THE JUDGMENT
OF THE LIVING

David Dence
Have you ever seen a picture of the great white throne judgment? High above the giant ten commandments shrouded in brilliant white light resides God the Judge. Crowding the perimeter are countless angels fading into the distance. Standing before the throne is the poor human defendant, and Christ the Advocate. Seated at a small desk is the recording angel with a stack of books. The judgment of the dead is a rather straightforward process. When John Doe’s name is called, the angel presents before the court his book of record. Inquiry is made regarding his adherence to the law of God. Did he measure up? If not, did he appeal to the Sin Bearer? Did he kneel at the cross and accept Jesus’ substitutionary death? If the record so indicates, the court turns to Jesus for His confirmation. If Jesus raises His nail-pierced hands and testifies that He shed His blood for John Doe, his sins are expunged and his name is retained in the Lamb’s book of life. Revelation 20 puts it this way:

11 I saw a great white throne and the One who was sitting on it. When the earth and sky saw his face, they tried to ran away, but there was no place for them to go.
12 I also saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books.
13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it. And Death and Hell gave up their dead. Each of the dead was judged by what he had done.

Do the dead really stand before the great white throne? No. They stand before the court in the person of the books which were written by the recording angels during their lives.

This simple process however, cannot take all day. The daily caseload is enormous. Just to keep up, just to stay current, heaven’s court must adjudicate 153,000 cases per day! That is 107 cases per minute. That equals the current world-wide death rate.

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Heaven is a very busy place. But heaven must get a whole lot busier if it is ever to catch up to the current population of the earth and keep up with the world wide birth rate. You see the problem.

I am sure you want, and fully expect to get a fair trial in heaven’s court. How much time would you like, to present your case? After all, if things don’t go your way, you could face the death sentence. Cases in earthly courts involving the death penalty take many months, and rightly so.

I am sure heaven’s court is much more efficient than any earthly court, so let’s allot one hour to each case. How long would it take to judge 7.3 billion living people? That would be 304 million days, or 833,000 years! That is simply untenable. So let’s allot one second for each case. Just how long might that take? Well let’s work it out:

There are 60 seconds in a minute.
3600 seconds in an hour.
86,400 seconds in a day.
4,492,800 seconds in a year.

So that means it would take 1625 years to judge everyone currently in the world. But by that time there would be millions or billions more people to judge. Which means the judgment of the living could never be finished. Not to mention the fact that most of the defendants would have died before their names came before the court.

TWO JUDGMENT SCENES

Daniel 7 (New Life Version)
9 As I kept looking, thrones were set up and the One Who has lived forever took His seat. His clothing was as white as snow and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne and its wheels were a burning fire.
10 A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him. Many thousands were serving Him, and many millions were standing before Him. The Judge was seated, and the books were opened.

This heavenly scene in Daniel depicts the commencement of the judgment of the dead.

But what about these verses in Revelation 14 (New King James Version)?
Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—

saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

Judgment of the dead? No. Judgment of the living! Surprised? How do I know? Simple. You don’t make announcements to dead people! Furthermore dead people cannot fear God or give glory to Him. That’s right, the first angel’s message is still future! Did I lose you? Please stay with me. There is no reason to doubt that the judgment of the dead began in 1844. First on the docket was probably righteous Able. But those living in 1844 needn’t have been too concerned. They would be dead and gone long before their names would come up in the judgment. Notice: “The hour of His judgment is (present tense) come.” This is the script the 144,000 will use when the tribulation begins. And remember, the time of trouble will not commence until the 144,000 are ready. Did you notice that our attention is drawn to the 144,000 at the beginning of Revelation 14? Why? Because they are the only ones qualified to give this message. Now you can see why Sister White said, “The most solemn, sacred work ever given to mortals is the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages to our world.”—Counsels on Diet and Foods p. 76

Did you say you wanted to run and hide during the time of trouble? Why? Just to save your skin? When you understand the high privilege bestowed upon the 144,000 you will not want to hide. You will be anxious to do your part in proclaiming the message of the first angel. When the trumpets sound you will want to be on hand to give the trumpets a certain sound. Without your voice the trumpets will simply look like natural disasters.

