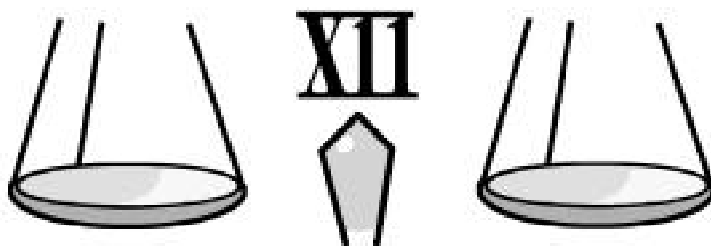


The Pre-Advent Judgment¹



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 13

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Daniel 7:9-14, 21, 22, 26-28.

MEMORY VERSE: “It is time for people to be judged. It [judgment] will begin with the family of God. And since it begins with us, what will happen to people who don't [do not] obey God's good news?” (1 Peter 4:17, NIV).

DURING THE CLOSING DAYS OF WORLD WAR II, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a young German theologian, was led from his prison cell by prison guards and hanged for high treason. In 1996, a court in Berlin declared Dietrich Bonhoeffer innocent of the charges that led to his death.

Almost the same thing happens in the pre-Advent judgment. God's people are falsely accused by Satan and his followers on earth. In front of the universe, they will be cleared (pardoned) in the judgment. The judgment is for the sake of God's faithful people. The heavenly court will announce a judgment in favor of His people (Daniel 7:22). This pre-Advent judgment is part of the good news of salvation. The pre-Advent judgment is not an old historic piece of Adventist history. Instead, the judgment is an important part of God's plan of salvation. By understanding the judgment, a believer can fully appreciate the good news of the gospel.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Why would an all-knowing God need an investigative judgment? How does the great controversy (war) help us understand the need for a judgment? How does the idea of a pre-Advent judgment appear in the Old Testament? How does the idea of a pre-Advent judgment

¹the pre-Advent judgment—the judgment that will take place before Jesus' second coming. Adventists believe that God's judgment comes in three parts. The first part began in 1844, and is continuing until Jesus' return to the earth. This is the pre-Advent judgment. The pre-Advent judgment is also called the investigative judgment.

appear in the New Testament? What is the purpose of the judgment? What kind of hope does the judgment give us? What is the connection between the judgment and the Second Coming?

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 20.

SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 14

INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (Genesis 3:9-19).

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Daniel 7 teaches the pre-Advent or investigative judgment. The idea of an investigation (examination) before judgment is found early in the Bible.

What do the following verses teach us about the idea of an investigative judgment? Genesis 3:9-19; Genesis 18:20, 21; Genesis 19:24, 25.

God asked Adam and Eve many questions. These questions were an investigation of what they had done: “Where are you [Adam and Eve]?”



“Where are you, Adam? What have you done?”

“Who told you?” “Have you eaten from the tree?” “What have you done?” After God finished this investigation, He announced the punishment (Genesis 3:14-19).

The way the Bible describes God's handling of Sodom and Gomorrah is also important. Most of Genesis 18 and Genesis 19 describe God's thoughts before giving His punishment. When God said, “I will go down now and see . . .” (NKJV), He is describing His investigation of the facts before announcing the punishment.

Why would God, who knows all things (Job 37:16; Proverbs 5:21; Isaiah 46:9, 10; 2 Timothy 2:19), need to hold an investigation? Why did He have to ask Adam and Eve what they had done when He knew what they had done?

In Adam and Eve's case, God required them to answer His questions. In this way, questioning them helped them to better understand the sinfulness of their actions.

It is important to keep in mind the idea of the great controversy (war). We are not alone in the universe. The whole question of sin, evil, and rebellion involves more than just humans (Job 1; Job 2; Ephesians 3:10; Revelation 15:4; Roman 8:22, 23). There are other intelligent beings² in the universe who are

²intelligent beings—angels and created beings from other worlds who have not sinned.

watching (1 Corinthians 4:9). They are not all-seeing and all-knowing. So they also can learn about God's great love from the pre-Advent judgment.

We know about the great controversy. We know that other intelligent beings in the universe are watching what is happening. How does knowing about the great controversy and about other intelligent life in the universe help us understand the need for God to do an investigation before He gives punishment? Why would it not be fair to punish or to pardon anyone without first giving all the facts?

MONDAY—NOVEMBER 15

THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (Matthew 22:1-14).

The idea of an investigative, pre-Advent judgment appears in the New Testament, too. The parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22 is a good example.

Where in Matthew 22:1-14 do you see the idea of an investigation (examination) before giving punishment?

The king's inspection of the guests represents a process (method) of in-

vestigation. The result of this investigation decides who may remain at the wedding and who may not. This is a picture of the pre-Advent judgment going on now in heaven.

Where in John 5:28, 29 and Revelation 20:4-6 do you see the idea that a judgment has already taken place before the events³ shown in these same verses?

Many Bible interpreters admit that Revelation 20 teaches two real resurrections⁴ of the dead. These two resurrections are separated by one thousand years. As the "blessed and holy" people come up in the first resurrection, an early (first) judgment must have taken place to decide who will take part in this first resurrection.

