

MOSKALA: TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

Daniel contains the best heavenly judgment scene ever recorded in the Scriptures (Dan 7). Prophets as servants of the covenants speak eloquently about God's impending and eschatological judgment (e.g., Joel 3:12; Jonah 3:4; Hos 1:8; 2:23; Amos 5:18-20; Isa 6:1-13; 26:9-11; Jer 11:20; Ezek 7:3-14; 9:1-11; 18:30). Additionally wisdom literature paints the judgment picture (e.g., Job 19:25, 29; Ps 50:6; 96:13; Eccl 12:13-14). Also New Testament passages point clearly to the same reality (e.g., Mat 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom 2:16; 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1-8; Heb 9:27). The book of Revelation cannot be understood without grasping his decisive work of God. It not only contains scattered references to the theme of judgment but this thought is an integral part of the essential kerygma of that book (6:10; 11:17-18; 15:3-4; 16:5-7).⁵ Thus these samples from the first pages of the Bible to the last book of Revelation not only convincingly demonstrate before readers the significance of the theme of judgment but also provide crucial insights into the unfolding drama of God's judging activity.

Judgment is an integral part of God's nature; it is His characteristic divine prerogative. To understand God means to know and comprehend His judgments, which are very comprehensive. Through the study of His judgments, we can know who He is and what is His character. God actually invites us to understand His judgments in order to be able to deliberately declare that He is love and justice (Rom 3:4; Pss 51:4; 34:8; Phil 2:10-11), because His word and character were challenged and ridiculed from the very beginning (Gen 3:1-6; Ezek 28:16 [the Hebrew word *ra'aka* can also mean "to gossip or slander" ⁶]; Isa 14:12-15; Job 1:6-12).⁷

In the Bible there is a twofold definition of God's judgment positive and negative.⁸ Both aspects are fully presented and are complementary but it is

Daniel, because God is Judge of all of us. In the book of Revelation the last seventh church is named Laodicea (Rev 3:14-15), which means "people of judgment."

⁵Ranko Stefanovic, *The Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs: Andrew UP, 2002), 31, 365-367, 523-572; Craig S. Keener, *Revelation, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 44-46, 372-382; Robert H. Monce, *The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 271-267.

⁶Richard M. Davidson, "Satan's Celestial Slander," *Perspective Digest* 1/1 (1996): 31-34.

⁷See, Jose M. Berblui, "The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy Between Good and Evil" (Th.D. Dissertation, Andrews University 1985); Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity 1997); *ibid.*, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity 2001); Christian Breninger, "Where Angels Fear to Tread: Appraising the Current Fascination with Spiritual Warfare," *Covenant Quarterly* 53 (1995): 37-48; Peggy Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: Satan in the Hebrew Bible*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 43 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988); Stephen T. Davis, *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, revised. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox 2001); Tremper Longman and Daniel G. Reid, *God is a Warrior. Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

⁸From the very beginning of God's revelation these indispensable aspects of judgment are practiced. For example: 1) in the story of Adam's fall into sin, God condemns but also saves and

MOSKALA: TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

cion gift of life ~~old~~ be ~~en~~gished, because sin brings death, suffering, and violence. However, God is the Judge and the Victor (Ps 7:11; John 16:33; Rev 3:21); ~~he~~ He brings an end to evil, and the salvation and life of His faithful followers is secured for all eternity. Actually here is no Gospel ~~in~~ judgment. Everyone must be judged by the Gospel of Jesus (Rom 2:14), and ~~in~~ without any exception all people have to appear before the judgment seat of God, as Paul asserts (2 Cor 5:10). Judgment is an integral part of the eternal Gospel (Rev 14:6-13).

