

The Uniqueness of Seventh-day Adventist Eschatology

by Jan A. Sigvartsen

Abstract:

The eschatological belief held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Beliefs 24-28) is a composite belief founded on the reformation principles of *Sola Scriptura*, *Tota Scriptura*, *Prima Scriptura*, and the *Analogy of Scripture*. Apart from Revelation 20-22, there is only one other late Second Temple Period text which separates the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked by a Messianic kingdom. This paper will compare and contrast the composite eschatological belief held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the belief appearing in the pseudepigraphical text, *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*. This paper will demonstrate that although there are some important overall similarities, there are also some significant differences between the two beliefs, suggesting the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological belief may be unique.

Introduction

The Old Testament does not reveal much regarding the eschaton and the world to come. The poetic seams (Gen 49; Num 24; Deut 32) in the mega structure of Pentateuch (Narrative – Poetry – Epilogue) focus on the eschatological Messiah (Messiah ben Joseph, Messiah ben Levi, and Messiah ben David),¹ a theological theme also emphasized in the canonical seam-structure of the TaNaKh.² However, this kingdom is described as an earthly kingdom (e.g., Isa 24-27, 65-66; Dan 2:44-45; 7:27), where death is still a reality, Gentile nations still exist, and Jerusalem with its temple functions as its capital. This seems to contrast the Second Temple period Paradise, the heavenly kingdom of the New Testament (e.g., Matt 6:19-21; 7:21; John 14:2-3; 1 Thess 4:15-18) or the *world-to-come* (עולם הבא) in Rabbinic Judaism. Abba Arikha (175-247 CE), better known as Rav in Talmudic literature, describes this place in the following way (b. Ber. 17a:12):

¹For a discussion on how the three messianic figures, Messia ben Joseph, Messiah ben Levi, and Messiah ben David relates to each other, see Jan A. Sigvartsen, *Messiah ben Joseph: A type in both Jewish and Christian Traditions*, GlossaHouse Monograph Series 1 (Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse, 2018), 64-90.

²John H. Sailhammer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009) and Richard M. Davidson, "The Eschatological Literary Structure of the Old Testament," in *Creation, Life and Hope: Essays in Honor of Jacques B. Doukhan*, ed. Jiří Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2000), 349-366.

In the World-to-Come there is no eating, no drinking, no procreation, no business negotiations, no jealousy, no hatred, and no competition. Rather, the righteous sit with their crowns upon their heads, enjoying the splendor of the Divine Presence.

העולם הבא אין בו לא אכילה ולא שתיה ולא פריה ורביה ולא משא ומתן ולא קנאה ולא שנאה ולא תחרות אלא צדיקים יושבין ועטרותיהם בראשיהם ונהנים מזיו השכינה

This echoes Jesus' assertion that following the resurrection, the righteous will be like the angels in heaven, who neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt 22:30; Luke 20:34-36).

Although the Old Testament certainly shows an awareness of the Heavenly realm and the possibility for an individual to enter this realm (e.g., Gen 5:24; 2 Kgs 2:1, 11; Job 1-2; Dan 7:9-14), the biblical writers do not show it much interest as their major emphasis is the promised land. The covenant with the nation of Israel, which was ratified at Mt. Sinai (Exod 24), was conditional upon their obedience to God's covenant as expressed in Moses' exhortation to Israel to choose blessings and life, as opposed to curses and death (Deut 30:11-20). This Deuteronomistic retribution principle and the so-called "Noachide Laws"³ became the foundation for the Prophet's judgment message. Richard Fuhr and Gary Yates write:

The primary role of the prophets was to proclaim the word of God as "covenant reinforcement mediators," preaching to the people a message of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience, reinforced through fresh and sometimes shocking rhetoric . . . In fulfilling this primary role, the prophets did fill a secondary role as a foreteller of future things—but this prognostication was always set within the context of covenant obligation and fulfillment. They foretold the historical details of what would later take place as a result of Yahweh's covenant faithfulness and Israel's covenant unfaithfulness.⁴

Fuhr and Yates note the indictment brought against Israel by the prophets, God's prosecuting attorneys, "revolved around five primary areas of violation: (1) idolatry, (2) social injustice, (3) violence, (4) hypocritical ritualism, and (5) spiritual apathy."⁵ Three of these primary areas of violation, idolatry, social

³Claire Foley, "The Noachide Laws," *Studia Antiqua* 3.2 (Nov 2003): 19-49 and Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, "The Noachide Commandments and New Testament Ethics: With Special Reference to Acts 15 and Pauline halakhah," *Revue biblique* 102 (1995): 72-101.

⁴Fuhr, Richard Alan, Jr., and Gary E. Yates, *The Message of the Twelve: Hearing the Voice of the Minor Prophets* (Nashville, TN: B&M Academic, 2016), 20.

⁵*Ibid.*, 21-22.

injustice, and violence were also brought against the surrounding nations as they, together with sexual immorality, would fall under the so-called Noachide laws. It is important to keep in mind that the judgment message of the Old Testament was primarily addressed to the collective and not the individual. Even though the judgment, grace, and salvation hope would certainly affect the individual member of a nation, it was the destiny of the nation as a whole that was the main focus. This being the case, the death and resurrection language, remnant motive, judgment, and eschatological language used in the Old Testament relates mainly to the nations—a nation’s destruction, revival, survival, and/or glorious eschatological future.

