

The Good News About God, Our Judge



SABBATH—APRIL 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 51:1–4; Revelation 20:12; Daniel 7:9, 10, 13; Revelation 4:2–4.

MEMORY VERSE: “The angel said in a loud voice, ‘Fear [respect] God and give him praise. The time has come for God to judge all people. Worship God. He made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs [places where the water comes out of the earth] of water’ ” (Revelation 14:7, ERV).



Every person who ever lived will answer to God for everything he or she did.

THE BIBLE TEACHES us that God is our Judge. Not only that, but also God is “the Judge of the whole earth” (Genesis 18:25, NlrV; also read Psalm 58:11; Psalm 94:2; Psalm 98:9). Sooner or later, God will judge everyone, both the dead and the living. As Paul wrote, “So each of us will have to [must] explain to God about the things we do” (Romans 14:12, ERV).

Scary thought, right? Every person who ever lived will answer to God for everything he or she did. God knows everything. “God will judge everything people do. That includes everything they try to hide. He’ll judge everything, whether [to decide if] it’s good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14, NlrV).

In the end, God’s work as Judge will show His love and mercy to everyone in heaven and on earth. We will see that God is both fair and full of mercy when He judges the saved and the lost.

This week, we will study about God’s work as Judge in the end times. We also will look at what happens to God’s loyal people during “the time when God will judge everyone” (Acts 24:25, NlrV).

THE GOOD NEWS AND GOD'S WORK AS JUDGE (Psalm 51:1–4)

The book of Revelation shows what will happen at the end of the worldwide war between God and Satan. This war started before God made the earth. Lucifer started the war. Lucifer was a beautiful angel who turned against God. Lucifer accused God. Lucifer said God wasn't fair or wise. The book of Revelation shows that God's work as Judge will show that Lucifer is wrong to blame God for anything.

Revelation 14:7 says: "The angel said in a loud voice, 'Fear [respect] God and give him praise. The time has come for God to judge all people. Worship God. He made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs [places where the water comes out of the earth] of water' " (Revelation 14:7, ERV). **Do you see what the angel says right after he talks about the Good News (Revelation 14:6)? The angel talks about God's work as Judge. How is the Good News connected with God's work as Judge?**

The Good News and God's work as Judge are both parts of the First Angel's Message. The two parts can't be separated. What does that show us? It shows us that without the Good News, we would have no hope when God judges us. As we will see, the Good News is our **only** hope when we are judged.

During God's work as Judge, the people who live on other planets will see that God did everything possible to save every last person on earth. God's work as Judge shows us that He is both fair and full of mercy. His work as Judge shows us both His love and His law. God's work as Judge also shows His love to save us from sin.

God's work as Judge is part of His answer to the sin problem. In the worldwide war between good and evil, God answered Satan's lies. How? Jesus died on the cross. During God's work as Judge, He will show us that He did everything possible to save us and to lead us to the cross for forgiveness. The record books in heaven will be open at this time (read Daniel 7:10). We are precious to God. So, He will give everyone in heaven a chance to look at the choices we made to follow the Holy Spirit. God gave us His Spirit to lead us to Jesus.

Read carefully Psalm 51:1–4. Look at verse 4. How do these verses help us understand God's work as our Judge?



Lucifer was a beautiful angel who turned against God.

GOD, OUR JUDGE, IS FULL OF MERCY (Revelation 20:12)

The cross and God's work as Judge show that God is both fair and full of mercy. God's law was broken. The punishment for breaking the law is death. So, the sinner must die. "When you sin, the pay you get is death" (Romans 6:23, NIV). But God also is full of mercy. So, when you accept His forgiveness, He "gives you the gift of eternal [everlasting] life" (Romans 6:23, NIV). If God could change His law, then Jesus didn't need to die. Jesus' death on the cross shows us that God's law can't be changed.

How are we judged? Read Revelation 20:12 for the answer. What is the connection between our good behavior and our being saved?

