

Adult
Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide

Oct | Nov | Dec 2013

The Sanctuary



150  SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH
1863-2013

United for Mission

Contents

1	The Heavenly Sanctuary — <i>September 28–October 4</i> —————	6
2	“Heaven” on Earth — <i>October 5–11</i> —————	14
3	Sacrifices — <i>October 12–18</i> —————	22
4	Lessons From the Sanctuary — <i>October 19–25</i> —————	30
5	Atonement: Purification Offering — <i>October 26–November 1</i> ——	38
6	The Day of Atonement — <i>November 2–8</i> —————	46
7	Christ, Our Sacrifice — <i>November 9–15</i> —————	56
8	Christ, Our Priest — <i>November 16–22</i> —————	64
9	The Pre-Advent Judgment — <i>November 23–29</i> —————	72
10	The Eschatological Day of Atonement — <i>November 30–December 6</i> —	80
11	Our Prophetic Message — <i>December 7–13</i> —————	88
12	The Cosmic Conflict Over God’s Character — <i>December 14–20</i> —	96
13	Exhortations From the Sanctuary — <i>December 21–27</i> —————	104

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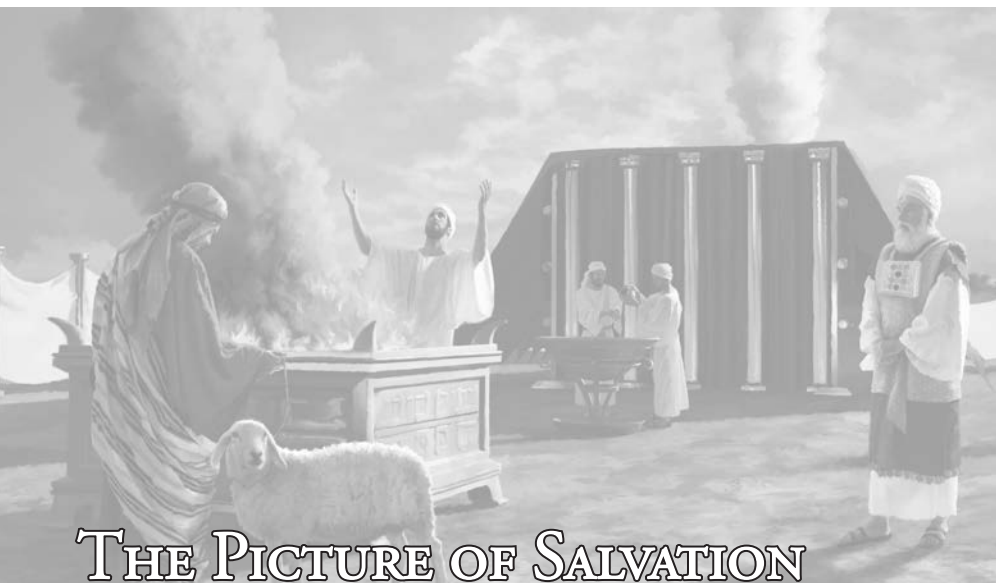
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**Sabbath
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THE PICTURE OF SALVATION

Unquestionably, the greatest revelation of the love and character of God was at the Cross, where the Lord offered Himself in the person of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for the sins of a world that never had to sin to begin with. To help us to understand better what this great sacrifice meant, God devised the earthly sanctuary, a pictorial representation of the plan of salvation. This earthly sanctuary, however, only modeled the heavenly one, which is the true center of God's presence and of His activity in the universe.

When God established the sanctuary on earth, He used it as a teaching tool. The Israelite sanctuary and its services displayed important truths about redemption, about the character of God, and about the final disposition of sin.

The sanctuary formed the template to help us understand Jesus as our Sacrifice and High Priest. When John the Baptist told his disciples that Jesus was the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (*John 1:29, 36, NKJV*), they understood what John meant because they understood something of the sanctuary. The book of Hebrews presupposed a knowledge about the ancient Israelite priesthood so that the original recipients of the letter could grasp what Jesus was doing for them in heaven. Sanctuary terminology was also used to teach truths about Christian living. In short, knowledge of the sanctuary system became a foundation for the new message of salvation in Christ.

However, throughout much of the Christian era, the sanctuary message was

largely forgotten. Not until the middle of the nineteenth century, when Seventh-day Adventists began to appreciate God's paradigm of salvation anew, including the message of the pre-Advent judgment, was a fresh emphasis placed on the sanctuary.

"The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great advent movement and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people."
—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 423.

As the key for a complete system of truth, the sanctuary and Christ's priestly ministry became the basis for the Seventh-day Adventist faith—and still remains so. In fact, the sanctuary message is the Adventists' unique doctrine. At the same time, no other doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (with the possible exception of the Sabbath) has faced so many challenges. Fortunately, throughout the years, these challenges have not only been withstood, but they have increased our understanding of this crucial teaching and have made us, as a people, stronger in our understanding of salvation.

Ellen G. White recommended focusing our highest attention on the sanctuary because "the sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin. It is of the utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects."
—*The Great Controversy*, p. 488. Thus, we can "exercise the faith which is essential at this time" and "occupy the position which God designs [us] to fill."
—*The Great Controversy*, p. 488.

The sanctuary discloses the heart of God. Studying the sanctuary will bring us close to the presence of the Supreme and to the personality of our Savior and draw us into a deeper personal relationship with Him.

Hence, our study for this quarter: God's sanctuary, both His earthly model and the heavenly original.

The sanctuary formed the temple to help us understand Jesus as our Sacrifice and High Priest.

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This quarter part of our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help establish Messy Church programs in every region of the Trans-European Division.

Our church cares for families. And this program is one great way to show it. I’m glad my church can get messy to bring others to Jesus.

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The Heavenly Sanctuary



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Jer. 23:23, 24; Ps. 89:14; Revelation 4, 5; Ps. 11:4–7; Deut. 25:1; Heb. 8:1, 2.*

Memory Text: “‘[T]hen hear in heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause’” (*1 Kings 8:49, NKJV*).

Where does God live?” This innocent question of a six-year-old could be quite perplexing. It could easily lead to more difficult ones, such as, “If God lives in one place, how is it possible that He is everywhere?” Or, “Does God need a dwelling place?” Or, “If He doesn’t need one, why does He have one?” Or, “If He does need one, why does He need it?”

These are good questions, and, given the little we know (and the lot we don’t), they are not so easy to answer.

Nevertheless, we can answer with what we do know. As Seventh-day Adventists, we know from the Bible that God dwells in heaven, that He is actively working in our behalf “up there,” and that the center of His work is in the heavenly sanctuary.

Scripture is clear: the heavenly sanctuary is a real place, and from it we can learn truths about the character and work of our God. Thus, the focus of this week’s lesson is the heavenly sanctuary and what God is doing there for us, because what He is doing in the sanctuary is, indeed, for us.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 5.*

God's Residence

We often say that “God is everywhere.” Or that He is “omnipresent,” which means that He is present throughout the universe. “‘Am I a God near at hand, . . . and not a God afar off? . . . Do I not fill heaven and earth?’” (*Jer. 23:23, 24, NKJV*). David understood, too, that nobody can flee from God (*Psalms 139*). Indeed, as Paul argues, God is close to everyone, at least in a spiritual sense (*Acts 17:27, 28*).

Complementing God's attribute of omnipresence is His eternal existence. God has neither beginning nor end (*Ps. 90:2*). He has always been and will always be (*Jude 1:25*).

Read 1 Kings 8:49 and Psalm 102:19. What do they teach us about the place where God dwells? How are we to understand what this means? Can we understand it?

The Scriptures are full of statements about God's residence being in heaven (*1 Kings 8:30, 43, 49*). Does this mean that God is more present in heaven than He is anywhere else? God obviously dwells in heaven in a special way, in His glorious presence and pure holiness. The greatest manifestation of God's presence exists in heaven.

There is a difference, however, between God's “general presence” and His “special presence.” God is generally present everywhere; yet, He chooses to reveal Himself in a special way in heaven and, as we will see, in the heavenly sanctuary.

Of course, we have to admit that we are limited in our understanding of His physical nature. He is spirit (*John 4:24*) and, as such, cannot be contained in any structure or dimension (*1 Kings 8:27*). Even so, the Bible presents heaven (*John 14:1–3*) and the heavenly sanctuary as real places (*Heb. 8:2*) where God can be seen (*Acts 7:55, 56; Rev. 4:2, 3*). We have to believe that even heaven and the heavenly sanctuary are places where God condescends to meet His creation.

There are many things that are difficult for us to imagine or understand, such as the dwelling place of God. Yet, the Bible says that this dwelling place is real. How can we learn to trust in all that the Bible teaches us, no matter how hard it is sometimes to understand? Why is it important for us to learn to trust even when we don't understand?

Throne Room

Read Psalms 47:6–9; 93:1, 2; 103:19. What do these texts teach us about God and His throne?

Several visions of the heavenly throne occur in the Bible. Most depict a kind of heavenly assembly with God as King. Interestingly enough, most of them are concerned with human affairs—usually presenting God as acting for or speaking in behalf of the righteous.

The Bible also reveals God as sovereign. For instance, the kingship of the Lord is a recurring theme in the Psalms. God is not only King of heaven but also “King of all the earth” (*Ps. 47:7, NKJV*), and not only in the future but already in the here and now (*Ps. 93:2*).

That God’s throne is established in heaven has several ramifications. One of them is that God is independent and superior to the rest of the universe.

Read Psalms 89:14, 97:2. What do these texts teach us about the character of God and how He rules?

God’s rule encompasses righteousness and justice, as well as love and truthfulness. These moral qualities describe how He acts in the human world and underscore His position in the entire universe. These qualities, which compose His rule, are also the same as those that He wants His people to manifest in their lives (*Mic. 6:8, compare with Isa. 59:14*), and it is our sacred privilege to do so.

“As in obedience to His natural laws the earth should produce its treasures, so in obedience to His moral law the hearts of the people were to reflect the attributes of His character.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 144.

How can we better manifest goodness, righteousness, and justice in a world filled with evil, unrighteousness, and injustice? Why *must* we do these things?

Worship in Heaven

Read Revelation 4 and 5. What do these two chapters teach us about the heavenly dwelling place of God? In what way is the plan of salvation revealed in these texts, as well?

The vision of the heavenly throne room is a vision of the heavenly sanctuary. This is made evident from the language referring to the Hebrew religious system. For instance, the words for “door” and “trumpet” in Revelation 4:1 appear often in the Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament) in reference to the sanctuary. The three precious stones in Revelation 4:3 are part of the High Priest’s breastplate. The seven lampstands are reminiscent of the lampstands in Solomon’s temple. The twenty-four elders remind us of the twenty-four divisions of service for the temple priests throughout the year and their prayer offering in the golden bowls of “incense” (*Ps. 141:2*). All of these verses point back to the Old Testament worship service, which centered around the earthly sanctuary.

Finally, the slain Lamb of Revelation 5 points, of course, to Christ’s sacrificial death. Christ, the Lamb, is the only Mediator of divine salvation and is accounted worthy because of His triumph (*Rev. 5:5*), His sacrifice (*Rev. 5:9, 12*), and His divinity (*Rev. 5:13*).

“Christ took upon Himself humanity, and laid down His life a sacrifice, that man, by becoming a partaker of the divine nature, might have eternal life.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 141.

What we see in these two chapters, centering around God’s throne, is a depiction of God’s work for the salvation of humanity. We can see, too, that this work has unfolded before the other intelligent beings in heaven, a key theme in the great controversy motif.

Think about what it means that Christ, as God Himself, took on our humanity and died as our Substitute; that is, whatever wrongs you have done for which you yourself should be punished fell on Him instead. Why should this truth motivate everything that you do?

Court Room

Read Psalm 11:4–7 and Habakkuk 2:20. What else does God do in His heavenly temple, and why is this important for us to know?

Many Psalms reveal that the Lord is not indifferent to the needs of the righteous or to the injustices that they often face. He will react to the issues that cry out for redress, and He will “justify the righteous and condemn the wicked,” just as any good judge would do (*Deut. 25:1, NKJV*).

When God judges, the throne room becomes a courtroom and the heavenly throne, a judgment seat. The One enthroned is the One who judges (*see Ps. 9:4–8*), a concept known in the ancient Near East where kings often functioned as judges, as well.

Divine judgment involves both the wicked and the righteous. While the wicked receive a punishment similar to that received by Sodom and Gomorrah, the upright “will behold His face” (*Ps. 11:6, 7, NASB*). The classic combination of throne room and judgment appears in Daniel 7:9–14 (a significant passage that we will study later). There again, the judgment consists of two strands: a verdict of vindication for the saints and a sentence of condemnation for God’s enemies.

In the book of Habakkuk, after Habakkuk asks God why He is silent about injustice (*Habakkuk 1*), God answers that He will certainly judge (*Hab. 2:1–5*). While idols have no “breath” or “spirit” (*Hab. 2:19*), the Creator God is enthroned in His temple, the heavenly sanctuary, and He is ready to judge.

