

The Gospel and Judgment



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 16

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Leviticus 16; Romans 8:1, 24; Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24; 1 Peter 1:2, 18, 19.

MEMORY VERSE: “My dear children, I’m [I am] writing this to you so that you will not sin. But suppose someone does sin. Then we have one who speaks to the Father for us. He stands up for us. He is Christ, the Blameless One” (1 John 2:1, NIV).

AS ADVENTISTS, WE BELIEVE THAT SINCE 1844 WE HAVE BEEN LIVING IN THE REAL DAY OF ATONEMENT.¹ The earthly Day of Atonement was just a model (an example) of the true Day of Atonement. The animal sacrifices were symbols of Jesus’ cross. In the same way, the earthly Day of Atonement was a symbol of the real Day of Atonement. This true Day of Atonement began in 1844 with Jesus’ work of judgment in the heavenly sanctuary.

This is good news! What is atonement without saving us through Jesus’ blood? The law cannot atone (forgive and cleanse). Obedience cannot atone. Our good character cannot atone. Atonement comes only through Jesus’ blood.

Should it not be good news that we are living in the Day of Atonement? Should not any “day” dedicated to atonement be something to be thankful for? Should we not be rejoicing in the hope of living in the Day of Atonement instead of being depressed about it?

The judgment is good news because it is an important part of salvation. The judgment is about our having accepted by faith Jesus’ death for us. This week we will look at the gospel and the judgment. Only through the gospel can we fully see what the judgment means for us.

¹atonement—forgiveness and cleansing from sin.

SUNDAY—SEPTEMBER 17**WE MUST ALL STAND
(Matthew 12:36)**

As we saw in lesson 2, the Bible is clear that there is a judgment. This is a judgment where our works come under inspection. Jesus said we all shall give a reason for “every careless word” (Matthew 12:26, NIrV). Every careless word? Is this not the same Lord who “counts every hair on your head” (Matthew 10:30, NIrV)? Is this not the same Lord who knows when a sparrow falls to the ground (Matthew 10:29)? Does he not say that He shall “judge everything people do. That includes everything they try to hide” (Ecclesiastes 12:14, NIrV)? Every work? Every secret thing? So, the whole idea of an examination of works, an investigation (inspection) in judgment, follows the teaching of the Bible.

How could any sinner stand when every idle word, every secret thing, comes into judgment? This is frightening. Imagine yourself standing in front of God in judgment when everything you have ever done comes under review (examination). Imagine yourself standing in front of a God who, in His holiness, is a “consuming fire”

(Deuteronomy 4:24). What person (no matter how obedient, holy, or faithful) has the kind of record that could put him or her in favor with such a God? How do Romans 8:34; Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24; and 1 John 2:1 answer the above question?

The good news of the judgment is that Jesus gets us through the judgment because He stands in our place. This is what His high-priestly ministry (work) means. Without Jesus, all of us would be lost, because none of us is perfect enough to stand in front of a holy God. If we are not clothed in Jesus’ righteousness (holiness), we would have to stand in our own righteousness. Because we are all sinners, we would all be judged guilty.

“We cannot meet these charges ourselves. In our sin-stained clothes, we say we are guilty. We also stand before God. But Jesus is our Advocate.² He offers a plea that works for all who have repented³ and who have trusted their souls to Him. Jesus pleads their cause and defeats their accuser⁴ by the powerful arguments of the Cross.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 471. How does this quote

²advocate—someone who supports another person. Jesus is our Advocate. He supports us against Satan’s accusing us of sin.

³repented—to have said that you are sorry for your sins, and that with the Holy Spirit’s help, you want to stop sinning.

⁴accuser—someone who blames another person for doing something wrong. Here the accuser is Satan. Satan accuses God’s people of sinning (Zechariah 3:1-5).

help you better understand your only hope in the judgment?

MONDAY—SEPTEMBER 18

BLOOD AND JUDGMENT (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9:12-14)

The sanctuary is central to our beliefs as Seventh-day Adventists. The earthly sanctuary is a model of the plan of salvation. The heavenly sanctuary is the place where Jesus is now working on our behalf through His atoning⁵ death. Based on (1) the earthly sanctuary model, (2) the book of Hebrews, and (3) the prophecies in Daniel, Adventists believe that since 1844 Jesus has been in the Most Holy Place. This is where the judgment (Daniel 7) is now taking place.

Much of our understanding for this comes from the earthly Day of Atonement. Once a year, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place of the earthly sanctuary. This is found most clearly in Leviticus 16.

