



The Great Judgment Day

The legendary thunderbird is found in many stories of Native nations across the United States and Canada. It is regarded in Sioux legends as “the guardian of truth.” In stories of many other nations the thunderbird is considered to be a stern but fair judge of their people in matters of right and wrong, putting terror in the hearts of the guilty.

In some legends he is also depicted as the protector of people from the evil monsters in unruly creeks, rivers, and seas. In stories of the Northwest Makah, the thunderbird is portrayed as the rescuer of those who almost became victims of drowning.

Similarly, Sioux legends tell of the thunderbird showing sympathy for people who were at one time threatened by water monsters who caused great flood waters. The thunderbird used lightning and fire to attack these water monsters, leaving only dry bones which were turned into hard rocks. Today these are considered to be the fossils of the great badlands of the Dakotas.

Many legends of the thunderbird have similarities to the teachings of the judgment day in the Bible. Like the thunderbird attacking evil, Jesus Christ, as our Judge, will come again in the skies to destroy wickedness and deliver the righteous. Satan and his angels will be destroyed permanently. Jesus, the great Judge, will then enjoy living with His people in the Holy City, the place of refuge and peace where He has prepared homes of safety for them.

Sources: *The First Americans*. Time Life Books, 1992, pp. 166–175;
People of the Desert. Time Life Books, 1993, pp. 163–164;
Cultures of Native North Americans. C. F. Feest, 200. Cologne, Germany,
p. 130.

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Key Thought. The judgment which takes place in heaven before Christ comes again will determine who will be saved and who will be lost. And when Jesus comes again, He will take His people to heaven. Only those who have accepted the righteousness of Jesus and who are honestly trying to live a dedicated Christian life in loving obedience will then be allowed to inherit the kingdom of righteousness.

BIBLE ANSWERS

1. How many of us will be judged? 2 Corinthians 5:10. *Circle one.* (1) All. (2) Just the wicked. (3) Just the righteous. *(All quotations from the Bible in these lessons are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.)*

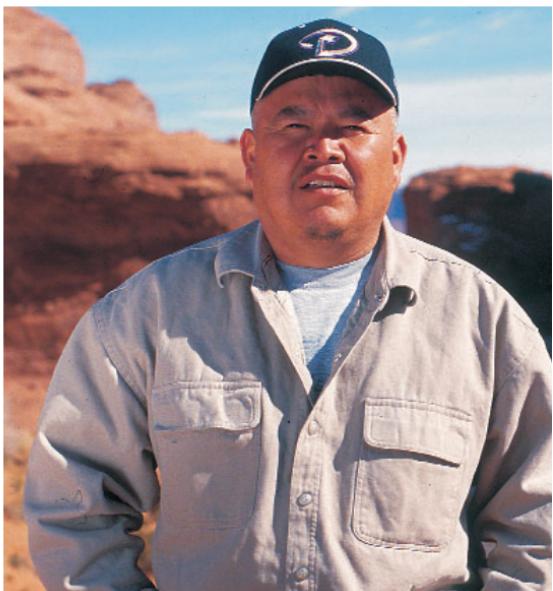
Many become nervous as they hear about the judgment. But Jesus is also our advocate. His blood washes away every trace of sin.

Note. The idea of having to “appear” before the judgment seat of Christ strikes fear in the hearts of many. The word “appear” doesn’t necessarily mean we appear in person, but that our names and the case history of our lives will be brought up and considered at that time. Here are other Bible references to this: Philippians 4:3; Revelation 13:8; 2 Timothy 4:1; Daniel 7:10.

2. Who will judge us? John 5:22. *Circle one.* (1) The Father. (2) The angels. (3) Jesus, the Son.

Note. Who could be a better judge than Jesus, who has had first-hand experience with the life and hardships of mankind? Not only did Jesus come to this earth to live like we do, but He showed great sympathy for mankind. He not only understands our humanity, but He also understands the great love the Godhead has for us. I'm glad that we have Jesus as our judge, aren't you?

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3. Does the judgment take place before or after Jesus comes again? Daniel 7:9-14. (*Circle one.*) (1) Before. (2) After.

Note. Daniel 7:13–14 pictures the second coming of Christ, and verses 9 and 10 picture the judgment taking place before Jesus comes again. This same sequence is revealed in Revelation 14. Verses 6 and 7 indicate that “the hour of His judgment has come,” and verses 14 to

16 picture Jesus coming again after the judgment. It is also only logical that the decision of who will be saved at the time of Christ's second coming must be made before He comes.

