

The Pre-Advent Judgment in Daniel 7 through the Lens of Ancient Near East Legal Practices

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Abstract

The Pre-Advent or Investigative Judgment is among the most criticized doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. To many non-Adventist scholars, this doctrine is often perceived as the most perplexing and difficult to comprehend, which contributes to its frequent criticism. One of the key texts supporting this doctrine is Daniel 7, which portrays a heavenly judgment scene. This paper seeks to analyze Daniel 7 in the context of Ancient Near Eastern judicial practices and legal cases mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, aiming to identify the roles of its key characters in the judgment scene. The objective of this exposition is to address the most contested aspects of the Doctrine of the Pre-Advent Judgment and propose a resolution that may appeal to its critics. The study concludes that the role of the One Who is like the Son of Man—a symbol representing Jesus—is analogous to that of a debt guarantor or surety in the ancient Near Eastern legal system. This analogy suggests that Jesus assumes responsibility for the guilt of the saints of the Most High, making Him the primary focus of the judgment. The saints are also involved in the judgment due to their union with Jesus. This interpretation of the Pre-Advent Judgment addresses many of the critical issues raised by opponents of the doctrine and has significant implications for understanding the parallel vision in Daniel 8.

Keywords: Daniel 7 and 8, pre-Advent judgment, ANE legal practices

Introduction

The Pre-Advent/Investigative Judgment is one of the most criticized doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. For the non-Adventist scholars, among all the Adventist beliefs, this one is the most bizarre and the most difficult to comprehend.¹

¹ For example, Walter Martin, who gave a positive evaluation of the Adventist church in general, wrote regarding this doctrine, “Holding as they do to the

According to opponents of Adventism, this doctrine undermines the most foundational biblical teachings on salvation, atonement, and assurance in salvation.

However, even inside the church from time to time, some people denounced this doctrine claiming that it is unbiblical. Among the most famous Adventist opponents of the doctrine, A. F. Ballenger, W. W. Fletcher, D. Ford, and R. Cottrell might be mentioned, but of course, this list is far from being exhaustive.

Below are the most common arguments that were often put forward against this doctrine:

1. The doctrine of the pre-Advent judgment does not have biblical foundation. Even the word “investigative” cannot be found in the Bible.²
2. According to John 5:24, those who believe in Christ shall not come under judgment but passed from death to life.³
3. According to John 10:14 and 2 Tim 2:19, Jesus knows those who belong to Him and does not need to do any investigation.⁴
4. The doctrine is based on the modern understanding of the judicial system, which is not applicable to the biblical times.

doctrine of the investigative judgment, it is extremely difficult for us to understand how they can experience the joy of salvation and the knowledge of sins forgiven.” Walter Martin, *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 182–183. See also Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 126; Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and the Occult* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), 121.

² Desmond Ford, for instance, explicitly said, “There are no clear scriptures that teach the investigative judgment.” See, Desmond Ford, “Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment,” Unpublished manuscript, 1980, 470.

³ Martin, *The Truth about Seventh-Day Adventism*, 178.

⁴ Ibid, 179; Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 155.

5. The New Testament says nothing regarding this teaching.⁵
6. The idea of the pre-Advent judgment contradicts the doctrine of full atonement performed by Christ on the cross.⁶

This article pursues the goal of analyzing the doctrine of the pre-Advent judgment with two objectives: 1) to provide a fresh look at some aspects of the doctrine; 2) to deal with some of the objections raised by the opponents of the doctrine and to provide a new explanation for them. To achieve these objectives, I will focus on the study of Dan 7 as the key passage describing the pre-advent judgment. Dan 7 will be analyzed against the background of ANE judicial practices and also legal cases mentioned in the Hebrew Bible.

⁵ Usually, opponents of the Doctrine of the Pre-Advent Judgment argue not only that it is absent from the Gospels, but that the very concept of an investigative judgment fundamentally contradicts the core message of the New Testament. For instance, Jones asserts, “One who believes the ‘investigative judgment’ doctrine of Adventism cannot have a true conception of the gospel, much less enjoy its blessings. The two are as opposite to each other as sin to righteousness.... Everyone who really knows and believes the gospel, has the assurance that he is ‘accepted in the Beloved’; he *knows* that *he has been saved*. How can one enjoy the Good News of salvation if he must wait until God examines the books to see whether he is worthy of receiving it?” (*emphasis in original*). E. B. Jones, *Forty Bible-Supported Reasons Why You Should Not Be a Seventh-Day Adventist*, 5th ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Religion Analysis Service, 1946), 15.

⁶ For example, Ballenger argued that the teaching of the Heavenly Sanctuary and the Investigative judgment delays the justification of the believers until the close of probation, therefore, “It makes the atonement for sin and sinners depend upon what *man* had done for God instead of what God has done for man.” Albion Fox Ballenger, *An Examination of Forty Fatal Errors Regarding the Atonement* (Riverside, CA, n.d.), 52. See also Jones, *Forty Bible-Supported Reasons*, 9.

The ANE Legal Practices

In critical scholarship, Dan 7:9-14 is usually defined as a divine council scene⁷ and is interpreted in light of the descriptions of similar scenes in ancient Near Eastern literature, with particular attention paid to Ugaritic myths.⁸ Also, there is a consensus among scholars that Dan 7 describes the judgment scene.⁹ Usually, *1 Enoch* and the *Book of Giants* from Qumran are used as a background for studying the judgment scene of Daniel 7.¹⁰ However, there is a lack

⁷ Min Suc Kee, "The Heavenly Council and Its Type-Scene," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31.3 (2007): 259–73; John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 292; Marylyn Ellen White, "The Council of Yahweh: Its Structure and Membership" (PhD Dissertation, University of St. Michael's College, 2012), 48; Michael S. Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature" (PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin—Madison, 2004), 152. The question that is usually debated among scholars is the location of the council. While some scholars argue that it is taking place in heaven (see, for example, Elias Brasil de Souza, "The Heavenly Sanctuary/Temple Motif in the Hebrew Bible: Function and Relationship to the Earthly Counterparts" (PhD Dissertation, Andrews University, 2005), 450; Louis Francis Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, 1st ed., The Anchor Bible 23 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 217.), others insist that it is located on earth (see, for example, George Raymond Beasley-Murray, "The Interpretation of Daniel 7," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (January 1983): 49; John Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary 30 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 1989), 164.)

