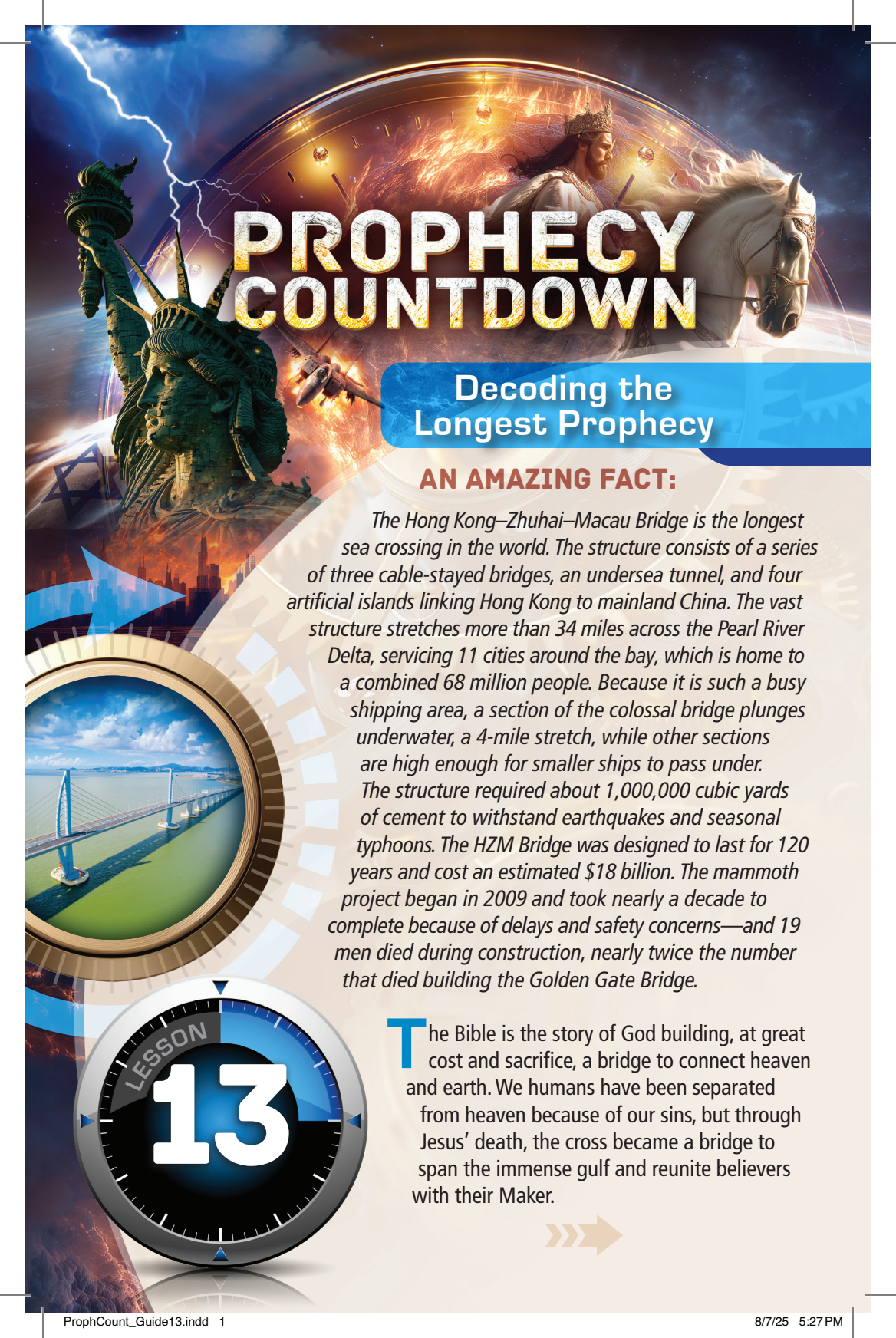




PROPHECY COUNTDOWN

Decoding the Longest Prophecy

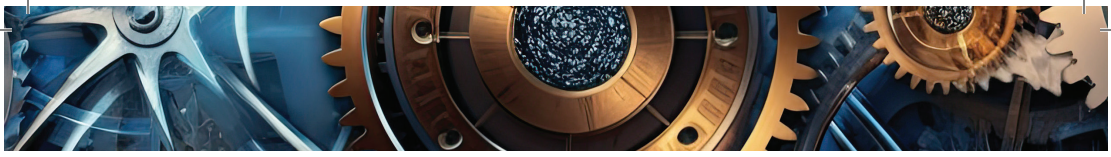
AN AMAZING FACT:

The Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macau Bridge is the longest sea crossing in the world. The structure consists of a series of three cable-stayed bridges, an undersea tunnel, and four artificial islands linking Hong Kong to mainland China. The vast structure stretches more than 34 miles across the Pearl River Delta, servicing 11 cities around the bay, which is home to a combined 68 million people. Because it is such a busy shipping area, a section of the colossal bridge plunges underwater, a 4-mile stretch, while other sections are high enough for smaller ships to pass under. The structure required about 1,000,000 cubic yards of cement to withstand earthquakes and seasonal typhoons. The HZM Bridge was designed to last for 120 years and cost an estimated \$18 billion. The mammoth project began in 2009 and took nearly a decade to complete because of delays and safety concerns—and 19 men died during construction, nearly twice the number that died building the Golden Gate Bridge.

The Bible is the story of God building, at great cost and sacrifice, a bridge to connect heaven and earth. We humans have been separated from heaven because of our sins, but through Jesus' death, the cross became a bridge to span the immense gulf and reunite believers with their Maker.

LESSON
13





Found in the book of Daniel, the longest time prophecy in the Bible describes, with precise timing, Messiah's coming as the Lamb and His work as our High Priest before He comes again. The thrilling conclusions of this study will help you realize that God holds all of history in His hands. And by crossing the bridge He has built, you can face the future without fear ...



When you see a blank, use your Bible to look up the missing word and fill it in.



The prophet Daniel had an amazing vision in which he saw a ram with two horns (Daniel 8:1-4)—what does the ram represent?

Daniel 8:20

The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of _____ and _____.

NOTE: Historically, the Hebrews were shepherds, making them well acquainted with the nature of sheep and goats. God used these creatures as symbols of nations, such as Persia, that would fight to dominate the territory of Israel and beyond.



Daniel next saw a goat with a great horn between his eyes—what does this mean?

Daniel 8:21, 22

The male goat is the kingdom of _____. The large horn that is between its eyes is the _____ king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, _____ kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.

NOTE: The male goat represents Greece, which conquered the Persian Empire; its big horn is a symbol of its ruler Alexander the Great. The four horns represent the four generals who took power over parts of the empire when Alexander died.



A little horn then sprouts up out of one of the four—what power does this represent?

Acts 18:2 *Claudius [Caesar] had commanded all the Jews to depart from _____.*

NOTE: The “little horn” that persecuted God’s people, trampled holy things, and stood against Jesus represents Rome—both pagan and papal. Pagan Rome is the power that followed Greece and became exceedingly great, ruling over the Mediterranean world when Christ was born.



Daniel was told that this little horn would defile the sanctuary. How long until it would be cleansed?

Daniel 8:14 *For _____ thousand _____ hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.*

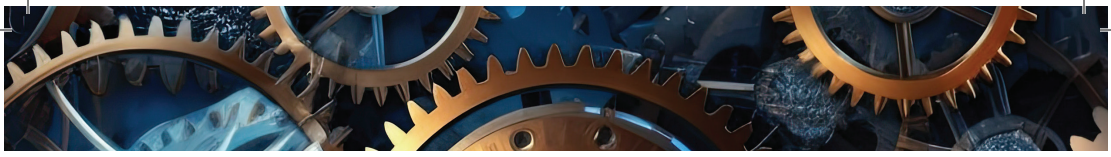
NOTE: This 2,300-day period is the longest time prophecy in the Bible, but the starting point and meaning are not given until the next chapter—in Daniel 9:25. (Remember, in Bible prophecy, a day represents one literal year. See Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34.)



How did Daniel respond when he saw the little-horn power persecute God’s people and distort the truth?

Daniel 8:27 *And I, Daniel, fainted and was _____ for days; ... I was astonished by the vision, but no _____ understood it.*

NOTE: Daniel was so deeply grieved by what was to come upon God’s people that he fainted and was sick. Initially, neither Daniel nor his friends understood the 2,300-day portion of the vision.



In the next chapter, the angel returns to complete the prophecy—how long was the additional time period included in the vision?

Daniel 9:24

_____ are determined for your people and for your holy city, ... to seal up vision and prophecy.

NOTE: Several years after Daniel's vision about the 2,300 days, while he was earnestly praying for his people, the angel Gabriel reappeared to help him understand the first vision (Daniel 9:23). The angel also explained that the vision included a 70-week prophetic period "determined for," or allotted to, the Jews and the city of Jerusalem. This meant that God would give His chosen nation an additional 490 years to accomplish its purpose of presenting and proclaiming the Messiah to the world (v. 24).



