

Let Freedom Ring!

9. Long Black Robes and White Quill Pens: Your Day Before the High Court



Scripture: Daniel 7:9, 10

Introduction

When the Constitution of the United States of America was signed in 1776, it divided the new government into three branches: the Executive, the Legislative and the Judicial. The executive branch was headed by the president and his cabinet. The Legislative branch was composed of the Senate and House of Representatives. As for the Judicial branch, other than establishing it, the Constitution failed to detail its specific duties, its powers or its organization. The third article of the Constitution merely stated:

“The judicial power of the United States shall be vested in one Supreme Court and in such inferior courts as Congress may from time to time ordain and establish.”

This left the organization of the new nation’s highest court to the Congress and to the Justices of the Court itself to define. President George Washington appointed John Jay as the first Supreme Court Justice. The Supreme Court got off to a slow start. It began its deliberations on February 1, 1790 with a full courtroom of spectators--and no cases to consider! It spent its first session organizing itself and determining its own powers and duties. It wasn’t until two years later the new Justices heard and decided their first actual case.

In many respects, America’s Supreme Court is the same today as when it first met in 1790. This is due to certain unchanged features—traditions. These include the following:

- **Supreme Court Justices hold their positions for a long time— often over three decades. The longest to date served for 36 years and six months.**
- **The justices seated in on the bench in a prescribed order—with the Chief Justice occupying the center chair, the senior associate to his right, the next senior associate to his left, and so on, alternating right to left by seniority.**
- **All justices wear the traditional robe that is a mark of their office. The first Chief Justice Jay and his colleges lent a colorful air to the first Supreme Court sessions by wearing robes with a red facing. Since at least 1800, each Justice wears a flowing black robe while presiding in court.**
- **The Court has a dress code. Initially, there was a dress code of formal “morning clothes” required of all attorneys who appeared before the Court. Someone in street clothes was refused a hearing until he met the approved dress code. Today, the traditional formal dress is followed only by the Department of Justice and other government lawyers.**

- **Quill pens and ink pots have remained an ongoing part of the Courtroom scene.** White quills are placed on the counsel tables each day the Court sits, as was done at the earliest session of the Court.
- **In the late 19th century, Chief Justice Melville W. Fuller introduced the “Conference handshake”.** When the Justices assemble to go on the Bench each day and at the beginning of the private Conferences at which they discuss decisions, each Justice pauses first to shake the hand of each of the other eight. This tradition serves as a reminder that differences of opinion among the Justices did not prevent overall harmony of purpose.
- **The Supreme Court also has a traditional seal.** This seal is similar to that of the Great Seal of the United States, but with a single star beneath the eagle’s claws. This symbolizes the Constitution’s creation of one Supreme Court. The seal is kept in the custody of the Clerk of the Court and stamped on official papers. Over the course of the Court’s history, the Court’s seal has been worn out and replaced five times.

By these traditions America’s Supreme Court has affirmed its continuity and defined its role and identity in national life. Because of the ongoing impact of its decisions, many believe that the Judicial branch has become the most powerful of the three branches of government. It is the final court of appeals in American life with its decisions setting the course of the nation and affecting every citizen to some degree.

I. Heaven’s High Court Revealed

All human governments have laws that require a court before which those who are accused of breaking them may stand to be acquitted or condemned based on evidence presented. In the Bible, we find that God’s government also has a high court. This court deals with matters that affect the entire universe. In particular, the Supreme Court of the Universe is now engaged in dealing with the matter of Satan’s rebellion and the sin of humanity. It may surprise you to learn that the Supreme

Court of the Universe is already in session, and your name may pass in review very soon!

