

The Meaning of the Judgment Today



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 23

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 1:7-11; Psalm 73:1-17; Matthew 5:16; John 14:2; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 4:5, 9; Ephesians 2:8-10; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Revelation 22:12.

MEMORY VERSE: “Have respect for God. Give him glory. The hour has come for God to judge. Worship him who made the heavens and the earth. Worship him who made the sea and the springs of water” (Revelation 14:7, NIV).

WE HAVE COVERED A LOT IN OUR STUDY OF THE 1844 PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT.¹ We have studied how the Bible shows this judgment. We studied the earthly sanctuary model to Daniel's prophecies, to Jesus' life and death, to the book of Hebrews. We have seen that we have solid Bible proof about this judgment.

But, so what? Here we are in the twenty-first century. What does a judgment that began in 1844 mean for us today? Why is it important for us to believe in this judgment? What does the judgment show about God and His salvation?

The 1844 judgment helped answer the question of the Great Disappointment.² The judgment helped the early Adventists better understand the Millerite prophecies.³ But what about now? How do we relate to the judgment today? The prophecy is about the judgment fulfillment in a time when most of our great-grandparents were not even born.

This week's lesson looks at some of these questions.

¹the pre-Advent judgment—the judgment that will take place before Jesus' second coming. Adventists believe that God's judgment comes in three parts. The first part began in 1844 and is continuing until Jesus' return to the earth. This is the pre-Advent judgment. The pre-Advent judgment is also called the investigative judgment.

²the Great Disappointment—many Christians believed that Christ would come back in 1844. They were disappointed when He did not. They later discovered that they had misunderstood and misinterpreted the Bible. The first part of judgment was to begin in 1844, not Christ's return.

³Millerite prophecies—prophecies made by William Miller in the 1830s that Jesus Christ would come in 1844.

SUNDAY—SEPTEMBER 24**JUDGMENT AND JUSTICE
(Psalm 73:1-17)**

Our world is filled with injustice. In every land, in every government, in every city, town, and village, there is unfairness, inequality, and injustice. No human has escaped experiencing injustice and unfairness. To live in this sinful world is to experience injustice.

Of course, the greatest injustice happened at the Cross. Jesus, the sinless One, faced the punishment that all sinners deserve. That punishment was the second death.⁴ So, when we experience any injustice, we know that God, in the person of Christ, faced greater injustice.



The greatest injustice of all

What point does Psalm 73:1-17 make? How does this point relate to our understanding of the sanctuary and judgment?

⁴second death—being separated from God forever because of sin. The first death is when we die physically.

⁵restoration—when all things will be made as they were before sin entered the world.

⁶vindication—the time when God's name is cleared and sin is removed from the earth forever.

The 1844 judgment truth teaches that there will be a judgment. This will be a fair judgment that punishes evil and clears God's people of wrongdoing. The judgment truth teaches about this judgment and tells us when it will happen. The 1844 judgment says that God's justice will not delay forever. He has promised to bring judgment (Revelation 14:7). The 1844 judgment also tells us that we can trust God to punish evil and restore goodness. The judgment truth tells the world that judgment already has begun, and that one day we will see the judgment's final results. For now, we have life by faith. We are waiting for the day of final justice and restoration.⁵

Have you lately treated someone unfairly? If so, what can you do to make up? Why should you make up?

MONDAY—SEPTEMBER 25**VINDICATION⁶ AND GOD
(Romans 3:26)**

This quarter, we have studied an important theme—the vindication of God in the face of evil.

The judgment is so important, because it tells us so much about God's character. The judgment tells us that God is willing to work openly as He deals with sin, rebellion, and backsliding. The judgment tells us we

can trust God even when things are really bad. No matter how terrible the world is, our God is a God we can trust. We can trust Him because all His works and dealings will be open for the universe to examine.



We can trust God even when things are really bad.

How do the following verses teach the idea of the vindication of God?

