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International Journal for Pastors
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monthly since 1928 by the Ministerial
Association, General Conference of
Seventh-day Adventists.® *Ministry* is a
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PRINTER Pacific Press® Pub. Assn.,
1350 N. Kings Rd., Nampa, ID 83687

Standard mail postage paid at Nampa, Idaho.
(ISSN 0026-5314)

Member of Associated Church Press.

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Vol. 86 Number 8 © 2014

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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The blessing of C. D. Brooks

As I read Elder Ted N. C. Wilson's review of *C.D.: The Man Behind the Message* in April's *Ministry*, I recalled Elder Brooks's brief encounter with me at a camp meeting at Mount Vernon (OH) Academy.

The unique outdoor Communion service on the lawn of the girl's dorm 34 years ago came flooding back to me.

After brief remarks from the conference president, he asked me to pray on the bread. I remembered this gem from Ellen White: "A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust."¹ Elder Brooks leaned

over and thanked me. How could I forget this gracious man!

—Keith Mundt, Riverside, California, United States

Rights of individual conscience?

In reflecting upon Stephen N. Allred's article, "Persecution in the Adventist Church?" (June 2014), the author seems confused about whether a member must believe the 28 fundamental beliefs. He wrote, "[T]he 28 fundamental beliefs (or maybe only the 13 baptismal vows) are theoretically not debatable."

For many years, membership in the church was based upon a public acceptance of the 13 baptismal vows.

The eleventh stated, "Do you know and understand the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church? . . . [O]rdering your life in harmony with these principles?"

The vow did not require the member to believe in the Fundamental Beliefs, he only had to know and understand them and follow the external practices.

The author's confusion comes from a 2010 addition to the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* of an alternate vow that does require acceptance of the Fundamental Beliefs: "Do you accept the teachings of the Bible as expressed in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?"²

The church manuals from 1971 through 2000 included a quote, affirming that "the decisions of the General Conference . . . should be submitted to by all . . . unless they can be shown to conflict with the word of God and the rights of individual conscience."³

This quote was not included in the 2010 edition of the *Church Manual*, but a weaker statement was included on page 31: "I have often been instructed by the Lord that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any other one man."⁴

The church that Ellen White served and that I joined many years ago strongly affirmed the rights of individual conscience. It appears from changes to the manual and this article that there are sinister forces acting to destroy that right.

—Richard A. Helzerman, pastor, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Newburgh, Indiana, United States

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The sanctuary doctrine: Does it really matter?

The last issue of *Ministry* dealing exclusively with the sanctuary doctrine was in 1980—34 years ago. Those were turbulent times, as some of you well remember. Have we finally found peace, or have we just chosen to forget? Why are we producing another special issue on the heavenly sanctuary and the ministry of Jesus as our great High Priest? Does it really matter?

Some insist that we should forget peripheral issues and just focus on Jesus. I agree. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith, and He embodies all that we know as true. We should focus on Christ's incarnation, earthly ministry, death, and glorious resurrection. But, as devoted followers of Jesus, should we not also pay attention to Christ's current ministry in heaven? What is Jesus doing right now? Why is His high priestly ministry at the present time so vitally important in the plan of salvation?

The sanctuary issue has become important to me, personally. I have colleagues in ministry who have distanced themselves from the Seventh-day Adventist Church because they believe that its teachings about the sanctuary are fatally flawed. Others, while they may continue to serve as Seventh-day Adventist pastors, have lost confidence in the sanctuary doctrine or simply ignore it. If the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary really does matter, we have a responsibility to answer the question "Why?"

Wilson Paroschi addresses this question directly in his article, "The Cross and the Sanctuary: Do We Really Need Both?" His detailed exegesis of Romans

3:21–26 leads him to the conclusion that we need both the Cross and the sanctuary, Christ's atoning sacrifice and His ministry as our great High Priest.

In his article "Why the Sanctuary Is So Important," Norman Gulley supports Paroschi's assertion, emphasizing that "the two phases of Christ's ministry are the gospel equally because there is no redemption without resolution of the controversy." The decisive issue in the judgment does not primarily concentrate on what we have done or not done, but rather whether we have accepted or rejected what Christ has done for us. If we have accepted Christ's saving work on our behalf at the Cross, we can face the judgment without fear. We have already passed from death to life!

Gerhard Pfandl addresses the important topic of the pre-Advent judgment as part of the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary in his article "The Books Were Opened." He sees the pre-Advent judgment as a vital and beautiful part of the three angels' messages.

Roy Adams shows the relevance of the sanctuary message in his article titled "The Cry for Justice . . . and the Answer From the Sanctuary." In a world where people are crying out for justice, God's judgment from the heavenly sanctuary will hold the perpetrators of evil and injustice on this planet and in the cosmos accountable for their actions.

While the books of Daniel and Hebrews are primary sources of information about the sanctuary and the ministry of Jesus as our great High Priest, David Tasker focuses our attention on the Psalms. In his article "The Heavenly Temple in the Psalms," he

Have we finally found peace, or have we just chosen to forget?

identifies numerous references to the heavenly sanctuary. Looking beyond the furniture and features, Tasker sees a God who rules from His temple to ensure justice, holiness, and restoration.

Seventh-day Adventist scholars have not always agreed over every interpretation concerning the sanctuary and the ministry of Jesus as our great High Priest. While the Scriptures should always be foundational, we also need to come together with a spirit of love and humility. That's a valuable lesson for all of us.

In the early years of the Advent movement, Ellen White gave this inspired counsel regarding the theme of this special issue: "The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest."^{*} We're praying that these articles will assist you on that journey—because this topic really *does* matter. ✓

^{*} Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 488.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or visit www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine.

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The cross and the sanctuary: *Do we really need both?*

In his book *Right With God Right Now*, Desmond Ford argues that atonement was completed on the cross and that there is no need of subsequent actions in the heavenly sanctuary for salvation to be fully experienced by the believer. On the basis of Romans 3:21–26, he emphasizes that God could not have forgiven sin until its penalty was paid, and so the Cross was necessary to entitle God to forgive. Not that God is controlled by a law outside of Himself, Ford argues. He is not. God is controlled by what He is, meaning that His law is but the outward expression of His own character. The Cross, therefore, was necessary, Ford concludes, and on it the One sinned against paid the penalty so that the sinner could be forgiven and saved.¹

Despite the several difficulties Romans 3:21–26 entails, Ford’s interpretation of this passage presents no major problem, but is it possible to conclude from these verses that the Cross is where atonement was completed and is all that God needs? Is Jesus’ ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, as postulated by Seventh-day Adventist theology, a contradiction of His accomplishments on Calvary? Or does it really detract from the believer’s full assurance of salvation here and now?²

Preliminary considerations

Because of the way Romans 3:21–26 summarizes Paul’s concept of justification, these verses have been described as the heart and center of Romans.³ The passage comes right after a long section in which the apostle makes it unmistakably clear that all humanity, whether Jew or Gentile, is caught up in sinfulness and so is held accountable to God (1:18–3:20). But then comes the good news: God’s saving righteousness has been dramatically revealed in the atoning death of Jesus Christ as the only possible answer to the human plight created by sin (vv. 21–26). Such answer, however, is effective only for those who believe (see v. 22). Faith is not the condition for justification but rather the instrument through which the sinner receives justification.⁴ All boasting, therefore, is excluded (v. 27). Faith establishes the inability—not the nullity—of the law (v. 31), and so of human self-confidence in any kind of moral attainment (vv. 28, 29).

When talking about Jesus’ death—“His blood” (v. 25) being a clear reference to it—Paul uses two metaphors to explain on what grounds God justifies the sinner. The implied objection seems obvious: How can a righteous God justify the unrighteous

without compromising His righteousness? The answer comes first under the metaphor of redemption (*apolytrōsis*) (v. 24b), which was applied to slaves who were purchased in the marketplace in order to be set free. When this happened, they were said to have been redeemed (see Lev. 25:47–55). The same metaphor is also used in the Old Testament (OT) of the people of Israel who were redeemed from both Egyptian and Babylonian captivity (Deut. 7:8; Isa. 43:1). Just so, those who were enslaved by sin and completely unable to liberate themselves have been redeemed by God, or bought out of captivity, through the blood of Jesus that was shed as a ransom price (cf. Mark 10:45; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:9).

The second metaphor is propitiation or atonement (*hilastērion*) (Rom. 3:25), taken from the context of worship—more precisely, sacrifice. Propitiation or atonement points to the substitutionary character of Jesus’ death in the sense that He voluntarily experienced on the cross the whole intensity of God’s wrath against sin (1:18; 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10),⁵ thus effecting reconciliation between the sinner and God. Death is the penalty for sin (Rom. 6:23; cf. Ezek. 18:20), but just as the sacrificial animal in the OT times took the place of the sinner and died in his

or her stead (Lev. 17:10, 11; cf. Gen. 22:13), so Jesus' death was the perfect, antitypical sacrifice that releases those who believe from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10, 11, 13; cf. 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Heb. 2:9) and reconciles them with God. There were several sacrifices in Israel's religious life, and all of them met their fulfillment in the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:12, 26–28; 10:12), “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29 NKJV; cf. Isa. 53:5, 6).

sinner but about what He has done to justify, or vindicate, Himself. In other words, what Paul does here is present a rational argument for the necessity of Jesus' death. This describes why he uses the forensic term *endeixis* (“proof/demonstration”) twice in this context (vv. 25, 26), whereas in verse 21 he uses the passive form of the verb *phaneroō* (“to reveal/make known”). These two terms are not equivalent. While *phaneroō* puts the emphasis on that which is revealed, that is, on

the guilty” (Exod. 34:7; cf. Deut. 25:1). If He does so, He can be accused of conniving with evil, which is a denial of His own nature.⁹ But how exactly did God pass over former sins? According to the traditional interpretation, which goes back to Anselm of Canterbury in the 11th century, God passed over sins by not punishing them.¹⁰ But there seems to be a problem here, for how does the Cross prove God's righteousness in relation to the sins committed beforehand and not punished? Unless



***How can a righteous
God justify the
unrighteous without
compromising His
righteousness?***

God's righteousness

Perhaps the most controversial issue in our passage is whether God's righteousness, or “His righteousness,” in verses 25 and 26 (NKJV) has the same meaning as in verses 21 and 22. The traditional interpretation, which seems to fit the context better, is that *dikaiosynē autou* in those verses refers to an attribute of God, meaning that God is righteous, while in verses 25 and 26 it must be taken as a gift from God, the righteousness that He imputes to those who believe.⁶ If so, verses 25 and 26 differ from verses 21 and 22 in the sense that Paul is no longer talking about what God has done to justify the

the subject of the verb itself, hence the passive voice—exactly as with *apokalyptō* in 1:17—*endeixis* always points to something else (cf. 2 Cor. 8:24), trying to establish its validity or compelling its acceptance as truth.⁷

The idea, therefore, emphasizes that God set forth Jesus Christ as a *hilastērion* “at the present time” (v. 26a), the time of Jesus' historical death, in order to prove His righteousness because, in His “forbearance” (*anochē*), He “had passed over” (*paresis*) the sins that had been previously committed (v. 25, NKJV).⁸ For Paul, by doing this God created a legal problem for Himself, for a righteous God cannot simply “clear

Paul is referring to those who had been justified, the argument makes no sense. We just have to remember that (1) sins are not punished today more than they were before; (2) all the sinners of the OT times sooner or later ceased to exist, so in a sense it could be said that they had indeed been punished; and (3) in the OT times, God did not always let sins go unpunished, as Paul himself says (Rom. 1:24–32; cf. 5:12–14; 6:23; 7:13; 1 Cor. 10:5, 8, 10).

