

## ABSTRACT

**“Pre-Advent Judgment in the Context of God’s Salvation and Sanctuary”**— This article explores the pre-Advent judgment within the framework of divine salvation, interpreting it through the lens of Israelite sanctuary sacrifices. It addresses God’s responsibility as judge, the dynamics of salvation, and the vindication of His character in judgment. Through the typology of the Day of Atonement, the article argues that this judgment affirms divine justice, the moral transformation of believers, and the imminence of final redemption within an eschatological context.

**Keywords** Pre-Advent judgment, sanctuary, divine justice, Day of Atonement, eschatology

## RESUMEN

**“El juicio preadvenimiento en el contexto de la salvación y el santuario de Dios”**— Este artículo examina el juicio preadvenimiento en el marco de la salvación divina, utilizando los sacrificios del santuario israelita como clave interpretativa. Se aborda la responsabilidad de Dios como juez, las dinámicas de la salvación y la vindicación de su carácter en el juicio. A través de la tipología del Día de la Expiación, se argumenta que este juicio reafirma la justicia divina, la transformación moral de los creyentes y la inminencia de la redención final en el contexto escatológico.

**Palabras clave:** juicio preadvenimiento, santuario, justicia divina, Día de la Expiación, escatología

## PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF GOD'S SALVATION AND SANCTUARY

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### Introduction

This article explains the pre-Advent judgment in the context of salvation, as illuminated by certain sacrifices at the ancient Israelite sanctuary. Subtopics covered here include: the responsibility of God as judge, dynamics of salvation illustrated at the Israelite sanctuary, and God's pre-Advent judgment as good news.

### Responsibility of God as Judge

What happens when God as Judge forgives guilty human beings?<sup>1</sup> Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem that God would judge justly:

If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house, then hear in heaven and act and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness (1 Kgs 8:31–32).<sup>2</sup>

Here the alternative verdicts from God as a just judge are only condemnation of the guilty or vindication of the innocent, not forgiveness of the guilty. These decisions correspond to those of just human judges. According to Moses, who received instructions from God, the Israelite judges would be “acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty” (Deut 25:1).

Does this mean that God is an unjust judge when he forgives guilty people? Romans 3 answers the question: When those who have done wrong, which includes everyone, accept Christ's sacrifice on their behalf by faith, they are acquitted by God's grace as a gift (vv. 23–25) and God is “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (v. 26).

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1. For the idea of God as judge, see Ps 7:11[12]; 50:6; 58:11; Eccl 3:17. In cases when the Hebrew numbering differs from the English one, the Hebrew numbering of the text is given between brackets [].

2. Regarding such situations, see the legislation in Exod 22:8–11[7–10].

The key to God's justice when he justifies/forgives guilty people is the sacrifice of Christ when these people receive this sacrifice through faith. Without (1) the sacrifice and (2) its reception by faulty people, God would be unjust if he justified them.

Why can't God simply be merciful and forgive without Christ's sacrifice? If God did that, he would be unjust. For one thing, he would be unfair to Satan and his angels, whom he condemned. Moreover, he would be irresponsible in jeopardizing the community of his created beings by permitting the self-replicating virus of sin to go free.

If God is not just, he is not the God of love whom he claims to be (1 John 4:8, 16) because justice is part of love, along with mercy. We see justice with mercy in God's proclamation of his character to Moses (Exod 34:6–7) and the definition of what is morally good that he revealed to Micah (Mic 6:8). If God would violate his own character of love by compromising justice, his influence would ultimately destroy the universe of his created beings.

The solution for giving mercy with justice is Christ's sacrifice. Christ is God, the Creator and Father of the human race (Isa 9:6[5]—"Everlasting Father"; John 1:1–4, 14; 8:58; Heb 1:2). A father or ancestor represents all of his descendants (Heb 7:9–10). Therefore, Christ could and did choose to suffer the penalty of the "second death" in place of his "children." However, he uniquely rose from the "second death" experience of separation from his Father (Matt 27:46) because he was indeed innocent, bearing the sins of others (Isa 53:9–12).

God can justly forgive guilty people based on Christ's sacrifice, but only if they accept this sacrifice by faith. According to Rom 3:26, God is "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus," but he would not be just if he justifies one who does not have faith in Jesus.