The prophetic appeal is, “‘Let all the earth be silent before Him’” (*Hab. 2:20, NASB*). The appropriate attitude toward God’s ruling and judging is awed silence and hushed reverence.

The place where God reveals His special presence and where He is worshiped by the heavenly beings is the same place where He is rendering righteous judgment for all humans: the sanctuary in heaven. God is just, and all our questions about justice will be answered in God’s time, not ours.

However much we cry out for justice, we often don’t see justice in the present. Why, then, must we trust in God’s justice? Without that promise, what hope do we have?

Place of Salvation

Read Hebrews 8:1, 2. What is Christ doing at the throne of God?

The book of Hebrews teaches that Christ is ministering in the heavenly sanctuary as our High Priest. His work there is focused on our salvation, for He appears “in the presence of God for us” (*Heb. 9:24, NASB*). He sympathizes with us, giving us assurance that we will not be rejected, but instead, receive mercy and grace (*Heb. 4:15, 16*) because of what He has done for us. As in the earthly sanctuary, the heavenly one is where “atonement” (or “reconciliation”) is made for the sins of the believers (*Heb. 2:17*). The Jesus who died for us is the One now ministering in heaven “for us,” as well.

Read Revelation 1:12–20, 8:2–6, 11:19, and 15:5–8. What sanctuary imagery appears in these passages?

The verses in today’s study are just some of the places in the book of Revelation where sanctuary imagery appears. In fact, most of the major sections of the book begin with or contain a sanctuary scene.

The first introductory scene shows Christ, clothed as High Priest, walking among the seven lampstands (*Rev. 1:12–20*). The second shows the heavenly throne room, and the verses reveal a wide variety of sanctuary imagery: throne, lamps, sea, slain Lamb, blood, and golden bowls of incense (*Revelation 4, 5*). The third scene refers to the continual service of intercession in the context of the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary (*Rev. 8:2–6*). The fourth and central scene gives us a glimpse of the ark of the covenant in the second apartment (*Rev. 11:19*). The fifth scene brings the entire tabernacle in heaven into view (*Rev. 15:5–8*). The sixth scene is unique in that it does not contain any explicit references to the sanctuary, perhaps to illustrate that Christ’s work there is finished (*Rev. 19:1–10*). The final scene is all about the glorious Holy City on earth, which is portrayed as the tabernacle “coming down out of heaven” (*Rev. 21:1–8, NASB*).

A careful study of these scenes reveals that they are interconnected, showing an internal progression in the salvation accomplished by God: from Christ on earth, to His heavenly ministry in the first and second apartments, to His high priestly ministry’s end, and finally to the new earth tabernacle.

Further Study: “Paul had a view of heaven, and in discoursing on the glories there, the very best thing he could do was to not try to describe them. He tells us that eye had not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him. So you may put your imagination to the stretch, you may try to the very best of your abilities to take in and consider the eternal weight of glory, and yet your finite senses, faint and weary with the effort, cannot grasp it, for there is an infinity beyond. It takes all of eternity to unfold the glories and bring out the precious treasures of the Word of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1107.

“The abiding place of the King of kings, where thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him (Daniel 7:10); that temple, filled with the glory of the eternal throne, where seraphim, its shining guardians, veil their faces in adoration, could find, in the most magnificent structure ever reared by human hands, but a faint reflection of its vastness and glory. Yet important truths concerning the heavenly sanctuary and the great work there carried forward for man’s redemption were taught by the earthly sanctuary and its services.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 414.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Look at the last statement in Friday’s study from Ellen G. White. What does she mean when she says that many “important truths” for our salvation were taught in the earthly sanctuary and its services? What are some of those truths, and why are they important?
- ❷ What does it mean that God “dwells” in heaven? How do you understand that concept?
- ❸ This week’s lesson touched on the idea that the onlooking universe sees the work that God is doing in behalf of humanity. Why is that a crucial concept to grasp? How does this concept help us to understand the great controversy motif and what that motif means in the whole plan of salvation? What does it tell us about the character of God that He would leave His ways open to the scrutiny of beings that He, Himself, created?

The Rude Neighbor

Jules and some choir members were going door-to-door to share their faith in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. As they approached one home, a man yelled angrily, “I don’t want you here! Get out!” Jules tried to talk to the man, but he shouted angry threats at them. Quietly the believers left and went next door. The neighbor, Mangu, listened to the choir members sing several spiritual songs. He thanked them and accepted a pamphlet they offered.

On Sabbath Jules and his friends returned to Mangu’s home to sing and share their faith again. Simon, the neighbor who had been so rude to the young people, saw the visitors in Mangu’s yard and walked over to see what was happening. Mangu showed Simon the Bible study pamphlet.

Simon asked Mangu for the pamphlet. “This one is mine,” Mangu said. “Ask for your own.” Simon swallowed his embarrassment and invited the Seventh-day Adventists to come to his house.

“I saw the Bible lesson you gave Mangu,” Simon said. “I want to read it too. I want to know what’s so special about Seventh-day Adventists.”

Simon listened to Jules and his friends talk about Jesus. The young people invited Simon and his family to join the choir’s Bible-study group. “I’d like one of these pamphlets for my wife and each of my children,” Simon said quietly.

Jules smiled as he pulled out more Bible pamphlets. “Could we have Bible studies here in our home?” Simon asked. Jules agreed. He and one other young man returned to Simon’s home every week for a month. Then Simon and his wife and children joined the Bible-study group at the church.

When the church announced evangelistic meetings, Simon and his family attended every meeting. Simon and his wife asked to be baptized, and later the couple’s three teenage children joined the church, as well.



Simon, the once-rude neighbor who wouldn’t allow the youth into his home, now shares his faith with anyone who will listen. He urged his neighbor, Mangu, to check out the Seventh-day Adventists, and Mangu now attends the Bible-study group every week.

Our mission offerings help reach people in difficult places such as Kinshasa, where less than one in a thousand is a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. Thank you for sharing.

JULES TSHIAMALENGA *shares his faith in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.*

“Heaven” *on* Earth



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Gen. 1:31–2:3; Exod. 39:32, 43; 25:9; Heb. 8:5; John 2:19–21; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Rev. 21:1–22.*

Memory Text: “Who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain’ ” (*Hebrews 8:5, NKJV*).

Though the sanctuary in heaven is the original, the one where God Himself is ministering “for us,” the Lord has revealed truths about this sanctuary in different ways to us here on earth.

God created the Garden of Eden as a symbol of the sanctuary. The heavenly sanctuary and its function in salvation were represented in the earthly tabernacle and the larger structure of the Israelite temples.

In Jesus, of course, the temple was made manifest in a human being. And, finally, the heavenly temple will come down to the new earth.

As we will see, God has used concepts relating to the heavenly sanctuary to reveal truth. This week we will study some of those concepts.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 12.*

The First “Sanctuary” on Earth

Bible students have noted that many features of the Garden of Eden correspond to the later sanctuaries in Israel, indicating that Eden was the first symbolic “temple” on earth. Some parallels between Eden and the sanctuary include:

1. At the end of the Creation account and the report describing the construction of the wilderness tabernacle, the same three elements—approval, completion, and blessing—are expressed with the same key words (*compare “all,” “finish,” and “bless” in Gen. 1:31–2:3 with Exod. 39:32, 43; 40:33*).
2. Just as God was “walking in the Garden” (*Gen. 3:8, NASB*), so He was in the midst of His people in the sanctuary (*2 Sam. 7:6, 7*).
3. Adam was to “tend” and “keep” the Garden (*Gen. 2:15, NKJV*). The same two verbs are used for the service of the Levites in the tabernacle (*Num. 3:7, 8*).
4. Gardenlike imagery appears all throughout the sanctuary (*Exod. 25:31–36, 1 Kings 6:18*).
5. Cherubim guarded the Garden (*Gen. 3:24*); two cherubim were stationed in the Most Holy Place (*Exod. 25:18–22*).
6. Just as Creation took six days, each day being introduced by “God said” and all of them together followed by the Sabbath, so there are six “the LORD spoke to Moses” sections concerning the tabernacle (*Exod. 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1*), followed by a seventh section about the Sabbath (*Exod. 31:12–17*).
7. The sanctuary was finished on the first day of the first month (*Exod. 40:17*), the Hebrew New Year’s Day, which recalls the completion of the world at Creation.

Genesis 2 did not need to be explicit about these parallels; the ancients understood them. For example, a Jewish writing of the second century B.C. claims that “the garden of Eden was the holy of holies and the dwelling of the Lord.”

The Garden of Eden is called the “garden of God” (*Isa. 51:3, Ezek. 28:13, 31:9*). It was God’s dwelling on earth, the place where our first parents were intended to worship and commune with Him. Therefore, the greatest loss of the Fall was not the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden but the loss of being in the immediate presence of God.

Dwell on the concept of the word *sanctuary* itself. What comes to your mind? What things form a “sanctuary” for you now? How does your understanding of these sanctuaries on earth help you to understand better what God’s sanctuary in heaven provides for us?

Copy of the Pattern

Read Exodus 25:9, 40; Hebrews 8:5; 9:23, 24. What is the relationship between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries?

The Scriptures clearly teach that Moses did not invent the tabernacle but built it according to the divine instruction that he received on the mountain (*Exod. 26:30, 27:8, Num. 8:4*). The earthly sanctuary was to be constructed after the “pattern” (*Exod. 25:9, 40*). The Hebrew word for “pattern” (*tabnit*) expresses the idea of a model or copy; thus, we can conclude that Moses saw some kind of miniature model that represented the heavenly sanctuary and that this model served as the pattern for the earthly one.

Therefore, the heavenly temple is the original, the model for the Israelite sanctuaries. What is also obvious is that we cannot equate the sanctuary in heaven with heaven itself. The heavenly temple is “in heaven” (*Rev. 11:19, 14:17, 15:5*); thus, heaven contains it. The two are not synonymous.

The book of Hebrews explains in unmistakable terms that the heavenly sanctuary is real. The sanctuary in heaven is called the “true tabernacle” (*Heb. 8:2, NKJV*), as well as the “greater and more perfect tabernacle” (*Heb. 9:11, NKJV*), while the earthly is a “copy and shadow” of the heavenly one (*Heb. 8:5, NKJV*). As a shadow is always a mere representation of something real, and an imperfect and faint representation at that, the earthly sanctuary is a mere representation of the heavenly. Whatever its limitations, however, the earthly sanctuary does reflect the reality of the heavenly one in important ways.

The relationship between the two is called typology. Typology is a divinely designed, prophetic prefiguration that involves two corresponding historical realities, called type (original) and antitype (copy). Because the correspondence runs from the type (original) to the antitype (copy), we can see in Hebrews that the heavenly model that Moses had seen is referred to as “type” or “pattern” (*Heb. 8:5*) and the earthly sanctuary as “antitype” or “copy” (*Heb. 9:24*). This truth presents more evidence that the heavenly one existed prior to the earthly one. As Seventh-day Adventists, we are on solid biblical ground when we emphasize the physical reality of the heavenly sanctuary.

Jesus as the Sanctuary

Read John 2:19–21. Why is Jesus’ body compared to the temple? See also John 1:14.

One of the themes in the Gospel of John is that, with Jesus, the better “temple” has come. Tabernacle imagery is used as early as in John 1:14. Jesus is the Word who “dwelt” among men, and they saw His “glory.” The Greek word used for “to dwell” (*skenoo*) is the verbal form of the Greek noun for “tabernacle” (*skene*); so, one could translate verse 14 as the Word “tabernacled among us.” In this context, the word *glory* recalls the glory of God that filled both the wilderness tabernacle (*Exod. 40:34, 35*) and Solomon’s temple at its inauguration (*2 Chron. 7:1–3*). So, when Christ came to earth as a human, He fulfilled God’s temple promise to dwell among His people.

As the texts above show, Jesus declared Himself to be the temple, signifying already the end of the earthly temple’s significance after His death (*John 2:19–21, Matt. 27:51*). Also, when Jesus said that He is the Bread of Life (*John 6:35*) and the Light of the world (*John 8:12*), He might have been pointing beyond the manna on the table to the bread of the presence and the lampstand, objects in the earthly sanctuary. A definite reference to the sanctuary is the designation of Jesus as the sacrificial “Lamb of God” who will bear the sin of the world (*John 1:29*).

“All who did service in connection with the sanctuary were being educated constantly in regard to the intervention of Christ in behalf of the human race. This service was designed to create in every heart a love for the law of God, which is the law of His kingdom. The sacrificial offering was to be an object lesson of the love of God revealed in Christ—in the suffering, dying victim, who took upon Himself the sin of which man was guilty, the innocent being made sin for us.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 233.

