

## ***The Gospel, 1844, and Judgment*** ***“Principalities and Powers”***

Lesson #1 for July 1, 2006

Scriptures: Psalms 51:1-4; Zechariah 3:1-4; Matthew 22:11-12; Romans 3:4; Romans 3:25-27; Ephesians 3:9-10; Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 13:2; Revelation 12:7-12.

1. Seventh-day Adventists have been known for years for our emphasis on the Seventh-day Sabbath and our hope of the soon coming of Jesus Christ. These doctrines are represented in our name. But they are not unique with our church. We do, however, have one unique doctrine. A doctrine which sets us apart from all other Christian denominations: our belief in the pre-advent judgment beginning in the year 1844. Other Christians have made fun of us because of this doctrine. Many among us are uncomfortable in holding a doctrine that no other Christian group believes in. So what is the truth about this doctrine? 1) In order to accept and understand the pre-advent judgment you must first believe in the non-immortality of the soul. (Genesis 2:17; Ezekiel 18:4; Malachi 4:1) This immediately separates us from the vast majority of Christians. If each person goes to his reward—either heaven or hell (or temporarily to purgatory)—at the time of death then there would be no reason for a pre-advent judgment, because each person would have already gone to his “reward”. So, first of all, we must understand the basis of God’s judgment before we can move on. 2) We’ll look at the biblical basis for our belief in the judgment beginning in 1844. 3) We need to look at some objections and questions that have been raised about this teaching. And we need to ask some questions of our own for example: “What does a judgment whose beginning was dated in the 19th century mean for us in the 21st? What does it tell us about ourselves, our church, and, most important, about the God who promises to return and take us home?” (*Adult Teacher’s S.S. Bible Study Guide*, p. 3)
2. What then is the relationship between the Gospel as we understand it and this pre-advent judgment? What does the idea of a pre-advent judgment say to us about God? We have sometimes called it “the investigative judgment”. Why would an omniscient God who knows everything in the past and even everything in the future need to investigate anything?
3. Read Revelation 14:6-7: “<sup>6</sup> Then I saw another angel flying high in the air, with an eternal message of Good News to announce to the peoples of the earth, to every race, tribe, language, and nation. <sup>7</sup>He said in a loud voice, “Honor God and praise his greatness! For the time has come for him to judge. [And for him to be judged?] Worship him who made heaven, earth, sea, and the springs of water!” (*GNB*) **Clearly this passage suggests that God’s judgment is a part of the good news or Gospel. Is judgment ever good news? Clearly we must decide what the Gospel is and then we must decide how that Gospel might relate to judgment. We are being judged, but is God being judged also?**
4. If the Gospel is primarily about how God saves you and me—as most of our Christian friends believe—then judgment almost seems like an oxymoron. Is God trying to save his children but at the same time excluding many of them from his kingdom?
5. What **does** the Bible tell us about judgment? Who is involved? What role does each person play? When will the judgment take place?
6. Seventh-day Adventists—along with some other Christians—believe that there are many other beings inhabiting other parts of this vast universe in which we live. Do these other beings have anything to do with the judgment? Do they care about the judgment? Do they care about what happens here on planet Earth? Paul suggest that this little world is the theater of the universe! (1 Corinthians 4:9). Why would this be?
7. We believe that Jesus Christ came and lived and died here on this planet primarily to say something significant—and absolutely essential—about our God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If the Gospel is primarily about them and not about us, or even how God saves us, then the judgment could speak volumes.