And why is mention made of “the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water?” Because these very things have just been, or are about to be clobbered by the first four trumpets. Are you beginning to see the picture? When the curtain rises and the drama of the ages plays out before your eyes, you will be amazed at the accuracy of these once obscure prophecies! Surely you understand that the three angel’s messages will transpire in quick succession. That they are spread out over many generations is not indicated.

“In the typical system, which was a shadow of the sacrifice and priesthood of Christ, the cleansing of the sanctuary was the last service performed by
the high priest in the yearly round of ministration. It prefigured the closing work in the ministration of our High Priest in heaven. This service involves a work of investigation, a work of judgment; and it immediately precedes the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. It is this work of judgment, immediately preceding the second advent, that is announced in the first angel’s message of Revelation 14:7 ‘Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment IS come.’”—GC p. 352

Twice she uses the word immediately. Do you know what immediately means. Did someone say 1844? I don’t think so. I don’t know Hebrew and I don’t know Greek, but I grew up in a home where English was spoken. And immediately means the very next event, without delay. When my mother said, “Get in this house immediately,” she did not mean tomorrow. And when the Pastor announces that a fellowship meal will be served immediately following the service, he doesn’t mean 170 years later. And did you notice in the GC quote above that Ellen White applies the first angels message to the judgment of the living?!

**JUDGMENT OF THE DEAD vs. JUDGMENT OF THE LIVING**

The judgment of the living is a much more complex process than the judgment of the dead. How do you judge a dynamic living being? He has not come to the end of his life yet. Some days he is good, some days he is bad. If he is judged one day too soon chances are he might change his mind the next day. One day my wife walked into the bedroom where my little daughter had just neatly folded and put away her clothes. “Oh you are such a good girl,” she commended.

Her reply was, “Sometimes my does, and sometimes my not.”

Just how is heaven going to run the judgment of the living? It cannot take forever. It must be universal, decisive, and final. It must be a judgment that ends all judgments.

“Oh,” you say, “heaven has ways and means far above our comprehension.” True, but God does not expect us to hold to a mystic or cosmic or abstract religion. Some folks will dismiss any serious discussion of the judgment of the living on the basis that God is omnipotent and can accomplish His will in a flash. True enough, but God is not about to waste or squander this epoch event. Remember, this is all about a wedding, and the Bridegroom is not interested in eloping. He will take the time to do it right. The judgment of the living has much broader implications than you
may realize. The judgment of the living is not just for the benefit of the defendants. Neither is it for the benefit of God. He already knows the outcome. It is for the edification of the entire watching universe.

**THE JUDGE**

In order to conduct a judgment, we need a judge. Who shall we get? How about God? I think God would be a good judge, don’t you? Let’s ask Him. And for our answer let’s go to John 5:22 “For the Father judgeth no man.” Oh, oh. Looks like we have a problem. How can we have a judgment without a judge? If the Father abdicates, who can we get? Look. The rest of the verse seems to solve that problem: “He hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” OK. It looks like the judgment is back on. Let’s see if Jesus is willing to be the judge. A quick check of John 8:15 indicates that we have another big problem. Jesus also declines! In His own words He declares, “I judge no man.” And just to make sure there is no misunderstanding, Jesus again in John 5:45 (Amplified Bible) declares “Put out of your minds the thought and do not suppose [as some of you are supposing] that I will accuse you before the Father.” John 12:47 confirms, “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” What shall we do now? We can’t have a judgment without a judge. Or can we? There are several stories in the Bible that hold the answer to this dilemma.

**BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF JUDGMENTS OF THE LIVING**

The earliest known example of a judgment of the living occurred not on earth, but in heaven! When iniquity was found in Lucifer, he did not keep it to himself. He spread discontent to every angel who would listen. And amazingly God let him undermine heaven’s perfect society. But God had His finger on the pulse. And when God sensed that rebellion was ripe, He did a curious thing: He declared war. And just what did that accomplish? That set the stage for what would follow. Remember how it was at recess time back in grade school? While you were running out the door someone would shout, “Let’s play ball.” The very next order of business was to divide up into two teams. You simply cannot play ball until this is done. Thus God gave the angels time to decide which side they would join. And when each and every angel had made up his/her mind, war commenced. But it was not the war that was the deciding factor. It was the process of deciding whose team to fight on that was significant. The declaration of war was the means that brought every participant to an irrevocable decision. Please notice that God was not in the least bit arbitrary.
NOAH
For 120 years Noah faithfully warned the people that a flood was coming. He made it clear that the OLNY way to survive the world-wide flood was to simply get on the big boat he was building. When construction was finished, the animals were divinely led into the ark. The people were amazed but unmoved. When everything was ready for the maiden voyage Noah stood in the doorway and invited anyone and everyone to join him in the safety of the ark. There was plenty of room. The people laughed. They could not bring themselves to step out of line. The scientists had convinced them that it was scientifically impossible to rain. “Don’t worry, be happy.” Then an unseen hand closed that massive door and sealed it. Their doom was also sealed. This is a perfect illustration of a judgment of the living. Everyone was judged at once. The final test was simple and singular. And no one could blame Noah. Everyone had judged himself.