This evening we will trace the workings of the High Court of heaven as it is described in God's Word. We will see that God isn't simply interested in rendering a decision in the final judgment. He wishes that His dealings with sin and sinners be conducted in an open fashion so that it may be understood by all. In short:

**In the three distinct phases of the final judgment
as described in the Bible,
God demonstrates His absolute fairness
to all intelligent beings.**

- ***The Investigative Judgment* occurs in heaven and is completed before the Second Coming of Jesus. It is the phase of judgment where the verdict of guilty or innocent is rendered on all who have ever lived, or who now live. It determines who among those who have professed faith in Jesus will be saved at His return.**

- ***The Millennial Judgment* occurs in heaven during the 1,000 year period that separates the resurrection of the righteous from that of the wicked. In this phase of the judgment, the records of lost men and angels are reviewed. It is the sentencing phase of the judgment, when those who have been most affected by the wrongs of the lost may speak and when those who have been saved may see clearly why the lost could not be taken to heaven.**

- ***The Great White Throne Judgment* occurs on earth at the end of the millennium when the wicked are raised to meet God and face the record of their lives. It is the execution phase of judgment, when the penalty for evil is announced carried out.**

Let's look at these three phases of judgment more closely.

II. The Investigative Judgment

The first phase of the final judgment is sometimes referred to as “The Investigative Judgment” by Bible students. This judgment occurs before Jesus’ Second Coming. In the final book of the Bible, Jesus gives this promise:

“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.” *Revelation 22:12*

Plainly, Jesus need to decide who He is coming to get before He arrives. This is the purpose of the Investigative Judgment. As the first phase of the final judgment, heaven’s court renders a simple “guilty” or “innocent” verdict. It doesn’t deal with humanity as a whole, but solely with those who have professed faith in Jesus. The Apostle Peter wrote:

“For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” *I Peter 4:17*

God’s judgment begins with the professed followers of Jesus. Have they truly followed Him? Have they repented of their sins and placed their faith in Jesus? Are they safe to save? These questions are decided in the Investigative Judgment before Jesus returns.

In the book of Revelation chapter 14, verse 7, a prophecy of the announcement of this judgment appears:

“He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.’” *Revelation 14:7*

**When would this judgment of those Jesus would return for occur?
Where would it occur?**

III. William Miller and 1844

The story of the discovery of the Bible answers to these important questions is a uniquely American one. It involves a man by the name of William Miller.

Miller was born February 15, 1782 in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Though raised in a devout Baptist family, in his youth Miller rejected Christianity and embraced Deism—the belief that God had created the world, set natural law in operation then largely abandoned it. This belief in a distant God came complete with a rejection of the miracles of the Bible and the Bible as a source of Divinely inspired revelation.

A natural leader, Miller was elected to a series of local public offices, including Constable, and Justice of the Peace. He served in the Vermont militia and was commissioned a lieutenant in 1810. When the War of 1812 broke out, Miller raised a company of local men and transferred to the 30th Infantry Regiment in the regular army of the United States with the rank of lieutenant. Two years later he was promoted to captain. He saw his first combat action at the Battle of Plattsburg. There the vastly outnumbered American forces won an unaccountable victory over the better trained and armed British forces.

By all the expected outcomes of natural law--the only law Miller's Deistic belief allowed--the battle should have been lost. Miller himself should surely have been killed. Yet he not only survived, but saw the American forces prevail.

After the war and his discharge from the army, Miller moved his family back to Low Hampton where his Baptist relatives lived. To humor his relatives, Miller began attending Baptist services, still espousing his Deistic views. One day he was asked to read the sermon in the absence of the regular pastor. Miller later wrote of the experience:

"Suddenly the character of a Savior was vividly impressed upon my mind. It seemed that there might be a Being so good and compassionate as to Himself atone for our transgressions, and thereby save us from suffering the penalty of sin. I immediately felt how lovely such a Being must be; and imagined that I could

cast myself into the arms of, and trust in the mercy of, such an One." (*Apology and Defence, William Miller, 5*)

Upon learning of Miller's conversion, his Deist friends challenged him to justify his newfound faith. Miller began a study of the Bible in the first chapter of Genesis, studying each verse and comparing it to others on similar themes with the aid of a concordance before moving on. He became convinced that the Bible was a system of revealed truths with one part explaining the other. His study also led him to reject the prevailing view of the time that the 1,000 year millennium must occur before Jesus Second Coming.