How many times is the blood mentioned in Leviticus 16? What does the blood symbolize? Also read Hebrews 9:12-14.

Blood was very important in the earthly Day of Atonement. Blood was a symbol for Jesus' blood. Jesus bled

for our sins on the cross. Because the Day of Atonement is the day of judgment, judgment and atonement are closely connected. So because atonement is good news, judgment should be good news, too. And it is good news only because of the blood representing the life and death of Jesus for our sake.

What do Leviticus 17:11; Luke 22:20; Romans 5:9; Hebrews 10:19; Hebrews 12:24; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 1:2 and 1 Peter 1:18, 19 tell us about how important blood is in the plan of salvation?

Blood is a symbol of life. Shed blood⁶ means death. Shed blood is a symbol of Jesus' life and death for us. Blood was shed. Then priests worked with the shed blood on the Day of Atonement. So, blood is important on the Day of Atonement because it represents the life and death of Jesus for our sake! That is why for Christians, the judgment is good news. We have a Substitute⁷ who stands in the presence of God "for us" (Hebrews 9:24) in the judgment.

Imagine your case in front of God on Judgment Day without a Substitute! What hope would you have? Why must you have a Substitute in the judgment?

⁵atoning—forgiving and cleansing.

⁶shed blood—the blood that flowed because a person was losing it and was dying.

⁷substitute—someone who takes another person's place. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

TUESDAY—SEPTEMBER 19**THE GARMENT (ROBE)
(Matthew 22:1-13)**

In lesson 2 we studied the wedding parable in Matthew 22 as proof of a pre-Advent judgment.⁸ But there is more to this parable than just the timing. This parable is a powerful example of what it means to be covered by Jesus' righteousness (holiness) in the judgment. This parable also shows what it means not to be covered with Jesus' righteousness in the judgment.

What made the difference between whether the man stayed or left? Matthew 22:1-13.

What does the garment symbolize? Isaiah 61:10; Zechariah 3:1-5.

In this parable, we see a clear example of someone who accepted the invitation to the wedding, but not the conditions for going to the wedding. He refused to accept what the owner offered him: the robe of Jesus' perfect righteousness. And upon investigation (inspection) he was found without this robe.

The parable said that both good people and bad people came. The parable does not say if the man without the robe was good or bad. Without a robe in the judgment, we all will be found guilty. It will not matter if we are good or bad. What the guest needed is the same thing we need in the judgment.

We need something that covers us. Without it, we will be cast out to where there is weeping and gnashing (grinding) of teeth. That covering is symbolized by the robe. The robe is Jesus' righteousness credited to His followers by faith. Jesus' righteousness is our only hope now and in the judgment.

We need something to get us through the judgment. Through Jesus' sacrifice, we have all we need. All we need is Jesus given to us because of our faith in Him (Romans 3:21, 22; Romans 10:3; 2 Peter 1:1).

Have you accepted the invitation to the wedding, but not the conditions for going to the wedding? What are those conditions? Be prepared to talk about these conditions in class on Sabbath.



Do not refuse the conditions that will help you in the judgment.

⁸pre-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.

WEDNESDAY—SEPTEMBER 20**NO CONDEMNATION (GUILT)
(Romans 8:1, 2; James 2)**

What message is found in Romans 8:1, 2 that is very important for facing judgment?

The good news of the judgment is that we do not have to depend on our own righteousness (holiness). We can depend on Jesus' righteousness. Being judged by works does not mean we are saved by works. We are saved only through Jesus' righteousness. His righteousness is credited to us by our faith. Our faith is always shown by works. Jesus' righteousness covers us the moment we surrender to Him and claim His righteousness for ourselves.

How does James 2 help us understand the part that works play in the judgment?

But how do I know I will have enough works to show that I have faith? That question shows some sense, but for the wrong reasons. It shows the attitude⁹ of those who said, "Lord! Lord! Didn't [did not] we prophesy in your name? Didn't we drive out demons in your name? Didn't we do many miracles in your name?" (Matthew 7:22, NIV). The question shows the attitude of the man who said, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people. I am not like robbers or those who do evil things. I am not

like those who commit [do] adultery. I am not even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. And I give a tenth of all I get" (Luke 18:11, 12, NIV).

Instead, our attitude should be that of the tax collector. He beat his chest saying, "God, have mercy¹⁰ on me. I am a sinner" (Luke 18:13, NIV). Those who have ever seen a small part of Jesus' righteousness know they must throw themselves on God's mercy and grace. They realize that their works are never enough. This is why they have to live by faith and trust in God's promises that He will save them because of Jesus alone. Knowing that our works will never be good enough drives us to faith and to the promises of salvation in Jesus. It is the faith that believes God's promises that changes our life. And the changes are shown in works.