MOSES
Moses conducted a judgment of the living without ever passing judgment or condemning anyone. When finished no one contested the outcome nor cast any blame on Moses:
Moses and Joshua had been up in the mountain with God for several weeks. The Israelites had become weary of waiting for their return. They talked Aaron into making them an idol of gold. As Moses and Joshua were descending the mountain they heard a noise coming up from the valley below. Joshua opined, "There is the sound of war in the camp."
But Moses replied: "It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear."
Exodus 32 (New International Version)
19 When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.
20 And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.
21 He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?"
22 “Do not be angry, my lord,” Aaron answered. “You know how prone these people are to evil.
23 They said to me, ‘Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.’
24 So I told them, ‘Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.’ Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!”
“Yeah right,” says Moses, “likely story.” Moses quickly gathered all the people together and drew a line in the sand as it were.

“Now let everyone who is on the Lord’s side come stand by me.” Moses accused no one. He simply set the stage and waited. Then there was a movement in the crowd. Slowly people began lining up beside Moses. More and more crossed the line. Soon it could be seen that only members of the tribe of Levi had heeded Moses’ invitation. It was learned that the Levites had not participated in the wild apostasy. But still, anyone could have joined them behind the safety line, guilty or not. Sin has a strange paralyzing hold on the soul. For a few brief moments Moses was offering amnesty. Oh why could they not run to safety? Such is the mystery of iniquity.

THE TEN VIRGINS
Another striking example of a judgment of the living is found in Matthew 25:1-13. Please read these profound verses. You will notice that there was nothing arbitrary about the selection of the wise virgins. And no one singled out the foolish virgins. The narrative simply says “they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut.” They that were ready. Oh beloved, let these four words burn into your heart. The wise virgins had prepared themselves for this pivotal moment. The foolish virgins had simply neglected to think ahead.

Hebrews 2 (King James Version)

3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?
And just what was it that the foolish virgins were lacking? Sister White tells us exactly: “Let every youth consider the parable of the ten virgins. All had lamps, that is, an outward semblance of religion; but only five of them had the \textit{inward piety}.”--\textit{YI, September 20, 1894}

Inward piety is what you are when no one is looking. Not many Christians are Christians in the dark. Do you lack inward piety? You may want to start by severely limiting all sources of worldly media. It will be almost impossible to be a wise virgin while you daily indulge in commercial, syndicated, network, worldly, sinful programing. No excuses. It is too late to be fooling around with golden calves. If you watch what the world watches, you will fear what the world fears. You will begin thinking like the world. It will be almost impossible to think for yourself. Oh, you don’t think your viewing habits are adversely affecting your spiritual life? Neither does the drinker think a little alcohol will affect his driving. Go ahead, take a stand. Do something radical. I know, it will be the hardest thing you have ever done. But when the cry is heard at midnight, “Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him,” you will rise with great joy and follow Him into the banquet. You will feel that you have a perfect right to be there. Can you imagine the horror of being left outside? It is unthinkable. You have only a few years, months, perhaps, weeks or even days left to gather up a few drops of the precious golden oil. Don’t put it off. Not one of us is guaranteed tomorrow. Right now you are preparing yourself to be a wise virgin or a foolish virgin. The choice is yours, all yours. The good news is, if you want to be among the wise virgins, you may!