The apostle, therefore, seems to have in mind those repentant sinners who had been justified by God prior to the Cross. Evidence for this, besides *endeixis*, is the connection of God's

righteousness with His right to justify in verse 26. The idea, then, is not simply that God withheld punishment of sins when He should have inflicted it but that He “passed over” such sins by justifying, without legal backing so to speak (cf. Heb. 10:4), those who committed them.¹¹ This was the case, for example, of Abraham and David (see Rom. 4:1–8). By forgiving sins in a time when the propitiatory blood had not yet been shed (see Heb. 9:15), God put His own character at stake, raising serious questions about His presumed righteousness (Ps. 9:8; Isa. 5:16).

Thus, if God’s intention by presenting Jesus Christ as a *hilastērion* was to demonstrate His righteousness, so that “at the present time” He can be both “just and the justifier” of those who believe in Jesus (Rom. 3:26b), this seems to imply that in former times He was only one of those two things—only the justifier, suggesting that He was not just when He acted as such. The notion of God not acting justly, or

righteously, seems blasphemous, but this is the meaning of Paul’s words in this passage. He uses forensic language to describe the implications of the way God dealt with sins in the past and, by extension, in the present as well, for there is no question that sin is a human problem, but once forgiven, it becomes a divine problem. God is the One who has to account for it, as perhaps there is nothing more contradictory to His holiness and righteousness than His act of justifying the ungodly (4:5). But the Bible makes it clear that God is also love, and the tension between love and righteousness has been solved by the Cross (5:6–11).

The cross and the sanctuary

One thing is clear in Romans 3:21–26: the cross gives God the right to forgive and justify. The cross is all that God needs to implement salvation. At the cross, all OT sacrifices met their fulfillment, including the one that

was offered on the Day of Atonement. Why, then, do we need a doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary as claimed by Seventh-day Adventists?

The Greek word *hilastērion* is also used in the New Testament (NT) for the golden lid that was placed on top of the ark of the testimony in the Most Holy Place of the Israelite sanctuary (Heb. 9:5; cf. Exod. 25:17–22, LXX); the ark was the supreme symbol of God’s presence among His people. Usually called the “mercy seat,” that lid, which was overshadowed by the wings of two cherubim, was in fact the place where the second of the two-phase propitiation—or atonement—ritual took place.¹² In phase one, the sins were forgiven and then transferred to the sanctuary (Lev. 4:3–7, 13–18, 22–25, 27–30). In phase two, which occurred once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the sanctuary was cleansed of such sins (16:15–19). In fact, the Day of Atonement was not about forgiveness; the term does not

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even occur in Leviticus 16 or 23:27–32. The Day of Atonement was the time when the sanctuary (and the people) was cleansed and the sins finally and definitively blotted out (see 16:29–34; 23:27–32).

Forgiveness and blotting out of sins, therefore, are not the same thing. Forgiveness, which was real and effective, was achieved through regular sacrifices (Lev. 17:10, 11), when the sins were transferred to the sanctuary, that is, to God Himself. “God assumes the guilt of sinners in order to declare them righteous. If God forgives sinners, He takes their blame.”¹³ Next, the sins needed to be blotted out, and this was accomplished on the Day of Atonement. Two things, then, must be vindicated: God’s right to forgive and the sinner’s aptness to be forgiven, which is nothing but his or her faithful acceptance of God’s forgiveness. In other words, forgiveness has two sides, the side of the One who provides forgiveness and that of the one who receives forgiveness. Where salvation is concerned, both sides must be well justified: the side of God, otherwise He could be charged of arbitrariness; and the human side, otherwise the result would be universalism, which is the idea that all humanity will eventually be saved. If salvation is by faith, it needs to be accepted. So, just as the sacrifice justifies God’s prerogative to forgive (Rom. 3:25, 26), some sort of examination is necessary in order to demonstrate that forgiveness has been truly and faithfully accepted. Only when both sides of forgiveness are clearly and fully vindicated can the blame—the legal responsibility—be finally taken away from God Himself.

This is why we need both the cross and the sanctuary, the sacrifice and the actual Day of Atonement. On that day (the most important day of Israel’s religious calendar as it marked the final cleansing of both the people and the sanctuary), all the people were required to cease their work and humble their souls in complete

submission to God (Lev. 23:27). Those who did not follow these instructions, which imply some form of scrutiny, were to be cut off and destroyed, even if they had been forgiven before (vv. 29, 30). On the cross, God Himself bore the sinner’s punishment (1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). He paid the ransom price and shed the propitiatory blood for our salvation. This is the reason Jesus had to die if we were to be saved. And in the sanctuary, human commitment to God was verified, so as to demonstrate that He was right in forgiving this or that person. The cross in no way can prove that God is just when He justifies an individual sinner—the human end of forgiveness. The cross entitles God to forgive. As a sacrifice of atonement, the cross was perfect and complete, but it alone cannot vindicate our commitment to Jesus Christ as our Savior. There is need for something else—to bring atonement to its final stage—and that is where the sanctuary comes in.

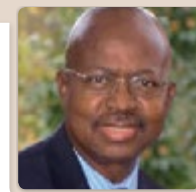
The sanctuary, then, is not about works, as forgiveness is not about works. Paul himself is absolutely clear on this in Romans 8:31–39. When accused of ineligibility for salvation because of their sins, those who have put their trust in Jesus can rest on the assurance that He is mediating for them before God. They have nothing to fear, as nothing will be able to separate them “from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (v. 39, NKJV; cf. 1 John 1:9). Salvation is not once for all, but apart from us (ourselves), there is nothing in the entire world that can take us away from God’s salvation (cf. John 6:37). “Let us draw near,” then, “with a true heart in full assurance of faith. . . . Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:22, 23, NKJV). This is the message of the sanctuary. ❏¹

1 Desmond Ford, *Right With God Right Now: How God Saves People as Shown in the Bible’s Book of Romans* (Newcastle: Desmond Ford, 1999), 43–55 (esp. 44, 47, 54, 55). At one point in his discussion, Ford is also reacting against the so-called moral

influence theory, according to which the cross was not really necessary, that Jesus’ death was but a gesture on God’s part to show He loves us, which means He could have forgiven sin without the cross (44–48). Ford’s main contention, however, is that “the ancient Day of Atonement is not talking about the nineteenth century. It points to the cross of Christ. That’s where the final, full atonement was made. Calvary was the only place of complete atonement. We look only to Calvary, not to an event or date invented by man” (55). On the moral influence theory, see John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 217–226.

- 2 This essay follows the traditional Reformed interpretation of Paul’s doctrine of justification, particularly with respect to issues such as “works of the law” (Rom. 3:20; cf. Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10), which refers to the concept that God’s favor can be earned by good works and obedience to all the prescriptions of the law, and *pistis Christou* (Rom. 3:22, 26; cf. Gal. 2:16, 20; 3:22; Phil. 3:9), which is understood as “faith in Christ,” rather than “the faith [fullness] of Christ,” as argued by the so-called new perspective on Paul. For an introductory discussion on the new perspective on Paul, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 528–534.
- 3 C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 199.
- 4 “Faith is the eye that looks to Him [Christ], the hand that receives His free gift, the mouth that drinks the living water” (John Stott, *Romans: God’s Good News for the World* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994], 117).
- 5 On the wrath of God, see Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 45–49, 70–83.
- 6 In support of this position, see D. A. Carson, “Atonement in Romans 3:21–26: ‘God Presented Him as a Propitiation,’” in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives*, eds. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 124, 125, 138.
- 7 BDAG, 332.
- 8 Attempts have been made to translate *paresis* as “forgiveness.” Most scholars, however, are convinced that there is no sufficient lexical support for such a translation. See, e.g., Sam K. Williams, *Jesus’ Death as Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, vol. 2 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 23–25.
- 9 As William Barclay points out, “The natural thing to say would be: ‘God is just, and, therefore, condemns the sinner as a criminal’” (*The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed. [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975], 69).
- 10 See also Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 183.
- 11 “God ‘postponed’ the full penalty due sins in the Old Covenant, allowing sinners to stand before Him without their having provided an adequate ‘satisfaction’ of the demand of His holy justice” (Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995], 240).
- 12 Because of this, in many modern languages *hilastērion* in Hebrews 9:5, as well as its Hebrew equivalent in Exodus 25:17–21 and other OT passages (*kappōret*), is translated as “propitiatory,” as Jerome already did in the Latin Vulgate. “Mercy seat,” which is more an interpretation than a translation, was introduced by William Tyndale, under the influence of the German *Gnadenstuhl*, of the Luther Bible.
- 13 Martin Pröbstle, *Where God and I Meet: The Sanctuary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2013), 55.

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“The cry for **justice** . . . and the **answer** from the **sanctuary**”

“They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’” (Rev. 6:10).¹

“Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened” (Dan. 7:10).

Many years ago I was flying out to the West Coast of the United States to give a presentation regarding the sanctuary on the campus of an Adventist college. As we settled in, I and the passenger next to me shared with each other the purpose of our trip. Then just as I thought we were done, he sprang this unexpected question to me: “So what are you going to talk about?”

As I struggled to describe the subject of my presentation in a way that would make sense to him, the thought occurred to me that as Adventists we have developed a whole body of language around the sanctuary theme that is not easy to translate into common speech for the general public. And in one of my books on the sanctuary,² I make the point that in order to fully understand the sanctuary’s central teaching, we need to focus on its essentials. As we do this, the entire ancient

sanctuary operation divides into three fundamental segments:

1. Atonement in the outer court—which points to Calvary.
2. Intercession in the Holy Place—which points to the ministry of Jesus, our great High Priest, from the Ascension to probation’s close.
3. Solemn services of the annual Day of Atonement—which symbolizes judgment.

I wish to focus here on one aspect of the final segment.

Scratching where people itch

If the sanctuary doctrine is to remain strong and relevant, it must somehow make contact with the contemporary mood, addressing both its longings and problems. In other words, *it must scratch where people itch today*.

What do people around us (and we ourselves) long for most? I would suggest the following, among others: justice, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, community, renewal, security. And what problems face us all? Tribalism, estrangement, loneliness, boredom, stress, alienation, hopelessness, futility. This article focuses on just one of those contemporary longings—the longing for justice. Justice

is not only intimately intertwined with judgment but constitutes judgment’s fundamental goal, and thus is a central theme of the sanctuary.

As I labored on my doctoral dissertation on the doctrine of the sanctuary in the Adventist Church, I shared a quiet room inside the James White library at Andrews University with fellow doctoral student Arthur Ferch. He was working on Daniel 7. I well remember the day when he literally jumped out of his seat, breaking the silence of the enclosed carrel to announce, “I’ve found it!” Carefully poring over the original text, he had just discovered that the judgment described in Daniel 7 was taking place in historical time, contemporaneous with the activities of “the little horn” on earth—which meant that the judgment was happening pre-Advent. This he had always believed, but his excitement came from actually seeing it in the text.

