It was a perilous time for the greatest king that Israel ever had. King David’s son Absalom had conspired against his father and had rallied a large part of the nation on his side. Rather than subjecting Jerusalem to a bloody conflict, David and his loyal circle of mighty men vacated the city before Absalom and his vast army arrived. The two chief priests Zadok and Abiathar and all the Levites with them came to join David, carrying the ark of God from the sanctuary. But David advised them to take the ark back to its place in Jerusalem, trusting that if God willed it, He would bring him back to see it again.

David then requested Zadok and Abiathar to make their sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan to be messengers to bring him news of the developments in Jerusalem, which now was under Absalom’s authority. Another loyal friend and counsellor of David, Hushai the Archite, came with his clothes rent in token of mourning for what was transpiring. But David also sent him back to Jerusalem to do what he could to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, one of David’s most able counsellors who had defected to Absalom. This was a critical issue in the conspiracy because, as the Bible tells us in 2 Samuel 16:23, “And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.” When someone told David that Ahithophel was among the conspirators, “David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness” 2 Samuel 15:31.

After occupying Jerusalem, Absalom asked counsel regarding what he ought to do next. Ahithophel advised an immediate attack against David and his forces while they were still weary from their flight and unprepared for battle. Had they done that, it would have been disastrous for David and his men. However, in the providences of God, Absalom also called in Hushai, who in pretence seemed to have joined the conspiracy. When Absalom told Hushai what Ahithophel had counseled, Hushai realized that if Absalom followed the advice of Ahithophel, David and his men would be in grave danger. He decided that by appealing to Absalom’s pride and vanity, he might be able to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. We read of how Hushai worked to dissuade Absalom from following Ahithophel’s counsel.

In his reply to Absalom, Hushai said, “The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time.” Then he gave his own advice by saying, “I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person. . . . And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom” 2 Samuel 17:11-14.

Hushai’s advice to mobilize a vast army and lead the armed confederacy in person appealed to the prince. The scene of grandeur with Absalom riding before his great army destined to victory appealed to his pride and vanity, and he chose to follow Hushai’s counsel. Of course Hushai realized it would take more time to mobilize such vast army, and would give David and his men more time to cross over the Jordan river and establish their position in one of the cities in Gilead.

After having given his counsel, Hushai secretly sent a message to Zadok and Abiathar the priests to let David know what Ahithophel had counselled and what he had counselled Absalom. His advice to David was to immediately cross over Jordan in his flight in case Absalom changed his mind and accepted Ahithophel’s advice.

Fortunately, Absalom followed Hushai’s advice and having mobilized a huge army, Absalom led them
across the Jordan to engage with David’s forces. They joined battle in the “wood of Ephraim” which proved disastrous for Absalom’s unwieldy army. 2 Samuel 18:6-8 tells us “So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim; where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men. For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.” When David’s men pursued Absalom as he tried to flee through the woods, he unfortunately got his hair caught in the branch of a great oak tree, and his mule passed on, leaving him suspended helplessly in midair. When Joab, one of David’s captains, was informed of Absalom’s plight, he quickly killed the conspirator and buried him in a pit where they laid a great heap of stones upon him.

Joab then blew the trumpet to signal the end of the battle. Absalom’s forces had suffered a humiliating defeat, and the good news was to be brought to the king at the city of Mahanaim where he was anxiously awaiting tidings regarding the battle. Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, came to Joab and offered to run to Mahanaim to bring tidings to the king.

“Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies. And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king’s son is dead. Then said Joab to Cushi, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cushi bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.

Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushi. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready? But howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi “ 2 Samuel 18: 19-23. Ahimaaz was eager to run even though he did not have the full tidings of all that had transpired that day.

The watchman on the roof above the gate of the city where David was anxiously waiting spied two runners, one in advance of the other, coming toward the city, and he reported it to the king. When Ahimaaz arrived, David was eager to get some news from him. “And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king. And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king’s servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was. And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still “ 2 Samuel 18: 28-30.

Ahimaaz was a swift runner who outran Cushi who had been sent with the full tidings. When Ahimaaz was asked about the most important tidings that the king wanted to know about, Ahimaaz replied, “I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.” He was asked to step aside until Cushi came with the full tidings.