\textit{Romans 11 (King James Version)}

\begin{quote}
33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his \textit{judgments}, and his ways past finding out!
\end{quote}

So just how is God going to run the judgment of the living? Very simply, and it will not take a long time. In fact we will all be judged at the \textit{same time}. I am not trying to deny God’s role as Judge. Genesis 18:25 tells us plainly: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” God has a very important role in the judgment, but it is passive. He sets the stage, the atmosphere. Then He provides the test. But the test is never sprung unannounced. Ample warning and time to ponder the conditions and consequences is provided. God is fair and never arbitrary.
THE DAY OF ATONEMENT
Perhaps you will recall that anciently the Day of Atonement fell on the
tenth day of the seventh month. That was when the High Priest entered the
Most Holy Place of the Sanctuary and made an atonement for the children
of Israel. If anyone had unconfessed sins he was cut off. But the Day of
Atonement was no surprise, for ten days earlier commenced the Feast of
Trumpets. Each morning silver trumpets, and sometimes ram’s horns blew
loudly from the temple steps. They sounded a clear warning. These ten
days were known as the days of awe. The people had ten days to put away
their sins, confess their faults and make things right. It was like a
countdown: Ten days ‘til the day of atonement. Nine days to the day of
atonement. Eight days to the day of atonement, seven, six, five, four, etc.

The Day of Atonement which occurred once each year typified a future
event called the Judgment of the Living, which is still future. And true to
form, the coming judgment will be preceded by trumpets. This time,
however, there will be only seven. And they might cover a span of several
months instead of only ten days. Even though they are called trumpets in
keeping with the ancient feast of trumpets, they will be blasts from various
“natural” disasters.

First trumpet Rev 8:7 Fiery burning hail which burns a third of the trees
and all the grass - scorched earth!
Second trumpet Rev 8:8 A rock the size of a mountain falls into one of
the seven seas, turning it to blood. Fish die and ships sink.
Third trumpet Rev 8:10 A larger rock impacts one of the seven conti-
nents, making the springs of water bitter. Men drink the water and die.
Fourth trumpet Rev 8:12 A one-third reduction in sunlight due to smoke
and dust. It is going to get gloomy. That will put an end to global warming.
Fifth trumpet Rev 9:1 Satan appears masquerading as Christ (His evil
angels join him).
Sixth trumpet Rev 9:14 An army of 200 million soldiers kill a third of
mankind.
Seventh trumpet Rev 10:7; 11:15 The Mystery of God is finished and
Probation closes.

This is the setting in which the Judgment of the Living takes place. What
has God just done? He has arrested the attention of the world. And He has
turned up the heat. What happens when you turn up the heat under a
pressure cooker? The beans or vegetables cook faster due to the increased
pressure. Thus God will bring things to a head and accelerate the refining
process.
“It is in a crisis that character is revealed.”—Maranatha p. 262
“As we near the judgment, all will manifest their true character, and it will be made plain to what company they belong.”--IT p. 100

“We are standing upon the threshold of great and solemn events. The whole earth is to be lightened with the glory of the Lord…Prophecies are being fulfilled, and stormy times are before us. The angels are holding the four winds, that they shall not blow…but the storm is gathering, the clouds are loading, ready to burst upon the world…All that God has said of the future will surely come to pass; not one thing will fail of all that he has spoken. All heaven is represented to me as watching the unfolding of events. A crisis is to be revealed in the great and prolonged controversy in the government of God on earth. Something great and decisive is to take place, and that right early. The armory of heaven is open; all the universe of God and its equipments are ready. One word has justice to speak, and there will be terrific representations upon the earth, of the wrath of God. There will be voices and thunderings and lightnings and earthquakes and universal desolation. Intensity is taking possession of every earthly element.”—SpTA01b p. 38

“Last Sabbath evening the Lord gave me a view of many things, which I will now try to relate. I saw the people of God—some were dormant and stupid; they were but half awake, and did not realize the time we were living in. The angel said destruction is coming like a mighty whirlwind. I saw that very soon the overflowing scourge would pass over, and sweep their possessions all away; and then it will be too late to sacrifice earthly goods, and lay up treasure in heaven.”—16MR p. 30