But by far the most astonishing of his discoveries had to do with a passage in the 8th chapter of the book of Daniel. There Miller read:

"Unto two thousand three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." *Daniel 8:14*

Accepting the common understanding of Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5 6 that a day in prophecy equals a year, Miller calculated the 2,300 day prophecy would end in 1843. The implications of his calculations were immense.

In Miller's day, the Christian churches as a whole held that the sanctuary was planet Earth, and that its cleansing would be through the fires of the final judgment at the time of Jesus' Second Coming. Miller's study had pinpointed the time this event would occur. He wrote:

"I was thus brought... to the solemn conclusion, that in about twenty-five years from that time all the affairs of our present state would be wound up." (*Apology and Defence, William Miller, 11-12*)

Between the years 1818 and 1823 Miller continued to study the matter privately. He became increasingly convicted that Jesus would return, but did not begin publicly lecturing on the matter until August 1831 in the down of Dresden. In time, huge numbers of people, including 10,000 pastors of various churches, embraced Miller's views. His followers grew by some estimates to between 100,000 and a half a million strong. Great tents were pitched. Special trains were scheduled to bring the many who wished to hear the preaching on prophecies. The power of the press gave great strength through books, charts and tracts. An

enormous interest and expectation grew as the time foretold neared. Saloons turned into meeting houses. Gambling dens were shut down. Many thousands were converted.

While Miller never set an exact date for the expected Second Coming of Jesus, others who elaborated on his basic calculations pinpointed October 22, 1844 as the precise date for the conclusion of the 2,300 day prophecy. But the great event hoped for did not occur. Jesus did not return. The sun rose October 23 as it had in the past.

What a disappointment! In the aftermath of the disappointment of 1844, those who had expected Jesus' return divided into three groups:

- The first and largest group concluded that *the event expected had been correct, but that the calculation of the prophecy of the 2,300 days had been wrong*. This group quickly abandoned any attempt to interpret the prophecy of the 2,300 days.
- A second group held that *both the prophecy and the event had indeed occurred, but that the nature of the event expected had been in error*. They concluded that Jesus had indeed returned, but in some spiritual manner rather than literally. Many among the ranks of these "spiritualizers" fell into fanaticism.
- A third group concluded that while *the time had been correct, the event expected was in error*. Was the cleansing of the sanctuary the Second Coming of Jesus and the purification of the earth by fire, as the entire Christian world had assumed? Or was it something else? This group returned to a careful renewed study of the Bible, focusing on the true meaning of the sanctuary and its cleansing.

Those Adventist who took up the Bible to investigate the subject of the sanctuary and its cleansing quickly uncovered the other half of the truth Miller had proclaimed. He had been correct about the date of 1844 for the cleansing of the sanctuary they affirmed. His error, and the cause for the disappointed expectations of his followers, had been in the understanding of the nature of the sanctuary itself and of its cleansing. Their study soon led them to conclude that the sanctuary to be cleansed in Daniel 8:14 was not earth, but rather the sanctuary in heaven, of which the earthly sanctuary given through Moses to Israel was a type.

They saw several points clearly:

- **First, a literal sanctuary exists in heaven.**

Hebrews chapter 8:1, 2 say:

“The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.”

- **Second, the Hebrew sanctuary system was a complete visual representation of the plan of salvation patterned after the heavenly sanctuary.**

God had told Moses:

“Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.” *Exodus 25:9*

- **The third that that became apparent was that just as the earthly priests had a two-phase ministry in the wilderness sanctuary, so our great high priest Jesus has a two-phase ministry in the greater sanctuary in heaven.**

The first phase of the earthly ministry, removed the sins from the worshippers and placed them within the sanctuary itself—thus defiling it. The second phase, which occurred on the Day of Atonement at the end of each year, removed the accumulated sins from the sanctuary and placed them on the head of the scapegoat. This goat was taken away into the wilderness, removing the sins from the camp and God’s people forever. This yearly event, portrayed in Leviticus 16, was the cleansing of the sanctuary—a work of judgment. On that occasion at one time in one place, the sins of all God’s people must be confessed and forsaken.

