

Study Guide #13: Objections to the Pre-Advent Judgment

Introduction

Please read Explorer III, Study Guide #12 before studying this one because *there* we laid out the case for the pre-advent judgment. We saw this is a process of judgment going on in heaven during what Daniel calls “**the time of the end.**” It involves only those who have made a claim to follow Jesus or at least their conscience because others are like those who plead “guilty” and have no need of an investigation. Numerous objections have been raised to this doctrine, mostly by people who don’t understand it. We answer those objections in this Study Guide.

Question #1: In the previous Study Guide, Question #11, you stated that Daniel 7 supported the concept of a pre-advent investigative judgment. But in that chapter, the little horn is being judged, not God’s people. The language of verses 21-22 suggest the context of a lawsuit in which God’s people are suing the little horn to stop its persecution of them, and “a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High” (NKJV) by the heavenly court. So how can you teach that God’s people are the ones who are judged in this judgment?

Answer: We agree that the language in Daniel 7 strongly suggests that God’s people are engaged in a lawsuit to stop this evil power from persecuting them, and that the little horn is judged at the end of the “trial.” God is not the One engaged in this celestial lawsuit because the *leadership* of “the Ancient of Days” (vv. 9-10, i.e., God the Father) and “the Son of Man” (v. 13, i.e., Jesus) in the courtroom judgment scene would taint the proceedings as blatantly biased and unfair. Besides, the language does not even hint that God is the One bringing the lawsuit.



But let’s take a closer look at the Biblical evidence. Daniel 7:25 plainly declares that the little horn is guilty of three specific crimes: (1) he speaks words against God; (2) he persecutes God’s people; and (3) he thinks he has the authority to change God’s “times and law.” Each of these three crimes is a *public* crime—speaks, persecutes, and changes. None of the little horn’s actions are done in secret; it is obviously guilty. Yet verse 10 definitely refers to a courtroom judgment scene in which certain “books were opened,” which clearly implies a trial in which evidence is examined (i.e., an investigation phase of judgment). This strongly suggests that the little horn’s actions are not the actions being investigated by the evidence from the judgment books, and that something else is involved in this lawsuit.

All three of the little horn’s crimes are examples of that power exercising the prerogatives of God in assuming the role of God on earth. In other words, the little horn is behaving as if it is acting in the place

of God, which is the spirit of antichrist. [NOTE: The prefix “anti” is often used with the sense of “in place of someone/something” rather than always in an openly hostile manner.] As such, God’s people must be the ones defending God’s character and authority by their own words and actions, thus angering the little horn—all of which implies that in an indirect sense, God Himself is on trial, so to speak. In acting in God’s place to persecute God’s people, the little horn is actually declaring that those people are heretics and do not deserve eternal life.

Therefore, while the direct language in Daniel 7 suggests that it is God’s people who initiated the lawsuit



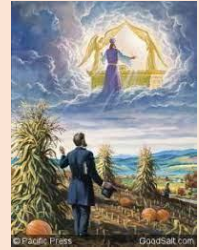
as the plaintiff in the case, the evidence being examined from the judgment books actually concerns the words and actions of God’s people in order to show that (a) they have been correctly upholding God’s character and authority, and (b) they really do belong to Jesus, and through Him, they have the right to eternal life. In other words, the little horn has countersued. The little horn is judged in the sense that its actions against God’s people for their defense of God’s character and authority, and for their “crime” of heresy, are proven wrong, thereby resulting in its destruction (v. 26).

Our conclusion is reinforced by the obvious fact that the real power behind the little horn is Satan himself. Zechariah 3:1-5 pictures the Lord and Satan in a dispute over Joshua the high priest. Satan there is opposing Joshua, who seems to represent all of God’s people, apparently because Joshua is clothed in “filthy garments,” which represent his sins (v. 4). The Lord replaced his filthy garments with “rich robes” (v. 4) and a “clean turban on his head” (v. 5), which is consistent with godly garments representing the righteousness of Jesus throughout the Scriptures. This vision clearly is that of a judgment scene in which Joshua, representing all of God’s people, are accused of deserving eternal death (just as the same is implied in Daniel 7). Instead, Satan loses the case as God’s people are vindicated in this judgment setting. Therefore, Zechariah 3 illustrates the truth that in the great controversy between Jesus and Satan, God’s people are defended and ultimately vindicated by a process of judgment in which Satan and his human allies lose and are ultimately destroyed. [NOTE: The fact that the vision in Zechariah 3 specifically and immediately concerns Satan’s efforts to prevent the restoration of the Jewish Temple after the Babylonian Captivity and the high priestly ministry of Joshua in that temple does not invalidate the message of this vision as illustrating an end-time restoration of God’s Temple in heaven and the restoration of God’s people to heavenly bliss (see Zechariah 3:8-10).]