It will be obvious that the earth has been mortally wounded. Men will agree that earthlings are headed for extinction. Everyone will be thinking seriously for a change. All will agree that God is angry. All will agree that the tribulation has begun. All will agree that in order to appease this angry God we must get back to the Bible. But here is where the agreement falls off. At this point there are apt to be Saturday laws in Jerusalem, Friday laws in Mecca and Sunday laws in America. When Satan shows up claiming to be the Messiah, he will commend his world religious leaders, “You’ve done good, but not good enough. We must not have three holy days.” And in honor of that head which was wounded by a sword and did live, he will recommend Sunday as the universal day of worship. Soon laws will be enacted to force all men everywhere to worship the beast. Now things will really get hectic. The contest is on. Everyone will be talking about it.
A SINGLE SIMPLE TEST
And as in the garden of Eden, the test is singular. Through the violation of just one prohibition, sin entered the world. And in the end, the inhabitants of Earth will face a single test. Not ten. Not 28. Just one. How simple! Everyone with enough sense to count his change will be required to make a decision for or against the worship of the beast. If he refuses to worship the beast he will not be able to buy or sell. If he worships the beast, God will cast him into the lake of fire. The stakes are high. But in the final hour there will be no fence sitters. Everyone will be shaken off. There will be no middle ground. Because the tension is so great and the very atmosphere so tense, decisions made will be emphatic and permanent. Tenants of the Sabbath/Sunday issue will be made very clear. Everyone will have sufficient facts on which to make an intelligent decision. In due time everyone will have taken sides. And when all have made their final decision, the Judge of all the Earth will bring down the gavel and announce, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Rev 22:11

Did God judge anyone? No. He simply confirmed everyone’s personal decision. Can God be blamed? No. Everyone bears the responsibility for his own decision. Thus in just a few months 7.3 billion people will have been judged. The judgment being over, Jesus can now ride forth on His white horse as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Note: To relegate the seven trumpets to the distant past is to strip them of their significance. Their very purpose is to warn the inhabitants of Earth of the impending judgment. We are not to view them as strung out over many generations. That would entirely muffle their true meaning. “Give the trumpet a certain sound.” If the trumpets occurred in the past, was the generation then living aware of their meaning and message? No. Were the inhabitants of the earth confronted with the startling news that the judgment of the living was about to commence? No. And why not? Simply because the 144,000 messengers were not on the scene yet. It is the 144,000 who give meaning to the trumpets. And it is the trumpets that validate the 144,000. They work together. The trumpets cannot sound until the 144,000 messengers are ready. So why did our pioneers view the trumpets in the past? It was because they believed Jesus would return in 1843 or 1844 so they tried to find fulfillments for these prophecies before that date.
NO NEED TO FEAR THE JUDGMENT

1 John 4 (Contemporary English Version)
16 God is Love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God, and He will stay one with us.
17 If we truly love others and live as Christ did in this world, we won't be worried about the day of judgment.
18 A real love for others will chase those worries away. The thought of being punished is what makes us afraid. It shows that we have not really learned to love.

The righteous should not tremble in fear of the judgment. For in the judgment we shall be vindicated. Last week my partner judged me; I lay awake all night. A month ago my wife judged me; I turned away in silence. Three years ago my best friend judged me; it broke my heart. Last week my dispatcher judged me; I couldn’t believe it. Last month a Virginia State Trooper judged me; it cost me dearly. Two weeks ago a passing motorist judged me; well, he just didn’t know me. Last winter my neighbor judged me; she about ruined my reputation. My Bible says God is a righteous Judge.

2 Timothy 4 (King James Version)
7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:
8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

One day the righteous Judge will vindicate me. That’s good news! No one understands like Jesus. Jesus really loves me. It is His work to cover a multitude of sins. My sins! And He will cover them permanently with His precious blood. Not because I am worthy, but because of His great love for me. I am looking forward to the judgment.

“We are to do all that we can do on our part to fight the good fight of faith. We are to wrestle, to labor, to strive, to agonize to enter in at the strait gate. We are to strive earnestly to be zealous and to repent, to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts from every defilement…The Bible teaches that everything regarding our salvation depends upon our own course of action. If we perish, the responsibility will rest wholly upon ourselves…We must be diligent to make our calling and election sure.”—Signs of the Times, June 16, 1890; Faith and Works p. 48.2
God is not standing ready to condemn you in the judgment. Please notice what Jesus said in Matthew 12:36-38 (King James Version) speaking of the judgment:

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Whose words? Your words! Amazing!

