

The Gospel, 1844, and Judgment

The Gospel and Judgment

Lesson #13 for September 23, 2006

Scriptures: Leviticus 16; Romans 8:1, 34; Hebrews 6:20; 7:25; 9:24; 1 Peter 1:2,18,19.

1. What is the relationship between the Gospel and judgment? Remembering that the Gospel means “good news”, is there any “good news” about the judgment? Most people are frightened when they hear about judgment. Seventh-day Adventists believe that the great antitypical Day of Atonement is taking place right now, having begun in 1844, and continuing until just before the second coming of Jesus Christ in the clouds of glory. What is really happening in this judgment? Should we be frightened that at any moment our names might come up and our cases decided finally?
2. Why is this period of time known as the Day of Atonement? At-one-ment suggests that God is trying to reconcile his people. What happens in the great antitypical Day of Atonement that will reconcile his children back to him? “This, of course, is good news. After all, what is atonement other than the work of God saving us through Christ’s blood? The law can’t atone; obedience can’t atonement; character can’t atone. Atonement comes only one way, through the Cross.” (*Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for September 16, 2006) Or does atonement come because we look at the life and death of Christ, and understanding at least some of what is implied; we like what we see and we come to trust God because of what he has done?
3. Look again at Matthew 25:31-46. God appears to be separating the sheep from the goats. What does this have to do with reconciliation? Let us begin by taking a bird’s eye view of the lesson: (See #24)
 - 1) We are all sinners. Romans 3:23
 - 2) There is nothing we can do about this.
 - 3) God knows everything about us. (Matthew 12:36; Ecclesiastes 12:14)
 - 4) If we have to stand before God on our own, we are all lost.
 - 5) “The good news of the judgment [and the Day of Atonement] is that Jesus, in His righteousness, gets us through the judgment because He stands there in our place. This is what his intercession, His high priestly ministry, is all about.” (*ibid*, September 17, 2006)
 - 6) So when God comes to judge us, he looks at Jesus who stands in our place and we are judged savable.
 - 7) Our salvation then is based on the merits of Jesus Christ and not on our own.
4. How do you feel about this picture? How can we be certain that Jesus will stand in our place? If Jesus can stand in our place no matter what our condition then why doesn’t he stand in that position for everyone? Doesn’t God want to save all of his children?
5. There are three full chapters in the writings of Ellen White which discuss this issue at length: *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, page 467-476 (1885); *The Great Controversy*, pages 479 to 491(1888); *Prophets and Kings*, pages 582 to 592 (1915). These are very useful chapters to read.
6. Is it apparent to you, then, why the Day of Atonement and the judgment are good news? What is the relationship between these events and the cross? Look at these statements from the teacher’s edition of the *Bible Study Guide*:
 - A) Jesus stands in our place in the judgment.
 - B) Without the perfect garment of righteousness, which is attainable only through

Christ, we would all be condemned.

- C) Having Jesus as our Advocate and Judge gives us the highest hope to stand victorious in the judgment. (Romans 8:1, 34; 1 Peter 1:2,18,19)
7. The *Adult Teacher's Bible Study Guide* goes on to explain further:
 - A) "The earthly sanctuary is a model of the whole plan of salvation.
 - B) Christ now stands in the heavenly sanctuary and ministers in our behalf the merits of His atoning death.
 - C) Christ's blood alone can atone for sin."
 8. Certainly these statements should raise questions in our minds. Does Jesus stand beside each person as they face the judgment? Who else stands there to accuse us? If Jesus is standing there and can minister his merits to each one, why are some names accepted and others rejected?
 9. What are the "merits of His atoning blood"? What was the role of blood on the Day of Atonement? The judgment?
 10. If you have not recently reviewed the events of the Day of Atonement read Leviticus 16. Compare Hebrews 9:12-14. What is being symbolized here? Can sins be transferred from a sinner, to an animal, to a priest, to a temple, to a priest, again, to another animal, and thus carried far away from us and eliminated from our lives completely?
 11. What is the role of blood? See Leviticus 17:11; Luke 22:20; Romans 5:9; Hebrews 10:19,20; 12:24; 13:20,21; 1 Peter 1:2,18,19.
 12. What is your understanding of the role of blood in the ancient sanctuary system? (Hebrews 9:22) Is it fair to take this verse and apply it directly to the heavenly Day of Atonement? Is there blood being administered in the heavenly sanctuary? What would that mean? What did God want to teach the children of Israel through the offering of animal sacrifices? "God hoped to teach Israel the seriousness of sin and the enormous cost of forgiveness through the sanctuary services." (*Teachers Bible Study Guide*, page 153)
 13. How successful do you think God was in this endeavor? Why did God do away with the system of animal sacrifices after the life and death of Jesus? What symbols do we use today to help us recognize the seriousness of sin? "The blood of Jesus shed on the cross proved that God is both just and loving in His efforts to destroy sin and redeem the sinner. Thus, the work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary since 1844 is the fulfillment of the earthly sanctuary's Day of Atonement." (*Ibid*) Is the logic here clear to you?
 14. We have a number of passages in the Old Testament talking about various aspects of the sanctuary system. Leviticus 16 is very clear about the Day of Atonement. Hebrews goes on to describe in some detail how these symbols might apply to the heavenly sanctuary. Where would you look in the Bible for the clearest picture of exactly what happens on the antitypical Day of Atonement and the judgment? Is Zechariah 3:1-10 the clearest picture?
 15. There are two interesting parables given near the end of the life of Jesus by Matthew. Look at Matthew 22:1-14. Compare Matthew 25:31-36. Which of these parables more clearly talks about judgment? Can you relate the two together? Do they illustrate each other in any way?
 16. "Notice, the parables said that both the good and bad came. It didn't say whether the man without the garment was good or bad. In one sense it made no difference: Before

