

A Biblical Basis for

The Doctrine of the Investigative Judgment

by Bob Pickle

Seventh-day Adventists teach that phase one, the investigative phase, of the Judgment began in 1844 at the end of the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14, and that this phase will conclude just before the seven last plagues are poured out and Christ returns. This is a judgment that only considers the cases of professed believers, and is the antitype to the ancient Day of Atonement when the sanctuary was annually cleansed. Is there a Biblical basis for these views?

1. A separation of true believers from mere professors must take place at the end.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: ⁴⁸Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. ⁴⁹So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Mat. 13:47-50)

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. . . .

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. ⁴¹The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; ⁴²And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Mat. 13:30, 40-43)

2. Before God either hands down a sentence or executes judgment, He always investigates the facts of the case, even though He already knows everything. First He searches hearts, then He rewards.

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? ¹⁰And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. ¹¹And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (Gen. 3:9-11)

And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9)

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. (Gen. 11:5)

And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; ²¹I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. (Gen. 18:20, 21)

And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. (Rev. 2:23)

3. True to the way God operates, we would expect Him to investigate before He separates the wheat and the tares, the good fish from the bad. An investigation of professed believers does in fact take place just prior to Christ's wedding.

So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. ¹¹And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: ¹²And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. ¹³Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen. (Mat. 22:10-14)

4. Since this wedding takes place prior to Christ's return, this investigative judgment, this examination of the guests invited or called to the wedding, must also occur before He comes.

And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. (Luke 12:36)

5. Just as Christ's wedding precedes His return, so also does His receiving His kingdom precede His return.

He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. (Luke 19:12)

6. Since the Judgment begins before Jesus receives His kingdom, the Judgment must also begin before He returns to this earth.

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.

¹⁰A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. . . .

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. ¹⁴And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14)

7. The first angel of Revelation 14 uses the perfect tense in describing the beginning of the Judgment: "The hour of His judgment *has come*." The angel is proclaiming that the Judgment has already commenced. Since the first angel precedes the third angel's warning about the mark of the beast, the Judgment must be already in progress by the time the mark of the beast becomes an issue.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, ⁷Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. . . .

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand. (Rev. 14:6, 7, 9)

8. The first angel said, "Fear God and give glory to Him," in the context of a judgment already begun. Solomon connected fearing God with the Judgment as well, but he was a little more distinct about what he meant by fearing God. "Fear" appears to be an appropriate sense of respect and reverence that leads to obedience to all of God's commandments.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. (Eccl. 12:13, 14)

9. The reason obedience to God's commandments is important in light of a Judgment already commenced is that the Ten Commandments are to be the standard by which men's lives are judged.

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. ¹¹For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a

transgressor of the law. ¹²So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:10-12)

10. If there is one of the ten that most people ignore today and refuse to keep literally, it is the fourth. How appropriate then for the first angel, in calling attention to the Judgment already being in progress, to quote from the Fourth Commandment, asking people to worship the Creator. And the one specific way given in Scripture to worship the Creator God is the observing of the Fourth Commandment.

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Rev. 14:7)

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: ¹⁰But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Ex. 20:8-11)

11. Marriage is used in Scripture to illustrate the closeness between Christ and His church, but this does not authorize us to spiritualize away the Seventh Commandment. Some might claim to keep this commandment by being married to Christ and Christ alone, while at the same time they are being unfaithful to their wives. In actuality, they would be transgressors, despite their claim to obedience. God expects us to literally keep the Ten Commandments, even though they may be used to illustrate spiritual truths.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. ³²This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:31, 32)

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. (1 Cor. 6:18)

And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. . . .

Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. (Mark 7:9, 13)

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (Mat. 15:9)

12. Daniel 7 and 8 give similar sequences of the kingdoms that would hold sway upon earth: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. While Daniel 7 has the Judgment following Rome, Daniel 8 has the cleansing of the sanctuary following Rome. This implies that the cleansing of the sanctuary and the Judgment are related events.

Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. ²⁴And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. ²⁵And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. ²⁶But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. (Dan. 7:23-26)

And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. ¹⁰And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. ¹¹Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. ¹²And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. ¹³Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? ¹⁴And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. (Dan. 8:9-14)

13. The book of Daniel was to be sealed until the time of the end. The time of the end begins at the conclusion of the 1260 day prophecy.

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. ⁵Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. ⁶And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? ⁷And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. ⁸And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? ⁹And he

said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. (Dan. 12:4-9)

14. In chapter 8 Daniel was also told that his vision was to be shut up. He tells us that none understood the vision. However, Gabriel had explained every part of the vision except the 2300 days of verse 14, so it was only the 2300 days that were not understood, and not to be understood, until the time of the end. This point is made even stronger by the fact that in the Hebrew the 2300 days are literally 2300 "evenings-mornings." When Gabriel refers to the "vision of the evening and the morning," saying that the vision is to be shut up, he is specifically talking about the 2300 days.

And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days. ²⁷And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it. (Dan. 8:26, 27)

Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. . . .

And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. . . .

Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. . . .

And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. . . .

