



2023 Q2 The Three Cosmic Messages: Lesson 5 The Good News of the Judgment

by Russell Atkins

SABBATH

“Saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ” (Revelation 14:7, NKJV).

From the Lesson:

“If the Bible was ever clear about anything, it’s clear that God is a God of judgment, and that sooner or later, in one way or another, judgment—the judgment so lacking here and now—is going to come and be administered by God Himself, “the Judge of all the earth” (Gen. 18:25; see also Ps. 58:11, Ps. 94:2, Ps. 98:9). Or, as Paul himself had written: “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12).

Scary thought, isn’t it? Having to give an account of ourselves before God, the God who knows the deepest things, the God who will “bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccles. 12:14, NKJV)?

Yet, ultimately the judgment reveals the goodness and the grace of God and that He is both just and merciful in how He deals with the saved, and even with the lost.

This week we will explore the deeper themes of the judgment in relation to the great controversy raging in the universe, and we will look especially at what happens when God’s faithful people themselves face the inevitable “judgment to come” (Acts 24:25).

What can we “judge” about the author’s / editor’s Law construct?

Does he think God’s Law functions as the design for life or does it function like human laws?

Going back to our Power of Love seminar in Dallas in Jan, 2020 Tim did a piece on “Judgments”, and it’s also covered in greater detail in our magazine “The Final Message of Mercy.”

<https://comeandreason.com/the-three-angels/>

Here’s a summary:

First Judgment — We [humans] JUDGE God. Is God trustworthy [like Jesus revealed] or is he like Satan alleges?? See Romans 3:4, and Revelation 14: 6,7 [our memory text].

Second Judgment — The judgement of a perfect physician [correctly diagnosing a condition and developing/delivering a remedy]. See Malachi 3:1-5.



Third Judgment — We judge angels and those who are not in Heaven during the 1,000 years before the 3rd Coming so there can be no doubt as to why they are missing. See Revelation 20: 4-6 and 1 Cor. 6: 3.

Fourth Judgment — The White Throne Judgement. The Holy City is on Earth and the doors remain open, however, no-one comes in. The wicked are constrained to admit that God is correct in His judgement of their characters, but attack the City anyway. The Saved “judge” that there was nothing more God could have done to save them. See Revelation 20: 11, 12.

SUNDAY

The Significance of the Judgment Hour.

The lesson asks “Why is it significant that right after we are told about the “everlasting gospel”, the first angel’s message mentions God’s judgment? What does the “everlasting gospel” have to do with God’s judgment?”

Why indeed?

Whom is being judged?

Who is doing the judging?

Does it matter which Law construct you see this from?

Does the “everlasting gospel” of God’s character of Love make a difference on how / if we judge Him to be trustworthy? Does His character of Love / Goodness / Kindness / Forgiveness lead us somewhere? See Romans 2:4.

With respect to the author of the lesson, I don’t think the 1st Angels message is about the “White Throne” **Fourth judgment** in Revelation 20. I think it’s the **First judgment** listed above — where we judge God Himself. He opens Himself to our judgment and give us evidence [not proof] of His trustworthiness. The author, however, is correct in saying, “Were it not for the ‘everlasting gospel,’ we would have no hope in the judgment.”

We would have no hope in accurately judging God’s trustworthiness or in the White throne judgments. Were it not for the everlasting gospel of God’s character of Love, humanity would have no hope whatsoever.

Also from the lesson:

Heaven’s infinite, minute, exact, detailed records will be opened (see Dan. 7:10). We are so precious to God that the entire universe pauses to consider the choices we have made in light of the wooing of the Holy Spirit and the redemption so freely provided by Christ on Calvary’s cross. **Emphasis mine.**



The penal substitution adherents LOVE the record keeping.

MONDAY

God's Mercy and Judgment.

From the Lesson:

“The cross and judgment both reveal that God is just and merciful. The broken law demands the death of the sinner. Justice declares, “The wages of sin is death.” Mercy responds, “The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23, NKJV). If God’s law could be changed or abolished, it would be totally unnecessary for Jesus to die. Christ’s death establishes the eternal nature of the law, and the law is the basis of judgment.”

How does the cross and judgment reveal that God is just and merciful?

How does the broken law demand the death of the sinner?

Does “justice” declare that “the wages of sin is death”?

How does Christ’s death establish the “eternal nature of the law”, and the law’s basis of judgment?

Does the EGW quote from the lesson give us any insights?

The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves. The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will be their desire to be conformed to His image, and the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves. But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own.
-- Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 471, 472.

TUESDAY

A Magnificent Scene.

The lesson references Daniel 7 as its source for Tuesday’s lesson so let’s look at it. Specifically vs. 21, 22 from a variety of translations.

I was seeing, and this horn is making war with the saints, and hath prevailed over them, till that the Ancient of Days hath come, and judgment is given to the saints of the Most High, and the time hath come, and the saints have strengthened the kingdom.