Our behavior shows our choices. Our behavior also shows if we are loyal to God. Paul says: "You have been saved by grace because you believe. You did not save yourselves. It was a gift from God. You cannot brag that you are saved by the work you have done" (Ephesians 2:8, 9, ICB). When Jesus saves us, He changes us. "We are His work. He has made us to belong to Christ Jesus so we can work for Him. He planned that we should do this [good work]" (Ephesians 2:10, NIV). The Holy Spirit helps us do good works. But our good behavior doesn't save us. Our behavior only shows that our faith is real. God's work as Judge will show everything that is in our hearts.

Read this powerful quote from Ellen G. White about the Good News and God's work as our Judge: "The Bible shows us that God's people stand in dirty clothes before God. He is our Judge. This word picture shows us that we must empty our hearts of all pride. All Christians should make their hearts clean. We should obey God's law. We should not have any pride in our hearts. The more we look at the perfect life of Jesus, the more we will want to be the same as He is in our hearts. We will see that all the good in our hearts comes from Jesus. We will see we are sinners. At the same time, we will depend on Jesus. Jesus makes us holy. Jesus is the only One who can answer Satan when he accuses us of sins. Jesus goes to God for us and argues our case in court. Jesus tells Satan to stop blaming us. Jesus can do this work for us because He died for us. We are saved because of Jesus' holy life, not because of our good behavior."—*Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, pages 471, 472, adapted.



Jesus' death on the cross shows us that God's law can't be changed.

A BEAUTIFUL SCENE (Daniel 7:9, 10, 13)

The books of Daniel and Revelation show us what will happen in the end times. So, we should study these books together. The book of Revelation announces that we are living in the time when God will judge the earth. The book of Daniel shows us when God's work as Judge started.

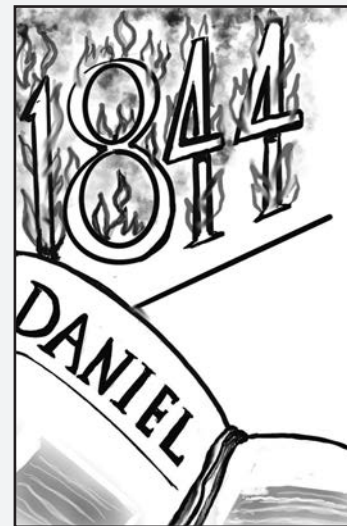
In Daniel 7, God shows Daniel the history of this earth. We also learn about the different kingdoms that control the earth. These kingdoms include Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Then the kingdom of Rome ends. After that, God's people suffer because of their faith. Their enemies attack them for 1,260 years (Daniel 7:25; also read Revelation 12:6, 14). Then God shows Daniel a powerful scene that will happen in the future. God will make everything right. Then God will give Jesus the kingdom that belongs to Him. This kingdom continues forever.

Read Daniel 7:9, 10, 13. What does Daniel see in these verses? What does God decide to do? What happens at this time? Read Daniel 7:14, 26, 27 for the answer.

God decides what will happen to everyone who lived. This decision happens in heaven's court. God's love wins. His law wins, too. This scene is one of the most beautiful scenes in the whole Bible. The good news is that everything ends very well for God's people. These people serve Him in faith. They put on Jesus' holy life the same as clothes.

Jesus comes to His Father in heaven. Everyone in heaven is watching. Angels crowd around God's throne. All the people from other planets watch, too. They are surprised and filled with wonder as they watch God do His work as Judge. This worldwide war between good and evil will soon end. This war has continued for so long. The fight for God's throne will be decided forever.

Daniel was right about the kingdoms that came and went, just as God promised. Daniel also explained that the final kingdom will continue forever. Why should we believe Daniel's message in the Bible about this final kingdom?



The book of Daniel shows us when God's work as Judge started.

THE HOLY ROOM IN HEAVEN'S TEMPLE (Revelation 4:2–4)

In Revelation 4, John sees an open door in heaven. Jesus gives John an invitation: “ ‘Come up here. I will show you what must happen after these things’ ” (Revelation 4:1, NLV). Jesus opens the door to heaven's temple and invites John to look inside. There, God will show John what will happen in the future in the war between good and evil. We also can look with John to see God's plan to save us.