At the end of the First Temple Period and during the Second Temple Period, however, a shift in focus from the collective to the individual took place⁶ and the problem of theodicy became more apparent.⁷ Questions about the validity of the retribution principle, that God would reward the righteous Torah observant Jews with a long and prosperous life while cutting short the life of the wicked, were

⁶It could be argued this shift may be reflected in how the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel reacted to and commented differently regarding the proverb, אָבוֹת אֵכְלוּ בָּסֵר וְשִׁנֵּי בָנִים תִּקְהֶינָה, *the fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge* (Jer 31:29; Ezek 18:2). When reading Jeremiah’s response, he seems to think that the people are justified in using this proverb. He states: בְּיָמֵם הַהֵם לֹא־יֵאמְרוּ עוֹד, *In those days they do not say any more*, referring to a future time (“in those days” is referring to the future restoration when God will fulfill everything which he showed Jeremiah in the vision recorded in the first half of chapter 31), implying that at the present the proverb is true. The words in Lam 5:7, which are traditionally credited to Jeremiah, seems to be picking up the concept presented in this proverb when it states: אֲבֹתֵינוּ חָטְאוּ וְאַיִנָּם וְאַנְחָנוּ עוֹנֵתֵיכֶם סָבְלָנוּ, *Our fathers sinned; they no longer exist, but we bear their punishment* (CSB). Ezekiel, on the other hand, argues that the people wrong God when using this proverb, and insists that they should stop using it, stating: אַם־יִהְיֶה לָּכֶם עוֹד מִשֵּׁל הַמִּשְׁלַל הַזֶּה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, *you have no more the use of this proverb in Israel* (Ezek 18:3).

The theological difference between the portrayal of King Manasseh in Kings and Chronicles could also be due to this shift from the collective to the individual. The author of the book of Kings seems to suggest it was the evil deeds of Manasseh which ultimately led to the Babylonian exile (2 Kgs 21:11-15; 23:26; 24:2-3), leaving later generations powerless to prevent the inevitable, supporting the view held by Jeremiah. In contrast, the author of the Chronicles records King Manasseh’s exile—repentance—re-instatement (2 Chron 33:11-16), thereby shifting the blame for the exile away from Manasseh and placing it squarely on the generation who were exiled. This is an empowering message as the individual, or the exiled people, can no longer view themselves as innocent victims, but instead presents them with a choice. Like Manasseh who was exiled because he “chose” curses and death and who was re-instated when he repented, the exiled people a few decades later, could be assured that if they also repented and “chose” blessings and life, they too would experience restoration and return to the land of Israel. This message of personal responsibility is at the core of Ezekiel’s message as recorded in Ezekiel 18.

⁷The question of theodicy is a central theme in the Old Testament (e.g. Gen 18:17-32; Lev 16; the Book of Job).

undoubtedly raised by some Old Testament writers (e.g. Book of Job; Jer 12:1-3; Mal 3:14-18) and was perhaps most succinctly expressed by the author of Ecclesiastes 8:14:

There is a futility that is done on the earth:
that **there are** righteous people who get what
the actions of the wicked deserve,
and there are wicked people who get what the
actions of the righteous deserve.
I say that this too is futile⁸

יֵשׁ-הַבֶּל־אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשֶׂה עַל-הָאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ צַדִּיקִים אֲשֶׁר מֵגִיעַ אֲלֵהֶם כְּמַעֲשֵׂה הַרְשָׁעִים
וַיֵּשׁ רְשָׁעִים שְׂמֹגִיעַ אֲלֵהֶם כְּמַעֲשֵׂה הַצַּדִּיקִים
אִמְרָתִי שְׁגָם-זֶה הַבֶּל:

The Jews during the Second Temple period experienced “foreign occupation and oppression; oppression of the righteous poor, religious persecution, and martyrdom. For the Torah observant Jews, justice had been perverted: the righteous were receiving the curses of the wicked, while the wicked enjoyed the blessings promised the righteous. Only a belief in an afterlife could solve this acute problem. If there was an afterlife, it was argued, God could set things straight and give the righteous and the wicked their proper due.”⁹ However, the increased interest in an afterlife belief, although providing a satisfactory solution to the problem of theodicy for the individual, introduced a complexity that resulted in a plethora of afterlife views.¹⁰ In the apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, eighteen complete and distinct death-to-eternity views appear. Even the partial views appearing in these writings seem to provide additional

⁸Unless otherwise indicated, the author uses the CSB version of the English Bible.

⁹Jan A. Sigvartsen, *Afterlife and Resurrection Beliefs in the Apocrypha and Apocalyptic Literature*, Jewish and Christian Texts (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming).

¹⁰When introducing an afterlife belief, a number of questions emerge that beg an answer. Perhaps the most important is what happens upon a person’s death, if something of that person survives and continues to exist beyond death. This is a question regarding human anthropology. It should be noted that the majority view appearing in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha is that humans have a soul—about 86% of the literary composition which present an afterlife view. Thus, if a person has a soul, what happens to that soul when it leaves the body, is it stored somewhere in wait for an eschatological reunification with the body? If so, are the righteous souls and the wicked souls stored together or separately and would they be conscious or unconscious during this phase? If the soul is conscious, would it experience any reward or punishment prior to the reunification with the body? Would the wicked souls have an option to repent during this period? A different line of questions relates to the resurrection. Who will resurrect? Will the resurrected look the same or different than how they looked before they died? What and where is the final destiny of the righteous and the wicked? An afterlife view also raises the need for one or more judgments. In the eighteen complete views identified in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, two judgments are the norm as one is needed following death and a second following the eschatological resurrection. There is also a question regarding the purpose of the eschatological judgment.

afterlife/eschatological scenarios. Sigvartsen concludes that “each literary work containing a ‘life-after-death’ view seems to present a unique perspective.”¹¹ The remaining part of this paper will compare and contrast the composite eschatological belief held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the belief appearing in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*—the most similar of the eighteen distinct and complete afterlife views in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha.