Psalm 19:9 _____

Romans 3:26 _____

1 Corinthians 4:5 _____

1 Corinthians 13:1 _____

What the judgment tells us is that even now God is working openly. The universe sees the righteousness (holiness) and fairness of God’s judgment. We understand that our day also will come, when we shall “know completely just as God knows me completely” (NIRV). The Bible says “we shall judge angels” (1 Corinthians 6:3). The idea is that all things will be open to us for our inspection, too. The pre-Advent judgment truth tells us that this judgment already has begun, and that one day we will have all our questions answered. All questions about pain, suffering, and sin will be resolved. And we, too, along with all the angels, will see God’s justice and righteousness in removing sin, evil, and rebellion from the earth.

What are some of the questions you want to ask God? What are some things you cannot understand now? What does the promise mean to you that one day your questions will be answered to the glory of God?

TUESDAY—SEPTEMBER 26

THE SECOND COMING (Acts 1:11)

Review the judgment scene in Daniel 7. This pre-Advent judgment is the last thing that happens in salvation history before the Second Coming.

What are the following Bible texts talking about? John 14:2;

**Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18;
Revelation 22:12.**

What other verses can you find that talk about the same thing?

While on earth, Jesus talked about His second coming many times. The early church expected Him to return soon. Through long and painful hundreds of years Christians have waited for Him to return. Today, we also live with the hope that Jesus will soon return.

But we are still here. With each passing year, it has been easier and easier for people to lose hope in Jesus' return.

Here is where the judgment comes in. The judgment teaches us about the times we live in. The judgment is a message from Jesus, saying, *Trust Me, I am coming as I have said. My return is not too far off.*

The 1844 pre-Advent judgment is the last prophetic time given to the world. The judgment is God's way of telling us that final (last) events⁷ are happening and that Jesus' coming will be soon. All of the kingdoms in Daniel's vision came and went, much as prophesied. God proved we can trust Him about future events. So, we can trust Him when He says the judgment will lead to the Second Coming. Because we know when this judgment began, we can know that the Second Coming is near.

As a class, talk about the signs of the times we are living in. How do these signs foretell Jesus' second coming? Why is the example of the judgment the most certain sign that announces His return?

WEDNESDAY—SEPTEMBER 27

THE ASSURANCE⁸ OF SALVATION (Ezekiel 18:24)

Perhaps the most important point about the 1844 pre-Advent judgment is that it is a message of assurance. The judgment is a promise that as long as we remain faithful to God, we will have a faithful High Priest (Jesus) working for us. Jesus is our faithful High Priest who stands as our Substitute⁹ in judgment (lesson 13). We are sinners. We have broken God's law. We deserve to die the second death. But we have the assurance in the judgment we will be found not guilty because we have Jesus standing in our place. This is the most important message of the 1844 judgment.

Some Christians have no understanding of the idea of the judgment because they believe in "once saved, always saved." This idea is that once they have accepted Jesus as their Savior, then they always will be saved. It does not matter what other choices they

⁷events—things that happen.

⁸assurance—the promise, hope, and sureness of our salvation.

⁹substitute—someone who takes another person's place. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

make. It does not matter if they turn away from Jesus. How do the following verses prove that “once saved, always saved” is false and dangerous? Ezekiel 18:24; Matthew 24:13; Luke 8:5-15; Romans 11:16-21; 1 Corinthians 9:27.

Adventists and many other Christians reject the idea of “once saved, always saved.” They understand that Jesus’ followers can fall away. With this understanding, we can better grasp the meaning of the pre-Advent judgment. It is in the judgment that once and for all our decisions for or against Jesus are made final. The judgment is not a time when God decides to accept or reject us. The judgment is when God makes our choice final as to whether or not we have accepted or rejected Him. It is a choice that is made clear through our works. The good news of the judgment is that we have assurance if we stay faithful to Jesus. If we claim His righteousness (holiness) for ourselves, He stands in our place in the judgment. When our name comes up in the judgment, we are forever sealed in the salvation He freely offered us. So, once our names come up in judgment, true Christians are truly once saved, always saved.

