

# The Pre-Advent Judgment

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Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.  
Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

## Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

The last newsletter on "The Heavenly Sanctuary: Real or Symbolic?" generated an unusual number of responses. Many Sabbath School teachers expressed appreciation for the material provided and asked me if I would discuss more fully the unique Adventist understanding of the Pre-Advent judgment. The reason given is that an increasing number of their Sabbath School members find it difficult to accept the notion of an endtime judgment prior to Christ's coming. They feel that there is no need for God to investigate again sins which have been forgiven.

The comments received suggest that there is considerable misunderstanding and confusion regarding the Adventist understanding of the Pre-Advent judgment. Some feel that this doctrine rests primarily on the problematic text of Daniel 8:14 which speaks of the cleansing of sanctuary after 2300 "evenings and mornings." If this claim were true, then we would have to admit that our Adventist church has built its unique doctrine of the Pre-Advent judgment on a weak biblical basis. But this claim is not true, because, as we shall see, there is a broad biblical basis for this doctrine.

Interested readers who wish to receive my more comprehensive study on the Pre-Advent Judgment, are welcomed to call me at (269) 471-2915 or email me you request at <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net> I will be glad to mail you at a discounted price the two books, *The Fall Festivals* and *The Advent Hope*, where I examine this subject at considerable length.

In view of the fact that this subject is being discussed in our current Sabbath School lessons, I am hastening to post this Bible study, hoping that it will reach in time those who are teaching and studying the lessons. Because of space and time limitations, I will not discuss in this issue such significant recent developments as the removal of the Ten Commandments monument from the rotunda of the Alabama Judicial Building and the recent acceptance of the Sabbath by church leaders like Chuck Missler, who is a well known syndicated radio program host and scholar.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AT THE END OF THIS NEWSLETTER

At the end of this newsletter you will find the following important announcements:

- 1) The date and location of my weekend seminars for September 2003.
- 2) Information on how your church can purchase a state-of-the art HITACHI LCD VIDEO PROJECTORS at over 65% discount on the Factory Suggested Retail price. HITACHI has agreed to offer their line of outstanding LCD projectors to our Adventist churches and institutions at an incredible discount.
- 3) A special offer on the newly recorded PowerPoint SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR in VIDEO tapes and DVD disks. For the first time the whole seminar consisting of 8 one-hour lectures is offered for \$50.00, instead of the regular price of \$120.00

## **THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT**

**Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.**

**Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University**

Someone has said that in the new world there will be three surprises for the redeemed. First, there will be the surprise to discover that some of the “saints” most people expected to find there will not be there. Puzzled, and confused, some will ask: How can such a godly person as Mr. Smith be missing? Second, there will be the surprise to note that some of the “sinners” most people thought would never make it to the Kingdom in actual fact will be there. “How can Mrs. Morris be here when she did not attend church for several years?” some will wonder. Third, there will be the most pleasant surprise of all, namely, to find oneself there.

Surprise about God’s criteria for offering eternal life to some while allowing others to experience eternal death could give rise to feelings of doubt and mistrust about the fairness of God’s judgments. If allowed to persist, such feelings could threaten the eternal security of the new world. Rebellion against God could arise a second time and the redemptive mission of Christ into this world would have been in vain.

The eternal security of the new world will rest on the unquestioning attitude of trust, love, and obedience to God of its inhabitants. This attitude cannot be demanded, it can only be earned. A significant method used by God to gain and maintain the unconditional love and trust of His creatures is by making adequate provision for them to understand and accept the justice of His judgments. Numerous Scriptural passages to be considered in this chapter speak of God’s inviting the moral beings of His universe to participate in His final judgment process that will decide the eternal destiny of people and angels (Dan 7:10, 22, 26; Matt 19:28; 12:41, 42; 1 Cor 6:2-3).

Historically little or no attention has been given to the role which heavenly and human beings play in God’s final judgment. The focus has been primarily on the executive aspect of the final judgment. Even this aspect has been viewed primarily as a day of gloom and doom on which Christ will manifest His vengeance by inflicting punishment upon the wicked.

**Objective of this Bible Study.** The objective of this study is to ascertain the Biblical understanding of the judicial process which precedes and follows the Advent judgment. A brief analysis will be made of the most significant passages which refer implicitly or explicitly to the judicial process of the final judgment. The final part of the chapter will reflect upon the theological significance of the Biblical teaching on this subject. The study is divided into the following three parts:

1. The Pre-Advent Phase of the Final Judgment
2. The Post-Advent Phase of the Final Judgment
3. The Theological Significance of the Final Judgment

## PART ONE THE PRE-ADVENT PHASE OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT

### Biblical Emphasis on Reality of Judgment

**Reality More Important than Modality.** The emphasis of the Scriptures is not on the dynamics of the final judgment, but rather on its inevitability and finality. To Bible writers the reality of the final judgment was more important than its modality. This observation applies to other Biblical truths such as the Second Advent and the resurrection. For example, no attempt is made by Christ or by most of the New Testament writers to differentiate between the resurrection of believers at the time of Christ's Coming and the resurrection of unbelievers at the end of the millennium.

Jesus speaks of "the hour" that is coming "when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). In this statement Christ presents the resurrection of the "good" doers and that of the evildoers as taking place contemporaneously (cf. Matt 25:32; Luke 11:32). Yet John the Revelator distinguishes between the two resurrections by placing the former at the beginning of the millennium and the latter after "the thousand years were ended" (Rev 20:4-5).

**Fact More Important than Phases.** To a scientific modern mind, those two statements stand in open contradiction. Yet Biblical writers had no difficulty in reconciling the two statements because for them the reality was more important than the modality of the resurrection. In fact, most of the references to the resurrection mention the fact rather than the phases or manner of the event.

The same principle applies to the Biblical references to the final judgment. In most cases the concern is to emphasize the reality and finality of the event rather than its modality. Yet as in the case of the resurrection so in that of the final judgment, there are some Biblical passages which implicitly suggest a Pre-Advent and a Post-Advent phase of the final judgment. A study of these passages offers a fuller appreciation of the dynamics of the final judgment.

### The Pre-Advent Judgment in the Teaching of Jesus

**The Notion of Reward.** The notion of a Pre-Advent judgment is an underlying assumption of much of Jesus' teachings. Such a notion is implied even in those numerous passages where the technical terms for judgment are not used. Jesus often spoke about receiving or missing God's reward, which implies a previous evaluative judgment.

In Matthew 5 each of the Beatitudes contains a promise of reward (5:1-12). In verse 46 Jesus says: "If you love those who love you, what reward have you?" The same notion is found several times in the following chapter and throughout the Gospels: "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 6:1; cf. 6:2, 4, 5, 16, 18; 10:41, 42; Mark 9:41; Luke 6:23, 35).

**The Time of Rewards.** The time for assigning rewards or retribution is clearly given as the Second Advent: "For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done" (Matt 16:27; cf. 25:31-32). In this and similar statements, the Second Advent is perceived as the time for the assignment of rewards or punishments, and not for the evaluation of what each person deserves. In none of the statements of Jesus is the suggestion ever made that He will set up the traditional Grand Assize at His Return to investigate and determine the destiny of every person who ever lived.

Since the time of Christ's Coming is primarily the occasion for bestowing rewards or punishments, we may reasonably assume that the evaluative process that determines such decision takes place before the Advent. Some may wish to argue that there is no need for God to investigate the deeds and attitudes of each person to determine what they deserve, because He already knows it all. There is some truth in this argument, for God obviously does not need to seek for lacking information about His creatures. Yet, Jesus and other Biblical writers speak of a judgment that will investigate not only deeds, but also words: "I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter" (Matt 12:36).

The purpose of this investigation, as we shall see, is not to enable God to ascertain the truth about each person, but rather to expose and disclose this truth to His moral universe. Our immediate concern, however, is not to understand the purpose of God's evaluative judgment but rather to acknowledge its reality and validity. We have already noted that a Pre-Advent judgment is presupposed by the fact that Christ comes not to institute a judgment process but to execute the judgment which has already taken place.

**Human Accountability.** The notion of a Pre-Advent judgment is also implied in Christ's statements about human accountability. Jesus said that the extent of our accountability includes not only acts but also "every careless word" (Matt 12:36). Paul expresses the same thought when he writes that God will judge "the secrets of men by Christ Jesus" (Rom 2:16). Such a thorough investigation of the conduct of the billions of persons who have lived on this planet presupposes a Pre-Advent judicial process because, as noted earlier, the Advent judgment is primarily the moment of final adjudication or separation and not the institution of a judicial investigative process.

In some of His parables, Christ illustrates the principle of human accountability at the final judgment. In Matthew, for example, three parables are given following the Olivet Discourse which illustrate areas of accountability. In the parable of the Ten Virgins the emphasis is on the accountability for our spiritual preparation (Matt 25:1-13). In the parable of the Talents, the area of accountability is the stewardship of our resources such as time, money, and skills (Matt 25:14-30). In the parable of the Sheep and Goats, the area of accountability is our social responsibility toward the needs of others (Matt 25:31-46).

