

Imperial versus Design Law Judgment: New Insights into Daniel 7

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | August 10, 2023



During my Christian upbringing, I was taught that God will one day have a judgment—a judicial proceeding in which record books are opened, a heavenly tribunal is held, and individual guilt or innocence is pronounced, followed by either punishment or reward.

Those who hold this view of judgment do so because they go to Scripture with the preconceived idea, the assumption, the false belief that God's law functions no differently than human law—imposed rules that require legal enforcement, the kind that sinful humans administer. They teach that God is a supreme magistrate who will one day use His power to inflict torture and/or death upon people who refuse to love Him.

With the assumption that God's law is like human law, they read into Scripture ideas of judgment that do not originate in the inspired record. They string together a variety of passages to teach this legal judgment view—one of them being Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14, which reads:

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. ... 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. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed (NIV84).

But when we return to worshiping God as Creator, we recognize that He is the builder of reality and, as such, His laws are the laws that all reality and life cooperate upon, what I call [design laws](#). These include the physical laws, such as gravity, health, and physics, but also the moral laws—the laws that govern the operations of our thoughts, feelings, and relationships. Life and health are only possible when we are in harmony with the laws our Creator built life to exist and operate upon.

The view we hold of God's law determines how we interpret text like that found in Daniel 7. Those who hold the human imposed-law view interpret this text as depicting a judicial court, but when we recognize God as Creator and embrace design law, we realize that this is not a judicial court; rather, it is God's royal court in which Jesus comes and receives the kingdom from His Father, a kingdom that is rightly His and that He objectively proved, through His self-sacrificial death, to be worthy of receiving. And all the intelligences in heaven attend this court and affirm Him as worthy, worthy, worthy the Lamb who was slain!

This is the same event recorded in Revelation chapter 5, so I encourage you to read Revelation 5 in whatever translation you prefer. You will see that Revelation 5 describes the same event as Daniel 7, but it adds in more details. Note these common elements:

- God is on His throne.
- The heavenly intelligences who are beyond counting are gathered around the throne.
- There is a book or scroll, which Revelation informs us is sealed with seven seals.
- Jesus comes to His Father and is found worthy to receive His kingdom and to open the book/scroll sealed with seven seals.
- Jesus opens the books/scroll.
- The heavenly beings rejoice.

This is not a judicial scene; it is something much more profound. It is the outworking of the Godhead's answer to the questions in the great controversy; it is the ongoing revelation of truth that effectively destroys the lies of Satan; it is the unsealing of the divine response to the enemy's allegations; it is an essential demonstration of the attributes of God necessary to win the war for hearts and minds, defeat the infection of doubt that Satan's lies instilled, secure the loyal beings beyond any deception, and vindicate the righteous government of God.

So, what is in this book that is sealed with seven seals?

I will share my paraphrase of Revelation 5, which describes what I believe to be the design-law view of both Daniel 7 and Revelation 5:

Then I looked, and I saw that he who sits on the throne had written out the history of the world before the world began, and sealed it up. It was symbolized by a book in his right hand, with writing within, and sealed with seven seals. And I watched as a mighty angel asked in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the book of God's foreknowledge, and intervene in human history?" But there was no created being in heaven, or living on earth, or amongst the dead, who could open the scroll or even look at its

contents. My heart broke with sadness because there was no one found who could open the book or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, “Don’t be sad! See, Jesus—the Lion from Judah, the descendant of David—has overcome and is now able to open the book of God’s foreknowledge, sealed by seven seals.”

Then I saw a Lamb, appearing as if it had been slain—symbolizing Jesus who sacrificed himself to eradicate sin—standing at the command center of the universe, surrounded by his staff and agents symbolized by the four living creatures and the elders. He had all heavenly power and all wisdom at his disposal—symbolized by seven horns and seven eyes, which represented God’s Spirit—and he was directing every heavenly agency to rescue, heal and restore his children living on earth. He came and took the book from God’s right hand. When he took the book, his staff—symbolized by the four living creatures and twenty-four elders—were so relieved that they fell down in joy and awe before him. They were processing requests from God’s children on earth—symbolized by the golden bowls of incense they each held. They also had renewed hearts that were like musical instruments making a beautiful melody, and they sang a new song stemming from their admiration for Jesus:

“You are able to take the book and reveal the sealed contents because you were killed, and by your death you revealed the truth and achieved the Remedy to free humans from sin and restore people from every race, language, tribe and nation to God. You have healed their minds, making them a kingdom of priests ministering the Remedy of our God, and they will administer God’s methods on earth.”