It is my deep conviction that we need to develop a new pattern regarding God's universal judgment. This new approach will help us to perceive in a more consistent and comprehensive way how God deals with sin and how He saves sinners. For a long time on Adventist theology has not put enough emphasis upon the cross of Jesus Christ as the center of all of God's judgments, ¹³ even though Adventist authors have taught the importance of the cross of Jesus along with salvation in Christ. However, the cross has often not been presented in direct connection with God's eschatological judgment but rather separately detached.¹⁴ The identity of Jesus in the drama of the cross has frequently not been seen as playing a dominant role in the context of God's eschatological judgment. It is particularly true in regard to the three final eschatological phases of God's

¹³See, for example, Gerhard F. Hasel, *Divine Judgment* (*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 815-856; Mark Finley *Studying Together: A Ready-reference Bible Handbook*, rev. ed. (Fallbrook: Hart Research Center, 1995), 2122; Richard Rice, *Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1997), 328-346.

One may detect two extremes in Christian literature: either everything in relationship to judgment is done and accomplished on the cross, or God's eschatological judgments are too far from the perspective of the cross. These one-sided positions fail to do justice to the total picture of biblical teaching.

¹⁴It is necessary to stress that the cruciality of salvation in Jesus accomplished at the cross is a very dominant and significant concept in Adventist theology. Jesus Christ is seen as an Advocate or Intercessor at the judgment but simplified presentations about the judgment confuse some, hindering their ability to grasp clearly the true meaning of the whole concept of judgment—namely putting the cross and judgment together.

For the beauty of the explanation of how we are saved in Jesus Christ at God's judgment see, for example, La Rondelle, *Assurance of Salvation*, 93-101; Morris L. Venden, *Never Without an Intercessor: The Good News About the Judgment*

JOURNAL OF THE

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The cross of Jesus divides human history into three dispensations or epochs of time: the first one as the pre-cross dispensation, the second as the cross dispensation, and the third as the post-cross dispensation.²⁰ The cross is the pivotal, crucial, and irreplaceable dividing point. The pre-cross epoch may be described as pre-eschatological, and the second and third epochs together form an eschatological period of time.

The first phase of God's universal judgment consists of His interventions into human affairs before the first coming of Jesus Christ. He is the life of an individual or a community. We need to remember that God's judgments are eschatological in nature.²¹ When, for example, God intervenes in order to justify sinners, it means that the final judgment has broken into our existence and history.²²

MOSKALA: TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

be holy and blameless in his sight (Eph 1:4).²⁵ This means that the cross is a symbol of grace, of God's action on behalf from the very beginning of humanity.²⁶ Without that grace, the first couple in the Garden of Eden would have died after they sinned, because God plainly stated that the day they ate from the forbidden fruit they would surely die (Gen 2:16-17). But in view of God's ultimate sacrifice on the cross, they were given grace, forgiveness, and new life as offered. At the cross everything merges, and from it deeper insights spill out. From his view of the cross, I want to explore the theology of divine judgment in its seven phases. This is why I divide God's judgment into pre- and post-cross.

There are multiple examples of the pre-cross phase of God's judgment, because every time God saves or condemns, He is acting as a Judge.²⁷ All people saved in the Old Testament dispensation of time were saved only on the basis of God's grace flowing from the cross and never on the basis of the law obedience, or their own righteousness achieved through their good deeds (Gen 5:24; 6:8-9; 15:6; Deut 4:2; Ps 32:1-2; 51:8-10; Hab 2:4). The law and grace of God and faith in God were the integral parts of their transforming experience of salvation from the very beginning.²⁸

²⁵See also 1 Pet 1:20: He [Christ a Lamb without blemish and defect] was chosen before the creation of the world.

²⁶The merits of the cross are anticipated in God's salvific activity; they are taken as a reality as though it had already taken place and salvation was accomplished. The certainty of the act of Jesus on the cross is taken for granted. Some examples will suffice: in the Flood account Noah received grace; after the Tower of Babel, Abraham was called to be God-faithful in his world; Moses was God's instrument of salvation in a situation of judgment (Exod 32:30-32), etc. These

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL

MOSKALA: TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

the prince of this world now stands condemned (John 16:11). The cross was the fulfillment of the prop-Gospel of Gen 3:15 about the promised Seed who will crush the head of the serpent Satan.³¹ Paul eloquently describes his triumphant victory over Satan, evil, and sin in Col 2:13-15 and Eph 4:8 (cf. Luke 10:18).³² Also, the book of Revelation speaks about this pivotal victory of Jesus (Rev 12:7-12). Thus, Satan was judged and defeated along with everyone who associates with the arch-enemy of God. God Himself was judged, i.e., indicated, and it was proven that He is the God of love, truth, justice, and freedom.