**Dead Resurrected Already Judged.** The accountability of each human being is obviously decided before Christ comes to call forth "those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). The resurrection to life or to condemnation represents Christ's executive judgment which presupposes the termination of the evaluative judgment. In this text Christ indicates that people will be resurrected not to be judged but already judged. If those who are resurrected to eternal life or death were still to be judged, we would have an incongruous situation whereby the results of the judgment would be meted out before the convening of the judgment itself.

The phrase "resurrection of judgment" actually means "resurrection of condemnation," since it is contrasted with the "resurrection of life." This meaning is accurately rendered in the New International Version: "those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." The judgment that decides who "will rise to live" and who "will rise to be condemned" must obviously take place before the resurrection itself. This thought was expressed by Christ in a conversation with the Sadducees when He said that only "those who are accounted worthy" will "attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead" (Luke 20:35).

**The Notion of Separation.** The idea of the separation that will take place at the Coming of Christ between the saved and the unsaved also presupposes a Pre-Advent judgment. Jesus describes this Advent separation in a variety of ways. He compares it to the separation that takes place at harvest time between the wheat and the weeds. Note that the reapers are simply told: “Gather the weeds . . . gather the wheat” (Matt 13:30). There will be no need for them to ascertain which is the wheat and which is the weeds because by harvest time the distinction between the two has already been established.

Jesus illustrates the Advent separation also by the parable of the good and bad fish. In the parable the task of the angels is not to determine who are “the evil” and who are “the righteous,” but simply to separate one from the other (Matt 13:49). The implication is that the determination of the status of each has already taken place.

A dramatic reference to the Advent separation is found in the Olivet Discourse where Jesus, speaking of the day of “the coming of the Son of man,” says: “Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left” (Matt 24:40-41). The sudden separation between the saved and the unsaved presupposes a previous determination of their respective destinies.

**The Sheep and the Goats.** The Advent separation is also compared by Christ to a shepherd who “separates the sheep from the goats,” by placing the former at the right hand and the latter at the left (Matt 25:32-33). In a similar fashion Christ “will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, . . . inherit the kingdom . . .’” and “to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, . . . into the eternal fire’” (Matt 25:34, 41).

Some have interpreted the description of the gathering of all the nations before Christ (Matt 25:32) as representing a universal investigative judgment conducted at the time of Christ’s Return. The description, however, contains only Christ’s invitation and condemnation (Come, . . . Depart . . .) with the respective explanation (“For I was hungry and you gave me food” or “you gave me no food”), but not an investigation of who did or did not act compassionately. The judicial process that led to this determination is presupposed as having already occurred.

**The Wedding Garment.** A Pre-Advent evaluation process is also presupposed in Christ’s parable of “a king who gave a marriage feast for his son” (Matt 22:2). When the original guests refused to come to the marriage feast, the wedding invitation was extended to as many as could be found and “so the wedding hall was filled with guests” (vv. 3-10). The king went to a great deal of expense not only in extending the invitation but also, according to custom, in supplying to each guest a beautiful robe to wear for the occasion. “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment” (v. 11).

Evidently the king examined the guests before the marriage feast began. In Revelation 19, the Coming of Christ is compared to the “marriage of the Lamb” (vv. 7, 17). The consistency of this imagery suggests that the marriage feast of Matthew 22 is an allusion to the celebration that will accompany the Second Advent. The Church, espoused to Christ by faith (Eph 5:32), waits, as in the parable of the Ten Virgins, for the Coming of the Heavenly Groom to celebrate the marriage feast. If this interpretation is correct, then the examination by the king of the wedding guests before the celebration of the marriage feast would represent an evaluation process that will take place before the Coming of Christ.

Ellen White offers this interpretation when she writes: “In the parable of Matthew 22 the same figure of the marriage is introduced, and the investigative judgment is clearly represented as taking place before marriage. Previous to the wedding the king comes in to see the guests, to see if all are attired in the wedding garment, the spotless robe of character washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb . . . This work of examination of character, of determining who are prepared for the kingdom of God, is that of the investigative judgment, the closing work in the sanctuary above.”<sup>1</sup>

This brief survey indicates that the idea of a Pre-Advent evaluative judgment is an underlying assumption in much of Jesus' teaching about the judgment. Each of the themes examined (reward, accountability, and separation) presupposes a Pre-Advent judicial investigation that determines who is "accounted worthy" to attain to the resurrection of life and who to the resurrection of condemnation (Luke 20:35; John 5:28-29). This notion of a Pre-Advent evaluative judgment is implicitly expressed, as we shall now see, by other New Testament writers.

### **The Pre-Advent Judgment in Paul's Writings**

**Emphasis on Certainty.** Paul, like Christ, emphasizes the certainty and inevitability of the final judgment, rather than its modality. He writes that "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; . . . So each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom 14:10-12; cf. 2 Cor 5:10; Acts 17:31).

No explicit explanation is given by Paul regarding the time of this universal accountability before the judgment seat of God. Did Paul associate this universal accountability with the Coming of Christ? If he did, he failed to indicate it, especially in his references to the Second Advent, which he describes as the joyful reunion of believers with their Lord and not as the inauguration of a judicial process that will examine each person who ever lived.

**Revelation Presupposes Investigation.** The Advent judgment is seen by Paul as the disclosure (1 Cor 4:5) or revelation of God's judgment rather than as a process of judicial investigation. In Romans 2:5, he describes it as the time "when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."<sup>2</sup> This revelation will consist of the executive act of Christ who will give "eternal life" to "those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality" and "wrath and fury" to "those who are factious and do not obey the truth" (Rom 2:7-8).

This revelation of "God's righteous judgment" presupposes some prior process of investigation that determines who is to receive the gift of eternal life and who "the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess 1:8-9).

**Dead Judged While Dead.** The same inference can be drawn from Paul's reference to Christ "who is to judge the living and the dead" (2 Tim 4:1; cf. 1 Pet 4:5). The personal presence of defendants is unnecessary, because the existence of a perfect record of each life (Dan 7:10; Ps 69:28; Mal 3:16; Rev 20:12) provides all the necessary evidences for the heavenly court to see.

If the dead are judged while still dead, such judgment must precede the Advent judgment when the resurrection to eternal life or eternal death takes place. We noted earlier that people will be resurrected already judged. By the status of each person at the moment of the resurrection "God's righteous judgment will be revealed" (Rom 2:5). The revelation of God's judgment at the Second Advent presupposes the termination of God's judging before the Advent.

**Judgment Precedes Appearance of Christ.** As Paul comes to the end of his letter to Timothy, he challenges him by reminding him of three vital things about Christ: "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, . . ." (2 Tim 4:1-2).

William Barclay notes the significance of the sequential order of the charge: (1) Judgment, (2) Appearance, (3) Kingdom. This sequence, he points out, reflects the logical progression that leads to the consummation of salvation-history.<sup>3</sup> Christ's judgment of the living and the dead is followed by His appearance which will usher in His eternal Kingdom.

The King James Version places the judgment at the time of Christ's appearing in its translation: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom." This translation has been largely rejected by modern translators and commentators because of conceptual and textual reasons.

Conceptually the judgment would be linked not only to Christ's appearance but also to His Kingdom. Nowhere does the Scripture suggest that Christ will judge the living and the dead in His kingdom. Textually, the preferred Greek text contains the two conjunctions "kai . . . kai" (and . . . and): "and by his appearing and his kingdom" (RSV). The New International Version, like the Revised Standard Version, accurately renders the Greek text: "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: Preach the Word, . . ."

**A Three-Parts Composition.** Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelman note that Paul's charge "is to be regarded as formulaic, as in 1 Tim 5:21."<sup>4</sup> In the latter text Paul's charge to Timothy also contains three elements: "In the presence [1] of God and [2] of Christ Jesus and [3] of the elect angels I charge you . . ." (1 Tim 5:21). The structural similarity between the two charges supports a three-part composition for both.

Moreover, since Paul's charge to Timothy is expressed by a liturgical formula, presumably it represents a basic Christian belief. Liturgical formulas express basic truths of the Christian faith. In such a case, Paul's progressive sequence: Christ's judgment of the living and dead, His appearing and His kingdom, presumably represents the prevailing understanding of the sequence of events leading to the consummation of salvation-history.

**Second Advent Precludes Investigative Judgment.** Of all the New Testament writers, Paul provides the most vivid and informative descriptions of the Second Advent. Our understanding of the manner of Christ's Coming and of the events associated with it would be very deficient if we did not possess Paul's descriptions of this event (1 Thess 4:13-18; 2 Thess 1:7-10; 1 Cor 15:51-58).

The Pauline descriptions, however, exclude the possibility of a universal investigative judgment being set up and conducted by Christ at His Second Advent. This can be seen by looking at the sequence of events given by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:

1. Glorious descent of Christ from heaven (v. 16)
2. Resurrection of the "dead in Christ" (v. 16)
3. Transformation of living believers (v. 17)
4. Meeting of believers with the Lord (v. 17)
5. Eternal communion with the Lord (v. 17)

The shorter description found in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 makes mention only of the immediate outcome of Christ's Coming, namely, "eternal destruction" for the wicked and glorification for the "saints." Both descriptions of the Second Advent make no mention of or allowance for a universal judicial process conducted in conjunction with the Second Advent. The Coming of Christ is followed immediately, not by a judgment process, but by Christ's executive act which resurrects/transforms believers and destroys unbelievers. Any process of evaluation and determination of each human destiny has already taken place before the Parousia.

