

writing of ordinances our Lord did blot out, take away, and nail to his cross.” . . .

But the moral law contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the prophets, he did not take away. It was not the design of his coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which never can be broken, which “stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven.” The moral stands on an entirely different foundation from the ceremonial or ritual law. . . . [p. 222] Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages; as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstance liable to change, but on the nature of God, and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.

Law, Moral, Ceremonial, and Jewish National

SOURCE: Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. 21 (originally 19), “Of the Law of God,” secs. 1-4, in A Harmony of the Westminster Presbyterian Standards, ed. by James Benjamin Green (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1958), pp. 110, III, Colossians 1.

[p. 110] 1. God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it; and endued him with power and ability to keep it.

[p. 111] 2. This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon mount Sinai in Ten Commandments, and written in two tables; the first four commandments containing our duty toward God, and the other six our duty to man.

3. Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the New Testament.

4. To them also, as a body politic, he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any other, now, further than the general equity thereof may require.

LAW, Moral, Ceremonial, and judicial

SOURCE: Samuel Mather, The Gospel of the Old Testament (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1834), Vol. 1, p. 210.

The laws . . . delivered by Moses, were of three kinds, moral, ceremonial, and judicial. . . . The first, or moral law, being the law of universal or unalterable right, is binding upon all men, and is still in force.

3. The Investigative Judgment

W. E. READ

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THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST view of the investigative judgment has come in for a good deal of criticism during the years. The author of the book *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* maintains that there is no Biblical basis for such a concept, and others have even declared that the teaching is “fantastic” and a “Face-saving device.” Furthermore, some affirm that even the term “investigative- is an alien term, not being found in the Scriptures. Others maintain that the child of God will not come into judgment in any case.

The Use of the Term “Investigative” in Connection With the judgment

The use of this term has been challenged on the ground that it is not once mentioned in the Bible. That the term is not used in the Sacred Word, we readily concede; but does that mean that it could not be used if it expresses what we feel is a Biblical truth? Would we make the same charge against the word “incarnation” because it is not found in the Scriptures? The same can be said of such expressions as the “virgin birth,” the “Trinity,” the “millennium.” We fully believe these doctrines, but the terms by which we express them are not found in the Divine Word. Many other Christians speak of “rapture,” or “secret

rapture,” yet these words are not found in the Bible.

Two Theological Camps in the Christian Church

There are two main theological camps in the Christian church. As to what one believes on such doctrines as the sovereignty of God, the eternal security of the believer, whether one can lose his status as a born-again Christian and be lost, whether there is a difference between the forgiveness of sin and the blotting out of sin, and other matters will, to a large degree, be determined by the camp with which he is associated. If he is in the Calvinistic group, then he favors one concept. If he is in the Arminian group, another concept. Seventh-day Adventists, from their beginning, have held quite largely to the Arminian concept, as have many other Christian bodies, such as the Methodists. John Wesley was for twenty years the editor of the Arminian Journal.

Three Schools of Prophetic Interpretation

Still another important item is the interpretation of passages from the books of Daniel and Revelation. The interpretation will be determined according to the school of prophetic interpretation to which one belongs. There are three such schools—the Praeterist, believing that these prophecies have already largely been fulfilled; the Futurist, maintaining that in the main, their fulfillment is yet in the future; and the Historicist, believing that they are being progressively unfolded and fulfilled. We belong to this last-mentioned group, and our concepts are naturally in harmony with this school of prophetic interpretation.

1. IS SUCH A DOCTRINE AS THE “INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT” TAUGHT IN THE SCRIPTURES?

The Term “Investigative”

Now, take the term investigative, as used in this connection. Why should exception be taken to it? It is true we do not often use such an expression in referring to the work of our earthly courts of justice, but do we not in principle do the very thing this term implies before a decision is rendered? Do we not aim at a thorough consideration of all the factors involved, whether they be for or against the accused? As to whether one calls such a procedure an investigation or an examination matters not, the principle is the same. No decision is given unless such a procedure is followed.

. In our earthly courts there is the “investigation” of the case. Then comes the “Pronouncement” of the verdict. The accused is either condemned or acquitted. If condemned, as in the case of a murderer, then comes the carrying out of the sentence, which might be life imprisonment or execution.