The judgment on the cross is *theological*, because the cross of Christ is the central point in human history and at Calvary in the intense agony of suffering He fought for our salvation and secured it. In total humility and surrender to His Father, Christ won the victory. Even the safety of the whole universe depends on that key event because the rebellion against the loving Lord started in heaven. The cross was and is a focal point of the whole universe; his is how we today see the spectacle for the inhabitants of heaven (1 Cor 4:9), and our fight of faith has a cosmic dimension (Eph 3:10; 6:12).

Witnesses of his judgment were multiple: the whole heaven, and upon the earth those who were present at the crucifixion of Jesus—Romans, Jew, Pilate, and Herod, who together conspired against Jesus (Acts 4:27). Everything in the universe depended on his crucial event of salvation history. Through Christ's death, salvation was secured once and for all (Heb 9:26-28). It is no wonder that his ultimate event in history is so *significant* and *comprehensive* in scope. This is why we call his judgment *theological*. Jesus revealed to God is, that He is always on the side of the sufferer, because in our distress and suffering He suffered with us (Isa 63:9). Thus God proved that He is indeed love and justice (Rom 1:17; 2:4; 1 John 4:16-17).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

occurs when we react to the Gospel, ³⁴ to the preaching of the Word of God. It means that his judgment depends on the decisions we make in relationship to Christ to His deeds for us. For example, during a sermon in a worship service or during messaging and Bible studies, God's judgment is in effect according to our response to the message heard. On these occasions, the judgment has arrived and is present. Jesus demonstrates his point very clearly. Tell of the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life (John 5:24).³⁵ Once we believe, we receive eternal life as a gift. Thus, the nature of his judgment during our lifetime can be called *pre-judgment*, because a personal decision of each individual to the proclamation of the Gospel is crucial. When personal decisions are made in relationship to God, his judgment occurs.

Key texts which describe his phase of God's judging activities can be found in such passages as John 5:22-24; 3:16-18, 36; 14:6; 16:8-11; Rom 5:1-2; 8:1-4, 31-39; Eph 2:4-10; 1 John 2:28; 4:17; Isa 53:11-12; and Dan 11:33-35; 12:3.

This judgment occurs positively when humans are justified by God, when they are forgiven. God justifies sinners who come to Him and confess their sins, renounce them, and decide to follow Him in humility and obedience, wanting to serve others unselfishly. In that moment God declares a repentant sinner just. This means that the eschatological judgment breaks into the life of the believer. We are *what we will become* because God is looking upon us from the future perspective. By the transforming power of God's grace, we will be like Him! The amazing grace of God will gradually change us in order to reflect the character of God.

his kind of judgment after the cross only for pedagogical reasons in order to simplify the flow of different types of judgment from the perspective of the first coming of Christ. However, the principles are applicable to both periods of time.

³⁴By the Gospel I do not mean only a narrow understanding about the life and death of Jesus, even though it is the integral and central part of it but Gospel in the full sense revealed in the Bible of Scripture: God as our Creator, Judge, Redeemer, Lawgiver, Lord, Intercessor, Friend, Re-Creator, etc. Gospel from the Creation and the Fall to the new creation, from the Gospel according to Moses to the Gospel according to the Apocalypse. Gospel is about God's true character and His doings revealed in each book of the Bible and to us in His life, ministry and death of Jesus Christ. He is the Living Gospel! But we can know Him only through the written Gospel of the whole Bible.

³⁵The phrase of Jesus: "Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned" (NIV) is also translated "He who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment" (NKJV). Both translations are possible and correct. The Greek phrase used here, *krō'sin ouk e'zchetai* opens to both renderings, and they both make good sense, but from a different angle. In the first case, Jesus' sentence means that the believer in Jesus will not be condemned at the divine judgment at the end of time (at the affirming judgment) because such a person accepted Jesus' word and followed Him; in the second case, it means that such a person will have no part in the Last Judgment because he will be affirmed by Jesus as His at the affirming judgment and will be resurrected at the second coming of Christ and live for ever! See below for more details.