Some have taught that this judgment takes place after the second coming of Jesus, when we are already in heaven. If this teaching were true, then a person already in heaven who was judged to be unrighteous and unworthy would have to return to earth and die for his or her sins. This is not the way the Bible says God deals with people. Even the wicked will know they are lost when they see Jesus coming. They will cry for the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from Christ's appearing (Revelation 6:15-17).

J esus not only saves us from our sins, but He also empowers us to live a new life now.



4. Is there a specific time when Jesus begins the judgment in preparation for His second coming? Acts 17:31. God "has appointed a _____ on which He will judge the world."

Note. The question of when the judgment begins leads us to examine two of the most amazing time prophecies in the Bible. One is the longest time prophecy in Scripture, called the 2300-day, or year, prophecy, and is

found in Daniel 8:14. The other prophecy, called the 490-day, or year, prophecy, is found in Daniel 9:25-27. As we shall see, the 2300-year prophecy and the 490-year prophecy began with the same event in the same year.

Here are some point-by-point facts relating to these prophecies:

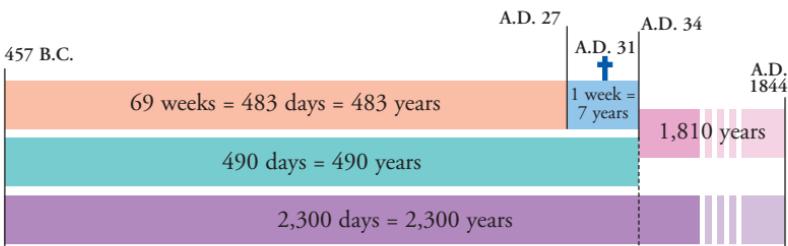
- a. This prophecy of Daniel 8:14 covers the long time period of 2300 days or years (Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 establish that a day can stand for a year in symbolic Bible prophecies).
- b. According to Daniel 8:14 “the sanctuary shall be cleansed” at the close of this 2300-year period.
- c. The cleansing of the sanctuary refers to Leviticus 16:29–30, and chapters 17 and 23. Those living sinful lives were judged as unrighteous and were “cut off” from the rest of the people (Leviticus 23:29). So the cleansing of the sanctuary taught the people of the Old Testament about the judgment (which began in heaven in 1844 at the end of the 2300 years) which prepares the way for the second coming of Christ.
- d. In 1844 the worldwide message began to sound: “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come,” meaning that Jesus will soon come! (Revelation 14:6–7). The proclaiming of the judgment hour message begins in 1844 and ends with the second coming of Christ (verses 13 and 14). According to this text, Christ’s decision as to who will be saved and who will not be saved is taking place now.
- e. The Bible clearly tells when this 2300-year prophecy would begin. Both the 2300-year and the 490-year prophecy began in 457 B.C. when a third and final decree was issued by a Persian monarch for the restoration of the Jews to their homeland (Daniel 9:24–25). This beginning time of the third and final decree becomes clear from a comparison of



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Daniel's account with Ezra's (see Ezra chapters 6 and 7). These decrees are mentioned in ancient history books found in most libraries today.

- f. The 490-year prophecy focuses on the ministry of Jesus, the Messiah (Hebrew: anointed one), which would begin 69 weeks or 483 years after this 457 B.C. date. The end of the 69-week period brings us perfectly to A.D. 27 when Jesus was "anointed" at His baptism, at the beginning of His ministry (Daniel 9:25, Matthew 3:13-16, Acts 10:37-38).



Most meaningful of all was that Jesus was "cut-off" or crucified, "not for Himself" but for you and me. He died to save us from sin and give us eternal life.