This is not just an Adventist interpretation. The Lutheran theologian⁵ Joseph A. Seiss writes, "The resurrection, and the changes (which pass 'in the twinkling of an eye' upon living people) are themselves the fruits of earlier judgment. They are the results of judgments already made. Dead people are not raised to come to judgment. Resurrections are results of judgment already passed, upon dead people as dead people, and upon living people as living people. 'The dead in Christ [Jesus] shall rise first,' because they are already judged to be in Christ. And the living saints are caught up together with them

³events—things that happen.

⁴resurrections—when the dead are raised back to life.

⁵theologian—a person who studies the Bible as his or her profession.

in the clouds. This is because they are already judged to be saints, and worthy to receive their rewards.”—Adapted from *The Apocalypse,⁶ Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (reprint; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publication House, 1973), p. 181.



The resurrection of life—the result of a judgment already passed (John 5:29).

In Revelation 14:14-20, the harvest of the earth comes after the first angel’s message, “‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come’ ” (Revelation 14:7, NKJV). When we look at the order of events shown in Revelation 14, we decide that the judgment in verse 7 happens before Jesus comes again to give reward and punishment.

⁶apocalypse—the end of the earth. The book of Revelation teaches about what will happen at the end of the earth.

Read again Matthew 22:1-14. The host *wants* people to attend his son’s wedding feast. What does the host wanting people to attend tell us about God’s character and His desire to save us?

TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 16

THE SON OF MAN AND THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT (Matthew 20:28).

Daniel was watching the heavenly court scene. He saw “ ‘One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven’ ” to the Ancient of Days (God) (Daniel 7:13, NKJV). The wording “ ‘like the Son of Man’ ” means that this figure was in human form.



Jesus is the Son of Man.

Who is this “Son of Man”? What is His work in the pre-Advent judgment? Mark 10:45; Matthew 20:28; John 5:22; 1 Timothy 2:5.

The “Son of Man” was Jesus’ favorite title for Himself. People called Him the Prophet, Messiah, Son of David, or Son of God. These names meant to them a glorious conquering king who would quickly fulfill their personal and national hopes. But Jesus used the name “Son of Man” about forty times to show His connection with humanity⁷ (Matthew 8:20; Matthew 9:6; Matthew 10:23; Matthew 11:19; Matthew 12:8; et cetera). At the same time, it was a name for the Messiah (Daniel 7:13). The chief priests recognized it, too (Matthew 26:64, 65). This explained their reaction. There is one thing we can be sure of: Jesus is at the center of this heavenly judgment scene in Daniel 7.

What verdict (decision) is given in this heavenly judgment? Daniel 7:22.

It is very important to understand that this judgment ends with good news for God’s people. Daniel 7 shows God’s work for His people.

What important point do the following verses make? What hope do these verses give us? Daniel 7:18, 22, 27.

In Daniel 7, we see God working for His people among trouble, violence, and suffering. We are in the middle of a great controversy (war). Daniel 7 focuses on one part of that controversy. And he shows us how it will finally end. That end is good news for God’s people.

Jesus died for our sins. He stands as our Mediator,⁸ Judge, and Substitute.⁹ Jesus is at the center of this judgment. Why should Jesus being at the center of the judgment bring us comfort and hope?

WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 17

VINDICATION¹⁰ AND CONDEMNATION:¹¹ THE LITTLE HORN, THE SAINTS, AND THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT (Daniel 7:22).

The judgment in Daniel 7 is really about the saints—God’s people. So why does Daniel 7 discuss the persecuting (attacking) little horn? The answer is in the Hebrew understanding of justice and

⁷humanity—all the people of the world.

⁸mediator—a lawyer or go-between who helps to bring people together. Jesus is the Mediator between God and us. Jesus helps to bring us back to God.

⁹substitute—someone who takes another person’s place. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

¹⁰vindication—proving God’s people are not guilty because of the righteousness (holiness) of Jesus they received and that they are worthy to enter heaven; proving a person is not guilty.

¹¹condemnation—judgment of guilt.

judgment. The Hebrew understanding of justice and judgment involves both the vindication of innocent people and the punishment of guilty people. The little horn does evil against God's people. So, there is a judgment that vindicates¹² His people—"and judgment was passed in favor of the saints" (Daniel 7:22, NASB). There is also a judgment that brings the wicked little horn to final justice: "But the judgment shall sit, and they [God's people] shall take away his [the little horn's] dominion [power], to consume [wipe out] and to destroy it [the little horn's power] unto the end" (Daniel 7:26).

Against the background of the pre-Advent judgment, this description of the end of the little horn makes perfect sense.

How do Deuteronomy 25:1 and 1 Kings 8:32 help us understand that the pre-Advent judgment includes the vindication of God's people and the condemnation of the little horn?

In Deuteronomy 25:1 and 1 Kings 8:32, we see what Daniel 7 shows—wicked people are punished, and righteous (holy) people are pardoned. This is judgment. And it is why Daniel 7 pictures the judgment as the background for the end of the little-horn power who is against God's people. In the final judgment, God's people are pardoned, and the little-horn power is punished.