Why is faith in Jesus required? Because a guilty person needs moral transformation that only God can give to those who believe and trust him. David recognized this when he prayed for forgiveness after his sin with Bathsheba, including the words: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps 51:10[12]).<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew verb translated "create" is *bārā'*, the same word used for

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3. "God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.' Psalm 51:10." Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1956), 114.

God's creation of the world in Gen 1–2 (1:1, 21, 27; 2:3–4). In the Hebrew Bible, the only subject of this verb, who performs actions of creation, is God.<sup>4</sup> David understood that God's kind of forgiveness is uniquely transformational. He takes us as we are, but he does not leave us as we were, as Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery: "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more" (John 8:11).

### Dynamics of Salvation Illustrated at the Israelite Sanctuary

The way in which God saves faulty human beings was dramatically illustrated by expiatory animal sacrifices performed at the ancient Israelite sanctuary. All of these sacrifices prefigured the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). But one kind of sacrifice went much further than the others in illuminating the process of salvation. This was the purification offering (so-called "sin offering"), which remedied relatively minor moral faults (unintentional sins, failure to testify, and sins of forgetfulness; Lev 4:1–5:13) and physical ritual impurities from genital flows (Lev 12, 15), scaly-skin disease (Lev 13–14), and human corpses (Num 19).<sup>5</sup>

Only purification offerings transferred symbolic contamination to the sanctuary so that this pollution had to be removed once a year on the Day of Atonement.<sup>6</sup> Evidence for this transfer appears in in-

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4. See *DCH* 2:258.

5. Physical ritual impurities were not acts of sin but symbolized the state of sinfulness in the birth-to-death cycle of mortality (Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and its Place in Judaism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 60; cf. 31–32, 48–50, 207–208) that results from sin (Gen 3; Rom 5:12; 6:23).

6. Therefore, leaning one hand on the head of a sacrificial animal (Lev 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33 in purification offerings) only contributed to transfer of sin or physical impurity in purification offerings. In other kinds of sacrifices, including the well-being (or "peace") offering that was not offered for cases of sinful actions or impurity (Lev 3; 7:11–36), the hand-leaning gesture only signified the connection between the offerer and his/her sacrificial victim (as clearly implied in 1:4 in the context of a burnt offering). This connection function also applied in a purification offering, in which the offerer-victim connection facilitated the transfer of sin or impurity when the victim was a four-legged animal by signifying that the transfer was going from a certain person to the correct animal. When there was no possibility of ambiguity regarding the connection between the offerer/sinner and his/her offering material, as when a sacrifice consisted of a bird or a grain item that simply would be handed to a priest, no hand-leaning gesture was necessary (1:14–17—burnt offering; 2:1–16—

structions that only applied to the purification offering. According to Leviticus 6, it was necessary to wash off blood of a purification offering that had spattered through the air onto a garment (v. 20; English v. 27), whether that of the offerer or of the officiating priest, most likely when the offerer slit the throat of the animal and the blood came gushing out. It was also necessary to break a pottery vessel or scour a metal vessel in which the meat of such a sacrifice was boiled (v. 21; English v. 28) for the priests to eat (vv. 19, 22 [English vv. 26, 29]). The need for these procedures indicates that the sacrificial animal was carrying a kind of contamination (cf. Lev 11:32–33, 40; Num 31:24), which only could have come from the human offerer, from (preposition *min*) whom the sacrifice removed sin or physical ritual impurity (Lev 4:26; 5:6, 10; 12:7; 14:19; 15:15, 30).<sup>7</sup>

As an important part of a purification offering, the officiating priest would daub on the horns of an altar (altar of incense—Lev 4:7, 18; outer altar of burnt offering—25, 30, 34) some blood from the animal that was carrying residual contamination from the sin or impurity removed from the offerer. This would convey contamination to the altar, just as blood from the same animal that landed on a garment would contaminate it. Then the priest would burn the suet (fat) of the animal on the outer altar (vv. 8–10; 19, 26, 31, 35), which would also carry contamination to the altar, just as meat from the body of the same animal that would be boiled in a vessel would contaminate it.<sup>8</sup>

This transfer of residual contamination from the offerer to the purification offering animal and from the animal to the outer altar in the

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grain offering; 5:7–13—purification offering). So when a purification offering was a bird (5:7–9; 12:6, 8; 14:22), transfer of sin or physical impurity would take place without hand-leaning.