MOSKALA: TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

During life, our response to Jesus is what determines the outcome of the judgment. We are free to make any decision we please, but we need to understand that upon his decision rests our eternal destiny. There is nothing God or anyone can do to change the outcome of our decisions. The real issues in his judgment are: What will I do in Jesus? Whom will I trust? What is my reaction to the Gospel? These decisions are done during a lifetime with consequences for all eternity—saved or condemned, faithful or unfaithful, good or evil. Nothing and no one can reverse our decisions or reverse the passing of God's judgment.

All humanity those who ask for forgiveness but also those who refuse to accept Jesus as their personal Savior, are the participants at this judgment. God is the primary witness, because his judgment has a more or less private character. It occurs between God and the believer. Of course, people living around the saved must notice the profound change in their lives, because the Gospel always has ethical dimensions.

The following simple illustration demonstrates what Christ means to the repentant person. We sinners are like a paper upon which are written all our and many sins. Jesus Christ is represented by a Bible. As sinners who have heard the good news about God, and for the first time were attracted to Him for His goodness, kindness, faithfulness, and love toward us. We see His beautiful holiness, grace, and tender care. We accept Him as our Creator and Savior; we respond to His grace. This is how we are coming to Him as we are. If we come to Him and confess our sins openly, sincerely, and honestly, He is faithful and just to forgive all our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7; Isa 1:17). He accepts us 100%, in our own reservation, and we are in Christ hidden in Him, as the paper can be placed inside the Bible and becomes totally hidden in the Bible. We are thus completely covered by the white robe of His righteousness. This means that His righteousness is our righteousness; His purity is our purity; His perfection is our perfection; His character is our character; and we are seen by God as if we had never sinned!³⁶ Moreover, when the heavenly Father looks upon us, He does not see us sinners, but His beloved son Jesus Christ! This is the perfect Gospel.

This in Christ alone is a dominant thought in Pauline writings. We have everything in Christ (see, for example, Rom 3:22; 6:11, 23; 8:31; 9:1; 12:5; 16:7, 9, 10; 1 Cor 1:2, 4, 30; 3:1; 4:10, 15; et).³⁷

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

has done for us from Creation to the present. The marvelous deeds of God climaxed on the cross of Jesus. Our relationship to Jesus, therefore, decides our eternal destiny.

However, the good news does not stop here. God also gives to His followers eternal life. Those who believe in Jesus already *now have* (not merely *will*

MOSKALA: TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

need to wait for the second coming of Christ to encounter Him face to face, receive eternal life, and actually be seated in Him on the throne (Rev 3:21); His kingdom of glory is not there. Because God's trial and His coming is so certain, therefore we already have everything in Him now

We need to come to the throne of grace everyday (Heb 4:16; 7:25; 10:19-28). Because we are saved by the grace of God in Jesus Christ through faith (Eph 2:8), this has ethical consequences; we are now created in Christ to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (v10).

If God is so involved in us, how can separate us from such great love of God? Paul is certain that no one and nothing on earth or in the whole universe can separate us from that love (Rom 8:35-39). Let me stress that even sin cannot separate us from God, but only confessed sin, stubborn staying in sin, cherished sin will ultimately separate us from the love of God. On a long attitude kills whatever is valuable, beautiful and good.

When we accept Jesus we are justified, and as a result there is no more condemnation against us (Rom 5:1, 9; 8:1, 33, 34; 1 Cor 6:11).³⁹ God's grace works in the life of saved people. Grace is like a pregnancy; it works instantly even though it is not visible immediately. It needs time to be visible, tangible. It is the same in God's grace: it transforms, but time is required for the process. Justification is a creative power of God that brings new life. It is an existential process: it re-creates the life, in the final eschatological renewal and transformation starting in our time and space.