Is not this what takes place in the judgment of the great day of God? Let us see—

- a. There is to be a judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Hebrews 9:27).
- b. There is to be a judgment of all men (Romans 14: 10).
 - c. There is to be a judgment of the righteous and the wicked (Ecclesiastes 3:17).
 - d. There will be an “investigation” of all cases, for the books of record are to be opened for an investigation, after which the redeemed ones will be “accounted worthy- (Daniel 7:10; Luke 20:35; 21:36; 2 Thessalonians 1:5).
 - e. There will be a pronouncement of the verdict (Revelation 22:11, 12).
 - f. There will be an “execution” of the judgment on the wicked (Revelation 20:11-15).
 - g. There will be the clearing of all the cases of the righteous (Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20; Hebrews 12:23).

The Significance of the Second Advent

In the second place, think of what takes place at the second advent of our Lord:

- a. There will be the resurrection of the righteous dead (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).
- b. There will be the translation of the righteous living (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).
- c. The resurrection of the righteous is called the “first” resurrection (Revelation 20:5, last part, and

6). The “rest of the dead” (the wicked) are not raised until the end of the 1000year period (Revelation 20:5). Now, think of what the foregoing considerations postulate.

The wicked dead are not raised at the second advent of our Lord, but the righteous dead are raised, and not only so, they are raised to immortality and to be forever with their Lord.

This being so, the cases of all, both righteous and wicked, must have been determined before the Second Advent. Remember that what happens at the second appearing of our Lord is done “in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52). Therefore, the cases of all have been determined before that event. That this is so is seen from the following:

a. There is an “accounting worthy- of the righteous before the Second Advent. Luke 20:35; 21:36; 2 Thessalonians 1:5.

Note that the righteous are accounted:

Worthy to obtain that world (Luke 20:35)
Worthy to obtain that resurrection

Worthy to escape all these things (Luke 21:36)
Worthy to stand before the Son of man
Worthy of the kingdom of God (2 Thessalonians 1:5)

It is interesting to note that the Greek word for “to account worthy” is kataxio6 and according to Moulton and Milligan means not ‘to make worthy,’ but “to count worthy.” This could refer then, not to the result of the judgment work, but to a process or investigation before the result is known and declared.

b. Prior to the Second Advent a special preparatory message goes forth to the whole world, which among other things declares that the hour of God’s judgment is come. Paul in his day could announce the judgment “to come” (Acts 24:25), but near the time of the Second Advent it can be said with assurance that the hour of the judgment is come (lit., came). That this message is to be heralded to the whole world before Christ returns in glory is, we believe, set forth in the sequence of events as outlined in Revelation 14.

The message of the judgment hour is given in verse 6 and onward; the character of the people who accept it is outlined in verse 12, and the Second Advent for which they are prepared is described in verse 14. Hence it would seem clear that the message is given to the world during this phase of the judgment to prepare a people to stand in the great day of God.

c. We believe that the prophecies of the Word of God foretell an aspect of the judgment before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We read in Daniel 7:9, 10 the following:

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.

A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

Note two expressions in the above scriptures. Mention is made that the thrones were “cast down.” The RSV and many others say “were placed.” For “the judgment was set” the RSV gives “the court sat in judgment.” Again we read:

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him (Daniel 7:13).

This scene presented to the prophet is part of a larger vision dealing with the four beasts of Daniel M. These are interpreted by the angel to represent four consecutive kingdoms, or dominions, that were to rule the earth until the God of heaven sets up a kingdom peopled exclusively with His saints. “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom- (verses 17, 18). Since these four world kingdoms parallel the vision of Daniel 2, where the first kingdom is said to be Babylon, this vision of Daniel 7 must reach from the time of the prophet to the second coming of Christ, at which time the everlasting kingdom of righteousness will be set up. This is important to observe, for the judgment pictured in verses 9-14 takes place before the second coming of Christ. Some of its decisions regarding the beast are executed while world affairs are in progress, and the taking away of the dominion of the beast is a progressive work that continues “unto the end” (verse 26).