Then I heard many voices, so I looked, and I saw millions of angels—so many that it was beyond my ability to count. They surrounded the throne and the living creatures, and the elders. In rich booming voices, they sang:

“Worthy is Jesus the Lamb to possess all power, resources and ability, and receive all honor, glory and praise, because he was slain, proving that he will never abuse such mighty power!”

Then I heard every living being in the universe singing in unison:

“To him who sits on the throne and to Jesus the Lamb be praise and honor, glory and power, for ever and ever, without end!”

The four living creatures said, “Absolutely right!” and the elders fell down in adoration and awe (*The Remedy*).

The event described in Daniel 7 and Revelation 5 is not judicial; it is a description of Jesus receiving His kingdom, His power, and authority and taking command of all heavenly resources for the purpose of finishing His saving, healing, and cleansing work—of eliminating all sin from His universe.

The book with seven seals is the book of God’s foreknowledge that He recorded before He began creating. Then, after recording His foreknowledge of events in the book sealed with seven seals, God created and appointed His recording angels to record history as it unfolded. And when Jesus unseals the seven seals of the book of God’s foreknowledge, it is compared with history as it happened and every

intelligent being sees that God does, in fact, have perfect foreknowledge but has never used that foreknowledge to restrict our liberty, take away our freedom of choice, or manipulate us for selfish purposes. In other words, God's character and government are vindicated.

Just as Revelation tells us, we are to be in awe of God and give Him glory for the hour of *His* judgment has come! (Revelation 14:7). It is now, at this very time in history, that we are to reject the imperial Roman legal view of a dictator god who makes up rules and uses power to torture and kill rule-breakers and, instead, judge God to be just like Jesus revealed Him to be, the Creator who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water and whose laws are the protocols upon which all life exists and operates!

But some might argue that I am taking this portion of Daniel 7 out of context and not considering later verses that they claim prove this court is judicial, specifically Daniel 7:21, 22, which reads from the NIV84:

As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and **pronounced judgment in favor of the saints** of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom (emphasis mine).

Those who prefer to believe God's law functions like human law read legality into the Bible and will read this verse and proclaim, "See! God is pronouncing judgment. This is a tribunal; it is a legal court." However, the translation "pronounced judgment in favor of the saints" is an interpretation based on the preconceived ideas of the translators, namely that God's law functions like human law. The wording is a legitimate translation, so I don't allege anything nefarious against the translators, but it is not the only legitimate translation. Here is the rendering from the KJV:

I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and **judgment was given to the saints of the most High**; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom (emphasis mine).

When we understand design law, we understand that the war between Christ and Satan is a war for our hearts and minds—in whom we believe and to whom we choose to be loyal.

Satan is the father of lies, and he seeks to win converts through deception, and his lies are primarily about God. The apostle Paul explicitly states that in this warfare, we have divine weapons to demolish every argument and pretense that sets itself up against the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). In other words, when an individual is being duped, the way to free their hearts and minds is to provide them with the ability to make a judgment in favor of the truth—in this case, in favor of God.

This prophecy in Daniel is about the war over God's trustworthiness. The prophecy describes a little-horn power that misrepresents God in a way that sets up a false version of God in the spirit-temple, a false view that people believe (2 Thessalonians 2:4), and, in so doing, the little horn is defeating the saints *until* they are given the judgment to reject the lies and return to the truth about God. That false version is the idea that God is a dictator, a being who makes up rules like sinful humans do and then uses His power to punish rule-breakers. This is the imperial Roman idea of law that the Roman church

accepted and promulgated and which led to the Dark Ages and the many abuses that the church perpetrated upon humanity, such as the Crusades, Inquisition, and burning people at the stake.

God is telling us in these prophecies that the little-horn power will war against the saints and be winning until the saints are given judgment—or discernment—to distinguish the true from the false, to recognize the truth about God and reject the false imperial Roman god. Thus, God's end-time message is to lighten the world with the eternal gospel (Revelation 14:6), the good news that God is not like a Roman Caesar.

Daniel 7 is not a heavenly tribunal in which God is reviewing record books of sinners and determining guilt or innocence—such a conclusion continues to advance the lies of the little horn. No, Daniel 7 is the royal court coronating Jesus, which leads to the opening of the book of God's foreknowledge and reveals the truth of God's kingdom, methods, character, and principles; this truth about God that Jesus revealed destroys the lies of Satan, and the saints of God are in awe of Him and glorify Him in their lives, revealing His methods, for the time in human history has come for people to make a right judgment about God and return to worshiping Him as our Creator—the One who built reality and whose laws are design laws.