God in judgment, we all—"good" or "bad"—without a garment stand condemned. What the guest needed at the wedding is the same thing that we need in the judgment, something covering us; otherwise, we will be cast out where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. That covering, symbolized by the garment in the parable, is the righteousness of Jesus, credited to his followers by faith—and it is their only hope now and in the judgment." (*Ibid*, Tuesday, September 19, 2006)

17. Why do you think the man in the feast refused to take a wedding garment? Who provided the garments? Was there any expense involved?
18. Can you be certain that you are wearing the "garment" of Christ's righteousness? How can you be certain?
19. Review Zechariah 3:1-5. Does the garment of righteousness that was given to Joshua the high priest cover his old garments or must the old garments be removed first?
20. Read Romans 8:1. "The good news of the judgment is that we don't have to stand in our own righteousness. **We can stand in the righteousness of Jesus. That we are judged by works doesn't mean we are saved by them; we are saved, instead, only through the righteousness of Jesus, which is credited to us by faith, a faith that is always manifested by works.** This righteousness covers us the moment we, through a complete surrender of ourselves to Christ, claim it for ourselves, and it stays with us (though not unconditionally) right through the judgment. After all, what good would being covered by that righteousness do any of us if we did not have it when we needed it the most, which would be in the judgment?" (*Ibid*, Wed., Sept. 20, 2006)
21. Is this suggesting in any way that God—maybe the father—can't see what kind of people we really are under that garment? If the rest of the beings of the universe—including our guardian angel who has followed us all our lives—see us approaching covered by Christ's righteousness, do they have any question about what happened to the former us?
22. "Unlike any other trial or any other proceeding in the history of the universe, this judgment can turn totally in your favor, however bad your record has been. Jesus has written on His hands the names of those He's forgiven. If you are on those hands, you have nothing to fear." (*Ibid*, 157) Does this mean that the key to salvation is forgiveness from Jesus? What about the people who crucified him? (Luke 23:34) So how can we be sure we are there permanently? Our Bible Study Guide has suggested in the past that we are judged by works, but saved by faith. (See #20 above) Notice the following passages in support of that idea:
"Every work, every secret thing, every idle word comes into review (*Ps. 135:14; Eccles. 12:14; Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 10:30*). Who could stand before such a scrutiny? No one (*Rom. 3:23; Gal. 3:22; 1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 3:10*). However, for the true followers of Christ, Jesus stands as their Advocate, their Representative, their Intercessor in heaven (*Rom. 8:34, Heb. 6:20, 7:25, 9:24, 1 John 2:1*). And though they have nothing in and of themselves to give them merit before God, though they have no works that are good enough to justify them before the Lord, their lives—however faulty, however defective—nevertheless reveal their true repentance and faith (*Matt. 7:24-27, John 14:15, James 2:14-20, 1 John 4:20, 1 John 5:3*). How they treated others, the poor, the needy, prisoners, how they forgave as they were forgiven, the words they spoke, the deeds they did (*Matt. 7:2; 12:36, 37; 18:23-35; 25:31-46*)—while these things never could justify them before God, while they never could answer the demands of a broken law, they reveal those who have accepted Christ as their Substitute—and His righteousness alone, which covers them like a garment, gets them through the

judgment (*Lev. 16; Zech. 3:1-5; Matt. 22:1-14; Rom. 8:1, 34; Heb. 9:24; 1 John 2:1*).” (*Ibid*, Thursday, September 21, 2006)

Ellen White: “Every man’s work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the books of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling. Heaven-sent warnings or reproofs neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil, with its far-reaching results, all are chronicled by the recording angel.” {GC 482.1}

“But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 472.

23. So is there any problem in facing the judgment? Is this going to be easy? If not why not?

24. The apostle John speaks very specifically about how the judgment takes place. Read John 3:16-21 and 12:47,48. If the blood of Jesus is central to the judgment, why doesn’t John mention it? Why is there no mention of substitution in these verses?

25. **Does God care more about the sins of our past lives or what kind of lives we will live in the future? Our past is a permanent part of history. It will never be erased. But it doesn’t matter any more if we have established a true faith relationship with God.** This is not because of some legal transaction, but because as we come to know God better and better, we like him more and more and the most important thing in our lives is to become like him. By beholding we will be transformed into his image.

26. So what is faith and how does it work? “Faith, is [just] a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well known. The better we know Him, the better this relationship may be.

“Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in Him, based on the more than adequate evidence revealed, to be willing to believe whatever He says, to accept whatever He offers, and to do whatever He wishes—without reservation—for the rest of eternity.

“Anyone who has such faith is perfectly safe to save, This is why faith is the only requirement for heaven.” (*Can God Be Trusted?*, A. G. Maxwell, p. 46)

27. **We can never do enough good works to earn our way to heaven. But that is not the issue! We are judged by works because they are the evidence of our growing faith relationship with God. If we truly believe in God, trust him fully, and want to be as much like him as possible, wouldn’t that affect the way we live? This is why faith is the only requirement for salvation.**

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