Read Revelation 4:2–4. What is happening in these verses? Compare these verses with Daniel 7. How do both of these verses show us God's work as Judge?

God the Father sits on His throne in heaven. Angels stand all around Him. There is thunder and lightning. Thunder and lightning are word pictures for God's work as Judge. We also see that 24 spiritual leaders sit around God's throne.

Who are these 24 spiritual leaders? In Old Testament times, the spiritual leaders who served Israel were separated into 24 groups. These groups of leaders took turns serving God in His temple. The spiritual leaders went to God for the people. In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter announces that God chose New Testament Christians as His new group of spiritual leaders. So, maybe the 24 elders are part of the group of people that woke up from the dead with Jesus and went to heaven with Him (Matthew 27:52; Ephesians 4:7, 8).

Whoever they are, they give us hope. The 24 spiritual leaders show us that some of the people whom God saves are around the throne of God. Satan tried to get these people to sin, just as he tries to get us to sin. But these people won the fight against sin because of God's mercy. The Holy Spirit helped them win. So, the 24 spiritual leaders wear white clothes. These clothes show us that Jesus' holy life covers them and that God forgives their sins. The 24 spiritual leaders wear gold crowns on their heads. Their crowns show that they won in the fight against evil. Now they are part of heaven's royal group of faith-filled followers.

God sits on a throne in heaven. Angels and other people stand around the throne. Soon, all the angels start to sing a song of praise: “They say: ‘Our Lord and God, it is right for you to have praise and honour and power [control]. You made all things. They were made and have life because you wanted them’ ” (Revelation 4:11, WE).



**Thunder and lightning
are word pictures
for God's work as Judge.**

JESUS IS WORTHY (Revelation 5:8, 9)

In Revelation 5:1–5, we see a throne. We also see rolled-up paper, or a book, with writing on the front and back. This book has seven locks on it. No one in heaven or on earth can break the locks and open the book. John starts to cry because no one can open the book. Then one of the 24 spiritual leaders gives John encouraging news. Jesus, the Lamb of God, is worthy to open the book.

In Revelation 5:5, John sees the answer to the sin problem. John sees the only way that we can be accepted by God when He does His final work as Judge. John tells us, “One of the leaders said to me, ‘Stop crying. See! The Lion from the family group of Judah has power [control] and has won. He can open the book and break its seven locks. He is of [from] the family of David.’ I saw a Lamb standing in front of the twenty-four leaders. He was before the throne and in front of the four living beings. He looked as if He had been killed” (Revelation 5:5, 6, NLV).

Read Revelation 5:8–12 about the announcement that Jesus is worthy to open the book. What does everyone in heaven do when they hear this announcement?

Jesus takes the book. Jesus died to save everyone. So, only He can open the book. The book is about God’s work as Judge. When Jesus takes the book, all the people in heaven shout with joy. They praise God. Why else is Jesus worthy to open the book? Jesus refused to sin when Satan tried to get Him to do evil. Jesus died on Calvary’s cross. Jesus woke up from the dead. Jesus works for us in heaven as our Spiritual Leader. He goes to God to get help for us. Jesus saves everyone who chooses with faith to accept His mercy. So, God’s work as Judge is wonderful news for God’s people. God’s work as Judge is the beginning of the end of sin. God’s work as Judge shows us that God will put an end to sin, evil, and death.

Is there any better news than this news? Jesus fights for us, forgives our sins, and makes us new. Jesus pardons us, changes us, and helps us live holy lives. So, we don’t need to fear God’s work as Judge. God’s work as Judge is not about showing us that we are awful. God’s work as Judge is meant to show us that God is good and full of mercy.



Jesus died to save everyone. So, only He can open the book.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read this powerful quote from Ellen G. White about God’s work as Judge in the end times.

