



2-20-20

## **Is the Investigative Judgment Experiential?**

A number of people have recently asked me, "Is the investigative judgment experiential? If so, can you prove this from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy? Is it possible to know when your name comes up in the judgment of the living?" These are very important questions and deserve sensible answers which are supported by inspiration.

As a fourth generation Seventh-day Adventist, I grew up believing that we will never know when our names come up in the judgment of the living, and that we would only learn the results of our judgment after the close of probation when it was too late to change or appeal the verdict. I was not much concerned with this way of looking at the judgment, because I had been raised by a very godly mother and grandmother who were devout Seventh-day Adventists and taught me to love the Bible and the spirit of prophesy, and I grew up knowing in my heart that I was called to someday do a special work for God. But this was not the case for many Seventh-day Adventists, as we can see from this article by Martin Weber in the Ministry Magazine, Oct. 1994:

"The devil has aimed some of his sharpest arrows at the heavenly sanctuary, with its 1844 judgment. This Adventist pillar, built upon Christ, will nurture both assurance of salvation and fervent commandment-keeping. Apart from the cross, however, the sanctuary/judgment doctrine becomes a discouraging, faith-destroying heresy.

"Eternal torment is a terrible doctrine of the devil, but at least it doesn't disturb the faithful with doubts about their own damnation. The sanctuary/judgment doctrine I was taught, however, informed struggling saints not yet victorious that if their names had already come up in the celestial judgment and they had flunked the test, they were going about their business already doomed.

"What's the use?' many of my teenage friends lamented after Bible classes. Why even try to be like Jesus if we might already be damned in the judgment? No wonder some stopped climbing the steep stairs to the throne of grace in the heavenly sanctuary. Concerned pastors and teachers redoubled their efforts to save their youth from tuning out the church and turning on with drugs. Mostly in vain.

"People young and old have become weary of shame-based, guilt-driven religion, and the tendency is simply to give up.... Some Adventist give up on God and the church; others keep attending but divorce themselves from the dysfunctional aspects of religion that brings them pain -- such as a perfectionistic perversion of the sanctuary/judgment doctrine.

"What a pity! Seventh-day Adventists have so much to teach the world. There is nothing missing in our message; God has given us a complete package of truth. However, we've had a problem connecting Adventist doctrine with Christian faith, compounded by a desire to doubt rather than to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him. The 1888 episode was supposed to remedy all that.

"But it hasn't. Seeking remedial revival, some Adventists want to lead the church back to the good old days, when most members believed basically the same thing and few challenged our landmark doctrines. A compelling question comes to mind, however: If the good old days were all that good, why are we still here?" Martin Weber, Ministry Magazine, Oct. 1994.

Now, over 175 years after the great disappointment in 1844, we must come to grips with this vital question: "Why are we still here?" To begin our search, I will use a quotation taken from Great Controversy, pp. 424, 425:

"But the people were not yet ready to meet their Lord. There was still work of preparation to be accomplished for them. Light was to be given, directing their minds to the temple of God in heaven; and as they should by faith follow their High Priest in His ministrations there, new duties would be revealed. Another message of warning and instruction was to be given to the church. [Mal. 3: 2, 3 then quoted.] Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14. "When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing."

Clearly, something absolutely vital must take place in the lives of Christ followers before they are ready for Him to come. This experience is described in Early Writings, pp. 269271:

"I saw some, with strong faith and agonizing cries, pleading with God.... Firmness and great earnestness was expressed in their countenances.... Now and then their faces would light up with the marks of God's approbation, and again the same solemn, earnest, anxious look with settle upon them.

"Evil angels crowded around, pressing darkness upon them to shut out Jesus from their view, that their eyes might be drawn to the darkness that surrounded them, and thus they be led to distrust God and murmur against Him. Their only safety was in keeping their eyes directed upward....