Jesus Christ declares that He is our Judge (John 5:22)! This does not contradict Dan 7:22, because the Aramaic text does not convey the idea that the Ancient of Days Himself is pronouncing judgment but that the judgment was pronounced (Peil form of *yehib*; Peil is a passive conjugation) in favor of the saints of the Most High. The biblical text in Dan 7 is silent as to who pronounced the judgment. However, in the context the best candidate for pronouncing the verdict is a heavenly and divine person (clouds are a symbol of the deity).⁴⁰ The Son of Man who is eternally related to the saints of the Most High, acts for them, and has the highest authority. He is presented at the center of the judgment session. The heavenly Father is presiding over the judgment but Jesus is actually the one pronouncing the verdict.

Although the Gospel that we sit in Jesus Christ already in heaven is so beautiful, this is not the end of the good news about God as the Judge. He is the One who is also conducting a judgment in heaven so that He can, in front of the whole universe, legally secure our place here forever. This leads us to the fourth needed and important phase of God's judgment.

39

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

God does not need to convene the judgment in heaven in order to condemn people, because we are all sinners and have been condemned to death. If He is calling a continuing session in heaven prior to His second coming,⁴¹ its primary purpose is to secure a legal place in the heavenly family for eternal Jesus, as the true Witness, will proclaim in front of the whole universe at the heavenly tribunal that we are His, that His grace is sufficient for us, that He made us new persons, changed by the power of His grace! He wants to secure it legally openly and publicly and also transparently to all inhabitants of the universe, so that no one during eternity will ever raise the question of something being done unfairly secretly and partially. Jesus makes it plain that the saved are trustworthy people, that they fit in heaven because God's amazing grace is a transforming grace that changes them. God wants us to be accepted into heaven without any doubts or question marks.

Phase number two of God's post-cross judgment is the pre-advent judgment described mainly in Dan 7:9-10; Mat 22:1-4; Rev 11:19; 14:7.⁴² This judgment is performed in heaven (Dan 7:9-10, 13-14) prior to the second coming of Christ when the rewards will be given. Seventh-day Adventists explain that this judgment started in 1844 according to the book of Daniel (Dan 7:25).⁴³

⁴¹The sequence of the events in Dan 7 is cyclical: after the fourth kingdom (Rome) here is: 1) a persecution of the saints (7:21, 23-25); 2) the judgment in heaven (9:2, 22a, 26); and 3) finally the kingdom of God (13:4, 22b, 27). This sequence is repeated three times in the same chapter!

⁴²Very often the judgments described in the New Testament do not make a clear distinction between the final phases of divine universal judgment. In some biblical passages regarding the judgment these particular phases blend together and look like one event. Only through the deeper insight of the immediate context and often through the larger context of the scriptural revelation does the light shed on the details help the reader understand a more distinct time framework of the specific judgment.

In similar fashion, the Old Testament mentions the first and the second coming of Christ together in one passage without paying special attention to the reality that they are describing two events (e.g., Isa 11:1-10; 52:1-10). Consider his analogy when looking into the constellation of Orion and seeing all of its stars from an earthly perspective, each star appears as if it is the same distance from us here on earth. However, although the stars look like they are on the same plane in the sky if one uses a telescope to view Orion, one realizes great distances in depth between the stars as well as dramatic variations in the distances between the different stars and the earth.

⁴³For the detailed exegetical and theological insights of the pre-advent judgment see Hasel, *Divine Judgment* (1984); Shea, *Daniel 7:12, 85-86*; Richard M. Daidson, *The Meaning of Nisdaq in Daniel 8:14*, *ÓJATS* 7/1 (Spring 1996): 107-119; Heppensall, *Our High Priest*, 107-109; Norman Gleason, *Christ is Coming! A Christ-centered Approach to Last-Day Events* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1998), 410-417.