Seventh-day Adventist Eschatological View

The Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view (Beliefs 24-28)¹² is a harmonized and composite belief founded on the reformation principles of *Sola Scriptura*, *Tota Scriptura*, *Prima Scriptura*, and the *Analogy of Scripture*. The members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church hold a high view of Scripture, believing “all scripture,” both the Old and the New Testament, is inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16-17)¹³ and its writers were “moved” by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20-21). This is a part of the foundational belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (*Belief 1 – The Holy Scripture*) and forms the hermeneutical foundation on which all the other official beliefs rest (Beliefs 2-28). The implication of this belief is that although there were many biblical writers, there was, in effect, only one author—the Holy Spirit (Belief 5). Consequently, this allows the reader to consider the Bible as a unit which contains a consistent and harmonious message. While only the Holy Spirit has the complete picture, the individual writer presents a part or aspect of this picture, and by combining these individual parts or aspects it may be possible to recreate this larger picture.¹⁴ The following figure provides the composite Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view (see Fig. 1).

¹¹Jan A. Sigvartsen, *Afterlife and Resurrection Beliefs in the Pseudepigrapha*, Jewish and Christian Texts (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming).

¹²For the 28 official belief-statements of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, see: www.adventist.org/fileadmin/adventist.org/files/articles/official-statements/28Beliefs-Web.pdf

¹³It should be noted that most Seventh-day Adventists apply 2 Tim 3:16-17 both to the Old and the New Testament. Although, when these words were first written by Paul, there was not a “New Testament.” This being the case, Paul was most likely speaking of the Old Testament.

¹⁴For the official statement by the Seventh-day Adventist Church on “Methods of Bible Study,” approved by the Annual Council, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 12, 1986, see: www.adventist.org/en/information/official-

Belief 19 – The Law of God, Belief 22 – Christian Behavior, and Belief 24 – Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary note that this current life determines the future destiny of each person – either their reward and eternal life or their punishment and eternal death (see also Matt 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; 1 John 2:3-6). *Belief 7 – The Nature of Humanity* and *Belief 26 – Death and Resurrection* state that death (Death 1 in Fig. 1) is “an unconscious state for all people” and each person “is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else.” This view is based on Gen 2:7 that suggests a living being consists of a body and God’s breath. Death is the reversal of God’s creation act – when the body returns to dust while the breath returns to God who gave it (Gen 3:19; Eccl 3:19-21; 12:7). Seventh-day Adventist believers believe his breath of life should not be confused with a “soul,” something that lives on independently from the body upon death (*Belief 7 – The Nature of Humanity*).

Belief 24 – Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary states that before the second coming, commencing in 1844 at the conclusion of the 2300 day-year prophecy in Dan 8:13-14, there will be an investigative judgment (Judgment 1 in Fig. 1). This judgment will determine who will be a part of the resurrection of the righteous (Resurrection 1 in Fig. 1) and who are numbered among the righteous living – those who Jesus will bring to Heaven for the Millennium.¹⁵

[statements/documents/article/go/0/methods-of-bible-study](#). At the General Conference Session in San Antonio, TX (July 10, 2015), the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) was tasked to restudy the biblical principles of interpretation.

¹⁵The element of a judgment (Judgment 1 in Fig. 1) prior to the resurrection is not unique to the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view. This is the majority position among the eighteen complete and distinct death-to-eternity views appearing in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha. Sigvartsen observes that twelve of these views mentions a pre-resurrection judgment specifically and it is implied in three views (Sigvartsen, *Afterlife and Resurrection Beliefs in the Pseudepigrapha*, forthcoming). However, in most of these cases, the pre-resurrection judgment takes place upon death or soon thereafter as it needs to be determined where the person’s soul should be sent while awaiting the resurrection. Regarding the views that do not contain a soul which can exist separately from the body, the pre-resurrection judgment would take place at some point prior to the resurrection to determine who will participate in the resurrection. If there is only one universal eschatological resurrection event of for all the righteous and the wicked dead, and there is no soul involved, there is no need for a pre-resurrection judgment.

The unique element of the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view is that the pre-resurrection judgment has been given a specific commencement date. According to Dan 7:9-10; 22, 26, the judgment scene takes place after the little horn’s “time, times, and half a time” (v. 25) rule and before the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom (Dan 7:12-14, 18, 22, 27). By synchronizing Daniel’s vision of the four beasts (Dan 7) with his vision of a ram and a goat (Dan 8) and the 70 weeks-of-year prophecy (Dan 9:20-27), a case could be made that 1844 is the start date, and more specifically, October 22, as this date was the equivalent of the 10th day of Tishrei, the Jewish date for

The first general resurrection (Resurrection 1 in Fig. 1) takes place at the second coming and includes all the righteous dead (*Belief 25 – The Second Coming of Christ* and *Belief 26 – Death and Resurrection*). Following the resurrection, all the righteous will be transformed and be “clothed in immortality” and become like the angels before they are brought to Heaven to be with God during the Millennium (*Belief 27 – The Millennium and the End of Sin*; Luke 20:36; 1 Cor 15:42-45; Phil 3:21; Rev 20:4-6). There is some New Testament evidence that there will also be a “special” and limited resurrection of those who killed Jesus (and the most wicked) which will take place before the second coming and the resurrection of the righteous (Matt 26:64; Rev 1:7). Then following the second coming they will die a second time and await their final annihilation at the end of the Millennium. Ellen G. White expands on this special resurrection in the *Great Controversy*.¹⁶ White also seems to suggest that there will be a second “special” and limited resurrection of some righteous who will be counted among the 144,000 which will also take place before the second coming.¹⁷ The wicked, however, will be destroyed (Matt 24:37-39; Luke 17:28-30; Rev 19:18-21) and be dead until the resurrection of the wicked (Resurrection 2 in Fig. 2) at the end of the Millennium (*Belief 26 – Death and Resurrection* and *Belief 27 – The Millennium and the End of Sin*).

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). For further reading, see William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 1 (Lincoln, NE: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1982); Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Daniel: Introductory and Exegetical Study*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 2 (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute and General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986); and *ibid.*, *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 3 (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute and General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986).

¹⁶Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2002), 643.

¹⁷*Idem.*, *Spiritual Gifts: Volume 1 and 2* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 1:205-208.