⁸ For example, Collins asserts, "The fact remains, however, that the ancient Canaanite myths provide the most adequate background for understanding the configuration of motifs that we find in Daniel 7" (Collins, *Daniel*, 294).

⁹ Paul R. Raabe, "Daniel 7: Its Structure and Role in the Book," *Harvard Annual Review* 9 (1985): 271; Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, The New American commentary 18 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 204; Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, 217; Collins, *Daniel*, 303.

¹⁰ Critical scholars usually assume that *1 Enoch* antedates the *book of Daniel* and might be a source of inspiration for the author of the book of Daniel. See Ryan Stokes, "The Throne Visions of Daniel 7, 1 Enoch 14, and the Qumran Book of Giants (4Q530): An Analysis of Their Literary Relationship," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 15, no. 3 (2008): 340–358; Joseph L. Angel, "The Divine

of research on how the ANE judicial practices may shed light on the understanding of Dan 7. Since a common legal tradition existed across all cultures of ANE,¹¹ it is logical to assume that the judgment scene depicted in Dan 7 must have many common features with other ancient legal customs. Below I will discuss different aspects of ancient legal traditions including the roles different parties played in a trial, place of trial, method of making the decision, etc.

The Judges

One must be very careful while applying modern terminology to the ancient milieu. Although there were judges, prosecutors, and similar officials in ancient times, they did not function in the same way as their modern counterparts. For example, in ancient cultures, usually there was no official position of a judge who was engaged solely in the decision of legal issues, but various officers performed the judges' functions.¹² For example, the "commanders of the guard" are mentioned as functioning as judges in the Hittite

Courtroom Scenes of Daniel 7 and the Qumran Book of Giants: A Textual and Contextual Comparison," in *The Divine Courtroom in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Ari Mermelstein and Shalom E. Holtz, Biblical interpretation series volume 132 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 25–48.

¹¹ As Moshe Weinfeld asserted, "the basic judicial procedure... was common to all ancient Near East people and is known to us at least from the middle of the second millennium B.C. onwards." (Moshe Weinfeld, "Judge and Officer in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East," *Israel Oriental Studies* 7 (1977): 88. See also Raymond Westbrook, Bruce Wells, and F. Rachel Magdalene, *Law from the Tigris to the Tiber: The Writings of Raymond Westbrook* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 305.

¹² As Sophie Demare-Lafont pointed out, some professional judges existed already in Sumer and in Old Babylonian Empire but we have very little information about them and since they did not carry the title "judge," most probably, they occupied several offices including the office of a judge. See Sophie Demare-Lafont, "Judicial Decision-Making: Judges and Arbitrators," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, ed. Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson, Oxford handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 342.

documents.¹³ The same is true for Neo-Assyrian Empire where there were no professional judges but different officials were in charge of the dispensation of justice.¹⁴ In the Neo-Babylonian Empire the judicial system was more developed and engaged various groups of professionals, like court scribes, royal notaries and judges.¹⁵ However, in Babylonia, along with the professional judges, many other government officials took part as judges in court proceedings with the right to rule on almost any subject.¹⁶ Sometimes, the matter was decided not by one judge but by a panel or council of judges. As Westbrook and Beckman point out, the number of members of such an assembly might be 14 or even more.¹⁷ Except officially assigned administrators who were entitled to perform justice, the local communities also had a right to decide upon debatable issues in which their members were involved.¹⁸

The supreme power to judge any case belonged to the king who could at any time review or revoke the judgment made by any lower authority.¹⁹ Although the title “judge” was not often applied to the king, the judicial function was part of his responsibilities. Kings usually portrayed themselves as just rulers who loved justice and

¹³ Weinfeld, “Judge and Officer in Ancient Israel,” 71.

¹⁴ Karen Radner, “The Reciprocal Relationship between Judge and Society in the Neo-Assyrian Period,” *Maarav* 12.1–2 (2005): 42, 48–49.

¹⁵ Shalom E. Holtz, “The Career of a Neo-Babylonian Court Scribe,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 60 (2008): 81.

¹⁶ Usually, only the decisions on matters relating to religious offences were reserved for the temple officials. See Bruce Wells, “Competing or Complementary? Judges and Elders in Biblical and Neo-Babylonian Law,” *Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 16, no. 1 (2010): 77, 82.

¹⁷ Raymond Westbrook and Gary M Beckman, *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 30.

¹⁸ Demare-Lafont, “Judicial Decision-Making,” 340.

¹⁹ Radner, “The Reciprocal Relationship,” 66.

protected the offended and vulnerable. It was commonly understood that the duty to maintain justice was imposed on them by a deity.²⁰ It was expected that the king was accessible to all who was seeking his attention.²¹ Usually, people approached the king when their case was not given justice at a lower level. They could appeal either personally or by writing a petition. Many discovered written complains to the kings allow suggesting that the level of corruption was quite high and the matters were not always solved satisfactorily.²²

The king's judgment was understood as divinely inspired and, as a rule, his decision could not be revoked.²³ However, although the king was an absolute ruler and was not answerable to any human authority, his absolute power was restricted. He was supposed to rule according to certain standards of justice and if he failed to do this he might call upon himself and his kingdom the anger of the gods to whom he was subjugated.²⁴

²⁰ Demare-Lafont, "Judicial Decision-Making," 338.

²¹ Ibid., 338. However, it was not always possible. Sometimes kings exercised the judicial power through the proxy-officials assigned especially for judging on behalf of the king.

²² Radner, "The Reciprocal Relationship," 67.