Adventists have tended to confine this (pre-Advent) judgment to the comparatively few people who have claimed the name of God over the centuries. But a careful reading of Daniel 7, in conjunction with Daniel 8 and the corresponding sections of the book of Revelation, would indicate that the pre-Advent judgment includes, in its scope, God’s faithful people—“the saints of the Most High” (Dan. 7:18, 22); God’s apostate people, symbolized by

“the little horn,” “Babylon,” and the sea beast of Revelation 13 (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20–22, 25, 26; Rev. 13:5–8; 16:10, 11; 18:2, 15–20); “the kings” and “the inhabitants of the earth” cooperating with Babylon (Rev. 17:1, 2; 19:17–20); the devil—“that ancient serpent,” the deceiver of the whole world (Rev. 12:9; 20:1–3); and, finally (in a sense), God Himself (Rev. 15:2–4; 19:1, 2, 11–16).

While it would be impossible to unpack all this in a single article, of course, the listing shows the broad parameters of this extraordinary heavenly assize. Daniel 7 means to confront nations, institutions, and individuals with the awesome gravity of this cosmic tribunal in session now and with its profound implications for every soul on earth. To believe otherwise is to charge God, inadvertently, with injustice. For in Revelation 16, the seven last plagues from the heavenly sanctuary, “like guided missiles,” pursue only those with “the mark of the beast”—clearly

showing that “there has been a prior assessment in order to affix the mark legally to some and not to others.”³

Why it matters

At a time when there is growing impatience and frustration with the administration of justice worldwide, this judgment message, correctly handled, directly addresses the perennial human longing for justice.

I sensed this while on a flight from Germany to South Africa in 1995. The woman sitting next to me, perceiving somehow that I was a minister, wanted to know what I thought about the genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda. She could not understand how the perpetrators of such atrocities could get away with it. As I saw the depth of her concern, I began talking to her about (of all things) the judgment; and in surprise I watched her face relax. As I finished, she was actually beaming to know that there is Someone in ultimate control;

Someone who eventually will bring the miscreants of this world to justice.

In this connection, I have always been intrigued by Psalm 73, with its depiction of the fate of evil and the destiny of its perpetrators. Asaph, to whom the psalm has been attributed, confesses that he had almost lost his way, obsessing over the prosperity of the wicked. Swollen with arrogance, they “lay claim to heaven” and earth and, in the process, even question the wisdom of God (vv. 6–11). “Always care-free, they increase in wealth,” while the humble and godly suffer harassment and derision (vv. 12–15).

This is the great conundrum of the ages. Is life fair? Is there justice? It almost drove Asaph into agnosticism; and in a million ways, this still plagues our psyche, today. “When I tried to understand all this,” Asaph says finally, “it was oppressive to me deeply till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny” (vv. 16, 17).



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Whatever else Asaph's words might mean, they certainly present the sanctuary as the place where our vision unclouds, where the puzzle of life unravels, where we obtain a fresh concept of ultimate justice. Seen through the lens of the sanctuary, Asaph's discovery can bring to us, in our times, a sense of *security, reconciliation, peace, renewal, and hope.*

The world cries out for it

The specter of injustice, in our times, overwhelms us. The producers and distributors of pornography, whose multibillion-dollar enterprises wreck countless lives and homes each year, largely get away with it. And so also do many who traffic in illicit drugs and in human beings; murderous gangsters; terrorists, with their wanton maiming and killing of innocent people; the kingpins of organized crime; and those who oppress the helpless poor. To catalogue the injustices done

and experienced in contemporary society would fill encyclopedic volumes as far as the eyes could see.

The United States ranks among the best countries in the world in regard to justice. Yet it is a country in which a man who murders an innocent 17-year-old black boy, minding his own business on the way home from the corner store, walks free; while a black Tampa, Florida, woman who fires a warning shot into a wall to scare off her estranged, abusive husband—with nobody getting hurt—is sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Today 1,000 trouble spots around the world lie dormant but not dead, because justice was never realized. Revolting genocide and crimes against individuals and humanity go unresolved and unpunished.

On February 16, 1997, CBS's *60 Minutes* carried a piece by Bob Simon on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission was an

effort to fully understand the tragic events that took place during the cruel years of apartheid. Describing how the commission worked, Simon, perhaps unwittingly, used language that uncannily spoke to the universal yearning for justice: "The victims tell their stories, stories of atrocities which were literally unspeakable. . . . Then the perpetrators get a chance to own up to their crime, and by doing so, become eligible for amnesty. All they have to do is tell the truth. They don't even have to say they're sorry—no apologies, no remorse *and no justice.*"⁴

The commission certainly answered the deep human yearning for *forgiveness*, one of the longings listed above; and its architect, Nelson Mandela, appropriately received worldwide commendation. On the other hand, the commission might be seen, essentially, as a symbol of human impotence in the face of mammoth evil on the part of very powerful systems or people. Charity Kondile, the mother of




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a boy who'd been killed and burned to ashes by the secret security police, said, painfully, "Imagine some people are in jail for stealing a chocolate, and now men who have committed such crimes will be given amnesty. I mean, that is ridiculous, unbelievable."⁵

It is against this and many other heart-rending issues that we should trumpet the message of a judgment in session now. If we assume that the "souls" under the altar in Revelation 6:9, 10 refer to religious martyrs across the centuries, then we are right. But if we think that the reference is only to them, then we limit the outrage of an offended God—a God who registers the fall of every sparrow, a God who hurts for the cruelty committed against every human being on earth.

We believe, of course, in mercy. We believe in grace. Where would any of us be without these? Really! But I notice that when Paul, the unequalled champion of grace among early Christian leaders, appeared in Felix's court, his message included none of these. The record says that "Felix became frightened" as Paul "discussed justice, self-control, and the coming judgment" (Acts 24:25, NRSV).

Sometimes we think that God is too good to punish people—that He leaves such dirty work to the devil. But if God Himself does not bring to justice the perpetrators of the bloody crimes and atrocities committed across the centuries, then we live in an immoral universe. In the face of extreme evil, there is a sense in which a "rush to mercy" is insensitive, irresponsible, even immoral—and a sense in which inaction is criminal. On assignment for the United Nations (UN) in Rwanda during its genocide, retired Canadian three-star army general Romeo D'Allaire pleaded in vain to his superiors for help—for food, medicine, and material—and "just 3000 combat troops." But tragically, the UN never responded.

The memory of that catastrophic nightmare, and particularly of his own impotence in the wake of that dark

evil, shattered D'Allaire's mental equilibrium and sent him into psychiatric counseling and therapy. At one point, he was downing nine tranquilizers and antidepressants a day to keep from going crazy. In a television interview that I watched back in February 2001, D'Allaire openly confessed to ABC's Kevin Newman that he stood at that time on the verge of committing suicide.⁶

The outrage against injustice lies buried deep within the human psyche.

That is why it is present truth

To look at acts of injustice and tragedy only as signs of the times is often to fail to share the outrage that affects regular people. We can come across as unfeeling, with our heads in the clouds, unaffected by the common afflictions of human beings all around us. Only when we can share society's collective indignation over the failure of our human systems can we point to the reality of cosmic justice.


A whole catalogue of Old Testament saints, in sync with the "souls under the altar" in the heavenly sanctuary, cry out for judgment, justice, vindication. They represent the cry of millions through the ages and around the world who have been victimized because of their faith, religion, race, ethnic origin, or political beliefs. If this is not one of the most basic concerns of contemporary society, then I must be listening to news from another planet.

The judgment referred to in Felix's court, future in Paul's day, stands in session now. And God's "loud voice" message "to every nation, tribe, language and people" is to "fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev. 14:6, 7). The court is seated, and the books have been opened (Dan. 7:10).

Felix trembled, but none of God's children need to. The ancient day of judgment in Israel ended with the people being declared "clean from all your sins" (Lev. 16:30); in the

judgment of Daniel 7, "the Ancient of Days . . . pronounced judgment in favor of the saints" (v. 22); and in Revelation 19:9, God's faithful get "invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb."

Simply put, judgment in the context of the heavenly sanctuary is God's action to hold accountable the perpetrators of evil and injustice on this planet and in the cosmos; to clear His name from the besmirchment, slander, and universal stigma that have been cast upon it on account of sin and wickedness in the world and the evil machinations of Satan and his angels; and, finally, to vindicate God's name and people.

The cry for justice becomes louder with every passing day. But with that cry also comes the increasing realization of the inadequacy of human justice. What human court could adequately take on the human animals that have engineered the bloody horrors and massacres across the centuries? Some of the crimes committed are too complex and entrenched for human justice to unravel. And some of the criminals are too powerful and well connected for human courts to prosecute. That is why we need a judge big enough to take on the system, however well established, and big enough to confront the most entrenched citadels of organized crime, wherever they exist. We need a judge who is absolutely beyond corruption or intimidation. That Judge is Christ, before whose judgment seat we shall all appear (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). 

1 All texts are from the New International Version, unless otherwise indicated.

2 Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary: Understanding the Heart of Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1993).

3 *Ibid.*, 125.

4 From a CBS transcript of the February 16, 1997, program, "How Mandela Tried to Soothe the Wounds of War," 60 Minutes requested at the time and now in the author's personal files. An exhaustive search failed to locate the broadcast on the Web. Italics supplied.

5 *Ibid.*

6 Kevin Newman, "Nightline: U.N. Soldier Struggles With Past," *Nightline*, broadcast February 7, 2001, accessed June 17, 2014, abcnews.go.com/Nightline/story?id=128908&page=1&singlePage=true.

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“The books were opened”: A survey of the pre-Advent judgment

“I watched till thrones were put in place,
And the Ancient of Days was seated;
His garment was white as snow,
And the hair of His head was like pure wool.
His throne was a fiery flame,
Its wheels a burning fire;
A fiery stream issued
And came forth from before Him.
A thousand thousands ministered to Him;
Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.
The court was seated,
And the books were opened”
(Dan. 7:9, 10).¹

Seventh-day Adventists were not the first ones, but today they are the only ones who teach a pre-Advent judgment. In the early 1840s, Josiah Litch, a Methodist theologian and the most influential Millerite, taught that “the divine act of raising some persons to life and others to death at the second coming constitutes an ‘executive judgment’ that must necessarily be preceded by a ‘trial.’”² He linked this trial to the judgment scene of Daniel 7, suggesting for its commencement the date 1798, the close of the 1260 days. By 1844, many

Millerites believed that the judgment had already begun.

Other commentators in the past have recognized that the judgment in Daniel 7 does not represent the final judgment. The Roman Catholic author Friedrich Düsterwald, for example, wrote, “Without question, the prophet Daniel here describes God’s judgment concerning the hostile powers. The judgment ends with the total condemnation of the world empires and the triumph of the cause of God. However, what is described here is not God’s judgment here on earth as many older interpreters (Theodoret and others) have assumed; rather the place of the judgment is in heaven. The context indicates that it is a preliminary judgment which is later confirmed in the general judgment of the world.”³

The Protestant interpreter Thomas Robinson located the timing for this judgment in the 19th century when he wrote his commentary on Daniel. He believed that the judgment in Daniel 7 “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. As occasioned by the great words of the Little Horn and followed by the taking away of his dominion, it might seem to have already sat. As, however, the sentence is not yet by any means fully executed, it may be sitting now.”⁴

These commentators saw the judgment as a judgment of the little horn, not of the saints as Seventh-day Adventists do.

The investigative judgment concept in Scripture

Critics hold that the pre-Advent judgment was simply a face-saving device after the Great Disappointment of 1844.⁵ However, the concept of an investigation prior to the pronouncement of a judicial sentence can be found throughout Scripture. Right from the beginning of God’s dealing with sinners in Genesis 3, a pattern of judicial procedure emerges. First, the investigation: *Where are you? Who told you? Have you eaten of the tree?* (Gen. 3:9–13). Following this investigation, God announces the verdict in verses 14–19.