Because of our sinful natures, it’s so easy to think that God is angry with us. How does the revelation of God’s love, as seen in the life and death of Jesus, help each of us to realize on a personal level that God loves us despite our faults? In what ways should this realization encourage us to gain victories over self?

The Church as the Sanctuary

After Christ's ascension to heaven and His inauguration as High Priest in the sanctuary there, the temple on earth no longer had any real purpose in the plan of salvation (*see Matt. 27:50, 51*). However, God still seeks to dwell among His people on earth, which was now possible through the Holy Spirit. The apostles use temple imagery to convey this truth.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 6:16; and Ephesians 2:19–22. Notice the sanctuary imagery in these texts. What truth does the Bible teach us here?

Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 to the church as a corporate unity, and he presents to them the temple themes of ownership (*1 Cor. 3:16*) and of holiness (*1 Cor. 3:17*). He applies the same principles in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 to the individual believer. As a temple, the believer is holy terrain and, as such, is under divine obligation to live in holiness. Paul uses the temple imagery to emphasize his call for pure and holy living, which in this context he identifies as sexual purity over immorality (*1 Cor. 6:15–18*). Paul's last reference to the church as a divine sanctuary fits into this pattern. There is no common ground between believers and unbelievers (*2 Cor. 6:14–7:1*), for the church is in a covenant relationship with God and, thus, is exclusively His (*2 Cor. 6:18*).

At the same time, the church is not only God's temple but also a holy priesthood (*1 Pet. 2:5, 9*). No doubt, with such a privilege as this, important responsibilities follow. How crucial that we surrender our lives in faith and obedience to the Lord who has given us so much and who, therefore, asks much of us in return.

Of course, we are saved by Christ's righteousness, which covers us completely. However, because of what we have been given in Christ by grace, what does God ask of us in return? And even more important, how can we best do that which He asks of us?

New Creation

Read Revelation 7:15–17. Where are the redeemed, and how does this passage portray them?

These verses describe the redeemed as kings and priests who serve in God’s palace and temple (*Rev. 1:6, 5:10, 20:6*). The promise that “He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them” (*Rev. 7:15, NASB*) alludes to God’s presence in the wilderness sanctuary, where He dwelt among ancient Israel as its Leader. On the new earth, the sanctuary once more becomes the perfect place of relationship where God and the redeemed meet. It guarantees shelter, protection, and the ultimate fulfillment of life in the presence of God and His Christ. The One who once tabernacled among men (*John 1:14*) now spreads the tabernacle over His saints so that they may “tabernacle” in His place.

Read Revelation 21:1–22. How is the New Jerusalem described? What parallels do you find between the Holy City and the sanctuary in these texts?

John does not see a temple in the New Jerusalem (*Rev. 21:22*), but this does not mean that there is no temple. Rather, the New Jerusalem itself is the temple and the “tabernacle of God” (*Rev. 21:3, NKJV*). Several sanctuary elements are assigned to the New Jerusalem: it is “holy” and of heavenly origin (*Rev. 21:2, 10*); it has the same cubical form as did the Most Holy Place (*Rev. 21:16, 1 Kings 6:20*); similar to the temple precincts, “nothing unclean” is allowed into the city (*Rev. 21:27*); and, most important of all, God is present. In the sanctuary of God, we can live with Him in the closest relationship possible (*Rev. 21:3, 7*). This is the goal of salvation.

An eternity in a close relationship with God? Why is it, then, so crucial for us to walk, as Ellen G. White says over and over, “in close communion with God” now?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “The School of the Hereafter,” pp. 301–309, in *Education*; “The Controversy Ended,” pp. 673–678, in *The Great Controversy*.

“A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured His disciples that He went to prepare mansions for them in the Father’s house. Those who accept the teachings of God’s word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. And yet, ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.’ 1 Corinthians 2:9. Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 674, 675.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Why do you think it is important for us to understand that God’s heavenly sanctuary is a real place? At the same time, why must we be careful not to make too detailed a comparison between the earthly temple and the heavenly temple?
- 2 In class, dwell more on the idea of the church as a “sanctuary.” How do you understand this truth? Also, how can we as a church better fulfill this crucial teaching?
- 3 “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:16, 17). What do these texts teach us, and how can we apply their teachings to the way that we live?
- 4 Dwell more on this idea that we are “priests” now and that we will function as priests after the Second Coming. What are those functions for us now, and what will they be after Jesus returns? Why does even the use of the word *priests* show us just how central the concept of the sanctuary is to the plan of salvation?

Faithful Little Flock

In China, pastors often have several churches. Pastor Sun oversees 10 churches and 200 small groups with a membership of about 5,000. To shepherd this large and diverse flock, Pastor Sun trains lay evangelists.

Sister Xu found Christ and joined the Seventh-day Adventist church in the provincial capital. She wanted to share her new faith with her family and friends living in her hometown, Wu Yan, a city of about 100,000 people. When she arrived in Wu Yan, she found no other Seventh-day Adventists living there. Undaunted, she shared her faith first with her sister and then with others. Xu found several people who wanted to hear about Christ, and she asked Pastor Sun to send someone to help her plant a church in Wu Yan.

Pastor Sun sent Liu, a Global Mission pioneer, to work with Xu. He met with Xu's sister and some neighbors in Xu's home. Another neighbor reported Liu's activities to her own church officials, who made trouble for Liu.

The little band of new believers prayed that God would protect the infant flock, and Liu visited the neighbor's church. He worshiped with them and made friends in the congregation. Liu met several people who were open to hearing what he believed, and he explained his work.

One woman in the church, Zhang, asked for Bible studies. Liu studied with her, and she in turn brought five others to meet Liu and study the Bible with him. All six people from the neighbor's church began keeping the Sabbath. Liu encouraged them to continue attending their church on Sunday to find other honest-hearted Christians who wanted to know what the Bible teaches.

When the Sunday church's leaders learned that more than 20 of their members were studying to become Seventh-day Adventists, they were angry and told them to stop attending their church. But the little group continued telling others what they had discovered. The believers invited their friends and those in need to come for prayer and help.

In one year, more than 30 people are meeting regularly on the Sabbath, and 18 have been baptized. In China, a new believer must know the Bible truths and pass an examination before they are baptized, so 18 baptisms is remarkable.

Our mission offerings support the world church in its challenging task of telling everyone everywhere that Jesus loves them and died to save them. Thank you for your part in supporting missions around the world.



PASTOR SUN works in China. This photo has been altered to protect his identity.

Sacrifices



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 3:9–21; Exod. 12:21–27; Lev. 2:1–3; Gen. 22:1–19; Lev. 17:10, 11; Phil. 4:18.*

Memory Text: “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship” (*Romans 12:1, NASB*).

Central to the entire gospel is the concept of sacrifice. In the biblical languages, the words for “sacrifice” often depict the idea of drawing near and of bringing something to God. The basic meaning of the Hebrew for *offering* or *sacrifice* describes the act of approaching, the act of bringing something into the presence of God. The Greek equivalent means “gift” and describes the presentation of a sacrifice.

Similarly, the English word *offering* comes from the Latin *offerre*, the presentation of a gift. The word *sacrifice* is a combination of the Latin *sacer* (holy) and *facere* (make) and refers to the act of making something sacred.

This week we will look at some of the sacrifices that believers have offered to God. We will discover that God has always been calling for sacrifices, and He is still doing so today.

Of course, and most important, God provided the ultimate sacrifice, that of Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 19.*

The First Sacrifice

Read Genesis 3:9–21. What was God’s response to Adam and Eve after they sinned?

Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world, in a sanctuary-like garden, and God granted them face-to-face communion with their Creator. Their first sin opened a nearly insurmountable breach in their relationship to God. However, God had already planned how to counter such a breach of trust, and even before there came any judgment against them, He gave them the hope of a Savior (*Gen. 3:15*).

“Adam and Eve stood as criminals before their God, awaiting the sentence which transgression had incurred. But before they hear of the thorn and the thistle, the sorrow and anguish which should be their portion, and the dust to which they should return, they listen to words which must have inspired them with hope. Though they must suffer . . . , they might look forward to ultimate victory.”—Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 16.

The Lord showed them the ultimate foundation of that victory when, immediately after His judgment speech, He made for them garments of skin to cover their nakedness and shame. Although unstated, it may be reasonable to assume that an innocent animal had to die for this, and perhaps even that it was understood as a kind of sacrifice (*Gen. 3:21*).

God’s provision of clothes for the culprits became a symbolic act. Just as the sacrifices in the desert sanctuary guaranteed the special relationship between God and His people, so the clothing in the Garden assured the quality of God’s unchanging goodwill toward them.

So, from the earliest days of human history, sacrifices taught that sinful humans could find union with God, but only through the death of Jesus, who was prefigured in those sacrifices.

Reread Genesis 3:9–21. What does it say to you that even before God spoke any words of judgment to the guilty pair, He gave them the promise of “ultimate victory”? What does this say about God’s attitude toward us, even in our fallen state?

Types of Offerings

In Old Testament times, believers could bring offerings on different occasions and in different personal circumstances. Different objects they were allowed to “offer” included clean animals, grain, or drink, as well as other things. The animal sacrifice is the oldest element in the sanctuary service, and together with the priestly service, belongs at the center of the Israelite service. Religious life without sacrifice was inconceivable.

Which kinds of offerings are described in the following texts? *Exod. 12:21–27, Lev. 2:1–3, Exod. 25:2–7, Lev. 4:27–31.*

God established the sacrificial system so that believers could enter into a close relationship with Him. This is why offerings could be brought in all different kinds of situations: for thanksgiving, for an expression of joy and celebration, for a gift, for a petition for forgiveness, for a penitential plea, for a symbol of dedication, or for restitution.

Among the most important types of offerings were the burnt offering (*Leviticus 1*) and the grain offering (*Leviticus 2*), as well as the peace, or well-being offering (*Leviticus 3*), the purification offering (*Leviticus 4*), and the reparation (trespass) offering (*Lev. 5:14–6:7*). The first three were voluntary offerings, which were to remind the giver (and us) that, in the end, everything that we are and all that we have belong to God. The burnt offering symbolizes the total dedication of the one making the offering. The grain offering symbolizes the dedication of our material possessions to God, whether they be food, animals, or something else. The well-being offering is the only sacrifice in which the participant receives a part of the offering for personal consumption.

The other two sacrifices were obligatory. They reminded the people that, though wrongs have consequences, those wrongs can be “healed.” The purification offering, often called “sin offering,” was offered after ritual defilement or after the person became aware of a moral defilement through sin.

The widespread function of the offerings shows that every aspect of our lives must come under God’s control. How can you learn to surrender completely everything you have, or are, to Him? What happens when you don’t do this?

Sacrifice at Moriah

Read Genesis 22:1–19. What did Abraham learn about sacrifice?

What was God’s purpose in this incredible challenge to Abraham’s faith? The patriarch’s life with God had always been accompanied by divine promises: the promise of land, of descendants, and of blessings; the promise of a son; and the promise that God would take care of Ishmael. Abraham sacrificed, but it was always in the light of some promise. However, in the situation described in Genesis 22, Abraham did not get any divine promise; instead, he was told to sacrifice the living promise, his son. Following through on God’s command, Abraham showed that God was more important to him than anything else.

“It was to impress Abraham’s mind with the reality of the gospel, as well as to test his faith, that God commanded him to slay his son. The agony which he endured during the dark days of that fearful trial was permitted that he might understand from his own experience something of the greatness of the sacrifice made by the infinite God for man’s redemption. No other test could have caused Abraham such torture of soul as did the offering of his son. God gave His Son to a death of agony and shame.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 154.

Concerning the sacrifice, Abraham understood two essential principles. First, no one but God Himself can bring the true sacrifice and the means of salvation. It is the Lord who will, who must, provide. Abraham eternalizes this principle by naming the place, “YHWH Jireh,” which means “The-LORD-Will-Provide.” Second, the actual sacrifice is substitutional, one that saves Isaac’s life. The ram is offered “in the place of” Isaac (*Gen. 22:13, NASB*). That animal, which God provided, prefigures the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, on whom “the LORD has laid . . . the iniquity of us all” (*Isa. 53:6, 7; Acts 8:32, NKJV*).

What an astonishing surrender to God! Who can imagine what that experience must have been like for Abraham? Think about the last time that you had to reach out in sheer faith and do something that caused you a lot of anguish. What did you learn from your actions, and how well has the lesson stuck?

Life for a Life

Read Leviticus 17:10, 11. What function does God give to the blood?

In a passage where God instructs the Israelites not to eat any blood, He provides an interesting reason for this prohibition: blood stands for life, and God has made sacrificial blood a ransom for human life. One life, represented by the blood, ransoms another life. The principle of substitution, which became explicit on Mount Moriah when Abraham offered the blood of the ram in the place of the blood of his son, is firmly anchored in God's legal requirements for ancient Israel.

