

The Pre-Advent Judgment¹



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 23

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Daniel 7; Genesis 3:8–20; 2 Timothy 2:19; Psalm 51:4; Psalm 96:11–13; 2 Corinthians 5:10.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘ “Then the authority, power and greatness of all of the kingdoms on earth will be handed over to the people of the Most High God. His kingdom will last forever. Every ruler will worship and obey him” ’ ” (Daniel 7:27, NlrV).

AS THE BOOK OF HEBREWS CLEARLY SHOWS, AFTER HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION (RETURN TO LIFE), JESUS BEGAN A NEW PART OF HIS WORK FOR US. He became our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.² The visions in Daniel 7 and 8 show that at some point in history this heavenly work of Christ for us entered a new period, the judgment. This is sometimes called the “eschatological (final; closing) Day of Atonement.”³ It is called eschatological because it is about the end time. It is also called the Day of Atonement because it is symbolized (shown) by the Day of Atonement service in the earthly sanctuary.⁴

Daniel 7, our focus (main topic) this week, shows a series of kingdoms, symbolized by four animals. They are represented by the four kingdoms in Daniel 2: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

As we study, we will see that the judgment is good news. This is because our Lord God works for His people. He judges in their favor while the universe watches. And He gives to His people the permission to enter His eternal kingdom.

1. pre-Advent judgment—Seventh-day Adventists believe that God's judgment comes in three parts: (1) pre-Advent judgment, (2) millennial judgment, and (3) executive judgment. The pre-Advent judgment has been going on since 1844 and will last until the second coming. It examines the lives of all believers (both the living and the dead in Christ) before Jesus comes to take them to heaven.

2. heavenly sanctuary—the place in heaven where Jesus works as our High Priest before the throne of God.

3. eschatological Day of Atonement—the time in which God rewards us for the choice we have made to love and serve Him.

4. earthly sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times. Here the high priest offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 24**THE VISION AND THE JUDGMENT
(DANIEL 7:10)**

Read Daniel 7:1–14. What is happening here?

Daniel saw four beasts. Then he watched another horn coming up among the horns of the fourth beast. This “little horn” became the main enemy of God and His saints. Suddenly, Daniel’s attention turned from the dark earth to a bright judgment scene in the heavenly throne room (Daniel 7:9–14).

The judgment scene is the center of the entire vision. It shows two important figures, the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man. Angels also are there. They are witnesses to the judgment. The scene moves along in three steps: first is the court scene (verses 9, 10), then the end result of the judgment on the beastly powers on earth (verses 11, 12), and finally the transfer (change) of dominion (control) and kingdom to the Son of Man (verses 13, 14). God the Father is pictured as the Ancient of Days and the excellent, wise Ruler and Judge. “The Son of Man” (NKJV) is Jesus Himself, and He represents all people in the heavenly court. Jesus used this title many times about Himself. At least two times He clearly referred back to Daniel 7 (Matthew 24:30; Matthew 26:64).

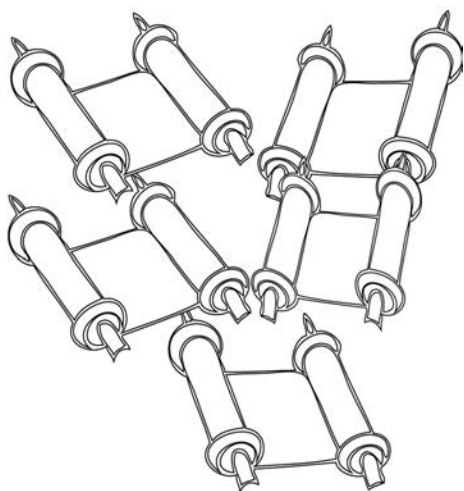


The little horn became the main enemy of God and His saints.

This heavenly temple scene takes place during the Day of Atonement. In fact, the scene is pictured as if the heavenly High Priest comes surrounded by clouds of incense⁵ to the Ancient of Days. Then, in Daniel 7:10, the “books were opened.” Books play an important part in the heavenly judgment. These books include: the “book of life” (Psalm 69:28; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; Revelation 13:8; Revelation 17:8), the “book of remembrance” (Malachi 3:16, NASB), the books of “deeds [actions]” (Revelation 20:12, NASB), and God’s “book” (Exodus 32:32, 33; Psalm 56:8).

Imagine being judged by God. Imagine everything you have ever done being judged. If you have to stand on your record, your own deeds, your own good works, what hope do you have? What, then, is your only hope in the judgment?

5. incense—sweet smelling perfume given off by certain spices when burned. The smoke and sweet smell of the incense represented the prayers of God’s people rising to Him in heaven.



Daniel saw that the “books were opened” (Daniel 7:10) in the heavenly judgment.