We must throw ourselves on God's mercy and grace for salvation.

⁹attitude—how someone feels about something or someone.

¹⁰mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 21

JUDGED BY WORKS; SAVED BY FAITH (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Romans 3:23; Romans 8:34; John 14:15; Matthew 18:23-35; Zechariah 3:1-5)

Follow the thinking below and look up the different verses. How does this help you understand what a judgment by works means for people who are saved by faith?

A Christian's life comes before God in the judgment. Every work, every secret thing, every word, comes into review (Psalm 135:14; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 10:30). Who could stand before such an inspection? No one (Romans 3:23; Galatians 3:22; 1 Timothy 1:15; Romans 3:10). But, for the true followers of Jesus, He stands as their Advocate, their Representative, their Intercessor (Go-between) in heaven (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24; 1 John 2:1). They have nothing in and of themselves to give them favor with God. They have no works that are good enough to make them righteous (holy) in His eyes. But their lives show their true repentance¹¹ and faith (Matthew 7:24-27; John 14:15; James 2:14-20; 1 John 4:20; 1 John 5:3). How they treated others, the poor, the needy, and prisoners. How they for-

gave as they were forgiven, the words they spoke, the things they did (Matthew 7:2; Matthew 12:36, 37; Matthew 18:23-35; Matthew 25:31-46). These could never make them righteous (holy) in God's eyes. They could never answer the requirements of a broken law. But these things show those who have accepted Jesus as their Substitute.¹² His righteousness (holiness), which covers them like a robe, gets them through the judgment (Leviticus 16; Zechariah 3:1-5; Matthew 22:1-14; Romans 8:1, 34; Hebrews 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

Or, as Ellen White so clearly explains, "We should realize our sinful condition. But we are to depend upon Jesus as our righteousness, our sanctification (holy living), and our salvation. We cannot answer Satan's charges against us. Jesus alone can plead for our sake. He is able to silence Satan with arguments based on His own righteousness, not ours." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 472. Our works for salvation are useless. For this reason, we should depend fully on Jesus' mercy, on His blood, and on His righteousness. Then, out of love and thankfulness for our salvation through Him, we serve Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and body. This is a service of thanks shown through works.

How well do your works reflect (show) your faith? What things do

¹¹repentance—saying you have sinned and that with the Holy Spirit's help you want to stop sinning.

¹²substitute—someone who takes another person's place. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

you need to repent¹³ of and change to reflect more fully Jesus' righteousness?



Jesus fed the hungry. We should, too. Our works show our faith.

FRIDAY—SEPTEMBER 22

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, "Joshua and the Angel," pp. 467–476.

About the saints in judgment, Ellen White wrote: "Their only hope is in God's mercy. Their only defense will be prayer. Joshua was pleading before the Angel. In the same way, the last-day church, with broken heart and earnest faith, will plead for pardon and salvation through Jesus their

Advocate. They fully realize how sinful their lives are. They see how weak and unworthy they are. As they look upon themselves, they are ready to lose hope. The tempter (Satan) stands by to accuse them, as he stood by to make a charge against Joshua. Satan points to their dirty robes, their faulty characters. He points to their weakness and foolishness. He brings up their sins of unthankfulness. He argues that their characters are not the same as Christ's."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 473.

In the judgment: "Satan points to the record of the saints' lives and to their faults of character. He accuses them of not being like Christ. He says they have brought dishonor to their Savior. Satan presents a list of all the sins he has tempted them to do. Because of these sins, Satan claims them as his subjects.

"Jesus does not excuse their sins. But He shows their repentance and faith. He claims forgiveness for them. He lifts His wounded hands toward the Father and the holy angels, saying: 'I know them by name. I have engraven them on the palms of My hands.'"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, p. 484.

¹³repent—to say you are sorry for your sins and that with the Holy Spirit's help, you want to stop sinning.



Jesus has engraved your name on the palms of His hands.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. As a class, talk about your

answers to the question at the end of Tuesday's lesson.

2. Why do you think the pre-Advent judgment has caused so much fear and worry among so many people in the Adventist Church?
3. What can you do as a class to help all the members of your church better understand the good news of the judgment?
4. What could you do for someone who is discouraged about his or her walk with Jesus? How can you use what we have learned this week to encourage that person?