As in Genesis 22, God shows that it is He Himself who provides the means for atonement; in the Hebrew, the *I* in “ ‘I have given it to you’ ” (*Lev. 17:11, NKJV*) is emphasized. We cannot provide our own ransom. God must give it.

The concept is different from that of other religions that use sacrifices. In the Bible, it is not a human who approaches God and knows how to appease Him; it is God, rather, who provides the means for a person to come into His holy presence. And in Christ, He Himself provides the blood for ransom.

Read 1 Samuel 15:22 and Micah 6:6–8. What are some of the dangers of the ritual system?

God never intended the sacrificial service to be a substitute for the attitude of the heart; on the contrary, the sacrifices were to open the heart of the believer to the Lord. If we lose sight of the fact that sacrifices express a spiritual relationship between God and us and that they all point to a much greater sacrifice, Jesus Christ, we could easily mistake the sacrificial ritual for an automatic apparatus for making atonement. Besides sacrifice, God really wants our hearts to be right with Him (*Ps. 51:16, 17*). Consistently the Israelite prophets accused the people of false piety and called for them “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (*Mic. 6:6–8, NRSV; compare Isa. 1:10–17*).

In what ways do we face the same danger as expressed above? Why is it often so hard to realize that we could be doing exactly what the ancient Israelites did in this area? How can we avoid this mistake?

Sacrifices Today/Living Sacrifice

Though after Christ's sacrificial death there was no more need for animal sacrifices, the New Testament does talk about the need for another kind of sacrifice instead.

According to these texts, what kind of offerings are we to bring to God today? *Rom. 12:1, 2; Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:15, 16; 1 Pet. 2:5.*

Terminology from the sacrificial system worked very well in describing the early Christian concept of what it meant to live a life totally consecrated to God. In fact, even when Paul was thinking about his martyrdom, he described himself as a drink offering (*Phil. 2:17, 2 Tim. 4:6*).

What specific message is given to us in Romans 12:1? In what ways are we to manifest this truth in our own lives?

A "living sacrifice" means that the entire person is given to God. It includes the dedication of the body (*Rom. 12:1*) as well as the transformation of the inner being (*vs. 2*). We are to be set apart ("holy") for the sole purpose of serving the Lord. Christians will present themselves wholly to the Lord because of the "mercies of God," as described in Romans 12:1–11, which presents Christ as our Sacrifice, the means of our salvation.

In this context, Paul's appeal is for Christians to imitate Christ. A true understanding of God's grace leads to a life consecrated to God and to a loving service for others. Surrender of self and the desires of self to the will of God is the only reasonable response to Christ's ultimate sacrifice for us.

In the end, there has to be a harmony between our understanding of spiritual and doctrinal truth and our service to others. Every aspect of life should express the believer's genuine commitment to God. True worship is never only inward and spiritual; it must encompass outward acts of selfless service. After all, think about what our Lord has done for us.

Further Study: “It had been difficult even for the angels to grasp the mystery of redemption—to comprehend that the Commander of heaven, the Son of God, must die for guilty man. When the command was given to Abraham to offer up his son, the interest of all heavenly beings was enlisted. With intense earnestness they watched each step in the fulfillment of this command. When to Isaac’s question, ‘Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ Abraham made answer, ‘God will provide Himself a lamb;’ and when the father’s hand was stayed as he was about to slay his son, and the ram which God had provided was offered in the place of Isaac—then light was shed upon the mystery of redemption, and even the angels understood more clearly the wonderful provision that God had made for man’s salvation.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 155.

Discussion Questions:

- ① “Our feet will walk in his paths, our lips will speak the truth and spread the gospel, our tongues will bring healing, our hands will lift up those who have fallen, and perform many mundane tasks as well like cooking and cleaning, typing and mending; our arms will embrace the lonely and the unloved, our ears will listen to the cries of the distressed, and our eyes will look humbly and patiently towards God.”—John Stott, *Romans* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994), p. 322. In what ways does this quote show what it means to be a “living sacrifice”? Why is it that only through death to self could we ever be able to live like this?
- ② As we saw during the week’s lesson, one of the great problems that the people faced was seeing the sacrificial system as an end in itself instead of a means to an end—that end being a life wholly consecrated to God, a consecration that reveals itself in loving service to others. In what ways are Seventh-day Adventists (who have been given so much light), especially in danger of going down the same path, because perhaps we now think that the great truths we possess are an end in and of themselves, instead of a means to the end?
- ③ Dwell more on the story of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. However troubling this story is, one could argue that it was meant to be troubling, to cause consternation and distress. Why do you think anyone would argue that it was meant, among other things, to evoke those emotions in the reader?

Best Friends for Jesus

Moses is eight years old. He and his family live in the tiny country of Armenia, tucked between Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.

Moses and his family had just moved to a little village in western Armenia. Moses didn't know anyone there. Then he met Hayk [*hike*], a boy his own age. The two boys quickly became friends. They enjoy playing and riding their bicycles together.

Moses realized that Hayk didn't know Jesus. His family didn't go to church. So, Moses started praying for his friend. He wanted to invite Hayk to church, but first he decided to give Hayk a book about Jesus.

Hayk liked the book and started reading it even before Moses left his house. Mother noticed that Hayk read late into the evening and again the next day. The book has lots of pictures that held Hayk's interest.

Later when Hayk visited, Mother asked the boys some questions about stories she knew were in the book, and Hayk answered them all. Hayk said that he tells his mother the stories that he reads, and now his mother and sister want to read the book too.

A few days later, Hayk asked Moses, "May I go to church with you?"

Moses was surprised and happy. "Of course you can!" Moses said. "I was going to invite you!"

Hayk loves church and wants to go every Sabbath. Children in Armenia don't have lesson quarterlies, so the teacher must read the lesson in Russian and tell it to the children in Armenian.

Hayk is so excited about what he's learning in church that he's invited some of his friends to go with him. One week, five boys and girls attended church with Hayk, and he's looking for more children to invite.

Moses invited Hayk, and now the boys are inviting others. And the church in Armenia is growing.

Our offerings help support outreach in countries where Seventh-day Adventist membership is small. Thank you for stretching the arms of mission around the world through your offerings.



MOSES and HAYK (left) share their faith in a small town in western Armenia.

Lessons From *the* Sanctuary

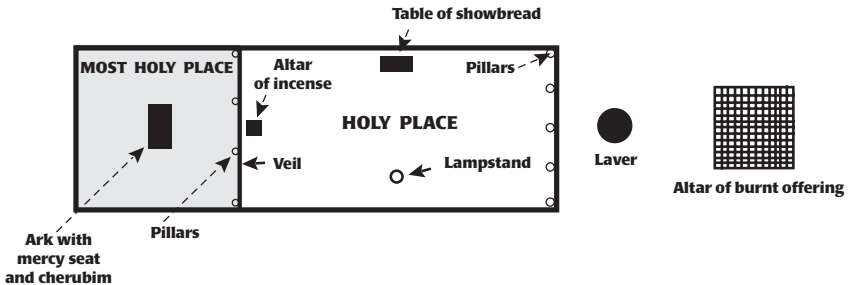


SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Exod. 40:9, 10; Lev. 19:2; 1 Pet. 1:14–16; Exod. 31:2–11; Rom. 3:25–28; 1 Kings 8:31–53; Ps. 73:1–17.*

Memory Text: “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them” (*Exodus 25:8, NASB*).

The sanctuary is one of God’s major devices to teach us the meaning of the gospel. As we study the sanctuary this week, the drawing below will be helpful:



This week’s lesson focuses on some of the major insights provided by the earthly sanctuary. We will study the sacrificial system later.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 26.*

Place of the Presence

According to Exodus 25:8, what was the purpose of the earthly sanctuary in the wilderness? What amazing truth does this teach us about God's love for us?

In the Garden of Eden, sin had broken the face-to-face relationship between God and humanity. Sin forfeited our first parents' unhindered communion with God. However, the Creator still desired to draw us to Himself and to enjoy a deep covenant relationship with fallen humanity, and He began this process right there in Eden. Centuries later, in saving Israel out of Egypt and establishing the sanctuary and the sacrificial system, God again took the initiative in bringing humanity back into His presence.

The sanctuary thus testifies of God's unceasing desire to dwell among His people. This is God's idea (*Ps. 132:13, 14*). His ultimate goal is relationship, and the sanctuary services were His chosen means to illustrate that relationship. The sanctuary is the tangible evidence of God's presence with His people on earth.

From the description in Numbers 2, it is evident that the tabernacle was located in the center of the square encampment where, as was customary in the ancient Near East, the king would place his tent. So, the tabernacle symbolizes that God is the King over Israel.

The Levites, meanwhile, placed their tents around the tabernacle (*Num. 1:53*), and the other tribes put theirs farther around at a "distance" in groups of three (*Num. 2:2*). This illustrates in a tangible way both the nearness and the distance of God.

Another purpose of the sanctuary was to provide a location for a centralized, divinely ordained system of worship. Because God's presence in the midst of the people was jeopardized by their impurities and moral failings, He provided a system of sacrifices and offerings through which unholy people could live and remain in the presence of a Holy God.

So, in this context, the sanctuary revealed details regarding the plan of redemption, which included not only the sacrifices but the ministry of the priesthood, which was an integral part of the plan of redemption, as well.

With the sanctuary, the Creator of the universe, the One who made all that was made (see *John 1:1-3*), lowered Himself to dwell among homeless wanderers in the desert. How should this fact alone help us avoid harboring ethnic, class, or cultural prejudices against anyone?

“Be Ye Holy”

“And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof: and it shall be holy.

“And thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy” (*Exod. 40:9, 10*).

Exodus 40:9, 10 shows us that the sanctuary was to be regarded as “holy.” The basic idea of holiness is separateness and uniqueness, in combination with one’s belonging to God.

“The typical service was the connecting link between God and Israel. The sacrificial offerings were designed to prefigure the sacrifice of Christ, and thus to preserve in the hearts of the people an unwavering faith in the Redeemer to come. Hence, in order that the Lord might accept their sacrifices, and continue His presence with them, and, on the other hand, that the people might have a correct knowledge of the plan of salvation, and a right understanding of their duty, it was of the utmost importance that holiness of heart and purity of life, reverence for God, and strict obedience to His requirements, should be maintained by all connected with the sanctuary.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1010.

Read Leviticus 19:2 and 1 Peter 1:14–16. What is the primary reason for the people to be holy?

God’s holiness transforms us and sets us apart. His holiness is the ultimate motivation for the ethical conduct of His people in all spheres of life (*see Leviticus 19*), whether that be observing the dietary laws (*Lev. 11:44, 45*), respecting the priest (*Lev. 21:8*), or not conforming to former lusts (*1 Pet. 1:14*). Obviously, God wants us to grow in holiness as we become closer to Him. This change can come about only through a self-surrender of our sinful natures and through a willingness to do what is right, regardless of the consequences.

Think about yourself, your habits, your tastes, your activities, et cetera. How much of what you are, and what you do, would be considered “holy”? It is kind of a tough question to face, isn’t it?

Instruments of the Sanctuary

Read Exodus 31:2–11. What do these verses teach us about the making of the objects in the earthly sanctuary? What link is there with Genesis 1:2? See also *Exod. 25:9*.

Of all the objects in the sanctuary, the ark of the testimony was the supreme symbol of God's presence and holiness. The name derives from the two stone tablets of the law, called the "testimony" (*Exod. 32:15, 16*), that were placed inside the ark (*Exod. 25:16, 21*).

On top of the ark was placed the "mercy seat," with two cherubim overshadowing the cover with their wings (*Exod. 25:17–21*). It is appropriately called the "atonement cover" (*NIV*), for it conveys the idea that our compassionate and gracious God has reconciled the people with Himself and made every provision for them to maintain a covenant relationship with Him.

This is the place where, once a year, on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur* in the Hebrew), atonement for the people and the sanctuary took place (*Lev. 16:14–16*). In *Romans 3:25*, Paul refers to Jesus as "atonement cover" (usually translated as "propitiation" or "sacrifice of atonement"), for Jesus Himself is the place of Redemption, the One through whom God has made atonement for our sins.

In the Holy Place, the first compartment, the lampstand continually provided light (*Lev. 24:1–4*), and the altar of incense produced the protective smoke that concealed the presence of God from the priest (*Lev. 16:12, 13*). On the table for the bread of the presence were placed twelve loaves of bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Dishes, pans, jars, and bowls (*Exod. 25:29, 30*) also were placed on the table. Although little information is given about the significance of these items, it seems that they represented the elements of a covenant meal (*recalling Exod. 24:11*) and served as a constant reminder of God's covenant with the people.

Read Romans 3:25–28. What great hope can we take from the promise of salvation "by faith apart from the deeds of the law"? (*NKJV*).

Center of Divine and Communal Activity

Read 1 Kings 8:31–53. What more does this text teach us about the function of the sanctuary?