²³ Demare-Lafont, "Judicial Decision-Making," 339.

²⁴ Westbrook and Beckman, *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*, 26. It is interesting to note that as a rule, a judge could not change his own decision once it was done. As Hammurabi's law says, "If a judge renders a judgment, gives a verdict, or deposits a sealed opinion, after which he reverses his judgment, they shall charge and convict that judge of having reversed the judgment which he rendered and he shall give twelve-fold the claim of the judgment; moreover, they shall unseat him from his judgeship in the assembly, and he shall never again sit in judgment with the judges." See, Martha Tobi Roth, Harry A. Hoffner, and Piotr Michalowski, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, 2. ed., Writings from the Ancient World 6 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 82.

The judicial system of Israel was not very much different from the practices described above. As Moshe Weinfeld pointed out, in Israel, the office of judge was usually combined with other administrative offices.²⁵ The Chronicler (1 Chr 26:29) reports that David appointed Levites to be officers (שָׁרִים) and judges (שׁוֹפְטִים), so the Levites performed not only the judicial functions but some other administrative duties. Most probably, the same is true regarding the judges appointed by Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 19:5-11). Although the text says primarily about their judicial functions, however, since Zebadiah son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, was appointed as one of two chiefs over them, most probably, they also must perform some other duties pertaining to the king's matters. Jeremiah was also judged by some officers, not by the professional judges (Jer 26).

One biblical story demonstrates how close the Israelites' and ANE judicial practices were. Joab hired a wise woman of Tekoa to tell the king David a fictional story about her two sons who were fighting and one killed another (2 Sam 14:4-11). This story reveals three important issues regarding the judicial system in Israel. First, the community had right to make judgment on different issues, including the criminal cases, since they required the death of the killer (2 Sam 14:7). Second, the king was accessible for almost everybody who was seeking the justice. Third, the king had a supreme power and could revoke the decision of the community.

The Parties

For any legal case, two parties were necessary, the litigant and the defendant. There were neither lawyers nor advocates in ancient times. The parties must speak for themselves.²⁶ It was also a

²⁵ To prove this, Weinfeld mentions Isaiah 1 where the prophet rebukes the officials for not exercising the just judgment. See Weinfeld, "Judge and Officer in Ancient Israel," 67.

²⁶ Radner, "The Reciprocal Relationship," 47. In Egypt there was a practice of using an official who can help the parties to be prepared for the hearing; also, in Nuzi it was possible that somebody can substitute the absent party, however,

responsibility of the parties to bring the witnesses or evidences confirming their case. As a rule, the plaintiff was also an accuser. In private cases, usually it was the plaintiff's responsibility to bring the defendant before the court.²⁷ However, it was also possible, if a plaintiff comes to the court alone just to present his case and the court summons the defendant.²⁸ The court also might summon a witness to argue for or against the case.²⁹ When the two parties made themselves available before the court, the hearing started and both parties presented their arguments. If the defendant did not appear before the court, most probably he might lose the case.

The Debt Guarantor

One more interesting role existed in the ancient judicial system—the role of debt guarantor or surety. When extending a loan to someone, it was imperative to have a guarantor for payment. The guarantor's responsibility was to ensure that the debtor would be available to the creditor at the appointed time for payment. Should the debtor fail to appear, the guarantor was obliged to settle the debt. Once the creditor's claim was settled, the surety had the right to seek reimbursement from the debtor.³⁰

it is doubtful if they might be called the "lawyers." See Westbrook and Beckman, *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*, 31.

²⁷ Westbrook and Beckman, *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*, 31.

²⁸ A special procedure of summoning the defendant is attested in many Neo-Babylonian documents, see Shalom E. Holtz, *Neo-Babylonian Court Procedure*, Cuneiform monographs v. 38 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 232-234.

²⁹ Westbrook and Beckman, *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*, 32.

³⁰ Raymond Westbrook, "Conclusion," in *Security for Debt in Ancient Near Eastern Law*, ed. Raymond Westbrook and Richard Jasnow, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 329; Holtz, *Neo-Babylonian Court Procedure*, 167.

False Accuser

The false accusation was considered a very serious crime in all ancient societies. In many ancient codices, the false accuser must face the penalty that would have been imposed on the accused (LH 1-4, LL 17, 33; MAL A. 18-19). Only in cases when equal retribution was not possible other penalty was prescribed.³¹ The book of Deuteronomy prescribes the same punishment for the false accusation as other ancient laws (Deut 19:16-19).

Place of Trial

In the documents of the Neo-Babylonian period the so-called “house of judgment” is mentioned as a place where the court was sitting.³² Unfortunately, not so much is known about what this place might be. It is not very likely that the judges had a designated place devoted solely for legal practices. Whatever the place of judgment could be the most important thing is that it must be a public space freely accessible for the witnesses, for example, at the city gate. Since the judicial responsibilities were usually additional duties given to different officers it is logical to assume that the legal procedure may take place at the main office of the judge, e.g. in the palace, temple, or other place where the officer sat.

Defining the Roles in Judgment Scene of Daniel 7

Several characters or group of characters can be found in the judgment scene of Daniel 7. These are:

³¹ This issue primarily pertains to false sexual accusations. If the accuser failed to prove the guilt of the accused, they would either face a fine (LL 33) or be subjected to corporal punishment and forced labor (MAL A. 18-19).

³² F. Rachel Magdalene, “The ANE Legal Origins of Impairment as Theological Disability and the Book of Job,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 34, no. 1 (2007): 33; Joachim Oelsner, Bruce Wells, and Cornelia Wunsch, “Mesopotamia: Neo-Babylonian Period,” in *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*, ed. Raymond Westbrook et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 2:918.

1. the Ancient of Days who is accompanied by a multitude of servants (vv. 9-10a);
2. the court (v. 10b);
3. the One like the Son of Man (v. 13);
4. the saints of the Most High (vv. 18, 22, 27);
5. the little horn (vv. 8, 11, 20-21, 25).