**A Prevailing Misconception.** Many Christians mistakenly view the resurrection as the preliminary step to the final judgment. Thus, the judgment is regarded as an event distinct from the resurrection and taking place after it. This is not the teaching of Jesus or of Paul or of the rest of the Biblical writers who view the resurrection to life or to death as being the revelation and execution (Jude 15) of God's righteous judgment.

J. A. Seiss perceptively notes in this regard: "The truth is, that the resurrection, and the changes which pass 'in the twinkling of an eye' upon the living, are themselves the fruits and embodiments of antecedent judgment. They are consequences of abjudications then already made."<sup>5</sup>

## **Pre-Advent Judgment in the Book of Revelation**

**Centrality of Judgment.** The theme of judgment is central to the book of Revelation. The book opens with the vision of Christ executing the final judgment upon the wicked: "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him" (1:7). Their reason for mourning is that Christ has come to execute judgment upon impenitent evil hearts. The book closes with the vision of the judgment before the Great White Throne (20:11-15) and with the promise "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done" (22:12).

The rest of the visions are in a sense a series of judgments. First the church is warned about God's judgment if she does not repent (2:5, 16, 26; 3:3, 16, 21). Then a series of judgments are predicted for the heathen world. They begin with the Seven Seals (6-7) and continue with the Seven Trumpets (8-14) and the Seven Plagues (15-16). They close with the description of God's judgment upon Babylon (17-18), the beast and the false prophet (19:20), Satan (20:10) and all the wicked who ever lived (20:12-15). A crescendo is noticeable from the partiality of the preliminary judgments ("a third of"—8:7, 8, 11; 9:15) to the totality of the final judgment ("every living thing"—16:3; "all were judged"—20:13).

The theme of judgment is central in Revelation because it represents God's method of finally overcoming the opposition of evil to Himself and His people. The martyrs who cry for judgment (6:10) are reassured that God will shortly vindicate them. When finally the redeemed stand beside the sea of glass they sing: "O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, . . . for thy judgments have been revealed" (15:3-4).

**Phases of the Final Judgment.** The emphasis on the centrality and finality of God's judgment in Revelation overshadows the concern to differentiate between its phases: Pre-Advent, Advent, Post-Advent judgment. Yet these distinctions are not altogether absent. For example, it is explicitly stated that "judgment was committed" to those who share "in the first resurrection" (20:4, 6).

Evidently this phase of the judgment is conducted after the Advent since its participants shared in the first resurrection associated with Christ's Return. Similarly, the judgment before the Great White Throne presumably takes place after the Second Advent, since it is held before the One from whose "presence earth and sky fled away" (20:11)—a clear allusion to the Second Advent (6:13-14). Thus, the Book of Revelation implicitly recognizes certain distinct phases of the final judgment.

**The Vision of the Lamb.** The Pre-Advent judgment is presupposed in several places. The series of preliminary judgments mentioned earlier anticipate and foreshadow the final judgment. A more specific allusion to a Pre-Advent judgment can be seen in the vision of the Lamb holding the scroll of human destiny, sealed with seven seals (ch. 5). This scroll, which contains the complete destiny of mankind ("written within and on the back"—5:1), rests safely in the "right hand" of God (5:1), as the seven stars rest firmly in the hands of Christ (1:16).

There are at least three reasons why the sealed scroll seems to represent the divine decision-judgment regarding the destiny of every human being. First, the fact that only the Lamb that was slain is worthy to open it (5:9) implies that its content has to do with the decision regarding the salvation or perdition of human beings. Second, Revelation refers several times to "the book of life of the Lamb that was slain" which is said to contain "the names" of the redeemed (13:8; 17:8; 21:27).

Third, the only book that is ever opened in Revelation is “the book of life” during the judgment before the Great White Throne (20:11-12). It is said that “if any one’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (20:15). The removal of the seals by the Lamb, which results in the manifestation of preliminary divine judgments upon mankind, seems designed to build up to the climactic moment when the suspense is broken by the opening of the book, which discloses who is to be punished with “the second death” (20:14).

**Judicial Elements of the Vision.** This vision of the Lamb holding the sealed scroll, technically speaking, does not appear as a judgment session. Yet under closer scrutiny the vision contains some clear judicial elements. The image of the Lamb, for example, which is used 29 times in Revelation, as John A. Bollier notes in his perceptive study on “Judgment in the Apocalypse,” is “the predominant symbol representing Christ as Judge.”<sup>6</sup>

The title “Lamb” is used interchangeably with “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (5:5). Thus the figure of the Lamb represents not so much the meek and mild aspect of Christ, but rather His victory which gives Him authority to judge. The wicked fear “the wrath of the Lamb” (6:16).

The Lamb is surrounded by living creatures, elders, and “many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands” (5:11). This vision is reminiscent of the judgment scene found in Daniel 7 where “a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; and the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened” (Dan 7:10).

**Approval of Judgment.** In Revelation the multitude of heavenly beings do not sit in judgment before opened books, but rather ascribe to the Lamb the right “to take the scroll and to open its seals” (5:9). They are satisfied to let Christ reveal and proclaim the final verdict regarding human destinies because they acknowledge that He was “slain” and by His “blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” (5:9).

By acknowledging the right of Christ to open the scroll and reveal God’s verdict regarding human destinies, these heavenly beings implicitly approve the judgment process which has already taken place. Their approval is determined by their understanding of how God’s justice and mercy have been manifested through the Lamb who has ransomed people of “every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (5:9).

This vindication of the justice of God’s government is a vital function of the Pre-Advent judgment, to be discussed later. At this juncture we conclude that the vision of the Lamb holding the sealed scroll in its own unique way implies a Pre-Advent judgment in which heavenly beings express their approval of God’s final judgment and of Christ’s right to reveal that judgment by opening the seals.

**The Announcement of Judgment.** A clearer portrayal of the Pre-Advent judgment is found in Revelation 14. This chapter contains three distinct visions, each introduced by the phrase: “Then I looked . . .” (14:1, 6, 14). The first vision presents the 144,000 singing the song of triumph before God’s throne (14:3). They are said to be the “first fruits” of the redeemed (14:4). This vision introduces the next two visions, the first of which announces God’s judgment (14:6-13) and the second of which describes its execution (14:14-20).

The function of the introductory vision is to offer to believers the assurance of divine vindication on the day of the judgment. In the light of this setting the proclamation of God’s judgment that follows is not a moral deterrent, but a moral stimulant to live “chaste,” “spotless” lives (14:4-5) in the expectation to “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (14:4).

The second vision describes three angels flying in mid-heaven, proclaiming three judgment messages. The first angel declares: "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water" (14:7). The second angel announces God's judgment upon Babylon (14:8) and the third warns people about God's judgment upon those who worship the beast and its image (14:9-11).

**The Last Call to Repentance.** The third vision portrays dramatically the execution of the final judgment by Christ at His Coming by means of the imagery of the harvest (14:14-20). It is noteworthy that the harvest of the earth is preceded by the announcement that "the hour of his judgment has come" (14:7). This announcement is designated as the "eternal gospel" (14:6). This means that the time of judgment that precedes the execution of the final judgment at Christ's Coming is not a time of no return, but rather the time when God sounds the last call to repentance. The Pre-Advent judgments in Revelation, as aptly stated by John A. Bollier, "are educative in purpose rather than vindictive or retributive. They are meant to bring both the church and the world to repentance."<sup>7</sup>

**The Timing of the Judgment.** The timing of the announcement that "the hour of his judgment has come" is significant. It comes, as noted by John A. Bollier, between the end of the first two series of judgments (seven seals and seven trumpets—chs. 6 to 13) and beginning of the last series of judgments (seven plagues, punishment of Babylon, of the beast, the false prophet, Satan and the wicked—chs. 15 to 20).<sup>8</sup> What this means is that the judgment announced by the first angel begins before the outpouring of the seven last plagues, which terminate with the Coming of Christ (16:15).

The Pre-Advent nature of the first angel's judgment-message is indicated by the fact that it precedes the third vision of the same chapter which describes the two harvests reaped by Christ at His Coming. The first is the harvest of the grain which represents the gathering of the righteous into God's Kingdom (14:14-16). The second is the harvest of the grapes which refers to the vintage of God's wrath manifested in the condemnation of the wicked (14:17-20).

The fact that the announcement about the beginning of the judgment is made before Christ comes "for the harvest of the earth" (14:15) suggests that his is the Pre-Advent phase of the final judgment. This is a time when not only an evaluative judgment is conducted in heaven, but also God's last call to repentance is given on this earth.

As in the typical Levitical system the trumpets were blown ten days before the Day of Atonement to call the people to repentance during the Pre-Atonement judgment, so in the antitypical service an angel announces with loud voice that "the hour of his judgment has come" and calls upon mankind to repent and worship God during the Pre-Advent judgment and before the Advent harvest.

## **Pre-Advent Judgment in the Book of Daniel**

**Judgment Vision.** The seventh chapter of the book of Daniel describes a most impressive judgment vision which sheds light on the nature and timing of the Pre-Advent judgment. The chapter is structured in three parts and each of them climaxes with a court scene in heaven around the throne of "the Ancient of Days."