"Some, I saw, did not participate in this work of agonizing and pleading. They seemed indifferent and careless. They were not resisting the darkness around them, and it shut

them in like a thick cloud. The angels of God left these and went to the aid of the earnest, praying ones. I saw angels of God hasten to the assistance of all who were struggling with all their power to resist the evil angels and trying to help themselves by calling upon God with perseverance. But His angels left those who made no effort to help themselves, and I lost sight of them....

"I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the council of the True Witness to the Laodiceans....

"This testimony must work deep repentance; all who truly receive it will obey it and be purified....

"I asked what had made this great change. An angel answered, it is the latter rain, the refreshing from the presence of the Lord, the loud cry of the third angel."

Notice that before we receive the latter rain, there must be a work of repentance and cleansing in cooperation with what Jesus is doing for us in the heavenly sanctuary. This work is not secret. It is a cooperative work between our souls and our Savior, and we are fully aware of this experience. Jesus, the True Witness to the Laodiceans, points out our sins and discrepancies of character, and we hear and respond to the work of the Holy Spirit in cleansing our lives by repentance and receiving correction and healing for these sins. This experience is in exact accordance with the requirements of the people of Israel on the Day of Atonement when their high priest was cleansing the second apartment, or most holy place, of the sins that were placed there during the yearly ministration.

"Though the sin was forgiven, the record of the sin remained until the Day of Atonement, when it was 'blotted out.' And when this had taken place there was 'an end of reconciling.'" 1BC 777 [not EGW].

Furthermore, every Israelite was required to fast on that day, do no work, and search their hearts diligently to see if anything remained of the sins in their lives that had been committed and forgiven during the year. Anyone who did not do this work of heart searching was excluded from the camp.

"And this shall be a statute forever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls,... for on that day, shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord." Lev. 16:29, 30, KJV.

"Anyone who does not [afflict - KJV] himself on that day must be cut off from his people." Lev. 25:29.

Therefore, the work of Jesus in the most holy place in the sanctuary of heaven in blotting out the sins of His people, requires a corresponding work of repentance and afflicting of soul, as we have seen described in Early Writings, if we intend to be among those who receive the latter rain and the refreshing from the presence of the Lord. This

requires cooperation with Jesus through the Holy Spirit as He impresses us with the things that He sees written in the books of heaven that need to be cleansed and purified out of our lives. Of ourselves, we do not even know what our sins are in the deepest levels of our mind. Thus, we need to have a close, intimate relationship with Jesus which will allow Him to point out what He sees recorded in the books of heaven, for "The Lord does nothing without our cooperation." 2 SM. 236.

"While Christ is cleansing the sanctuary, the worshippers on earth should carefully review their lives, and compare their character with the standard of righteousness." Ev 224.

"Without the transforming process which can come alone through divine power, the original propensities to sin are left in the heart in all their strength, to forge new chains, to impose a slavery that can never be broken by human power." Ev 192.

Do you see how impossible it is in human power to prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus? Therefore, God has made a way for us to cooperate with Jesus as He cleanses both the sins in our lives and the record of these sins in the books of heaven.

I well remember the day when I began this cleansing process in my own life. I had been going through some severe trials, and no matter how hard I tried, I could not overcome my feelings of anger and frustration. Every day I prayed and wept before the Lord to give me victory over my feelings; but day after day I faced the same defeat. Then one day as I asked the Lord to show me why I could not overcome, I saw a succession of pictures in my mind about my anger toward my father since childhood. Going to my bedroom room I prostrated myself face down on the bed and pleaded to know why I was experiencing this strange phenomenon. "I want you to confess to your father the anger you had towards him as a child," the Lord said. "But," I replied, "Why should I confess to him when he was the one who hurt me and caused me to feel angry?" "Your father is responsible to Me for his actions toward you," came the quiet voice in my conscience, "but you are responsible to Me for how you reacted to your father." A light of understanding began to dawn in my heart; and so as soon as possible, I drove the three hours to my parent's home. While I was there, I confessed my childhood anger toward my father, and asked him to forgive me. He threw his arms around me and said, "Carol, I have been thinking that I should come back to the Lord. Please pray for me."