At the dedication ceremony of the newly built temple, King Solomon offered seven kinds of specific prayers that could be offered at the temple. The seven functions exemplify the extensive role of the temple in the lives of the Israelites. The temple was a place for seeking forgiveness (*vss. 30*); for oath swearing (*vss. 31, 32*); for supplication when defeated (*vss. 33, 34*); for petition when faced with drought (*vss. 35, 36*) or other disasters (*vss. 37–40*). It was also a place for the foreigner to pray (*vss. 41–43*), as well as a place to petition for victory (*vss. 44, 45*).

That the temple was intended to be a “‘house of prayer for all the peoples’ ” (*Isa. 56:7, NASB*) becomes evident from the fact that Solomon envisioned the individual Israelite, the foreigner, and the entire population as petitioners.

The sanctuary was the ideological center of basically all activity in Israel. Religion was not just part of the believer’s life, even if it was a major part; it was life. What does this tell us about the role that our faith should play in our own lives?

When the people wanted to receive advice or judgment, or if they repented of their sins, they went to the sanctuary. The sanctuary was also the hub of life during the desert years of Israel. When God desired to communicate to His people, He did so from the sanctuary (*Exod. 25:22*). Therefore, it is appropriately called the “tent of meeting” (*for example, Lev. 1:1, NASB*).

Think about your prayer life. How deep, how rich, how faith-affirming and life changing is it? Perhaps the first question you need to ask yourself is: how much time do I spend in prayer?

“Until I Went Into the Sanctuary of God”

Time and again, the Psalms show that the sanctuary plays a significant part in the relationship between believers and God. Well known is the firm conviction David expressed at the end of Psalm 23 that he “will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (*vs. 6, NKJV*). David’s foremost wish in Psalm 27 was to be in the presence of Yahweh, a presence which was best experienced in the sanctuary. In order to show how much he cherished the sanctuary, David used the full range of expressions to refer to it, calling it the house of the Lord, the temple, the tabernacle, and the tent. It is there that one can meditate and “behold the beauty of the LORD” (*Ps. 27:4, NKJV*).

The activities of God in the sanctuary illustrate some crucial points: He keeps the worshiper safe and hides him in His sanctuary, even in tough times (*Ps. 27:5*). God provides secure refuge and assures peace of mind for all who come into His presence. These expressions connect the beauty of God to what He does for His people. In addition, the sanctuary service with its symbolic significance shows the goodness and justice of God.

The ultimate object of David’s deepest desire was not only simply to be in the sanctuary but for Yahweh to be present with him. That is why David resolves to “seek” God (*Ps. 27:4, 8*).

Read Psalm 73:1–17. Which insights did Asaph receive after entering the sanctuary?

In Psalm 73, Asaph addressed the problem of suffering. He could not understand the apparent success of the wicked (*vss. 4–12*) while the faithful were afflicted. He himself almost slipped (*vss. 1–3*), but going into the sanctuary made the difference for him (*vss. 13–17*). There, Asaph could see the same power and glory of God that David mentions in Psalm 63:2 and recognize that the present conditions will one day change and justice will be done. He could reflect anew on the truth and receive reaffirmation that, in the end, the wicked are on slippery ground (*Ps. 73:18–20*) and the faithful are secure (*vss. 21–28*). For those who seek God, the sanctuary becomes a place of confidence and a stronghold of life, one where God will set them “high upon a rock” (*Ps. 27:5, NKJV*). From the truth that the sanctuary service teaches, we can indeed learn to trust in the goodness and the justice of God.

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “The Tabernacle and Its Services,” pp. 343–358, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“For the building of the sanctuary great and expensive preparations were necessary; a large amount of the most precious and costly material was required; yet the Lord accepted only freewill offerings. ‘Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take My offering’ was the divine command repeated by Moses to the congregation. Devotion to God and a spirit of sacrifice were the first requisites in preparing a dwelling place for the Most High.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 343.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Dwell more on the question of God’s justice. We see so little justice in this world now. Why, then, without the ultimate hope of God’s justice, would there be no hope of justice at all?
- ❷ Someone wrote: “The tabernacle is a piece of holy ground amid a world that has lost its way.” What does that mean to you?
- ❸ Read 1 Peter 1:14–16. In what way do you understand God’s holiness? What does it mean to be holy yourself? How can we become holy?
- ❹ The sons of Eli are an example of people who were “close” to God but who lost their appreciation of His holiness (*1 Sam. 2:12–17*). How can you avoid losing a sense of God’s holiness? Why are prayer, study, and obedience crucial in helping us to preserve the awareness of His holiness?
- ❺ “The most important part of the daily ministration was the service performed in behalf of individuals. The repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle, and placing his hand upon the victim’s head, confessed his sins, thus in figure transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice. By his own hand the animal was then slain, and the blood was carried by the priest into the holy place and sprinkled before the veil, behind which was the ark containing the law that the sinner had transgressed. By this ceremony the sin was, through the blood, transferred in figure to the sanctuary.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 354. How does this quote help us to understand the ways in which “salvation by faith” was revealed in the sanctuary service?

Persecuted and Victorious

“Hang the heretics!” the angry mob shouted, shoving my neighbor and me toward a makeshift gallows. Rough hands slipped a noose over my head and shouted, “Now will you repent?”

“No!” I said, and the noose drew tighter around my neck.

Months earlier I noticed a man reading a Bible on a bus. He saw my interest and urged me to buy a Bible and discover God’s truths for myself. Then he invited me to visit the Seventh-day Adventist church. I bought a Bible and began reading, eager to share what I was learning with others.

On Sabbath my wife and I walked two hours to the next village to visit the Seventh-day Adventist church. Church members gave me eight Bibles to share, and a layman offered to come to the village and study with us.

I gave out the Bibles and invited my neighbors to study with me. Soon my house was full of people who wanted to know God’s Word! But when the local village leaders learned of the Bible study, they accused us of making trouble and threatened us. The next day an angry mob came to arrest my neighbor and me.

We were told to renounce our faith. We refused, and the men placed the ropes around our necks. As I prayed for my family and the new believers, someone cut the ropes. They let my friend go, but they beat me and threatened me. Still I refused to deny Christ.

Eventually they let me go, but as I hurried toward home I noticed some villagers following me with machetes. I ducked behind some tall bushes and ran home, where the Seventh-day Adventist layman waited with my wife.

“Come and stay in our town for a while,” he urged. We gathered some clothes and our animals, and we escaped to the neighboring village, where we stayed until the church could work out a solution with our village leaders. At night we sneaked back home to harvest our crops so we would have food. Soon my wife and I were baptized.



When it was safe, we returned home, free to worship and share our faith with friends and family. The village leaders gave us land, and we built a church. Today more than three hundred Seventh-day Adventists, and many visitors worship with us!

We praise God for turning persecution into praise. Part of a recent Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped to build churches in my region of central Mexico. Thank you!

AUGUSTIN CRUZ is a farmer and a lay worker in Oaxaca State, Mexico.

Atonement: Purification Offering



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *2 Chron. 33:12, 13; 2 Sam. 14:1–11; Lev. 4:27–31; Jer. 17:1; Lev. 10:16–18; Mic. 7:18–20.*

Memory Text: “Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (*1 Peter 1:18, 19, NASB*).

The sacrificial system is probably the best-known part of the sanctuary service because it's the part that points directly to Christ's sacrifice. The blood of the animal that died for the sinner becomes a symbol for the blood of Christ, who died for us.

This week we will study several concepts linked to the “purification offering” (also called “sin offering”), which was God's appointed way of helping us to understand better how He is reconciling us to Himself through the only true Sacrifice, Jesus Christ. At times, this lesson uses the term “purification offering” instead of “sin offering” to avoid the impression that an act that required an offering, such as giving birth, be regarded as a moral fault (*Lev. 12:5–8*). Such a sacrifice is best understood as a purification offering for a woman's ritual impurity and not as a sacrifice because of sin.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 2.*

Sin and Mercy

As anyone who knows the Lord can testify, sin separates us from God. The good news is that the Lord has put in place a system to heal the breach caused by sin and to bring us back to Him. At the center of this system is, of course, the sacrifice.

There are basically three kinds of sin depicted in the Old Testament, each corresponding to the sinner's level of awareness while he or she committed the transgression: inadvertent or unintentional sin, deliberate or intentional sin, and rebellious sin. The "purification offering" prescribed in Leviticus 4:1–5:13 applied to cases of unintentional sin, as well as some cases of deliberate sin (*Lev. 5:1*). While an offering was available for these first two categories, none is mentioned for rebellious sin, the most heinous kind. Rebellious sin was done "in the face" of God, with a high hand, and the rebel deserved nothing less than to be cut off (*Num. 15:29–31*). However, it seems that even in these cases, such as with Manasseh, God offered forgiveness (*see 2 Chron. 33:12, 13*).

Read Deuteronomy 25:1, 2 and 2 Samuel 14:1–11. What does 2 Samuel 14:9 reveal about mercy, justice, and guilt?

Is God justified in forgiving the sinner? After all, is not the sinner unrighteous and therefore worthy of being condemned (*see Deut. 25:1*)?

The story of the woman of Tekoa can illustrate the answer. Pretending to be a widow as instructed by Joab, this woman went to King David, seeking his judgment. Joab contrived a story that he asked her to tell David, about her two sons, one having killed the other. Israelite law demanded the death of the murderer (*Num. 35:31*), even though he was the only male left in the family. The woman pleaded with David (who functioned as judge) to let the guilty son go free.

Then, interestingly enough, she declared: " 'Let the iniquity be on me and on my father's house, and the king and his throne be guiltless' " (*2 Sam. 14:9, NKJV*). Both the woman and David understood that if the king would decide to let the murderer go free, then the king himself would acquire the guilt of the murderer and that his throne of justice (that is, his reputation as judge) would be in jeopardy. The judge was morally responsible for what he decided. That is why the woman offered to take over this guilt herself.

Similarly, God takes over the guilt of sinners in order to declare them righteous. For us to be forgiven, *God Himself must bear our punishment*. This is the legal reason why Christ had to die if we were to be saved.

Laying on of Hands

Read Leviticus 4:27–31. What ritual activities were performed along with the sacrifice?

The goal of the offering was to remove sin and guilt from the sinner, to transfer responsibility to the sanctuary, and to let the sinner leave forgiven and cleansed. (In extremely rare cases, one could bring a certain amount of fine flour as a purification offering. Although this purification offering was bloodless, it was understood that “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” [*Heb. 9:22, NASB*]).

The ritual itself included the laying on of hands, the death of the animal, blood manipulation, the burning of fat, and the eating of the animal’s flesh. The sinner who brought the offering was granted forgiveness, but only after the blood ritual.

A crucial part of this process involved the laying on of hands (*Lev. 1:4, 4:4, 16:21*). This was done so that the offering “may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf” (*Lev. 1:4, NASB*). The offering applied only for the one who put his hands on the animal’s head. According to Leviticus 16:21, the laying on of hands would be accompanied by a confession of sin; this would acknowledge the transfer of sin from the sinner to the innocent animal.

The slaughter was, of course, basic to any animal offering. After the animal was killed, the spilled blood was used to make atonement on the altar (*Lev. 17:11*). Because the sins had been transferred to the animal by the laying on of hands, we should understand the death of the animal as a substitutionary death. The animal died in the place of the sinner. This may explain why the act of killing the animal had to be performed by the sinner, or the guilty one, and not by the priest.

Next time you are tempted to sin, envision Jesus dying on the cross and see yourself putting your hands on His head and confessing your sins over Him. How might this concept, played out in your mind, help you to understand just what it cost in order to be forgiven? How could this idea help you to resist succumbing to that temptation?

Transfer of Sin

“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, and upon the horns of your altars” (Jer. 17:1).

After the laying on of hands and the death of the animal, the next ritual activity in the offering was the handling of the blood. The priest applied the sacrificial blood to the horns of the altar. Because blood was involved, this ritual part had to do with atonement (*Lev. 17:11*). If the sinner was a commoner or a leader, the blood was applied on the altar of burnt offering (*Lev. 4:25, 30*); if the high priest or the entire congregation was the sinner, the blood was applied to the inner altar, the altar of incense (*Lev. 4:7, 18*).

What did it mean to smear blood on the horns of the altar? The horns were the highest points of the altar and, as such, could signify the vertical dimension of salvation. In this way, the blood was brought into the presence of God.

Jeremiah 17:1 is of particular importance for understanding what happens: the sin of Judah is engraved “upon the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars” (*NASB*). Although the text is referring to altars involved in idolatrous worship, the principle remains the same: the altar reflected the moral condition of the people. Blood transferred the guilt of sin. The blood smeared on the horns of the altar transferred sin away from the sinner to the sanctuary, a crucially important truth in order for us to understand the plan of salvation as revealed in the earthly sanctuary service, which symbolizes the work of Christ in heaven for us.