Someone asks you, “How do you know you are saved?” How will you answer and why? Share your answers in class on Sabbath.

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 28

JUDGED BY WORKS (Ephesians 2:8-10)

The Bible teaches that we are saved by faith and not by works (Romans 3:28). The Bible also teaches that we are judged by our works (Ecclesiastes 3:17; Ecclesiastes 12:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Peter 1:17). When we realize that our works are being judged, we should be inspired to do good works. We should not work to be saved. Instead, we work because Christ lives in our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26, 27; Galatians 5:16-26).

How are faith and works to be balanced? Ephesians 2:8-10.

Our works cannot save us. Our works show that we are saved, and that Christ lives in us. Our works also do more. They are part of the answer to questions about God’s character.

What do the following verses tell us about our good works? Job 1:7-11; Matthew 5:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 4:9; and Ephesians 3:10.

The judgment tells us that the universe is watching the works we do. If we love God and rejoice in our salvation, we want to send a message to the world and the universe. The message is that we love and serve the Lord who has done so much for us.

Good works show how real our faith in Christ is. Good works do not save us. They show that Christ has done the right thing in bringing us into the kingdom “that . . . shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:14).

What kind of message do your works send people who are watching you? What changes do you need to make in order to send a better message?

FRIDAY—SEPTEMBER 29

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, “God’s Law Immutable,”¹⁰ pp. 433–450.

Another important point about the 1844 judgment relates to the Adventist Church. The foundation (basis) of our church was built on the understanding that the Millerites¹¹ got the event wrong, but the date right. Our history and the Bible foundation of the Millerites came from the 1844 judgment prophecy in Daniel. So, it is important for Adventists today to understand how the Bible supports the 1844 judgment. We have grown in

our understanding of the judgment truth. By being firmly rooted in what the Bible says about 1844, we can be sure that the prophetic foundation of our church is rooted in the Bible.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

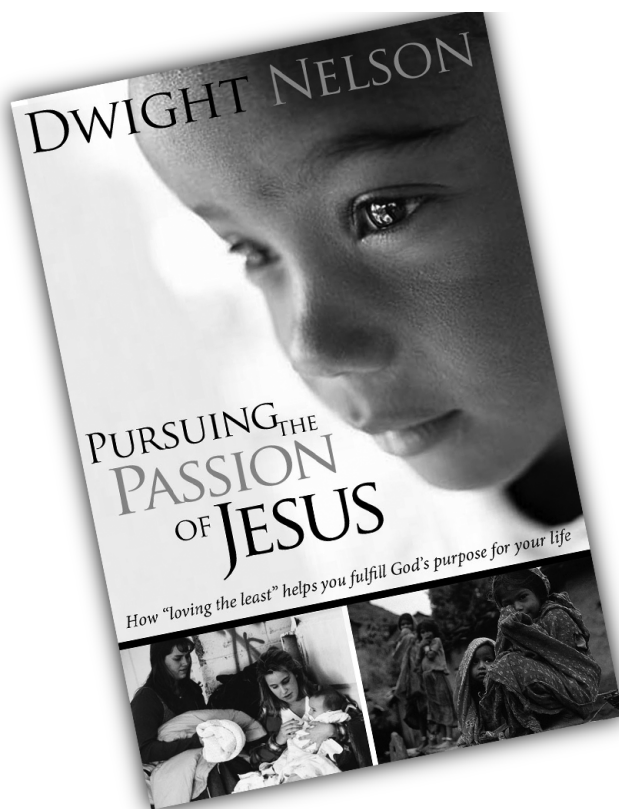
1. What do the answers to Wednesday’s final question teach us about how well we understand the plan of salvation?
2. The 1844 judgment helps us understand where we are in prophetic time. But we are now in the twenty-first century. The year 1844 was a long time ago. With each passing year, 1844 gets further away. How should we deal with this passing of time? As you think about your answer, think, too, about these time prophecies: the 1,260 years, the 2,300 years, the 490 years, et cetera. How do these long time periods help us keep things in balance?
3. As a class, take what you have learned this quarter and put together a seminar (workshop) for the whole church. Be sure the seminar emphasizes the Bible basis of the 1844 message.