In the first part (7:1-14) Daniel describes a vision in which he saw an unfolding of historical powers symbolized by the successive arising out of the sea of four great beasts, each different from the other. Daniel is astonished by the dreadfulness of the fourth beast out of which arises a persecuting power represented by a little horn with "eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things" (7:8).

While observing the little horn, Daniel's gaze shifts heavenward where he sees the dazzling appearance of the Ancient of Days seated on His throne: "a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment and the books were opened" (7:9-10). While viewing this celestial tribunal, Daniel's gaze shifts back momentarily earthward, where he sees God's judgment being visited upon the insolent despot and the beasts (7:11-12).

Then Daniel's gaze shifts back again to heaven where he sees "a son of man" coming to "the Ancient of Days" to receive His eternal dominion and Kingdom "which shall not pass away" (7:13-14). It is noteworthy that the celestial judgment in this first scene begins after the appearance of the insolent Little Horn, and before the Coming of the Son of Man to receive the eternal Kingdom. Thus the sequence of events clearly indicates that the heavenly judgment described in verses 9-10 precedes the Coming of Christ to establish God's eternal kingdom.

**The Explanation of the Vision.** In the second part of the chapter (7:15-22), Daniel asks for and receives the explanation of the meaning of the four beasts. He is told that the four beasts represent four kings, the last of which will give rise to a power which will make war against "the saints" (7:21). The persecution of the saints by this despotic power will continue "until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom" (7:22).

This second part adds some details to the judgment scene of vv. 9-10, by explaining that the judgment concerns both the persecuting power and the persecuted saints. The outcome of the judgment is the reception of the kingdom by the saints. Here, as in the first court scene, the heavenly judgment is a process that precedes the establishment of God's Kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

**An Additional Explanation.** In the third part of the chapter (7:23-28), the angel returns and gives to Daniel an additional explanation about the terrible fourth beast (7:23-24) and especially about the powerful apostate "little horn" who will endeavor to "wear out the saints of the Most High, and . . . to change the times and the law" (7:25).

The climax of this vision, as in the previous two, is again the heavenly court which sits "in judgment," condemns the godless tyrant and divests him of all power (7:26). These heavenly judicial proceedings result in the giving of the eternal kingdom "to the people of the saints of the Most High" (7:27).

**Time of the Judgment.** We noted that each of the three parts of Daniel 7 climaxes with the scene of a heavenly judgment and in each instance this judgment stands in historical sequence after the war against the saints by the despotic little horn and before the Coming of Christ to establish God's eternal kingdom.

The complete historical sequence runs as follows: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rom, ten horns, apostate horn, judgment, Coming of the Son of Man, establishment of God's eternal Kingdom. This sequence indicates that the judgment is not an executive act carried out on this earth at the time of Christ's Return, but the evaluative process conducted in heaven before myriads of heavenly beings prior to the Second Advent.

**A Comparison with Revelation 5.** A parallel vision is found in Revelation 5 where, as already noted, myriads of heavenly beings surround the throne of God, expressing their approval of the worthiness of the Lamb to open the scroll which contains God's verdict regarding human destinies. Both in the vision of Daniel 7 and in that of Revelation 5, all the angelic hosts are present to give their approval to God's judgment regarding the destiny of mankind.

In the former vision they are seen as participating in the judgment process, while in the latter they are shown as expressing their approval of the right of the Lamb to reveal God's final judgment. In a sense, these two judgment visions are complementary since they indicate that heavenly beings participate in the final judgment both by investigating the records and by approving Christ's right to reveal the final verdict. The large participation of heavenly beings in this Pre-Advent judgment suggests that this is one of the greatest events of salvation-history.

**Sanctuary Vision of Daniel 8.** The vision of Daniel 8 covers much the same ground as that of Daniel 7, but it defines more precisely the commencement of the Pre-Advent judgment. The judgment scene of Daniel 7 is thematically linked to the purification ("cleansing") of the sanctuary in Daniel 8. The time of the latter is clearly eschatological since the angel repeatedly explains to Daniel that "the visions is for the time of the end" (8:17; cf. vv. 19, 26).

The End-time is linked to the time prophecy of Daniel 8:14 where a heavenly being says: "For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state." The "restoration" or "cleansing" (KJV) of the sanctuary occurred in Old Testament times annually on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29-30). This event, as will be shown shortly, typologically represented the final judgment that will bring about the eradication of sin. On the basis of the terminological and contextual connection which exists between Daniel 8 and 9—a connection recognized by several scholars<sup>10</sup>—Seventh-day Adventists believe that the seventy-weeks prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 provides the starting point of the 2300 day-year prophecy of Daniel 8:14.<sup>11</sup>

The starting point of both prophecies is the first decree of Artaxerxes of 457 B.C. (Dan 9:25) which provided for the repatriation of the Jews and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Accordingly, the endpoint of time of the 2300 day-year prophecy falls into the year A.D. 1844. Since that time the Pre-Advent phase of Christ's heavenly ministry has been going on. The nature of this ministry will be clarified shortly in our study of the typology of the Day of Atonement.

**The Scope of the Judgment.** The scope of the Pre-Advent judgment described in Daniel 7 and 8 includes both a judgment against the enemies of truth, of God and His people (7:25-27; 8:11-14, 23-25) and a judgment in favor of "the saints of the Most High" (7:22). In either case this judgment discloses the "rightness" of the divine verdict of salvation or punishment.

This judicial process is conducted on the basis of a perfect record of each human life kept in so-called "books": "the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened" (7:10). Here Daniel does not explain which books were opened. The Scripture, as mentioned earlier, refers to several books (Mal 3:16; Ps. 69:28; Rev 3:5; 20:12; Phil 4:3). Whatever these books are, they must contain a record of all the relevant "facts" which include motives as well as overt and covert actions. These data enable the heavenly assize to evaluate and thus vindicate the "rightness" of God's judgment.

**The Outcome of the Judgment.** The outcome of this judicial process described in Daniel 7 is the complete destruction of God's enemies ("destroyed to the end"—7:26) and the reception of the "everlasting kingdom" by "the people of the saints of the Most High" (7:27). The finality of this outcome indicates that this is the final judgment which determines the eternal destiny of each human being.

This final outcome is described in similar terms in the vision of Daniel 12. In the latter, Daniel is shown Michael delivering during the "time of trouble . . . every one whose name shall be found written in the book" (12:1). The verdicts contained in "the book" presumably determine also who is to have part in the resurrection "to everlasting life" or in the resurrection "to shame and everlasting contempt" (12:2).

In Daniel 12, there is no mention of any judicial process but reference is made to the execution of the verdicts contained in “the book,” namely, the resurrection to eternal life for some and to eternal contempt for others. This executive phase presupposes the evaluative phase described in Daniel 7. Thus Daniel 12:1-3 complements the judgment vision of Daniel 7 by describing the outcome of the latter in terms of resurrection to “everlasting life” or “everlasting contempt.”

The “books” which are opened in Daniel 7:10 to inaugurate the Pre-Advent judgment are the basis that determines which “name shall be found written in the book” of Daniel 12:1, when eternal destinies are adjudicated. Revelation presumably refers to the same book when it says: “if any one’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15). In short, Daniel 7 describes the evaluative phase of the final judgment which determines the eternal destiny of every human being and which precedes the executive phase when the actual granting of rewards and punishment will take place.

### Pre-Advent Judgment in the Typology of the Day of Atonement

**A Time of Judgment.** The need for a final judgment, in both its investigative and executive phases, was effectively taught in Old Testament times through the rituals of the Day of Atonement. The great Day of Atonement was viewed as a time of solemn judgment which dealt in a total and final way with the accumulated sins of Israel. This annual day of judgment and cleansing was rendered necessary by the sins which symbolically had been transferred and accumulated in the sanctuary during the daily atonement through the rite of blood (Lev 4:5, 6, 16-18) and the rite of eating the sacrificial flesh by the priest (Lev 6:24-30; 10:18).

These accumulated sins of Israel were disposed of in a corporate (“all their/your sins”—Lev 16:16, 22, 30, 34) and conclusive (“you shall be clean”—Lev 16:30) manner, through the elaborate ritual of the Day of Atonement, which included a sacrifice for the priest, a sacrifice for the people, and the release of Azazel (Lev 16).

**A Judgment Process.** The final disposition of Israel’s sins was the outcome of a judgment process which began on the first day of the seventh month (New Year) with a “blast of trumpets” (Lev 23:23) to usher in a period of repentance. This period of soul-searching which lasted ten days, that is, until the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:27), was in a sense an investigative judgment during which God judged in a total and final way the accumulated sins of Israel.

The judgment nature of this period was clearly established by the rabbis who taught: “The judgment is passed on New Year and the decree is sealed on the Day of Atonement.”<sup>12</sup> The judgment-function of the Day of Atonement is also indicated by the fact that people were asked to “afflict” themselves (Num 29:7), that is, to repent and to confess their sins. Anyone who refused to participate in this corporate repentance was to be “cut off from his people” (Lev 23:29).<sup>13</sup>

**Judgment Ritual.** The judgment-nature of the Day of Atonement can be seen also in the ritual performed on that day. It was only on that day that the high priest appeared before the Shekinah glory of God, which was manifested above the ark of the covenant (the throne of God’s judgment—Rev 7:15; Ps 99:1; 80:1), to present the cases of all the people.