Plainly, it was the changing of the nature of Jesus’ work as our Great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary that was pointed to by the prophecy pointing to 1844. At that time began in heaven the work of judgment, the investigation to determine who among God’s people would be saved and who would be lost on Jesus’ return. Christ must complete this work, then He would return. The cleansing was by the

application of the blood blotting out the heavenly record of the sins of His people, not the fiery cleansing of earth.

Other related truths quickly became apparent. If the sanctuary on earth was patterned after the sanctuary in heaven, then the Ten Commandments were eternal—including the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. If the work of the Day of Atonement was the last in the sacred year in the earthly temple, then Jesus' corresponding work in heaven meant the Second Coming was indeed near. The connection between the Commandments, Jesus final priestly work in the sanctuary, and the Sabbath all came together in a key passage in Revelation that depicted the very work of the final proclamation of the gospel in which they were engaged. The third angel's message of Revelation 14:7, which Adventists increasingly saw as their message and mandate said:

“Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

So the teaching of the sanctuary unfolded a cluster of related truths. The investigative judgment occurring there would continue until Jesus had completed His work in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly temple. When all who would be saved had made their choice, Jesus would throw down His priestly incense censure. He would say:

“Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.” *Revelation 22:11*

Then this first vital phase of the final judgment would be complete. The cases of all who have ever lived or were alive would be decided forever. Shortly after, He would return to earth for His own.

III. The Millennial Judgment

But the Investigative Judgment that must occur before Jesus Returns to receive His own is not the only judgment brought to view in the Bible. That judgment merely determines who will be ultimately saved and who

will ultimately be lost. Even in our earthly courts a verdict of “guilty” is not the end of the matter for one convicted. After the determination of guilt has been established, the penalty phase of the trial begins where punishment is matched to the crime committed.

In the High Court of Heaven, the penalty phase of the judgment of the lost occurs during the 1,000 year period commonly referred to as the millennium. At this time, God’s redeemed have seen Jesus return in the clouds. The righteous dead have been resurrected and the righteous living translated. The wicked dead remain dead while the wicked who are alive at Jesus’ return are slain by the brightness of His coming.

In heaven, the righteous are welcomed with joy into the Holy City New Jerusalem. They are wedding guests at the great Feast of the Lamb along with the saved of all ages. On earth the wicked are all dead. What could be more natural than for some to look around and ask, “Why isn’t so and so here?”

The Millennial Judgment both allows these questions to be fully answered as well as providing opportunity for those who have been most harmed by the actions of evil men and angels to have a “victim’s impact” report during that phase of the judgment where penalties are assigned. In His parable, Jesus once said that the servant who knew his master’s will and did not do it would receive more punishment than the one who did not know his master’s will. While all the lost will suffer eternal death, there are variations between the punishment to be meted out to the great sinner and the lesser.

The apostle Paul spoke of this phase of the final judgment to the Corinthians. He said:

“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world. Do you not know that we will judge angels?” *I Corinthians 6:2, 3*

And when would this occur? Again the apostle speaks:

“Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes.” *I Corinthians 4:5*

There is a judgment that began in 1844 and must conclude before Jesus returns for His own. There is a second judgment in which God’s

redeemed will play a part in judging both the lost world and the fallen angels. That judgment's appointed time follows the return of Jesus. And what will be the condition of those who are being judged by the redeemed? Revelation 11:18 says:

“The nations were angry, your wrath has come. *The time has come for judging the dead...*”

Not only must we appear before the High Court of Heaven, we are called to sit on it as fellow judges with Christ during the Millennial Judgment when the records of the wicked dead and the fallen angels come up for the penalty phase of the trial. The book of Revelation pictures that great scene in these words:

“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” *Revelation 20:4*

And what of the wicked? The Bible says:

“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) *Revelation 20:5*

Those being judged are judged in abstention during this point in the trial of the ages. They cannot be present. They are dead. Yet the record of their wrongs remains written clearly on the books of heaven for all to read who will. These records include not only the records of lost men, but of lost angels.

Jude 6 says of the fallen angels:

“The angels...he kept in darkness, bound...for the judgment on the great day.”