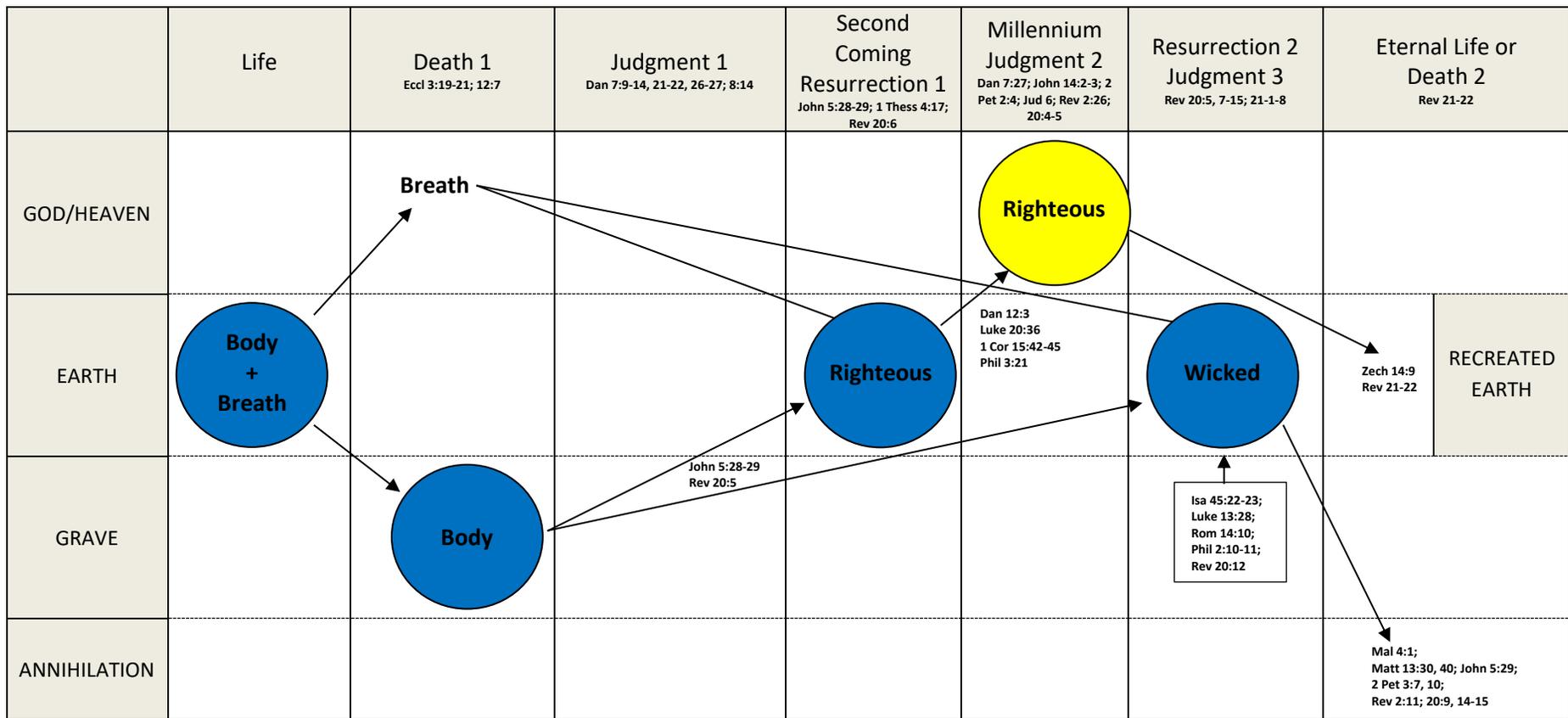


Fig. 1. The Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view. Sourced from Sigvartsen, *Afterlife and Resurrection Beliefs in the Pseudepigrapha*, forthcoming.

Belief 27 – The Millennium and the End of Sin states that during the Millennium, the earth will be desolate (Jer 4:23-25 || Gen 1:2), and only Satan will be roaming the earth (Rev 20:2-3), while the righteous are in Heaven reigning with God (Dan 7:27; Rev 2:26; 20:4) and “judging the wicked” (Judgment 2 in Fig. 1; 1 Cor 6:2-3; 2 Pet 2:4; Jud 6; Rev 20:4) before the resurrection and sentencing of the wicked. Apart from Revelation 20-22, there is only one other late Second Temple Period text which separates the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked by a Messianic kingdom, the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, a literary work which will be considered in the following section.

The resurrection of the wicked (Resurrection 2 in Fig. 1) takes place at the end of the Millennium when the righteous have returned to the earth with God and the New Jerusalem (*Belief 26 – Death and Resurrection* and *Belief 27 – Millennium and the End of Sin*). Following the sentencing of the wicked (Judgment 3 in Fig. 1),¹⁸ the wicked will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:7-15; 21:1-8; Death 2 in Fig. 1). The righteous will live on a recreated earth with God for all eternity while the wicked are completely annihilated (*Belief 28 – The New Earth*; Rev 21-22).

The View Presented in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*

The *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* is a composite work consisting of two distinct literary works—the *Martyrdom of Isaiah* (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 1-5) and the *Ascension of Isaiah* (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 6-11). The oldest work, the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, is also a composite work, a Jewish part (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 1:1-3:12; 5:1-16) and a Christian part (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 3:13-4:22) the latter which is also known by the title *Testament of Hezekiah*. M. Knibb dates the Jewish section to the second century BCE, and the

¹⁸There is only one literary work in the Pseudepigrapha which mentions three judgments, the *Testament of Abraham*. This work is a Jewish composition most likely originating from the Jewish diaspora in Egypt at the turn of the first century CE (for a discussion on dating and provenance, see E. P. Sanders, “Testaments of Abraham,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth [New York: Doubleday, 1983], 1: 874-875). The first judgment is given by Abel at the first gate of heaven (T. Ab. A11:1-13:5), the second judgment by the twelve tribes of Israel (T. Ab. A13:6), and the third and final judgment by God himself (T. Ab. A13:7). This triple judgment follows the direction of Deut 19:5, which requires three witnesses in a legal matter: “One witness cannot establish any wrongdoing or sin against a person, whatever that person has done. A fact must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” The Targum adds that the Word of the Lord is also required. This thoroughness ensures that God’s justice is ultimately settled. For further reading, see: George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Eschatology in the Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Judgment Scene in the Two Recensions,” in *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*, ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 23-64.

embedded Christian section to the end of the first century CE.¹⁹ The most relevant passage for this study is the climax of the Christian section (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:14-22, see below), and follows the reign of Beliar (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:1-13). This vision summarizes the key events that will take place following the second coming of Christ (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:14-18).

