

A CASE STUDY IN ADVENTIST EISEGESIS:  
JUDGMENT/SANCTUARY THEOLOGY  
IN DANIEL 7-8

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Adventists ground their belief in the Investigative Judgment on two passages: Dan 7:9-10,22,26 and Daniel 8:13-14. The first (itself spread among the chapter's four prophetic sequences: vss. 1-14, 15-18, 19-22, 23-27) follows descriptions of the little horn's blasphemous attacks against heaven and persecution of the saints. It describes a celestial judgment, over which "the Ancient One" presides (Dan 7:8,11,20-22,24-25).

Adventists traditionally refer to this trial as the "Investigative Judgment." Quoting Dan 7:9,10, Ellen White writes: "Thus was presented to the prophet's vision the great and solemn day when the characters and the lives of men should pass in review before the Judge of all the earth, and to every man should be rendered 'according to his works.'" (GC 479)

There is no doubt that this judgment has universal consequences: its purview evidently includes all kingdoms under heaven (cf. 7:11-14,18,22,27). However, its character is political, resulting in social upheaval: the court destroys kingdoms (7:11,26), expropriates their dominion (26,12[?]), and grants authority to the Messianic kingdom (13-14,18,22,27). Although these verdicts are rooted in moral judgments (e.g. condemning the blasphemies and persecutory attacks of the little horn), they apply to national units—not individuals—in keeping with the historical-political interest of Daniel 7. Furthermore, the court (however eschatologically consequent) addresses a temporal circumstance. Heaven apparently convenes the court in direct response to the activities of the little horn, especially its persecution of the saints (7:21-22).

Therefore, the Adventist understanding of that celestial judgment (as an eschatological review of individual consciousness in the Atonement tradition) is foreign to the text—eisegetically inserted. The subjects of the trial are not individual men and women, but the national powers that have oppressed the saints: particularly the little horn and its beast (7:11,12,21-22,25-26). The court reviews and condemns their evil deeds, destroying these entities and compensating their victims with "an everlasting kingdom." Daniel 7 thereby represents an executive judgment upon God's enemies, not an investigative judgment of God's people.

Disappointingly, the Adventist reading of Daniel 8:13-14 manifests a similar tendency: overlooking contextual indicators in favor of a foreign interpretive background. Dan 8:14 predicts: "unto 2,300 days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (KJV). Adventists interpret this cleansing as the

antitypical Day of Atonement (cf. Lev 16). According to this belief, at the end of the 2,300 day period (allegedly terminating in 1844 CE), Christ the High Priest entered into a final stage of his salvific ministration: purging the accumulated sins of the people from the Heavenly Sanctuary (an act that will consummate in the Second Coming).

Unfortunately, this interpretation is foreign to the natural sense of the entire chapter. Dan 8:11-12 describes the attack of another little horn (perhaps corresponding to the one in Dan 7) upon the celestial realm. In keeping with the chapter's cultic character (Shea 196-198), the little horn's focuses his attack upon the "holy place" or "sanctuary." In its arrogance, it makes war against the "prince of the host": "taking away the regular burnt offering (*tamid*)" and "overthrowing the place of his sanctuary."

Parallel passages further detail the activities of the little horn. Dan 11:31 (which Adventists agree is parallel to Dan 8:11-12) also describes the removal of "the regular burnt offering." However, that text discusses the simultaneous pollution of the sanctuary (as an abomination that causes desolation is set up). Likewise, Dan 12 speaks of "the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up," linking the two actions into a single event. Therefore, the little horn's attack against the sanctuary includes the edifice's pollution or desecration.

Daniel 8:14 describes the restoration and ritual purification of the sanctuary after this period of desecration: "unto 2,300 days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (cf. temple purification in Neh 13:4-9; 1 Mcc 4:36-59). After the little horn defiled the sanctuary, it must be "cleansed." Therefore, the true interpretive context of the cleansing described in Dan 8:14 is the ritual defilement described in Dan 8:11-12.

Consequently, Adventist attempts to read the theology of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16) into this passage are unfounded. The "defilement" requiring purgation is not that transferred by the sin offerings of the camp of Israel. In fact, the daily offerings have been suspended: there can be no transfer of guilt (Dan 8:12). Rather, the sanctuary must be purified because the little horn has "trampled upon" it: polluting its courts (Dan 8:11.13). Temple restoration is the only interpretive background for this passage, as demonstrated by every contextual indication. By contrast, the Adventist reading introduces foreign and unwarranted "backgrounds," ignoring (and thereby violating) the demands of the passage itself. The "Investigative Judgment" follows a gross misinterpretation of Daniel 7-8; thoughtful Adventists will abandon it.

## Work Cited

Shea, William H. 1986. "Unity of Daniel." *Symposium on Daniel: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*. Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 2. Ed. Frank B. Holbrook. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald.

White, Ellen G. 1950. *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (1911). Nampa ID: Pacific Press.

I have yet to read Desmond Ford or any of other critics of this Adventist doctrine, and therefore cannot credit them in this paper. Nevertheless, I am confident they must have arrived at similar conclusions.