Because the blood carried sin, it also defiled the sanctuary. We find an example of this defiling in cases where the blood of the purification offering splashed accidentally on a garment. The garment needed to be cleansed, not just anywhere, but only “in a holy place” (*Lev. 6:27, NKJV*).

Finally, the burning of the fat on the altar indicated that everything relating to the purification offering belonged to God (*Lev. 3:16*).

Thanks to the death of Jesus, symbolized by these sacrifices, our sin has been taken away from us, placed on Him, and transferred to the heavenly sanctuary. This is central to the plan of salvation.

How does the sanctuary service help us to understand our utter dependence on God for forgiveness of our sins? What comfort does this truth bring you? At the same time, what important responsibilities follow? See 1 Peter 1:22.

Bearing Sin

Read Leviticus 6:25, 26; 10:16–18. What crucial truth is revealed here?

By eating the offering at a holy place, the officiating priest would “bear away the guilt” of the offender. The meat of this offering was not just payment for the priests’ services (otherwise Moses would not have been so angry with Aaron’s sons for not eating of it) but a crucial part of the atonement.

How does the eating of the sacrifice contribute to the process of atonement? Eating was required only of those offerings in which blood did not enter the Holy Place; that is, the offerings of the leader and the commoner. The Bible explicitly said that by eating the sacrifice the priests would “bear away the guilt,” which would “make atonement” for the sinner. To carry the sinner’s guilt implies that the sinner now goes free.

In the Hebrew, Exodus 34:7 says that God “carries iniquity,” the same two Hebrew words used in Leviticus 10:17, where it’s clear that the act of the priest’s carrying the sin is what brings forgiveness to the sinner. Otherwise, without that transfer, the sinner would have to bear his own sin (*Lev. 5:1*), and that, of course, would lead to death (*Rom. 6:23*).

The priest’s work of bearing another’s sin is exactly what Christ did for us. He died in our place. We conclude, then, that the priestly work at the earthly sanctuary typifies Christ’s work for us, because He has taken upon Himself the guilt of our sins.

“The blessing comes because of pardon; pardon comes through faith that the sin, confessed and repented of, is borne by the great Sin-bearer. Thus from Christ cometh all our blessings. His death is an atoning sacrifice for our sins. He is the great medium through whom we receive the mercy and favor of God. He, then, is indeed the Originator, the Author, as well as the Finisher, of our faith.”—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 302.

Imagine standing before God in judgment. What would you lean on—your good works, your Sabbath keeping, all the nice things you have done and all the bad things you haven’t done? Do you really think this would be enough to justify you before a holy and perfect God? If not, what’s your only hope in that judgment?

Forgiveness

Read Micah 7:18–20. What picture of God do we find in this passage?

The last three verses of the book of Micah focus on the relationship of God with His remnant. The text beautifully describes why God is unrivaled. He is incomparable because of His forgiving love and grace. The outstanding characteristic of God, as revealed in Micah (and elsewhere), is His willingness to forgive. Micah emphasizes this point by using various expressions for God's attributes (*vs. 18*) and achievements (*vss. 19, 20*). His attributes and achievements are explained in the language of the Israelite Credo in Exodus 34:6, 7, one of the most beloved biblical descriptions of the character of God.

Interestingly, several crucial words in Micah 7:18–20 are also used in the Servant Song in Isaiah 53, pointing to the fact that the means of forgiveness comes from the One who is suffering for the people.

Unfortunately, not everyone will enjoy God's saving grace. God's forgiveness is neither cheap nor automatic. It involves loyalty. Those who have experienced His grace respond in kind, such as we see in Micah 6:8, a central text in the book. Just as God "delights in unchanging love" (*NASB*), He calls His remnant to "love kindness" (*NASB*). His people will imitate God's character. Their lives will reflect His love, compassion, and kindness.

In the Bible, Micah 7:18–20, with its emphasis on forgiveness, is immediately followed by Nahum 1:2, 3, with its emphasis on judgment. This unfolds the two dimensions of God's dealings with us; He forgives the repentant and punishes the wicked. Both sides belong to God. He is Savior and Judge. These two aspects of God's character are complementary, not contrary. A compassionate God can also be a just God. Knowing this, we can rest assured in His love, in His forgiveness, and in His ultimate justice.

Read Micah 6:8. What good is a profession of faith without these principles to reveal the reality of that profession? What's easier, to claim faith in Jesus or to live out that faith, as expressed in Micah 6:8? How can you better do the latter?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “The Tabernacle and Its Services,” pp. 343–358, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“As Christ at His ascension appeared in the presence of God to plead His blood in behalf of penitent believers, so the priest in the daily ministration sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice in the holy place in the sinner’s behalf.

“The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Some have argued that the whole concept of substitution is unfair. Why should the innocent die in the place of the guilty? However, because this is a truth that is not only clearly taught in the Bible but is central to the core theme of the Bible, how do we answer that charge? Might the “unfairness” of it all help us to understand the grace that was displayed in order to bring us forgiveness? That is, in what ways might this “unfairness” help to show just how great and merciful and loving our God really is?
- 2 As a class, read Micah 6:8. What are we being told here? More important, how can we learn to fulfill this explicit command? How do we learn to do all these things, including to “walk humbly with thy God”? What does that mean? How can walking humbly with God translate into walking humbly with others?
- 3 Think about what it means that the only way we could be saved was through the death of Jesus. What does this amazing truth teach us about just how bad sin is and why any effort to save ourselves by our own works is as fruitless as scrubbing a pig in hopes of making it kosher?
- 4 In class, go over the final question at the end of Wednesday’s lesson. Discuss your answers and the implications of your answers in terms of the gospel and that which God has done for us in order to save us.

The Sword and the Spirit

Joseph's heart pounded as the mob raged toward him. "Beat him!" someone yelled. "Kill him!" another echoed.

Joseph hadn't been a Christian long. In his zeal to share his new faith with others, he had come to this village as a Global Mission pioneer to teach others about Christ. Some listened, but others were angry that a Christian had come to stir up their village. They found Joseph and demanded vengeance.

Joseph prayed as the mob surrounded him. Then he spoke to the leader, who brandished a sword. "Brother, I've come in peace and in the name of Jesus," he said. "My God wants to be your God too."

The crowd quieted, and the leader challenged Joseph with his eyes. "My little girl has been paralyzed for six years. She can't move, and she can't speak. If your God can heal my daughter, then we will leave you alone. But if not, then we will kill you." The man turned and walked toward his home. The mob pushed Joseph to follow. Joseph and the mob leader entered the house together.

Joseph looked at Kamala, the little girl, and realized that only a miracle would save her life—and his. He knelt by her bed and asked God to heal Kamala if it was His will. "Help this family to understand that You are the all-powerful God," he prayed.

Joseph finished his prayer and stood up. He continued to pray silently for the child, and within minutes Kamala moved slightly. She stretched one leg and then the other; then she stretched her arms. Slowly she sat up. The family watched, speechless with joy, as Kamala pulled herself up on her once-withered legs and took a step.

"My daughter!" Kamala's mother whispered. The girl smiled and walked slowly toward her mother. Tearfully the man who had planned to kill Joseph hugged him. "I want to know about your God," he said.

News of the girl's miraculous healing spread rapidly through the village. Many wanted to know about Joseph's God. The man who had brandished a sword and planned to kill Joseph now works with him to teach others about the living God. Dozens have turned to Jesus and worship Him instead of their former gods.

Our mission offerings help support the work of men and women such as Joseph who serve as Global Mission pioneers around the world. Thank you for having a part in the work of God through your offerings.



JOSEPH and his wife served as Global Mission pioneers in western India.

The Day of Atonement



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Leviticus 16, Lev. 23:27–32, Deut. 19:16–21, Matt. 18:23–35, Isa. 6:1–6.*

Memory Text: “Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities underfoot. Yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (*Micah 7:18, 19, NASB*).

The Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, as revealed in Leviticus 16, is the most solemn Old Testament ritual. It is deliberately placed in the heart of the book of Leviticus, which is itself at the center of the Five Books of Moses, in order to help to illustrate the “most holy” character of this ritual. Also referred to as the Sabbath of Sabbaths (*Lev. 16:31*), the day calls for the cessation of all work, which is unique for an Israelite yearly festival. This fact places the day squarely within the concept of the Sabbath—it is a time to rest in what God, as Creator and Redeemer, has done (and will do) for us.

This week we will study what happened on the Day of Atonement in the earthly sanctuary, specifically the rituals with the two goats, which helps us to better understand deeper truths regarding salvation and the final disposition of sin.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 9.*

The Yearly Cleansing

Read Leviticus 16:16, 30. What is purged on the Day of Atonement?

Throughout the year, all kinds of sins and ritual impurities were transferred to the sanctuary. With the Day of Atonement comes the time for their removal. There are three main parts to the Day of Atonement:

1. *The purification offering for the priest.* The high priest slaughtered a bull for his sins, making sure that he (the priest) would be clean when entering the sanctuary so that he could perform the ritual to cleanse it.

2. *The purification offering of the goat “for the LORD” (Lev. 16:8, NKJV).* During the year, the purification offerings “brought” all the sins of the Israelites into the sanctuary. The Day of Atonement was the time to remove these sins from the sanctuary; this process was done through the blood of the goat “for the LORD.”

3. *The elimination ritual with the live goat for Azazel.* God wanted to get the sins of His people away from the sanctuary and the camp. Therefore, another live goat was sent out into the desert.

Read Leviticus 16:15. What happened to this goat, and what did it symbolize?

Because there was neither confession of sin nor laying on of hands involved with the goat for the Lord, its blood was not a carrier of sin. Thus, it did not defile; but rather, it cleansed. The effect is clearly described in verses 16 and 20. The high priest made atonement with the blood of the Lord’s goat, cleansing the entire sanctuary. The same procedure also effected the purification of the people so that, when the sanctuary was cleansed from all the people’s sins, the people themselves were cleansed too. In this sense the Day of Atonement was unique, for only on this day were both the sanctuary and the people cleansed.

The Day of Atonement was the second stage of a two-phase atonement. In the first phase, during the year, the Israelites were forgiven. Their sins were not blotted out but were entrusted to God Himself, who promised to deal with them. The second phase did not have much to do with forgiveness; the people were already forgiven. In fact, the verb *forgive* does not occur at all in Leviticus 16 or in Leviticus 23:27–32. What this shows us is that the entire plan of salvation deals with more than just the forgiveness of our sins, a point that makes even more sense when understood in the wider context of the great controversy.

Beyond Forgiveness

Read Leviticus 16:32–34. What was the main task of the high priest on the Day of Atonement?

The primary function of the high priest was to mediate between God and humankind. Regarding the sanctuary, he administered the system and performed various rituals of sacrifices and offerings (*Heb. 8:3*). His task on the Day of Atonement was enormous. He performed almost every ritual, except for leading the goat for Azazel into the wilderness, though he gave the command to send the goat away.

On the Day of Atonement, the “great” priest, as he was also called, became a living example of Christ. Just as the attention of God’s people was focused on the high priest, Jesus is the exclusive center of our attention. As the activities of the high priest on earth brought cleansing to the people, Jesus’ work in the heavenly sanctuary does the same for us (*Rom. 8:34, 1 John 1:9*). Just as the only hope of the people on the Day of Atonement was in the high priest, our only hope is in Christ.

“The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357.

According to Leviticus 16:16–20, the high priest had to enter the Most Holy Place and purge it from the ritual impurities, transgressions, and sins. He then transferred all the iniquities, all the transgressions, and all the sins of Israel onto the live goat and sent them away, through the goat, into the desert. Thus, all the moral faults of Israel were gone. This achieved the unique goal of the Day of Atonement: a moral purification that went beyond forgiveness. There was no new forgiveness necessary on this day. God had already forgiven their sins.

As we struggle with all our God-given strength to put away all sin, how can we learn to lean totally on Christ’s merits as our only hope of salvation?

Azazel

Read Leviticus 16:20–22. What happened to the live goat?

The ritual with the live goat was not an offering. After the lot decided which of the two goats was to be for Yahweh and which one was for Azazel (often translated as “scapegoat”), only the goat for Yahweh is referred to as a purification offering (*vss. 9, 15*). By contrast, the goat for Azazel is called the “live goat.” It was never slain, probably to avoid any idea that the ritual constituted a sacrifice. The live goat came into play *only after* the high priest had finished the atonement of the entire sanctuary (*vs. 20*). This point cannot be overemphasized: the ensuing ritual with the live goat had nothing to do with the actual cleansing of the sanctuary or of the people. They already had been cleansed.

Who or what is Azazel? Early Jewish interpreters identified Azazel as the original angelic sinner and the primary author of evil, even as the leader of evil angels. We know him, of course, as a symbol of Lucifer himself.

The ritual with the live goat was a rite of elimination that accomplished the final disposal of sin. Sin would be brought upon the one responsible for it in the first place and then carried away from the people forever. “Atonement” was made upon it in a punitive sense (*Lev. 16:10*), as the goat carried the ultimate responsibility for sin.