7. On purification offerings removing sin or physical ritual impurity from (privative use of preposition *min*) the persons who offered them (sinners or persons undergoing physical ritual purification), see Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 106–143; Roy E. Gane, “Privative Preposition *min* in Purification Offering Pericopes and the Changing Face of ‘Dorian Gray,’” *JBL* 127 (2008): 209–22.

8. On Lev 6:20–21 (English vv. 27–28) and the implications of this passage for transfer of residual contamination from sins and impurities to the sanctuary, see Gane, *Cult and Character*, 165–180. For defense of this interpretation against objections, see Roy E. Gane, “Purification Offerings and Paradoxical Pollution of the Holy,” in *Writing a Commentary on Leviticus: Hermeneutics – Methodology – Themes*, ed. Christian A. Eberhart and Thomas Hieke, *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments* 276 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 116–122.

courtyard, which was an integral part of the sanctuary (Lev 16:20, 33), explains how “uncleanesses,” that is, physical ritual impurities, and forgivable *ḥaṭṭā't* “sins” affected the sanctuary so that they had to be purged from the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. On this day, the impurities and sins had to be removed from the inner sanctum (most holy place) and the outer sanctum (holy place),<sup>9</sup> as well as the outer altar (Lev 16:16, 19).<sup>10</sup> The sanctuary was a unit, so when part of it (the altar) had received contamination, the pollution went to the whole sanctuary. This “part for all” effect<sup>11</sup> shows that the contamination was not ordinary physical dirt that only affects something or somewhere else if it is physically carried there.<sup>12</sup> The contamination was symbolic.

There was another unique kind of transfer that was unique to purification offerings. When a priest ate his portion of a purification that he officiated to remedy sin, he received and bore (*nāśā'*) the *āwōn*, “blame/culpability,” usually translated “iniquity” (Lev 10:17) that was removed from the sinner (cf. 5:1).

Why would a purification offering, which removed sin or impurity from the offerer transfer a kind of symbolic contamination to the sanctuary and “blame” to the priest? The sanctuary was the Lord's house, representing his administration and character, and the priests were his servants, whose role represented his saving work for his faulty people. When God forgives, he bears (*nāśā'*) sin, including *āwōn*, “iniquity/blame” (Exod 34:7),<sup>13</sup> so his priests bore it when they

9. Leviticus 16 refers to the inner sanctum as the “holy place” (vv. 2–3, 16–17, 20, 23, 27) and to the outer sanctum as the “tent of meeting” (vv. 16–17, 20, 23, 33).

10. Leviticus 16:19 abbreviates the list of evils removed from the inner sanctum in v. 16 by referring to the first item in the list: the physical ritual impurities.

11. Regarding the “part for all” effect, compare Exod 30:10, where applying blood to the horns of the incense altar once a year (on the Day of Atonement) purges the whole altar. For other examples of “part for all,” cf. Gane, *The Sanctuary and Salvation*, 205–209.

12. It is true that the offerer physically contacted his/her sacrificial animal by leaning one hand on its head and the priest physically applied the blood and suet of the animal to the outer altar. So in this way, the contamination was carried step-by-step. However, physical impurities and sins remedied by sacrifices that involved actions only at the outer altar had to be removed from the inner sanctum on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:16). So they moved there from the outer altar without direct physical transfer.

13. English translations of Exod 34:7, including ESV, render the participle of *nāśā'* as “forgiving,” but elsewhere, this verb with *āwōn*, “blame/culpability” as its direct object refers to bearing the blame (Exod 28:43; Lev 5:1, 17; 10:17, etc.).

participated in the process of removing sin from people. When God freed people from guilt, he bore it at his house and on his servants (the priests) there.