We should observe that in the seventh chapter of Daniel we have an over-all picture of the conflict between the saints of the Most High and the little horn, the papacy. It wages fiercely through the years until

the time when “one like the Son of man came . . . to the Ancient of days,” to the Father (verse 13), at which time a session of the judgment began in heaven. This judgment issues in a condemnation of the little horn, and a verdict in favor of the saints (verses 21, 22). The papacy claimed the right to decide cases, the power to forgive sins and to determine who belongs to the church of God. Daniel in this chapter declares that there is only one court that has this power, the one meeting in the heavenly sanctuary shortly after the close of the 1260-day prophecy (verses 25, 26). God alone knows the hearts of men. He alone has the records of the lives of men. And John declares: “The Father . . . hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). Who else could distinguish between the true and the false? Who else has that right? Thus before Christ comes the heavenly assize will declare in favor of the saints and against the enemies of God. This judgment, when completed, will result in the rewards to the people of God; “and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (Daniel 7:22).

As noted above, one of the acts of judgment is to give to the “Son of man” “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him” (verses 13, 14). This takes place before the second coming of Christ, for when He returns it is as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19: 1 P 16).

We agree with T. Robinson that the judgment here predicted precedes the second coming of Christ:

We have before us a passage of overwhelming grandeur and sublimity; the description of a scene of awful solemnity.... The passage exhibits the judgment-seat of God, with myriads of attendant angels, and the infliction of pronounced doom on a large portion of the human race. The judgment is not indeed, like that in Revelation 20, the general judgment. . . . As already observed, this is not the general judgment at the termination of Christ’s reign on earth, or, as the phrase is commonly understood, the end of the world. It appears rather to be an invisible judgment carried on within the veil and revealed by its effects and the execution of its sentence. . . . It may be sitting now. – “Daniel,” The Preacher’s Homiletic Commentary, pp. 136, 139.

Thomas Scott, in his commentary, remarks also that: “The fulfillment of this prophecy will precede the introduction of the millennium; the final judgment will succeed to consummation of all things here on earth.” We quote these writers to show that certain scholars have referred to a judgment prior to the Second Coming.

In this prophecy Daniel refers particularly to one group, symbolized by the “little horn” which came in for examination, for sentence, and for condemnation. He does not aim to list all whose cases are to be considered: he mentions only the “little horn” which had persecuted and wasted the people of God. The fact that “the books were opened” would seem to imply the judgment of others. This could be so, and the writer quoted above mentions this:

Whatever may be the case in regard to the judgment we have been considering, and whatever share we may or may not have in it, it is certain that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive according to the things done in the body, whether good or bad.... Each [man] must then give account of himself to God, for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. . . . Am I pardoned and accepted now in the surety, the Lord our righteousness? A place in the New Jerusalem or the Gehenna of fire depends on the question-Ibid., p. 140.

With this conclusion Ellen G. White is in full harmony, for we read:

Thus was presented to the prophet’s vision the great and solemn day when the characters and the lives of men should pass in review before the judge of all the earth, and to every man should be rendered “according to his works.”-Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 479.

The work of the investigative judgment and the blotting out of sins is to be accomplished before the second advent of the Lord. Since the dead are to be judged out of the things written in the books, it is impossible that the sins of men should be blotted out until after the judgment at which their cases are to be investigated-Ibid., p. 485.

When the investigative judgment doses, Christ will come, and His reward will be with Him to give to every man as his work shall be.-Ibid.

Another text to which our attention might be directed is Revelation 11:18:

And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou should give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, small and great; and should destroy them which destroy the earth.

There might be a question in the minds of some as to when this passage has its application. There is one clause, however, that might give us an answer, and that is “that thou should give reward unto thy

servants ... and to the saints.” This act of our Lord in bestowing these special gifts upon His children is located at His second advent:

Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be (Revelation 22:12).

Behold thy Savior reveals himself; behold the reward of them that perform his word is with him (Isaiah 62: 11, Targum).

Granting that this is so, and that rewards are given at our Lord’s appearing, then “the time of the dead, that they should be judge” must, of course, precede His return from heaven.

So in the light of these considerations, we feel there is ample evidence that the “investigation” aspect of the judgment takes place during the hours of time just prior to and up to the coming of Christ in power and great glory.

II. IS IT A BIBLICAL CONCEPT THAT THE CHILDREN OF GOD COME WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE JUDGMENT?

This question can be answered in the affirmative by reference to the following scriptures:

“God shall judge (LXX Gr. krin6) the righteous and the wicked” (Ecclesiastes 3:17).

“We shall all stand (Gr. paristimi) before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14: 10).