We find a similar situation in God’s dealing with Cain (Gen. 4:9, 10) and His handling of Sodom and Gomorrah. Most of Genesis 18 and 19 describes God’s

investigations and deliberations prior to His punitive act. It is significant that the New Testament projects the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah as an example, or a type, of God's judgment at the end (2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7).

In the Old Testament prophetic writings, Israel or the nations are arrayed before God's judgment seat, an investigation is made, facts are stated, witnesses are called upon, and finally a verdict is pronounced (e.g., Isa. 5:1-7; 43:8-13, 22-28). The sequence is always the same: sin, investigation, and judgment.⁶

The concept of a pre-Advent investigative judgment appears also in the New Testament. The parable of the wedding (Matt. 22) is a prime example. "When the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment" (v. 11). The king's inspection of the guests represents a process of investigation. The result of this investigation determined who of the guests could remain and who could not. In this sense, this reveals a picture of the pre-Advent investigative judgment in heaven going on now.

Other New Testament texts that presuppose a pre-Advent judgment are John 5:28, 29 and Revelation 20:4-6. The Gospel passage mentions a resurrection for life and a resurrection for condemnation. Most biblical exegetes agree that Revelation 20 teaches two literal resurrections of the dead, separated by 1,000 years. Inasmuch as only the "blessed and holy" come up in the first resurrection, a prior judgment must have taken place to determine who will take part in the first resurrection.

The Lutheran theologian Joseph A. Seiss recognized this in his book on the apocalypse: "The resurrection and the changes which pass 'in the twinkling of an eye' upon the living, are themselves the fruits and embodiments of antecedent judgment. They are the consequences of adjudications then already made. Strictly speaking, men are neither raised nor translated, in order to come to judgment. Resurrections and translations are products of judgment previously passed upon the dead as dead, and

upon the quick as quick. 'The dead in Christ shall rise first,' because they are already adjudged to be in Christ, and the living saints are caught up together with them to the clouds, because they are already adjudged to be saints, and worthy to attain that world."⁷

In Revelation 14, the harvest of the earth (vv. 14-20) is preceded by the first angel's message, "'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come'" (v. 7). The sequence of events portrayed in this chapter clearly indicates that the judgment spoken of in verse 7 precedes the execution of the judgment at Christ's second advent in verses 14-20.⁸

Thus, throughout Scripture we find the concept of an investigative judgment.

The judgment in Daniel 7

Daniel 7 consists essentially of a vision, its interpretation, and the prophet's reaction to the vision and framed by a prologue (vv. 1, 2a) and an epilogue (v. 28). The vision (vv. 2-14) depicts four beasts, with the focus on the fourth beast that has ten horns out of which arises the little horn.

This little horn becomes the main opposition to the "Most High" and the saints in the rest of the chapter. While the activities of the little horn continue here on earth, Daniel's attention is drawn to a heavenly judgment scene

(vv. 9-14) that finds the little horn condemned; the saints vindicated; and dominion, glory, and a kingdom given to "One like the Son of Man."⁹

We must recognize the importance of the fact that this judgment goes on while the little horn stays active on the earth. At the end of verse 8, Daniel hears the pompous words of the little horn, and then his attention is diverted to the heavenly judgment scene (vv. 9, 10). But after describing the judgment scene, Daniel's attention is again arrested by the great words that the horn spoke (v. 11). In other words, while he was beholding the heavenly assize, this speaking with great words took place here on earth.

The time of the judgment

There are three passages in Daniel 7 that refer specifically to the judgment:

- Daniel 7:10: "The court was seated, and the books were opened." "
- Daniel 7:22: " 'Until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High.' "
- Daniel 7:26: " 'The court shall be seated.' "

To know when this court shall sit, we have to look at the historical sequence of the powers symbolized by the four animals.

	DANIEL 2	DANIEL 7
BABYLON	golden head	lion
MEDIA-PERSIA	silver chest	bear: one shoulder higher
GREECE	brass thighs	leopard with four heads
ROMAN EMPIRE	iron legs	dreadful beast
EUROPE AS DIVIDED ROME	feet and toes of iron and clay <i>The extension of Roman iron from the legs into the feet symbolizes continuation in Europe of characteristic Roman concepts</i>	ten horns ROMAN CHURCH little horn <i>Persecutes saints Speaks against God</i>

1260 days (538-1798)

At the center of this vision is the little horn; 7 of 28 verses deal with the little horn. The context indicates that the little horn is a religious power:

- Daniel 7:24: “ “He shall be different from the first ones.” ’ ”
- Daniel 7:25: “ ‘ “He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law.” ’ ”

Although this power is religious, it has strayed far from God’s truth and is the historical fulfillment of our sinful human tendency to wander away from God. Paul predicted a departure from the faith: “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw

Pagan customs, like Sunday keeping, were accepted, and by the sixth century, the state church had become the little horn of prophecy.

From the sixth to the end of the 18th century, for more than 12 centuries (1260 years according to Daniel 7:25), the church dominated the life and thinking of the people. No other power in history fits the description of the little horn except the papacy. In Daniel 7:25, 26, we are told, “ ‘ “He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.

“ ‘ “But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever.” ’ ” After the 1260 years, the judgment shall sit:

appears in the texts prior to the judgment passages in verses 8, 21, and 25.

Daniel 7:8	Little horn
Daniel 7:9, 10	Judgment
Daniel 7:21	Little horn
Daniel 7:22	Judgment
Daniel 7:25	Little horn
Daniel 7:26	Judgment

The earthly powers are given in historical sequence; the judgment, therefore, must also be part of this historical sequence.

Who is being judged?

In this judgment scene, books are opened and studied (v. 10). In the Old Testament, we find references to the “book of the living” (Ps. 69:28), the “book of remembrance” (Mal. 3:16) and to God’s “book” (Exod. 32:32; Ps. 56:8). The same thought occurs in the literature of later Judaism and the New Testament (e.g., 1 Enoch 47:3; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:12; 21:27). The important question is, *Who is being judged from these books?* From the context, we conclude that this judgment includes:

1. *God’s people.* Because “ ‘a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High’ ” (7:22), they must be, in some way, the subjects of this judgment. This fact is not officially recognized outside of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, though this should not surprise us. Because most Christians believe in the immortality of the soul, they believe that a person’s future state is decided the moment when he or she dies. A pre-Advent judgment, therefore, in which a final decision is rendered as to whether a person is saved or not, does not make sense to them. They see the dead as already being in heaven or hell (or purgatory for Roman Catholics). Hence, Christians, by and large, have no room for a pre-Advent judgment, though the context in Daniel 7 clearly demands it.

	DANIEL 2	DANIEL 7	
BABYLON	golden head	lion	
MEDIA-PERSIA	silver chest	bear: one shoulder higher	
GREECE	brass thighs	leopard with four heads	
ROMAN EMPIRE	iron legs	dreadful beast	
EUROPE AS DIVIDED ROME	feet and toes of iron and clay <i>The extension of Roman iron from the legs into the feet symbolizes continuation in Europe of characteristic Roman concepts</i>	ten horns ROMAN CHURCH little horn <i>Persecutes saints</i> <i>Speaks against God</i>	1260 days (538-1798)
JUDGMENT SITS		<i>Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days</i>	
NEW KINGDOM	<i>Stone becomes a mountain</i>	<i>Son of Man gives dominion to the saints</i>	

away the disciples after themselves’ ” (Acts 20:29, 30).

Beginning in the first century, we find that the church had to do battle with such men. In the fourth century when the Christian church became the state church, rapid apostasy set in.

Daniel 2 gives a general overview; Daniel 7 provides more detail by introducing the little horn. Since the kingdoms are in sequence—one following the other—the judgment mentioned in verses 9, 10, 22, and 26 must follow the period of the little horn that always

2. *The little horn.* The context of the judgment scene repeatedly refers to the little horn (vv. 8, 11); the judgment, therefore, must somehow also involve the little horn. “Internal contextual evidence suggests that the saints and the little horn equally share in the pre-Advent judgment verdict.”¹⁰ The saints receive the kingdom (v. 27), and the little horn’s dominion is taken away from it. Thus the vindication of the saints (v. 22) implies the condemnation of the little horn.

The purpose of the pre-Advent judgment

The pre-Advent judgment is actually the first of four cosmic judgments in Scripture:

1. The pre-Advent or investigative judgment (1844 to Second Advent).
2. The executive judgment at Christ’s second coming (Matt. 25).
3. The investigative judgment of the wicked during the millennium (Rev. 20:4–6).
4. The executive judgment after the millennium before the great white throne (Rev. 20:11–15).

The different judgment scenes can be thought of as different phases of God’s end-time judgment. With the last of these phases, the plan of salvation comes to a close. Each of these phases has its own special focus:

1. Pre-Advent judgment—God shows why the righteous are saved.
2. First executive judgment—the righteous dead and the living saints are saved.
3. Judgment during the millennium—God shows why the wicked are lost.
4. Second executive judgment—the wicked and Satan are destroyed.

The primary purpose of the pre-Advent investigative judgment is the final confirmation of salvation and vindication of God’s people (7:22). “From time to time some of these

saints have been judged guilty of various crimes by earthly tribunals when actually they were serving God and man faithfully. In the pre-Advent judgment these unjust sentences by earthly courts will be reversed by the courts of heaven. In this way God will vindicate His saints.”¹¹

Beyond the vindication of the saints and the condemnation of the little horn, the pre-Advent judgment also vindicates God’s justice in His dealings with humanity. When the unfallen beings in the universe examine the records of the saints during the pre-Advent judgment, they will come to the conclusion that indeed God has been just and merciful in each case. In this way the character of God, which has been at the center of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, will be vindicated.¹²

What happens in the pre-Advent judgment?

A picture of what happens in the pre-Advent judgment can be gained from a scene that the prophet Zechariah portrays. The scene takes place in the heavenly courts. Joshua the high priest is “standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the LORD said to Satan, ‘The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?’

“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

“Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, ‘Take away the filthy garments from him.’ And to him He said, ‘See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.’

“And I said, ‘Let them put a clean turban on his head.’

“So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him” (Zech. 3:1–5).

From this description, try to get a picture of what happens in the pre-Advent judgment. Satan stands before

the throne of God and makes his charge: “Brother X is a great sinner, you cannot possibly accept him.” Satan shows Jesus a long list of X’s sins.

Jesus answers, “I know he is a great sinner, but I have forgiven him. Blot out his sins. I have died for him; put a new robe on him.” Judgment is thus given in favor of X.