Want to have a chance to see the life record of your private tempter, the angel who went wrong and has worked your entire life to tempt you into wrong? This is the opportunity—the Millennial judgment. It is then

God's saved judge both the world and the angels. What the seating arrangement is in the courtroom of heaven during this phase of the judgment we are not told. But we may be sure of one thing: Unlike the Supreme Court of the United States, in heaven's courtroom the robes are not black, but white! Revelation says elsewhere that is the color of robes given to those who enter heaven.

Why would God go to such infinite lengths in the three phases of the final judgment, spanning centuries of time? He is God isn't He? Doesn't He know who is good and who is evil? Couldn't He simply save the righteous and destroy the wicked and make short work of the whole sorry mess sin has brought into the universe?

A story from early American folklore about a judge who once came to a small gold mining town to try the cases of a group of six rough necks who had been terrorizing the miners may shed some light here.

Those accused had been captured and were awaiting the judge's arrival. A great crowd had gathered as the criminals were brought forth and the judge took his seat on the raised platform. They watched curiously as the judge called each criminal to himself, spoke with him a minute or two, then moved on to the next and did the same.

When these private interviews of the prisoners had been finished, the judge stood to his feet. The crowd stood waiting, ready to tell their stories and give their testimony. But the judge gave them no chance. Without further discussion, he sentenced Ned, Ted and Jed to be hung before sunset. The he released Jim, Tim and Slim to full freedom immediately.

The crowd gasped in amazement. Was this really happening? Angry voices began to rise. Jim and Tim were just as guilty as Ted and Ned. Besides Jed wasn't really that bad of a fellow? Why should he be hung while Jim went free? The roar of the citizens rose louder and louder.

The judge stood and called for silence. Eyeing him with suspicion, they quieted down. "Listen, folks!" the judge declared, "I talked with each of these men. I have made my investigation. I know which ones are really criminals and which are not. Just trust me."

The roar of the crowd rose to thunder as the citizens debated the lack of an adequate investigation. Supposed justice without a fair, complete and public trial was entirely unjust.

By sunset, there was a hanging. The judge was hung.

God knows who can safely be saved and who cannot. We do not. That is the reason for the Millennial Judgment. We have full opportunity to review the cases of any who don't make it to heaven to see for ourselves from the records of their deeds how God did everything possible to save them. God needs us to know why He has done as He has. The thousand year trial of review before final sentence is executed on the incorrigibly lost sets all questions of His justice to rest forever.

VII. The Great White Throne Judgment

We have seen the first two phases of the work of Heaven's High Court:

- The first is the *Investigative Judgment* of those who will be saved that must of necessity come before Jesus' return for His own which began in 1844 and will soon be over.**
- The second is the *Millennial Judgment* when those who have been saved have opportunity to judge both lost men and angels and to satisfy themselves of the justice of God. This occurs during the 1,000 years between the judgment of the righteous at Jesus Second Coming and the resurrection of the wicked at the end of the 1,000 years.**

By this time, the unfallen angels and the inhabitants of God's vast domains have had their questions answered. They have seen and had a say in the work of the High Court of the Universe as God deals with the life records of men and angels.

But there is still a group who don't know why they are lost. There are those who have done evil, died without penalty. They have done wrong toward themselves, God and others, yet never faced any consequence nor acknowledged any wrong. It would appear they had, "Gotten away with it." There are also those who fancy themselves good people and

even good Christians in their own eyes, yet who have ever been a blot and a stain among God's people. They may be truly self-deceived. It is for the sake of the damned themselves that God enters into the final phase of the great final judgment.

- The Bible calls the third and final penalty phase of judgment the *Great White Throne Judgment*. It occurs at the end of the 1,000 years when the Holy City New Jerusalem with God and the redeemed descends to the surface of planet Earth.