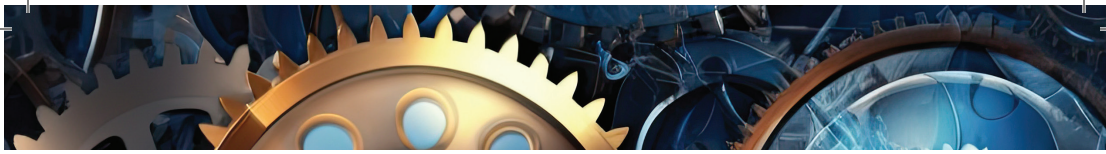
What was the starting point for both the 2,300-day and 70-week time prophecies?

Daniel 9:25

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to _____ and build _____ until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.

NOTE: The angel told Daniel to begin counting the 2,300-day and 70-week prophecies from the pivotal decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. After the fall of Babylon, the Persian king Cyrus II allowed the Jews to return to Israel and resettle the land. However, the notable decree to rebuild Jerusalem came several years later. This was issued by King Artaxerxes I in the seventh year of his reign. Artaxerxes I came to the throne in 464 BC; therefore, Artaxerxes' decree was delivered in 457 BC (Ezra 7:7–24).

There is significant historical evidence for this date outside of the Bible. "The Elephantine papyri give strong support to our conclusion that the decree of Artaxerxes was issued and carried out in the year 457 B.C." (*The Chronology of Ezra 7*, Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood, 1970).



The angel said that when counting 69 weeks from 457 BC, it would come to Messiah the Prince—did this happen?

Acts 10:37, 38

That word you know, ... after the baptism which John preached: how God _____ Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.

NOTE: Yes, it did! Here is a fantastic miracle. Hundreds of years before Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit, the event was precisely foretold in prophecy! "Messiah" is the Hebrew word for "anointed," and the word "Christ" is the Greek version of the same word. Luke 3:21, 22 says this special anointing by the Holy Ghost took place at His baptism. Remembering that one prophetic day equals one literal year, adding 69 weeks, or 483 prophetic days ($69 \times 7 = 483$), to 457 BC brings us to the year AD 27 ($483 - 457 = 26$, + 1 year because there is no zero year between 1 BC and AD 1).

The Gospel writer Luke was an excellent historian and gave us six benchmarks in history to know exactly when Jesus was baptized (Luke 3:1, 2). AD 27 is when Jesus turned 30 and began His ministry as Messiah after His baptism—precisely 483 years after the decree given in 457 BC! This is why, after His baptism, Jesus began preaching, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). He was speaking of the time prophecy in Daniel 9:25!



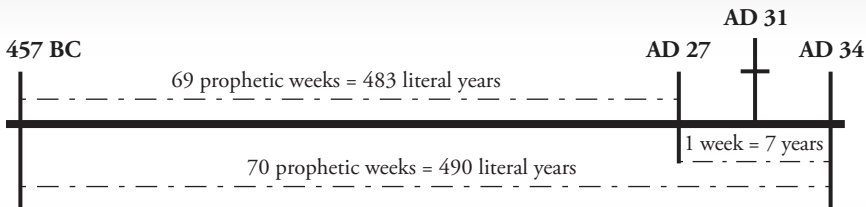
What was to take place next in the prophecy?

Daniel 9:26, 27

And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be _____, but not for Himself; ... he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the _____ of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.



NOTE: The prophecy next predicted that Jesus would be “cut off,” or crucified, in the middle of the last week of the 70-week prophecy. Counting three and a half years from His anointing in the fall of AD 27 takes us to the spring of AD 31, which is precisely when Jesus was crucified. (See timeline below.) At the time He died, the temple veil was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:50, 51), indicating that Jesus had caused the sacrificial system to cease by His death as the true Lamb of God.



Some Bible students detach the last week (seven literal years) of Daniel's 490-year prophecy and apply it to Antichrist's work at the end of time and a seven-year tribulation. There is no Bible support for doing so.



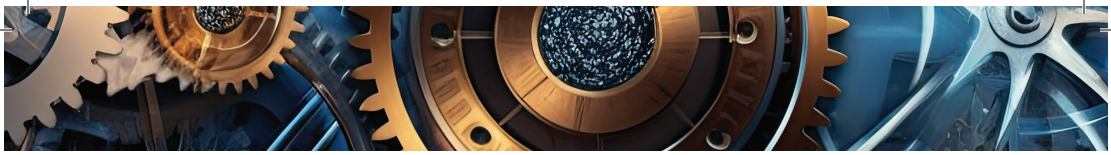
Jesus told His disciples to focus their preaching first on which group of people?