“Our only hope is God’s mercy. The only thing that will protect us is prayer. Joshua prayed before the Angel, who was Jesus. In the same way, God’s end-time church will pray for Jesus to save them. God’s people will empty their hearts of all pride. Their faith will be strong. Jesus is their Lawyer. God’s people know that their lives are full of sin. God’s people see that they are weak and not worthy. They are ready to give up all hope. Satan stands ready to accuse them. In the same way, Satan stood ready to accuse Joshua. Satan points to the dirty clothes that God’s people wear. These clothes are a word picture for their behavior. Satan says that God’s people are weak. Satan accuses them of doing evil things. Satan says God’s people aren’t thankful. They aren’t the same as Jesus at all. They have not honored Jesus, their Savior. . . . God’s people have made many mistakes. Satan knows very well the sins he has caused them to do. Satan shows God these sins. Satan makes these sins look worse than they really are. Satan announces, ‘Will God throw me and my angels out of heaven and reward the ones who did the same sins we did? You can’t do this, O Lord, and be fair. You will not be a holy and fair Judge then. You must punish them for their crimes.’ Yes, Jesus’ followers have sinned. But they haven’t given their lives to the control of Satan. God’s people gave up their sins. God’s people went to the Lord. They emptied their hearts of all pride. They were sorry for their sins. Jesus, their Lawyer, goes to God to get help for them. They hurt Jesus by not thanking Him for everything He’s done for them. Jesus knows their sin. But He also knows they have given up their sins. So, what does Jesus do? He announces, ‘May God correct you, Satan. I gave My life for these people. I have marks on My hands from the nails to show I died for them.’ ”—*Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, pages 473, 474, adapted.



Our only hope is God’s mercy. The only thing that will protect us is prayer.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① We are living in the time when God will judge all people. How should this Bible truth change the way we live each day?
- ② Why is God’s work as Judge good news and not bad news for us?

A GUY ON A BICYCLE

Philip Ainslee Reekie was born in Scotland, in 1846. In 1888, Philip already lost one wife and divorced another one. Philip went to Australia to look for a new life. A year later, in 1889, Philip discovered some Christian books. Philip learned many wonderful Bible truths. Best of all, Philip met the real Jesus. Philip found a new country and a new reason to live. Philip wanted to share with other people the hope he found in Jesus. Philip quit his job so he could work for Jesus full-time.

Philip was a Bible bookseller. Philip rode his bicycle hundreds of miles all over Australia selling his books. Philip came to a farm in the country. The farm was far away from any towns and cities. The place was named Eugowra. Philip saw a farmer plowing his field. The man looked very strong. But he didn't feel very strong inside. He felt weak because he was so sad. The man was named Tom Kent.

Philip did not know that Tom's whole family was sad, too. Tom's wife, Mary, died not long ago. Tom worked hard to take care of their 11 children. Just before Mary died, she asked Tom to promise to meet her in heaven. Mary asked Tom to make sure their children were in heaven, too. Tom promised. After Mary died, Tom looked for a Bible to see how to keep his promise to Mary. That's when Philip met Tom.

Philip listened to Tom's sad story. The story made Philip sad. Philip saw that Tom suffered very much. When Tom told Philip about Mary's dying hope, Philip knew what to do. Philip shared a copy of *The Great Controversy* with Tom. At first, Tom had a hard time understanding the Bible truths that he read. But Tom studied the Bible carefully. Little by little, he started to understand Bible truth. He accepted the new Bible teachings. Tom's studies gave him the peace and comfort that he so badly needed. He shared the Bible truth with his children and neighbors. All his children and five of the families who were his neighbors accepted the Bible truth. They all became followers of Jesus. That is when Tom knew he could keep his promise to his wife.

Today, this powerful story continues. Tom Kent's future children, plus the other five families, and the new people they brought into the Seventh-day Adventist Church add up to more than 20,000 people! Those are a lot of lives changed by a Bible bookseller on a bicycle and a farmer. This miracle happened because these two men shared *The Great Controversy* with family and friends.

Would you like to do the same thing? Join the worldwide church in 2023 and 2024 in sharing *The Great Controversy*. Visit greatcontroversyproject.org for more information or ask your pastor.

INSIDE
Story
by ANTHONY KENT



Just before Mary died, she asked Tom to promise to meet her in heaven.