Satan, has been bound on planet earth during the millennium. He has had no wicked to lead. They are all dead. He has had no righteous to tempt. They are all in heaven beyond his reach. Now as the Holy City descends and the resurrection of the wicked occurs, he is released from his enforced inactivity and springs into action. The Bible says:

“When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corner of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves.” *Revelation 20:7-9*

This is the day of the living dead! Those outside of the city come forth from their graves not to live forever, but to face God in judgment. They arise with all the marks of the curse still on them, with the same train of thought with which they died. Whole howling, hating hordes of bloodthirsty warriors led on by generals who never lost a battle. There are cursing ship loads of pirates. There are gangsters who were gunned down as they had gunned down others. There are Caesars laughing at the spectacle of their bloody cruelty in the arenas of Rome. There are false hearted religious leaders who served themselves instead of God, His people and His truth. There are vast multitudes of those who simply chose the easy way and turned from what they knew was right. Sadly, there are many in the ranks of the lost who have walked the broad road that leads to destruction.

These rise to view a sin-ruined that has lain in ruins for a thousand years. Before them they see the grandest prize in the universe: the Holy

City New Jerusalem. Lost men and lost angels mingle together in the vast throngs that have risen.

On that day, all of us will either be inside the Holy City looking out, or outside the New Jerusalem looking in. Who will be outside? Revelation 22:15 says:

“Outside are the dogs (referring to humans who behave like mere brute beasts), those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”

Satan makes quick work of breathing his own spirit of hatred and greed into the armies of the damned. How long it will take Satan to organize the attack on the Holy City is uncertain. There are at least three motives for making the attack:

- **First, while the righteous are raised with incorruptible bodies that will never die, the wicked rise with all the marks of the curse and the pains sin brings on them. Inside the New Jerusalem is the Tree of Life. If even one sinner can gain access to its fruit, Satan’s original lie will prove true: sinners will not really die.**
- **Second, inside the city before them are the same righteous Creator loyalists who they hated and persecuted during their earthly lives. Cain wants another shot at killing Able. Herodias wants to see John the Baptist’s head on a platter again. Nero wishes to see the Christian martyrs die still.**
- **The third motive for attack is simple greed. The Holy City with its walls and streets of gold, its foundations of precious gems and its gates of 12 huge pearls is the greatest concentration of mineral wealth in the universe. What a prize to the conqueror!**

The armies of the wicked draw up in ranks around the walls of the Holy City awaiting the command for attack. They believe they have come for battle. They do not know that God has allowed them to believe a lie that they may be summoned to stand in ranks before Him for their day before Heaven’s High Court.

The Bible says:

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.” *Revelation 20:11-13*

This final judgment happens in a moment’s time. When fallen man comes into the presence of his Maker in whose image he was formed, and sees himself, he speaks truth. When Isaiah saw the Lord in the temple, high and lifted up, he cried, “I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips!” For Isaiah, this confession was not too late. A coal was taken from the altar by the angel and laid on the prophet’s lips and he was forgiven. But for the multitudes of the lost there is no space for repentance. That has long since passed. As the record of each life appears before those outside of the city, the part played in the great rebellion against God is plain. The righteous acts of God in all the long rebellion sin has brought are made plain.

Revelation 15:4 says:

**“Who will not fear you, O Lord,
and bring glory to your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship before you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed.”**

On that day when God’s Great White Throne appears, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that God has been just and merciful in all His actions. Even the lost will acknowledge that heaven has done all it can for their salvation and that the full responsibility for their eternal ruin lies with themselves, not with God.

Then the scene flickers out. The lost rise to their feet again. Satan rushes among them urging the attack on the city. The God who brought

Israel through the Red Sea has a choice. He can do nothing, and the wicked will attack and kill the righteous. Or He can let go His restraining power, not on walls of water over Egyptian armies this time, but of the fires of heaven and earth.

Revelation 20:9 and 10 says:

“But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown.”

Verses 14 and 15 add:

“Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

II Peter 3 pictures the same scene in these words:

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar: the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of the righteous.” (*Verses 10-13*)

This is God's strange act. It is the second flood, the flood of fire. As Noah and those who went into the ark with him floated on the surface of the flood that destroyed the wicked in the past, so God's people inside the Holy City New Jerusalem will be preserved as the surface of the world is turned molten by the fires from the sky above and from the lavas of the earth below.

As for Satan, Ezekiel 28, verses 18 and 19 clearly portray his end. Looking ahead to Satan's final end, God says:

“So I have made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.”