It is important to differentiate between an eschatological time in general inaugurated by the first coming of Jesus and a specific prophetic time of the end starting in 1798 and 1844 according to the historicist school of prophetic interpretation (Dan 7:25). For the explanation of his prophetic eschatological time and the chronological aspect of the judgment see especially the following studies: Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 67-71; Dokhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 100-106; idem, *Daniel: The Vision of the End*, 11-14, 153; Richard M. Daidson, *The Confirmation*

MOSKALA: TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

We are judged by the standard of God's law, the Decalogue, which is the transcript of His character. Jesus Christ is a perfect living example and personification of his law (James 2:12-18; 1:25; Rom 2:13, 16; 3:21-26; Mat 16:27; John 8:46; 14:30)! He is here for us as our Judge, Advocate (defense attorney), and Intercessor; all at the same time (1 John 2:1). He presents our life in its entirety before the heavenly court as our true and faithful Witness, so we are not going through investigation here alone! We are not standing in front of the court exposed and abandoned as he court-administers its judgment. On the contrary, Jesus is here on our behalf.

In some misleading Christian paintings and pictures, the repentant sinner is portrayed as a lonely being in the middle of the courtroom in millions of angels as witnesses, while God is portrayed as the Judge of the event. Unfortunately, his wrong representation of the judgment does harm to the living character of God. The correct interpretation of the situation should be portrayed in the following way: the repentant sinner standing in the courtroom in Jesus by his side, being embraced by his or her Savior; or the sinner standing on the palm of the pierced hand of Jesus; or Jesus standing in the courtroom in the sinner drawn in His heart.

What is done here before more or less privately in the life of individuals in relationship between God and himself is now publicly made known to the whole universe. God affirms His judgment of justification in front of the universe to show that he saved and in close relationship with Him (it is not enough to marry to stay married). Therefore, the name of his judgment can be called _____ or _____ that certifies, seals, and ratifies what is done during a person's lifetime. From the perspective of God and the believer, no investigation is going on. God knows who belongs to Him, what happened in the lives of believers, and what relationship they cultivated with Him during their lifetime. Believers cannot influence anything in that judgment. They are totally passive, because all decisions were made during their everyday life. Affirmative judgment is a confirmation of lifetime decisions!

Investigation at this judgment is going on only for the sake of the angels or inhabitants of the universe, because for their sake the books (records of lives) were opened (Dan 7:10). They need to clearly see that those people who will be admitted to heaven to live with them are new people. This is why Jesus Christ as the true Witness of our life decision, orientation, and attitudes. He who knows perfectly our relationship to Him presents our case to the universe. This presentation will be God's revelation of His amazing grace and transforming power (rather than a display of our sins). The effects will be celebrated in the lives of the individual sinners. It will be a great power-point presentation of how He

of the Sanctuary Message. *JATS* 2/1 (1991): 93-104. See also a pertinent dissertation written by Gerhard Pfandl, *The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series, vol. 2 (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society 1992), 272, 314, 317.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

worked for us, in us, and through us! Nothing mysterious, no secret activity. It is a legal procedure of admission to heaven in front of the whole universe. It will be plainly revealed if we sincerely accepted God as our Creator and Savior and embraced His grace, or if we were only acting as good actors or actresses.

God's love and justice is demonstrated when He accepts into the heavenly family those who repented and followed Him. God is proven just because Christ demonstrates the transformation of sinners by God's grace, Word, and Spirit. This process started in their lives, developing through time.

The common name given by Adventists to the pre-advent judgment is the *investigative judgment*. This designation perhaps does not best describe the overall nature of that judgment because from the perspective of God and the saved no investigation is going on. God knows who are His, and the redeemed made their decisions for God, and they know if they are in the right relationship with Him or they *chance* or live in sin. This judgment is *investigative* only from the standpoint of the angels. This is why I want to coin a new name for this particular judgment namely *affirmative judgment*, because God in front of the universe affirms or confirms the relationship established between Him and believers during their lives. Nothing mysterious, hidden, or esoteric is performed at this judgment. It is a *revelatory judgment* because Jesus personally reveals the ethical dynamics of the relationship between Him and His faithful children.⁴⁴

This judgment is like the final inspection of a horse. Inspection comes after a long period of construction, and at the end comes the process of *sealing* or approving the work. Part of his affirmative judgment is a review of lives, a demonstration of life orientation and attitudes, and finally comes the confirmation of a judged person. The pre-advent judgment is the last legal procedure before the second coming of Jesus to make clear to the universe who at the second coming of Christ will be saved and who rejected.