Inside the ark were the tables of the law (Ex 40:20), representing the moral standard of God’s judgment (Ps 89:13-14). The believer did not appear in person before God’s judgment throne, but waited expectantly and penitentially while the high priest presented his case before God. This ritual effectively symbolized, as we shall see, Christ’s entrance into the heavenly sanctuary “to appear in the presence of God on our behalf” (Heb 9:24).

**A Time of Vindication.** The judgment of the Day of Atonement was not intended to be punitive but redemptive. It was a day in which the Israelite was vindicated by God before his fellow beings and before the universe. This redemption/vindication was expressed in a variety of ways. For example, the focal point of the priestly atonement was the mercy seat (cover of the ark where blood was sprinkled seven times (Lev 16:14-15) to reassure the people that God had fully “covered” their sins.

The vindication of the believer was in a sense the vindication of God’s justice manifested in saving those who accepted His atonement for their sins. Such a vindication was finally shown through the rite of the goat Azazel upon which were symbolically transferred Israel’s sins (Lev 16:21). Azazel, as symbol of Satan (Enoch 6:7—“chief of fallen angels”), was taken into the wilderness to pass away (Lev 16:21-22) and thus indicate the permanent removal and elimination of sin.

**Jubilee Celebration.** The finality of the cleansing and elimination of sin was also expressed through the blasting of the ram’s horn (“yobel” from which “jubilee” derives—Lev 25:9) at the close of the services of the Day of Atonement to usher in the New Year and the Jubilee Year every 49th year.

It is noteworthy that the liberation and restoration of the Jubilee Year was ushered in by the cleansing and new moral beginning granted by God to His people on the Day of Atonement. This may explain why the imagery of the Jubilee’s trumpet blast is used in the Scripture to describe both the messianic ingathering of the exiles (Is 27:13; Zech 9:9-14) and the Return of Christ (Matt 24:31; 1 Thess 4:16; 1 Cor 15:52).

All of this shows that the Day of Atonement marked the end of the judgment process of sin and resulted in the beginning of a new order. It symbolized God’s final and conclusive disposition of the sins of the people as a whole and the restoration of a new covenant relationship.

## **The Heavenly Antitypical Day of Atonement**

**The Reality of the Heavenly Sanctuary.** The momentous typological significance of the Day of Atonement as a judgment process resulting in the final cleansing and vindication of God’s people points to corresponding redemptive activities performed by Christ. The Scripture teaches the existence of this correspondence by explaining how the earthly sanctuary and its services typified the corresponding greater reality of the heavenly sanctuary is established especially in Hebrews by means of vertical and horizontal typologies.

Vertically, the heavenly sanctuary is presented as the “true tent” (Heb 8:2), the “perfect tent” (Heb 9:11; cf. 9:24), of which the earthly one was a “symbolic” pattern (Heb 9:9; cf. 8:5; Act 7:44; Ex 25:40). Similarly, the priestly services and sacrifices of the earthly tabernacle are seen as a “copy and shadow” (Heb 8:5) of the “more excellent” (8:6) High Priestly ministry conducted by Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 7:24-25; 8:4, 11-13; 10:11-21).

Horizontally, the past (before Calvary) typological services of the earthly sanctuary (Heb 9:6-9) are viewed as fulfilled and superseded by the present heavenly intercession and mediation of Christ (Heb 9:9, 11-14). The existence of a real heavenly sanctuary where Christ ministers as High Priest and Intercessor is also attested by the numerous Biblical references to a heavenly sanctuary-temple or parts of it (Is 6:1; Ezek 10:3; Rev 1:13; 7:15; 11:19; 14:17-18).

**Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary.** The typological correspondence between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries presupposes a correspondence between them in the priestly ministry performed. In the earthly sanctuary, the priestly ministry consisted of two phases: (1) a daily service of intercession in the Holy Place, and (2) an annual service of judgment and cleansing in the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement. These two phases of intercession and judgment find their correspondence in Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

**Intercession.** The first phase of Christ's ministry of intercession began at the time of His ascension to heaven and installation at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33-34; 7:56; Heb 8:1-2). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is seen as the evidence of the official enthronement of Christ to His heavenly ministry (Acts 2:33). The installation of Christ to His heavenly ministry is reflected in those passages which speak of His sitting at the right hand of God (Acts 2:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13).

The meaning of "sitting" as intercessory ministry is explained especially in Hebrews 8:1-2, where Christ is presented as the "high priest, . . . seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent." Through His intercessory ministry, Christ sustains the Church (Rev 1:13, 20), mediates repentance and forgiveness to believers (Acts 5:31; 1 John 2:1-2; 1:9), makes our prayers acceptable to God (John 16:23-24; Rev 8:3), and provides us with the invisible and yet real assistance of His angels (Heb 1:14; Rev 5:6; 1:16,20).

**Judgment.** The second and final phase of Christ's heavenly ministry involves, as in the earthly sanctuary, a judgment process which results in the final disposition of sin and the jubilee-celebration at His Second Coming. This final phase of Christ's heavenly ministry represents not a replacement of, but an addition to the work of intercession. The special sacrifices of the Day of Atonement were offered in addition to the "continual [daily] burnt offering" (Num 29:11).

Intercession is intrinsically related to judgment because the positive or negative response to the gift of salvation offered through Christ's intercession presupposes a final judgment that reveals what each response has been. Both intercession and judgment are the work of the same High Priest. Intercession is Christ's work in actualizing His redemptive love manifested at the cross. Judgment is Christ's work in realizing His redemption in a final and conclusive way at the end of history. Thus the difference between the two is one of perspective: intercession is the work of Christ viewed from the perspective of His First Advent. Judgment is the work of Christ viewed from the perspective of His Second Advent.

**The Cleansing of the Heavenly Sanctuary.** The Scripture alludes to the final phase of Christ's heavenly ministry in a variety of ways. Hebrews, for example, establishes a correspondence between the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary and that of the heavenly sanctuary: "Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things [the earthly tabernacle and its vessels—9:21-22] to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (9:23). This text emphasizes the necessity of the "cleansing" of the "heavenly things" and its accomplishment through the "better sacrifice" of Christ which does not need to be repeated annually as did the typical Day of Atonement (9:25).<sup>14</sup>

How is the heavenly sanctuary cleansed? Hebrews recognizes past, a present, and a future aspect in Christ's removal of sin represented by the Day of Atonement. In the past, Christ "has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (9:26). In the present ("now"), Christ appears in the presence of God on our behalf" (9:24). In the future, Christ "will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (9:28).<sup>15</sup>

The past, the present, and the future ministry of Christ are in Hebrews ideologically connected because they are all dependent upon the same “once for all” sacrifice on the Cross. It is the same atoning sacrifice that enables Christ to fulfill the two phases of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary: intercession and judgment.

**An “Already” and a “Not-Yet” Fulfillment.** In a sense the Cross represents an “already” fulfillment of the Levitical Day of Atonement, since through it Christ “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb 9:26). This, however, does not lessen the “not-yet” future and final aspect of Christ ministry. The principle of a double fulfillment—“an already and not-yet”—is common in the New Testament. The author of Hebrews recognizes that the Cross does not exhaust Christ’s redemptive ministry, because he explains that Christ not only “appeared” in the past “to put away sin” but also appears now in the present before God’s presence and “will appear” in the future to save.

The ministry of Christ “in the presence of God on our behalf” (9:24) includes both a work of intercession and a work of judgment. Regarding the first, Hebrews says that Christ “always lives to make intercession for them” (7:25). Regarding the second, Hebrews suggests that the work of the investigative judgment will be completed before Christ comes. This suggestion is made by means of the following comparison: “And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (9:27-28).

**Pre-Advent Judgment.** In this passage the author correlates human death which will be followed by the final judgment (cf. Heb 10:26-27) with Christ’s atoning death which will be followed by His Second Advent. In this correlation, the judgment is placed in correspondence with the Second Advent. Yet the judgment implicitly precedes the Second Advent because the author says that the latter does not “deal with sin.” Christ “will appear a second time,” not to judge but “to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (9:28).

The implication is that the judgment process that decides who is to receive the gift of eternal life is completed before Christ comes. As the appearance of the High Priest out of the sanctuary at the end of the Day of Atonement marked the completion of the judgment process which resulted in the final disposition of sin and the inauguration of a new covenant relationship with God, so Christ’s Second Advent appearance at the end of the antitypical Day of Atonement marks the completion of the process of judgment which results in the bestowal of eternal life to those “who are eagerly waiting for him” (9:28).

The above survey indicates that the concept of a Pre-Advent evaluative judgment is clearly implied in different ways in the Scripture. This concept is an underlying assumption of much of the teachings of Jesus and of Paul. More explicit descriptions of the Pre-Advent judgment are found in the apocalyptic judgment visions of Daniel (chs. 7 and 8) and Revelation (chs. 5 and 14).

Valuable insights into the Pre-Advent judgment work of Christ are provided also by the typological correspondence which Hebrews establishes between the ministry of the Day of Atonement performed by the high priest in the earthly sanctuary and that performed by Christ in the heavenly. These cumulative indications point convincingly to a Pre-Advent phase of the final judgment.

