



The right to a speedy trial is part of our constitution. When someone is accused, they cannot be held in custody without a prompt trial. For misdemeanors this is a thirty-day window. For felonies it is sixty. And it makes sense. Who wants to sit in jail waiting for their trial? Yet some defendants waive their right to a speedy trial. Delaying their court session can sometimes work in their advantage. A person may not be in custody but under parole and wants to delay facing the music. Or a crucial witness against the defendant may be close to dying. Evidence in the case against the defendant may be time-sensitive. Delaying trial is a tactic that sometimes works. One man tried that to the extreme. Kharon Davis was arrested and charged with murder in 2007. But his trial, through various legal tactics, was delayed for ten years. Finally, he asked the judge to dismiss his case. He appealed to his right for a speedy trial. But the judge saw through it all and the court date was set. How does God handle injustice? Doesn't it seem like he needlessly delays the trial? People will hate, steal, hurt, and kill; yet God doesn't immediately respond. Today we see find out though vision given to Daniel that God how God responds to injustice. God allows for a delay, but not a dismissal. The King comes to judge the world.

If anyone felt like God was delaying justice, it might have been Daniel. As he lay down to sleep in ancient Babylon, he could recall the events that led to a terrible downfall of his people. For the past fifty years they had been pushed around, taken advantage of, and abused. The Babylonians had destroyed their capital city, torn down their place of worship, and dispersed the people of Jerusalem into exile. It felt like God had put off justice for a long time. The painful plight of God's people is captured for us in Psalm 74. *"O God... Turn your steps toward these everlasting ruins, all this destruction the enemy has brought on the sanctuary. ⁴Your foes roared in the place where you met with us; ... ⁷They burned your sanctuary to the ground; they defiled the dwelling place of your Name. ⁸They said in their hearts, "We will crush them completely!" They burned every place where God was worshiped in the land. ⁹We are given no signs from God; no prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be. ¹⁰How long will the enemy mock you, God? Will the foe revile your name forever? ¹¹Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!"* The cry is for God to act with justice. That's how Daniel and many others felt. It was as if God was just letting his enemies mock him and his people. It was as if God was content to stand by idle while his name was trampled underfoot.

People are not trampling over us and literally tearing down our place of worship. **But can't we relate to this disheartened cry?** God seems to remain on the sidelines while injustice and oppression happen all the time. And it happens to God's church. Though the enemies of God might not be directly boasting as they trample down your gate, you can hear many boasts against God Faithful Christians are mocked on light night programs and laughed at in many classrooms. What were once faithful Christian churches are now in many places museums. Where once people worshipped God there are now ruins. New churches that spring up sometimes only retain a faint whisper of the truth while they trample over much of God's Word.

The level of sin might be the same as ever. **But the level of boasting over sin has absolutely increased in recent days.** I find it odd that political victories are celebrated not so much on the basis of policy but on the basis of supporting a candidate's immoral lifestyle. And the political candidates that claim to worship God are often far from it in their own actions. How are you, your family, and your Christian friends holding up under all the pressures and attacks? Is the devil having his way as their faith dwindles each day? Are they tempted to join in the world's boast against God? Or are they sinking into disillusion and despair when they see the state of Christianity? There are accounts of Christians in churches found guilty of embezzlement, adultery, and abuse. He has brought many down to shame. He has led many away from the truth.

Just like Daniel did after fifty years of exile we must ask, "Where is God as all this takes place?" God gives Daniel an answer. He delays but does not dismiss his court. Daniel has a dream in which he sees a vision from God. At a time when many were saying, "no prophets are left," God's Word remained, and he gave it to his prophets. Even as Daniel slept in exile, he receives a vision with an answer to all his concerns. And this vision is the same answer to all of ours.

His vision depicts two types of oppressors. One includes kingdoms of the earth. Those kingdoms tear apart other nations and take control. It reminds me of the sinister struggles of the European cuckoo bird. The cuckoo lays its eggs in another birds' nest and pushes out one of the existing eggs. The cuckoo hatchling then pushes all rivals out of the nest and down to their death. This is what many godless governments have done with Christianity. They see religion only as a tool for power. They take it over and replace it. They infiltrate and destroy the Church. The government in places like China is doing this today at an alarming rate. It is a powerplay and it involves forcefully shutting down true churches to replace them with false ones.

Daniel's vision also reveals **another type of oppressor.** It operates on lies and boastful words. Daniels sees a boastful ruler coming out of the future kingdom of Rome. That ruler would rise up out of Rome and speak against God and oppress the saints. It reminds me of the tactic of another sinister bird, the cowbird. The cowbird secretly lays its eggs which on the surface seem like they belong in the other birds' nest. When it hatches it doesn't kill its nestmates. Instead it opens its mouth wider and gets all the attention and food. Its rivals slowly weaken. If not recognized it hatches and takes over the nest. False teaching is like that. The egg of false teaching, if not recognized, takes over the church. It has the loudest mouth and attracts the most attention. Finally, it leaves the true Church crowded out and oppressed. Just as Daniel's vision prophesied a false teaching has come out of Rome that strangles the truth and harms the Church. How long will God delay justice?