All professing believers in God are judged, not only those who truly follow Him but also those who are opposing His people in the name of their God. In a sense, God is also indicated, as it is demonstrated that His previous approval of a believer was correct. In his affirmative judgment God is indicated in forgiving those who asked openly, sincerely and honestly for forgiveness of their sins, transgressions, and mistakes.

⁴⁵ In

⁴⁴ Ian T. Blazen, *Judgment and Judgment* (70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Washington: General Conference Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 339-388; idem, *Judgment and Judgment: Justification by Faith and Judgment According to Works*, *Adventist Review*, 28 July 1983, 46; idem, *Judgment and Judgment: Pre-advent Judgment and Judgment*, *Adventist Review*, 25 August 1983, 91; Heppenstall, *Our High Priest*, 131-140.

⁴⁵ Dan 8:23 reveals that the little horn, the antichrist power which played God, tried to change God's law, trampled down His throne, and persecuted God's faithful followers, is judged and condemned to death (see Dan 7:11, 26, and Dan 8:25). For all the details of his phase of God's judgment see especially Hasel, *Divine Judgment* (1942).

MOSKALA: TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

MOSKALA: TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

Jesus (2 Thess 1:6-10; 2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:21). The key biblical passage describing his judgment is found in Rev 20:11-15.⁴⁸

What is the purpose of his judgment? We do not have much in the biblical text itself about this judgment herefore we need to deduce things from the larger context. God wants all His people to be happy throughout eternity despite the fact that somebody below by the sea will not be present. God opens to be redeemed all His inner thoughts and decisions and explains to them that He was doing to save those who will eternally perish, and He will unmask their inner reactions, thoughts, feelings, and motivations. God will take time to explain to the saved what they were really doing and how they were thinking and feeling.

This judgment will be an endorsement of God's previous decisions taken during the lifetime of the wicked and publicly displayed in heaven during the affirmative judgment. What was confirmed previously in heaven in front of the heavenly inhabitants during the affirmative judgment is now displayed to be redeemed. Everybody will understand by God had to decide negatively in their cases, because God's decision in regard to their lives was built on their negative attitude toward God. The cross, the ultimate revelation of God's love and the only solution to their wickedness, was rejected by these people!

To be redeemed, learning by God could not admit the unrepentant to heaven and to the New Jerusalem comes as a deeper revelation of His love and justice. They understand that He could not forgive those who did not ask for forgiveness or asked for it hypocritically. God demonstrates that these people rejected His saving grace that leads to good works and obedience (Gal 5:6; Mat 7:21-23; 1 Cor 7:19).

All the redeemed attest to God's goodness, love, and justice, despite their below human fellow-being condemned to eternal death. The nature of his judgment can be characterized as when all of the redeemed attest to God's justice and love in His decision not to admit to heaven those who did not surrender their lives to God,⁴⁹ refused His saving activity for them, and continued in their destructive behavior. They will also judge the evil angels and Satan (Rev 20:4; 1 Cor 6:2-3; Mat 19:28). The book of Revelation tells life about this judging activity of the redeemed during the millennium.

⁴⁸For deeper exegetical insights into this biblical passage, see Peter M. van Bemmelen, "The Millennium and the Judgment," *JATS* 8/1 (1997): 150-60; Joel Badina, "The Millennium," *On Symposium on Revelation-Book II*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring: General Conference Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 225-42; C. Merri Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation*, 494-500; Stefanovic, 561-567; Giley 438-457; Ekkehardt Müller, "Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 20," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 37/2 (1999): 227-55.

⁴⁹For how people are saved at the judgment see Clifford Goldstein, *Graffiti in the Holy of Holies* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2003), 115-42; Morris Venden, *Good News and Bad News About the Judgment* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1982); Giley 458-61; LaRondelle, *Assurance of Salvation*.