Let me first start with the discussion of the traditional identification of roles in the judgment scene suggested by the SDA theologians.

Traditional Distribution of Roles

Adventist scholars widely agree that in Dan 7, the Ancient of Days serves as a judge,³³ presiding over the judgment of Christians who are described as the “saints of the Most High.” The purpose of the judgment is to demonstrate to the whole universe “who among those who ever professed to be followers of God deserve to inherit and live in the eternal kingdom of God. All who remain loyal in faith to the end will be vindicated in the pre-Advent judgment. Their sins will be blotted out because Christ took care of them.”³⁴

The role of Jesus who is described in the judgment scene as the One who is like the Son of Man³⁵ is a bit controversial. Many

³³ Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (Takoma Park, Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 1944), 113; Arthur J. Ferch, “The Judgment Scene in Daniel 7,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981), 164; Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 114–115.

³⁴ Gerhard F. Hasel, “Divine Judgment,” in *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 842.

³⁵ The identity of the One who is like the Son of Man has sparked debates among critical scholars, with various theories proposed to explain his identification.

Adventist scholars agree that he is a representative of the saints of the Most High.³⁶ However, there is a very common understanding that Jesus in this scene assumes two roles: an advocate and a judge.³⁷ The assigning Jesus with the role of a judge is needed mostly to reconcile the interpretation of Dan 7 with other texts, for example, John 5:22 “the Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son.”

Thus he was identified as Gabriel by Z. Zevit (Ziony Zevit, “The Structure and Individual Elements of Daniel 7,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 80, no. 3 (1968): 395), as Michael by J. Collins (Collins, *Daniel*, 310), as a symbol for the “holy ones of the Most High” by Di Lella (Alexander A. Di Lella, “The One in Human Likeness and the Holy Ones of the Most High in Daniel 7,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39.1 (1977): 1–19; as the Angel of the Lord by P. Munoa (Phillip Munoa, “The Son of Man and the Angel of the Lord: Daniel 7.13–14 and Israel’s Angel Traditions,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 28, no. 2 (2018): 143–67). Nevertheless, SDA commentators unanimously agree that this figure is none other than Jesus Christ. See, for example, Loron Wade, “Son of Man’ Comes to the Judgment in Daniel 7:13,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11, no. 1 (2000): 277–281.

³⁶ Francis D. Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978), 4:829. G. Hasel also confirms this, “Christ does not judge at that time. But Jesus Christ, the risen Saviour, is present at this judgment (Dan. 7:13, 14), taking the role of support for those whose names come up for judgment.” See Hasel, “Divine Judgment,” 840.

³⁷ Roy Allan Anderson, *Unfolding Daniel’s Prophecies* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1975), 99–100; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 1981), 1:110; Frank D. Holbrook, ed., “Christ in Heavenly Sanctuary (Consensus Document),” in *Doctrine of the Sanctuary: A Historical Survey; (1845 - 1863)*, Daniel and Revelation Committee series / Biblical Research Institute 5 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Inst, 1989), 230; Alberto R. Treiyer, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment: From the Pentateuch to Revelation* (Siloam Springs, AR: Creation Enterprises International, 1992), 333; Jiří Moskala, “Toward a Biblical Theology of God’s Judgment: A Celebration of the Cross in Seven Phases of Divine Universal Judgment (An Over-View of a Theocentric-Christocentric Approach),” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15, no. 1 (2004): 153.

The roles of the plaintiff and accuser are not very clear, at least they are not very much emphasized. For example, G. Hasel says, “‘The saints of the Most High’ were under heavy attack by the ‘little horn,’ which persecuted them for a long time and killed many of them (vv. 21, 25). God takes up their case in the pre-Advent judgment.”³⁸ From this quotation, one might infer that the little horn is an accuser, or the saints lodge complaints against the little horn. However, the latter option is not possible because it is generally assumed that the saints are being accused. Marvin Moore ascribes the role of an accuser to Satan based on Rev 12:10.³⁹

Also, it is important to note that the understanding of the doctrine of the pre-Advent judgment was being changed over the time. The pioneers understood that this judgment will determine whose sins must be blotted out and who will participate in first resurrection.⁴⁰ However, later on the focus was shifted and the purpose of judgment was perceived primary as “to provide the angels with an opportunity to review God’s dealings with His professed people, so they can see the justice of His decisions about each one.”⁴¹ Also, it is often emphasized that during the pre-Advent judgment God is also vindicated because angels will confirm that God’s dealing with the people is fair and just.⁴² In spite of this shift of accent the idea that the sins of the righteous people will be finally blotted out based on the judgment decision is still being emphasized.⁴³ Jiri Moskala

³⁸ Hasel, “Divine Judgment,” 841.

³⁹ Marvin Moore, *The Case for the Investigative Judgment: Its Biblical Foundation* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 2010), 44–45.

⁴⁰ J. N. Andrews, *The Judgment: Its Events and Their Order* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 16–17.

⁴¹ Moore, *The Case for the Investigative Judgment*, 99.

⁴² Anderson, *Unfolding Daniel’s Prophecies*, 98–99; Moskala, “Toward a Biblical Theology of God’s Judgment,” 154.

⁴³ Moore, *The Case for the Investigative Judgment*, 209.

suggested a new terminology, the “affirmative judgment,” to emphasize that the purpose of the judgment is primarily to confirm before the universe that the saints sincerely accepted Jesus and now can enter the heavenly dwellings and be part of the heavenly family.⁴⁴

The traditional explanation of the participants’ roles in the pre-Advent judgment is susceptible to criticism. Firstly, the idea that Jesus holds two contradictory offices is illogical. A fundamental characteristic of any judge is the freedom from prejudices and biases. If Jesus simultaneously serves as both judge and advocate, he inevitably aligns with one side and cannot be objective. Moreover, assigning Jesus the role of a judge fails to resolve the contradiction. According to John 5:22, the Father is not expected to judge any individual, yet He is depicted as the Ancient of Days and a judge in Daniel 7. The idea that God is also vindicated during the pre-Advent judgment also contributes to the confusion in understanding of the judgment scene. If God is vindicated it is impossible to assign to him the role of a judge.

