

2 Timothy 4:1 in the Navajo Bible

Copyright (c) 2010 by Frank W. Hardy, Ph.D.

Diyin God áádóó Bóhólníihii Jesus Christ, éí dahináanii índa daneeznáanii yaa nídóot'ííłii binááł, áádóó Jesus yidooltséłígíí índa bee bóhólníihgo bił haz'áanii binahjí' ándishní[.] (2 Timothy 4:1) ¹

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: (2 Timothy 4:1) ²

Introduction

When does this judgment occur? And what does it mean that Christ Jesus "will judge the living and the dead"? Part of this is hidden within the text. I shouldn't even say it's hidden. It's in the text.

The words *yaa nídóot'ííłii* ("the One who will judge") contain a verb, and that verb is future. This doesn't automatically mean the judgment is still future to us, but it was future to Paul. For the rest, any further information concerning the judgment would have to follow from a study of prophecy.

The part about judging the living and the dead has clear implications. If a person has died, they lived their life earlier. If they're alive, well they're still living in the present. So the scope of this judgment crosses time barriers. It includes those who had lived in the past and those who are still alive when the judgment takes place.

The Judgment Was Future to Paul

There is a theology that says all judgment took place at the cross. Is such a position consistent with the verse we're studying? How could it be? Follow this series of events: First Christ died on the cross, then He was raised to life on the third day, then for three and a half years His followers enjoyed the respect of almost everyone living in Jerusalem (see Acts 1-7), then Paul (Saul of Tarsus) started persecuting the Jerusalem church (see Acts 8:1-3), then Paul accepted Christ and went everywhere telling others about Him, then at the end of his life he wrote the present letter to timothy, in which he tells us that the judgment is still – future. The cross was not still future at this time but the judgment was not. From this I draw that not all judgment is confined to the cross.

¹ Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

² English Bible quotations are from *The Holy Bible: New International Version®*. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

In regard to prophecy, we can either study or ignore what it says about the judgment. We will learn more from doing the one than from doing the other, so I propose saying some things about prophecy here. In what follows I offer a brief overview of Daniel 8 and 9 with special reference to the judgment. We start with Daniel 9.

In Daniel 9 the angel tells Daniel that, starting from a certain moment of history, it would be "seventy weeks" ("weeks" = *šābūʿim*) until the first coming of Christ. Now "seventy weeks" is not a normal way to measure time. One would normally say a little more than a year and four months, or a year and four months plus a few days. When the angel says, "seventy weeks," that's a symbolic reference to time.

In Daniel 8 we read about "2300 evening-mornings" ("evening-mornings" = *ʿereb-bôqer*). Some translate this as "evenings and mornings" to make it read better in English, but the word "and" is not there. It's "evening-mornings" – 2300 of them. What is an "evening-morning"? The fact that we have to ask demonstrates that this also is not a normal way to speak about time. This expression, like the first, is symbolic. An "evening-morning" of course is a day. But if we stop after saying only this much, what we have is a poetic reference to time. What I'm saying is that it's not just poetic. It's symbolic. What is the nature of the symbolism? Each day stands for one year.³

Daniel 9 speaks symbolically of "weeks" (groups of days), while Daniel 8 speaks symbolically of "evening-mornings" (parts of days). The one symbol is more, the other less. What binds the two together is their common relationship with the idea of a day. So for discussion, let's convert both periods to days. It will make it easier to compare them. In the way the shorter period becomes 490 "days" and the longer one 2300 "days." There is much to understand about these periods, but one thing is clear, i.e., 2300 "days" ("evening-mornings") is a lot longer than 490 "days" (seventy "weeks"). Daniel places the starting point for the seventy "weeks" in the Persian period (the fifth century BC). Toward the end of this period Jesus came to the Jordan river, was baptized by John the Baptist, and began His public ministry.