Does Satan then play a role in our salvation, as some falsely charge we teach? Of course not. Satan never, in any way, bears sin for us as a substitute. Jesus alone has done that, and it is blasphemy to think that Satan had any part in our redemption.

The ritual with the live goat finds a parallel in the law of the malicious witness (*Deut. 19:16–21*). The accuser and the accused stand before the Lord, represented by the priests and judges. An investigation is held; and, if the accuser is found to be a malicious witness, he shall receive the punishment he intended for the innocent (for example, vicious Haman who put up gallows for loyal Mordecai).

Thank God again for His merciful forgiveness and the fact that He will remember our sin no more (*Jer. 31:34*). How can we learn not to remember our sins once they are forgiven? Why is it so important for us to do this?

On the Day of Atonement

“Thus in the ministration of the tabernacle, and of the temple that afterward took its place, the people were taught each day the great truths relative to Christ’s death and ministration, and once each year their minds were carried forward to the closing events of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 358.

Read Leviticus 16:29–31 and 23:27–32. What did God expect the Israelites to do on Yom Kippur? How do these principles apply to us today, living as we are in the “antitypical Day of Atonement”?

If someone in ancient Israel did not follow these instructions, he was to be cut off and destroyed (*Lev. 23:29, 30*). The Day of Atonement was truly about nothing less than life and death. It demanded the believer’s complete loyalty to God.

Imagine that someone had confessed his sins during the first phase of atonement during the year; that is, the daily sacrifices, but then did not take the Day of Atonement seriously. By his disregard of what God had planned to demonstrate on this day, such a person proved himself to be disloyal to God.

What this means is that a person who professes faith in God can still lose salvation. As Seventh-day Adventists, we do not believe in once-saved-always-saved, because the Bible does not teach it. We are secure in Christ just as long as we live in faith and surrender to Him, claiming His power for victory when tempted and His forgiveness when we fall.

Read Matthew 18:23–35. What lesson should we take away from this powerful parable?

Isaiah's Personal Yom Kippur

In Isaiah 6:1, Isaiah sees the heavenly King sitting on a throne in the temple, “high and exalted.” The vision is a judgment scene that presents God as coming for judgment (*Isa. 5:16*). Isaiah beholds the true King, identified in the Gospel of John as Jesus Christ (*John 12:41*).

Even though Isaiah was God's prophet and he called others to repentance, he understood that in God's presence he was doomed. Confronted with God's holiness and glory, Isaiah perceived his own sinfulness and also the uncleanness of his people. Holiness and sin are incompatible. Like Isaiah, we all need to come to the conclusion that we cannot pass through the divine judgment on our own. Our only hope is to have a Substitute.

What parallels to the Day of Atonement appear in Isaiah 6:1–6?

The combination of a temple filled with smoke, an altar, judgment, and atonement for sin and uncleanness recalls strongly the Day of Atonement. Isaiah experienced his own “personal Day of Atonement,” as it were.

Functioning like a priest, a seraph (literally “burning one”) took a burning coal from the altar, presupposing some kind of offering, to purge the prophet's sin. This is an apt image for the cleansing from sin that is possible through the sacrifice of Jesus and His priestly ministry of mediation. Isaiah recognized this as a cleansing ritual, and he kept still as the coal touched his lips. Thereby his “iniquity is taken away” and his “sin is forgiven” (*Isa. 6:7, NASB*). The passive voice in verse 7 shows that forgiveness is granted by the One sitting on the throne. The Judge is also the Savior.

God's work of cleansing brings us from “Woe is me” to “Here am I, send me.” In other words, understanding the heavenly work on the Day of Atonement leads to a readiness for proclamation because a true understanding leads to assurance and surety. This is because we know that in judgment we have a Substitute, Jesus Christ, whose righteousness alone (symbolized by the blood) will enable us to stand without fear of condemnation (*Rom. 8:1*). Gratitude motivates mission. Acquitted sinners are God's best ambassadors (*2 Cor. 5:18–20*) because they know what God has delivered them from.

Further Study: “Now the event takes place foreshadowed in the last solemn service of the Day of Atonement. When the ministrations in the holy of holies had been completed, and the sins of Israel had been removed from the sanctuary by virtue of the blood of the sin offering, then the scapegoat was presented alive before the Lord; and in the presence of the congregation the high priest confessed over him ‘all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat.’ Leviticus 16:21. In like manner, when the work of atonement in the heavenly sanctuary has been completed, then in the presence of God and heavenly angels and the hosts of the redeemed the sins of God’s people will be placed upon Satan; he will be declared guilty of all the evil which he has caused them to commit.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 657, 658.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Why would any understanding of the plan of salvation be incomplete if it leaves out or minimizes the work of Christ as our High Priest? What does the sanctuary teach us about just how central the work of intercession in the sanctuary is to the plan of salvation? The bulk of an entire New Testament book, Hebrews, is dedicated to the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. In view of this, just how important is that work?
- 2 Someone once wrote that the work of Christ, from His death to His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, is simply part of “God’s orderly method” of dealing with the sin problem in a way that will help to answer all questions regarding His justice, fairness, and love. Dwell on the implications of that thought, especially in light of the great controversy and what it teaches us about the grand issues involved in the sordid tragedy of sin.
- 3 Many Seventh-day Adventists were taught about the Day of Atonement in a way that has left them without assurance of salvation. Such a view comes from a false understanding of the purpose of the Day of Atonement. Think about the word *atonement*. What does it mean? How is atonement achieved? Who does the work of atonement? How is it accomplished? How should these answers help us to understand why the Day of Atonement is actually good news?

A Child Shall Lead

From infancy, Joelito's mother taught him to love and serve Jesus. When she led small-group meetings, Joelito watched her and learned from her. When he was eight years old, he asked to be baptized and to lead others to Jesus.

When Joelito was ten, the government of Peru passed a law requiring children to attend school on Sabbath. His teacher allowed him to skip classes and make up work on Mondays. But when the time came for national exams, the teacher couldn't help him. "If you don't take the exam," she said sadly, "you'll fail." Joelito prayed that God would intervene, and in faith he spent the Sabbath worshipping God.

On Monday Joelito learned that the exam hadn't been given on Saturday because the classroom key had been lost. Joel thanked God for making it possible for him to keep the Sabbath and still take the exam.

Joelito told his friends how God had answered his prayers. He invited them to church and offered to study the Bible with them, just as he had learned from his mother. When the church held children's programs, Joelito invited his friends to attend. If they couldn't attend, he offered to visit their homes and study the children's Bible course with them. The mother of one of the children asked Joelito to study the Bible with her. "I wasn't nervous," Joelito says. "I had watched my mother give many Bible studies."

Joelito's church is small, and everyone takes part. When Joelito was 12, he began taking turns preaching and working as the stewardship leader.

During the summer vacation, young people throughout the country take part in a program called Mission Caleb. They go to a specific town to do community service, visit door to door, and give Bible studies. Joelito wanted to go, but he was told that he was too young. So, he stayed home and helped a group of Mission Caleb volunteers that had come to his town to do similar work.

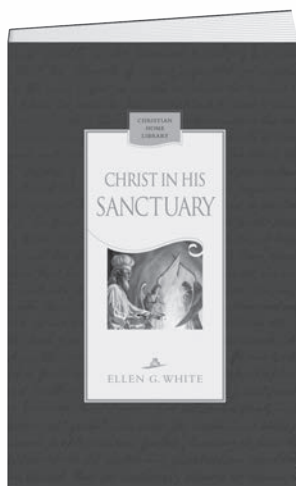


Joelito continues to work hand in hand with God, visiting people, giving them Bible studies, and working in the church. "I don't go with my mom to give Bible studies anymore," he says. "I'm too busy giving my own Bible studies." Joelito preaches in his church once a month, and he loves it.

Part of your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering recently helped to build a small church in Joelito's town. Thank you for sharing so that others can hear God's message of love.

JOELITO TAPIA, 15, shares his faith in Trujillo, Peru.

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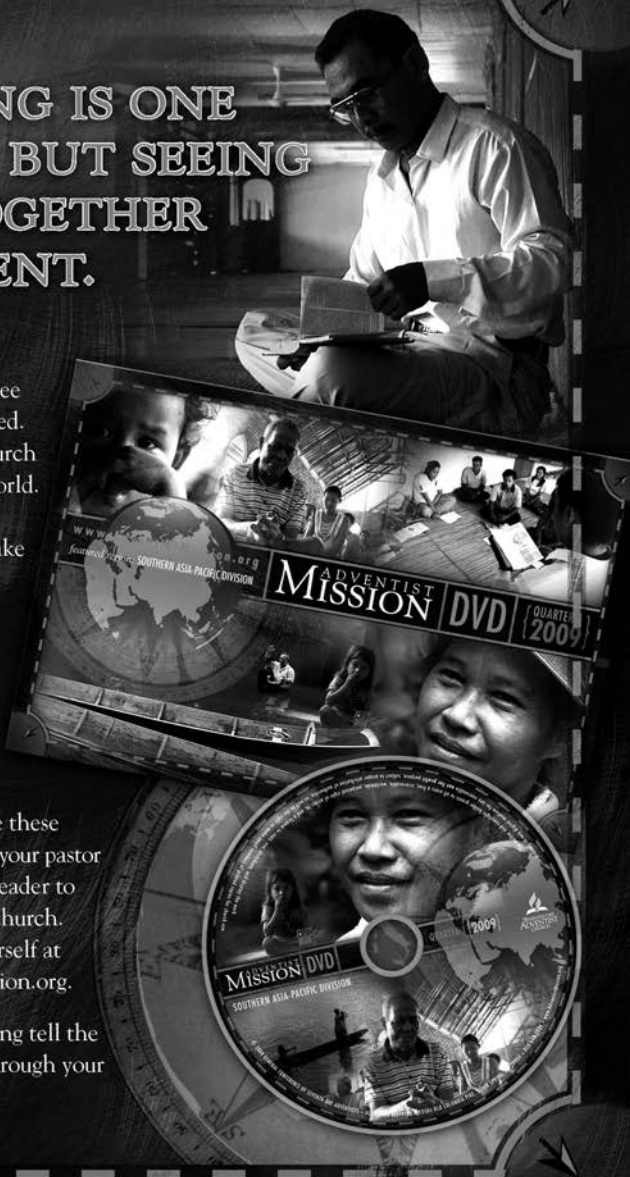
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Christ, Our Sacrifice



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Isa. 53:2–12, Heb. 2:9, Heb. 9:26–28, Heb. 9:12, Exod. 12:5, Heb. 4:15.*

Memory Text: “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (*1 Peter 2:24, NASB*).

Catholic Priest Maximilian Kolbe was imprisoned in Auschwitz for providing shelter to refugees from Greater Poland, including 2,000 Jews. When a prisoner in his barracks vanished (perhaps he escaped), the SS picked ten prisoners to be starved to death in reprisal. One of the selected men cried out, “Oh, my poor wife, my poor children. I shall never see them again.” At that point Kolbe offered himself in the man’s place; that is, he asked that he be the one to starve, not the distraught family man. The surprised SS officer agreed, and Kolbe joined the ranks of the doomed while the other man survived.

However moving, Kolbe’s sacrifice is only a shadow of the One who willingly took our place, an act symbolized in the sanctuary service. The New Testament identifies Jesus with the two major aspects of the Old Testament sacrificial system: He is our Sacrifice (*Hebrews 9, 10*), and He is our High Priest (*Hebrews 5–10*).

This week we will study different aspects of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice and see what His once-and-for-all death has provided for us.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 16.*

Jesus in Isaiah 53

Read Isaiah 53:2–12. What do these verses teach about what Christ did for us?

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is a powerful description of Christ’s death for the sins of the world. Several aspects in this passage provide clear evidence that Jesus’ death is atonement in the form of penal substitution, which means that He took the penalty that others deserved and, in fact, died as a Substitute for them. Here are some of the implications of this passage for Jesus’ ministry for us:

1. Jesus suffered *for* others. He took their grief and sorrows (*vs. 4*), transgressions, iniquities (*vss. 5, 6, 8, 11*), and sin (*vs. 12*).
2. He brings great benefits to those for whom He suffers: peace and healing (*vs. 5*) and justification (*vs. 11*).
3. It was God’s will for Jesus to suffer and be crushed (*vs. 10*). God put our iniquity on Him (*vs. 6*) because it was God’s plan that He died in our stead.
4. Jesus is righteous (*vs. 11*), without violence or deceit (*vs. 9*).
5. He was a guilt offering, an atoning sacrifice for sin (*vs. 10*).

Read Luke 22:37, Acts 8:32–35, and 1 Peter 2:21–25. How do these New Testament authors interpret Isaiah 53?

The New Testament allusions to Isaiah 53 establish beyond doubt that Jesus Christ fulfills this prophecy. Even He identified Himself with the person depicted there (*Luke 22:37*). Christ took our sins upon Himself so that we could be forgiven and transformed.