8. If the gospel is rather about how God saves you and me, then the judgment is a sort of necessary evil, like final exams at school, to decide who “passes” and who doesn’t. Such an exam often pictures the examiner as one who is doing his/her best to “flunk” his/her students. Is this what God is trying to do?
9. While the rest of the universe is not a main emphasis of the Scriptures as we have them, nevertheless these creatures who live outside of our world are mentioned frequently. See handout: *“The Great Controversy in Scripture”*. There are clearly many references to God, his angels, the devil, his angels, and creatures who live on other planets in the Scripture.
10. Do you believe in angels? Do you believe there are inhabitants living on other planets in our universe? Why? What is the basis for your belief?
11. How much involvement does the rest of the universe have in the events here on planet Earth?
12. We speak often about the great controversy. We believe that the great controversy began in heaven. It is a war between God and his accuser, Satan who has attempted to malign, misrepresent, and, if possible, destroy God’s influence among his other creatures. It is not like the wars that we know here on this planet where the most powerful side usually wins. God is clearly more powerful than Satan. This truth scares Satan and his followers. (James 2:19) “God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan’s government. The Lord’s principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God’s government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.” {DA 759.1}
13. **The real issue in the great controversy is: Who is telling the truth?**
14. **Does this great controversy have anything to do with our individual salvation? In what way?**
15. Do angels intervene at times in events here on this planet? What evidence do we have for that? Look at a few examples of the angel’s involvement with human beings: Job 1:6; Job 2:1; Job 38:7-8; Daniel 9:21; Acts 12:7; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 3:10; Hebrews 13:2; Judges 13:21; Genesis 19:15-16; Revelation 12:7.
16. Read Revelation 12:7-12. What do we learn from these verses about the conflict between Satan and Michael—one of the names of Christ? What do we learn about Satan’s plans for human beings?
17. What does the expression “by the blood of the Lamb” teach us? Does the death of Christ have something to do with this great controversy? What does it teach us about Jesus and about the Father?
18. How did this world become the battlefield in the great controversy? Did the great controversy begin here? Do we have any personal choice as to whether or not we are involved in this great controversy? Did Adam and Eve have any choice? If we did not have any choice in becoming involved in this controversy does that make us pawns? Or even guinea pigs?
19. Satan, “the one who stood before our God and accused our brothers and sisters day and night has been thrown out of heaven.” Revelation 12:10. He began by accusing God. How successful has he been in his accusations against God? How successful has he been in his accusations against us? (Romans 3:10-19, 23).
20. Read Zechariah 3:1-4. What is happening in this passage? Who is the accuser? Who is the defender of Joshua, the representative of the Jewish people in his day?
21. If in fact as the Bible states we are all sinners, what are Satan and Christ arguing about?
22. If Satan is speaking the truth when he accuses us of being sinners then why is Jesus rebuking

him?

23. Zechariah 3 suggests that the filthy garments of sin are to be removed from Joshua and then new clothes are to be put on him. What does this represent? (Compare Isaiah 61:10; Matthew 22:11, 12; Revelation 3:18).
24. Read Hebrews 2:14. What is implied by the words “He did this so that through his death he might destroy the Devil, who has the power over death,<sup>15</sup> and in this way set free those who were slaves all their lives because of their fear of death”?
25. Read Romans 3:25-27. If possible look at this passage in several different translations. What does the death of Christ say about the justification of God? Does God need to be forgiven of his sins!? Not at all! Does God’s justice need to be demonstrated? Or is it his truthfulness? His righteousness? Why is there such an incredible variety in the translations of this passage?
26. Who has questioned God’s righteousness? And why did they do it? Can you explain why a good God allows evil to exist? Did he create evil?
27. There are three huge questions that are tied up with demonstrating the truth about God:
  - a. Why did Jesus have to die? (Remember Bozo’s question? “What man would not be judged worthy of condemnation if he condemned the innocent in order to free the guilty?...For if he could not save sinners except by condemning the just where is his omnipotence? But if he could, but would not, how are we to defend his wisdom and justice?”)
  - b. Why are we still here so long after the cross?
  - c. Why does God allow evil to continue to exist?

Can we answer these questions honestly in a way that adequately and correctly represents God?

28. Do you understand the word “theodicy”? It means literally the “judgment of God”. It is derived from two words: *theos*, God, and *dike*, judgment. (Derived from the Greek word *deiknuo* or *deiknumi* which means “to show, expose to the eyes. 2 metaph. 2A to give evidence or proof of a thing. 2B to show by words or teach.” (Compare *Laodicea*, *laos*, people, and *dike*, judgment.) We are people who live in the time of the judgment. (Revelation 3:14-22) When the evidence is presented, God wins his case. (Romans 3:4).
29. Is the salvation of man the big question involved in all of this? Or are there other issues even bigger? “But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice--its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man--the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto [69] Me.” John 12:31, 32. **The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.**” Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 68, 69.

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