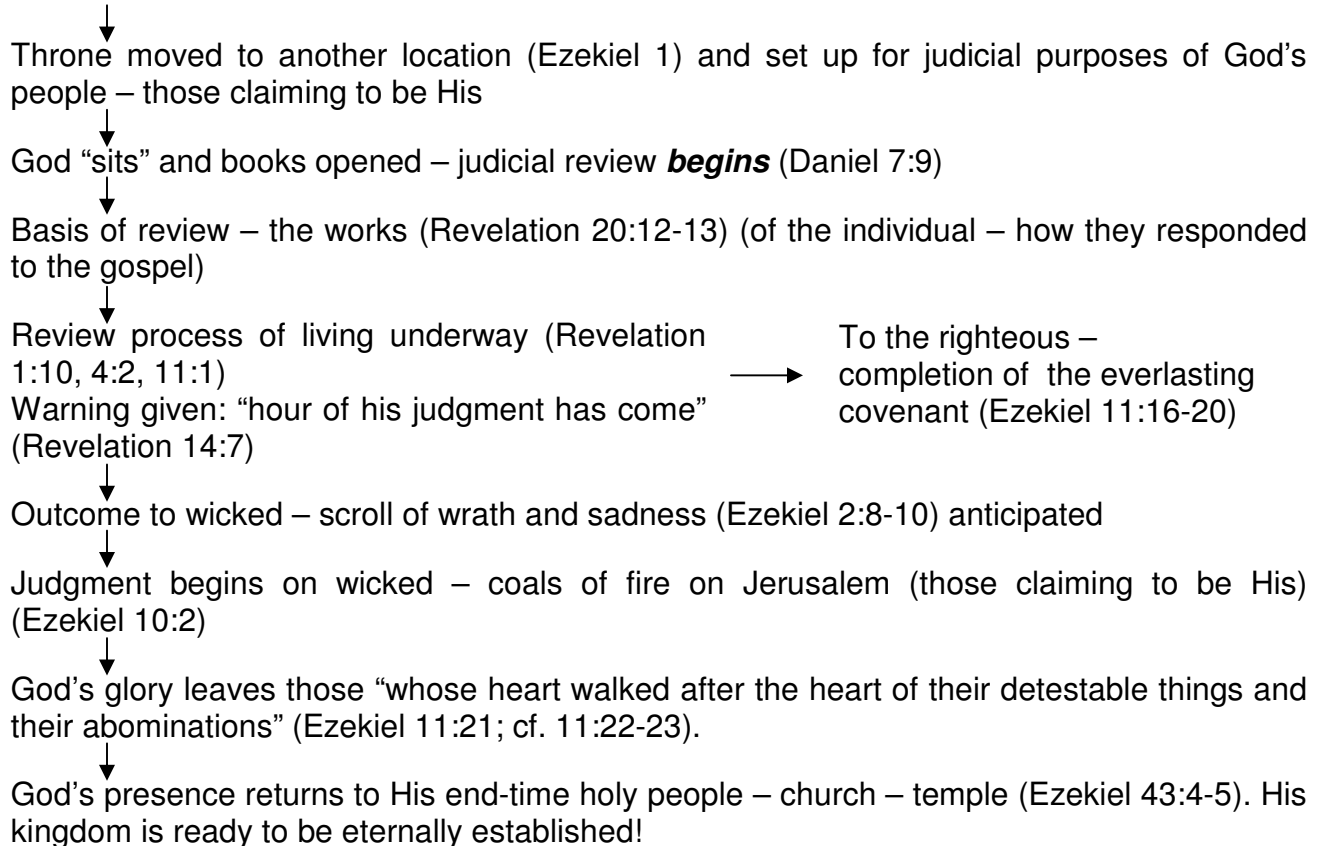
<sup>14</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Gospel Workers*, p. 489.

<sup>15</sup> Thayer Lexicon on *keimai*; cf. Liddel Scott.