## PART TWO THE POST-ADVENT PHASE OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT

### The Fact of a Post-Advent Judgment

**The Testimony of Christ.** Several Scriptural passages clearly attest that a judgment will be conducted by the redeemed after Christ's Return. Christ promised to His followers that "in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt 19:28).

The number twelve, which is used in this verse to refer both to thrones and to tribes, must not be understood as referring exclusively to the twelve disciples judging only the twelve literal tribes of Israel, but rather inclusively to all Christ's followers judging all the unsaved. This interpretation is supported both by the symbolic meaning of the number twelve, which stands for the totality of God's people, and by other passages to be considered below which speak inclusively of all the redeemed participating in the judgment of all the unsaved.

**The Testimony of Paul.** In rebuking the Corinthians for taking fellow-believers to court, Paul makes this startling statement: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, matters pertaining to this life!" (1 Cor 6:2-3).

Three points in this statement deserve attention. First Paul's rhetorical question ("Do you not know . . . ?") implies that it was a well-known fact that the saints "will judge the world." Thus the doctrine of the redeemed participating in a Post-Advent judgment process is viewed by Paul as a well-known and established fact.

Second, "the saints will judge the world." Obviously "the world" must be the world of the unsaved, otherwise the saints would be judging themselves. The fact that the "saints" are doing the judging implies that they themselves have already been judged in the Pre-Advent judgment which has granted them admission into God's kingdom.

Third, the saints will judge also the "angels." The reference here must be to the fallen angels whom, according to Peter, God has "kept until the judgment" (2 Pet 2:4; cf. Jude 6). In summary, according to Paul, the resurrected saints will participate in a Post-Advent judgment process that will examine the cases of both the unsaved human beings and the fallen angels.

**The Testimony of John.** John the Revelator corroborates and elaborates the above testimonies in his description of the millennial reign of the saints: "Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection!" (Rev 20:4-6).

This passage informs us first of all that a work of judgment is committed to redeemed persons. The identity of these people has been disputed. Many interpreters limit them to the "martyrs" who have died "for their testimony to Jesus." The language in Greek, however, suggests two groups, as correctly translated by the NIV: "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus" (Rev 20:4).

In other words, John envisaged two groups: one larger group of all the saints to whom judgment was given and then a smaller group—the martyrs—who are singled out for special mention. This interpretation harmonizes also with Christ's promise found in Revelation that all His followers would share in His throne (Rev 3:21; 2:26; 5:9-10; cf. Matt 19:28; 1 Cor 6:2).

This passage tells us also that the saints will begin their work of judgment after they come to life at the time of the first resurrection. The latter is differentiated from the resurrection of "the rest of the dead" who come to life a thousand years later to be destroyed in the lake of fire. The time of the first resurrection is the Second Advent of Christ, which is symbolically portrayed in the preceding narrative through the imagery of a dazzling rider on a white horse coming with the armies of heaven (Rev 19:11-16).

The outcome of Christ's Coming is the destruction of the beast, the false prophet, and the wicked, and the chaining of Satan (Rev 19:17 to 20:3). In the context of these events which transpire at Christ's coming, John sees the enthronement of the saints who begin a work of judgment. The above testimonies of Jesus, Paul, and John make it abundantly clear that there is a Post-Advent phase of the final judgment which is conducted by the resurrected saints.

### **The Scope and the Basis of the Post-Advent Judgment**

**The Scope.** The Post-Advent judgment will include all the unbelievers and fallen angels who ever existed. This total inclusiveness is expressed in a variety of ways. We noted that Jesus said that the judgment will include "the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt 19:28). Paul speaks of the saints judging "the world" and "angels" (1 Cor 6:2-3). John expresses this inclusiveness in a most dramatic way: "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened . . . And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done" (Rev 20:12-13).

No matter how important ("great") or unimportant ("small") a person may have been, no one will be immune from the final judgment. No matter how a person died, he will be brought to life to appear before the judgment seat of God. Contrary to the prevailing notion that only those who died on dry land would rise from the dead, John says that even those who drowned and were lost in the bottom of the sea will be revived to stand before God in judgment. In this final judgment are included not only impenitent human beings, but also "the devil and his angels" (Matt 25:41; cf. Rev 20:10).

**The Basis.** The judgment is conducted on the basis of evidences supplied both by the record contained in the books of the deeds and by the record found in the book of life. These two kinds of books are mentioned in Revelation. The first of these apparently contains the record of human deeds: "And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done" (Rev 20:12). The parallelism suggests that the content of the books is the record of "what they had done." We have seen that the idea of the judgment based on the records of people's deeds is common in the Scripture. "The court sat in judgment," says Daniel, "and the books were opened" (Dan 7:10).

Earlier we have shown that there is no conflict between judgment according to works and justification by faith apart from works because the works that save are those that derive from an active, working faith. By the same token, the works that will condemn people are the evil deeds that derive from unfaithfulness to God.

The concept of a record kept by God of each person's deeds suggests that each person is writing his or her own destiny. Through the life we daily live, we are acquiring a record that will bring us either shame or honor in the final judgment. In a sense it is not so much God judging each person as it is each person writing his or her own final judgment.

**The Purpose.** The other book is called “the book of life”: “Also another book was opened, which is the book of life . . . and if any one’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:12, 15). This is the book which contains the names of all those who have believed in Christ. Both the Old and New Testaments often speak of the book including all the names of the righteous (Ex 32:32-33; Dan 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 21:27).

The relationship between the books of deeds and the book of life is not clear. Austin M. Farrer aptly suggests that those whose names are missing from the book of life are given the chance to understand the reason by checking the books containing the record of their lives.<sup>16</sup>

It seems plausible that this verification is also part of the judgment process performed by the saints. As stated at the introduction of this chapter, there will be surprises in God’s Kingdom as some of the respected “saints” will be absent and some of the reputed “sinners” will be present. The book of deeds will explain why some names are present while others are absent from the book of life. Thus an important function of the Post-Advent judgment, like that of the Pre-Advent judgment, is to enable moral beings fully to understand and accept the justice of God’s judgments.

### **The Relationship Between the Pre-Advent and the Post-Advent Judgment**

**Similarities.** A comparison between the Pre-Advent and the Post-Advent phases of the final judgment suggests several similarities and some differences. There is a conceptual similarity between the description of the Pre-Advent judgment found in Daniel 7 and that of the Post-Advent judgment found in Revelation 20. George Eldon Ladd notes, for example, that in both passages are mentioned the seeing of thrones, the setting of a judgment, the presence of many beings and the reception of the Kingdom by the saints. To these can be added the opening of books and the destruction of God’s opponent (Little Horn—Satan).<sup>17</sup>

There is also a functional similarity. Both the Pre-Advent and Post-Advent judgments are a judicial process that precedes God’s executive act of granting final rewards or punishments. Both are designed to enable moral intelligences to evaluate and accept the justice of God’s judgment in saving some and condemning others. Both decide eternal destinies of intelligent, moral beings.

**Differences.** There are also some differences. While the Pre-Advent judgment is held in the presence of unfallen heavenly beings, the Post-Advent judgment is conducted before saved human beings. While the former reveals God’s justice in saving believers, the latter reveals His justice in punishing unbelievers. While the former results in Christ’s Coming to grant eternal life to the righteous, the latter terminates with the eternal destruction of the wicked.

## PART THREE THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT

The study of the various aspects, phases, and outcome of the final judgment raises questions on its overall significance. What does this doctrine of the final judgment tell us about God's nature, His relationship to the universe, the outcome of the conflict between good and evil, the value of human life and actions, our attitude toward God, and our view of ourselves? We will attempt to answer questions such as these by considering four major theological implications of the doctrine of the final judgment.

### **A Transcendent Moral Order**

**Security to our World.** The final judgment points first of all to the existence of a transcendent moral order in the universe. It tells us that there is a supreme Moral Arbiter in this universe who is working out His eternal purposes. This message has tremendous significance in our time when the world seems out of control.

At a time when disorder, hate, immorality, wars, and senseless destruction of human life and property prevail, the message of the judgment reassures us that the eternal destiny of each individual and of the world as a whole is not in the hands of some mad, blind forces, but in the hands of our Almighty God. "He's got the whole world in His Hands." The scroll of human destiny rests safely in the hands of the Lamb (Rev 5:7).

The judgment conducted around God's throne, in the presence of myriads of beings and on the basis of a perfect record of each individual, tells us that there is a moral order governing this universe, an order to which each individual is ultimately accountable. Those who think they have fooled everybody and every system will be surprised to discover that they never fooled God. The final judgment will disclose all their deeds and punish them accordingly.

**Meaning to Human Existence.** By pointing to a moral order that governs the universe, the doctrine of the final judgment gives meaning to our human existence. To be truly human means to express moral sensitivity, moral responsibility, and moral choices. This would not be possible if a moral order did not exist.

It would be frightening to live in a world where there was a total breakdown of the moral and civil order, where everyone was a law unto himself. The final judgment constantly reminds us that we cannot flaunt God's moral principles with impunity because "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor 5:10).