How does God respond to the oppression and injustice against his people? **That brings us to our reading for today from Daniel's vision. There we have the answer.** *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."* (Daniel 7:9-10)

This is a future scene of judgment. God is going to act. The thrones that were set in the vision are the seats for judgment day. The Supreme Judge of all will take his seat. He is not "the man upstairs" as some try to call him and soften the image. No, he is "the Ancient of Days." In contrast to the kingdoms and rulers of this world which come and go he is the eternal one. Their thrones will fall. His is established forever from eternity. And his judgment seat is over all.

When God acts, he is not like the unjust kings before him. The picture of his white robes indicates in the vision that he is pure. Unlike the kingdoms and rulers of this world God never is sinister. He never has oppressed those he rules. He never has failed to keep his Word. He never has committed a single injustice. He is pure justice and holiness. Nor does God make foolish choices. "The hair of his head was white like wool" is an indication of age and wisdom. Kingdoms and rulers of this world make foolish mistakes and never learn. But God never makes a mistake; his wisdom is beyond our understanding.

When he comes to Judge none will be able to oppose him. "His throne was flaming with fire and its wheels were all ablaze." This is a picture of his chariot throne. God judges with inescapable fierceness and fire. You cannot evade the omnipresent Judge. And when he comes to judge he sits on a fiery throne that no one can dare to oppose. Not even corrupt rulers with nuclear weapons can match him. The sheer strength and terror of his power is overwhelming. "A river of fire was flowing from before him, coming out from before him." When the volcanos flowed lava recently in Hawaii there was nothing that could be done to stop it. It devoured roads, homes, and everything in its path. All the more when God comes to judge there will be no withstanding him or escaping his judgment. He is a holy God who devours his enemies with fire.

Don't think you can escape this court. Its officers and legal records are unlike any of this world. And the picture of his judgment comes with more than a single officer of the court. Daniel sees the tens of thousands of times tens of thousands of angels that surrounded the throne of God. The Scriptures make clear that when he judges he will send his angels to gather up the harvest for judgment. At his order the judgment will be swiftly carried out by those powerful spiritual beings. In the vision God's court was seated, and the books were opened. God's Word speaks of two different types of books in his courtroom. One is the record of deeds by everyone. There is no sin which he does not see. There is no hiding from this Judge. Everything has been written down. Every sinister deed and thought are in his book. Another book mentioned in Scripture is the book of life. Everyone who sins has their name blotted out of the book of life. And if your name is not in the book of life you will not escape the judgment of a fiery, holy God, the Ancient of Days, who will come to Judge all the world.

There are governments and false teachers who live as if the Ancient of Days will never come to judge. There are times when you and I may be tempted to think he will never act against them. But God will. One day the court will be called. The King will be seated. And the judgment will come. Dare God's people ever live as if this day is never going to come? Should those who know this vision live as if there will not be a judgment? Dare a Christian be so cold and heartless that he would refuse to reconcile with his spouse? He will be called into account before the judge. Dare a Christian be so blind to their sin that they continue to dishonor marriage by sexually immoral living? That person will be called into account by this Judge.

Dare we ignore this Ancient of Days who tells us to honor his name, listen to his Word? Dare you and I to ever think we can stand by hiding our sins? We will be called into account for every thoughtless deed, every careless act, and every wayward thought. How can we stand in such a holy judgment? Not by our own strength. Were we to face our Judge on the basis of our own worth, we would stand condemned along with everyone in the world. We can't face him on our own.

That's why the Ancient of Days sent his Son to the world. In order that we might not be condemned he came to the world. He said at his first coming. "God did not send his Son into the world to judge it, but to save it." Christ Jesus freed us from every deed written in the book that stood against us. Though we are guilty God's Son set us free. Jesus took the sentence that we deserved. "Jesus Canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross." (Colossians 2:14) The beautiful proclamation of the gospel is that we have been acquitted. Now in the courtroom of God by his mercy we will hear the phrase, "not guilty." We have been declared innocent through the work of Jesus who took our place. He didn't blot out our name from the book of life, he blotted out our record of sin instead! The innocent one dies so that the guilty go free. It's a verdict freely given to all who in repentance look to Jesus.

Kharon Davis couldn't escape justice. After ten years, the court was in session, trial was held, and the verdict was read: guilty as charged. So, it will be for all this world. God doesn't allow injustice. He will take his seat as Judge. He is a wise, perfect, and holy judge. He comes with justice and fire to judge everyone. His court will not be dismissed. It will come. But for those who trust in him he comes with mercy. With Daniel we look forward to that great day. We will stand in the judgment and rejoice in it. And like Daniel and all God's people we will stand in the judgment because we know him who Judges. I'm sure Daniel couldn't wait to wake up from his dream. The King is coming! We wait for that day with great expectation and join with the Psalm writer: "If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you. I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning." (Ps 130)