One of the early Adventist preachers was Elder D. M. Canright. He was a good preacher and drew large audiences. But when it came time to preach the Sabbath, his audiences dropped off. That really bothered him. So he left Adventism and accepted a call to be the preacher at the Fountain Street Baptist Church. But he was not happy. How could he be? At heart he was still an Adventist. Once an Adventist, always an Adventist. To salve his conscience he fought against the Adventist Church and especially Ellen White. Without the blessing of heaven he sank down in despair and despondency. His life was marked with many failures and reverses. It was the Advent message that had made him a great preacher, and without that, he was nothing. One summer evening he happened along a street and heard familiar hymns coming from an open door. He was drawn inside where Ellen White was holding a meeting. Even though he had spent his life working against her, his attention was arrested. After the closing hymn he was invited to repent and return to the fold. But he just couldn’t do it. Slowly sinking into his seat he sobbed out those heart wrenching words, “I am a lost man.” Why was he a lost man? Because he said he was! If he had repented at that late date would God have forgiven him and accepted him back? Of course. Would Ellen White or any of the brethren refused him fellowship? Of course not. They would have rejoiced that a lost sheep had returned. As far as we know Dudley Marvin Canright died a lost man simply because he said he was.

Dear friend, do not fear that God will condemn you in the judgment.

John 3 (King James Version)

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.
18 He that believeth on him is not condemned:

You will ultimately condemn yourself. Or, if you have the faith of Jesus and refuse to give in to the devil’s accusations, you may claim victory.
It is really that simple. The decision is entirely up to you. All the devils in hell cannot damn your soul, and all the angels in heaven cannot save you. Only you can choose to follow Jesus.

“Our own course of action will determine whether we shall receive the seal of the living God or be cut down by the destroying weapons.”—Testimonies, Vol, 5. p. 212.

“Young and old, God is now testing you. You are deciding your own eternal destiny.”—Maranatha p. 43

“The young, as well as those of more advanced age, are accountable to God. They have their fate in their own hands…There is no election but one's own by which any may perish. Every person is a free moral agent, deciding his own future by his daily life…We are exhorted to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. God compels no man to be righteous, . We may be assailed by strong temptations, ; but these temptations are never irresistible.”—ST, October 8, 1885

“Each is deciding his own eternal destiny, according as he chooses obedience or disobedience. To every one is given freedom to act, and upon every one rests the responsibility for his own actions. But our words and actions must pass the test of God's high standard, or we shall be bound up with the wicked, to receive an eternal retribution.”—Ms 36, 1896

“The word of God leaves the responsibility of our ruin at our own door; everything depends upon our obedience or disobedience.”—RH, July 7, 1891

“The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion. Then the end will come.”—DA p. 673

“The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary.”—GC p. 543 (1888)

“For six thousand years the great controversy has been in progress; the Son of God and his heavenly messengers have been in conflict with the
power of the evil one, to warn, enlighten, and save the children of men. Now all have made their decision; the wicked have fully united with Satan in his warfare against God.”—GC p. 656 (1888)

So how does the judgment of the living work? In Testimonies to Ministers page 300 we find a clue: “God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness.”

1. God arrests the attention of the world. He sets the stage.
2. Through the seven trumpets and the loud messages of the 144,000 the world is warned of the coming judgment.
3. God provides a universal test.
4. Based on how folks deal with that test, they will be either saved or lost.

“A great test is coming: it will be upon obedience or disobedience to the commandments of God.”—Review and Herald, July 2, 1908

“The image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided.... This is the test that the people of God must have before they are sealed. All who prove their loyalty to God by observing His law, and refusing to accept a spurious sabbath, will rank under the banner of the Lord God Jehovah, and will receive the seal of the living God. Those who yield the truth of heavenly origin, and accept the Sunday sabbath, will receive the mark of the beast.”—Maranatha p. 164

“The Sabbath question is a test that will come to the whole world.”—3SM p. 254

“The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast, the observance of the false sabbath will be urged upon us. The contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. At that time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliance will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat.”—PK p. 188 also Maranatha p. 200

17
WHY IS THE JUDGMENT OF THE LIVING NECESSARY?

Jesus has a problem. A big problem. He has declared that He intends to bring earthlings to heaven to live with Him forever! The angels and unfallen beings are deeply concerned.

“But Jesus, if you bring those sinful beings up here they will ruin the place.”

