

INVESTIGATING THE INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT, I

A Brief Exposition of Adventism's Doctrine of the Investigative Judgment

1. Historic Adventists teach that in 1844, God the Father and His Son moved to the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary to begin a work of investigative judgment and final cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary (**Dan 8:14; Dan 7:9-13**)
2. They believe that this investigative judgment is the event announced in the first angel's message of Rev 14, "*Fear God, give glory to Him, for the hour of his judgment is come. . .*"
3. Adventists believe further that in this judgment which occurs before Jesus comes, the books of heaven are examined and the eternal destiny of all men, both the **good and bad**, is determined (**GC 479; GC 482, GC 490, SD 355**)
4. How important is the doctrine of the investigative judgment to Seventh-day Adventists?
 - a. It is a core belief; a central pillar in their theology
5. Adventists hold that the subject of the investigative judgment is so crucial that unless the topic is clearly understood, one's salvation may be placed at jeopardy:

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. Otherwise **it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time** or to **occupy the position which God designs them to fill. GC 488**

Four Main Objections to the Teaching of the Investigative Judgment

6. Unfortunately, this teaching of a pre-advent judgment by Adventist is under vigorous attack by the Christian world and even by people within the SDA church itself
 - **Objection #1:** Objectors say that the doctrine of a pre-advent investigative judgment is not taught in the Bible; the expression "investigative judgment" is not even found anywhere in it
 - **Objection #2:** The Adventist teaching of the investigative judgment is only a fabrication of Ellen White, to explain away the great disappointment of 1844; Donald Barnhouse called it "*the most colossal face-saving device in Christian history*"
 - **Objection #3:** Only the wicked are judged, but not God's people; they are exempt from this judgment, therefore it is not correct to teach that all men are judged in the investigative judgment
 - **Objection #4:** Objectors say the Adventist investigative judgment robs the Christian of the assurance of present salvation; therefore, the Adventist teaching of an investigative judgment undermines the gospel and should be rejected

Answer to Objection #1: The doctrine of a pre-advent investigative judgment is not taught in the Bible

7. Objectors say that the expression "*investigative judgment*" is not even found anywhere in the bible
8. Just because the expression "*investigative judgment*" is not found in the bible does not mean it not biblical

9. This philosophical objection to the doctrine of the investigative judgment falls apart when it is realized that certain core teachings of Christianity are accepted as biblical, even though the terms that identify these teachings are not found in the bible
 - a. The word "**Trinity**" is not found in the bible, and yet Christians in essence, believe in the doctrine of the Trinity based on **Matt 28:19** and other texts
 - b. The expression "**close of probation**" is not found in the bible, but Christians have no problem embracing the concept (**Dan 12:1; Rev 11:17-18**)
 - c. The words "**Substitution**" or "**Substitute**" is not found anywhere in the bible, and yet we believe that Christ is our Substitute based such as such texts as **Rom 5:6; Heb 2:9; 1 Pet 3:18**
10. The concept of an investigative judgment where books are examined is taught in Bible, even though the expression "*investigative judgment*" is not found anywhere in the bible
11. The text of **Dan 7:9-10** clearly shows a work of investigation and judgment taking place
 - a. "*the judgment is set*"—a work of judgment
 - b. "*books are opened*"—presupposes a work of investigation and examination
12. Furthermore, the straightforward, chronological timeline of events in Dan 7, shows that work of investigative judgment is an end-time event, just prior to the coming of Jesus to set up His kingdom which has no end; this is why we say pre-advent investigative judgment
 - a. The investigative judgment is found at the tail-end of the timeline of events showing that it is an end-time event
 - i. The lion (Babylon), **Verse 4**
 - ii. The bear (Medo-Persia) **Verse 5**
 - iii. The leopard (Greece), **Verse 6**
 - iv. The non-descript beast (pagan Rome), **Verse 7**
 - v. The little horn (papal Rome), **Verse 8**
 - vi. **The thrones cast down, books opened and judgment set (investigative judgment), verses 9-10**
 - vii. Christ's kingdom of glory established at His second coming, **Verse 14**
13. This pre-advent judgment prophecy of **Dan 7:9-10** is picked up in Revelation and finds fulfillment in **Rev 14:7**—"*the hour of his judgment is come*"
 - a. It is pre-advent because it occurs just before the harvest of the earth at the coming of Jesus (**Rev 14:14-20**)
14. If this is not so, then the judgment prophecy of **Dan 7:9-10** has no fulfillment and no projection anywhere in the bible; it is a prophecy that was never meant to be fulfilled; it is an empty prophecy

Answer to Objection #2: The Adventist teaching of the investigative judgment is only a fabrication of Ellen White, to explain away the great disappointment of 1844

15. Just because so much about of the investigate judgment is found in the writings of Ellen White does not mean the doctrine originated from her
16. A brief sampling of Ellen White statements on the investigative judgment (1SM 125; COL 310; 7BC 987; GC 421-422; GC 425, etc.)
 - In 1844 our great High Priest entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, to begin the work of the **investigative judgment**. The cases of the righteous dead have been passing in review before God. When that work shall be completed, judgment is to be pronounced upon the living. . . **1SM 125**