¹⁰immutable—cannot be changed.

¹¹Millerites—the followers of William Miller. Miller believed Jesus would return in 1844.



Dwight Nelson reveals the true "passion of Christ"



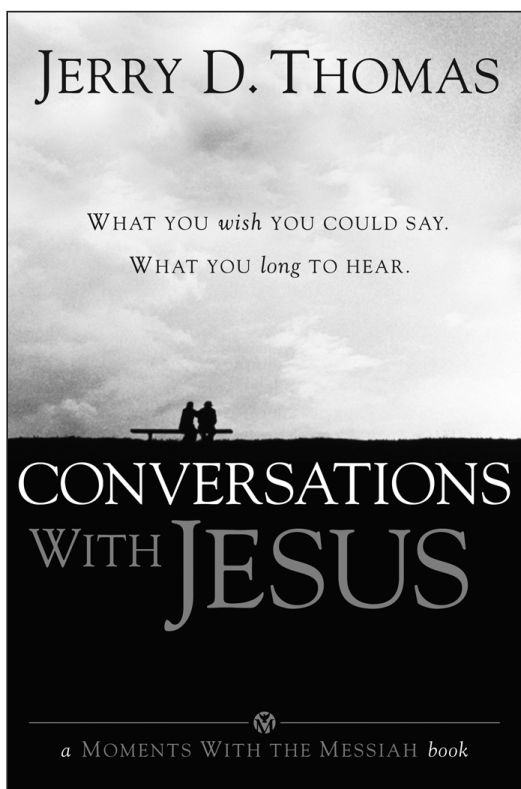
Jesus has a passionate love affair with the poor. The downtrodden. The marginalized. The forgotten. And nowhere in Scripture is this passion more clearly defined than in the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah.

In *Pursuing the Passion of Christ*, noted pastor and author Dwight Nelson opens this powerful, but often overlooked chapter in the Bible and shows in eye-opening detail how loving the least—personal and practical ministry to those who suffer—helps you fulfill God's purpose for your life.

0-8163-2043-8. Paperback. US\$10.99, Can\$14.99.

**Available at your local ABC,
1-800-765-6955. Or read a sample
chapter first and order online:
www.AdventistBookCenter.com**





Another moment with the Messiah

What would it be like to have a conversation with Jesus? What would you say to Him? More importantly, what would He say to you?

Freshly inspired from the life-altering insights he gleaned from his best-selling *Messiah* project, Jerry D. Thomas returns to the story of Jesus and allows us to

listen in on real conversations the Son of God had with ordinary people. The conversations prove that God is listening. That He cares. And that just as surely as Jesus spoke to Peter, or Martha, or a paralyzed man lying on a stretcher, He will speak to you.

This book is your invitation to connect with Christ. To open a dialogue with Divinity. To have a little talk with Jesus.

By Jerry D. Thomas

0-8163-2088-8. Paperback.

US\$11.99, Can\$16.49.

Available at your local ABC, 1-800-765-6955.
Or read a sample chapter first and order online:
www.AdventistBookCenter.com



