

God's System of Social Justice

How God Reveals Religious Hypocrisy and Heals Those Wounded by It

Sexual abuse always harms victims, but the most harmful form is sexual abuse by clergy. When one positioned to serve the flock sacrificially for God's sake instead sacrifices the flock for lust's sake, they inflict deep and complex wounds—wounds that sometimes lead to the loss of faith.

The worst aspect of sexual abuse by clergy is often not the abuse itself, but the fact that in most cases, the clergy person will succeed in deceiving the congregation. This leads to “institutional betrayal,” a syndrome where the abuse wound is deepened when the church stands behind the perpetrator rather than the victim.

How comforting to know that God has designed a system to expose the dark labyrinth of lies that can take hold in organized religion. This system will condemn the sinner and vindicate the victim. God is merciful, but also just. Praise His name.

Jesus said that not all professed believers will enter heaven, but only those who do the will of God.

He opposed empty religion; His pet peeve was religious hypocrisy. He rebuked it, in various forms, over a dozen times:

- Giving to the poor to be recognized by others (Matthew 6:2)
- Praying in public to be thought pious (Matthew 6:5; 23:14)
- Parading the fact that one is fasting to appear pious (Matthew 6:16)
- Pointing out sin in others when one harbors even worse sin (Matthew 6:5; Luke 6:42)
- Giving God lip service (Matthew 15:7-9; Mark 7:6)
- Accusing others to look superior (Matthew 22:18; Mark 12:15)
- Deceiving people away from a true knowledge of God (Matthew 23:13)
- Fleecing and oppressing the poor and vulnerable (Matthew 23:14)
- Teaching proselytes to be hypocrites (Matthew 23:15)
- Tithing, but neglecting more important matters (Matthew 23:23)
- Doing everything for show (Matthew 23:25-34)
- Treating animals better than human beings (Luke 13:15)
- Being able to analyze the weather, but not ethical matters (Luke 12:56-57)

Since spiritual things are “spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14), and since “man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks upon the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7), God Himself must judge the integrity of professed believers. He must penetrate the veil of hypocrisy. He does this through a very organized system of accountability sometimes called *the investigative judgement*. Sounds ominous, for sure! But true followers of Jesus need not fear. Let's look carefully at the how, where, and when of this judgment.

How

In any court of law there are two phases of a judgment—investigative and executive. The prosecuting and defense attorneys present their evidence, giving arguments for and against the defendant. Then the jury investigates the evidence, after which they come to a decision or verdict. They bring their judgment to the judge, who pronounces the defendant either innocent or guilty. When the judge makes this pronouncement and issues a sentence, he or she *executes* the judgment that has already been made.

God's final pronouncement and sentencing, with His "reward" (Revelation 22:12), comes at His second coming. Therefore the judgment preceding this is *investigative*, probing the secret deeds and even thoughts and motives of the subjects of the investigation.

Where

To identify the *where* of the investigative judgment, let's go to the heavenly sanctuary. God instructed Israel to create an earthly sanctuary "that I may dwell among them," according to "the pattern" (Exodus 25:8-9) of the heavenly sanctuary where God Himself lives. This earthly model consisted of an outer court where repentant people brought their offerings to be slain, the blood of which would be carried by the priest into the Holy Place, and then once a year into the Most Holy Place where the high priest would atone for the sins of all of Israel.¹ This once-per-year event was called the Day of Atonement:

Let's look at Leviticus 23:26-29.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God. For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people."

During the Day of Atonement, Israel laid aside distractions to consecrate their hearts. Anyone who did not join in was cut off. The *where* of the earthly Day of Atonement was the sanctuary around which the people gathered on that day. The *where* of the heavenly Day of Atonement is the sanctuary in heaven.

¹ See Hebrews 8:5, Hebrews 8:1-2, Leviticus 16:10-33.

When

So when does this heavenly Day of Atonement occur? As Paul preached the gospel to the governor Felix, he told him of a “judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). This means that the judgment takes place *after Jesus’ first coming*.

The three angels’ message of Revelation 14 is proclaimed to “ripen the harvest” of the earth (vs. 15). This agrarian language describes the saved multitudes at the end of earth’s history. Notice that God’s judgment “has come” (vs. 7) as opposed to “will come.” This means that the judgment takes place *in the end times*.

Jesus says, “Behold I come, and my reward is with Me” (Revelation 22:12). The cases of the saints have already been decided at Jesus’ coming! This means that the judgment of the saints takes place *before Jesus’ second coming*.

Let’s add these three points together: The judgment occurs after Jesus first coming, during the end times, and before Jesus’ second coming. Do you see it? We live in the time of the first, investigative phase of the judgment *right now!*

Supporting this idea, notice that the prophecies of Daniel revolve around the time when “the sanctuary shall be cleansed” (Daniel 8:14). As it turns out, this cleansing of the sanctuary language also refers to the heavenly Day of Atonement.

