

THE JUDGMENT OF THE LIVING

Part 3

“The Sign”

Introduction

Every prophecy is event-driven, given in a framework of time, and often with some “unique sign” preceding its fulfillment. In the time of Noah there was a 120-year warning. Just before the ark door swung shut, a final alarm sounded that in seven days the rains would come. The “unique sign” had just occurred through a divinely directed march of the animals into the ark’s corridors.

Amazing clues from Daniel 9 helped formulate the exact time of Christ’s birth so pagan wise men from the east were driven by conviction westward. Their “unique sign”? A guiding star!

By 68 A.D. Vespasian, a powerful Roman general, had subdued most of Palestine at the behest of Nero, the Roman Emperor. He held off a final attack against Jerusalem because of Nero’s death. His son, Titus, also a military man, assumed that task. In a history that followed sequenced prophecy with great precision, the Roman abomination of an “eagle standard” first intermittently surrounded the city (Luke 21:20), then penetrated its precincts (Mark 13:14) and finally entered the temple (Matthew 24:15), becoming a “special sign” for God’s people to flee. Jerusalem fell in 70 A.D. The timing? Stunning – exactly as Jesus said – within “one generation” (40 years). The “movement” of the abomination was the “special sign.”

The onset of the Judgment of the Living portends the soon arrival of the “appointed time” of three and a half years. That judicial phase is heralded by a “special sign.” That is what we address in this study.

Let’s first look at the important sequenced outlined in Revelation 10 and 11:

- Open little book (Revelation 10:2) – unsealed *chazown* vision of Daniel 8–12 (for 30+ years now)
 - Prophecy that “the” delay was about to end! (Revelation 10:6)
 - Eating the open book (Revelation 10:9-10) – understanding by God’s people (now hundreds around the world)
 - Judgment of the Living (Revelation 11:1) – church, leaders, parishioners
 - Three and one half years (Revelation 11:2-3) – “appointed time” of Daniel
 - 42 months – persecution
 - 1260 days – witnessing
- } Same period

The review of judicial documents (measuring) relates to those living. This is a distinct end-time event with associated clocks – and a “unique sign” we will soon discuss. In two separate articles we have shown that this solemn review process begins at a Feast of

Trumpets – an expectant fall season (September/October). This would be Tishri 1-10 of the “old” Jewish calendar.

The insights of expositor E. G. White relative to this event are profound. Her revelation of the “unique sign” is a “loud cry” to every Bible student to study, prepare, be ready to share. When that occurs, the “tarrying time” (the “delay” of Revelation 10:6) is about to end, meaning that “the end” will soon follow.

This comes as a warning via a Sardis Church message: “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. 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” (Revelation 3:3). Scholars have seen this “coming as a thief” not to be the *parousia* (second coming) but to judgment.¹ Weymouth’s translation actually says: “You will certainly not know the hour at which I come **to judge you.**” This refers to those living. The message is pointed – we can know “when.”

A Distinct Judicial Phase

The legal record review **transition** to the living is so unique it is as though the “books were opened” in a separate activity in heaven!

“The Day is not far distant when the books will be opened, when every man shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books.”² (Future to 1896.)

“The people must be warned to prepare for the coming judgment.”³ (Future to 1908.)

“The cases of the righteous dead have been passing in review before God. When that work shall be completed, judgment is to be pronounced upon the living. How precious, how important are these solemn moments! Each of us has a case pending in the court of heaven.... Shall we not search the Scriptures, **that we may know where we are** in this world's history?”⁴ (We can know its timing.)

This event is such an urgent change in God’s dealing with mankind that we are advised:

“We are nearing the judgment, and those who bear the message of warning to the world must have clean hands and pure hearts. They must have a living connection with God. The thoughts must be pure and holy, the soul untainted, the body, soul, and spirit be a pure, clean offering to God, or He will not accept it.”⁵

This should stir not only our souls but give us a burden for others within the context of this solemn time.

¹ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), p. 95, Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 178.

² White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, March 17, 1896.

³ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 632.

⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 125 (emphasis added).

⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 426.