This Jesus does for all who put their trust in Him, all who accept Him as their personal Savior. If we accepted Him as our personal Savior, then the judgment is good news for us because “there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1). ❖

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- 1 All scriptures are from the New King James Version.
 - 2 Josiah Litch, *Prophetic Expositions*, vol. 1 (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 49.
 - 3 Friedrich Dusterwald, *Die Weltreiche und das Gottesreich* (Freiburg: Herdersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1890), 177; translation my own.
 - 4 Thomas Robinson, *Daniel*, Homiletical Commentary, vol. 19 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1892), 139. Similarly, Samuel P. Tregelles, *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, 8th ed. (Chelmsford: Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, n.d.), 36–38.
 - 5 Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1985), 479.
 - 6 For other examples of investigative judgments in the Old Testament, see William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, rev. ed., Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 1–29; Eric Livingston, “Investigative Judgment: A Scriptural Concept,” *Ministry* (April 1992): 12–14.
 - 7 Joseph A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 136.
 - 8 Other examples are found in Samuel Bacchiocchi, “The Pre-Advent Judgment in the New Testament,” *Adventists Affirm* (Fall 1994): 37–44.
 - 9 Concerning the identity of the “Son of Man,” see Arthur J. Ferch, *The Son of Man in Daniel Seven*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 7 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1979).
 - 10 Norman Gullett, *Christ Is Coming!* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 413. See also Arthur J. Ferch, “The Pre-Advent Judgment: Is It Scriptural?” *Australasian Record* (August 28, 1982): 5–7.
 - 11 William H. Shea, “Theological Importance of the Pre-Advent Judgment,” in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 328.
 - 12 Because of challenges to the sanctuary doctrine in the 1980s, the General Conference established a committee with our best scholars to study the issue of the pre-Advent judgment and our interpretations of apocalyptic prophecy. The Daniel and Revelation Committee, as it became known, studied the matter for ten years, and between 1982 and 1992, it produced seven volumes dealing with the questions raised by the critics.

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The heavenly temple in the Psalms

Heavenly temple imagery in the Psalms paints some fascinating pictures, even if these pictures are not always fully understood. First, it must be stressed that the Hebrew word for temple, *hēkāl*, also means *palace*, so God’s temple is also His palace.¹ Therefore *God as King* is also *God as Judge*. Underscoring each of these themes are the subthemes of creation and worship.²

This study will first examine passages that speak of God as the eternal King enthroned in heaven. This will include His conquest over evil, the affirmation of His throne being in heaven rather than on the earth, the stress upon His holiness, and the praise He receives. The second part will deal with God as Judge, first as the One presiding in the heavenly council, then His scrutiny of events on earth, the pleas for rescue from His subjects, and finally His decision to come in judgment to the earth.

For this endeavor, only verses from the Psalms that are in the context of the heavenly palace or temple will be studied.³

The LORD reigns

Psalms of adoration are featured throughout the history of Israel and describe the Divine Monarch on His throne. These psalms may be prayers for help from imminent attack, prayers to obtain reassurance in the face of mockery, or simply a reflection on

the wonders of creation. Therefore, a selection of psalms describing God on His throne will be featured to illustrate God as Victor, from where He reigns, and the praise He receives.

Enthroned Victor

*The LORD reigns;
Let the earth rejoice;
Let the multitude of isles be glad!
(97:1).⁴*

Psalm 97 extols the One whose throne is founded on righteousness and justice (v. 2), before whom fire goes, lightning flashes, and mountains melt as wax (vv. 3–5). Although His physical form remains veiled, God’s description here is based on what His throne is founded on—righteousness and justice. While “the impenetrable darkness of clouds reverently maintains the mystery of His nature,” this hymn of praise affirms “God is Ruler of the world and the Judge of the world.”⁵

*The LORD is King forever and ever;
The nations have perished out of His
land (10:16).*

Psalm 10 speaks of evildoers mocking, and God seemingly hidden (vv. 1–4). The perpetrators of evil ambush, rob, murder, and crush the helpless, thinking that God does not see and has forgotten (vv. 7–11). The psalm closes with a reminder that YHWH is always

King (v. 16), and He will bring justice to the fatherless and the oppressed—the weakest and most vulnerable in society.

*The LORD reigns, He is clothed with
majesty;
The LORD is clothed,
He has girded Himself with strength...
Your throne is established from of old;
You are from everlasting (93:1, 2).*

The context of God’s enthronement is Creation, quite unlike the enthronement of an earthly monarch, based on the defeat of rivals and enemies. Psalm 93 connects the establishment of God’s throne (v. 2) to the establishment of the earth at Creation (v. 3). This is “in marked contrast” to the “cosmogonic battle motif found in other creation accounts,” such as *Enuma Elish* and the Ugaritic Baal narratives.⁶ In ancient Babylonian cosmology, the enthronement of the god Marduk was celebrated subsequent to his “victory over the powers of chaos at the creation of the world.”⁷ Psalm 93 celebrates God’s enthronement based on the intrinsic nature and power of the Creator.

*Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock;
you who sit enthroned between the
cherubim, shine forth (80:1, NIV).*

David describes God as “Shepherd of Israel” in Psalm 80⁸ and as dwelling

“between the cherubim”; something easily recognized as temple imagery. The context of the psalm is God’s judgment on the city, which has broken its walls down (v. 12). The city has been burned with fire (v. 16), and its “enemies” have laughed derisively (v. 6). In this context, we see the cherubim-enthroned Monarch in heaven (v. 14). G. K. Beale draws the parallel between the earthly temple, whose cherubim were sculptured into the ark and woven into the curtain, and the heavenly sanctuary, where living angelic cherubim guard the throne.⁹ Here is God seated in all His majestic power, ready to receive a plea for restoration from His people (v. 19).

*The LORD has established His throne
in heaven,
And His kingdom rules over all (103:19).*

This magnificent psalm focuses on the object of worship—God. It draws heavily from the proclamation of God’s name from Sinai (Exod. 33:12–34:7) and lists the ways that God shows His sovereignty: He forgives iniquity (Ps. 103:3a), heals disease (v. 3b), redeems people from destruction (v. 4a), “crowns” them with His covenant faithfulness (v. 4b), satisfies and renews (v. 5), ensures ultimate justice (v. 6), is slow to anger (v. 8b), and although He will not strive with us forever (v. 9), He does not deal with us as we deserve (v. 10). He removes our sin as far as possible from us (vv. 11, 12), and His “pity” for us is deeper than any parent’s (v. 13).

*The LORD is in His holy temple,
The LORD’s throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold,
His eyelids test the sons of men (11:4).*

Psalm 11:4 neatly summarizes all that can be said about God as King and Judge. In the context of David fleeing his enemies and a plea for God’s intervention, Weiser suggests that the acclamation of God as King in Psalm 11 connects to two themes: the enthronement ceremony and the conquest of the land.¹⁰ Note the synthesis of the

holy temple and its place in heaven. Note also that the heavenly throne is pictured as being in that holy heavenly temple, affirming that—in the face of every threat faced by God’s children—ultimate power and righteousness reside with God.¹¹

*A father of the fatherless, a defender
of widows,
Is God in His holy habitation (68:5).*

Psalm 68 features God as Father with jurisdiction over three mountains—Sinai, Bashan, and Zion (vv. 8, 15, 29). A progression is seen here moving from one section of the psalm to another. In the first, David pictures God riding a chariot over the desert plains¹² to meet His people at Sinai. In the second, He rides among untold thousands of chariots at Mount Bashan (v. 18), and in the third, He rides through the heavens to get to His sanctuary (v. 24). The depicted meeting of God with His people at each mountain becomes more magnificent than the one preceding it. Amid the grandeur of military and kingly might, the Father God’s first concern is the fatherless and widows (v. 5), the disenfranchised (v. 6), the poor (v. 10), and the captives (v. 18). To them He gives “strength and power” that becomes the basis for their praise (v. 35).

Praises

*Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
And Your glory above all the earth
(108:5).*

*The LORD is high above all nations,
His glory above the heavens (113:4).*

Here David depicts God as seated on high, a reference to His heavenly throne. His glory is seen above the heavens (Ps. 113:4), and He dwells on high (v. 5) from where He notices what happens in heaven and on earth (v. 6). So, when He raises the poor and needy from the dust and the ash heap and seats them with princes (vv. 7, 8), and when He gives children to the barren woman and fills her home with love and joy—then praises ring out (v. 9).

*Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
Praise Him in the heights! (148:1).*

*Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens
(150:1, NIV).*

Psalm 148 is a hymn of praise that catalogues the wonders of creation and encourages all people to praise God “in the heights” (v. 1) and “from the earth” (v. 7). Psalm 150 is the great climax to the psalms that praises God in His sanctuary. These climactic psalms of praise suggest that all voices in heaven and on earth sing praises to God with the entire orchestra of temple musicians accompanying them.¹³

God judges

Our study so far affirms that the judgment theme is intimately bound up with God being King. Therefore, since God reigns from a palace or temple, the implication is that He is King and God mediating the benefits of His efforts to a waiting people. This section therefore explores those possibilities; first, by observing descriptions of God presiding over the heavenly council; then, noticing how He observes injustice and the cries for deliverance; and finally, describing Him as He comes to earth in response.

God presides

*God has taken his place in the divine
council;
In the midst of the gods he holds
judgment (82:1, ESV).*

*The heavens praise your wonders,
O LORD,
your faithfulness too, in the assembly
of the holy ones (89:5, NIV).*

*In the council of the holy ones God is
greatly feared;
he is more awesome than all who
surround him (v. 7, NIV).*

The ancient Near East attests to a grand assembly of the gods, with the senior god presiding. In this context

the great emperors of the time called themselves King of kings and Lord of lords. This meant that the lesser kings had to sit in council under the great king, waiting for him to administer “justice to all the kingdoms and nations of the earth.”¹⁴ In answer to this, the Scriptures also describe God as presiding (Ps. 82:1). But instead of God presiding over divine beings, the psalms specify that this is the congregation of saints that God presides over (89:5, 7). This theme is also seen in the book of Revelation with the description of God’s throne being surrounded by 24 elders (Rev. 4:4). They are the ones to notice His creative powers (Ps. 89:9), they hold Him in reverence and awe (v. 7), they walk in the light of His countenance (v. 15), they rejoice in His name (v. 16), and He is their glory and strength (v. 17).

God sees events on earth

The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men,

To see if there are any who understand, who seek God (14:2, 53:2).

Nothing that happens on earth remains hidden from the penetrating look of God, but what is hidden is the person who “acts wisely and cares for him.”¹⁵ While fools think there is no God (14:1), this God looks down from heaven and notices that corruption is widespread and rampant. In that context, David pleads for judgment or salvation “out of Zion” (v. 7).

For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary;

From heaven the LORD viewed the earth (102:19).

Psalm 102 brings out something similar. This psalm comes from an afflicted one who asks God, the One enthroned forever, for help (v. 12) because God, from heaven, looks down to see the earth (v. 19). Therefore, despite creation growing old and

needing to be changed (v. 26), God will continue into eternity (v. 27), assuring His people of a future as well (v. 28).

The LORD looks down from heaven He sees all the sons of men (33:13).

God looks down from the vantage point where He sits enthroned and sees them as individuals whom He has personally fashioned (v. 15). No king or military officer can deliver people from the woes they face (vv. 16, 17), but God can deliver (vv. 18, 19), and only He can answer their deepest hopes (vv. 20–22). Notice that the act of God observing His people is not to make life more unbearable for them but to deliver them from the worst oppressions that they face.

God hears the cries for deliverance

Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts;

Look down from heaven and see, And visit this vine (80:14).

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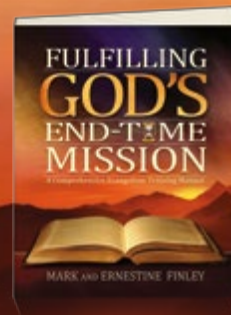
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The context of Psalm 80 is a battle, and no doubt raging armies and clashing chariots would have utterly shredded any vine or crop on the battlefield. In the midst of that chaos, God is depicted as drawing the psalmist out of deep waters; the same verb is used to describe the infant Moses' deliverance from the Nile (Exod. 2:10).