The bottom line is that a closer examination of the Biblical data, including within Daniel 7 itself, confirms our exposition of that chapter as portraying the Pre-Advent Investigative Judgment taking place in heaven a relatively short time before the Second Coming of Jesus. The lawsuit context in no way undermines that conclusion.

Question #2: Doesn't this teaching ignore the context of the little horn's sins as described in Daniel 8?

Answer: This objection basically is that the pre-advent investigative judgment as we teach it here doesn't deal with the sinful activities of the little horn. Rather, it ignores that context to say that those who have claimed to follow Jesus or at least their conscience are the ones being judged. However, the prophecy in Daniel 8 itself doesn't tell us who is judged there. But it does say that the little horn would obscure and undermine the truth of the heavenly sanctuary and Jesus' work there on sinners' behalf. By vindicating the faithful among God's professed people, this judgment shows that God's way of dealing with the sin problem through the sanctuary system is the only valid way to do so. Therefore, the pre-advent judgment does indeed fit the context.



Jesus in the
Heavenly
Sanctuary

Question #3: But why do God's people come into judgment at all?

Answer: This objection cites John 5:24 as teaching that God's people "**shall not come into judgment**" (NKJV). But the Greek word for "**judgment**" in that text means either "judgment" or "condemnation" (as the *result* of judgment). Romans 14:10-12 and II Corinthians 5:10 both teach that Christians will come before "**the judgment seat of Christ**" (NKJV). A "**judgment seat**" refers to a specific courtroom location where the judge sat. There's no escaping the conclusion that, while God's faithful people don't come into *condemnation*, everyone—both righteous and wicked—will go through a judgment proceeding.

Question #4: Does God need to investigate in order to decide who to save?

Answer: No, because God knows all things, including "**those who are His**" (II Timothy 2:19, NKJV). The pre-advent judgment isn't for God, but for others. Daniel 7:10 speaks of numerous beings around the judgment scene in heaven, presumably angels. And Revelation 20:11-13 describes the Great White Throne judgment for the lost, apparently so that even they will publicly concede that God is right and just (see Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10-11). God doesn't even need to do that, but as Love Personified (I John 4:8, 16), God does more than He has to do. In this way, every possible question about why someone was saved or lost will have been answered, so that sin will never rise again in the universe (Nahum 1:9).

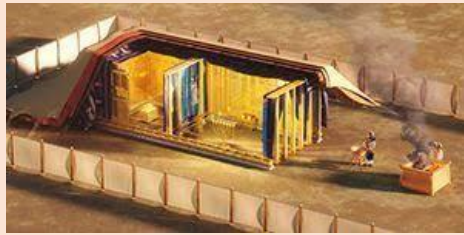
Question #5: Why does anything in heaven need to be cleansed or restored?

Answer: In Explorer III, Study Guide #12, we noted that the pre-advent judgment is the final, universal Day of Atonement judgment, in which the heavenly sanctuary (like the earthly one before it) would be cleansed or restored to its original perfection. It's a reasonable assumption that nothing in heaven needs to be cleansed or restored. However, Hebrews 9:23 does declare, "**Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these**" (NKJV, emphasis supplied). Of course, this would be a *symbolic* cleansing.

Question #6: Did Jesus enter the Most Holy Place in heaven at His ascension?

Answer: This objection is that the book of Hebrews teaches that Jesus already entered the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary at His ascension, so there can't be any special end-time significance to the Day of Atonement (the only day the High Priest entered that chamber). One of the texts so interpreted in Hebrews is 6:19-20, which states that Jesus “**enters the Presence behind the veil**” (NKJV). However, Hebrews 6 isn't discussing the details of the heavenly sanctuary. Instead, it's emphasizing that Jesus entered the Father's Presence without regard to a specific compartment. It's the equivalent of saying that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 10:12; 12:2; I Peter 3:22), which is simply a reference to His position of authority with God rather than a statement of celestial geography. [NOTE: A fundamental principle of Bible interpretation is that a text can't be used to answer a question that it's not addressing.]