Second Coming of Christ
(Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:14-22)

¹⁴And after [one thousand] three hundred and thirty-two days [Dan 12:12] the LORD will come with his angels and with the hosts of the saints from the seventh heaven, with the glory of the seventh heaven, and will drag Beliar, and his hosts also, into Gehenna. ¹⁵And he will give rest to the pious whom he finds in the body in this world, but *the sun will be ashamed* [Isa 24:23]. ¹⁶and (to) all who because of their faith in him have cursed Beliar and his kings. But the saints will come with the LORD with their robes which are stored up in the seventh heaven above; with the LORD will come those whose spirits are clothed, they will descend and be present in the world, and the LORD will strengthen those who are found in the body, together with the saints in the robes of the saints, and will serve those who have kept watch in this world. ¹⁷And after this they will be turned in their robes upwards, and their body will be left in the world. ¹⁸Then the voice of the Beloved will reprove in anger this heaven, and this earth, and the mountains, and the hills, and the cities, and the desert, and the trees, and the angel of the sun, and that of the moon, and everywhere that Beliar has appeared and acted openly in this world. There will be a resurrection and a judgment in their midst in those days, and the Beloved will cause fire to rise from him, and it will consume all the impious, and they will become as if they had not been created [Eth. Job 10:19]. ¹⁹And the rest of the words of the vision are written in the vision of Babylon. ²⁰And the rest of the vision about the LORD, behold it is written in parables in the words of mine that are written in the book which I prophesied openly. ²¹And the descent of the Beloved into Sheol, behold it is written in the section where the LORD says, "*Behold, my son shall understand* [Isa 52:13]." And all these things, behold they are written in the Psalms, in the parables of David the son of Jesse, and in the Proverbs of Solomon his son, and in the words of Korah and of Ethan the Israelite, and in the words of Asaph, and in the rest of the psalms which the angel of the spirit has inspired, ²²(namely) in those which have no name written, and in the words of Amos my father and of Hosea the prophet, and of Micah, and of Joel, and of Nahum, and of Jonah, and of Obadiah, and of Habakkuk, and of Haggai, and of Zephaniah, and of Zechariah, and of Malachi, and in the words of the righteous Joseph, and in the words of Daniel.

M. A. Knibb, "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:162-163.

Figure 2 illustrates the death and resurrection view presented in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*. According to this view, this current life determines the future destiny of each person. Assumedly, a judgment of the soul takes place at death because the righteous soul leaves the "robes of flesh" behind, is brought to the seventh heaven to be with the saints, and given "robes of above"

¹⁹For a discussion on the composite character of the work, dating, and provenance, see: M. A. Knibb, "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 147-150.

(Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:16; 8:14-15; 9:7-9).²⁰ While not specifically stated, it could be assumed the wicked are brought to Sheol (or Gehenna), where they will be kept until the resurrection of the wicked.