In the first place, the Old Testament passage asserts that both righteous and wicked will have their cases reviewed, and that undoubtedly means at the heavenly tribunal. In the second place, specific reference is made to church members, for Paul’s letter is to the churches at Rome and Corinth. But, doubtless, his words included others, those who were not believers in Christ. This is seen in his use of the word “all,” which in the Greek is in a position of emphasis. It is seen also in the effect of such a judgment for that which is meted out to all men is for the things that are “good” and those that are “bad” (2 Corinthians 5: 10).

Some students have said that the saints appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive their rewards, and by this they mean rewards for service, but the language of these texts means that they are there for the determination of character rather than for the bestowal of rewards.

It is true, of course, that the children of God are to receive rewards. These rewards are variously described as:

A “crown of life”
“A crown of glory”
“A crown of righteousness”
“An incorruptible” crown

James 1: 12
1 Peter 5:4
2 Timothy 4:8
1 Corinthians 9:25

But as we have already seen, these rewards will be bestowed at the time of the Savior’s second advent:

„And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:12).

We repeat, the texts in Romans and Corinthians do not refer to this. Notice the apostle’s words “We must all appear.” This includes members of the church. Then he states why we must all appear. It is that “every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12), to “receive the things done in his body. . . whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5: 10).

Again we mention, this is not determination of rewards but the determination of character.

Matthew Henry’s comment is much to the point in this connection:

Christ will be the judge, and He has both authority and ability to determine men’s eternal state according to their works, and before Him we shall stand as persons to be tried, and to give an account-
Commentary on Romans 14:10.

John Calvin also has an interesting comment on this point:

An account must one day be rendered before the judgment seat of Christ; for the man who

seriously considers this must of necessity be touched with fear, and shake off all negligence. He declares, therefore, that he discharges his responsibility faithfully and with pure conscience (2 Timothy 1:3). He is one who walks in the fear of the Lord (Acts 9:31), thinking of the account to be rendered by him-Commentary on 2 Corinthians 5:10.

This is all in full harmony with what we have observed above, that “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked (Ecclesiastes 3:17).

We are not unmindful of the fact that the Savior remarked in John 5:24:

He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life (RSV).

It must be remembered, however, that many versions give “condemnation” rather than “judgment.” See the K.J.V. and others. While the two words come from the same Greek word *krisis*, the word does not always mean the judgment as a tribunal, but as an act of that tribunal in the condemnation of judgment. This dual aspect of *krisis* is reflected in the following excerpt from Liddell and Scott:

Krime is an act of judgment, *Krisis* partakes of both concepts, that of trial and also of the sentence of the court. In such a case the meaning of the word in a given text must be determined by the context.-Greek English Lexicon.

That condemnation is the idea in John 5:24 is evident from the words “but is passed from death unto life.” Those who have rejected light and do not have eternal life are under -condemnation” (James 5:12), and the condemnation is “that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). Christians who walk in the light are not under condemnation; they live in the assurance of acceptance with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, as beautifully expressed by the apostle Paul:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:1).

In the next article we shall discuss the question: “Does the Bible Reveal the Time for the Beginning of the Investigative Judgment?”

4. Does the Bible Reveal the Time for This to Begin?

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IN THE FOREGOING chapter there were reviewed some of the Biblical evidences for a pre-Advent, or investigative, phase of God’s great judgment work. In these presentations scriptural reasons for our Adventist position on the judgment are being set forth. Consideration will now be given to the time when this judgment begins. If the Holy Scriptures declare that such a judgment is to take place, could we not expect that God would also reveal the time for this phase of the judgment to begin?

I. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

1. The Year-Day Principle

Through the years Adventists have used two periods of time in dealing with the question of when this pre-Advent judgment begins—that of the 2300 days (Daniel 8:14) and that of the 70 weeks (Daniel 9:25). The 2300-day period is connected with the symbolic prophecy of Daniel 8. This prophecy is in the form of four symbols—the ram, the he-goat, the little horn, and the 2300 days. If “day” is a symbol in prophecy, and the 70-week period is to be understood as a key to the understanding of the 2300-day prophecy, we should expect the 70-week period to be in literal language. In the light of this, it is interesting to note that a more correct translation of the Hebrew word *shabu’a*, rendered in the King James Version as “seventy weeks,” would be “seventy weeks of years,” as we find in the translations of Goodspeed, Rotherham, Moffatt, and the Revised Standard Version.