Why is this story important for us and what are the lessons to be learned? The narrative depicts two runners who are carrying tidings. But one does not have the full tidings, even though he is the fastest and most eager to run. He knows something important has happened, but he does not know what it was. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have been given the task of running with crucial tidings for these last days. The most important, the most solemn truths ever committed to mortals have been given to us. The great importance of these truths is pinpointed in the following from Inspiration.

“The third angel of Revelation 14 is represented as flying swiftly through the midst of heaven crying: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Here is shown the nature of the work
of the people of God. They have a message of so great importance that they are represented as flying in the presentation of it to the world. They are holding in their hands the bread of life for a famishing world. The love of Christ constraineth them. This is the last message. There are no more to follow, no more invitations of mercy to be given after this message shall have done its work. What a trust! What a responsibility is resting upon all to carry the words of gracious invitation. . . . They are made trustees for the world, executors of the will of One who has bequeathed sacred truth to men. Would that all could feel the dignity and glory of their God-given trust “5 Testimonies p. 206-207.

We need to consider whether we are carrying the kind of tidings that the King wants us to carry, or are we like Ahimaaz who ran with tidings which came short of what the king expected of him. The tidings that have been placed in our hands is the Third Angel’s message, which is the everlasting gospel in the time of the judgment. This brings to view the climax of the work of redemption to be accomplished by Christ’s closing ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. It is the greatest, most momentous event which decides the eternal destiny of the inhabitants of earth. To the faithful it will bring the unprecedented blessings and benefits of the new covenant and the latter rain. Both spiritual and tangible blessings will be bestowed when Christ asks for his people pardon and justification, full and complete, and a share in His glory and a seat upon His throne. See GC 484.

The Third Angel points the minds of the believers to the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. The outer court and first apartment represent the “precious truths” that have been progressively revealed since the first promise of Genesis 3:15 was given to Adam and Eve after the fall. The benefits of the former rain dispensation throughout the centuries were destined to produce a people of faith like we find recorded in Hebrews eleven. Yet the “precious truths” revealed to God’s people before 1844 were not destined, neither were they adequate to produce a perfected people, sealed with the seal of the living God and enabled to live without a mediator in the heavenly sanctuary. Hebrews 11:39-40 tells us that “These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” God’s people before 1844 did not have the full tidings needed to finish the work of redemption and prepare people for close of probation.

In this time when probation is about to close, we need higher and better things than those living before 1844 needed. In Review & Herald, Feb.25, 1890 we read: “We are not called to worship and serve God by the use of the means employed in former years. God requires higher service now than ever before. He requires the improvement of the heavenly gifts. He has brought us into a position where we need higher and better things than have ever been needed before. The slumbering Church must be aroused, awakened out of its spiritual lethargy, to a realization of the important duties which have been left undone. The people have not entered into the holy place, where Jesus has gone to make an atonement for his children. We need the Holy Spirit in order to understand the truths for this time; but there is spiritual drought in the churches, and we have accustomed ourselves to be easily satisfied with our standing before God.”

This passage pinpoints our urgent need for higher and better things and also where those higher and better things are to be obtained. It is from the second apartment where Christ has gone to make a special atonement for His children. If we run with only the “precious truths” revealed before 1844, we will be like Ahimaaz who ran without the full tidings that the King was expecting to hear. What makes it more serious is the fact that if “present truth” is rejected or neglected, the past, precious truth looses its power. Inspiration tells us that “In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. It is
only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new. But it is the light which shines in the fresh unfolding of truth that glorifies the old. **He who rejects or neglects the new does not really possess the old. For him it loses its vital power and becomes but a lifeless form** “Christ Object Lessons p. 127.

The Advent people in 1844 who did not follow the light as Jesus went to the second apartment, but remained in the first apartment, came under the most subtle deceptions of Satan. They received light and power from Satan when they thought they were praying to Christ. And the same experience will come to Adventists today if they reject or neglect the “present truth” that shines from the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. We cannot be accepted of God by embracing two thirds of the truths revealed in the sanctuary. We have this warning in Early Writings pp. 188-189. “As the disciples declared that there is salvation in no other name under heaven, given among men, so also should the servants of God faithfully and fearlessly warn those who embrace but a part of the truths connected with the third message, that they **must gladly receive all the messages as God has given them, or have no part in the matter.**” “There is no Bible sanctification for those who cast a part of the truth behind them. . . .” 7Bible Comments p. 947.