Matthew 10:5, 6

Do not go into the way of the Gentiles ... But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of _____.

NOTE: God is so merciful and patient! Even though His own people would betray Him, Jesus insisted that His disciples preach exclusively to the Jews first—because three and a half years would still remain in the nation's 490-year opportunity to accept and proclaim the Messiah. The prophecy in Daniel 9:27 said that Jesus would confirm the covenant, the great plan of salvation, with many for one prophetic week (seven literal years).

But Jesus was crucified in the midst of that final week allotted to His chosen nation, so how could He confirm the covenant with them after His death? The answer is found in Hebrews 2:3: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him?" Jesus' disciples preached only to the Jews for that final three and a half years, until the nation, through their Supreme Council, officially rejected the gospel message in AD 34 when Stephen, a spirit-filled deacon, was publicly stoned (Acts 7:58, 59).

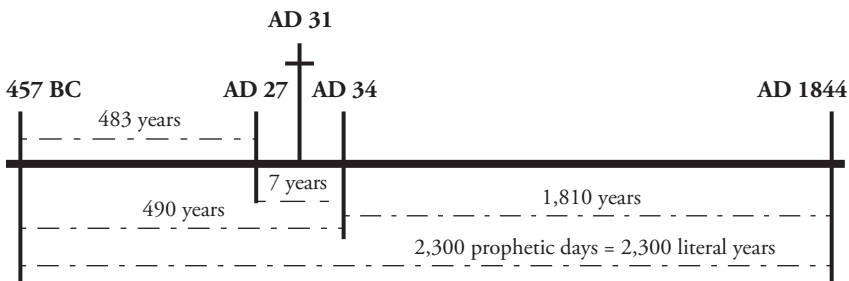


Who is God's chosen nation (1 Peter 2:9) following AD 34?

Matthew 21:43 *The kingdom of God will be _____ from you and given to a _____ bearing the fruits of it.*

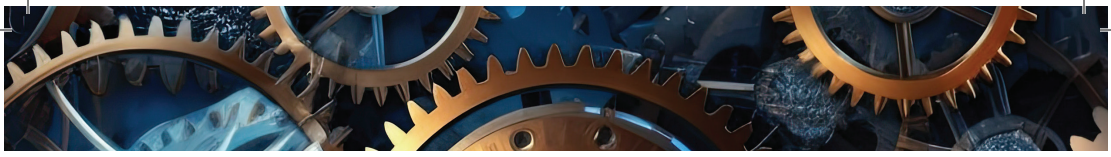
Romans 2:28, 29 *He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, ... but he is a Jew who is one _____.*

NOTE: Jesus made it clear that the special status of the Jewish nation would be revoked if the people persisted in rejecting His Messiahship. Although the Jewish *people* have not been forsaken by God (Romans 11:1), the Jewish *nation* is no longer His chosen instrument to reach the world. That covenant ended with the stoning of Stephen. Following the conversion of Paul, the gospel exploded among the Gentile nations. Since then, all who accept Jesus, both Jew and Gentile, are His chosen people (1 Peter 2:9), and the promises that once applied to literal Israel now extend to spiritual Israel (Romans 9:6–8). Thus, the nation in the Middle East is not the central focus of end-time prophecy.



According to the angel who spoke with Daniel, what final event would begin at the end of the 2,300 years?

Daniel 8:14 *He said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the _____ shall be _____."*



NOTE: Returning to our starting point of 457 BC and remembering that a day in prophecy represents a literal year, counting 2,300 years brings us to 1844. The angel said that the sanctuary would be cleansed, or “restored” (CSB, ESV, NASB). But the earthly sanctuary, destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, has never been restored. So what happened in 1844? Keep reading!



When Jesus ascended to heaven, where did His ministry for us continue?

Hebrews 4:14 *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the _____, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

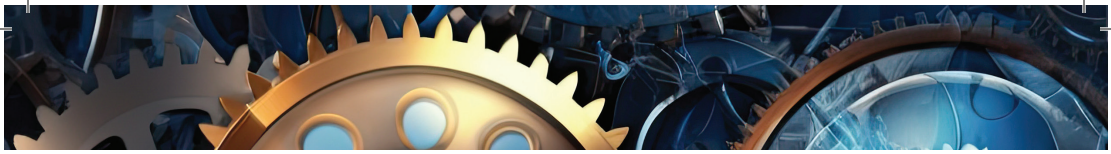
Hebrews 9:11 *But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect _____ not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.*

NOTE: When the religious leaders finally rejected Jesus’ teaching and ministry, He left the temple and declared, “See! Your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:38). When Jesus died on the cross, the purpose of the earthly temple—flowing with the blood of animal sacrifices—was now fulfilled. It had all pointed to Christ, the true Lamb and High Priest. The function of the earthly temple was over. Since His ascension, Jesus has been interceding before the Father as our High Priest, pleading His own blood on our behalf (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24).