Sin and sinners are no more. Every question has been answered. The universe and every heart is freed from all taint and sympathy for the great evil of sin. The Bible says:

“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire, says the Lord Almighty. Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things, says the Lord.”

Malachi 4:1-3

Then God will wipe every tear from the eyes of His own.

“There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’” *Revelation 21:4, 5*

Appeal

What do these things mean for each of us this evening? We have seen the first phase of the High Court of the Universe has already begun in heaven. In fact, it has been in session since the end of the 2,300 day prophecy in 1844 when the cleansing of that temple began.

The questions for each of us are simple:

- **Is my name written in the Book of Life?**

- **Have I retained Jesus as my lawyer?**

Someone once wrote:

**A good lawyer knows your case and the law.
A great lawyer knows the judge!**

In the case of the court now sitting in heaven, we may have even greater certainty. Jesus is not only the lawyer who knows our case and knows the judge, He is the judge!

Jesus said:

“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”

John 5:21-23

When your lawyer is the judge, how can you lose?

**Hangman, hangman, hangman,
Slack your rope a while.
I think I see my brother coming many a mile.**

**Brother, did you bring me any silver?
Brother did you bring me any gold?
Or did you come to see me
Hanging from this gallows pole?**

**No, I didn't bring you any silver.
No I didn't bring you any gold.
I came to see you hanging from the gallows pole.**

**Hangman, hangman, hangman,
Slack your rope a while.
I think I see my father coming many a mile.**

**Father, did you bring me any silver?
Father did you bring me any gold?
Or did you come to see me
Hanging from this gallows pole?**

**No, I didn't bring you any silver.
No I didn't bring you any gold.
I came to see you hanging from the gallows pole.**

**Hangman, hangman, hangman,
Slack your rope a while.
I think I see my mother coming many a mile.**

**Mother, did you bring me any silver?
Mother did you bring me any gold?
Or did you come to see me
Hanging from this gallows pole?**

**No, I didn't bring you any silver.
No I didn't bring you any gold.
I came to see you hanging from the gallows pole.**

**Hangman, hangman, hangman,
Slack your rope a while.
I think I see my True Love coming many a mile.**

**True Love, did you bring me any silver?
True Love, did you bring me any gold?**

**Or did you come to see me
Hanging from this gallows pole?**

**No, I didn't bring you any silver.
No I didn't bring you any gold.
I came to see you hanging from the gallows pole.**

**Hangman, hangman, hangman,
Slack your rope a while.
I think I see Lord Jesus coming many a mile.**

**Jesus, did you bring me any silver?
Jesus did you bring me any gold?
Or did you come to see me
Hanging from this gallows pole?**

**No, I didn't bring you any silver.
No I didn't bring you any gold.
I came to hang for you—
Hanging from the gallows pole.**

This evening, do you want Jesus to be your lawyer? Isn't He the best lawyer of all? He Himself said"

"Ask, and it shall be given you."

And:

"All that the father gives to me will come to me, and the one who comes to me, I will in no wise cast out."

This evening if you would place your case before the High Court of the Universe in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, our true Priest in the

Sanctuary in heaven, please come forward. We have something we'd like to provide for you to confirm your decision.

Our next scheduled meeting is _____ . The subject will be "America's Most Famous Haunted House and a Stairway That Leads to Nowhere". Please come and bring a friend.

Let's pray.

Dear Lord,

We thank you that you who are our judge in the final judgment have offered to take our case tonight. There are those here who have already placed their case in your hands. There are others who may be doing this for the first time tonight. We know you are the lawyer who has never lost a case and that your own blood covers our sins. We thank you for this now and always. Amen.

Note: Give a copy of the card provided below to each person who comes forward. Review the hand motions for "Five S's of Adventism" noting "Sanctuary" in particular. Pray with those who have come forward confirming their decision to place their case in Jesus' hands as their advocate in the judgment.

My Retainer Requesting Jesus Serve as My Advocate in the Sanctuary in Heaven

“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.” John 5:21-23

Lord Jesus, I hereby request that you serve as my advocate and judge in the sanctuary in heaven committing myself entirely into His keeping and representation now and forever.

Amen.

Signed _____

Dated _____