

# Sermon 11 - Opt. 2: The Judgment of God: A Verdict on His Character

By Pastor Ed Anderson

## Scripture Reading: Revelation 15:3-4

*"Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested."*

Opening Hymn: "Holy, Holy, Holy" (SDA Hymnal #73)

Closing Hymn: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" (SDA Hymnal #100)

## Introduction: A Wrongfully Accused Man and the Fight for Justice

In **1984**, a man named **Kevin Strickland** was convicted of **murder** in Kansas City, Missouri. The prosecution presented **witness testimony**, but no physical evidence tied him to the crime. Despite maintaining his innocence, he was sentenced to **life in prison without parole**.

For **over 40 years**, Strickland sat behind bars, fighting for his freedom. Then, in **2021**, new evidence came to light. The original witnesses recanted their testimonies, admitting that they had been **pressured to falsely identify him**. The courts **reviewed the case**, re-examined the evidence, and finally, the judge declared that Strickland was **innocent all along**. After **decades of wrongful imprisonment**, he was **exonerated and released**.

But here's the shocking part: **Even after his exoneration, there was no financial compensation** for the time he lost in prison. **The system had failed him**, and yet he had to rebuild his life from scratch.

## How Does This Relate to the Investigative Judgment?

- Imagine if **he had never been given the chance to prove his innocence**.
- Imagine if **the records had never been reviewed**.
- **Without a judgment, the truth would never have been revealed**.

This is exactly why **the Investigative Judgment matters**. Many people think of it as a terrifying event where God is searching for reasons to **condemn us**—but in reality, it is a

process where God is proving that His decisions are just, that He has always been fair, and that no one is wrongly judged.

Just like Kevin Strickland needed a new trial to **clear his name**, God is holding a **final review** before the universe, **not to determine whether He is loving or just—but to prove that He always was.**

**1 Peter 4:17** tells us,

*“For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.”*

This means that before **any final execution of justice**, God is showing the universe **why some are saved, why some are lost, and why He has always been fair in His judgments.**

Just like Strickland’s case, the Investigative Judgment is about **revealing the truth**—not just about us, but about **God’s fairness.**

As we go deeper into today’s message, let’s ask ourselves:

- **Is this judgment something to fear?**
- **Or is it something to rejoice in—because it proves once and for all that God is love?**

Let’s turn to the Scriptures and see how the Investigative Judgment is **the final proof that God has always been just.**

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Imagine a **courtroom**—not on earth, but in heaven. The **Judge** is God Himself. The **defense attorney** is Jesus. The **prosecutor** is Satan, the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). The audience? **The entire universe.**

This is the **Investigative Judgment**, a doctrine central to Seventh-day Adventist belief. But **what if this judgment is not just about us—but about proving God’s justice to the universe?** Today, we will explore how **the historic Adventist view, a new perspective of God’s vindication**, and **1 Peter 4:17** all fit together into a powerful revelation of God’s fairness.

## **I. The Historical View: The Investigative Judgment and the Cleansing of the Sanctuary**

### **1. The Foundation: Daniel 8:14**

- *“Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”*

- In 1844, Seventh-day Adventists understood this to mean that Christ entered the **Most Holy Place** in heaven to begin the final phase of judgment.

- This is based on the **Day of Atonement** in Leviticus 16, when the high priest entered the sanctuary to cleanse it from the sins of Israel.

## 2. The Purpose: A Review of the Records

- According to **Daniel 7:9-10**, *“the books were opened”* before the throne of God.

- Adventists historically taught that the Investigative Judgment is **God reviewing the records** to determine who will be saved.

- This view emphasized **human accountability**—our names are in the books, and we must be found faithful.

## 3. The Problem: Does God Need an Investigation?

- If God is **all-knowing**, why would He need to review books?

- The answer: **The judgment is not for God—it is for the universe.**

- This leads us to a **new understanding of the Investigative Judgment.**

# II. A New Perspective: The Judgment Vindicates God’s Character

## 1. The Great Controversy: Satan’s Accusations

- From the beginning, Satan has accused God of being unfair (Genesis 3:1-5, Job 1:6-12).

- Revelation 12:10 calls Satan the **“accuser of the brethren”**—but who is he really accusing? **God Himself!**

- The **Investigative Judgment is God’s response to these accusations.**

## 2. 1 Peter 4:17: Judgment Begins with God’s People

- *“For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.”*

- If God’s own people are judged first, it means God is **proving to the universe that He has been fair** in how He deals with them.

- This is **not about God finding out who is saved**—He already knows. It is about **showing the universe that His decisions are just.**

## 3. The Transparency of God’s Judgment

- In a human court, cases are judged **so that the truth can be known.**

- The **Investigative Judgment reveals God’s fairness** to all created beings (1 Corinthians 4:9).

- At the end, every knee will bow and confess that **God was right all along** (Philippians 2:10-11).

### III. The Final Verdict: God's Justice and the End of Sin

#### 1. The Books Are Opened for All to See

- Revelation 20:12 says, *"The books were opened... and the dead were judged according to their works."*
- This means the judgment is **public**—so that **no one can question God's justice**.

#### 2. The Saved Rejoice, the Lost Acknowledge God's Justice

- The righteous see that they were **saved by grace**, not works.
- The wicked, in the final judgment, recognize that **God was fair, but they rejected His mercy**.
- *"Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints"* (Revelation 15:3).