Furthermore, it is challenging to view Jesus as an advocate (defense attorney) in the modern sense of the term. As demonstrated earlier, advocates, as understood today, did not exist in the ancient judicial system. Each party was responsible for their own defense. While the Bible places great significance on the concepts of intercession and intercessors, the biblical understanding of intercessors differs from the modern concept of advocates.

There is another important detail to consider. As noted earlier, according to traditional understanding, the investigative judgment is necessary for the vindication of the righteous. This judgment is based on the records in the books (Dan 7:10), where the term “books” is used in the plural form. Heavenly books are frequently mentioned in the Bible, and it has been observed that there is a distinction between the use of the word “book” in the singular and plural forms. While the singular form always refers to the Book of

⁴⁴ Moskala, “Toward a Biblical Theology of God’s Judgment,” 154.

Life (Exod 32:32; Ps 69:28; Dan 12:1; Phil 4:3; Rev 17:8; 20:12, 15), the plural form is used as a record of human deeds for the condemnation (Dan 7:10; Rev 20:12).⁴⁵ A good illustration of this distinction can be found in Revelation 20:12 and 15:

“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done” (Rev 20:12).

“And if anyone’s name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15).

According to these texts, it is clear that justification is only possible if a person’s name is recorded in the Book of Life, whereas “the books of human deeds,” as coined by Rodriguez,⁴⁶ are used for the condemnation of sinners. In this context, the use of “books” in the plural form is unlikely to indicate that the purpose of the judgment is to vindicate the righteous. If that were the intention, the singular “book” would more likely be used, referring to the Book of Life.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Collins, *Daniel*, 303; Angel Manuel Rodriguez, “The Heavenly Books of Life and of Human Deeds,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 15.

⁴⁶ Rodriguez, “The Heavenly Books of Life and of Human Deeds,” 10.

⁴⁷ Rodríguez asserts that the judgment described in Daniel 7 involves a review of the records concerning each individual. He states, “...during the final judgment, the few good deeds performed by the wicked, or by those who turned from righteousness to wickedness, will not make any difference with respect to their final destiny. Their evil deeds will reveal that they did not remain in a permanent covenant relationship with the Lord” (Rodríguez, “The Heavenly Books of Life and of Human Deeds,” 24). Rodríguez emphasizes that the judgment is not necessary for God, as He already knows everything about every person. Rather, it is intended for the understanding of intelligent heavenly beings, who are also involved in the process of judgment (*Ibid.*). Although Rodríguez does not mean this, such a statement might be interpreted as suggesting a judgment based on works.

Finally, the role of the little horn in the heavenly judgment scene is not satisfactorily explained. Usually, the Adventist theologians spend much time to explain the earthly activity of the little horn but what is his role in the judgment is not very clear.⁴⁸

Distribution of Roles Based on the Parallels with Ancient Judicial System

Now I will discuss how those roles can be distributed based on the ancient near eastern and Israelite judicial traditions. It is going without saying that the Ancient of Days plays the role of a judge. The judgment decision is associated with him “until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given...” (v. 22). However, he is not portrayed as a sole judge. The picture of vv. 9-10 describes him as a head of the court. It fits well the ancient near eastern milieu when the king was the Supreme Judge and he usually performed his judicial function with the help of royal judges assigned by him.

Since in the ancient times, the plaintiff was also an accuser these two roles in the judgment scene of Dan 7 cannot be separated. The little horn fits this role very well. It is repeated three times that he speaks great things (v. 8, 11, 20), and finally it is said that he speaks against the Most High (v. 25). The matter of accusation is not mentioned.

The next important step is to define who the defendant is. The identity of the defendant might be assumed from the decision of the court. The result of the judgment is described five times in ch. 7:

⁴⁸ The attention given to the role of the little horn in the heavenly judgment scene within Adventist sources is minimal. At most, it is simply stated that the little horn is condemned. See Gerhard Pfandl, *Daniel God's Beloved Prophet: His Life and His Prophecies* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2020), 96. See also Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 106–111; Hasel, “Divine Judgment,” 832–845.

1. The beast was killed (v. 11).
2. The dominion, glory, and kingdom are given to the One who is like the Son of Man (v. 14).
3. The saints of the Most High receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom (v.18).
4. The judgment is given to the saints and they possess the kingdom (v. 22).
5. The kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms is given to the saints of the Most High (v. 27).

Three times the saints of the Most High are mentioned as beneficiaries of the court decision and one time the One who is like the Son of Man is mentioned.⁴⁹ It might be assumed that the saints of the Most High are the defendant in the scene of judgment. However, several considerations might be brought forward against this idea. First of all, if the saints are the human beings they cannot be present in the heavenly judgment scene. Even the description of the judgment implies that the saints are not physically present; they are the beneficiaries of the court decision but not the active participants. Furthermore, the little horn pronounces the accusation only against the Most High (7:25). He makes a war against the saints and wants to destroy them (v. 21; cf. v. 25) but does not accuse them, according to Dan 7.

Since the little horn pronounces great words against the Most High it is logical to assume that the Most High is the one being accused. However, it is not very clear who the Most High is.⁵⁰ He is

⁴⁹ However, it is important that the text mentions first that the One who is like the Son of Man receives the kingdom and dominion (v. 14) and only after that it is said that the dominion is given to the saints (vv. 18, 22, 27).

