

The Pre-Advent Judgment



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Deut. 25:1, 1 Kings 8:32, Ps. 51:1-4, Matt. 22:1-13, Heb. 9:22-24, Rev. 20:12, 22:12.*

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

Last week we looked at the pre-Advent judgment mostly in Daniel 8; this week we'll look at it again but from the perspective of Daniel 7 and some of the fascinating insights given to us there. As with the Gospels, we are given here more than just one rendering; both chapters contain crucial truths that need to be understood together. Each one, however enlightening, needs what the other has and, taken together, they reveal to us much about this judgment.

What's important to remember is that these chapters are not just deep theology or prophecy or history; instead, they together send a message to us, a message of hope, a message of promise. Together they tell us that no matter how bad things are, they aren't going to last; that despite appearances, the God who outlines for us the history of the world from Daniel's time until ours and into the future will bring about a wonderful end in which evil will be punished and the just shall be saved. How important, amid our study of charts and graphs and historical events, not to lose sight of this crucial point. How important, too, that as we share with the world these truths, we always keep before the people not just beasts and little horns but the wonderful promise of eternal life in God's kingdom that's been assured to us through the blood of Jesus and His death in our behalf.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 16.*

“Until the Ancient of Days Came”

One point that we touched on earlier this quarter was the importance of the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8. We saw (see week 5) four events depicted in the vision (Media-Persia, Greece, Rome, sanctuary cleansed); with the first three of obvious major importance, and with the vision climaxing with the cleansing of the sanctuary, it's more than obvious that whatever the cleansing of the sanctuary was, it had to be of major importance, as well.

Thus, the question is, What is this cleansing of the sanctuary, which was of such importance that it would be linked with the great empires that Scripture uses to depict the history of the world?

Daniel 8 itself doesn't yield much, in and of itself, on the answer; fortunately, the Lord didn't give us just Daniel 8. We have the obvious parallel with Daniel 7, which, in a great way, helps unfold the mysteries of Daniel 8.

We earlier saw the parallel between the judgment in Daniel 7 and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8. Read Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14, 18, 21, 22, 26, 27. What does this judgment (the same as the cleansing of the sanctuary) lead to? What is the result of this judgment? What one specific point is emphasized over and over?

Notice a theme reiterated in these verses: The saints will be given God's kingdom, an everlasting kingdom that will not pass away as did all the ones before it. Over and over, after the depiction of various kingdoms, especially the blasphemous and persecuting little horn, the final victory of God and His saints is shown. In other words, no matter how bad things get or how long things take, in the end, as a result of this heavenly judgment/cleansing of the sanctuary, evil will be eradicated, and God's eternal kingdom will be established.

In this context, how much easier now to understand why the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 climaxes the vision of these earthly powers. No wonder, too, it's shown to be so important!

All the other kingdoms came and went or finally will be destroyed. In contrast, the saints will “possess” (vs. 18) God's eternal kingdom. What does that promise mean to you? What's the first thing you want to do when you get there?

Judgment and the Little Horn

As Adventists, we understand the cleansing of the sanctuary as a judgment that involves those who have professed to be followers of Christ (*see Matt. 22:1-13*). We see this especially because in the earthly type of the cleansing of the sanctuary, the Day of Atonement (*see Leviticus 16*), the judgment centered around God's people.

Nevertheless, the question arises, Why in both Daniel 7 and in Daniel 8 is the judgment/sanctuary cleansing depicted in the context of the little horn, at least the phase of the little horn shown in the vision? What does the little horn have to do with the pre-Advent judgment?

Read again the texts looked at yesterday. What is the difference in the fate of the little horn and the fate of the “saints of the most high”? *See especially Dan. 7:22.*

It's very clear: The little horn is punished, condemned, while the saints are vindicated, exonerated. This is typical of the Hebrew concept of justice and judgment: It involved not just the punishment of the guilty or the vindication of the righteous—but both. Both are crucial elements of justice in Hebrew thinking, and both are seen here in this depiction of the pre-Advent judgment.

Read Deuteronomy 25:1 and 1 Kings 8:32. How do these two verses reveal the principles seen in Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 together?

Of course, the judgment in Daniel 7 results in the end of the little horn, but that's only because the judgment results in the Second Coming, which brings about the end of the whole world anyway (at least as we know it now). The point is that the judgment, though expressed here in the context of the little horn, a symbol of evil, involved more than just the little horn. What we see here are two elements: evil punished, the saints vindicated. It hardly would seem like justice if it were any other way.

