Daniel 7:9-10 9I continued to watch until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days was seated. His clothes were white as snow, and the hair on his head was like pure wool. His throne was flames of fire. Its wheels were burning fire. 10A river of fire flowed out from his presence. Thousands upon thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and books were opened.

 Yes, this is the same Daniel of the Lion’s den fame. Daniel as a prophet of the Lord, was faithful and true to the Lord. Had been his entire life. For instance, when Daniel as a young man was taken into captivity by the Babylonians, Daniel took a stance that he would eat only certain foods and not just everything the King gave them. At first, people scoffed at him but Daniel encouraged that he be allowed food his way and even offered a kind of test about it. The end result was that Daniel and his companions fared better and in this way got noticed by the King, basically ending up with high positions of authority. Top that off with how God took care of Daniel, even by giving Daniel the King’s dreams so Daniel could exalt the Lord as the true God above all.

 By the way, as we figure it, when Daniel is thrown in the Lion’s Den he is not a young man, but rather was somewhere around 80 years old. So if you picture a young man being thrown in, in fact it is an older man who is thrown in. The reason Daniel’s enemies wanted this done was because Daniel was in fact the ruler of the country with only the King over him in authority. Daniel’s God has caused Daniel to be truly and wonderfully blessed.

 So note, as in our text, Daniel is also given a number of visions or dreams that foretold the future events of the world. Take the words before us today. Note that we are at verses 9 and 10. Verses 1-8 are a very involved vision depicting the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. Our verses 9 and 10 are definitely a part of this extensive prophecy and it is clear that the prophecy is about the Lord God sitting on his throne of judgment. It is an awesome prophecy. Let’s see what we can learn as we break down the components of this prophecy and see what they reveal about what will be. Our theme will be: **THE LORD WILL JUDGE!**

 Again, here is this prophecy, a portion of a prophecy that God has given to Daniel. Remember that I said the first part of this prophecy revealed some things about the nations to come. Although in the prophecy the nations are not named, what is clear as history has unfolded, is what nations they were. The last nation prophesied about would be the Roman Empire. It is during this period of the Roman Empire that we are given the words that are before us. Again, clearly the words before us are looking at and considering the Lord God. Why do we say that?

 First, it is the “thrones” that are set up. Thrones are the seats of kings and queens, those who are rulers over others. But there is one particular throne that is greater than them all. That is the throne that one called “The Ancient of Days” takes. As you contemplate all that is said of the Ancient of Days in Daniel’s prophecies it becomes evident that this being is none other than God himself. I say it is evident because even our words give you a sense of awe and majesty about this being. It is God. God the ruler of all. God who sits on his throne over any other throne there might be! This is God the Almighty and All Knowing. What is the Lord God doing here? The imagery tells us.

 Notice that in this imagery we have the mention of fire. Here it is again: “**His throne was flames of fire. Its wheels were burning fire.** 10**A river of fire flowed out from his presence.”** Pretty awesome words. What we grasp is that fire is purging or fire is purifying. Here are a few other passages with the same idea. Zechariah 13:9 says, **“I will put that third into the fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and I will test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, “This is my people.”** Next comes Malachi 3:2-3 that says, **“But who can endure the day when he comes? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire, like launderers bleach! 3He will be seated like a refiner and a purifier of silver. He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and like silver.** Finally we can look at 1 Corinthians 3:13b-15. It says **“The Daywill make it plain, because it is going to be revealed in fire, and the fire will test each person’s work to show what sort of work it is. 14If what someone has built remains, he will receive a reward. 15If someone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but it will be like an escape through fire.”**

 Notice in our words how complete the imagery of the fire is. The throne is fire. The wheels of the throne, which we don’t necessarily grasp, are burning with fire. Even more pronounced is the last line: **“A river of fire flowed out of his presence.”**

 But the thing that clearly points us exactly what is going on is the line that says, **“The court was seated and the books were opened.”** Not just the Great King’s throne but really the Great King’s courtroom. In this courtroom there are judgments being made. The books that are there are opened. I don’t know if these are the Law books of God that are opened or if these are the books that contain our names, which would get us into heaven or are these the books, as I spoke to you about last week, that contain all the works of our lives: the good, the bad, and the ugly? They contain a record of everything, our thoughts, words and deeds. What I suspect is that these books actually represent the Bible, the very Word of God. More on that later. Yet frankly, I am not sure it matters which one of these understandings we want to think it is, because the bottom line is that we are before the Almighty, majestic, All-knowing God. Our lives will be judged. Our entirety will be judged. There will be no mistakes from this holy and perfect Judge and in truth, if we are simply going to weigh things by what the Word of God says, well then, we are in trouble.

 Because the Law makes it clear that no one, absolutely no one is holy and perfect like God. And the only way you are going to enter into heaven is to be holy and perfect like God. No flaws, no blemishes, not even a hint of wrong will be allowed. That’s simply the way it is. Perfect and holy or you have a problem, an eternal problem before the Lord.