“Those who have had the light of present truth, and yet feel no spirit of labor to warn their fellow men of the coming judgment, must give an account to God for their neglect of duty. The blood of souls will be upon their garments.”⁶

“God is testing the devotion of his churches and their willingness to render obedience to the Spirit's guidance. Knowledge is to be increased. The messengers of Heaven are to be seen running to and fro, seeking in every possible way to warn the people of the coming judgments, and presenting the glad tidings of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. The standard of righteousness is to be exalted.”⁷

That is pointed. Neglecting to warn of the anticipated judgments brings the charge against us of murder! That means we know so much about that event **and** its timing that we are confident to warn and driven to convince others to get ready. Stunning! Could this be why the first angel's message is so pivotal? That hour “has come.”

Knowledge regarding the Judgment of the Living will mold the spirit of the last-day church!!

“As we near the judgment, **all will manifest their true character, and it will be made plain to what company they belong.** The sieve is moving. Let us not say: Stay Thy hand, O God. The church must be purged, and it will be.... The judgment is to set, the books are to be opened, and we are to be judged according to our deeds.”⁸

Interestingly, contrary to what many Christian leaders caution, the nature of man's spiritual weakness demands a sensational message – like a pending judgment. That is not sensationalism – but it **is** sensational.

“There is nothing in the popular ministry that stirs the wrath of Satan, makes the sinner tremble, or applies to the heart and conscience the fearful realities of a judgment soon to come.”⁹

“The natural heart will raise no serious objection to a religion in which there is nothing to make the transgressor of the law tremble or bring to bear upon the heart and conscience the terrible realities of a judgment to come.”¹⁰ How many things must soon change!

Unique New Light is to Shine on Us

A remarkable message was given in 1900. “He [the Lord] is watching those who are walking in the light as fast as they receive it. They are the objects of his special care.”¹¹ This is so solemn that we are told “we shall be judged according to the manner in which we use the knowledge of truth which has been presented to us.”¹²

⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 11.

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, July 16, 1895.

⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 100.

⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 273.

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 344.

¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, April 3, 1900.

¹² White, Ellen G.; June 18, 1895.

“There are many, many in our churches who know little of the real meaning of the truth for this time.”¹³

“There are glorious truths to come before the people of God.”¹⁴

“We are only babes, as far as understanding truth in all its bearings is concerned.”¹⁵

“We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn.”¹⁶

“We have only the glimmerings of the rays of the light that is yet to come to us.”¹⁷

“Privileges and duties which they do not even suspect to be in the Bible will be made manifest.”¹⁸

If light comes and is “set aside or rejected, then comes condemnation and the frown of God.”¹⁹

“Is it not time that fresh light should come to the people of God, to awaken them to greater earnestness and zeal?”²⁰

“Every new truth has made its way against hatred and opposition.”²¹

“Those who turn away from the light which God has given, or who neglect to seek it when it is within their reach, are left in darkness.”²²

“There are wonders to be revealed.”²³ “Glorious things are to be revealed.”²⁴

“To those who truly love God the Holy Spirit will reveal truths that have faded from the mind, and will also reveal truths that are entirely new.”²⁵

“The Lord will hold both ministers and people responsible for the light shining upon them. He calls upon us to work diligently in gathering up the jewels of truth, and placing them in the framework of the gospel. In all their divine beauty they are to shine forth in the moral darkness of the world.”²⁶

¹³ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 252.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

¹⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 29.

¹⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 30.

¹⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, June 3, 1890.

¹⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Ministry of Healing*, p. 465.

¹⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, p. 116.

²⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890.

²¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 143.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 312.

²³ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, p. 301.

²⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Ministry of Healing*, p. 465.

²⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 473.

²⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Gospel Workers*, p. 289.

We Must be Preparing for the Judgment Hour

The Book of Revelation focuses on the Judgment of the Living in several places. It will be a transitional phase in God's review of mankind's records shortly before human history closes. This judicial process comes at the time of a Feast of Trumpets in the fall of the year. Growing evidence suggests that this has begun!

Knowledge regarding its meaning and timing must be in place with God's thinking remnant who will finish the work. Why? When the cry is given – so that all will hear – the “hour of his judgment has come,” we must be fully cognizant that it has arrived! This is **not** based on a historical event but **present truth**.

Prophecy makes “precision clear” **when** this occurs **and** that it comes **shortly before** the last three and a half years of earth's history. In God's prophetic communiqués, He provides not only clocks and events but usually gives a “sign,” specifically for the remnant, to affirm their understanding and of His guidance. There is a “sign” when the Judgment of the Living begins to affirm the Biblical truths that now have been unfolded. The rest of this document is devoted to the weight of that evidence.