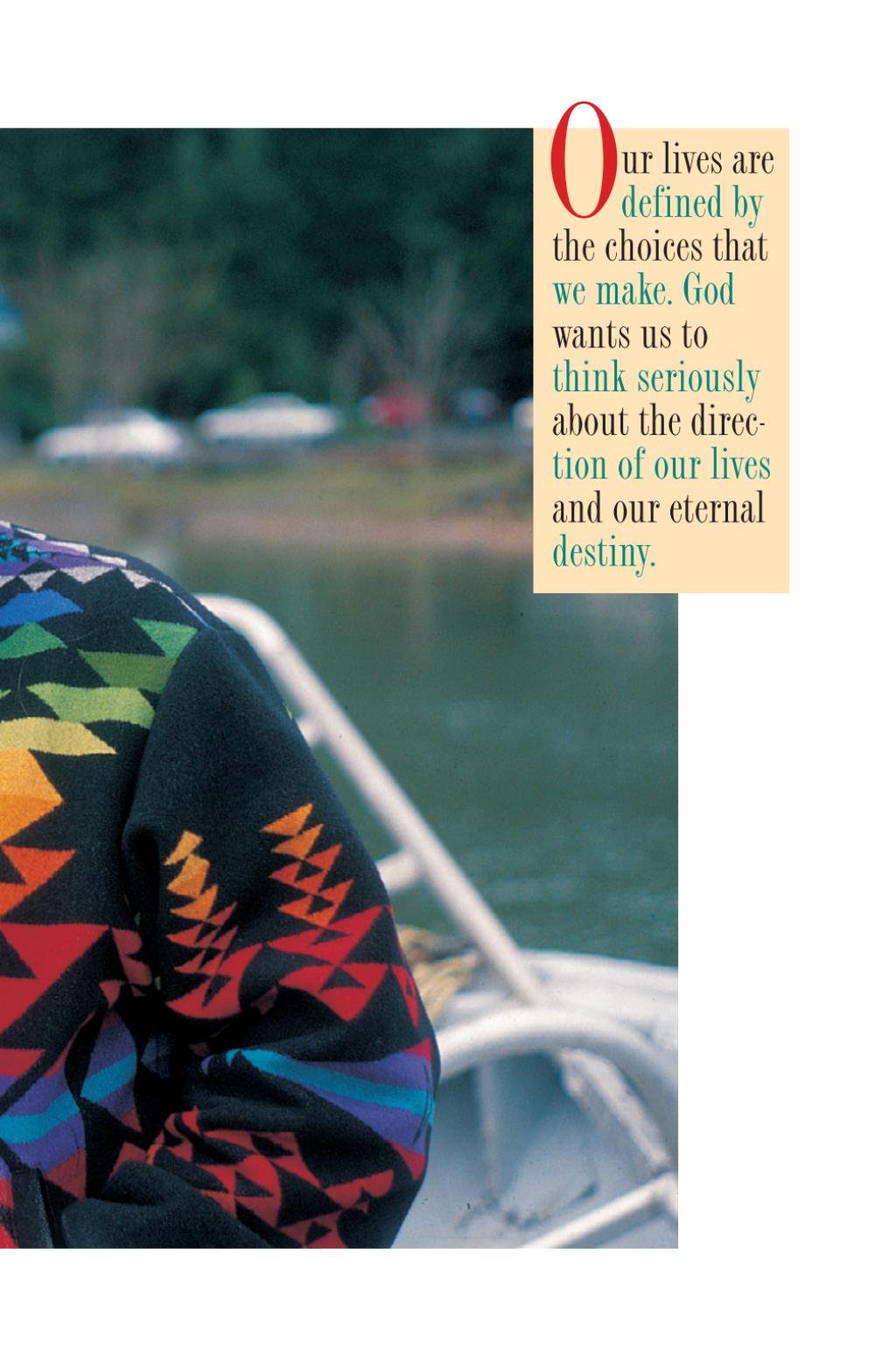
- g. According to Daniel's prophecy, "in the middle of the week" (Daniel 9:27), the "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself" (verse 26). The middle of this week of 7 years would be 3 1/2 years after Jesus' baptism. At that very time Jesus was "cut off"—died upon the cross in A.D. 31, exactly according to the prophecy (Daniel 9:26-27; Acts 10:37-39). (See also Galatians 4:4-5.)

- h. One prophetic week, or seven years after Jesus' baptism, the gospel would go to the Gentiles as well as to the Jewish people. The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in Acts 11:18; Matthew 23:37; and Galatians 3:29.
- i. The 2300-year prophecy takes us from its beginning in 457 B.C. to A.D. 1844. So the Bible clearly teaches that in 1844 Jesus began His pre-advent or investigative judgment (the "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary) which reveals to the entire universe who will be saved and who will not be saved at Jesus' second coming.
- j. The date of Jesus' baptism and the beginning of His ministry, and the date He was to be crucified were both perfectly accurate. This certainty should give us confidence in Jesus' ministry and confidence in the accuracy of the Bible. But most meaningful of all was that Jesus was "cut off," or crucified, "not for Himself"—but for you and me. He died to save us from our sins and give us eternal life. Knowing that the dates of Jesus' ministry and crucifixion are accurate, we can be sure that the 1844 date is also accurate.
- k. These Scriptures tell us that since 1844 the investigative judgment has been in progress in heaven. We are now living in the time of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary—the pre-advent investigative judgment. As you can see we are living in exciting but sobering times. We are now living in what the Bible calls the "time of the end," just before Jesus' second coming (Daniel 8:17, 11:35).

5. What is Jesus doing today for us during this time of the investigative judgment? Hebrews 7:24–25. "He [Jesus] always lives to make _____ for them." (See also Hebrews 8:1.)