God was affected by human moral faults (sins) and physical faultiness (physical ritual impurities) when he remedied them. His willingness to make himself vulnerable in this way shows the magnitude of his mercy.<sup>14</sup> No doubt this dynamic pointed forward to every case in which Christ's sacrifice redeems fallen people from their mortality and any of their sins. However, only purification offerings illustrated this in the OT ritual system, likely because the sins that they expiated were relatively minor, resulting in a small amount of contamination of the sanctuary (see above). If more serious sins, which could be expiated by burnt offerings (Lev 1:4; cf. Job 42:8) and by reparation offerings (so-called "guilt offerings," which expiated sins of sacrilege; 5:14–26 [English 6:7]), had contaminated the sanctuary in the same way as purification offerings, the Israelites could have worried that the sanctuary's defilement negated its holiness.

Occasional major sins could contaminate the sanctuary, but not through sacrifices. According to Lev 20:3, a wicked Israelite or immigrant living in the Israelite community who offered his child as a sacrifice to the god Molech would thereby defile the sanctuary. Similarly, according to Num 19:13, 20, an individual who deliberately failed to undergo purification from serious physical ritual impurity incurred from a corpse would also defile the sanctuary. There was no excuse for this neglect because the remedy for corpse contamination was easy and free, using water mixed with ashes of the red cow purification offering that were stored and provided for the entire community (vv. 9, 17–19).

These two kinds of sins—Molech worship and failure to undergo purification from corpse impurity—were not only deliberate; they were sins of rebellion against the Lord. This can explain why sins of *peša'*, "rebellion," for which no animal sacrifices were ever offered, had to be removed from the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement along with *ḥaṭṭā't* "sins" (Lev 16:16), which could be expiated by purification offerings and forgiven by God (4:1–5:13). The rebellious sinners

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14. Cf. Roy E. Gane, "The God Who is Affected by Human Problems: Atonement Through Israelite Purification Offerings," *Journal of the Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions* (of the Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions, Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan) 16 (2021): 33–55.

had sent defilement to the sanctuary when they sinned, not by coming to the sanctuary.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that God's house could be automatically defiled from a distance if people committed very serious sins further supports the conclusion that contamination of the sanctuary was not through transfer of any physical substance. Rather, it symbolized something that affected God's reputation, whether because he forgave a guilty but repentant person through a purification offering, which prefigured Christ's sacrifice, or because somebody in his community defamed him by committing a rebellious sin.

God's reputation matters because he must embody and exemplify true love, including full justice with full mercy, in order to maintain love as the governing relational principle of the universe and to attract fallen human beings to himself so that they can be saved (cf. John 12:32). In fact the whole Great Controversy between God and Satan is over God's character. Satan maligns God's character in order to deceive created beings, including humans, into thinking that his reign of selfishness—slavery to satanic self-idolatry masquerading as freedom—is superior to the lordship of the benevolent Creator.

Why would contamination of the sanctuary, symbolizing some kind of problem affecting or potentially affecting God's reputation, be a side-effect of purification offerings, which pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ, on the basis of which God is just when he justifies those who believe (Rom 3:26)? The sacrifice was accomplished, but the question remained: Did those who had received expiation for sin or physical purification from purification offerings *continue to have faith*. That is, did their loyalty to God continue, so that he would be vindicated in having forgiven or cleansed the right people?

The question was answered on the yearly Day of Atonement, when special purification offerings performed by the high priest on behalf of the priests and the non-priestly community ritually purged the sanctuary, thereby signifying vindication of God. On this day, all Israelites were required to demonstrate their loyalty to God by practicing physical self-denial (through fasting, etc.) and by abstaining from all work, thereby keeping a sacred ceremonial sabbath (Lev 16:29, 31; 23:27–32). People who had sinned, but who were repentant and had

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15. On illegitimate automatic defilement of the sanctuary, see Gane, *The Sanctuary and Salvation*, 199–204; Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 366–368; Gane, *Cult and Character*, 144–160.



received forgiveness for their sins earlier in the year, received moral purification as a result of the ritual cleansing of the sanctuary by the high priest (16:30). Their judge was right in having forgiven them, so their forgiveness was secure.