In 1 Selected Messages pp. 124-125, Inspiration shows how important it is to preach “present truth” which the flock needs now as the judgment is about to begin with the living. It tells us “We are in the great day of atonement, when our sins are, by confession and repentance, to go beforehand to judgment. God does not now accept a tame, spiritless testimony from His ministers. **Such a testimony would not be present truth.**

**The message for this time must be meat in due season to feed the church of God.** But Satan has been seeking gradually to rob this message of its power, that the people may not be prepared to stand in the day of the Lord.”

Those who teach that perfection is attained through the first apartment ministry may speak of the importance of Christ’s second apartment ministry, yet their concept reduces it to just a judicial act of cleansing the heavenly record books from the sins there recorded. If perfect sinlessness like Adam had before the fall were attained through the sanctification of the first apartment, the work of redemption would be finished. Then Christ’s work in the second apartment would not be a matter of salvation. It would follow that His work in the most holy place provides no soul cleansing, no removal of the filthy garments, no blotting out of sins from the mind, no work of salvation that hasn’t already been accomplished in the first apartment ministry. And since the Advent movement is based on Daniel 8:14 and the work in the second apartment, it would follow that the Advent movement has no message vital to salvation. The judgment and cleansing of the sanctuary would become just a theological anomaly as Walter Martin and Dr. Barnhouse described it when they saw Questions on Doctrine’s emasculated version of the most holy place ministry of Jesus.

What is needed today are Cushi’s who carry the full message of “present truth” as presented in Acts 3:19. We need more than the forgiveness of sins and justification through the merits of Christ. We need more than victory over sinful habits through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. All these are very essential to salvation, but they are not the completion of it. We need the blotting out of sins and the refreshing latter rain with all the mighty blessings that it bestows to meet the needs of this hour. And that comes from the second apartment. The message for today is, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the **times of refreshing shall come** from the presence of the Lord.” When this has been done, Christ can cease His priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and prepare to come back to receive His people to their eternal reward.

As God’s denominated people, we have to deal with a most urgent question facing us today. In the days of Christ, the most urgent question facing God’s chosen people then was, What think ye of Christ? Is He the
one and only way whereby we must be saved? But today the most urgent question facing Adventists is, What about Christ and His work of cleansing the sanctuary? Is the cleansing of the sanctuary an experience in the heart? Is there a simultaneous cleansing of the soul temple on earth when the record books are cleansed in heaven? We know that all our sins are recorded in the books of heaven, but Jeremiah 17:1 tells us, "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart." This is where the original record of sin is written and the books of heaven merely reflect what is written in the heart. The blotting out of sins from the books of heaven is a judicial act which does not affect our salvation experience. But the blotting out of sins from the heart and mind is very much a matter of salvation, just as much as the forgiveness of sins. No one goes to heaven without experiencing both.

What seems to be adding to a misunderstanding of Christ’s closing work in the sanctuary is the popular misconception that the judgment of the living is happening right now. Along with that is the belief that the judgment of the living is an unconscious event. So we have two misconceptions which adds confusion to the subject, namely that the judgment of the living is in progress right now and that no one will know when they are being judged. While we do not have a prophesied date like Daniel 8:14 to tell us when the judgment will begin for the living, an understanding of the order of last day events will help us to see how the judgment of the living coincides with the enforcement of the mark of the beast. This is clearly portrayed in 5 Testimonies pp. 472-473. Notice the following:

"Zechariah’s vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God’s people in the closing up of the great day of atonement. The remnant church will be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts. . . As he influenced the heathen nations to destroy Israel, so in the near future he will stir up the wicked powers of earth to destroy the people of God. All will be required to render obedience to human edicts in violation of the divine law."