Let’s get some background. Daniel 8:1-12 features a vision of beasts which symbolize world monarchies. These powers are characterized by strife and dominance. The most oppressive figure of Daniel’s vision is the little horn:

He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered. Daniel 8:12

In the hearing of Daniel, the angel says, “How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?” (Daniel 8:13). In other words, how long with this evil power reign?

“How long?” We all ask this from time to time, wondering at how God allows evil to prosper. Fortunately, He has an answer. He *will* deal with evil! The answer comes from the angel, “For two thousand and three hundred days, then the sanctuary shall be cleansed” (Daniel 8:14).

Using the day/year principle—that a day in prophecy is a year in real time²—the 2300 days is 2300 years. This means that the cleansing of the sanctuary will come after 2300 years.

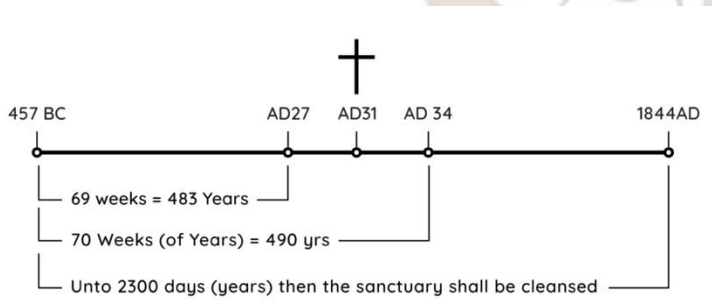
But starting when? Excellent question. What significance does a length of time have without a beginning point? Fortunately, Daniel received light on that question later in his life. For thirteen

² Ezekiel 4:5-6

years the vision of the little horn and the prediction of the cleansing of the sanctuary rattled around in his brain. For thirteen years he wondered what it could mean! Finally, when he began to seek God even more earnestly, Daniel received another prophecy. This prophecy revealed:

- The beginning of the 2300 years
- The end of the 2300 years
- The 490 years of probation for the Jewish people
- The baptism and the Cross

Since we have already covered much of the 490-year prophecy (See “He Showed up for Us”), we will dwell on the 2300 years. It is at the end of the 2300 years that the “sanctuary is cleansed.” The beginning, as you will recall, was “From the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:25). We identified this event as the most comprehensive of three commands from the Persian King Artaxerxes to let the Jewish people return to their land and rebuild their temple. The date of this decree, and the beginning point of the prophecy, is 457 B.C.; 2300 years later puts us in 1844.



What’s significant about 1844? Actually, it is the date of the Great Disappointment. A little background: The Great Advent Movement which preached the coming of Jesus in 1844, led to the Great Disappointment when He didn’t come. But those who had studied the 2300-day prophecy returned to their Bibles, sure that God had revealed the significance of that date. They learned that they had the right date but the wrong event—they mistook the “cleansing of the sanctuary” to be the cleansing of the earth by fire at Jesus’ second coming. Instead, they learned, it was the beginning of His Day of Atonement ministry—His systematic investigation of the lives of professed believers.

And thank God for this. The Apostle Peter said, “Judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17, KJV). God first judges those who make the loftiest profession.

We cannot calculate the harm done throughout human history by evil under a cloak of religiosity. During the Dark Ages, deranged religious authorities killed millions of “heretics.” This only scratches the surface of church corruption throughout the millennia. Crosses and cloaks may hide this compromise from human eyes, but they can’t fool God. His investigative system will document these religious abuses so that, when the final judgment comes, all will see His justice. Are you a victim of abuse by clergy? You will be vindicated. The truth will come out. Nothing is hidden that will not be known. Wait for it.

For the conscientious, those who tremble at the thought of being scrutinized by a holy God, fear not. The Judge is on our side. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). In giving Jesus, God proved that He would do anything to save us! He’s not trying to trick us *out* of salvation, but love us *into* salvation. Jesus Himself presides over the process of judgment: God “has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man” (John 5:27). As the Son of Man, Jesus, knows our every weakness. Place your hand—no, your whole self—in His hands, now and forever, and one day you will hear His voice saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant. . .enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:21).

The Takeaway

God hates hypocrisy. During the Day of Atonement, He will probe behind the veil of religious pretention. While the conscientious have nothing to fear, the hypocritical do. Let us lean more heavily into Jesus’ grace than ever before. While we do this, we will never be judged guilty.

Quiz

1. The worst aspect of being abused by clergy is that often the church backs him or her. This is called institutional _____.
2. God’s pet peeve is _____.
3. The two phases of judgment are: _____ and _____.
4. Where does the investigative judgment take place? _____
5. This judgment occurs after Jesus first coming, during the end times, and _____ Jesus’ second coming.
6. This means the investigative judgment is happening _____.
7. The people of the Great Advent Movement thought “the sanctuary shall be cleansed” meant what would be cleansed? _____
8. They had the correct _____, but the wrong _____.

Answer Key

1. Betrayal
2. Hypocrisy
3. Investigative, executive
4. The sanctuary
5. Before
6. Right now
7. The earth
8. Date, event