5. Ezekiel is then commanded to be totally open to God's voice (2:8-10).
6. Then God says to him: Open your mouth and eat what I'm going to give to you.
7. Instead of food, he is given a scroll of judgment (laments, moanings and wailings).
8. This describes the effects of the judgments that God will pronounce on His people.<sup>16</sup> This sounds similar to other such experiences:
  - "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16).
  - John ate a little book given to him by God (Revelation 10:9-10).
9. Coals are poured out on Jerusalem (Ezekiel 10:2), symbolizing **God's people**. Concomitantly, the wicked have their eternal destiny sealed. The righteous have become purified and are forever sealed.
10. God's glory leaves those who have "claimed" to be His (11:22-23) but have functioned as apostates.
11. God's glory finally returns to His church (43:4-5) in end-time imagery.

The judicial scene here in Daniel is preparatory for God's glory to come among His people in new kingdom imagery. The composite picture is stunning. Though the analysis and review are limited here by design, this picture emerges.

God's throne – on location



<sup>16</sup> Block, Daniel I.; *The Book of Ezekiel*, Chapters 1–24, p. 125.

When does God move His throne? The details are found in the great patterns of the Jewish system. On the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) the court of final appeal came symbolically into the Most Holy Place. That room contained the law (a basis for judgment) and a mercy seat (the bench of appeals) and God's presence (His throne). That is a fitting imagery of the final acts that lead to the destiny of all. Did God's presence move from "somewhere" to the symbolic "Most Holy Place"? The weight of evidence suggests that ***that occurred when this judgment began.***

The outcome of all judicial issues in Daniel 7 ***is:***

- Holiness has returned to the people
- They are called holy ones (*gaddisel*)
- Saints possess God's kingdom (7:22, 27)

When does that occur? When holiness begins to be vindicated. That is what Daniel 8:14 talks about! After 2300 evenings and mornings (Day of Atonement years) holiness will be adjudicated – vindicated (*qodesh nisdaq*). This judicial process is the onset of legally vindicating ***God's holiness.***

***"A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened" (Daniel 7:10).***

***"A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him:" (vs 10)***

The "fiery stream" or "river of fire" is emanating directly from the Ancient of Days. It portrays His judicial wrath. He, as presiding Judge in this courtroom scene, is now rendering verdicts against the wicked (Genesis 19:24; Leviticus 10:2; II Kings 1:10-14; Psalm 21:10, 78:21, 89:47, 97:3; cf. Deuteronomy 4:24; Psalm 18:9-14, 21:10, 50:3).<sup>17</sup>

This process sequentially follows the first rise of the beast and its little horn. It represents what will be the outcome of this judicial process after Rome falls and the little horn has risen in power. Daniel shortly notes that he watched "*till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame*" (7:11; cf. Revelation 21:10). That is a forward-looking prophecy of when the "beast" that carried the "little horn" is eternally destroyed (right at the end)!

- "*And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone*" (Revelation 19:20).

*"Fire goes out before him and burns his adversaries round about"* (Psalm 97:3; cf. 50:3). Though glory and holiness come from fiery imagery, this setting of a judge and review of books portends finality of cases. Holiness is vindicated by the "making up" of His kingdom. Judicial wrath is portrayed on those who failed to meet the standard. This is the true "left behind" imagery at the very end.

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<sup>17</sup> Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.

**“thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him:” (vs 10)**

This hyperbole expresses an innumerable company assisting with the legal proceedings (cf. Deuteronomy 33:10, Psalm 68:18).<sup>18</sup> John has a similar expression:

- “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands” (Revelation 7:9; cf. Revelation 5:11).

Though God’s judicial wrath is shown in Daniel, His saving grace unfolds there as well and in Revelation. The court finally rules.

- Ten thousand times ten thousand before the throne – Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:10) (courtiers)
- Innumerable throng before throne and Lamb (Revelation 7:9) (saved)

How many does the “numeric expression” “great multitude” conger up in thought? “Hundreds of millions.”<sup>19</sup> The scene brings the wicked to justice, and it brings the righteous before His throne.