This passage clearly shows us that the mark of the beast will be enforced "in the closing up of the great day of atonement." The passage also describes the affliction of soul that the saints are experiencing in the closing up of the great day of atonement, the judgment of the living. "As Joshua was pleading before the Angel, so the remnant church, with brokenness of heart and earnest faith, will plead for pardon and deliverance through Jesus their Advocate. They are fully conscious of the sinfulness of their lives, they see their weakness and unworthiness, and as they look upon themselves they are ready to despair. The tempter stands by to accuse them, as he stood by to resist Joshua. He points to their filthy garments, their defective characters. He presents their weakness and folly, their sins of ingratitude, their unlikeness to Christ, which has dishonored their Redeemer. He endeavors to affright the soul with the thought that their case is hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes to so destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations, turn from their allegiance to God, and receive the mark of the beast."

The judgment has been going on for the dead since 1844. The repeated admonition from the Lord’s messenger to cleanse our soul temple from all defilement while the judgment is going forward in heaven does not mean that the judgment is going on for the living. No one will know how soon it will come to the living, therefore we are to cleanse our hearts and minds from every sinful habit before judgment begins with the living. Inspiration tells us to send our sins beforehand to judgment that they might be atoned for and blotted out. It will be too late to cleanse our hearts from sinful habits once the judgment begins for the living. This was illustrated in the type. On the day of atonement there were no priests ministering in the outer court for the forgiveness of sins. So in this time, anyone who comes to the judgment of the living with unconfessed
and unforsaken sins will have their names blotted out of the book of life. The repentance and affliction of soul on the day of atonement was for past sins which were previously confessed and sent beforehand to the sanctuary. As stated in Hebrews 10:3, “there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.” Inspiration tells us that “Each one in the day of investigative Judgment will stand in character as he really is; he will render an individual account to God. . . . The mind will recall all the thoughts and acts of the past; the whole life will come in review like the scenes in a panorama” RH November 4, 1884. This passage dispels the notion that the judgment of the living is an unconscious event.

This reality was presented to the students at Battle Creek College by Ellen White when she addressed the student body. Here is part of what she told them. “There is a final examination that is to take place in reference to your probationary time in this world which is of vital interest to every one of us. There will in that day be no indifferent spectators. Every one will have a part to act, and will have intense interest to pass that ordeal with heavenly honors” Signs of The Times, Feb.14, 1878.

To summarize, there are three erroneous views about the judgment that has clouded the understanding of the most vital truth for this day.

1. The first one is the concept that perfection of character is fully accomplished in the first apartment ministry before the judgment of the living begins. It is true that there is a level of perfection that needs to be attained before the judgment of the living, which is victory over every wrong habit of thought, word and action. That is the condition for being accepted in the judgment and receiving the refreshing latter rain. But that is not sinless perfection such as Jesus demonstrated and which Adam had before the fall. 5Testimonies p. 475 shows us that the 144,000 come to the day of atonement still defective in character, clothed with filthy garments. That is due to their past sins which have not yet been blotted out. It also shows the dramatic change in their experience when the filthy garments are removed and they are clothed with a new garment of perfect righteousness.

2. The second erroneous concept that needs to be guarded against is the view that the judgment of the living is going on at the present time. We have the evidence from Inspiration that the judgment of the living does not begin until the enforcement of the mark of the beast. These two event coincide.

3. The third misconception regarding the judgment is the idea that the judgment of the living is an unconscious event that happens in heaven while the saints go about their daily business of life on earth. But we have many statements from Inspiration which clearly show that God’s people will be given a panoramic view of their past life at the judgment, and that they will have a part to act to pass that ordeal with heavenly honors. That is what the students at Battle Creek college were told when they listened to Ellen White’s address. Certainly it is evident that Satan has been seeking gradually to rob us of the heart and vitality of this great truth. We close with this pertinent passage from Inspiration “The third angel closes his message thus: ‘Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ As he repeated these words, he pointed to the heavenly sanctuary. The minds of all who embrace this message are directed to the most holy place, where Jesus stands before the ark, making His final intercession for all those for whom mercy still lingers and for those who have ignorantly broken the law of God. This atonement is made for the righteous dead as well as for the righteous living. It includes all who died trusting in Christ, but who, not having received the light upon God’s commandments, had sinned ignorantly in transgressing its precepts. . . . but the third angel was pointing them to the most holy place, and those who had had an experience in the past messages were pointing them the way to the heavenly sanctuary” Early Writings pp. 254 & 256.