Daniel 7:9-10 opens up a judicial missive which announces that a moral review process commences. In verse 26 new imagery is introduced, suggesting a different phase of that judgment. One that brings the antichrist to his final end just before the saints receive the everlasting kingdom/covenant. In John's apocalyptic bulletins, that new phase is also described in 1:10, 4:1-2 and 11:1.

Collectively, these present as the Judgment of the Living.

When the “supreme court” of the universe is in session, it is newsworthy. God wants us to be investigative reporters. We have been advised: “We need to humble ourselves before the Lord, with fasting and prayer, and to meditate much upon His word, especially upon the scenes of the judgment.”²⁷

Since the Bible has put us on notice that a point in time for this to occur was set (*“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”* – Acts 17:31), it's clear that heaven will be busy with this additional task right at the end.

Though elusive to many, Romans 14:10 and 12 and II Corinthians 5:10 is expressed in language where “rational minds” must defend themselves before the divine bench. Though this is all presented metaphorically, many expositors do conclude that this relates to a time when the saints are living.

The onset of this time was anticipated as future to 1907, when the “times of refreshing” begin. “The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the

²⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 601.

opening of the gospel, are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. Here are "the times of refreshing" to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out [in the investigative Judgment], when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus." [Acts 3:19, 20.]²⁸ (That would refer to the Judgment of the Living).

"The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill. Every individual has a soul to save or to lose. Each has a case pending at the bar of God. Each must meet the great Judge face to face. How important, then, that every mind contemplate often the solemn scene when the judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened [future] ... It is of the utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects."²⁹

This suggests that those who will be translated fully sense that hour and know what "time it is." There is a concerted move to put away all sin from their lives. Would an earthly court take someone to trial without letting him know **when** to face charges? We must know the "time."

"While Jesus had been ministering in the sanctuary, the judgment had been going on for the righteous dead, and then for the righteous living."³⁰

This time of putting away sins **precedes** the reception of the latter rain.

"I saw that none could share the 'refreshing' unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action."³¹

"Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. **Then** the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost."³²

A Sign We Must Be Looking For

Advent pioneer S. N. Haskell wrote a book called *The Story of Daniel the Prophet*. On page 153 he noted: "We may expect that the same angel of prophecy will set the waymark high and clear, that men in the last days may know the time of Christ's appearing in judgment, and of his second coming in the clouds of heaven. Let us watch and be ready." He was right. Bible prophecy does exactly that. Biblical missives have been grossly misused and mischaracterized.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 611-612.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

³⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 280.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, (emphasis added).

There must be something very distinct that signals its arrival. Clearly, the prophetic word establishes that fall period of time at Feast of Trumpets. But, again, note this quotation: “As we near the judgment, all will manifest their true character, and it will be made plain to what company they belong. The sieve is moving. Let us not say: Stay Thy hand, O God. The church must be purged, and it will be.... The judgment is to set, the books are to be opened, and we are to be judged according to our deeds.”³³

The ark that was hidden to protect it and its contents (along with the golden altar of incense) still belongs to God and has been under His special supervision.³⁴ Shortly before Nebuchadnezzar’s last attack on Jerusalem, when it would be destroyed (586–587 B.C.), the ark of the covenant was hidden.

“Among the righteous still in Jerusalem, to whom had been made plain the divine purpose, were some who determined to place beyond the reach of ruthless hands the **sacred** ark containing the tables of stone on which had been traced the precepts of the Decalogue. This they did. With mourning and sadness they secreted the ark in a cave, where it was to be hidden from the people of Israel and Judah because of their sins, and was to be no more restored to them. That sacred ark is yet hidden. It has never been disturbed since it was secreted.”³⁵

“Before the temple was destroyed, God made known to a few of his faithful servants the fate of the temple, which was the pride of Israel, and which they regarded with idolatry, while they were sinning against God. He also revealed to them the captivity of Israel. These righteous men, just before the destruction of the temple, removed the sacred ark containing the tables of stone, and with mourning and sadness, secreted it in a cave where it was to be hid from the people of Israel, because of their sins, and was to be no more restored to them. That sacred ark is yet hid. It has never been disturbed since it was secreted.”³⁶

Even this was recorded as a historical event by Maccabees before the first advent: “The prophet being warned of God, commanded the tabernacle and the ark to go with him, as he went forth into the mountain, where Moses climbed up and saw the heritage of God. And when Jeremy came hither, he found an hollow cave, wherein he laid the tabernacle, and the ark, and the altar of incense, and so stopped the door. And some of those that followed him, came to mark the way, but they could not find it. Which when Jeremy perceived, he blamed them saying, ‘As for that place, it shall be unknown until the time that God gather His people again together, and receive them into mercy.’”³⁷

Will those articles be found?