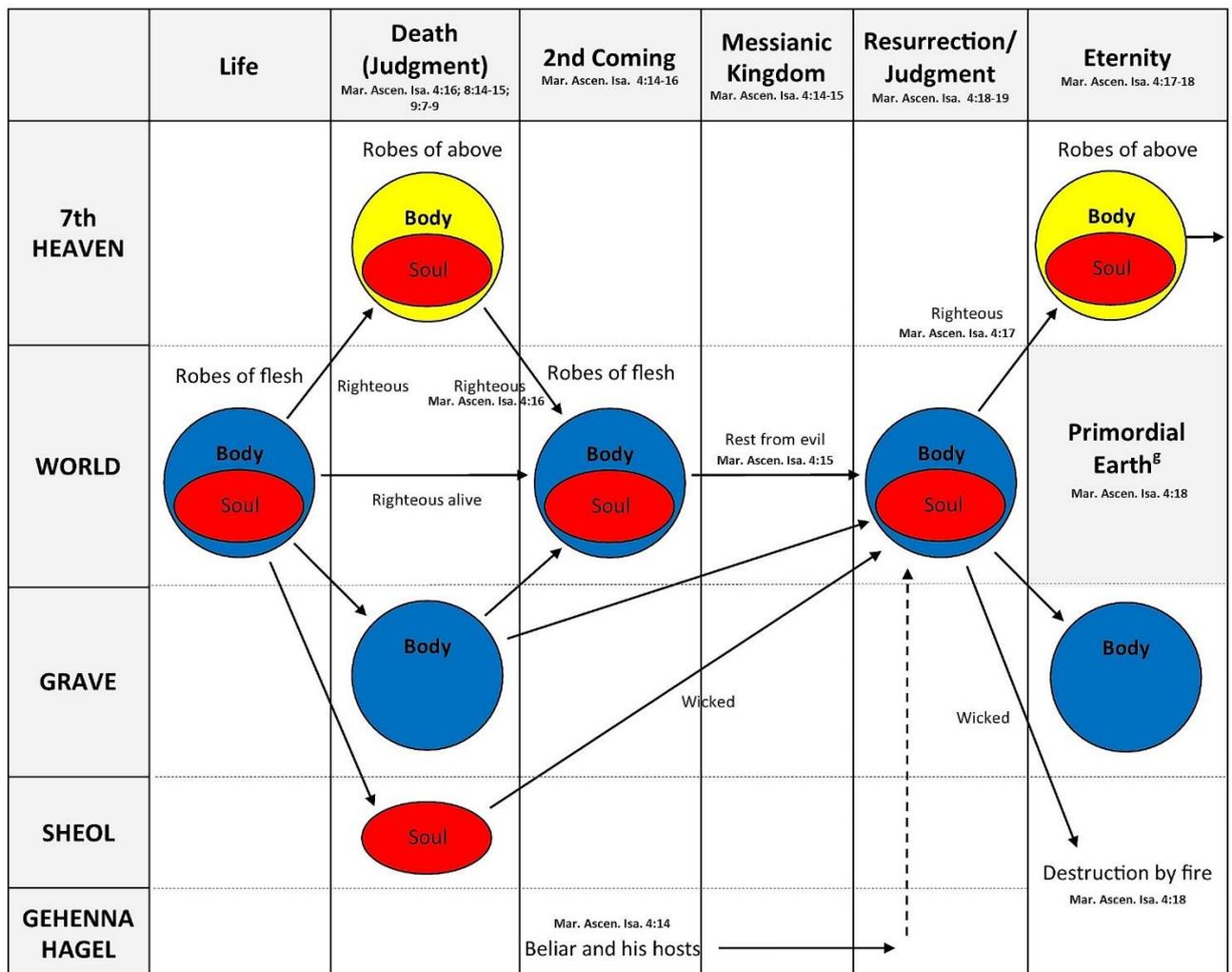


Fig. 2. The death and resurrection view presented in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*. Sourced from Sigvartsen, *Afterlife and Resurrection Beliefs in the Pseudepigrapha*, forthcoming.

The second coming of the Lord and the establishment of his temporary Messianic kingdom follows the “three years and seven months and twenty-seven days” long reign of Beliar (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:12) or 1332 days according to v. 14,²¹ based on an interpretation of Dan 12:12. The hosts of

²⁰This apocalypse does not mention the soul specifically, however, it does mention the “robes of flesh” and the “robes of above,” indicating that something lives on that is separate from the “robes” or “body.” It is not revealed in the text the type of “robes” the wicked will have after death. The “robe of above” which will be given to the righteous upon their ascension to the seventh heaven is also mentioned in: Mar. Ascen. Isa. 1:5; 3:25; 7:22; 8:14, 26; 9:2, 9, 17-18, 24-26; 11:40. This robe symbolizes a transformation which needs to take place to enable a person to dwell in the seventh heaven with God.

²¹This time period is reminiscent to the 1335 days of Dan 12:12. Knibb notes the 1332 days (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:14) or the three years, seven months, and twenty-seven day period (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:12) are the same

saints who accompany God and his angels (alluding to Zech 14:15),²² when descending from the seventh heaven, is the resurrection of the righteous, as they will once more be clothed in the “robes of flesh” and become a part of the earthly messianic kingdom. As a part of the second coming, Beliar and his hosts²³ will be dragged to Gehenna²⁴ where, it could be assumed, they will remain until the day of resurrection and judgment of the wicked. The messianic kingdom will be a temporary earthly kingdom²⁵ bookended by the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection and judgment of the wicked. As Beliar and his hosts reside in Gehenna, this unspecified time period will be without wickedness (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:14-15). The period of the earthly messianic kingdom concludes with the resurrection and the judgment of the wicked. The wicked will be destroyed by fire while the righteous will return to the seventh heaven, leaving their “robes of flesh” behind and receiving their

and, according to the Julian calendar, converts to 1335 days (Knibb, “Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah,” *OTP*, 2:162, n. j). Jonathan Knight observes the 1332 days is most likely an error for 1335, thus bringing the two references to the reign of Belial into agreement (Jonathan Knight, *The Ascension of Isaiah, Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995], 62). There is a precedence from the book of Revelation, a contemporary work, which refers to the same time-period in three different ways, as three-and-a-half years (Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14), 1260 days period (Rev 11:3; 12:6), and also as 42 months (Rev 13:5).

If the time-period in this text is indeed 1335 days, it is a clear link to the resurrection passage of Dan 12 which describes a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. It would also shed some light on how the author of this apocalypse understood the 1335 days period of Dan 12:12, understanding that the end of this period would directly precede the second coming and the establishment of an earthly Messianic kingdom, possibly an interpretation of the following passages from the book of Dan 2:34-35, 44-45; 7:13-14, 18, 22, 26-27; 12:1-13.

²²Although this passage does not mention who these saints are, Mar. Ascen. Isa. 9:6-11 notes that all the righteous, upon death, go to dwell with God in the seventh heaven, leaving the “robes of the flesh” behind to receive “the robes of above” (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 9:7-9). This might be an interpretation of Zech 14:5 which states: “You will flee by My mountain valley, for the valley of the mountains will extend to Azal. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come and **all the holy ones with Him** [כָּל-קְדוּשִׁים עִמָּו/πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι μετ’ αὐτοῦ]” (my emphasis added). This image is also present in the New Testament writings, where either angels (Matt 16:27; 24:29-31; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 13:24-27; Luke 9:26; 2 Thess 1:7; Rev 19:14) or the saints (1 Thess 3:13 [μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ]; Jude 1:14 [ἐν ἁγίαις μυριάσι αὐτοῦ]) are depicted as coming with Jesus Christ at the second coming. Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:14 mentions both the angels and the saints accompanying the Lord.

²³From the immediate context, the hosts of Beliar seems to parallel the hosts of saints coming with the Lord. It is not clear if Beliar’s hosts would also include Beliar’s loyal angels since, in the parallel, the angels of the Lord were mentioned in addition to the saints.