⁵⁰ It is important to note that in the phrase “He shall speak words against the Most High” (Dan. 7:25), the Aramaic spelling of “Most High” differs from its spelling in the expressions “the saints of the Most High” (Dan. 7:18, 22, 25, 27). In these latter expressions, the word *עליין* is used, a Hebraism derived from the Hebrew *עליון*. As a result, the phrase “the saints of the Most High” is

not the same as the Ancient of Days since the defendant cannot be the same person as a judge. The best candidate for the Most High and the defendant is the One Who Is like the Son of Man.⁵¹ He is also a beneficiary of the judgment decision since he received dominion and kingdom (v. 14). One more detailed is worth noting here. It is said that the One Who Is like the Son of Man is presented before the Ancient of Days (v. 13). The phrase “he was presented before” in Aramaic is וקדמוהי הקרבוהי. The verb קרב in this phrase stands in active causative stem (hafel), so the entire phrase literally means “they brought him before.” A similar phrase in the Hebrew Bible “to bring somebody before” or “to bring somebody to” when is used in the judicial context is applied to the defendant or accused. For example,

וְהִקְרִיב אֹתָהּ הַכֹּהֵן וְהִעֲמֶדָהּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה	“And the priest shall bring her near and set her before the LORD” (Num 5:16).
וַיִּקְרִיבוּ אֹתוֹ הַמִּצָּצִים אֹתוֹ מִקִּשְׁשׁ עֲצִים אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל כָּל- הָעֵדָה	“And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation” (Num 15:33).

a distinctive expression unique to Daniel 7. What is particularly noteworthy is that in Daniel 7:25, two different forms—עֲלִיָּא and עֲלִיּוּנִין—appear side by side, suggesting that the author intentionally employs distinct terms.

⁵¹ Although the Hebrew word עֲלִיָּא (the Most High) in the Aramaic sections of the Book of Daniel typically refers to God (Dan. 3:26, 32; 4:14, 21, 22, 29, 31; 5:18), within the context of Daniel 7 it may also be connected to the figure described as “One Like a Son of Man.” Scholars have noted striking parallels between Daniel 7 and the so-called *Aramaic Apocalypse* (4Q246). See Karl A. Kuhn, “The ‘One like a Son of Man’ Becomes the ‘Son of God,’” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2007): 24–27. The *Aramaic Apocalypse* introduces an eschatological figure who is described as: “Son of God he shall be called, and Son of the Most High he shall be surnamed.” This figure in 4Q246 bears significant resemblance to the “One Like a Son of Man” in Daniel 7. Consequently, it appears that already by the second century BC, the figure of the “One Like a Son of Man” was closely associated with the title and authority of the Most High.

It is also interesting to note that exactly the same Aramaic phrase appears in the story of Ahiqar,⁵² where it also describes the presentation of an accused person before a judge. Ahiqar speaks to Nabusumiskun, reminding him of the time when King Sennacherib was very angry with Nabusumiskun and wanted to kill him. Ahiqar saved Nabusumiskun by hiding him and telling the king that he had killed him. Later, at the appropriate time, Ahiqar brought Nabusumiskun before the king. Ahiqar says to Nabusumiskun:

שגיאן קרבתך קדם סנחאריב מלכא והעדית חטאך קדמוהי

“Then, after a long time, I presented you to King Sennacherib and cleared you of the charges against you” (Ahiqar, col. 4, line 50).⁵³

There is no doubt that Nabusumiskun was brought before the king as an accused person and was acquitted. All these parallels support the idea that the One Who Is like the Son of Man is also portrayed as a defendant.

In Dan 7, a special emphasis is placed on close relationship between Jesus who is described as One Who Is like the Son of Man and the saints of the Most High. Both Jesus and the saints are beneficiaries of the court verdict. Such a connection may lead to the assumption that Jesus in the heavenly judgment scene plays a role similar to a debt guarantor or surety. The responsibility of the debt guarantor was to bring the debtors at a due time before the creditor. If it has not been done the guarantor must pay the debt. Jesus can play exactly this role being a guarantor for the repentant sinners. Since the saints are not physically present in judgment Jesus must pay their debts. If such assumption is true, it confirms the thesis that

⁵² Di Lella, “The One in Human Likeness and the Holy Ones of the Most High in Daniel 7,” 19.

⁵³ J. M. Lindenberger, “Ahiqar,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1983), 2:496.

Jesus is the defendant or accused one in the heavenly judgment scene.

The idea that Jesus is the defendant in the judgment scene also fits very well the typology of sacrificial system in Ancient Israel. During the year all sinners confessed their sins at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. The ritual of sin offering implied the transfer of sin from a sinner to the blood of the sacrificial animal that was either poured out at the base of the altar or brought inside the sanctuary. When an individual committed a sin, the priest would eat a portion of the sacrificial animal, symbolically bearing the sin upon himself. However, if the sin was committed by the entire community, the blood of the sin offering was required to be brought inside the sanctuary. The concept of transferring sin from a sinner to another person or another place implies that a sinner after confession is free from sin and the one who symbolically takes upon himself the sins and carries them must be a defendant.

The same idea can be also confirmed by another typological scene of Zech 3. This scene portrays the High Priest Joshua standing before God and being accused by Satan. Joshua's garment is described as extremely dirty because he as a High Priest carries upon himself the sin of the entire nation. Finally, he is justified and dressed in a new garment. The scene of Zech 3 is usually understood as a typological presentation of the pre-Advent judgment.⁵⁴ Richard Davidson asserts that Joshua in this scene is a symbol for God's people.⁵⁵ While it is true that Joshua being a High Priest represents the people of Israel he does not symbolize them. In the Old Testament typology, the High Priest is always a type for Jesus. If it is the case, Zechariah 3 is the best parallel to Dan 7 and it confirms that Jesus is the accused one in the pre-Advent judgment scene.

⁵⁴ Richard M. Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary: Experiencing God's Presence in Shadow and Reality* (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2022), 420.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 419.

The idea that Jesus is the defendant also fits well other NT texts.

“For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22).

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24).

“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (John 3:18).

According to these texts, those people who believe in Jesus shall not be present at the judgment. They are already justified by Jesus. Those who do not believe are already condemned. Evidently, this judgment takes place during every person’s life. There is no need to consider the case of every individual again.