My father did come back to the Lord and was a saved man when he died at the age of 85. But this was only the beginning for me of this unique experience of receiving flashbacks into my childhood in answer to my requests for healing in some area of my life. Finally, I asked the Lord to explain to me why I was having these strange experiences. He said to me, "Go look up the final atonement." Immediately. I went to the bookcase and took out the Great Controversy, and turning to the chapter called, "The Investigative Judgment," pp. 489, 90, I read:

"We are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the

people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life, should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart.... Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth. Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

"The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon -- none know how soon -- it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others, it behooves every soul to heed the Savior's admonition, 'Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.'

Then I heard Jesus' sweet, still small voice say, "This is what is happening to you. I have come to your name in the judgment." "But," I said, "I thought that we would never know when our names would come up in the judgment!" "Read on," He said.

"If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

"But you were watching!" He said.

My excitement knew no bounds. All I could think of was the many people in our denomination that have lived in fear of this time, and now to find out that it was a walk with Jesus filled my soul to the uttermost, and I determined that I would spread this glad message to everyone to the extent that God would permit me.

For the next 10 years. I studied the subject of the sanctuary, and the Lord opened up to me the concept of "sanctuary prayer" as an experience with God as He cleanses us from sin on a daily basis. This message was examined and accepted by the Biblical Research Institute and has become a common word among many Seventh-day Adventists and even some other denominations. Then in 1984, God opened up a way for me to be speaking full time around the world.

Why has God waited so long to open up this topic to us? Actually, God did try to bring this understanding through Elders Jones and Waggoner in 1888. The book *Great Controversy* was first published in 1888, and when Ellen White penned the words that I have quoted above, the understanding of the experiential aspects of the judgment of the living had not yet been made clear. But through the work of Elder Jones especially, this concept began to be made simple and understandable. Listen to these words of Elder Jones in speaking to the General Conference session of 1893:

"Now some of the brethren have done that very thing. They came here free; but the Spirit of God brought up something they never saw before. The Spirit of God went deeper than it ever went before, and revealed things they never saw before; and then, instead of thanking the Lord that that was so, and letting the whole wicked business go, and thanking the Lord that they had ever so much more of Him than they ever had

before, they began to get discouraged. They said, 'Oh what am I going to do? My sins are so great.'...

"If the Lord has brought up sins to us that we never thought of before, that only shows that He is going down to the depth, and He will reach the bottom at last; and when He finds the last thing that is unclean or impure, that is out of harmony with His will, and brings that up, and shows that to us, and we can say, 'I would rather have the Lord than that' -- then the work is complete, and the seal of the living God can be fixed upon that character." Bulletin, pp. 404, 405.

Isn't that an exciting and simple way to see the judgment of the living? God is revealing things to us that we have never thought of before and all He asks is that we cooperate with Him, confess our sins, and let Him take them from us and blot out the records of our sins from the books of heaven. It is an intelligent, cooperative process with Jesus. Notice this process as described in Isaiah:

"Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. 'Come now, let us reason together,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." Isa. 1:16-20.

Even in the blotting-out time at the close of the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary, He invites us to come to Him and reason with Him so that we can understand what He is doing to help us to be free from our own sins, as well as the ancestral sins that come down to us from generations past.

"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. Review the past for me, let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence. Your first father sinned; your spokesmen rebelled against me." Isa. 43:25-27.

"The work of restoration can never be thorough unless the roots of evil are reached. Again and again the shoots have been clipped, while the root of bitterness has been left to spring up and defile many; but the very depth of the hidden evil must be reached, the moral senses must be judged, and judged again, in the light of the divine presence. The daily life will testify whether the work is genuine." 5 BC 1152.

"The class represented by the foolish virgins... have not... permitted their old nature to be broken up.... They have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore, they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. Their service to God degenerates into a form." COL 411.