The reality of the moral order attested by the final judgment makes all our actions, decisions, and choices significant because they have both immediate and ultimate consequences. The violation of moral principles cannot be ignored or taken lightly, because it represents an act of rebellion against God, the Moral Ruler of the universe. This rebellion results in separation from our only Source of being (Is 59:2) and in a process of self-destruction. The final judgment reveals God's concern to terminate destructive rebellion in order to restore eternal security to the universe.

**Substance to our Faith.** The final judgment challenges us to substantiate our faith in God not only through words but also through deeds. It reminds us that our relation to God, the Moral Ruler of the Universe, is based not merely on the profession but on the practice of our faith. At the final judgment, Christ will invite into His kingdom "not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' . . . but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 7:21).

"Works" are the criteria of the final judgment because, as noted earlier, they substantiate faith. Salvation is a divine gift that brings upon us a divine claim "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-13).

**Seriousness to our Living.** All of this means that the way we live our daily life is most important. The final judgment gives seriousness to our daily living. Our day-by-day round of thoughts, words, deeds, and attitudes counts for eternity. When the records will be examined in the final judgment, daily living will reveal what kind of persons we have been. Have we lived self-centered lives ignoring God's moral principles, or God-centered lives reflecting His moral values?

Mankind needs to hear the message of the final judgment. When governor Felix invited Paul to speak to him, the Apostle used the opportunity to talk not about the social unrest in Palestine or the political situation in the Empire, but rather "about justice and self-control and future judgment" (Acts 24:25).

The three are interrelated because it is the final judgment that challenges a person to live justly and temperately. "Felix was alarmed" by such a challenge, but he chose to ignore it. Many today, like Felix, would rather not hear about the final judgment, preferring to live under the false assumption that they will never have to give account for their immoral and intemperate behavior.

**Sobering Effect on Living.** One day I asked a Capuchin monk—a classmate at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome—why some of their rosaries had a little skull attached to them. He replied: "To remind us constantly of death. When we think about death we are less apt to sin." In Catholic theology, death is in a sense the time of judgment because it is at that moment that each person receives the eternal reward or punishment.

We disagree with the Catholic timing of the final judgment, but we wholeheartedly agree with the view that the thought of judgment can have a sobering effect on our living. Perhaps, instead of carrying a skull, we may wish to hang in a visible place the motto: "Remember the Final Judgment!" Such an awareness can constantly remind us of the seriousness of our living.

## **A Revelation of Individual Worth**

**God Views Each Person as Important.** The fact that the apocalyptic description of the Pre-Advent and Post-Advent judgment mentions "books" where our "names," thoughts, attitudes, and actions are recorded indicates that God places great value on each individual person. In a society where people are often regarded as cogs in a machine, numbers in a computer, it is reassuring to know that God places a transcendent significance on our personal identity. He has written the name of each believer "before the foundation of the world in the book of life" (Rev 13:8).

A name in the Scripture often represents the character and personality of the person it designates (Ex 6:3; Acts 1:15; Rev 3:4). This means that God knows us not merely by our first name or family name, but He knows us as a total person and preserves a perfect record of the totality of our personality. In the sight of God, the meaning and destiny of our life is determined not by our church affiliation, our family lineage, or our racial belonging, but by the values and decisions which characterize our personality.

**God Views Each Action as Important.** The importance which God attaches to each person extends to the single decisions and actions. The final judgement teaches us that nothing we do is worthless or inconsequential in the sight of God. Even the "careless word" (Matt 12:36) is considered in the investigative phase of the final judgment. A reason is that careless, thoughtless talk is often a most accurate reflection of our inner self. Moreover, "idle talk" may sometimes have even a greater impact on others than "serious talk." Thus, every thought, word, and action is potentially determinative of our destiny.

**Moral Worth to Living.** The far-reaching inclusiveness of the final judgment is awesome. Yet at the same time the thought that all we do, think, and say matters in God's sight makes our life worth living. The fact that even the most insignificant action, such as the giving of a cup of cold water (Matt 10:42; 25:35-40), will not go unnoticed gives a sense of dignity, of importance to all that we do, think, and say.

Sometimes it seems that even our highest motives and best efforts are misunderstood. The judgment gives us courage to face human misunderstanding and criticism, reassuring us that God understands and takes notice of all our overt and covert actions. Nothing is ignored in the sight of God and everything will receive due consideration in the final judgment. In summary, to live without the consciousness of the final judgment means to be robbed of the sense of awfulness, grandeur, and moral worth this event gives to our life.

### **A Vindication of God's Justice and Mercy**

The Biblical concept of the final judgment defined in this chapter raises some vital questions: Why does the Scripture speak of a final judgment process through which God terminates the problem of sin in this universe? Does God need a judicial process to gather information necessary to execute a just universal judgment? Why does the Scripture mention heavenly and human beings participating in a judicial process regarding the eternal destiny of moral beings? Seventh-day Adventists believe that the answers given to these questions are important because they can help us understand and appreciate God's final solution to the present conflict between good and evil.

**God is not Seeking New Information.** In the first place, it must be understood that the investigative phases of the final judgment are not intended to supply God with information which He does not already have. After all, God is the Author of the books which are used in His final judgment. The heavenly records represent not the acquisition on the part of God of new knowledge, but the revelation of old knowledge to moral intelligences.

One of the most telling evidences that God is not seeking new information through an investigative judgment is the Post-Advent judgment of the unsaved. This judgment, we noted, is designed to enable redeemed humanity to understand more fully God's justice in not saving the unrighteous. The very fact that the lost have no part in the first resurrection of believers (Rev 20:5) indicates that God has already decided their destiny.

Yet, before their final destruction at the end of the millennium, God offers redeemed humanity the opportunity to examine the record of their lives to understand the justice of His judgment. It is noteworthy that both before rewarding believers with eternal salvation and before punishing unbelievers with eternal destruction, God invites His moral creatures to evaluate the basis of His judgment.

**God is not on Trial.** In a sense the ones who are "on trial" in the investigative phases of the final judgment are not the saved or the unsaved, but God Himself. It is God's justice and mercy manifested in His decision to save some and condemn others that is being judged by moral intelligences. But why should God submit His judgments to the scrutiny of His created beings? Obviously, God is not morally obligated to go "on trial" before the universe. First, He has no moral debt toward His creatures. He has no confession to make as to possible defects in the making of the universe or of human beings. Nor has God any admission to make as to possible unfairness in His administration of the universe.

Second, God has no external obligation because He is the Sovereign Ruler who has freely created and redeemed His creatures. As He has freely created the universe, so He could freely dissolve it, starting all over again, without being in default toward anyone. Third, even if heavenly or human beings should find some fault in God's creation or administration—an absurd hypothesis—they could not dethrone God and enthrone another God in His place.

Whether the universe accepts or rejects the justice of God's government and judgments, this does not affect His Sovereignty. God would still be the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe. What is in jeopardy is not the eternal security of God but that of moral beings in the universe. Thus, fundamentally the one who is on trial is not God, but the moral universe. If the latter as a jury should find God, the Defendant, guilty of injustice, it is the jury and not the Defendant that would face a decisive punishment.

**God is on Trial.** There is a sense, however, in which God is "on trial" before His moral universe. For several reasons God is willing and expected to give an account of His creative, redemptive, and punitive activities. First, God has chosen to operate on the principle of freedom of choice. God has granted His moral creatures the freedom to choose between His love and justice and Satan's hostility and injustice. Not only has God granted this freedom of choice, but He also invites His moral beings to exercise this freedom by examining His moral principles and His judicial actions.

Second, God has chosen to operate on the principle of love and not of coercion. It was love that motivated God to create a universe of free moral beings who could be the recipients of His love and who could in perfect freedom reciprocate His love. It was love that motivated God to redeem mankind by entering into the limitations, suffering, and death of human flesh in order to provide moral beings with the greatest incentive to choose His love rather than Satan's hostility. It is love that motivates God to submit the records of His judgments to the scrutiny of the moral universe, so that His love and justice may be fully understood and accepted.

Love can render this universe eternally secure only if it becomes grounded on unquestionable trust. An attitude of trust and loyalty cannot be demanded, it must be freely given. It is only when we have had occasion to see the integrity, fairness, and trustworthiness of a person that we develop an attitude of trust toward such a person. A vital function of the Pre- and Post-Advent judgment is to provide an opportunity to the moral beings of the universe to deepen their trust in God by verifying, validating, and vindicating the justice of His judgments.

**Questions About God's Justice.** The presence of evil and injustice on this planet raises questions regarding the validity of God's government. Why do innocent people suffer? Why is "truth" so often trampled down? How long will injustice, wickedness, and immorality prevail? Can God be just in saving some and destroying others? Questions such as these are raised in the Scripture. The Psalmist admits that it was "a wearisome task" for him to understand why the wicked "have no pangs" and "are not in trouble as other men are" (Ps 73:16, 4, 5). These questions bothered him "until," he says, "I went into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end" (Ps 73:17).

At the sanctuary, the Psalmist "perceived the end" of the wicked through the typological services performed there. He saw God offering atonement and salvation to penitent sinners and condemnation and destruction to the wicked. On the Day of Atonement, God judged penitent sinners by offering them full cleansing and restoration to covenant relationship while He judged impenitent sinners by punishing them with permanent destruction (Lev 23:29).