Note. The Bible teaches us that Jesus is not only our Savior, but that He is also our Judge (John 5:22). As





Our lives are defined by the choices that we make. God wants us to think seriously about the direction of our lives and our eternal destiny.

both, He continually lives to make “intercession” for us—meaning that He continually works to prepare all those who will allow Him to prepare them for citizenship in heaven. God doesn’t want people in heaven who prefer to continue in sin and sinful lifestyles (Nahum 1:9).

No matter what your circumstances, God can lift you up and turn your life in a new direction.

Today Jesus not only saves us from our sins, but He also empowers us to live a new life now. This new life and changed attitude means leaving behind bad habits and sinful ways. For example, we can’t imagine beer cans littered along the streets of gold or people there who desire to steal or commit a murder. God our Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and a multitude of angels are working diligently today to prepare all who are willing to be changed to be ready for the kingdom of heaven.

When we understand this biblical teaching, we see Jesus our Judge not as a stern, exacting judge but as a God who deeply loves us and will do whatever it takes to get us ready for His coming and eternal life. Really, the biggest question concerning the judgment is: Are we now, today, allowing Jesus and the Holy Spirit to prepare us for eternity?

6. By what standard will we be judged? James 2:10–12. “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. . . . So speak

and so do as those who will be judged by the _____.”

Note. The law of liberty is certainly appropriate as a description of God’s law which will bring us great satisfaction, freedom, fulfillment, and happiness. His laws were never meant to be a burden, but only a blessing!

7. What does God admonish us to do now? 2 Peter 1:10. “Therefore, brethren, be even more _____ to make your call and election sure.” (See also 1 Peter 5:6–10.)



When we trust
in Jesus, His
sacrifice covers
our sins in the
judgment.

Note. When we accept Christ as our Savior and turn our life over to Him, we have nothing to fear when it comes to the time of judgment. Christ understands our weaknesses and forgives the sins we confess. All God’s enabling comes by the power of the Holy Spirit in us (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30).

You can have the assurance of eternal life right now. God promises each of us that when we accept Jesus into our lives we become part of His family. As a family member we will be with Him forever. Don't you want to choose today to be changed by Jesus and be saved eternally? If your answer is "yes", and I hope it is—then repeat this prayer.

◆ P R A Y E R ◆

Dear Father, I need You. I know I have nothing to fear in the judgment when I trust in Jesus. I give You my life, my all, and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for the gift of Christ's righteousness and for Your strength in my life. Amen.

Next Lesson. We will be studying what the Bible has to say about the destruction of the wicked. Have you ever wondered about eternal hellfire? Have you wondered how long hell will burn and exactly how God will carry out what the Bible calls His "strange" work?





*“God has given us eternal life,
and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11).*



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The Great Judgment Day

Read through the lesson, then fill in this Answer Sheet. You should refer back to the lesson to find the correct answers. Referring to the lesson helps fix the answers in your mind.

Place an X before each TRUE statement.

1. Who will be considered in the judgment when God decides who is safe to take to heaven when Jesus comes?

- Just the wicked.
- Every person who has ever lived.

2. Why has Jesus been appointed to be our Judge?

- He lived on earth as a man, so He understands our humanity.
- He is a vengeful, unfair judge who will apply the full penalty of the law.

3. The judgment of all people takes place BEFORE Christ comes again because:

- the decision must be made before He comes as to who will be saved and who will not.
- He will be too busy after He comes to have time for the judgment.

4. What does the Bible say about the time the judgment begins?

- The longest time prophecy of the Bible tells us that Jesus began His investigative judgment in the year 1844.
- God doesn't give us any information as to when He starts the judgment in preparation for His coming.

5. As our judge, what is Jesus doing now?

- He is watching to see if He can catch professed Christians committing sin.
- Jesus is earnestly making "intercession" for us—and others who are preparing to live as citizens of heaven.

6. God's law, the law by which we are judged, is called the law of "liberty" because:

- obedience to this law brings great satisfaction, freedom, and happiness.
- we are at liberty to obey it or to disobey since God doesn't really care if we obey or not.

7. How do we prepare today to be saved when Jesus comes?

- We will be prepared if we ignore what we read in the Bible.
- We will be prepared if we accept Jesus as our Savior and turn our life over to Him.

Is it important to keep God's commandments?

- Yes. We are saved only by God's grace and our acceptance of it. Likewise, only God's power can prepare us to live in heaven throughout eternity. If we allow Jesus into our lives, He will change us and give us the desire to keep the commandments of God. He will also give us the power to help us keep them. That is why the Bible says, "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

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