"In the parable of Matthew 22 the same figure [as the 10 virgins] of the marriage is introduced, and the investigative judgment is clearly represented as taking place before the marriage. Previous to the wedding the king comes in to see the guests, to see if all are attired in the wedding garment, the spotless robe of character washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.... This work of examination of character, of determining who are prepared for the kingdom of God, is that of the investigative judgment, the closing work in the sanctuary above." GC 428.

"Each one in the day of investigative judgment will stand in character as he really is; he will render an individual account to God. Every word uttered, every departure from integrity, every action that sullies the soul, will be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. Memory will be true and vivid in condemnation of the guilty one, who in that day is found wanting. The mind will recall all the thoughts and actions of the past; the whole life will come in review like the scenes in a panorama." R&H Nov. 4, 1884.

Perhaps it is easier to see now why the people of the past have resisted this experience, and have not understood how to cooperate with Jesus in the cleansing of their lives. Consequently, the Lord's coming has been delayed, for He must have a people who are cleansed and ready for the close of probation when He steps out of the sanctuary and there will be no more mediation in our behalf. But we do not need to be afraid of the judgment of the living anymore, for Jesus is right there with us as we go through it, and if we stay in touch with Him and allow Him to reveal, cleanse, and blot out every sin that remains in our lives, we will be counted among those who will be sealed, receive the latter rain, and preach the loud cry, which is the last warning message to the world:

"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." Rev. 18:4, 5, KJV.

Be assured that if we have not been cleansed of our own sins, the Holy Spirit will not be able to flow through us to preach this message to others. Many today are saying, even from the pulpit, that we will sin until Jesus comes and removes our carnal nature. This belief is a fatal sophistry of the devil to keep us in sin until the day of redemption has passed.

"I was shown that but a small portion of those who now profess the truth will be sanctified by it and be saved. Many will get above the simplicity of the work. They will conform to the world, cherish idols, and become spiritually dead. The humble, self-sacrificing followers of Jesus will pass on to perfection, leaving behind the indifferent and lovers of the world." 1T 608.

"Are we striving with all our power to attain to the stature of men and women in Christ? Are we seeking for His fullness, ever pressing toward the mark set before us -- the perfection of His character? When the Lord's people reach this mark they will be sealed in their foreheads. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they will be complete in Christ, and the recording angel will declare, 'It is finished.'" OHC 150.

"I... saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.

"I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of refreshing in the latter rain to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God." EW 71.

"It is a solemn thing to die, but a far more solemn thing to live. Every thought and word and deed of our lives will meet us again. What we make of ourselves in probationary time, that we must remain through all eternity. Death brings dissolution to the body, but makes no change in the character. The coming of Christ does not change our characters; it only fixes them forever beyond all change." 5T 466.

"I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty." EW 43.

"As mercy's sweet voice died away, fear and horror seized the wicked.... Those who had not prized God's word were hurrying to and fro, wandering from sea to sea, and from north to east, to seek the Word of the Lord.... What would they not give for one word of approval from God!" EW 281.

Beloved, we do not need to be among those who wake up too late to participate with Jesus in the cleansing that He is doing right now in the heavenly sanctuary. The judgment of the living is the process by which Jesus reveals to us our sins and removes them from us as we repent of them and seek to be covered by His perfect robe of righteousness. When this is done, the plan of salvation will be complete, and Jesus will come to take His waiting saints home with Him. Those who neglect this cleansing process now must meet their sins again in the Day of Judgment for the wicked:

"As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed. They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, just how far pride and rebellion have carried them in the violation of the law of God. The seductive temptations which they encouraged by indulgence in sin, the blessings perverted, the messengers of God despised, the warnings rejected, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart, -- all appear as if written in letters of fire." GC 666.

The judgment is now set, and the books have been opened to your name and mine [Dan. 7:10]. Now, in the few remaining days of our probation, is the time to cooperate with Jesus in the cleansing of all our sins and receive His words of affirmation, "Well



done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matt. 25:23, KJV.

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