³³ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 100.

³⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 97.

³⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 453 (emphasis added).

³⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, pp. 114-115.

³⁷ *Maccabees*, bk 2, 2:4-8.

“And He [Christ] gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communicating with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written by the finger of God.’ Nothing written on those tables could be blotted out. The precious record of the law was placed in the ark of the testament and is still there, safely hidden from the human family. But ***in God’s appointed time*** He will bring forth these tables of stone ***to be a testimony*** to all the world against the disregard of His commandments and against the idolatrous worship of a counterfeit Sabbath (MS 122, 1901).”³⁸

“These tables of stone will be brought forth from their hiding place, and on them will be seen the Ten Commandments engraved by the finger of God. These tables of stone now lying in the ark of the testament will be a convincing testimony to the truth and binding claims of God’s law (Letter 47, 1902).”³⁹

At an “appointed time,” God has a plan to bring them before the world.

Do we have any clue as to when this might be?

“The tables of stone are hidden by God, to be produced ***in the great judgment-day***, just as he wrote them.”⁴⁰ (Referring to the judgment of the living.)

“In the closing work of God in the earth, ***the standard of His law will be again exalted***. False religion may prevail, iniquity may abound, the love of many may wax cold, the cross of Calvary may be lost sight of, and darkness, like the pall of death, may spread over the world; the whole force of the popular current may be turned against the truth; plot after plot may be formed to overthrow the people of God; but in the hour of greatest peril the God of Elijah will raise up human instrumentalities to bear a message that will not be silenced. In the populous cities of the land, ... to every nation; ‘for the hour of His judgment is come ... ***At the judgment this covenant will be [future] brought forth***, plainly written with the finger of God, and the world will be arraigned before the bar of Infinite Justice to receive sentence.”⁴¹

The Judgment of the Living has now begun. This is the last phase of divine review of those claiming to be God’s loyalists just before the final Day of Atonement when probation closes. On that day the marriage of the Lamb to His people will occur. The bride will have been fully ready.

“Some will be ready when the Bridegroom comes, and will go in with Him to the marriage. How precious is this thought to those who are waiting and watching for His appearing! ... every moment is freighted with eternal interests. Now, when the great work of judging the living is about to begin, shall we allow unsanctified ambition to take possession of the heart and lead us to neglect the education required to meet the needs in this day of peril?”⁴²

³⁸ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1109.

³⁹ White, Ellen G.; vol. 7, p. 972.

⁴⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, March 26, 1908 (emphasis added).

⁴¹ White, Ellen G.; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 186-187 (emphasis added).

⁴² White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 129-130.

“Both parties were taken unawares”⁴³ But there is one group who is fully aware! Those who cry, the “Bridegroom is coming:”

“My mind was carried to the future, when the signal will be given. ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.’ But some will have delayed to obtain the oil for replenishing their lamps, and too late they will find that character, which is represented by the oil, is not transferable.”⁴⁴

How serious is this hour?

“We are nearing the Judgment [future judgment of the living], and *those who bear the message of warning to the world* [following its onset, just like Revelation 11 reveals] must have clean hands and pure hearts. They must have a living connection with God. The thoughts must be pure and holy, the soul untainted, the body, soul, and spirit be a pure, clean offering to God, or He will not accept it.”⁴⁵

This will add urgency to the reapplication of the three angels’ messages by those who are ready! The announcement that the hour of the Judgment of the Living has come will be powerful to planet earth:

1. Soon after the Feast of Trumpets
2. In the fall of the year (which just past)
3. Before the last three-and-a-half-year period (42 months; 1260 days; time, times, and a half) (2012) begins
4. The ark of the covenant will be found.

May God help us understand and be ready.

Franklin S. Fowler, Jr., M.D.
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EndTime Issues..., Number 119, April 7, 2011

⁴³ White, Ellen G.; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 412.

⁴⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, February 11, 1896.

⁴⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 426 (emphasis added).