- “And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left” (I Kings 22:19).
- In Hebrew tradition such a scene is called “The Council of Yahweh.”<sup>20</sup> (cf. Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 23:18; Zechariah 3:1-10; Job 1–2, Psalm 82, 89:6-8). Beautiful!

Intriguingly, “ten thousand times ten thousand” is the “square of the highest number for which ancient peoples had a word.”<sup>21</sup>

**“the judgment was set, and the books were opened” (vs 10)**

Again, there are several “books of record” alluded to in Scripture. These are particularly relevant to the court proceedings. Later, Gabriel will refer to the book or scroll (10:21) of truth that Daniel is admonished to address. A record or book listing those who will be citizens of the heavenly kingdom is mentioned frequently (Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, Isaiah 4:3, Daniel 12:1, Malachi 3:16). There appears to be some record of all the deeds people have done now coming under review (Nehemiah 5:19, 13:14; Isaiah 65:6; Psalms 51:1, 109:14).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Keil, C. F. and Delitzsch, F.; *A Commentary on the Old Testament* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA; 1866–1991), vol. 9, p. 643.

<sup>19</sup> Gaebelien, Frank E.; *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 12 (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI), 1984, p. 89.

<sup>20</sup> Collins, *op. cit.*, footnote, p. 303.

<sup>21</sup> Knight, G.A.F.; “The Book of Daniel,” *The Interpreter’s One-Volume on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), p. 445 – as quoted by Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>22</sup> Lucas, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-183.

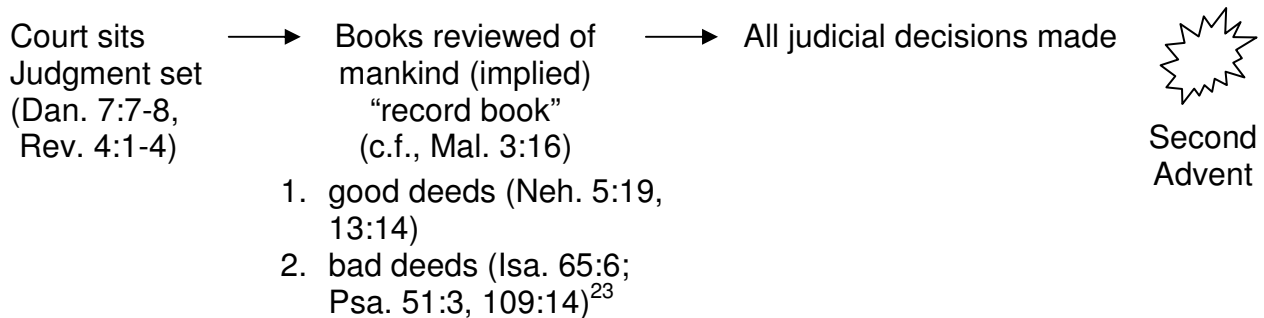


At the time of Paul this judgment had not commenced. Looking forward to that moment, he noted: *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at”* (Acts 17:30a).

There is a point in this review/sentencing/reward process where all decisions are made.

- *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still”* (Revelation 22:11).
- This comes just before the second advent.
- *“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be”* (Revelation 22:12).

What is noted as beginning in Daniel is completed in Revelation.



The eternal destiny hangs in the balance through this judgment process. Investigation of the records is in view.

“The time of this judgment is clear from the context. Since the kingdom of God immediately follows, the judgment of this empire and its leader, the Antichrist, must occur at the time of the Second Coming of Christ.”<sup>23</sup>

“Before His coming, then, the character of every man's work will have been determined, and to every one of Christ's followers the reward will have been apportioned according to his deeds.

“It is while men are still dwelling upon the earth that the work of investigative judgment takes place in the courts of heaven. The lives of all His professed followers pass in review before God. All are examined according to the record of the books of heaven, and according to his deeds the destiny of each is forever fixed.”<sup>24</sup>

Franklin S. Fowler, Jr., M.D.  
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<sup>23</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>24</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 310.