If the above considerations are true the real purpose of the pre-Advent judgment is to vindicate Jesus and remove from him the sins of humanity that he carries as the High Priest. At this juncture the nature of the accusation can be logically assumed. Although there is no biblical evidence for such a conclusion it is possible to suggest that the little horn while speaking great things against the Most High claims that Jesus must not be resurrected. Jesus took upon himself the sins of humanity that are recorded in the books (Dan 7:10) and accepted the punishment for it when he died at the cross of Calvary. Therefore, according to accusation, the resurrection of Jesus is not legitimate. He must remain dead. However, since the accusation of the little horn is false, according to Deut 19:16-19, the false accuser must take the penalty that he required for the accused. This is exactly what is described in Dan 7 and 8. The beast who was carrying the little horn is killed as a result of the court decision (Dan 7:11). Also, in parallel vision of Dan 8, the little horn is broken (Dan 8:25).

One more consideration is in order here. According to Dan 7 the One Who Is like the Son of Man and the saints of the Most High are closely associated with each other. The saints are called “the saints

of the Most High.” The fact that both, the One Who Is like the Son of Man and the saints benefit from the decision of the court can also mean that the saints are vindicated. According to the NT theology, those who believe in Jesus abide in him (John 15:4; Rom 8:1; 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:17; 1 John 3:24).⁵⁶ Therefore, we can say that if Jesus is vindicated the saints are vindicated with him. It is also true that if Jesus is not justified during the judgment the humanity will not be able to get the eternal life.

Interpretation of Daniel 8:14

This study pertains to another crucial aspect of Adventist theology, specifically the interpretation of Dan 8:14 and the understanding of the verb נִצָּדַק. In Dan 8:14, this verb appears in the Niphal stem, which is unique in the Hebrew Bible, making its precise meaning a subject of scholarly debate. Opponents of Adventism often argue that the entire doctrine of the investigative

⁵⁶ The idea that the righteous dwell in the sanctuary is well reflected in the Book of Psalms. The very first psalm compares the righteous to a tree planted by streams of water. As Dragoslava Santrac notes, “Psalm 1:3 seems to... picture the righteous as abiding in the sanctuary.” See Dragoslava Santrac, “The Psalmists’ Journey and the Sanctuary: A Study in the Sanctuary and the Shape of the Book of Psalms,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 25, no. 1 (2014): 26. The main argument for this view is that the imagery used in Psalm 1, such as the tree and the abundance of water, closely aligns with the descriptions of the sanctuary (Ezek 47:12) and the Garden of Eden (Gen 2). Other texts also point to the presence of the righteous in the sanctuary, for example, Psalm 24:3-6, which states that only the righteous may ascend the hill of the Lord, that is, the sanctuary; or Exodus 15:13, 17, which speaks of the Lord planting His people in His sanctuary. The New Testament also affirms that the righteous have access to the sanctuary (Heb 6:19-20). However, it is important to note that, historically, only priests had access to the earthly sanctuary and the lay persons were strictly prohibited entering it. We also cannot speak about the physical presence of the righteous in the Heavenly Sanctuary. Therefore, all texts referring to the presence of the righteous in the sanctuary should be understood metaphorically. Connecting this with what Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,” we can conclude that access to the Father, that is, to the sanctuary, is possible only through Jesus Christ, and it is only by being in Him that we can dwell in the sanctuary.

judgment is based on a mistranslation of Daniel 8:14. William Miller, who did not know Hebrew and relied on the King James Version of the Bible, was misled by this translation where the Hebrew verb קִדְּשׁ is rendered as “cleansed,” while it should be translated as “put in the right state” or “restored,” as modern translations do.⁵⁷ Many Adventist scholars attempt to demonstrate the opposite.

Thus, Richard Davidson, analyzing the semantic range of the verb קִדְּשׁ, identifies three basic meanings: 1) to be “put right” or “made right;” 2) “to cleanse” or “to purify;” and 3) “to vindicate.”⁵⁸ Davidson concludes that all three meanings are present in Dan 8:14, making the translation of this verse into any language particularly difficult. He even suggests leaving the verb untranslated, for instance, rendering it as “the sanctuary be niṣdaqed.”⁵⁹

Eric Murray Livingston chose the interpretation of the verb קִדְּשׁ in Dan 8:14 as the subject of his dissertation, arguing that the meaning “to cleanse” is indeed present in this verse. He concludes, “Contrary to the challengers, there are many קִדְּשׁ-cleanse connections that feed into a cultic-judicial understanding, according to Yom Kippur, for Dan 8:9-14.”⁶⁰

However, it should be noted that while the verb קִדְּשׁ sometimes appears alongside words derived from the root טָהַר, meaning “to be clean” (e.g., Job 4:17; 17:9; Eccl 9:2), as well as the noun כֹּהֵן “cleanness” (Ps 18:20, 24 [Heb. 21, 25]) and the adjective נָקִי “clean,

⁵⁷ Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 146.

⁵⁸ Richard M. Davidson, “The Meaning of Niṣdaq in Daniel 8:14,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7, no. 1 (1996): 114.

⁵⁹ Davidson, “The Meaning of Niṣdaq in Daniel 8:14,” 118.