²⁴It is not clear what the nature of this “Gehenna” is in this passage, if it is a place of eternal torment as suggested by the final Christian redactor in Mar. Ascen. Isa. 1:3. However, Mar. Ascen. Isa. 10:8 makes a distinction between Sheol and Haguēl, an Ethiopian word which means, “perdition.” Knibb adds that “‘destruction’ is probably intended here as the name of the final place of punishment for the wicked” (Knibb, “Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah,” *OTP*, 2:137, n. l). Even though it may be tempting to assume Gehenna carries the same meaning as in Jewish apocalyptic literature, as a place of eternal punishment (4 Ezra 7:36; 1 En. 90:26; Sib. Or. 4.186; 2 Bar. 59:10), there is no indication in this Christian apocalypse that the wicked have an immortal soul, rather, the emphasis is on their complete destruction (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:18).

²⁵There is no indication in this passage, nor in the apocalypse as a whole, regarding the duration of this Messianic Kingdom.

“robes of above” (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:18-19). The whole of creation will return to the state of pre-creation (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:18) while the seventh heaven will become the eternal home for the righteous (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:17). The wicked are destroyed permanently by fire (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:18).²⁶

The final section of this paper will consider several similarities and differences between the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view and the view presented in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*.

Similarities and Differences

The first, and perhaps the most important point of comparison between the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view and that of the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* is the time interval between the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked. It seems the author of the *Testament of Hezekiah* (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 3:13-4:22) has expanded upon the resurrection view appearing in Dan 12:2. Daniel 12 suggests there will be a resurrection of the righteous and a resurrection of the wicked, although the reader is left with the impression that these two resurrections will take place at the same time. However, both eschatological views discussed above have these two resurrections bookend the Messianic kingdom, a unique eschatological scenario shared by these two literary works. All other biblical texts and resurrection texts in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha that mention a dual resurrection, have the righteous and the wicked resurrection at the same time. The *Testament of Hezekiah* does not mention the length of the time interval while the book of Revelation (and the Seventh-day Adventist view) adds a time interval of 1,000 years between these two resurrection events.

A second major point of comparison is the location of the Messianic Kingdom. While the apocalypse in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* seems to suggest that the Messianic kingdom will be an earthly kingdom as supposed to a heavenly one (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:16), Revelation 20:4-6 does

²⁶It is not mentioned in this text how long the torment will last, but Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:18 states fire “will consume all the impious, and they will become as if they had not been created.”

not provide the specific location of the millennium kingdom. Joel Badina makes a case for the millennium kingdom being located in heaven based on a word-study of the word *θρόνος*, *throne*, used in Revelation 20:4. This word appears 47 times throughout the apocalypse and the throne's location is always in heaven when associated with God or Jesus (three of the 47 cases refer to the throne of Satan [Rev 2:13], dragon [Rev 13:2] or the beast [Rev 16:10], all of which are located on earth as opposed to heaven). Thus, he states: "it is reasonable to conclude that the thrones of 20:4 are in heaven, too, since they are thrones of people who will '[reign]' with Christ a thousand years' (20:4, 6)." Badina also finds support for his conclusion by linking the "conquerors" in Revelation 20:4 with the "conquerors" seen in Revelation 15:2 and 3:21, who are located in heaven²⁷ These two arguments assume the location of God's/Jesus' throne is fixed and does not move from heaven to earth at the second coming event. A case could be made that, if the messianic kingdom was established on earth, his throne would also be based on earth. William Shea adds a third argument for locating the millennium kingdom in heaven based on the parallel literary structure of Revelation 12 and 20. Based on his analysis, he sees a similar shift "earth-heaven-earth," in both chapters, thus, considering Revelation 20:1-3 and 20:7-15 as describing events taking place on earth while the middle section (Rev 20:4-6) takes place in heaven, thereby viewing the millennium kingdom as a heavenly kingdom.²⁸ Thus, the Seventh-day Adventist Church believes the Messianic Kingdom to be in heaven, in contrast to the *Testament of Hezekiah* which considers it an earthly kingdom – this would be in line with Dan 2:35, 44-45; 7:27.

A third point of comparison is the neutralization of Satan or Beliar at the beginning of the Messianic kingdom, following the resurrection of the righteous. As a part of the second coming, Beliar and his hosts are dragged to Gehenna which will bring "rest" to the righteous who were persecuted by Beliar and his hosts. In doing so, this would effectively bring an end to evil, thus establishing the

²⁷Joel Badina, "The Millennium," in *Symposium on Revelation – Book II*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 7 (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute and General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 239-241.

²⁸William Shea, "The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20," AUSS 23.1 (1985): 47.

supreme authority of the Lord (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:15). The Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches that the binding of the Satan in the abyss for 1,000 years (Rev 20:1-3) refers to the period when the righteous are in the Millennium Kingdom in heaven, while the wicked are all dead awaiting the resurrection of the wicked at the end of the 1,000 years. Thus Satan is alone on earth, effectively neutralizing him. The Greek word for abyss, ἄβυσσος, is the same word used in Gen 1:2, when describing earth prior to the creation week, suggesting the earth, during the millennium, is unfit for life (see *Belief – The Millennium and the New Earth*).

A fourth point of comparison is the righteous dead. According to the Mar. Acent. Isa. 4:14-16; 8:14-15; 9:7-9, following their death, the righteous ascend to the seventh heaven where they will receive “robes of above” while leaving their “robes of flesh” behind on earth. They will dwell in heaven until the second coming, when they will descend to the earth together with the Lord and take on their “robes of flesh,” which is the resurrection of the righteous, and dwell with Him on earth and be a part of His Messianic kingdom. In the book of Revelation scenario, upon death, the righteous dwell in the ground until the resurrection of the righteous at the beginning of the millennium kingdom which the Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches will be located in heaven. Thus, there is a major structural difference between these two second coming accounts. The book of Revelation does not mention the saints ascending from heaven at the second coming.²⁹ Instead, the righteous dead will be resurrected from the earth (Rev 20:4, 6).³⁰

²⁹Revelation 19:14 mentions the armies of heaven accompanying the Messiah, however, this may be an allusion to one of God’s titles used frequently (245x) in the TaNaKh, יהוה צבאות, the Lord of Hosts or armies, is most likely a reference to His angels.