MONDAY—NOVEMBER 25

JUDGMENT PATTERN (GENESIS 3:8–20)

Read Genesis 3:8–20. What does God do before He makes decisions?

The idea of an investigative judgment comes from the Bible. In the Bible, God’s method of judging often includes a period of examining and questioning. The first example of such a judgment is reported in Genesis 3, where God examines the case of Adam and Eve before He announces His decision (Genesis 3:8–19). God uses the same method with Cain (Genesis 4), Babel (Genesis 11), and Sodom (Genesis 18; Genesis 19). We see God taking the same action that He requires of the judges in Israel. He tells the judges to “question people” and “check the matter out carefully”

(Deuteronomy 13:14, NIV; read also Deuteronomy 19:18).

A careful investigation involves careful thought and fairness. It is often public. God lets others see for themselves what He is doing. In this way, when God announces His decision, people are sure that His action is the best. This is exactly the reason why the heavenly judgment in Daniel 7 requires books. The books are not for God’s sake so that He will remember more easily. They are really for the benefit of the heavenly beings who are around God. Unlike God, they do not know all things.

How does judgment turn out for the saints? Read Daniel 7:22.

In talking about the judgment, Ellen G. White writes: “The people of God are standing before the Lord in dirty robes. This should make those who claim Christ as their Lord and Savior very humble and search their hearts carefully. Those who are making their souls pure by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves. . . . But while we should realize our sinful condition [state], we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness [holiness] and our Savior. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make a perfect plea for us. He is able to silence Satan with arguments based not upon our goodness, but upon His own.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*⁶ for the Church, volume 5, pages 471, 472.

5. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.

How do these words help us to understand why the judgment is such good news?



Only Jesus can silence Satan's attacks against us in the judgment.

TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 26

TIME OF THE JUDGMENT (DANIEL 7:7–10)

Read Daniel 7:7–10, 21, 22, 25, 26. When does the judgment of Daniel 7 take place?

In both Daniel's vision and in the angel's interpretation (explanation), the judgment reveals (shows) God's answer to the horn's claims. The vision and its interpretation close with God's saints receiving the kingdom. The Bible describes the judgment as happening during the time when the horn power is still in control (Daniel 7:8, 9). The horn's control is taken away only after the court sits in judgment. Then, when the judgment is finished, all earthly kingdoms are destroyed (verse 26).

What this means, clearly, is that the judgment must take place before the Second Coming. It is a pre-Advent judgment that begins sometime after the end of the period of "a time, times, and half a time [1260 years]" (verse 25, NASB) ends. This makes sense because how could there be a final reward or punishment if there were no pre-Advent judgment?

The saints, however, are rewarded at the time of Christ's second coming. This shows that the saints already have been judged. In the same way, the wicked, as well as demons, will be judged during the millennium (1,000 years) before God passes the final judgment. (See Revelation 20.)

Read 2 Timothy 2:19. Why does God need a judgment? Does the Lord not know "those who are His" (NKJV)?

Our all-seeing God does know who His people are. He does not need a judgment in order to decide who is going to be saved. Instead, the pre-Advent judgment shows the Judge to be fair in the saving of His people. And the unfallen (without sin) beings in heaven need to be sure that the saints are safe to save. After all, the saints will be living together with these beings.

As we try to understand the meaning of the judgment, we need to remember that the great controversy (war) is going on. This fact is hinted at in these verses because we see angels also watching the judgment. We must remember that they also

have an interest in the final result of the plan of salvation.

“The Lord knows those who are His” (NKJV). How can you be sure you are one of “His”? What is the only way to be sure? Read Romans 8:1.



Angels are interested in the final result of the plan of salvation.

WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 27

WHEN THE JUDGMENT ENDS (Review Daniel 7)

Read Daniel 7 again. What are the results of the pre-Advent judgment?

The judgment leads to several important actions:

1. *The Son of Man is crowned.* He receives “dominion [control], glory [power] and a kingdom” (Daniel 7:14, NASB).

2. *The saints receive the kingdom forever.* The judgment is for the benefit (good) of the saints who will receive God’s kingdom (Daniel 7:22).

The Son of Man and the saints have a very close relationship. When the Son of Man receives His kingdom, He invites the saints to join Him. His kingdom is their kingdom (Daniel 7:27). This judgment leads to a time when the King of the everlasting kingdom is reunited (brought back together) with His people. This is their greatest reward and His.

3. *The rebellion (war against God) is defeated and destroyed.* The enemies of God’s people are judged. After the horn makes war with the saints, it is defeated itself and destroyed forever (Daniel 7:25, 26).