The righteous vindicated, evil punished. That's God's promise. How should that promise help you through times when, so often, it seems only the opposite happens?

Theodicy, Again

In the first week of this quarter we looked at a term, *theodicy*, which meant the vindication of God in the face of evil. It's the idea that despite all the evil in the world, we can trust that God is good and righteous and just.

We saw, too, that sin and evil began in another part of the universe and that sin and the questions it raised weren't limited only to earth. On the contrary, the earth is merely the place where they are being played out. We also looked at the fact that other intelligences in the universe also are involved, and interested, in the question raised about sin and rebellion.

Read Daniel 7:9, 10 and then answer the following questions:

- 1 What event is taking place here?
- 2 Where is it taking place?
- 3 Before whom?

Not only do we have a heavenly judgment scene here, a judgment that leads to the destruction of the little horn and the establishment of God's kingdom, this judgment takes place before a multitude of heavenly beings. "Ten thousand times ten thousand" is a way of depicting an uncountable multitude. Thus, what we see here is the onlooking universe watching God execute the judgment that leads to the establishment of His eternal kingdom.

Keeping in mind this judgment scene in Daniel 7, read Psalm 51:1-4 and Romans 3:4. How do these texts fit in with the judgment as revealed in Daniel 7?

The crucial point to remember here is that God is judging His people in an open way before the onlooking universe. And He's going to do it in a manner that, when it's over, it will be said that "you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge" (*Ps. 51:4, NIV*).

How open and transparent are you in all your dealings and judgments with others? If you're not, why not, and what does your answer tell you about the quality of those dealings? What might you need to change?

Pre-Advent Judgment

Read Daniel 12:1, Matthew 16:27, and Revelation 20:12. Each, in its own way, talks about judgment. What evidence can you find in these texts that shows why this judgment is *before* the Second Coming; that is, a pre-Advent judgment?

If, at the Second Coming, the saints receive the kingdom and the little horn is destroyed, there must have been some sort of reckoning *before* the execution of the sentence. After all, even corrupt earthly courts do as much! How fair would it be to sentence someone and then, only after the sentence, have a trial and investigate the facts?

If, when Christ returns, “my reward is with me, to give every man as his work shall be” (*Rev. 22:12*) and we all are to be judged by our works (*Eccles. 12:13, 14; 1 Cor. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:12*), then it’s fairly obvious that there must be a judgment prior to the Second Coming. Or, as Adventists phrase it—a pre-Advent, or investigative, judgment. (After all, what kind of judgment prior to a sentence doesn’t entail an investigation of some kind?)

Read carefully, again, the judgment scene as depicted in Daniel 7 (if need be, look at some of the previous charts that parallel the chapters). Putting aside any of the numbers and dates, why is this so clearly a pre-Advent judgment? In fact, what evidence do you find in the texts that hint at an investigation? See also *Ps. 56:8, 69:28, Dan. 12:1, Rev. 13:8, 20:12*.

We can see, then, from Daniel 7 that there is, indeed, a massive pre-Advent judgment, a judgment that leads not only to the demise of the little horn but to the end of this world and the inauguration of the next, in which the saints live forever in God’s eternal kingdom. What’s depicted here is, obviously, an event of tremendous importance, an event in which the eternal destiny of untold numbers is involved. No wonder we deem the judgment-hour message as crucial to what we believe as Adventists.

The Heavens Purified

Read Hebrews 9:22-24 and then answer the following questions:

1. What two sanctuaries are being talked about here?
2. What parallel is being drawn between them; that is, what is the author saying that must happen to both sanctuaries?

These texts have baffled non-Adventist scholars because of the clear reference to the idea that the heavenly sanctuary itself needed to be cleansed. “One might conclude that the earthly sanctuary was cleansed because its heavenly counterpart also was to be cleansed.” —Craig Koester, *Hebrews*, Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 2001), p. 427.

In fact, the Greek word in Hebrews 9:23 for “purified,” or “cleansed” comes from the same Greek word used in an ancient Greek translation of Daniel 8:14. Thus, those ancient Greeks who, before the time of Christ, translated the Old Testament understood the Hebrew in Daniel 8:14 to mean that the sanctuary was to be cleansed; years later, the author of Hebrews had the same idea, however different the immediate context: Just as the earthly sanctuary was cleansed, so must the heavenly. Indeed, the whole point of the earthly cleansing was to point to the greater one, the real one in the heavenly sanctuary.