- When we become children of God, our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and they remain there until the time of the **investigative judgment**. Then the name of every individual will be called, and his record examined, by Him who declares, "I know thy works." **7BC 987**

The Origin and Development of the Doctrine of the Investigative Judgment

- The Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment did not originate with Ellen White
 - 1840**--The concept of a pre-advent judgment was introduced to the Millerite believers by the Methodist theologian **Josiah Litch**¹ as early as 1840-1842; it was based on Daniel 7, the Day of Atonement of Leviticus 16 and the marriage parables (Matthew 22 and 25)
 - 1844**—After the great disappointment of 1844, the Sunday-keeping Millerites continued to promote Litch's concept of a pre-advent judgment
 - These were published in the Millerite papers
 - Ellen White** had no input whatsoever here
 - 1845-1850**—by this time, the idea of an investigative judgment was soon abandoned by the non-Sabbatarian Millerites but the Sabbatarian Adventists however retained it and developed it further
 - Joseph Bates** then became the principal writer on the matter of the investigative judgment from **1846 to 1850**
 - 1857**--**James White** first rejected it, but then in 1857 embraced it; he was the first to use the expression "**investigative judgment**" during this time
 - James White saw the connection between the investigative judgment and the message to the church of Laodicea and saw it as a much-needed appeal for repentance and spiritual preparedness on the part of God's people living in the time of judgment
- Over the years, pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist church have developed the doctrine of the investigative judgment not by deriving it not from the writings of Ellen White, not from a single isolated proof-text, but using as large pool of Biblical data from both the Old and the New Testament
 - Dan 7:9-13**—the investigative judgment in heaven is convened; both the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man come to the Most Holy Place; context locates this judgment as occurring later than the 1260 years of activity by the little horn power, but prior to the second advent
 - Dan 8:14**—provides the timing of the commencement of the investigative judgment of Daniel 7
 - Dan 12:1-2; Rev 20:6**—at the second coming, those whose names are found in the book of life are resurrected to receive eternal life; the investigative judgment determines whose are found in that Book and whose names are not, prior to the second coming of Jesus
 - Lev 16 and 23**—those who do not afflict the soul on the Day of Atonement are cut off; the work of cutting off clearly presupposes a work of selection, a work of judgment
 - Malachi 3**—the purging of the sons of Levi in the temple is parallel with the events of Dan 7, Lev 16, and Dan 8
 - Acts 3:19**—sheds light on the blotting out of sins by the heavenly High Priest, prior to His return to earth; this work of blotting out of sins presupposes a work of examining the records to see whose sins will be blotted out, and whose sins will not be blotted out prior to the return of Jesus to earth
 - The wedding parables—the examination of the guests in the parable of the wedding garment (**Matt 22**) portrays a work of investigation and judgment to determine who have a

¹ Josiah Litch was the Millerite preacher who predicted the fall of the Ottoman empire in Aug 11, 1840 at the termination of the 391 prophetic days under the 6th trumpet of Revelation 9 (GC 334)

part in the marriage supper; the parable to the 10 virgins (Matt 25) presupposes to work of investigative judgment to determine who will have part in the marriage of the Lamb and those who will not

- h. **Rev 14:6-13**—the first angel’s message announces the commencement of the investigative judgment at the time when the everlasting gospel is preached; the destiny of men is determined in the judgment based on their response to these messages
- i. **1 Pet 4:17**—judgment begins at the house of God; begin at my sanctuary (Eze 9:6)
- j. **Rev 7:1-3**—sealing work presupposes a work of judgment to determine who receive the seal of God on the foreheads
- k. **Rev 22:11**—investigative judgment ends with a solemn verdict for each individual from which there is no appeal—he that is holy let him be holy still and he that is filthy let him be filthy still. . .
- l. The doctrine of perseverance—the judgment determines who have endured until the end; believers who have the Son have life right now, but they will be saved if they endure until the end (**1 John 5:12; Matt 24:13**)
- m. **Spring and Autumn typology**—Spring ceremonies (Passover, wave sheaf, Pentecost) were fulfilled in connection with the first advent of Jesus whereas the autumn ceremonies (feast of trumpets, Day of Atonement and the feast of tabernacles) apply to events associated with the second coming of Jesus; this argument places the judgment on the Day of Atonement at the end of time

Keeping Up with Advancing Light

- 19. We understand more now about the investigative judgment because of the diligent study of our pioneers; **the least** we can do is to say, “*Thank you*” to these persevering, devoted pioneers of the church
- 20. **The best** thing we can do is to take this light and develop it further until it shines brighter and clearer

The Lord has made his people the repository of sacred truth. Upon every individual who has had the light of present truth devolves the duty of developing that truth on a higher scale than it has hitherto been done. But should we be in trust of sacred, advanced truth, and yet be satisfied to work in narrow, selfish lines? The Lord will hold us accountable for the influence we might have exerted but did not, because we have not earnestly tried to understand our accountability in this world. We shall either glorify or dishonor God. HM July 1, 1897, Article B, Par. 1

- 21. **The worst** thing we can do is to support the efforts of the enemies of the church in tearing down this message; it would be tantamount to a betrayal of sacred trust
- 22. And this we will find ourselves eventually doing without even realizing it, if we are not studying this message and developing it further as we are told to do. . .

To be continued. . .