True enough. They have a legitimate point. What is Jesus’ solution?

“I am not done with them yet. Please be patient and watch. When I am done with them you will love and trust them just as much as I do.”

Notice verse 19 below:

Romans 8 (New Living Translation)

17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.

19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.

This is why the judgment of the living is necessary. It is not only for your benefit, but for the benefit of the watching universe. Jesus knows that you are a saint, a wise virgin. But that is not enough. He must convince His neighbors of that fact. You might think it would be sufficient for Jesus to simply, emphatically declare that you are righteous. Your faith in Jesus’ omnipotence is admirable. But remember, Jesus cannot, must not be arbitrary. Throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity no one will ever request a “recount.”

1 Corinthians 3 (New Living Translation)

11 No one can lay any other foundation than the one that has already been laid. That foundation is Jesus Christ.

10 Whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful.

12 Anyone who builds on that foundation may use gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw.

13 But on the judgment day, fire will reveal plainly what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show clearly the character and worth of the work each person did.

Do you see anything arbitrary about this? Can God in any way be blamed?
What is God’s part? He simply provides the “fire.” This is an excellent example of how the judgment of the living works. Brilliant, isn’t it? And you thought you knew God. Well, now you know Him better than you did before. Isn’t He wonderful? Don’t you love Him more deeply than ever before?

HAS THE JUDGMENT OF THE LIVING STARTED YET?

No, no. There should be no question in your mind. Remember, God is not going to spring the judgment on us without ample warning. And what happens to those who fail the judgment? They receive the mark of the beast.

“No one has yet received the mark of the beast. The testing time has not yet come. None are condemned until they have had the light. But when the decree shall go forth enforcing the counterfeit Sabbath, and the loud cry of the third angel shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image, the line will be clearly drawn between the false and the true. THEN those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast.” —Evangelism 234

CLOSE OF PROBATION FOR THE CHURCH?

Some teach that there are two closes of probation. One for the church and one for the world. There are some serious problems with that view.

1. God is not in the business of closing probation for anyone. That is not the way He works. He will wait as long as necessary for everyone to come to an informed decision. “All heaven is waiting and longing for our
cooperation.”—That I May Know Him p. 342  If God were in the business of closing probation for folks, He could have done that long, long ago. The very fact that He is waiting and waiting and waiting indicates that He does not have a “ready-or-not” deadline. Is this clear? I know it is hard to give up the idea that God has a big secret time-line which will soon tick to a close. Will there someday be a close of probation? Yes, of course. But that day will come only after everyone has made their final decision. We humans determine that date, not God. Probation closes because there is no reason to continue it. Even if God waited another hundred years, He knows, in His infinite wisdom that no one would change sides. At that point in time God simply ratifies everyone’s decision.

2. Let’s look carefully at 1 Peter 4:17 (New International Reader's Version)
   “It is time for people to be judged. It will begin with the family of God. And since it begins with us, what will happen to people who don't obey God’s good news?”

True, judgment begins at the house of God, but it says nothing about judgment ending first at the house of God. Judgment ends for all of us at the same time. There is only one close of probation. And that occurs just before the first plague is poured out. Up until that time all who wish to run to the Rock and be saved may certainly do so. It makes no difference if they are Methodists, Mormons, Moonies, Masons, or Mennonites.

3. To single out Adventists and claim that their probation closes at or near the National Sunday Law is not fair. Do you really believe that just because a person has at some point in their life been baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church they will be consigned to hell before the general public? All 18 million of them? Really? All the Conference Presidents? All the Pastors? Let me explain something. The majority of Adventists do not have a clear picture of the prophecies. Most do not have any Spirit of Prophecy books. Many were baptized with very little preparation. In very poor countries ADRA will prepare baptismal packs consisting of a complete suite of clothes. Some for men and some for women. After a few weeks of meetings the attendees are offered a new suite of clothes if they will line up and be baptized first. And you are ready to close their probation just because a Sunday law is passed far across the sea in America? If this is true they would have been better off not to have been baptized until after the Sunday law.