There is no question that the *result* of the judgment brings about the final end of the little horn. The judgment leads to the

¹²vindicates—to prove that a person is not guilty.

Second Coming and is not limited to the end of the little horn. The judgment is a much bigger and more glorious event. This event leads to both the vindication of the saints and the end of their enemies.

Roy Gane, of Andrews University, wrote, "a court case results in one person winning and the other person losing, because the two people are opposed to each other. Through investigation (examination), one person is found to be right and the other person is found to be wrong. The 'horn' is opposed to Jesus. It speaks boastful words against 'the Most High (God).' It makes God's people suffer. It plans to change God's law. The horn power is a rebel who claims Jesus' control for himself.

"When Jesus wins in the judgment, His loyal people win with Him. They are saved from suffering, and they gain the kingdom."—Adapted from *Altar Call* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Diadem, 1999), p. 241.

THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 18

THE TIME OF THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT

(Daniel 7:8-10, 21, 22, 25, 26).

Daniel 7 does not give us an exact date for the beginning of the pre-Advent judgment. But it does give us a time frame for the judgment to take place.

What does Daniel 7:8-10, 21, 22, 25, 26 tell us about the time of the investigative judgment?

These verses show that the judgment is to begin after the little-horn power has started a certain work. These verses explain the little-horn power and its activities. Then the judgment scene begins in heaven.

Daniel 7:25 gives us more details. The “time and times and the dividing of time” (or 1,260 years; read Thursday’s study in lesson 7) is mentioned in connection with the little horn. The judgment scene also is shown as happening after that time period. We studied earlier that the 1,260-year period was connected with the little-horn power that arose out of the fourth beast, which was pagan¹³ Rome. This means that this judgment scene begins at least 1,260 years after the rise of the little-horn power. (We use the dates A.D. 583 to A.D. 1798 to show the beginning and the end of that 1,260-year period.) The important point is, that by the sixth century A.D., this little-horn power had established itself as the great power in that part of the world.

The little horn became a great power about the sixth century A.D., The judgment begins at least 1,260 years after. So what times does Daniel 7 show for the beginning of heavenly judgment?

It is important to understand that this judgment is the pre-Advent judgment. This means the pre-Advent judgment

takes place before Jesus’ second coming. Daniel 7:22, 25 show that the judgment comes before the Second Coming and that the judgment leads to the Second Coming. As a result of the judgment, the saints take over the heavenly kingdom.

What we see in Daniel 7 is a powerful presentation of a judgment that takes place after the 1,260 years and before the Second Coming.

Study Daniel 7 until you can see for yourself the order of events: little horn, heavenly pre-Advent judgment, Second Coming. Know the order of events well enough to explain Daniel 7 to someone else.

FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 19

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “There are people who have truly repented¹⁴ of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Jesus as their cleansing sacrifice. They have received pardon when their names were written in the books of heaven. They have become partners with Jesus in His righteousness (holiness). And they follow His law. Their sins will be removed. And they themselves will be judged worthy of eternal¹⁵ life.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 212.

“Jesus does not excuse our sins. But He shows our repentance¹⁶ and faith. He claims forgiveness for us. He lifts His wounded hands before the Fa-

¹³pagan—idol worshiping; not believing in God.

¹⁴repented—to have said you were sorry for your sins and that you want to stop sinning.

¹⁵eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

¹⁶repentance—being sorry for your sins and turning away from your sins.

ther and the holy angels, saying: ‘I [Jesus] know them by name. I have graven [written] them [their names] on the palms of My hands.’ ‘The greatest sacrifice you want is a broken spirit. God, you will gladly accept a heart that is broken because of sadness over sin.’ Psalm 51:17, NlrV. And to the accuser (Satan) of His people, Jesus says: ‘May the Lord condemn¹⁷ you Satan! May the Lord, who loves Jerusalem, condemn you.’ Zechariah 3:2, TEV. Jesus will clothe His faithful people with His own righteousness. Then He will present them to His Father as a ‘brightly shining church’ with ‘no stain or wrinkle, or any other flaw’¹⁸ (Ephesians 5:27, NlrV). The names of God’s people are written in the book of life. About them it is written: ‘They will walk with me [Jesus] dressed in white, because they are worthy’ (Revelation 3:4, NlrV).”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, p. 484.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you balance between grace and works in the above quotes by Ellen White? She talks about people who obey God’s law. Is she talking about salvation by works, or a faith that works? Explain your answer.



The nail scars in Jesus’ hands symbolize the names of His people.

2. The judgment in Daniel 7 leads to the Second Coming, an event of great importance. How should understanding the importance of the Second Coming help us to understand our work as Adventists?

SUMMARY: After the three-and-a-half times of the little horn’s control of earth, a court is set up in heaven. In this pre-Advent judgment, the sins of God’s people are removed. The little horn is punished. And the saints are given everlasting¹⁹ control and power that will never be destroyed.

¹⁷condemn—to find guilty and to punish.

¹⁸flaw—fault; defect; problem.

¹⁹everlasting—lasting forever; eternal; without beginning or end.