Hebrews 9:8, 12, 25 are 3 verses that are also used to support the belief that Jesus entered the Most Holy



Earthly Tabernacle

Place at His ascension. But note that the Greek word in each verse is “*ta hagia*,” which literally means “the holies” or “the holy places,” which as in the plural form refers to both compartments—that is, the actual building of the sanctuary (excluding the courtyard). Although verse 25 does seem to refer to the Day of Atonement because it speaks of the high priest entering the sanctuary “**every year**” (NKJV), the point is that even on the high day of the earthly sanctuary system, the blood of

animal sacrifices couldn't cleanse from sin. Again, the context of the entire chapter tells us that of the sanctuary furniture or compartments, “**we cannot now speak in detail**” (v. 5, NKJV). The purpose of the author isn't to discuss celestial geography, but that Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf. [NOTE: Translators sometimes confuse the issue by translating “*ta hagia*” in more than 1 way in these verses. Some, like the New King James' Version and the New International Version, incorrectly translate it as “Most Holy Place” or “Holiest of All.”]

Question #7: Doesn't the pre-advent judgment doctrine teach salvation by works and is thus hostile to the gospel?

Answer: No. Now if a believer isn't clear on the gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone, then the pre-advent investigative judgment would indeed be a very scary and false doctrine. But the teaching of this judgment itself doesn't constitute a doctrine of salvation by works at all. In Scripture, salvation is always presented as by grace through faith alone, but judgment is always presented as according to works. See Ecclesiastes 12:14; Jeremiah 17:10; Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6; II Corinthians 5:10; I Peter 1:17; Revelation 2:23; 20:12; and 22:12. In this, the Bible doesn't contradict itself. Anyone can claim to belong to Jesus, but James reminds us that faith is outwardly demonstrated by our works (James 2:18). There's an old saying that illustrates this point: “If you were charged with being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” In this way, salvation is by grace through faith alone, while judgment is according to works. In the pre-advent investigative judgment, a professed believer's works are evaluated—

not to see if they are good enough (oh no!)—to determine if the one who talked the talk has also walked the walk—not perfectly, but generally and persistently in the right spiritual direction.

Question #8: But aren't your sins forgiven at the moment of repentance?

Answer: This objection accuses belief in the pre-advent judgment as teaching that a person's sins aren't really forgiven when they're confessed. Instead, it's alleged that God holds them over our heads until just before the 2nd Coming of Jesus—thus robbing a Christian of the assurance of his salvation. This criticism represents a complete misunderstanding of this Bible teaching. *First*, remember that the Day of Atonement judgment under the Old Testament sanctuary system involved the cleansing of sins *already forgiven* that had been symbolically transferred to the sanctuary throughout the year. *Second*, this fact illustrates the truth that if a person whose sins have all been forgiven decides to walk away from the Lord at a later time, then that's the same as that person telling God that he's willing to pay for his own sins rather than allowing Jesus to have done this for him. It's like the person has hit the Delete key after highlighting the icon for "forgiven" next to all his forgiven sins, so to speak. Then they suddenly become unforgiven, and the person will pay for his own sins by being eternally lost. This occurs because (a) there's no such thing as "once saved, always saved;" and (b) God respects our free will so much that He allows us to pay for our own sins *if we insist*. That's one reason that a record is kept in heaven's archives until the end-time judgment. But note that it's the person, not God, who makes the decision to hit that Delete key. Therefore, the pre-advent investigative judgment in no way constitutes God holding our sins over our head; nor does it rob the believer of his assurance of salvation as long as he remembers that eternal life, like perfection, resides in Jesus, and an individual has eternal life only insofar as he maintains his spiritual connection to Jesus (I John 5:11-13).

Question #9: Wasn't the Pre-Advent Judgment just invented to save face after the debacle of the Millerite movement in 1844?