Notice that Jesus' ministry lasted three and a half years from His baptism, but the seventieth week of the prophecy lasted seven years. The beginning of the seventieth week marks the beginning of His ministry. So at the end of His ministry, when Jesus died on the cross, the prophecy was not finished. It still had three and a half years left to go.⁴ When Jesus died He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). If this is true – and since Jesus said it we can surely believe that it was – the people who killed Him were not making an intelligent, informed decision. There was still just a chance that some of them would repent and come to Christ for salvation. So He gave them more time – three and a half years to be exact.

But when the Jewish leaders put Stephen to death, they had been seeing the power of the Holy Spirit exercised in healings and conversions and all sorts of wonderful deeds over a period of time (three and a half years). So when they killed Stephen no one could generously come forward and say they didn't know. They knew. Now their decision was intelligent, purposeful, and fully formed. God respected that decision and registered in the books of record in heaven, which He said would be opened on judgment day, according to Daniel 7:9-10. But when would that happen? Is there any way to know?

³ See (exx.)

⁴

Actually there is. That's what the 2300 "days" tells us. I would like propose a hypothesis, i.e., that the 2300 "days" and the seventy "weeks" start together. I won't try to demonstrate that relationship in this paper, but for argument assume with me that they share a common starting point.

If we know when the seventy "weeks" end, it is a simple matter to work out when the 2300 "days" end. Just subtract 490 from 2300. I'll let you do the math. When you get the answer, add it to AD 34 when Stephen died and that's the prophetic ending point for the 2300 "days." The time period in Daniel 8 brings us to the same judgment as that portrayed in Daniel 7. The descriptions are not identical, but the events are.

"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. ¹⁰ 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)

So when does the judgment begin? Almost 2000 years after Stephen died (2300 – 490 = 1810, which we add to AD 34 to get 1844). Thus, the judgment does not begin when Paul was alive. (He says it was still future then.) Nor does it begin at some time that is still future to us. The heavenly court is in session now and the only thing left to look forward to is the second coming of Christ. It's important to study all three of these chapters together (Daniel 7, 8, and 9). If we split them apart, that diminishes their meaning, or at least it diminishes our ability to tell what their meaning is.

Christ Judges the Living and the Dead

If we see the word "judgment" and translate it in our minds into "punishment," a number of things no longer fit. That equation just doesn't work. In Daniel it says, "The court was seated, and the books were opened" (vs. 10). It doesn't say, The court was seated and the fires were lit. This scene is not about punishment, but about evaluation – about bringing the record of human lives under review. Those condemned in the judgment will be punished, it is true, but that's later.

The Father, through the Son, judges all mankind equally. He has many children, but no favorites. His decisions must bear close scrutiny. The whole universe is looking on as He announces the verdict for each case. And as His reason is laid bare, all His creatures praise Him. This, in my view, is the significance of the scene described in Revelation 4-5.

Conclusion

Are you glad you worship a God who doesn't play favorites? A God who wants us to understand when announces a course of action? He has all power. He could just do what He wants. But He wants us to understand and to buy in, as it were. I praise God for

doing things just the way He does them. I wouldn't change a thing. And when we all get to the other side – even if one of us is lost – we will praise Him for His infinite wisdom. Even if we're lost? Yes, even if we're lost. How do you read the following passage from Philippians?

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

What part of this is unclear? What I take it to mean is that "every knee" will bow and that "every tongue" will confess "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Do wicked people have knees? How about tongues? All the ones I've seen do. What about Satan himself? Surely this passage doesn't mean that Satan will bow and acknowledge that Jesus really was who He claimed to be all along? Yes, that is exactly the intent. It means "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (vss. 10-11). Every knee. Every tongue.

When wicked people make this acknowledgement, it will no longer benefit them. They're day of grace will have passed by that time. They will still have to be punished for their sins, since they wouldn't accept the free gift that Jesus offers. But they will see the fairness in God's decision concerning them. There is so much more to say on this topic, but I'll stop here. Everything God does is right, and fair, and loving. We also will praise Him for these things – for doing everything just as He has done it – only we will have the privilege of doing that forever.