*Part your heavens, O LORD, and come down;
touch the mountains, so that they smoke. . . .
Reach down your hand from on high; deliver me and rescue me from the mighty waters, from the hands of foreigners (144:5, 7, NIV).*

Psalm 144 portrays a hymn of David that extols God for giving him success in war in the past and now asks God to do it again, in order to give him a future, wealth, and security (vv. 12–14). He appeals to God to bend, bow down, part the heavens (v. 5), and stretch out His hand from on high to rescue him “from the mighty waters” (v. 7). Although the verses describe a scene of deliverance in the face of battle, the verb this time echoes the deliverance of the Israelite people as a whole.

God comes down

*Let the heavens declare His righteousness,
For God Himself is Judge (50:6).*

The devouring fire and roaring tempest in this psalm are reminiscent of the theophany at Sinai,¹⁶ where the law was originally given. Even more, this psalm seems to have an eschatological feel. Weiser observes that the “cosmic setting gives everything a universal and eschatological emphasis.”¹⁷ In broad sweeps, the heavens and earth are being called upon (v. 4). All beasts of the forest (v. 10), every bird of the mountains (v. 11), God's people (v. 7), and the wicked (v. 16) are addressed. This does not describe something happening in a corner, but the great

universal day of the Lord, referred to in verse 15 as the day of trouble. The public nature of these descriptions is obvious—the heavens are encouraged to “declare his righteousness, for God Himself is Judge” (v. 6). Then judgment takes place, with God first addressing His people (vv. 6–15), then the evildoers (vv. 16–22). The final verse assures that those who offer thanksgiving will see the salvation of God (v. 23).

Summary and conclusion

There is much more to the subject of the sanctuary in the psalms than the rituals of the tent in the wilderness. As observed, the psalms look at the grander theme of God's reign and judgment. Not only does God “dwell” in a palace or temple, but also His throne seems to parallel the mercy seat above the ark of the covenant, and instead of being flanked by golden cherubim, He is surrounded by real, living beings.

First, we noticed that God reigns—in heaven and from everlasting. This immediately rules out any earthly structure because all human sanctuaries are transient. The actual place of His sanctuary seems, in places, ambiguous because the earthly temple shadowed the reality and both were inextricably linked. What God decided in heaven was seen as coming from the temple and vice versa. There are enough references to suggest that the earthly structure functioned as a tiny microcosm of the eternal structure but on a very limited scale.

As various psalmists contemplated these themes, their sense of praise produced some majestic pieces. Their praise covered the entire created realm, consistent with the scope of God's monarchy. Their praise also came from the lips of every class of people, and they not only recounted God's acts of creation and the various redemptive victories of the past but had an abiding trust in God's deliverance in the future—something for which they pled.

The justice He dispenses is both right and fair and in marked contrast

to the corrupt and incompetent judges in the human realm. To the modern mind, we find that this seems amazing because the psalm writers actually plead for judgment. The ancients saw judgment as God's way of validating them, especially when they were being oppressed. God hears the cry of His distressed people when they call to Him for help. Judgment to them was salvation, not punishment.

These themes give us a deeper glimpse into the sanctuary—beyond the furniture and features. That God rules from His palace to ensure justice and presides from His temple to ensure holiness and restoration suggests we have hardly begun this journey. This brief exploration of the psalms reminds us that there are greater depths to plumb. The theme of God enthroned in the heavenly palace or temple deserves much greater study, and I trust others will take that challenge. ▣

- 1 See Ps. 45:15; Dan. 1:4; 1 Kings 21:1, among others.
- 2 Psalms that feature God as King and Judge: 47, 50, 82, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99, George A. F. Knight, *Psalms*, vol. 2, *The Daily Study Bible*, ed. John C. L. Gibson (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1983), 368.
- 3 These include Pss. 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, 33, 43, 47, 48, 50, 53, 57, 58, 60, 68, 75, 76, 80, 82, 85, 89, 92, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99, 102, 103, 108, 113, 115, 119, 123, 135, 144, 148, and 150.
- 4 Scripture is from the New King James Version throughout unless otherwise noted.
- 5 Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, Old Testament Library, trans. Herbert Hartwell, eds. G. Ernest Wright, John Bright, James Barr, and Peter Ackroyd (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1962), 632.
- 6 Mark K. George, *Israel's Tabernacle as Social Space*, *Ancient Israel and Its Literature*, vol. 2, ed. Benjamin D. Sommer (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 91.
- 7 Weiser, 617.
- 8 The figure of the Divine Shepherd is common in ancient Near East literature and refers to the political leadership of the god; e.g., the Sumerian god Enlil is described as “the shepherd upon whom you gaze (favorably)” and “Enlil, the worthy shepherd, ever on the move.” (Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer: Thirty-Nine Firsts in Recorded History* [Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998], 92.)
- 9 G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 35.
- 10 Weiser, 154.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 156.
- 12 The commonly suggested emendation “riding on the clouds” is creative, but not justified. The chiasmic parallel is “when you marched through the wilderness” (v. 7). Note also v. 33, “to Him who rides on the heaven of heavens.”
- 13 Weiser, 841.
- 14 Knight, *Psalms*, 54.
- 15 Weiser, 165.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 395.
- 17 *Ibid.*

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Why the sanctuary is so important

God revealed the sanctuary to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exod. 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; Num. 8:4).¹ Numbers 8:4b reads, “The lampstand was made exactly like the pattern [*mar’eh*] the LORD [*Yahweh*] had shown Moses’ ” (literally “had caused Moses to see”).² This causation is important, as we will find out.³ God said to Moses, “ ‘Make them according to the pattern [*tabnî*] shown you on the mountain’ ” (Exod. 25:40). The Hebrew word *tabnî* has a semantic range from “pattern” to “type” and could indicate architect’s plans (pattern) or a miniature model (type). At first glance, this could mean that God presented Moses with either architectural drawings or a model of the structure.

One thing is for sure: just as the commandments were not merely spoken, but written out by Christ’s own finger on stone (Exod. 24:12; Deut. 10:1–4), so the sanctuary instructions were not merely verbal but were presented to Moses as plans or as a miniature model (to be qualified below). Luke records that the sanctuary “ ‘had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen’ ” (Acts 7:44). Siegfried Wagner notes that “Yahweh shows Moses the pattern of God’s holy tabernacle and all its furniture (Exod. 25:9 twice, 40). Here *tabhnith* means ‘pattern, model,’ ”⁴ a “three-dimensional model” (Ps. 106:20).⁵

The Hebrew word *tabnî* (“pattern,” Exod. 25:40) is rendered in the Greek translation (LXX) by the word *tupon*, meaning “type.” F. F. Bruce comments on this, saying, “The implication is that Moses was shown something like a scale model of the sanctuary which was to be erected.”⁶ William Lane concurs, “Moses was shown some sort of ‘model’ that could be reproduced on earth.”⁷ Richard Davidson points out that if God had given a set of plans to Moses, we would expect him to bring them down the mountain as a guide to the builders, but the Bible says he brought down only the two engraved tablets (Exod. 32:15, 16).⁸ This rules out bringing down a miniature model as well.

Now comes the meaning of “cause to see” mentioned above. Davidson concludes, “It would seem more consonant with the context that Moses was provided a vision with a view of something constructed, relating in vivid reality how the sanctuary was going to look.”⁹ Moses was caused to see a vision that was clearly three-dimensional with careful specifications.

Holy and Most Holy Place

The earthly sanctuary had a Holy Place and a Most Holy Place (Exod. 26:33b). It should be noted that Solomon and Ezekiel’s temples had

different specifications.¹⁰ Though the sizes of the temples were larger than the tabernacle,¹¹ each one had the same Holy and Most Holy Places: the “outer,” or “main hall,” and the “inner room” (1 Kings 6:29; Ezek. 41:1–4). This layout of the two apartments is consistent in these three structures and is the most important part of the specifications God gave to Moses, David, and Ezekiel because these two apartments were the places where the priestly ministry took place after sacrifices were made.

The book of Hebrews speaks of the original tabernacle in heaven (Heb. 8:1–5) and indicates that after Christ made His sacrifice at Calvary, He entered the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 1:2) to begin a two-phased ministry. The two holy places¹² have everything to do with Christ’s two-phased ministry in heaven’s sanctuary—to redeem (first and second phases) and restore (second phase). Christ’s heavenly ministry redeems humans and restores the universe to its pre-cosmic controversy status.

The importance of Christ’s daily ministry

The New Testament repeatedly states that, in His ascension, Christ went to the Father and sat down at His right hand on the throne (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:34; 5:31; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12;

12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22). Most Christians fail to understand the importance of the two-phased ministry of Christ in heaven's sanctuary. The sanctuary is the longest-used teaching device in Scripture and reveals the mission of Christ in the Christian era.

In Christ's great teaching regarding the Christian era and the end time (Matt. 24; 25), He asks readers to understand Daniel's prophecy about the abomination that causes desolation, "standing in the holy place" (Matt. 24:15). Christ refers to two different attacks by the enemy: first on His earthly temple (Dan. 9:27) and then on His heavenly sanctuary (Dan. 11:31; 12:11). The first was the invasion of the Roman army under Titus in A.D. 70 to destroy the Jerusalem temple. The second is the replacement of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary by the Roman Catholic priestly ministry on earth. In this segment, we look at Christ's daily ministry first and then Christ's yearly ministry in the next segment.

Christ said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). In Scripture there is no place given for the intercession of Mary and saints. This is why the book of Hebrews, like a fifth gospel, says so much about Christ's postascension intercession in heaven; Mary or the saints are never mentioned. The prerequisite for Christ's intercession in heaven is His death. "He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption" (*ta hagia*, Heb. 9:12; cf. 7:27). No human intercessors qualify.

Unlike human priests, Christ has a "permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens" (Heb. 7:24–26). Christ promised, "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:14). Paul affirmed, "God will meet

all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Daniel prophesied about the attack on Christ's heavenly intercession. The enemy will "'desecrate the temple . . . and will abolish the daily sacrifice'" (Dan. 11:31). The word *sacrifice* does not exist in the original text. Only the word *daily (tamid)* is in the original (also in Daniel 8:11; 12:11). The word *daily* (continual) is everything that Christ does each day in heaven's sanctuary from His inauguration as King-Priest (Heb. 1:3–13; Rev. 5:1–14) until the close of probation in the future (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 21:6). The little horn that rose up is the Roman Catholic priesthood (Dan. 7:8), which "took away the daily sacrifice" (*tamid*, daily ministry of Christ), so that the "sanctuary was thrown down . . . truth was thrown to the ground" (Dan. 8:11, 12).

Christ was concerned about His continual, daily ministry for His followers in heaven's sanctuary, because this was replaced by the Roman priesthood and theology (Mary, saints). That is why He wants Christians to study Daniel, to know this counterfeit plan of salvation that comes between Christ and sinners—who need Christ alone.

The importance of Christ's yearly ministry

The Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) was a day of judgment near the end of the Jewish year. The antitype is announced by the first angel's message: "Fear [reverence] God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7). This directs attention to heaven's sanctuary, and thus away from the counterfeit on earth. God does not need the judgment, because He is all-knowing (Pss. 33:13–15; 56:8; 104:24; 139:2, 6; 147:5; Isa. 44:28; 46:9, 10; Mal. 3:16; Matt. 10:29, 30; Acts 15:8; Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:10). "The Lord knows those who are his" (2 Tim. 2:19).