³⁰It should be noted that Seventh-day Adventists believe there are already a few saints in heaven, like Enoch (Gen 5:24), Moses (Deut 34:5-6 || Jude 9), Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11) – the latter two are mentioned talking with Jesus in the New Testament (Matt 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30). Matthew records there were a number of saints who resurrected when Jesus died (Matt 27:52-53). Ellen G. White expands on Matthew’s account (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999], 184-185) and adds that they were brought to heaven as the first fruit of His act of salvation (Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* [Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2002], 786). There is also a reference in Rev 6:9-11 to the souls of the martyrs under the heavenly alter crying out for justice, however, most Seventh-day Adventist would give this passage a symbolic reading. Thus, although the righteous will rest in the earth until the second coming, there are some exceptions.

A fifth point of comparison is human anthropology. Although the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* does not specifically mention the soul, it does mention that something of the righteous dead survives as the righteous have their robes of flesh removed to have them replaced with the robes of above. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not believe in a soul which can exist independently from the body, and as such, all dead will sleep in the ground until the day of the resurrection of the righteous or the wicked. However, *Belief 25 – The Second Coming of Christ* states the righteous will be glorified before taken to heaven (1 Cor. 15:51-54). This transformation could also be supported by the glorification of Moses when receiving God’s law on the mountain (Exod 34:29-35), Daniel describing the resurrected saints as shining stars (Dan 12:3), or by Jesus’ transfiguration—when “His face shone like the sun. Even His clothes became as white as the light” (Matt 17:2). Sigvartsen comments that: “Some ancient Jewish traditions claim that the first couple were clothed in light, as humans were created in God’s likeness (Gen 1:26), and received a tunic of skin (ancient traditions makes a wordplay on the two Hebrew words אור [“light”] and עור [“skin”]) after the fall to cover their nakedness (Gen 3:21).”³¹ White seems to support this tradition when she writes that prior to the fall, Adam and Eve “were clothed with a covering of light and glory such as the angles wear.”³² Thus, the robing-disrobing-robing of heavenly garments, based on location, would not be a completely foreign idea.

A sixth point of comparison is the pre-second coming judgment. This judgment is needed in both eschatological frameworks, as it is necessary to determine who are the saints and who are the wicked, so the person can be allocated to the proper resurrection – the resurrection of the righteous at the second coming or the resurrection of the wicked following the Messianic kingdom. However, there is a major difference, in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, the judgment is ongoing until the day of the second coming, as it needs to be determined on a case by case basis who will be sent directly to heaven and who will remain dead until the resurrection of the wicked. Within the Seventh-

³¹Jan A. Sigvartsen, “An Overview of John H. Walton’s *Lost World of Genesis One*,” *AUSS* 49.1 (2011): 175. Also see discussion on “Glorious Clothing” in James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 114-120.

³²Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2002), 45.

day Adventist eschatological view, a judgment upon death is not necessary as long as a judgment of all dead takes place prior to the resurrection of the righteous, since the dead will remain in their graves until the day of resurrection (*Belief 24 – Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary*). The millennium-judgment (*Belief 27 – The Millennium and the End of Sin*) is lacking in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* although both views have a judgment of the wicked following their resurrection.

A seventh point of comparison is the wicked dead. Both apocalypses have the wicked resurrected, judged, and then destroyed by fire, however, the book of Revelation mentions specifically that Satan will be included in this destruction (Rev 20:9-10, 15; 21:8; *Belief 27 – The Millennium and the End of Sin*), this element can only be assumed in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*.

The last point of comparison regards the final abode of the righteous. Following the millennium in heaven, John the Revelator states that God will create a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1), where the New Jerusalem will be located (Rev 21:2), and all the saints will dwell in this city with God forever (Rev 21-22). This is in stark contrast to the view presented in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, which states that at the end of the Messianic era, after the resurrection of the wicked and their complete annihilation by fire, the righteous will ascend to the seventh heaven, leaving their “robes of flesh” to receive the “robes of above.” Knight notes the end of this world “would involve a full-scale destruction in which the Beloved’s voice would angrily reprove”³³ the whole creation (Mar. Ascen. Isa. 4:18), thus, returning it to the state of pre-creation. There will be no need for a recreation, a new heaven, or a new earth, since all the righteous are gathered in the seventh heaven, their eternal home.

Conclusion

The Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view separates the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked by a heavenly millennium kingdom based on Revelation 20-22. This is an almost unique eschatological view in the Second Temple Period as only one eschatological resurrection event is the

³³Knight, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, 63.

norm. There is only one other apocalyptic text, also Christian and dates to the late first or early second century CE, that separates the two resurrections, however in this case, it is separated by an earthly Messianic Kingdom. A comparison of the composite eschatological belief held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the view presented in the pseudepigraphical text, showed some important and helpful overall similarities, although there were also several significant differences. Even though there were several important shared elements, the overall eschatological structure is reversed. In the Adventist view, the Book of Revelation suggests the righteous dead remain in the grave until the second coming, when they will then be resurrected and brought to heaven. At the end of the 1,000 years, they will be brought back to earth, the wicked will be resurrected, judged, and be annihilated. The righteous will live with God for all eternity on a newly recreated earth. Thus, the movement is: EARTH=>HEAVEN=>EARTH. The pseudepigraphical text have the righteous dead transition straight to heaven where they will be with the saints until the return to earth at the second coming and the temporary Messianic Kingdom will be established. The resurrection of the wicked will take place at the end of the temporary kingdom, when they will be judged and annihilated. At this point, the righteous will return to heaven where they will live with God for all eternity, and the earth will return to a pre-creation state. Thus, the movement is: HEAVEN=>Earth=>Heaven. Based on this study, it could be established with some confidence that the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view is unique – as there is no literary work from the Second Temple Period which shares all its elements.