Young’s Literal Translation 1898

I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the



Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

KJV

I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

NKJV

I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

American Standard Version

While I was looking, that horn made war on God's people and conquered them. Then the one who had been living forever came and pronounced judgment in favor of the people of the Supreme God. The time had arrived for God's people to receive royal power.

Good News Translation

As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

New International Version [NIV]

Which of these translations harmonizes best with Design Law AND our understanding of prophetic history??

The “horn” in v. 21 refers to the Papacy, and it was waging / winning the war against “the saints” for most of 1260 years [time, times, and dividing of time]. Historically, the Papacy opposed Scripture being read to/by anyone except their leadership. They promoted ideas like eternal burning hell, and purgatory/indulgences/inquisitions/torture/etc. They persecuted Protestants, Jews, Muslims, etc in the name of saving their souls from hell. Above, and beyond all of that, however, they thought “to change times and Laws” [see v. 25].

If you seek to change God’s Laws, what is already settled in your mind? **That His Law[s] function like human laws [imposed] and can be changed.** If you understand that God’s Laws are Design Laws and cannot be changed, you wouldn’t waste any time trying to change them. It cannot be done.

Many of the above translations show a pre-existing bias in the translators minds with the imposed law translations giving us a “courtroom” version [God pronounced judgment in favor of the Saints], while the Design Law translations give us a “gracious” version [Judgment was given to the Saints].



It wasn't until the late 1700's that enough Truth and light had been uncovered, so that the "saints" were adequately/accurately able to discern [aka Judge] truth from error.

From the lesson: The destiny of all humanity is decided in heaven's courtroom. Right prevails. Truth triumphs. Justice reigns. This is one of the most amazing, most marvelous, most spectacular scenes in all of Scripture. And the good news is that it ends very well for God's faithful people, those clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Which Law construct does the author prefer?? Was the destiny of all humanity decided at that time in history??

WEDNESDAY

A Glimpse of Heaven

Have you ever wished you could get a vision of Heaven? I have. I think God, in his mercy, has withheld this from me for now.

The lesson focuses on "heaven's celestial court" and a "throne-room scene". What's a word to describe a king's immediate surroundings and people within it?? His COURT. The word "court" doesn't necessarily mean judicial place. Which court do you think the author is referring to??

Does the "thunder and lightning" symbolize God's judgments?? Serious question.

The lesson asks what similarities are found in Rev. 4 and Daniel 7 descriptions of Heaven.

Rev. 4.

One on the throne with the appearance of jasper and sardine [carnelian] stone. Of note: The sardine [carnelian] stone was the first on Israel's High Priest breastplate [top right] symbolizing the tribe of Ruben [first born], and the jasper stone was last on the breastplate [bottom left] symbolizing Benjamin. This ties in nicely with future chapters in Revelation where Jesus says "I am the alpha [first] and the omega [last]. 24 elders surround the throne [I think the lesson is on point with these being humans — first fruits or otherwise], clothed in White. The White symbolized purity OF CHARACTER, not simply being covered with a magic garment that keeps God from seeing us as sinners. He sees us a HEALED.

Daniel 7. "The Ancient of Days" is on the throne. His appearance is White [as snow / wool]. His throne and wheels [beneath the throne] were "as fire". A river of fire came out from the throne, and **billions stood in the fire** ministering for Him. The White, of course, symbolizes purity, grace, & Truth, but what does the fire represent??



THURSDAY

Jesus is Worthy.

In Revelation 5 John sees a scroll written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. No one in Heaven or Earth can open the scroll, save Jesus [sacrificed Lamb]. Any thoughts as to what's on the scroll, and why Jesus is the only One worthy to open it??

Tim and I discussed this a length on one of our trips and he thinks on the scroll is written the entire history of Heaven and Earth from Lucifer's creation until the end of sin. Jesus was the One Lucifer alleged equality with and Jesus is the only Being who could see and document the future accurately. I think this may be both literal and symbolic. I suspect the scroll was opened after Calvary as further evidence for the unfallen beings and eventually evidence for the saved humanity.

From the lesson:

“Jesus, the Lamb of God who has sacrificed His life for the salvation of all humanity, takes the scroll of judgment and opens it. All of heaven bursts forth in rapturous praise. His victory over Satan's temptations, His death on Calvary's cross, His resurrection, His high priestly ministry, provides salvation for all who choose by faith to respond to His grace. The judgment is incredibly good news for the people of God. It speaks of the end of the reign of sin and the deliverance of God's people.

Can anything be more encouraging? Jesus stands for us in the judgment. His perfect, righteous life covers us. His righteousness works within us to make us new. His grace pardons us, transforms us, and empowers us to live godly lives.

We need not fear. Jesus stands for us in the judgment, and the powers of evil are defeated. Judgment is passed in “favor” of the people of God (Dan. 7:22). The purpose of the judgment is not to find out how bad we are but to reveal how good God is.”