4. *The full justice of God is shown.* The judgment in the heavenly court is open to the public, and the angels watch carefully how the judgment is done. For this reason, all can see for themselves that God is fair in His actions. He is able to uphold both love and righteousness (holiness; His law). So, in the end, God’s name will be cleared of Satan’s charges against Him. And all will admit that God is fair and that God is love. This whole method makes sure that the universe will be a safe place for all eternity (read Psalm 51:4; Romans 3:4).

The pre-Advent judgment leads to fulfilling the hopes of both God and the believers. God’s desire is to save His people and remove sin while leaving no doubt about His love and justice. Our great desire to have salvation from sin will come true. And we will enjoy eternal life in the presence of God who loves us. So, the judgment becomes the guarantee for

an eternal and trusting relationship between God and His creation.

“The great controversy [war] is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. Peace, unity [oneness], and gladness are everywhere throughout the whole creation. From God who created all flows life and light and gladness throughout the universe. From the tiniest atom to the greatest world, all things, living and nonliving, in their full beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 678.

THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 28

RESPONSIBLE ASSURANCE (FAITH) (PSALM 96:11–13)

Read Psalm 96:11–13. What is the reason for all creation to be glad?

Why would anyone cry out “Judge me, O LORD” (Psalm 7:8, NKJV)? The reason is simple. Judgment means salvation: “*Save me*, O God, by Your name, and *vindicate* [clear] *me* by Your power” (Psalm 54:1, NASB; emphasis added). Psalm 26 is a heartbreaking plea for justice and righteousness (holiness). David explained beautifully the idea that God, the Judge, is always on the side of His loyal people and that His judgment is what people desire (Psalm 26:1; Psalm 35:24; Psalm 43:1). This is because judgment suggests vindication (forgiveness; getting a fresh start).

So, does the pre-Advent judgment endanger our assurance of (faith in)

salvation? No, because the result of this judgment is certain. It is “in favor of the saints” (Daniel 7:22, NKJV). God’s work in the judgment guarantees our forgiveness and increases our faith by taking away our sins forever.

Judgment is really another example of the salvation that is ours. The judgment is not the time when God decides to accept or refuse to accept us. Instead, it is the time when God finalizes (makes final) our choice of whether or not we have truly accepted Him. Our choice is proven by our works.

For the believer, judgment makes him or her more confident of his or her faith. To use stronger words, judgment lies at the heart of the doctrine (teaching) of Christian assurance (faith).

Read Romans 14:10–12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10. How should judgment influence the way in which we live?

To free the righteous (the loyal followers of Christ) from judgment is not what the Bible teaches. The righteous are cleared in the judgment, and their sins are forever removed. But the thought of the judgment encourages believers to live responsibly. The assurance (promise) of salvation should be the main reason for living righteously (a holy life through Christ). Because God has done so much for us, we love Him. And we show that love through being faithful in all that He asks of us.

A fellow believer is afraid of God

and of the judgment. How can you help that person to understand the good news about the judgment and to be certain about his or her salvation?

FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 29

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “God who lives in the heavenly sanctuary judges righteously [in a holy way]. His pleasure is more in His people, who struggle with temptation in a world of sin, than in the angels who are around His throne.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 176.

“Satan has a correct knowledge of the sins that he has tempted God’s people to do. And he urges his charges against them by saying that by their sins they have given up the right to have protection. Satan also claims that he has the right to destroy them because they have sinned. He announces that they deserve to be rejected by God, just as he is. . . . But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have not given themselves up to be controlled by Satan. They have repented of [turned from] their sins and have asked the Lord for mercy. And the Advocate [Jesus] pleads for them. This is the same Jesus who has been so abused by their ungrateful spirit. But He also knows of the repentance [sorrow for sin] of His followers. He says: ‘The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. I gave My life for these souls. They are graven [carved] upon the palms of My hands.

They may have imperfect characters [lives]. They may have failed in their efforts. But they have repented, and I have forgiven and accepted them.’ ”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets [Special Messengers From God] and Kings*, pages 588, 589.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Where did questions about God’s justice, law, and fairness first appear—on earth or in heaven? What does your answer suggest? (This is especially important when we try to understand why there is a heavenly judgment of any kind.)
- ② The Seventh-day Adventist Church has preached the message of the judgment for many years now. Still Christ has not returned. How are we to answer for the long, long delay? Why is it so important to remember that, as humans, we have a very limited understanding of time itself? Think about some of the very long time prophecies (special messages from God) in the Bible and how someone living in those times could easily have been discouraged about what, from their view, seemed to be taking forever.
- ③ Many Christians believe in the Bible version of judgment. (How could they not? It is all throughout the Bible.) But how does connecting the judgment to the heavenly sanctuary help to show important truths about the judgment and the hope and promise that it offers us?