On the other hand, those who did not show their loyalty on this day were condemned by God (23:29–30). Remaining condemned were rebellious sinners who had defiled the sanctuary from a distance. Their rebellious sins (plural of *peša'*) were purged from the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:16), clearing God's reputation, because his justice in condemning them was vindicated. But cleansing the sanctuary of these sins gave no benefit to the rebellious sinners, who in this sense had no part in the service of the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement vindicated God as just both when he affirmed those who were loyal and when he condemned those who were disloyal. Therefore, this was Israel's yearly judgment day, foreshadowing the pre-Advent judgment, which affirms the loyal "holy ones of the Most High" (Dan 7:18, 22, 27) and condemns those who rebel against God (vv. 11–12, 21–22, 26).<sup>16</sup>

### God's Pre-Advent Judgment as Good News

The idea of being judged terrifies people. But if you are on the right side of the law, judgment can benefit you, which is why a prayer that David sang included the words, "judge me, O Lord" (Ps 7:9 [English v. 8]), which means, "vindicate me, O Lord" (see also 26:1; 35:24; 43:1). In fact, if judgment will deliver you from a problem, such as someone who is threatening or oppressing you, judgment is salvation.<sup>17</sup>

The Israelite Day of Atonement judgment day was a solemn time because it was crucial for the relationship between God and his people, and the high priest had to be especially careful when he came closer to the Lord's awesome presence than on any other day (Lev 16:2). But it was very good for loyal Israelites because they received moral purification in a second stage of expiation (Piel of *k-p-r*, usually translated "make atonement"; v. 30), affirming the assurance of forgiveness that they had already received at the first stage of expiation when they had offered their individual purifica-

16. Cf. Dan 8:12–13, referring to *peša'*, "rebellion" against God that is remedied by the justifying (legal cleansing = vindication) of God's sanctuary (v. 14).

17. Cf. Jesus's parable of the persistent widow seeking justice from a judge against her enemy: Luke 18:2–5.

tion offerings (4:20, 26, 31, 35). So they could rejoice in their healthy relationship with God.

God's pre-Advent judgment, the global end-time "Day of Atonement," is also good for God's people. The apostle Paul referred to this judgment as part of his gospel (Rom 2:16). In Revelation 14, the first angel/messenger loudly proclaims an "eternal gospel" to everyone on earth (v. 6): "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come . . ." (v. 7). The long-awaited arrival of the judgment, for which God's oppressed people have prayed (6:10), is part of his "gospel," that is, it is good news.

Why is the arrival of the judgment good news? First, it is a thrilling and merciful appeal to all humanity to defy slavery to ignorant servitude to the arrogant and blasphemous "beast" and his "image" (Rev 13) and to worship the all-powerful Creator instead.

Second, God's judgment liberates his loyal people from oppression, including from "Babylon" (Rev 14:8; 17:1–18), which is the end-time manifestation of the "little horn" power that is condemned by the judgment in Daniel 7 (vv. 21–22, 26) and the persecuting "king of the north" in Daniel 11 (vv. 31–45), who will "come to his end, with none to help him" (v. 45; cf. Dan 8:25; 2 Thess 2:8).

Third, the pre-Advent judgment when three angels proclaim final warning messages (Rev 14:6–12) is the last phase of God's plan of salvation before Jesus comes (v. 14; cf. Matt 24:30). This is bad news for those who rebel against God because their time is almost up (Rev 14:17–20), but it is great news for God's faithful people because it means that their deliverance is drawing near.

God's true people have nothing to fear from his pre-Advent judgment for several reasons.<sup>18</sup> First, God is fair. He "will judge the peoples with equity" (Ps 96:10). "He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness" (v. 13).

Second, God's people enjoy conditional assurance of salvation by continuing to be in a covenant relationship with him. "He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people: 'Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!' The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!" (Ps 50:4–6). This covenant is based on sacrifice, which is ultimately the sacrifice of God's Son, whom he gave because he loves the people of his world (John 3:16). "Whoever has the Son has life" (1 John 5:12;

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18. Cf. Gane, *The Sanctuary and Salvation*, 306–313.

cf. John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47–48, 56–57). That is assurance! By faith in Christ’s mediation as our sympathetic high priest, we can come with confidence to God’s throne of grace through prayer anytime, anywhere, in order to receive the help we need (Heb 4:14–16). Our prayer hotline to the Control Center of the Universe (cf. Rev 4) is always open and never runs out of battery power.