J

MOSKALA: TOWARD A BIBLICAL I TwOWARD A Tj A OW Tm0071 TwOW6RD A HEOLGY OF

MOSKALA: TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

may be confident and ashamed before him at his coming (1 John 2:28), and

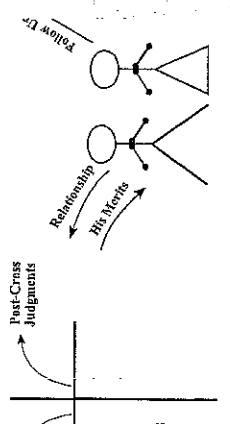
Forward Theology of God's Universe
Seven Phases of
(An Overview of Theology)

Sal Judgment
Divine Judgment
Christocentric
Moskalev

the Cross

ment: Celebratio
ing Activity
ocentric Approach

Phase	Scripture	Event	5. Judgment at the Coming of Christ	6. Judgment During Millennium	7. The Last (Final) Judgment
I. Pre-Formation	Gen 3:4-9; 11-12; Exod 7-12; Exod 13:4; etc.	1. Eschatological Judgment	Rev 1:1-6; Matt 13:14; Dan 1:1-2	Rev 20:4-6; 1 Cor 6:2-3; Matt 19:28	Rev 20:7-10, 11-15; John 12:48; Acts 17:31
I. Pre-Cross Judgments		2. Eschatological Judgment			
I. Pedagogical Judgment		3. Judgment During our Lifetime			
I. Pedagogical Judgment		3. Decisive Judgment			
		4. Pre-Cross Judgment			
		4. Affirmative Judgment			
		5. Judgment During Millennium			
		5. Executive Judgment			
		6. Judgment During Millennium			
		6. Executive Judgment			
		7. The Last (Final) Judgment			
		7. Executive Judgment			



Time:	2. JUDGMENT ON THE CROSS		4. Pre-Advent Judgment	5. Judgment at the Second Coming of Christ	6. Judgment during Millennium	7. The Last (Final) Judgment
Nature:	2. Central-cosmic Judgment		4. Affirmative Judgment	5. Realization Judgment	6. Attestation Judgment	7. Executive Judgment
Direct Beneficiaries: (For the Sake of)	Whole universe including humanity		Whole universe (angels)	Redeemed people	Redeemed people	Whole universe including redeemed
Further Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •God's triumphant victory over Satan, evil, sin •God is judged and vindicated: He is God of love, justice, truth, freedom, and order •God passed judgment upon sin and Satan •The whole world and all humanity judged •God's revelation—Who He is 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Revelation of God's grace and power (rather than display our sins); demonstration of His worked-for-in and through •Nothing mysterious •No secret activities •Legal admission in heaven in front of the whole universe •Plainly and openly revealed who accepted God as his/her Creator •Savior •God is proven just because sinners transformed by God's grace, Word and Spirit •God's love and justice are demonstrated with Him •He accepts into heavenly family those who repent and followed Him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Resurrection of dead in Christ •Consummation of hope of all hopes •Jesus Christ with rewards •All living humans judged but only faithful believers saved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •God waits that all redeemed are happy through whole eternity •Revelation of God's love and justice while not forgiving those who rejected His saving grace •All redeemed attest to God's goodness and justice in admitting into heaven those who refused His saving activity for them and continue in destructive behavior •Judgment of evil angels and Satan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •All intelligent beings in the universe will serve God faithfully out of love and gratitude because they know goodness of God •The overall judgment has very positive results •God as the surgeon •God as the Re-Creator •Total undoing of the damage done by sin •Salvation and life secured for all eternity •Sin or rebellion will never occur again

Theology of God's Judgment: Revelation is Open—God's Ways Are Justifying Sinners Who Accept Him as His Character in How He Deals with Fallen Angels, and How He Saves Them

Journal of God's Judgment: A Cosmic Approach," Journal of the Society of the Cross in Seven Phases of Divine Universalist Theological Society, 15, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 138-165

For further details, see Jiri Moskala, "Toward a Biblical Theology of Judgment: An Overview of a Theocentric-Christian Approach,"