Does God still have a temple on the earth?

Ephesians 2:19–22 *The household of God ... [has] been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a _____ in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*



NOTE: Yes. God's people are now His spiritual temple on earth! Believers are called "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5). Jesus also foretold, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," but He was speaking of His body (John 2:19–21). And, of course, the church is called "the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Daniel 8:14 predicts that a cleansing would begin. Cleansed from what? According to Daniel 8:11, 12, "the place of His sanctuary was cast down, ... and he [the beast power] cast truth down to the ground." In 1844, as our High Priest began cleansing the heavenly temple, a phenomenal worldwide revival began restoring the biblical truths that the beast had obscured or distorted during its 1,260-year reign. Jesus is coming for a church that has returned to the doctrines that were "once ... delivered to the saints" (Jude 3)—for instance, a church that keeps the seventh-day Sabbath and believes that immortality is received at His literal return.



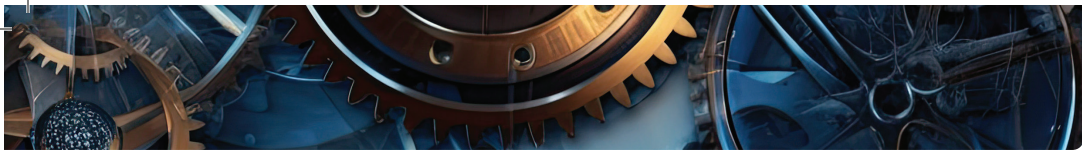
What unique aspect of His redemptive ministry did Jesus commence for His church in 1844?

1 Peter 4:17 *The time has come for judgment to begin at the _____ of _____.*

Ecclesiastes 12:14 *God will bring every _____ into judgment, including every _____ thing.*

NOTE: In the earthly sanctuary, the final act of the high priest at the end of the sacred year was the "Day of Atonement" (Leviticus 23:27). This was a time when God's people were cleansed from the sins that had been transferred to the sanctuary throughout the year. It was a time of self-examination and judgment.

In 1844, Jesus, our High Priest, began His final ministry in the heavenly sanctuary—a judgment that takes place before He comes again. The Bible says that when Christ returns, He is bringing rewards, so some form of judgment must happen prior to His coming (Revelation 22:12), which is why it's called the "pre-advent" judgment. In this first phase of judgment, only those who have claimed to be God's people are investigated (Psalm 50:3–5), whereas the judgment of the lost is reserved for the second phase during the Millennium (Revelation 20:4, 11, 12). The evidence in both phases comes from heavenly "books" containing all the details of a person's life (Psalm 56:8; Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:12). And the standard in both phases is the Ten Commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Revelation 22:12, 14).



What is our great hope in the pre-advent judgment?

- A. *Jesus is our Advocate (1 John 2:1).*
- B. *Jesus is our Judge (John 5:22).*
- C. *Jesus is our Faithful and True Witness (Revelation 3:14).*

NOTE: Satan is our accuser in this judgment (Revelation 12:9, 10), but thankfully, Jesus is the Christian's defense attorney, judge, and witness. If you confess your sins, surrender your life to Christ, and choose to follow Him, He will plead His blood on your behalf—and He has never lost a case with the Father, who also loves you! (John 16:27; Romans 8:1; Colossians 1:12–14).

» YOUR RESPONSE

When Jesus is your attorney in the judgment, He promises to win your case!
Will you turn your life over to Him today?

ANSWER: _____



FURTHER STUDY

Other Interesting Developments in 1844

- The Edict of Toleration is passed, allowing Jews to settle once again in the Holy Land for the first time in centuries.
- Darwin wrote *On the Origin of Species*, which would become the foundation for the theory of evolution.
- Karl Marx developed his political philosophy, which is found in the Communist Manifesto, paving the way for atheistic governments to spread around the world.
- The first electronic message relaying Morse code was sent in 1844, laying the foundation for electronic communication. The first message sent quoted the Bible: "What hath God wrought?" (Numbers 23:23 KJV).
- Charles Goodyear received a patent for vulcanization, a process to strengthen rubber, boosting the industrial revolution.
- The first treaty between China and the United States was signed.

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Lesson 13



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