A similar picture is found in Daniel 8 where a heavenly being asks, "For how long is the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled under foot?" (Dan 8:13). God's answer in this case is that after a prophetic period of 2300 days, the sanctuary, which is the center of God's redemptive/judicial activity, will be "restored," or "vindicated" or "made right" (Dan 8:14).

In Revelation also, those who “had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne,” are figuratively seen as asking with a loud, crying voice: “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?” (Rev 6:9-10). God’s answer to these martyrs is to wait “a little longer” (Rev 6:11).

**A Vindication of God’s Justice.** God’s final answer to all the above troubling questions is given especially through the evaluative and executive phases of His final judgment. We have seen how numerous Scriptural passages speak of God’s inviting heavenly and human beings to participate in an evaluative judgment in order to verify the fairness and justice of His decisions regarding the salvation or perdition of each human being.

This verification will ultimately result in a deeper trust in God and a vindication of His righteousness. This trust is expressed by the redeemed—represented in Revelation as standing beside a sea of glass—singing: “Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are they ways, O King of the ages! Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments have been revealed” (Rev 15:3-4).

It is noteworthy that the reason given for the universal acclamation of the greatness, justice, and truthfulness of God is the fact that His “judgments have been revealed” (Rev 15:4). Ellen G. White aptly comments in this regard: “Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy will then have been made plain. In the judgment of the universe, God will stand clear of blame for the existence or continuance of evil.”<sup>25</sup>

**A Vindication of God’s People.** This revelation of the justice of God’s judgment is in a sense also a vindication of the redeemed. We have seen that in the vision of Daniel 7, the Ancient of Days is seen as pronouncing “judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom” (Dan 7:22, NIV). Similarly, John the Revelator sees a great multitude in heaven crying: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgements are true and just; he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants” (Rev 19:1-2).

It is noteworthy that the vindication of God and of His people is followed by the announcement that the marriage of the Lamb to His bride is about to take place (Rev 19:7). The metaphor of a wedding feast is used by Jesus Himself to describe the perfect union to be established at His Second Advent between Himself and His followers (Matt 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Mark 2:19; cf. Is 54:5-6; Jer 31:32).

Paul also likens the relationship between Christ and His church to that of a husband to his wife (Eph 5:25ff), but the actual wedding is viewed as a future event when the church is presented before Christ “in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27).

It is this eschatological celebration of the perfect union between Christ and His church that John sees as taking place after the judicial vindication of God and of His people. As God’s vindication of His people on the Day of Atonement closed with celebrations and every 49 years with the inauguration of the Jubilee Year—a symbol of the ultimate restoration—so the antitypical vindication of God and of His people closes with the “marriage” celebration between Christ and the church and the final restoration of this earth (Rev 21:1-8).

## **A Basis for Hope and Confidence**

The Biblical view of the final judgment as the decisive and final triumph of God's justice, manifested in the vindication and salvation of believers and in the condemnation and destruction of unbelievers, is an event to be anticipated with solemnity and joy. It is to be viewed with solemnity because it deals with the eternal destiny of moral beings which for the unrighteous will be eternal destruction. It is to be looked forward to with joy by believers because it represents for them their final vindication and salvation, the dawn of God's New World rather than the doom of their life.

The Pre-Advent judgment does not destroy our joy and assurance of salvation because it is not a scheme or retribution, but a revelation of our standing before God as we are found to be in Christ. "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" asks Paul. "It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?" (Rom 8:33-34). As our records are opened in the Pre-Advent judgment, we have nothing to fear because our Mediator stands for us. Essentially, this judgment is the outworking of the message of the Gospel which contains the Good News that God not only justifies penitent sinners in this present life, but also vindicates them on the day of His judgment by giving them the reward of eternal life.

**Confidence and Hope.** The close connection between the Gospel and the final judgment is clearly expressed by Paul when he speaks of the "day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus" (Rom 2:16). The judgment is according to the Gospel in the sense that it is part of the gracious provision of salvation through Jesus Christ who offers us both forgiveness of our sins in this present life and vindication of our forgiven sins in the final judgment. Thus the Christian can look forward to the final judgment, not with fear and despair but with confidence and hope.

John sees an evidence of the love of God being made perfect in us in the fact "that we may have confidence for the day of judgment" (1 John 4:17). This confidence rests on the assurance that Christ "is able to keep [us] from falling" in this present life and "to present [us] without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing" on the Day of His judgment (Jude 24). It is also based on the assurance that "God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake" (Heb 6:10).

Human beings easily forget the good deeds done by others, but God preserves a remarkable and trustworthy record of every good deed, including the giving of a drink to a stranger (Matt 25:35). Thus, for God's people, the final judgment, especially its Pre-Advent evaluative phase, represents the revelation of their faith and love for Christ and their vindication before the angelic host. It represents the coming of better days when Christ will ultimately reveal the truth about them.

## **Conclusion**

The doctrine of the final judgment enshrines many vital truths. It points to the existence of a transcendent moral order and of a Moral Ruler. This gives meaning and seriousness to our daily living. It reveals that God places a great value on each person as well as on each of our decisions and actions. This gives a sense of accountability and moral worth to our living. It reassures us that God operates on the principle of love and freedom and that ultimately all the moral universe will be given the opportunity fully to understand and accept the justice and mercy of God. The vindication of God's justice will result in the vindication of His people.

The final judgment guarantees that the conflict between good and evil will not last forever, but will be terminated by God in a final and decisive way. It helps us overcome a self-centered type of religion by reminding us that our eternal destiny is linked to the cosmic vindication and triumph of God's love and justice which will guarantee the eternal security, peace, and harmony of this universe and its inhabitants. Lastly, the final judgment inspires us to live godly lives with joy, confidence, and hope while "awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

## ENDNOTES

1. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, California, 1950), p. 428.
2. Emphasis supplied.
3. William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Philadelphia, 1960), pp. 232-234.
4. Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelman, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia, 1972), p. 120.
5. J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (Philadelphia, n.d.), p. 18.
6. John A. Bollier, "Judgment in the Apocalypse," *Interpretation* (January, 1953), p. 18.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
9. The Aramaic of Daniel 7:22 can be understood as meaning either that the judgment concerns the saints or that the saints themselves will do the judging. Though the latter option has Biblical support (cf. Matt 19:28; Rev 20:4; 1 Cor 6:1-2), the former understanding is preferable because the context clearly speaks of God's activity against the persecuting power and in favor of the saints. As in the historical chapters (1 to 6) Daniel and his friends are so severely tested and rewarded by God for their faithfulness, so in the apocalyptic chapters the saints are persecuted but ultimately rewarded with eternal kingship because of their loyalty to God.
10. See, for example, S. R. Driver, *Daniel* (London, 1900), p. 133; A. Bentzen, *Daniel* (Tübingen, 1952), p. 66.
11. For a scholarly discussion on the relationship between the prophecies of Daniel 8 and 9, see William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1982); also by the same author, "The Relationship Between the Prophecies of Daniel 8 and Daniel 9," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, eds. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshar (Washington, D.C., 1981), pp. 228-250.
12. The saying is attributed to Rabbi Neir. See G. Foot Moore, *Judaism II* (New York, 1958), p. 62.
13. On the scapegoat rite see Gerhard F. Hasel, "Studies in Biblical Atonement II: The Day of Atonement," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement* (n. 11), pp. 121-123.
14. Emphasis supplied.
15. Emphasis supplied.
16. Austin M. Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Oxford, 1964), p. 210.
17. George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, 1979), p. 267.

## **UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS**

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the month of September 2003. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars. Thank you for informing your friends about the time and place of the seminars.

### **SEPTEMBER 5-6: LA: VALLEY CROSSROAD SDA CHURCH**

Location: 11350 Glenoaks Boulevard, Pacoima, CA 91331

For information call Pastor Reginald Robinson at (805) 499-1006

### **SEPTEMBER 12-13: ST. PAUL FIRST SDA CHURCH**

Location: 1915 Princeton, St. Paul, MN 55105

For information call Pastor Mark Smith at (651) 731-5180.

### **SEPTEMBER 19-20: ORLANDO: MT. SINAI SDA CHURCH**

Location: 2600 Orange Center Boulevard, Orlando, FL 32805

For information call Pastor Brent Waldon at (407) 944-1091 or (407) 298-7877.

### **SEPTEMBER 26-27: CHICAGO: ALL NATIONS FELLOWSHIP SDA CHURCH C/O UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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CP-S370W	SVGA	2200 Lumens	7 lbs	\$6,995	\$2100.00
CP-X385W	XGA	2200 Lumens	7 lbs	\$7,995	\$2700.00
CP-X430W	XGA	2500 Lumens	9.9 lbs	\$8,995	\$3200.00
CP-X880W	XGA	3000 Lumens	12.6 lbs	\$10,995	\$4000.00
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This has been an expensive and laborious project, but it was well-worth it, because small congregations in America and overseas will now be able to enjoy the same messages which I deliver every weekend in different parts of the world. All what they need is a VCR or DVD player.

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## Contact Information

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.  
Retired Professor of Theology and Church History  
Andrews University  
4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Phone (269) 471-2915 Fax (269) 471-4013  
E-mail: [sbacchiocchi@qtm.net](mailto:sbacchiocchi@qtm.net) or [sbacchiocchi@csi.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@csi.com)  
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