So, what is the point of the pre-Advent judgment? There would be no need of this judgment if there was no cosmic controversy that questions God. Satan and his angels were dismissed

from heaven for their rebellion (Rev. 12:7–9). So how can sinners, from planet Earth, be admitted into heaven in the Second Advent? Would this be fair? How can other sinners not be admitted? An examination of humans is necessary, so that created beings throughout the universe can be satisfied that God is fair in deciding who enters heaven and who does not.

Daniel 7 presents a court scene in heaven's sanctuary: "The court was seated, and the books were opened" (v. 10b). Notice that investigation takes place before the Second Advent. For when the verdict is reached, "a son of man" comes "with the clouds of heaven," but He does not leave heaven for the Second Advent (1 Thess. 4:16–18) but comes into the presence of the "Ancient of Days" in heaven (Dan. 7:13, 14). Hence the judging and verdict transpire prior to the Second Advent.

The verdict is announced in the context of a war being waged. "He [the little horn] will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time [1260 years, A.D. 538–1798, Rev. 12:6]. But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High" (Dan. 7:25–27a). The court verdict precedes the coming of Christ's kingdom (Rev. 11:15; 19:1–3).

The little horn waged war against God's people for 1,260 years (Rev. 12:14), a period in which the Catholic Church carried out persecution against those who proclaimed the gospel. Inquisitions and putting the Bible on the *Index of Prohibited Books* reveal the mission of the system.

Process of judging

Some Christians fear the present judgment, for they look to themselves instead of to Christ. In one sense, to look to self instead of to Christ is

no better than to look to a priestly ministry on earth instead of Christ's priestly ministry in heaven. During the pre-Advent judging process, intelligent beings in the universe see whether individuals being judged have accepted or rejected the saving work that Jesus Christ did for them at the cross.

It is precisely this, and nothing else, that determines personal destiny. God does not ask us to be preoccupied with our own perfection but with His. It is His garment of righteousness we need. So the pre-Advent judgment is Christ-centered and not human-centered. It is not so much what individuals have or have not done per se that is decisive (Eccles. 12:14; Matt. 12:36, 37), although that is included. Rather, it is whether they have accepted or rejected what Christ has done for them when He was judged in their place at the cross (John 12:31). Those who cling to Christ will go to heaven, those who do not, will not. God is thereby shown to be loving and just, allowing human freedom of choice to be decisive. This is why the judgment is pre-Advent, so the

onlooking universe can see that human destiny is fair before some are taken to heaven and some not at the Second Advent (1 Thess. 4:16–18).

The Day of Atonement continues beyond the pre-Advent judgment, to the millennial and postmillennial judgments. In these three judgments, all created beings, unfallen and fallen, see that God is just and bow before Him (Isa. 45:23b; Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10, 11; 15:3; 19:1–6). The two phases of Christ's ministry are the gospel equally because there is no redemption without resolution of the controversy. ❏

1 According to Frank B. Holbrook, in these five references, the Hebrew verb "to see" (*ra'ah*) has a causative meaning, "to cause to see." "The Israelite Sanctuary," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981), 4.

2 Unless otherwise indicated, scripture is from the New International Version.

3 The Hebrew word *mar'eh* is derived from the Hebrew word *ra'ah* "to see." The word *mar'eh* has a wide semantic range, which includes sight, vision, appearance, countenance, and beauty (Robert D. Culver, "mar'eh," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, ed. R. Laird Harris [Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980], 824). Daniel uses this word with reference to a vision given to himself, the prophet (Dan. 8:16, 26, 27; 9:23), and it is used in Numbers as a pattern given to the prophet Moses (Num. 8:4b).

4 Siegfried Wagner, "bānāh," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 179.

5 Holbrook, "The Israelite Sanctuary," 4.

6 F. F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: Hebrews*, rev ed., gen. ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 184, n. 27.

7 William L. Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary: Hebrews 1–8* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), vol. 47A, 207.

8 Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical τύπος Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 376.

9 Ibid.

10 In the building of Solomon's temple, God again gave careful specifications: "Then David gave his son Solomon the plans [*tabnit*] for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. He gave him the plans [*tabnit*] of all that the Spirit of God had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things. . . . 'All this,' David said, 'I have in writing from the hand of the LORD upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan'" (*tabnit*; 1 Chron. 28:11, 12, 19; see vv. 13–18 for other specifications). The Hebrew word *tabnit* is used for the sanctuary and the temple, and the vision given to Ezekiel of a temple never built was given with great specificity (Ezek. 40:1–42:20).

11 Solomon and Ezekiel's temples had additional rooms surrounding, but not joined to, the central temple (1 Kings 6:2–5; Ezek. 40, 41).

12 "The Holy Place" (Heb. 9:2b) and "Most Holy Place" (Heb. 9:3) are *hagia*, "holy places," not the "Most Holy Place" as wrongly translated in the New International Version of Hebrews 9:12.

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Finishing what was started

In the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Ezra the scribe returned from Babylon to his hometown of Jerusalem. This event was not just a homecoming but a search for the blessing of the God of his forebears: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ezra had a commission from the king and the support of many who returned from exile with him. But on his return, he found a people "intermingled" with the ways of the surrounding systems. He was "astonished" and "ashamed."

Ezra prayed long and hard to the Lord and before his fellows: "O our God, what shall we say

after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments" (Ezra 9:10, NKJV). His prayer stirred a response, and within three days the people came together to make a commitment to renewal. The language of the record is curious: "All the people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain" (Ezra 10:9, NKJV).

Again the call from Ezra: "Make confession to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will" (v. 11, NKJV).

We must do it, came the reply. "It is the season for heavy rain, and we

are not able to stand outside. Nor is this the work of one or two days" (v. 13, NKJV).

God still sends His rain on the just and the unjust. For those who feel the moisture and remember their Creator, rain carries the promise of renewal.

—LINCOLN E. STEED, EDITOR, *LIBERTY MAGAZINE*, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.



MISSION to the CITIES

Mission to the Cities is an emphasis of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on sharing Jesus' love and the hope of His soon return with people in urban settings. It envisions initiatives in more than 650 of the world's largest cities, starting with New York City in 2013 and running through 2015. Comprehensive outreach activities will be as varied as the character of each city, and will include Life Hope Centers, church planting, community events, health seminars, small groups, and reaping campaigns.

Please be praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Mission to the Cities:

- For the church members and church leaders working in these cities
- For the people yet to be reached with the Gospel
- For the world divisions and unions to develop strategies for reaching the large cities in their territories
- For the thousands of outreach activities and reaping events currently taking place
- For the strongholds of Satan to be broken, and relationships with Christ to be established

For a list of cities and to join in praying for them, go to:

www.MissiontotheCities.org and
www.RevivalandReformation.org/777



► Ordination study concludes with suggestions for “The Way Forward”

Baltimore, Maryland, United States—Leaders and members of the Adventist Church’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) wondered aloud whether the fourth and final multiday session of the group would yield a consensus on the issue of ordaining women to ministry.

However, when TOSC chairman **Artur Stele** announced the results of an informal survey of the group of scholars, church administrators, pastors, and laypersons, three positions emerged from the data, with no position claiming a majority of the 95 votes received. Forty TOSC members identified as their first choice a position that “Each entity responsible for calling pastors be authorized to choose either to have only men as ordained pastors or to have both men and women as ordained pastors.” Thirty-two members favored a proposal that affirms the “practice of ordaining/commissioning only qualified men to the office of pastor/minister throughout the world church.” A third option, the first choice of 22 participants, stated, “Christ is the only head of the church,” noting that there is a “biblical pattern of male leadership, under the headship of Christ, in the office of the ordained minister.” But this option also added that “we recommend that denominational leadership at a proper level be authorized to decide, based on biblical principles, whether such an adaptation [permission to ordain both men and women] may be appropriate for their area or region.”

General Conference president **Ted N. C. Wilson** spoke to committee members after the poll results were announced by Stele. “As we move

forward with this process, I’m asking that we each act with humility—not authoritatively or in an overbearing manner,” Wilson urged. “We should do all things in the spirit of Jesus.” Wilson also thanked participants for an action they voted unanimously earlier in the day. TOSC members acted “to affirm that in spite of the differences of opinion on the subject of women’s ordination, the members of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee are committed to the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as expressed through the 28 Fundamental Beliefs.”

“We will be very open and fair in the way we approach the handling of this matter,” Wilson assured the committee as he sketched key stages the church will follow in the months ahead. The matter will be placed on the agenda of the denomination’s Annual Council convening in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 9–14, 2014. General Conference leaders have promised to make all materials from the recent study process and supplemental documents available in advance to the 300-plus members of the GC Executive Committee, which decides what to recommend to the church’s quinquennial General Conference session planned for San Antonio, Texas, to be held in July 2015.

“The results of today’s poll shouldn’t dictate any outcomes for the world church, but they should be given their appropriate weight,” said TOSC vice chair **Geoffrey Mbwana**, also a vice president of the church. “No one should quickly say, ‘This is all a clear matter.’ All that is really clear at this moment is that we have strong

differences about the matter of ordaining women to ministry.” TOSC leaders saw the survey as an evaluation tool to determine whether consensus had developed in the committee, which the results showed had not happened.

The TOSC group’s assignment was to do an in-depth study and analysis of the subject of ordination with input from world divisions of the church. **Karen Porter**, TOSC secretary and assistant secretary of the world church, underlined the value of the study. “What we’ve experienced here could be an important template for the world church as it considers other international issues,” she said. “We’ve learned lessons of both kinds—what works, and what doesn’t—and we’re all better for having spent so many days and hours listening to people we may not always agree with.”

Stele also praised the spirit of committee members as the 24-month study process concluded. He suggested that the fourth session had probably been more positive because of the greater amount of time spent in caucuses and working groups instead of plenary presentations. “Though we’ve had challenging and difficult discussions at times, we’ve developed a camaraderie—a respect for each other—during the last two years,” he said. “A large majority of participants learned to trust each other as they prayed together, ate meals together, and talked in the hallways. This is the first truly global study process on this issue that has ever been attempted. It’s been gratifying to see and feel how much this unique process has built up mutual understanding and better relationships.”



As the Wednesday session ended, Wilson urged committee members to keep the mission of the church in focus.

He said, “We may not yet see just where the Spirit is taking us on this issue, but we firmly believe that God will open the

way for His church to fulfill its mission of proclaiming the three angels’ messages to the world.” [Adventist Review]

► Adventist Church overhauls North American publishing operations

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—The Review and Herald and the Pacific Press publishing houses have approved the biggest restructuring in Adventist publishing’s 153-year history, embracing a plan that Adventist leaders hope will strengthen the church’s American digital presence and ensure the long-term viability of its publishing work.

Constituency meetings of the two corporations, held consecutively on June 17 at the denomination’s world headquarters, voted 153–66 (Review and Herald) and 42–1 (Pacific Press) in favor of the restructuring.

The General Conference Executive Committee had previously endorsed the restructuring together with the church’s North American Division (NAD). Operating boards of both Review and Herald and Pacific Press voted to recommend the plan to each constituency during their respective board meetings held on May 8. Under the plan, the expanded Pacific Press will become an institution of the NAD.

“The General Conference wants the greatest expansion of publishing work in the North American Division (NAD) and will be praying that this new restructured approach will be blessed by God in its outreach to the vast public in the NAD territory,” said world church president **Ted N.C. Wilson**. He urged church members to rally “to the great opportunity of sharing Adventist evangelistic and nurturing materials in both printed

and digital form as we anticipate Christ’s soon return.”