Third, Christ, who gave his life to save us, is with us in the judgment in several roles. He is our Judge (John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1), defense attorney/advocate (Zech 3:1–5—“the angel of the Lord” as the preincarnate Christ; 1 John 2:1), our “true witness” (Rev 3:14), and best of all, he is our Substitute, who suffered our penalty for us (Isa 53:4–6, 8, 11–12; 1 Pet 2:24) as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Everything is stacked in our favor!<sup>19</sup> As Daniel 7:22 puts it, “judgment was given in favor of the holy ones of the Most High” (CEB).

The end-time “Day of Atonement” judgment, announced in Rev 14:7, began in AD 1844.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are now living at the time when our mission is to proclaim the three angels’ messages to the world, and Jesus is coming soon! Jesus could have come before this, but He is mercifully waiting until “this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations” (Matt 24:14). We have been slow in doing this, so Jesus is waiting.<sup>21</sup> Everyone on earth needs to hear the true gospel in order to make an intelligent, informed choice as to whether they will accept and worship their Creator and Savior (Rev 14:7) or worship the “beast” and its “image” (13:4, 12, 15) in rebellion against the true God (14:9–11).

When Jesus has completed the pre-Advent judgment, human beings will have chosen what kind of people they wish to be, and God will respect that choice: “Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be

19. Cf. Davidson, “The Good News of Yom Kippur,” 5–7; cf. Richard M. Davidson, “Assurance in the Judgment,” in *Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology*, ed. Martin F. Hanna, Darius W. Jankiewicz, and John W. Reeve (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2018), 395–416.

20. For a concise (only six pages!) explanation of ten steps in Daniel 8 and 9 that lead to AD 1844 as the beginning of the pre-Advent judgment, see Gane, *Who’s Afraid of the Judgment?*, 62–67. For answers to objections to this interpretation, see 68–86.

21. Ellen G. White repeatedly said that Christ already could have come if his people had been faithful: *Evangelism* (1883), 695–696; *The Desire of Ages* (1898), 633–634; *Testimonies for the Church* (1900), 6:450; *Testimonies for the Church* (1909) 9:29.

holy” (Rev 22:11). God doesn’t force anyone to accept the transformation that he offers through Christ’s sacrifice and the power of the Holy Spirit, just as he didn’t force anyone to get on Noah’s ark (Gen 7:1, 7, 13). But when people have had a reasonable opportunity to make up their minds, the door of opportunity is closed (cf. v. 16—“and the Lord shut him in”).

Who decides whether you are saved or lost? You do. How? By deciding whether or not to accept God’s free gift of salvation.

### Summary—Conclusion

A great judgment in heaven before Christ’s Second Coming, which was prefigured by the ancient Israelite Day of Atonement, vindicates the justice of God as Judge in having forgiven guilty but repentant, transformed, and loyal people. The judgment also vindicates his justice in condemning those who are disloyal and, therefore, unsafe to save. God involves his created beings in the judgment process so that everyone in the universe will know that he is truly the God of love whom he claims to be, so they can fully trust him forever.

We are saved by grace through faith alone. But the pre-Advent judgment considers records of human works that naturally result from, express, and are inseparable from true, living faith within the life of faith that is regenerated and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is not because we are saved by works, but because God’s created beings cannot see the thoughts part of our faith.

The judgment is a culminating part of the gospel because it vindicates the forgiveness that we have received, confirms our assurance of salvation, delivers us from oppression, and signifies that Christ is coming soon. We can rejoice, rather than be afraid of the judgment, because we have Christ on our side and as our Substitute. God has informed us when the end-time judgment begins so that we can participate by taking God’s final appeal and warning to the world, which calls for everyone to worship him, the Creator, and to keep God’s commandments and the faith of Jesus.

In light of all this, the judgment teaching is not at all legalistic, nor does it take away our assurance. If we continue in our transforming relationship with Christ, it does not matter when our cases will be considered in the judgment, so we do not need to know exactly when the judgment will begin to evaluate the lives of those who will be alive when Jesus comes.

Now rather than cringing whenever God's pre-Advent judgment is mentioned, we can shout with the Psalmist: "judge me, O Lord"! (Ps 7:9 [English v. 8]).

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