Answer: William Miller was a Baptist preacher who created much excitement among Protestant Christians from many denominations in the 1830s and 1840s by teaching that Jesus would return soon—eventually he predicted it to occur on October 22, 1844 (based on the 2300-day prophecy of Daniel 8). When that didn't happen, it became known as the Great Disappointment. One group of disappointed Millerite Christians reexamined the prophecy of Daniel 8 and concluded that he had been right about the date, but wrong about the event. They reinterpreted the event as the beginning of the end-time Day of Atonement Judgment—see Explorer III, Study Guide #12 for an exposition of that entire prophecy. If there was insufficient evidence for the new understanding of that prophecy, the criticism of inventing it to save face would be a fair criticism. Therefore, instead of emotionally reacting against those who had previously been part of a movement that set a date for the 2nd Coming of Jesus, the honest Christian should seriously examine the evidence for himself. We invite the reader to do just that, and we humbly ask you to take a serious look at our Explorer III, Study Guide #12 to start your search for the truth. [NOTE: We certainly believe that William Miller was wrong to set a date for the 2nd Coming of Jesus, for Jesus Himself plainly said not to do that (Matthew 24:36, 42, 50; 25:13).]



William Miller preaching

Question #10: Why would the Pre-Advent Judgment last so long as it has?

Answer: This final criticism implies that the pre-advent judgment doctrine can't be Biblical because surely such a judgment wouldn't need to last as long as it has (since 1844). But we respectfully submit that this is the wrong question because human beings are being born every day, and others are reaching the age of accountability every day. A better question is, "Why has God allowed this much time to pass before Jesus' Second Coming?". *First*, God reckons time on a vastly different scale than we do. *Second*, He's "**not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance**" (II Peter 3:9, NKJV). Therefore, He won't end human probation arbitrarily, but will instead *announce* the close of probation when every person capable of making an intelligent decision has done so—when there's nothing that either God or Satan can do to change anyone's spiritual direction.

Given human nature, it will almost certainly take a global crisis, or series of crises, to galvanize the world's attention to compel people to make an irrevocable spiritual decision for or against God. This global crisis is called the mark of the beast crisis in Revelation 13 (see Explorer III, Study Guide #10). Although one might say that God can take steps to control when that happens, nevertheless as a God of Love Personified, it probably means that He won't act to allow that crisis to occur until He would have to violate people's free will in order to prevent it. And *that* a God of Love will *not* do. Therefore, the most important questions to ask is, "What am I doing to prepare as if that crisis would happen in my lifetime?" and "Am I ready for Jesus to come?".

Question #11: Why is the doctrine of the Pre-Advent Judgment important?

Answer: We answer that question with a list of 5 significant truths that the Pre-Advent Judgment doctrine ought to remind every Christian of:



- *First*, it underscores the significance of the heavenly sanctuary and Jesus as our High Priest's work there on our behalf—which tells us that the benefits of the cross must be applied to an individual in order for it to be effective for anyone. In other words, while Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, we don't individually get credit for His righteousness and His death unless we individually come to God the Father through the merits of Jesus our Savior and High Priest.
- *Second*, it reminds us that ultimately, it's God who is on trial and who will be ultimately vindicated as a just and holy God. Remember that the great controversy over sin began in heaven with an angel who decided that he wanted the worship that is owed to God alone (Isaiah 14:12-14, Explorer II, Study Guide #2). In order to maintain the loyalty of His intelligent creatures (angels and other worlds), God didn't immediately destroy Satan, but He allowed Himself to be put on a kind of trial before the universe. And it's Jesus who will eventually be vindicated completely so that sin will never rise in the universe again (Nahum 1:9).

- *Third*, it helps keep Christians balanced in their understanding of the relationship of faith and works *if* they correctly understand the gospel and the judgment itself. That relationship is that salvation is by grace through faith alone—that no one can contribute anything to his salvation by what he does or doesn't do—but that good works are the necessary *result* of being in a saved relationship.
- *Fourth*, it reminds us that there's no such thing as “once saved, always saved.” Instead, it's how one *ends* his spiritual life, not how he begins it, that matters most. And if a person turns his back on Jesus, God will sadly allow him to pay for his own sins. Thus, even though his past sins had been fully forgiven, if he insists on paying for them himself, then it's like the person himself has resurrected those sins in order to pay for them with the loss of his eternal life.
- *Fifth*, because the 2,300-day-years extends into Daniel's “**time of the end**” (Daniel 8:17, NKJV; 11:40-12:3), it informs us that we are indeed living in “**the time of the end.**” Therefore, can the Second Coming of Jesus be that far behind?