 One more thing about what we find here. I don’t want you to miss it. As the entire prophecy unfolds, the early verses speaking of the kingdoms to come and such, it is important to see that this great courtroom and the great Judge of this courtroom are seated during the time of the last empire mentioned. During the last empire, which we now grasp is the Roman Empire, that is when all of this is to take place. That is when the Lord God has decreed that a judging, a purifying will be. Keep that in mind as we talk of a few other things yet.

 Perhaps at this time would be a good time to just stop for a moment and give some greater thought to God. I think this will benefit us. It seems to me that all too often, in our minds, we don’t surely and truly grasp the very essence of God. We will say, “I believe Jesus is God,” but then we go out and do things, be things that Jesus says we are not to do! Or we excuse this part of God’s Word or ignore that part of God’s Word as if somehow God’s Word and God are not intimately and perfectly linked. So just take a moment with me and contemplate this God that sits on this throne of fire and who will be our Judge!

 God is Almighty! There is nothing He lacks, nothing He is incapable of. With the flick of his finger or the blink of his eye God can end nations or worlds or even create the vastness of the universe in all its complete marvel. Just contemplate the greatness of God even as you look as this created world of His. The diversity, the complexity, the intricacy of this world. Just grasp how it all works together. Mind you, we live in a world tainted by sin so that it does not function as the perfect and holy God created it to and still we must marvel at the declaration of God’s power that creation declares. As a new Grandpa, who is still reeling from the awesomeness that bringing forth a child is, don’t tell me that this process of birth just happened by accident and is only the product of millions of years of dumb luck! No, it screams the wonder and awe, the power of God! This world is one of order, one of specific design, a world of such depth that I don’t know how you can even begin to imagine it is all an accident, a freak of nature!

 God is All-knowing. I am not sure we can truly get our minds around this one. I remember it was at MLS that a Professor there just made my mind totter when he correctly stated: “God knows everything! He knows everything that was. He knows everything that is. He knows everything that will be. God even knows everything that could be!” It was that truth that helped me to grasp the unsearchable wisdom of God. From that point on, I did not try to think myself the equal of God but rather worked in my life to have a better grasp and knowledge of God.

Just think, God knows all things, and all the possibilities there could be. Fact is, and this always makes my mind spin, God knows what Terry would be had he taken the other path he was thinking of. Terry had considered joining the police force but when he went to the State Police office in Flat Rock to speak with someone about how to pursue that, the Sargent on duty, after hearing that my other thought for my life was the ministry of the Lord said, “Son, I hope you know you can’t save the world!” I thanked him and walked out thinking, “Sir, you are right, I can’t save the world but Jesus did. I will spend my life speaking of Jesus!” So here we are! Thank you God for your grace.

 God is just. Sometimes I don’t think we consider that. This aspect of God speaks of what I would call, the legal aspects of God. God knows right and wrong, good and evil. God knows what is best, what serves best, what it is that will bring about His results and desires. God always acts and moves in the realm of this being just. He makes no mistakes, He has no trouble in weighing the facts and seeing clearly the reality of truth and attitude. As an example, understand that God can see what we do and God can discern the reason we do it. Is it an act of faith or is it an act of self-righteousness or work-righteousness on our part. That’s the point of the passage that speaks of God’s Word too. God’s Word and God are one and the same. So we hear: **“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to the point of dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, even being able to judge the ideas and thoughts of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from him, but everything is uncovered and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we will give an account.”** As you study those words you realize it is God that is really being revealed!

 Now there are many other things we can speak of when it comes to God. We could speak of his righteousness, his grace, his eternity and so forth. But for now we can stop because I think at this point one thing has become clear. We will stand before God and we will have to answer for our lives! On the basis of our merits, on whether we have lived to the standard of God or not, our eternal fate will be decided. That fate will be either heaven or hell. And there is a hell. In Wednesday’s Bible class we looked at Mark 9 this past week. What a startling thing to hear Jesus say, not once but repeated: **“It is better for you to be maimed….than go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where their worm will not die, and the fire is not quenched.”** Make no mistake, Jesus taught about hell and paints an entirely grizzly picture. Don’t tell me you believe in Jesus and then turn around and deny what Jesus himself taught.

 Where does that put us? Before the judgment seat of God! God makes it clear that we will have to answer to him. God also in this prophecy makes it clear that something, something awesome will happen that will deeply affect this judgement.

 Here are verses 13-14 of this chapter of Daniel. **“I kept watching the night visions, and there, in the clouds of heaven, I saw one like a son of man coming. He came to the Ancient of Days, and he was brought before him. To him was given dominion, honor, and a kingdom. All peoples, nations, and languages will worship him. His dominion is an eternal dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.”**

 I share those words because I know you will get they are about Jesus. Into this path of judgment before God will come Jesus and God’s Word makes it clear. You can stand before God and be judged without Jesus or you can stand before God and be judged through Jesus. Yep, that right, it is that simple fact: **“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”** You want to be without fear before the Ancient of Days, then make sure you have Jesus in your life, Jesus as your Savior, Jesus as the one you worship and praise! Jesus is the deciding factor, for all, in all, and always. Yes, the Lord will judge! Judge you without Jesus or with Him. Please, make sure you stand before God with Jesus. It will make an eternal difference for you. Amen.