Look again at Daniel 8:14. Considering the time frame of this prophecy, why must this cleansing of the sanctuary be the same cleansing that the author of Hebrews referred to?

In Jewish thought, the Day of Atonement, when the sanctuary was cleansed, was also the great day of judgment, the time when people had their last chance to repent before facing judgment. In fact, on the Day of Atonement Jews still sometimes say this blessing to one another: “May you be sealed in the book of life forever.”

Why is Christ’s righteousness covering you, by faith, your only assurance that, indeed, in the day of judgment you will be sealed in the book of life forever?

Further Study: In Jewish thought, what happens on the Day of Atonement, when the sanctuary is to be cleansed? Compare the quotes below with how Ellen White describes the pre-Advent judgment in *The Great Controversy*, as well as the images that are seen in the judgment scene of Daniel 7.

“God, seated on His throne to judge the world, at the same time Judge, Pleader, Expert, and Witness, openeth the Book of Records; it is read, even man’s signature [name] being found therein. The great trumpet is sounded; a still small voice is heard; angels shudder, saying, this is the day of judgment. . . . On the Day of Atonement, it is sealed who shall live and who shall die.”—Quoted in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, “The Day of Atonement.”

Some prayers uttered on the Day of Atonement read like this: “Justify me in the judgment. . . . O silence the accuser, and suffer the advocate to take his place . . . and in consequence of his pleading, declare, I have pardoned. . . . O blot out the transgression of the people that have been saved. . . . He, the Ancient of Days, sits as Judge. . . . In the book of life . . . may we be sealed by Thee.”

Discussion Questions

- 1 Think about all that God already has done for us, especially in the Person of Jesus. Yet, despite all this, in order to ensure that all the universe sees His justice and fairness in dealing with sin and rebellion, He allows Himself to be judged on how He judges. What does that tell us about the character of God and why He is so worthy of our praise, worship, and fealty?
- 2 If you believed that folks go immediately to heaven or hell at death, why would all this talk of a pre-Advent judgment, or any kind of future judgment, sound silly? What does this tell us about how interlocked many of our beliefs are?
- 3 Do you know people who are struggling with our understanding of pre-Advent judgment? Why not, as a class, plan a house meeting in which, after prayer and fellowship and food, you can share some of the things you have been learning?

The Bicycling Evangelist

Charlotte Ishkanian

Eulogio Masa is a farmer living in a village in northwestern Argentina. Several years ago he and his brother, Geraldo, traveled to the city of Tucuman to visit their brother, Francisco. Francisco had become a Seventh-day Adventist and invited his brothers to visit his church. They accepted and were so impressed with the message they heard that they stayed in Tucuman for six weeks to study the Bible. Before they returned home, both brothers were baptized.

Eulogio and Geraldo shared their new understanding of the Bible with their families. No Adventists lived in their area, so the families met in their homes to study and worship. In time they built a little church on their land, making everything by hand. They formed bricks from mud and dried them in the sun. Their burrow pulled the wagon carrying the bricks to the building site and hauled the water to make mortar. When the church was finished, the brothers called a pastor to dedicate the church and baptize their families.

The brothers shared their faith in surrounding villages. When Geraldo died, Eulogio carried on alone. He pedaled his bicycle over dirt roads and along narrow paths to bring God's love to others.

He found some people in the village of Babilonia, 13 miles from his home, who wanted to learn more about God. Eulogio rode his bike there every Sunday to study the Bible with them. One woman believed, but her husband was not interested. When he became sick and the doctors could not help him, his wife urged him to pray. He prayed, and God healed him. He and his wife were baptized together. A congregation sprouted in Babilonia that now reaches out to its neighbors.

Eulogio continues to ride the dirt roads of northwestern Argentina, telling people that Jesus is coming soon. He has led at least 50 people to Jesus and raised up three churches. "As long as God gives me strength, I will share this great news," he says.

Our Sabbath School mission offerings help supply lay evangelists with materials to share God's love with others.



Eulogio Masa (left) is a lay evangelist living in Mama Puka, Argentina. Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of Mission.