The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. ²²Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. ²³And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. (Dan. 8:3, 5, 8, 9, 14, 20-23)

15. The being who predicted that the time of the end would commence at the end of the 1260 days in Daniel returns in Revelation 10 to give another message. Daniel was to be sealed until the end of the 1260 days, and the specific part that was sealed was

the 2300 days. In Revelation 10 the angel holds a little book opened, signifying that Daniel has been unsealed and that the 1260 days have ended. The 2300 days must now be able to be understood, and the angel's declaration that "there shall be time no longer" must be an announcement of the soon ending of the 2300 days.

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: ²And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth. . . .

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, ⁶And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer. (Rev. 10:1, 2, 5, 6)

16. After consuming the book of Daniel, John has a sweet taste in his mouth and a bitter feeling in his belly. Somehow, understanding the 2300 days was to be a bittersweet experience, after which those going through this experience were to give another message from God to all the world.

And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. (Rev. 10:11)

17. This new message had something to do with the temple in heaven and the measuring of God's professed people.

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. (Rev. 11:1)

18. The measuring of God's professed people has something to do with a judgment. Thus we have directly connected in these passages the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14 and the commencement of an investigative judgment.

Judge not, that ye be not judged. ²For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (Mat. 7:1, 2)

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. (2 Cor. 10:12)

19. In the final phase of the Judgment, the book of life is opened.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (Rev. 20:12)

20. The unbeliever does not have life. Therefore his name cannot be entered in the Book of Life.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 Jn. 5:12)

21. If we do not accept Christ as our Savior, we are already condemned. Therefore, to have our names entered in the Book of Life, we must accept Christ.

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

22. It is possible to have one's name removed from the Book of Life. True to the way God operates, such an event should only come at the conclusion of an investigative judgment.

Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. ³³And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. (Ex. 32:32, 33)

Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. (Ps. 69:28)

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. (Rev. 3:5)

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Rev. 22:19)

23. On the ancient Day of Atonement, among other things, the high priest put fire from the altar into a censer, and entered the Most Holy place.

Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. ⁷But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. (Heb. 9:6, 7)

And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail. (Lev. 16:12)

24. Such Day of Atonement imagery is used in the Revelation to describe scenes immediately prior to Christ's return. Therefore most of the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement type must be at the end of time and not at the cross.

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. ⁵And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. (Rev. 8:3-5)

And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail. (Rev. 11:19)

25. The lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake, and hail mentioned in these texts are all associated with the voice of God that speaks just prior to Christ's return.

And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. ¹⁸And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. . . .

And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great. (Rev. 16:17, 18, 21)

26. Since there were two veils in the earthly temple and sanctuary, there should be something similar in the heavenly temple. In the book of Revelation, these veils are called doors, one leading to the Holy where the seven lamps and altar of incense are, and the other leading to the Most Holy where the ark of the covenant is.

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. . . .

And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. (Rev. 4:1, 5)

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. (Rev. 8:3)

And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail. (Rev. 11:19)

27. Looking at the seven churches from an historicist perspective, the Church of Philadelphia should be near the end of time. If the message to Philadelphia is referring to the opening of the door into the Most Holy and the closing of the door into the Holy, then during the Philadelphian time period is when the antitypical Day of Atonement would occur. The next and last church is Laodicea, *lao* meaning people, and *dicea* referring to some sort of judicial act of judgment. Jesus addresses Laodicea as the "Faithful and True Witness," which suggests that the heavenly court is in session during the Laodicean time period. So we have here another, though not as strong, connection between the opening of the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement and the commencement of the Judgment.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; ⁸I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. . . .

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. (Rev. 3:7, 8, 14)

28. Micah, in the introduction to his book, appears to echo the first angel's message of Revelation 14. Both contain a message to every nation and people on earth. Both refer to events immediately preceding the return of the Lord to destroy the surface of the earth.

Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. ³For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. ⁴And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. (Mic. 1:2-4)

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. (Rev. 14:6)

29. Micah is portraying an end-time call to return to obedience to God's commandments when he pleads for all to let the Lord be witness against them from His holy temple. Interestingly, the sanctuary is called the "tabernacle of testimony." It was called this because the ark within it was called the "ark of the testimony." And the ark was called this because the Ten Commandments within it were called the "tables of testimony." And the Ten Commandments were called this because they witnessed against the people's sins. After all, that is the purpose of the Ten Commandments anyway. They point out sin.

And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. (Ex. 31:18)

And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. (Ex. 25:16)

And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. (Ex. 26:34)

This is the sum of the tabernacle, even of the tabernacle of testimony, as it was counted, according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, son to Aaron the priest. (Ex. 38:21)

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Rom. 3:20)

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. (Rom. 7:7)

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (1 Jn. 3:4)

30. The sanctuary was to be a place for God and His commandments to dwell, where sinners could find atonement for the transgression of those commandments through the blood of a substitute.

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. (Ex. 25:8)

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: ¹⁴How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:13, 14)

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1 Pet. 1:18, 19)

31. The Lord investigates men and women from His temple, then He comes forth to execute judgment. In this investigation He compares our lives with His commandments, the realization of which causes us to shut our mouths.

The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. ⁵The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. ⁶Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. (Ps. 11:4-6)

But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him. (Hab. 2:20)

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (Rom. 3:19)

32. When Christ concludes the Investigative Judgment, the destiny of all is forever fixed. He then returns to give everyone their reward.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. ¹²And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. ¹³I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. ¹⁴Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. (Rev. 22:11-14)