⁶⁰ Eric Murray Livingston, “A Study of קִדְּשׁ in Daniel 8:14, Its Relation to the ‘Cleanse’ Semantic Field, and Its Importance for Seventh-Day Adventism’s Concept of Investigative Judgment” (PhD Dissertation, University of New England, 2007), 426.

innocent” (Exod 23:7; Job 17:8-9; 22:19; Ps 94:21), these instances consistently refer to ethical and moral purity.⁶¹ Therefore, it is difficult to argue for a “cleansing” connotation of the verb קִדַּשׁ in the cultic sense. This weakens the arguments of both Davidson and Livingston. Furthermore, it is important to note that the verb קִדַּשׁ appears 41 times in the Bible, and in each instance where it takes a direct object, that object is always a person, never an inanimate object.⁶²

An interesting interpretation of Dan 8:14 was proposed by Martin Pröbstle. He observed that the term מִקְדָּשׁ (“sanctuary”) is used in Dan 8:11, making it logical to assume that the term קִדְּשׁ (Dan 8:14), from the same root קִדַּשׁ , which is usually rendered as “sanctuary” might be intentionally used to refer to something different. He also noted that the noun קִדְּשׁ in the Bible is applied not only to the sanctuary but also to individuals. Pröbstle presents three arguments for understanding קִדְּשׁ as a term with a personal connotation: 1) the noun קִדְּשׁ serves as the direct object of the verb קִדַּשׁ , which always takes a personal noun as its direct object; 2) in the context of Dan 8, except for the noun מִקְדָּשׁ , all other words derived from the root קִדַּשׁ refer to individuals; 3) the word קִדְּשׁ can be semantically connected to the noun אִשְׁרָא , which is personal in nature.⁶³ However, Pröbstle does not dismiss the idea that קִדְּשׁ can also refer to a sanctuary. He contends that קִדְּשׁ encompasses more than just a sanctuary or temple;

⁶¹ B. Johnson, “קִדַּשׁ,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. Gerhard Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 12:249.

⁶² As Martin T. Pröbstle pointed out, the verb קִדַּשׁ is transitive only in Niphal, Piel, and Hiphil stems and “In the Piel and in the Hiphil, the object of קִדַּשׁ is without exception personal.” Therefore, it is logical to assume that in the Niphal stem, it would also take a personal direct object. Martin T. Pröbstle, “Truth and Terror: A Text-Oriented Analysis of Daniel 8:9-14” (PhD Dissertation, Andrews University, 2006), 400.

⁶³ Ibid., 422.

it also includes the host or holy ones who are being trampled by the little horn (Dan 8:13).⁶⁴

In my view, Martin Pröbstle is correct in emphasizing the personal nature of the noun קִדְּשׁ. However, it is difficult to agree that קִדְּשׁ is semantically related to the noun צִבְּאָה. Firstly, in the preceding verse, Dan 8:13, both terms, צִבְּאָה and קִדְּשׁ, appear and clearly refer to different entities. It would be illogical if קִדְּשׁ means “sanctuary” in Dan 8:13 but refers to a “host” in Dan 8:14. What would have prevented the author from using the word צִבְּאָה in Dan 8:14 if that was his intended meaning? Secondly, קִדְּשׁ is used in singular form and it is not a collective noun like צִבְּאָה, so it can hardly be associated with צִבְּאָה.

I believe it is inconsistent to assign different meanings to קִדְּשׁ in Dan 8:13 and 8:14. Furthermore, it is difficult to associate קִדְּשׁ with “sanctuary,” as the author uses for it the word מִקְדָּשׁ in 8:11. In this case, the only antecedent for קִדְּשׁ would be the phrase שַׂר־הַצִּבְּאָה, “the Prince of the host” (Dan 8:11). This interpretation aligns well with the preceding analysis of Dan 7. Daniel 8 is a parallel vision to Dan 7, suggesting that the two chapters describe the same event. As previously discussed, Dan 7 portrays the vindication of Jesus, who is presented as the One Who Is like the Son of Man, while Dan 8 describes the vindication of קִדְּשׁ. Given the strong personal connotation of the noun קִדְּשׁ, it is reasonable to suggest that this term serves as another symbol for Jesus, with קִדְּשׁ, “the Prince of the host,” and “the One Who Is like the Son of Man” all referring to the same person. In this context, the phrase וְנִצָּדַק קִדְּשׁ makes perfect sense as it describes the vindication of the Heavenly High Priest during the Pre-Advent judgment.

While I believe that קִדְּשׁ in Dan 8:13-14 refers to Jesus rather than the sanctuary, I do not intend to dismiss the traditional Adventist interpretation of the phrase וְנִצָּדַק קִדְּשׁ as referring to the cleansing of the sanctuary as entirely incorrect. In a certain sense, when the High

⁶⁴ Ibid., 424–425.

Priest is vindicated, the sanctuary is also cleansed. This connection can be explained by the nature of the High Priest's office. Leviticus 8 describes the anointing of the sanctuary, and of particular interest is that Aaron, the High Priest, was anointed twice: once when the sanctuary was anointed (Lev 8:10-12) and a second time when his sons, the priests, were anointed (Lev 8:30). The second anointing of Aaron aligns with the instructions in Exodus 29, but during the first anointing, Aaron was consecrated as part of the tabernacle. The tabernacle and the altar are called the Holy of Holies, and Aaron is to wear a turban inscribed with "Holy to the Lord" (Exod 28:36; Lev 8:9), symbolizing that he is as holy as the tabernacle's items. In other words, Aaron is considered part of the tabernacle itself.⁶⁵ As Baruch Levine noted, "The High Priest is a sacred vessel and is consecrated as such."⁶⁶ This close connection between the sanctuary and the High Priest is a significant element. Essentially, when the High Priest is vindicated, the sanctuary is also restored to its rightful state.

Conclusion

Such presentation of the doctrine of the pre-Advent judgment is not radically new. As I mentioned earlier, the idea that God is vindicated during the judgment process was emphasized by the Adventist theologians long time ago, however, it was not clearly presented and explained. Also, the presented exposition of the judgment scene in Dan 7 might be at least a partial response to the critics of the doctrine of the sanctuary and the doctrine of the pre-Advent judgment. Finally, this presentation of the pre-Advent judgment might be more attractive to other Protestants who usually believe that this teaching is not biblical.

⁶⁵ Feliks Ponyatovskiy, "Analysis of the Golden Calf Incident (Exodus 32:1–10) and Its Impact on the Sinai Covenant in the Pentateuchal Text" (PhD Dissertation, Adventist International Institutes of Advanced Studies, 2012), 143.

⁶⁶ Baruch A. Levine, "The Descriptive Tabernacle Texts of the Pentateuch," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85 (1965): 311.