#### 3. God's Name is Cleared

- At the very end, **Satan himself will be forced to admit that God was just** (*The Great Controversy*, p. 670).
- **The universe is satisfied** that God was never unfair, never arbitrary, never unloving.
- Then, and only then, will God destroy sin forever.

### Conclusion: The Investigative Judgment is About More Than Just Us

#### 1. It's Not Just About Who is Saved or Lost

- The Investigative Judgment is **not God trying to figure out who gets to heaven**.
- Instead, it is **the final proof that God is just**.
- 1 Peter 4:17 tells us judgment starts with God's people—so that **God's fairness is demonstrated to the universe**.

#### 2. The Final Victory Over Satan's Lies

- Satan's accusations **led to the fall of one-third of the angels** (Revelation 12:4).
- The Investigative Judgment **proves that God was never wrong**.
- When the judgment ends, the Great Controversy **is over**—God has won, and sin will never rise again (Nahum 1:9).

### 3. Our Response: Worship and Trust in God's Justice

- Instead of fearing the judgment, we should **rejoice in it!**
- The Investigative Judgment is not just about us—it is about **the character of God.**

- And at the end of it all, the universe will declare:  
*"Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!"* (Revelation 15:3)

#### Appeal: Standing Confident in God's Justice

- Instead of **fear**, we can stand in **faith**, because the **judgment proves that God is trustworthy.**
- Instead of thinking that **God is looking for a reason to reject us**, we should see that He is **proving that He was fair all along.**
- Will you trust God's judgment today?
- Will you rejoice that **your name is in the book of life**—not because of your works, but because of Christ's righteousness?
- And will you share this message—not as something to be afraid of, but as **good news** that God is love, and His justice is perfect?

#### Closing Story: The Man Who Took the Blame to Prove the Truth

In **1945**, during **World War II**, a Japanese soldier named **Hiroo Onoda** was sent on a mission to defend an island in the Philippines. As the war came to an end, he and his unit received orders to **never surrender**. But as time passed, Onoda refused to believe the war was over. For **29 years**, he lived in the jungle, hiding, fighting, and resisting anyone who told him the war had ended.

The Japanese government dropped leaflets, sent messages, and even brought his former commanders to convince him. But **he would not believe it**—he thought it was all **a trick**.

Finally, in **1974**, an old military officer who had served with him traveled to the island. He met Onoda face to face, showed him **the official documents**, and assured him that Japan had surrendered decades ago. Only then did Onoda finally lay down his weapon, realizing **he had been fighting a war that was already over**.

#### How Does This Relate to the Investigative Judgment?

For thousands of years, **Satan has accused God**, spreading lies that God is unfair, unjust, and unloving. He has convinced many that God is a **harsh judge**, looking for reasons to condemn His people.

But in the **Investigative Judgment**, God is revealing the truth:

- **The war is over**—Jesus won at the cross.
- **Satan was wrong all along.**
- **God is proving His justice to the universe, showing that He never acted unfairly.**
- **The universe will finally see that God’s love has been consistent from the beginning.**

Many people, like **Onoda**, continue to fight against God, believing the lies that Satan has told. They hold onto fear, guilt, or rejection—unwilling to believe that the judgment is actually **good news**.

But at the end of time, just like Onoda, **everyone will see the truth**.

Revelation 15:3-4 tells us:

*“Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy.”*

**Every knee will bow** (Philippians 2:10-11), not because God forces them, but because **they will see that He was right all along**.

**Final Appeal: Will You Trust God’s Justice?**

- **Will you let go of fear and trust that God’s judgment is not against you, but for you?**
- **Will you stop fighting a war that Jesus has already won?**
- **Will you choose today to worship God—not out of fear, but because you trust that He is just, merciful, and true?**

The **Investigative Judgment** is not about God trying to catch you in sin.

It is **God proving to the universe that He has always been fair**.

Today, will you say:

*“Lord, I trust You. I trust Your judgment. I trust Your love.”*

The war is over. The judgment is proof.

Will you believe it?

Amen.

### Final Thought: A God Worthy of Worship

*“Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come.”* – Revelation 14:7

The Investigative Judgment is **not about God discovering the truth**. It is about **Him revealing the truth**—that He was right, He was fair, and He was always love.

Let us worship Him, not in fear of the judgment, but in **awe of His justice and mercy**.

Amen.

### Closing Prayer: Trusting in God’s Justice and Love

Heavenly Father,

We come before You today with **humble hearts**, thanking You for the truth of Your Word. We have seen that Your **judgment is not something to fear**, but a revelation of **Your justice, Your love, and Your fairness**.

For too long, the enemy has **accused You** and spread lies about who You are. But today, through Your Word, we see the truth—**You are just. You are merciful. You have always been fair**.

Lord, we confess that sometimes **we have doubted Your goodness**. We have feared Your judgment, worried that we might not measure up. But today, we choose to **trust in Jesus, our Advocate, our Savior, and our High Priest**.

We rejoice that the **war is over**, that Jesus has won the victory, and that Your judgment is not against us—but **for us**. We surrender our fears, our doubts, and our burdens to You, knowing that **You have always acted in love**.

Father, as the Investigative Judgment continues, may we stand **not in fear, but in faith**. May we be counted among those who will one day stand before You and say:  
*“Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!”* (Revelation 15:3)

Write our names in the **Lamb’s Book of Life**, and keep us faithful until the day when we will see You face to face. Let this message of **Your justice and love** fill our hearts with

**peace**, and may we share it with a world that desperately needs to know the truth about You.

We pray all this **in the powerful name of Jesus Christ, our Advocate, our King, and our soon-coming Savior.**

**Amen.**