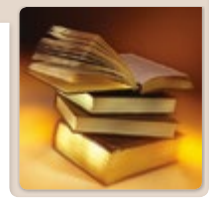
Under the restructuring, the financially troubled Review and Herald Publishing Association (RHPA) will unwind operations at its 80-acre facility in Hagerstown, Maryland, in a process that could take several months to accomplish. Some employees and assets may be transferred to the Pacific Press Publishing Association, based in Nampa, Idaho, which will become the North American Division’s major institution with its own printing facilities. Unneeded Review and Herald equipment and property will be sold, with the proceeds going to Pacific Press to help strengthen the print operations by allowing presses to run multiple shifts, making the print production more cost effective. The capital will also bolster its mandate to develop e-books, apps, and other forms of digital media.

Under the restructuring, Pacific Press became an institution of the North American Division following the June 17 vote, while the General Conference will retain a constituency structure for the Review and Herald, as one of its institutions whose scaled-down operations will move to its headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, a 90-minute drive from its current site. **Delbert Baker**, chairman of the Review and Herald and a General Conference vice president, underscored that the Review and Herald would continue its ministry, albeit at a different location and, without its printing

presses, with a different focus. “A most encouraging reality is that the RHPA will continue its historic publishing mission at the General Conference headquarters uninterrupted,” he said.

Dale Galusha, president of Pacific Press Publishing Association, vowed that Pacific Press would honor all Review and Herald magazine contracts, including *Message*, *Insight*, and *Guide*. “We will make sure that promises are fulfilled,” he said. Pacific Press’s digital strategy also remains in the early stages, but the company will be expected to add to its line-up some of the approximately 30 book titles that Review and Herald published every year.

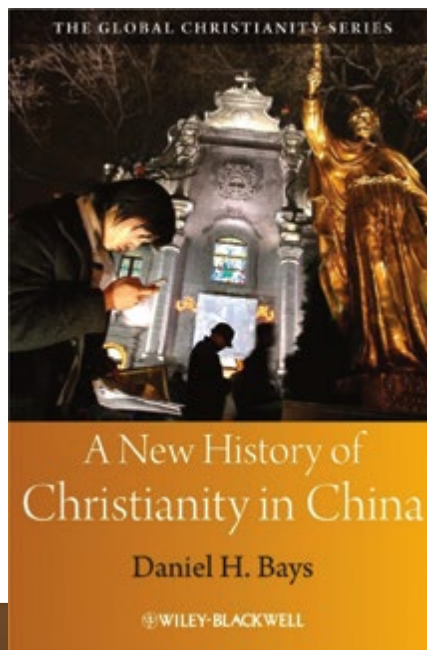
The General Conference, which allowed Pacific Press and Review and Herald to operate as stand-alone businesses without direct financial assistance, has acted as an unofficial publishing house without its own presses for years. It employs an editorial staff of 40 to 50 people who manage a variety of publications, including *Adventist Review*, *Adventist World*, *KidsView*, *Ministry*, *Journal of Adventist Education*, *Elders’ Digest*, the Sabbath School study guides, and materials for the church’s Biblical Research Institute. Even though writings by Adventist church cofounder Ellen White are printed by both Pacific Press and Review and Herald, their publisher is the Ellen G. White Estate, an entity closely associated with the General Conference. [Adventist Review/Andrew McChesney]



A New History of Christianity in China

by Daniel H. Bays, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

A *New History of Christianity in China* is an important book that contains a comprehensive survey of the history of Christianity in China. It makes use of several recent works, most notably the *Handbook of Christianity in China* in two volumes,* considered the benchmark reference work in the field, but with its high price and in-depth detail, relegates this one to either reference libraries or the highly skilled specialist. The author, Daniel H. Bays, avoids both of these perils by synthesizing into one approachable survey a tool that can be used either as a quick reference or as a helpful introduction.



bits and pieces of the Bible, a personal audience with the Christian God, and a few weeks' study with an American Baptist missionary, Issachar Roberts, in Hong Kong in 1847" (53). Although the author highlights the importance of the Ten Commandments to this movement, what he fails to note is that this movement was largely one that observed the seventh day as the Sabbath.

Whether you are a student of Christianity in Asia or someone who has an interest in missions or church history in China, this volume is a great place to start. Church leaders will want to read this volume to better appreciate the history that


Whether you are a student of Christianity in Asia or someone who has an interest in missions or church history in China, this volume is a great place to start.

What I found of particular interest is that Christianity has ancient origins in China. As the author points out, the Beijing City Museum has featured in its public exhibition an early depiction of a Nestorian stone cross that dates back 15 or more centuries. Perhaps an even more helpful artifact is the nine-foot-high marble stele (commemorative tablet) that contains more than 1,800 Chinese characters by a Christian monk named

Jingjing, claimed to have been written in 781. The stele gives a history of the early beginnings of Nestorian Christianity (a branch of the early Christian church) in China in 635 (for an overview, see pages 7–11). Truly, China has a rich and ancient Christian heritage.

Another area of personal interest was the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), which was inspired by Hong Xiuquan, who “received his Christian ideas from

has led to the extremely complex and vibrant Christian faith as found in China.

—Reviewed by Michael W. Campbell, PhD, assistant professor of historical-theological studies, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang Cavite, Philippines. 

* Nicolas Standaert, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 1, 635–1800 (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub., 2000), and R. G. Tiedemann, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 2, 1800–Present (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub., 2009).

S. Joseph Kidder, DMin, is professor of Christian ministry and discipleship, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



Focus on children's ministry

In researching growing Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America we discovered that the common denominator among these churches is their focus on children's ministries. In the past, parents brought their children to the church and the Lord. Today, children bring their parents and friends to the church if they enjoy their experience there.*

Children in fourth through sixth grades often demonstrate a strange mixture of sophistication and childlike qualities. These "little adults" are more like the junior high kids of 20 years ago than the elementary students most of us recall. Exposure to adult pressures has resulted in children who might be characterized best as "elementary teenagers." The good news? They respond to teaching about Christ and can be

have chosen and discover if or why they have found it so effective. Tour the classrooms, nursery, and offices, jotting down ideas to use later.

2. Train those who work with children

Try the "fifth Sabbath training" approach. On the fifth Sabbath of a month (four each year), schedule a one-to two-day event to include testimonies



Effective ministry to today's children goes beyond a basic understanding of developmental issues or simple babysitting.

What is your church doing to have the best children's ministry you can?

Effective ministry to today's children goes beyond a basic understanding of developmental issues or simple babysitting. Effective ministry requires taking risks to walk alongside children weighed down with burdens of divorce; physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; substance abuse; overcommitted parents; and stress-related disorders.

reached through appropriate ministry.

As you seek to develop your children's ministry to reach the new generation coming into your church, consider the following:

1. Survey other churches

When visiting other churches, notice how they advertise their children's ministry to the church body. Concentrate on the curriculum they

of significant accomplishments in the children's ministry, a time for prayer, and skill-development training in some area of children's ministry.

3. Target preadolescents

Times are changing and so is the level of sophistication of fifth- and sixth-grade children. This age group is quickly experiencing dropouts in the church because most churches

have not incorporated new ideas for reaching the preadolescent. Select and begin a curriculum aimed at this age group.

4. Appoint a children's director or hire a children's pastor

Children's ministry is one of the most overlooked, despite the continual pleas for recruitment of leadership. Appointing a children's director or hiring a children's ministry pastor will signal a new commitment to caring for children even if it begins as a part-time position. This will be a vital ingredient to a holistic ministry to the entire family. Barry Gain, an Adventist researcher in the area of youth ministry, once told me that his study confirmed the strong correlation between having a children's director or pastor and a higher percentage of youth who stay in the church.

5. Establish a prayer base

Tremendous amounts of pressure on children and their families exist today. Our families certainly need a prayer covering, and so do the children's workers who are trying to reach them. Begin by establishing a small prayer group to consistently pray for your children and workers. Some of the growing Adventist churches take time

during the worship service or during the week to pray for the children.

6. Highlight children's ministry

Have the pastor interview children in front of the congregation. Give monthly updates in the services to help the congregation know how they should be praying for the children's ministry and participating in it. Create a yearly video presentation highlighting some of the major accomplishments that have taken place during the year. Show how lives have been changed due to the focus and energy of this ministry. Provide a quality brochure that describes the children's ministry for all newcomers to the church.

7. Build ownership of the children's ministry throughout the entire church

One of the best ways to help the congregation take ownership of children's ministry is to have each child prayed for by an adult. On 3x5 cards put down relevant information about every child connected to your ministry. Then give the cards to trusted people from the congregation who would be willing for a month (or quarter) to pray weekly for the child. Such a ministry helps build bridges between the generations and automatically increases

adult interest and support. This also may increase your base of volunteers as adults develop more of a burden for the children.

8. Guarantee that all people who work with the children are properly screened and are beyond reproach as it relates to dealing with minors

This has to be done not only to avoid legal issues but because our children are precious and need to be protected and thrive in a safe and healthy environment. Today most conferences provide screening of individuals who interact with children (e.g., teachers, pathfinder leaders, administrative school positions, and Sabbath school leaders). This involves a background check and sometimes even fingerprinting. Many of them provide this service for free or at a minimal charge. If, for some reason, your conference does not provide this information, check with your local police department for help with background checks.

Anything you do prayerfully is better than nothing. So move ahead with a powerful and effective children's ministry and the Lord will bless you richly. Our children matter to God and to us. ❖

* S. Joseph Kidder, *The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2011), 58.

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LETTERS

Continued from page 4



Prison ministry

I just wanted to make a comment on Delbert Baker's interview with Antônio Monteiro in the April 2014 *Ministry* ("Reflections on a Ministry in Prison") that reminded me of men and women in prison.

Several years ago, we started a prison ministry in Milan, Michigan. Out of that ministry 11 men were baptized. To be baptized, they had to watch three video series, C. D. Brooks, Dwight Nelson, and Doug Batchelor. One of the

rules we made with them was that after they were released from prison, they had to find a local church within six months and apply for a transfer to that church or have their names dropped. This was very effective and only two were dropped. While they were in prison, they worked very hard to share their faith. They met many obstacles, but stayed with it, and we don't know the final results. I am thankful to see prison ministry getting attention and people responding.

"I was in prison, and you visited me" [Matt. 25:36, NLT]. Baptizing them in February was a challenge, but [it was] very fulfilling to see lives being changed and going against the odds of ending up back in prison.

—Pastor Dan Hall, email ❖

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 3 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 356.
- 2 *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 18th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010), 47.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 4, 1877, 106.
- 4 White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 9:260.

10th

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Lecture 1:

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In North America, the age group that is missing from church are the Millennials/Mosaics (18-29 yrs). This seminar will enlighten us on what we can do to open a dialogue with them.

Sunday, October 19 | 1:00 - 2:30 pm

Lecture 2:

You FOUND Me?

Nine characteristics of churches that are reaching the 'Lost' generation.

Sunday, October 19 | 3:30 - 5:00 pm

Sermon:

Who Are You Carrying? Mark 2:4

Monday, October 20 | 10:30 - 11:20 am

Lunch provided!

Pastor Laffit Cortes

From Bronx, NYC, he served as pastor in Greater NY Conference. He was the New Jersey Conf. youth director for eight years initiating teen, collegiate, young adult ministries and urban initiative: "The Ghetto Church." He served as the Campus Chaplain of Pacific Union College and is presently the lead Pastor of Miami Temple, FL.



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