Pacific Press®. *Where the Word is Life.*

© 2005 * Prices subject to change. 142/55590

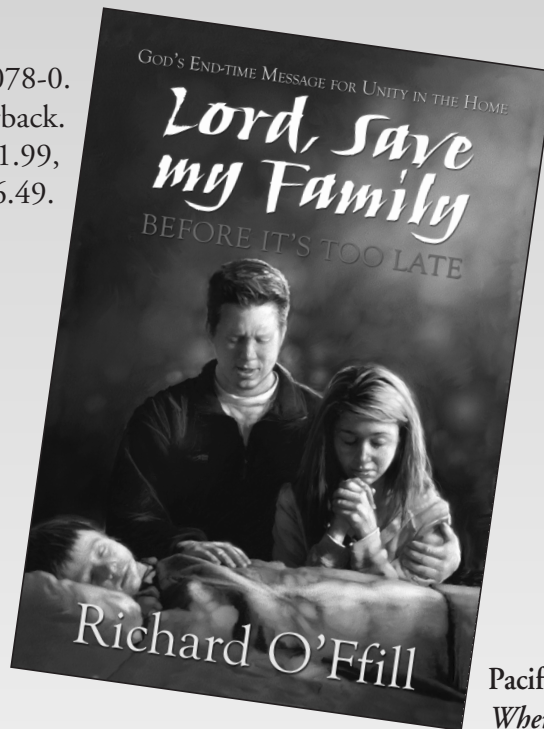
Marriage, the end times, and real “homeland security”

0-8163-2078-0.

Paperback.

US\$11.99,

Can\$16.49.



Pacific Press®.

Where the Word is Life.

Lord, Save My Family (Before It's Too Late) is Richard O'Ffill's defense strategy for Christian homes in the last days. Using the “Elijah Message” of Malachi 4:5, 6, O'Ffill shows that survival for our marriages and families depends on allowing the life of Jesus to come into our own lives first, and from there it will permeate the entire household . . . one heart at a time.

The information in this book can spell disaster for the enemy, but it may serve as a catalyst to bring revival, renewal, and reformation to your family—beginning with you.

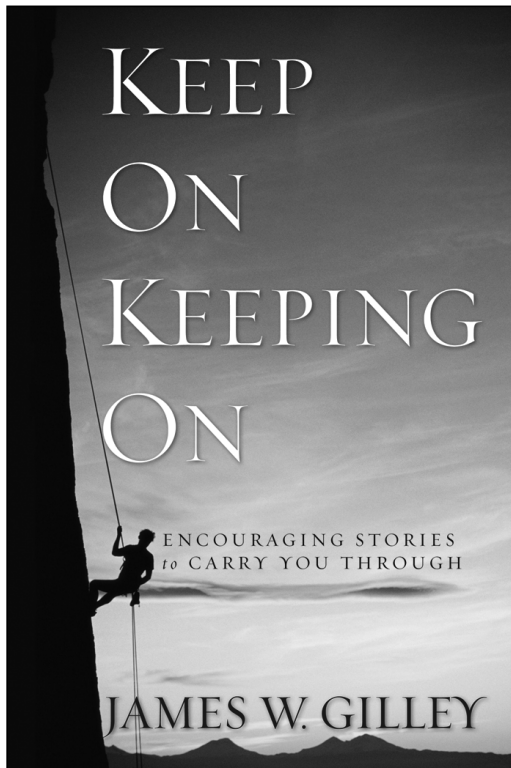
© 2005 * Prices subject to change. 210/55590

Available at your local ABC, 1-800-765-6955.

Or read a sample chapter first and order online:

www.AdventistBookCenter.com

Encouraging stories to carry you through the tough times



With a twinkle in his eye and a prayer on his lips, pastor, evangelist, and church administrator James Gilley pulls from his own experiences to provide heaping doses of encouragement for those going through tough times.

Often humorous and very personal, *Keep On Keeping On* will help you gain a new attitude and a life-grip on the Savior. When you feel like throwing in the towel, don't. Instead, put your hand in Jesus' hand and keep on keeping on!

By James W. Gilley.

0-8163-2059-4. Paperback.

US\$12.99, Can\$19.49.

Available at your local ABC, 1-800-765-6955.

Or read a sample chapter first and order online:

www.AdventistBookCenter.com



Pacific Press®. *Where the Word is Life.*

© 2005 * Prices subject to change. 140/55590