4. At the commencement of the time of trouble there will be sort of a close of probation for Seventh-day Adventists. This is how it works: The time of
trouble cannot commence until the 144,000 are ready. For more documentation please ask. The 144,000 will be composed largely of those with an Adventist background. (Doubtful? Remember, when Jesus came to earth He chose for His disciples members of His chosen people.) When that number is made up, membership into the ranks of the 144,000 will be closed. No more will be added. Nowhere in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy do we read about 144,001. So, will all the rest of the Adventists be lost? Of course not. They will then be given the opportunity to join the great multitude. And what is the difference between the 144,000 and the great multitude? The 144,000 will be translated, the great multitude will be martyrs. The 144,000 will be taken to heaven without seeing death. The great multitude will be killed for their faith and resurrected at the last trump. And why must the great multitude endure death? Because they come in after the time of trouble has started. They come in because they are scared to death. Does Jesus accept this kind of conversion? Your first response might be so say no. But actually the reason or motive for coming to Christ is never disparaged. If I am sad, I can come to Jesus. If I am mad, I can come to Jesus. If I am sick, I can come to Jesus. If I am terrified, I can come to Jesus. Even if I am indifferent or uncaring, I can come to Jesus. John 6:37 says, “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Clearly, Jesus welcomes all comers with open arms. But such “conversions” must be tested. Thus they will be required to stand firm for the Sabbath in the face of death.

Warning. Let’s not be too glib about this, “Oh well, if I don’t make it into the ranks of the 144,000 I’ll get a second chance. I will join the great multitude or just be laid to rest.” For you and me it doesn’t work that way. That provision is only available to “those who have had no opportunity to learn what is truth.” Sister White makes this grim statement:

“When the call shall come, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him," those who have not received the holy oil, who have not cherished the grace of Christ in their hearts, will find, like the foolish virgins, that they are not ready to meet their Lord. They have not, in themselves, the power to obtain the oil, and their lives are wrecked.”—RH, July 20, 1897

5. Shortly after the time of trouble begins the composite beast of Revelation 13 will come to life. This is also known as the crisis government, or Babylon the Great, or Babylon that great city. We might call it the One World Order. It will be composed of seven heads and ten horns. Seven religious leaders and ten political leaders. Make no mistake
about it; this beast power will allow NO religious or political rivals. ALL the world will wonder after the beast. Got the picture? At this time there will be no Seventh-day Adventist Church. It will be out of business. Neither will there be a Baptist Church or a Methodist Church or any other church. Surprised? For more documentation please ask. So, to single out Adventists and exclude them from salvation is not fair.

Perhaps you are thinking of
“The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have had no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter.”—9T p. 97

Well of course! That has always been the case. It is true today, it will be so in the future. But notice who the active parties are; “those who would not enter.” Now compare the above statement with the one below. See the similarities?

“The book of Revelation must be opened to the people. Many have been taught that it is a sealed book; but it is sealed only to those who reject light and truth. The truth it contains must be proclaimed, that people may have an opportunity to prepare for the events which are so soon to transpire.”—Ev p. 195

INVESTIGATIVE JUDGEMENT

And what about the Investigative Judgment? Well, you know, that term is not in Scripture. The Big Judgment, whatever you call it, will take place in heaven during the thousand years when the records are open.

“The day is coming when the world is going to stand before a jury made up of followers of Jesus. Why, we’re even going to judge angels!”
1 Corinthians 6:2-3 (The Message)

“Then I saw thrones, and sitting on them were people to whom authority to act as judges and to pass sentence was entrusted. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” Revelation 20:4 (Amplified Bible)

Please start from the top and read this booklet again. Now find someone willing to sit still for 30 minutes and read it out loud to them. Don’t be disappointed if they don’t get it the first time through. For some, it may
take several years to sink in. Do not discard. When the tribulation begins you will want to refer to this study, if you can find it. Corrections, questions, comments are eagerly accepted. If God has revealed to you a piece of the puzzle that He has not yet shown to me, I would be interested. Let’s learn together.

“All who have received the light upon these subjects are to bear testimony of the great truths which God has committed to them.”—GC p. 488  The closer we are aligned with truth, the better the Holy Spirit will be able to validate our message with power.

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Jesus has a problem. A big problem. He has declared that He intends to bring earthlings to heaven to live with Him forever! The angels and unfallen beings are deeply concerned. Are you?

How will the judgment be conducted? When will it happen? Is it happening now? What are we to do? Good questions. This little book has some good answers.