Dwell on all that Isaiah 53 says that Christ did for us. How can you make this personal, and know that no matter what you have done, the assurances here can apply to you if you give yourself to the Lord in faith and surrender?

Sufficient Substitution

Read Hebrews 2:9. What does it mean that Jesus “taste[d] death for everyone”? See also *Heb. 2:17, 9:26–28, 10:12*.

Jesus died for sinners. He was without sin (*Heb. 4:15*) so that when He gave His life as a sacrifice He would not die for His own sin. On the contrary, He was “to bear the sins of many” (*Heb. 9:28, NKJV*), to “make propitiation for the sins of the people” (*Heb. 2:17, NKJV*), and to put away sin forever (*Heb. 9:26*).

According to Hebrews 2:9, the purpose of making Jesus “lower than the angels” is so that He could suffer death. The point is to explain why Jesus’ death is an indispensable requirement for His exaltation. In simple terms, in order for humanity to be saved, Jesus had to die. There was no other way.

In this passage, the goal of the Incarnation is the death of the Son. Only through the suffering of death could Jesus become the Author of salvation (*Heb. 2:10*).

Why was it fitting for God to let Jesus suffer? The context in Hebrews 2:14–18 suggests that Jesus’ death was necessary in order to rescue God’s children from the slavery of death, from the devil, and from the fear of death, and to qualify Jesus to become a “merciful and faithful High Priest” (*NKJV*).

In short, the Cross had to precede the crown.

“Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

Christ, the Creator of the universe, died as a human being for your sins. Dwell on what this means. Think of the incredible good news that it is. Think of the hope it offers you, personally. How can you make this amazing truth the chief motivation of all that you do?

Christ's Blood

The concept of redemptive blood pervades the entire Bible. Starting from the earliest sacrifices after Adam and Eve sinned, blood was always present when animal sacrifices occurred. Blood rituals characterized the Israelite sacrificial system in order to illustrate the crucial truth that, without blood, we would not have any chance to be forgiven our sins and to enter into the presence of God. Blood was the only way to receive God's mercy and to have community with Him.

Read the following passages in Hebrews about Christ's blood and the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices. What do they teach us about the blood?

Heb. 9:12 _____

Heb. 9:14 _____

Heb. 9:18 _____

Heb. 9:22 _____

Heb. 10:19 _____

Heb. 12:24 _____

Heb. 13:12 _____

Heb. 13:20 _____

Christ's blood does not refer to His life, but instead it is a symbol of His substitutionary death. As such, it describes the functional aspect of that death. Christ's shed blood is amazingly multifunctional. Christ's blood obtains eternal redemption for us, provides us with cleansing from sin, provides us with forgiveness and sanctification, and is the reason for the resurrection.

In Hebrews, there is a powerful contrast: Christ's blood is better than any other blood. In fact, no other blood can really provide forgiveness; Christ's death is the only reason why sins are forgiven, before and after the Cross (*Heb. 9:15*). The shedding of Christ's blood, and its effects, are clear evidence that Christ's death was substitutionary, which means that He took the penalty that we deserve.

How should an understanding of Christ's death help to free us from any notion that our own works can save us?

Spotless Sacrifice

Which criteria does a sacrificial animal need to meet? Read *Exod. 12:5, Lev. 3:1, 4:3*.

The selection of a sacrificial animal required great care. A person could not just take any animal for an offering; the animal needed to fulfill several criteria, depending on the kind of offering.

However, there is one criterion that all offerings had to meet. They had to be “unblemished.” The Hebrew word *tamim* could also be translated as “complete,” “unscathed,” “without fault,” or “perfect.” It expresses the idea that something meets the highest standard possible. Only the best was good enough.

Pertaining to people, the word is used to characterize their relationship with God as being “blameless” (*Gen. 6:9, 17:1, NASB*).

How do these texts describe Jesus? *Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 9:14; and 1 Pet. 1:18, 19*. Why was it crucial that Jesus be sinless?

Jesus, the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (*John 1:29, NKJV*), perfectly fulfills the Old Testament criterion of a spotless sacrifice. His pure life established Jesus as a perfect sacrifice. This is the guarantee of our salvation, for only a sinless one could bear our sin for us, and it is His perfect righteousness that covers us, now and in the judgment. That righteousness is our hope of salvation.

Like its Hebrew equivalent, the Greek word for “without blemish” (*amomos*) is used not only to describe Jesus and His flawless sacrifice but also the character of His followers.

“By comparing their lives with Christ’s character, they will be able to discern where they have failed to meet the requirements of God’s holy law; and will seek to make themselves perfect in their sphere even as God is perfect in his sphere.”—Ellen G. White, *The Paulson Letters*, p. 374.

Through Christ’s death and His ministry, we are presented blameless before God (*Jude 24*). This is possible only because the Blameless One stands in our place.

Why can the concept of being “holy and blameless” cause uneasiness? How can the knowledge that Christ is our Substitute help you to accept that you are “holy,” as well? How should our new status before God impact the way in which we live?

A Great Danger

In the book of Hebrews, Paul not only focuses on the theological understanding of Christ's sacrifice, but he also explains some of its practical implications. At several places he shows what happens if someone ignores this sacrifice.

Read Hebrews 6:4–6 and 10:26–31. About what is Paul warning us? What kinds of attitudes does he describe?

In the book of Hebrews, Paul demonstrates how magnificent God's salvation is, how God has revealed Himself, and what He has done and is doing for the believers. However, there is at least one main, problematic issue that Paul has to address. It is the danger that Christ's sacrifice could gradually be taken for granted. He describes such a danger as "drifting away" from the goal (*Heb. 2:1*). The imagery behind Paul's words is that of a ship that is veering off course and does not reach the port of destination. So, the main task is to stay on course.

Some of those who reject God do so deliberately, which means that their lives after receiving the gospel are virtually the same as they were before these people received the gospel. These people do not, in fact, have any efficacious sacrifice for their sins (*Heb. 10:26–31*). It seems that not many believers would forthrightly reject Christ's sacrifice or even think about such a thing. Still, Paul sounds a warning. The real danger of disregard and neglect is that it is often a subtle and very gradual process. The transition can be unnoticeable. Gradually, the work of Christ is not appreciated enough, similar to Esau's failure to appreciate his birthright anymore (*Heb. 12:15–17*). Christ's sacrifice should never become so familiar that we regard it as commonplace.

Paul does not want to make his readers fearful; nevertheless, he needs to show them the consequences of veering away from God. He does not want such a thing to happen. On the positive side, he encourages them vividly to "hold fast" to all the good things of salvation (*Heb. 3:6, 14; 10:23*) and to fix their eyes on Jesus (*Heb. 12:2*).

What about yourself? Have you simply become "used to" the amazing truth about the Cross? Why is this such a terrible thing to do? How can we protect ourselves from the danger that Paul warns about here?

Further Study: “The Atonement, Part I—Atoning Sacrifice,” pp. 457–476, in Appendix C of *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7A.

What Martin Luther frequently called a “wonderful exchange” or “joyous exchange” of Christ’s righteousness for human sin, Ellen G. White describes in a classic statement as follows: “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

“Nothing less than the death of Christ could make His love efficacious for us. It is only because of His death that we can look with joy to His second coming. His sacrifice is the center of our hope. Upon this we must fix our faith.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 660.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Some don’t like the idea of Jesus as our Sacrifice. They think it makes God sound bloodthirsty or vengeful, like the pagan deities of the past. (In fact, some argue that the language of blood and sacrifice and so forth in the Bible is simply a reflection of these pagan concepts.) What is so dramatically wrong with this perception of the Cross? How do the concepts of death, sacrifice, and blood help to show us just how serious sin and its consequences are? How should this realization of the cost of sin help us to seek God’s power to put sin out of our lives?
- ❷ Some people struggle with the issue of works and how they relate to salvation. How can keeping before us Christ’s substitutionary death, and what He accomplished for us by that death, help to protect us from falling into the trap of salvation by works? After all, what could our works possibly add to what Christ has done for us by dying in our stead?
- ❸ Ellen G. White said it would be good to spend a thoughtful hour every day focusing on the life of Jesus, especially the closing scenes. How could such an exercise help to strengthen our relationship with Christ, as well as increase our appreciation of what He has done for us?

God of the Impossible

When my parents died, my grandmother took me in. Her priest hoped I would follow in his footsteps, so he paid my school fees. One day he gave me a sermon and told me to preach it the following Sunday. I didn't understand it, and the priest wasn't there to explain it. So, I asked a Seventh-day Adventist neighbor to explain it to me. He read the sermon and said the sermon wasn't biblical. Then he read several Bible texts that explained what the Bible actually said.

I skipped church that Sunday. Angry, the priest threatened to stop paying my school fees. I told the Seventh-day Adventist man, and he read me two powerful Bible texts. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (*Mark 8:36, NKJV*), and "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (*Matt. 6:33, NKJV*). He invited me to visit his church. On Sabbath I found a few Seventh-day Adventists worshiping under a tree. But I sensed that God was there.

The priest stopped paying my school fees, and I had to quit school. My neighbors taunted me for rebelling. But the Seventh-day Adventist district pastor found a sponsor so I could study. In time I was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

When my sponsor died, I had no means to continue studying. I prepared to go home, but the school's accountant stopped me and said my fees were paid for two more terms. I praised God and continued my studies. I worked to pay my remaining fees until I graduated.

I wanted to study at Zambia Adventist University, but with no sponsor, I couldn't enroll. I prayed fervently for God's help. I was offered a job on campus that would pay my tuition. I stayed with four other students in an unused chicken house until the school helped us find something better. We didn't mind, for we are studying!

I'm studying to serve God as a pastor. That's not exactly what the priest had in mind when he sent me to school, but I know it's God's will. I love to tell others this wonderful truth that I have learned. People in my village have seen that my God is the God of the impossible. Four members of my family have surrendered their lives to God and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Your mission offerings have helped build Zambia Adventist University to train leaders for service to God and humanity.



KISCO MWEEMBA shares his faith in Zambia.

Christ, Our Priest



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Ps. 110:1–5; Gen. 14:18–20; Heb. 7:1–3; Rom. 8:31–34; 1 Tim. 2:4–6; Heb. 8:6; Heb. 2:17, 18; Heb. 3:6; Heb. 10:1–14.*

Memory Text: “Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man” (*Hebrews 8:1, 2, NASB*).

After His resurrection and ascension to the heavenly sanctuary, Christ entered into a new phase of the plan of Redemption (*Heb. 2:17*). With the indispensable requirement of His sacrifice fulfilled, He was inaugurated as Priest and began His priestly ministry in order to mediate His perfect sacrifice in behalf of those covered, by faith, by His blood. His priestly ministry consists of two phases, both foreshadowed in the earthly sanctuary: the daily ministry and the yearly ministry during the Day of Atonement.

This week we will study the work of Jesus during His daily ministry and see some of the practical ramifications that His work has for us. We can, indeed, draw great comfort from knowing that Jesus is now standing in the presence of God, ministering the merits of His sacrifice in our behalf. The sanctuary message offers hope and encouragement to even the weakest of His followers.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 23.*

Our High Priest

The New Testament book that speaks the most about Christ as Priest is Hebrews. The Old Testament backbone of Hebrews consists of two verses quoted from Psalm 110. Verse 1 is cited to confirm that Christ is exalted above all because He sat down at the right hand of God. This is a recurring theme in Hebrews, one that emphasizes Jesus' divinity and Messiahship (*Heb. 1:3, 4:14, 7:26, 8:1, 12:2*). Psalm 110:4 is used to demonstrate that Christ's priesthood has been foreshadowed by Melchizedek (*Heb. 5:6*).

In what ways does Christ fulfill the divinely promised priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek? Compare *Gen. 14:18–20, Ps. 110:4, and Heb. 7:1–3*.

The Bible does not provide much information regarding Melchizedek. Yet, what it does reveal shows remarkable similarities to Jesus. Melchizedek is the king of the city Salem (Salem means “peace,” so he is the “King of Peace”). His name means “King of Righteousness,” which speaks of his character. He is detached from history, as his familial line is not given. His birth and death are not mentioned. So, it seems as if he had no beginning and no end, and he is “priest of the Most High God.” Melchizedek's priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood, because through Abraham, Levi gave tithes to Melchizedek (*Heb. 7:4–10*). Melchizedek, then, is a type of Christ.

But Christ is even more. Aaron was the first high priest in Israel. Hebrews 5:1–4 describes an idealized Aaronic high priestly office: divine appointment, representative of men, mediation before God, compassionate, and offering sacrifices for the people and for himself.

The book of Hebrews portrays Christ as the new High Priest. He is of a better order than even Aaron; not only does He fulfill the requirements of the Aaronite priesthood, He enhances them. Jesus had no sin, was fully obedient, and did not need to bring an offering for Himself. On the contrary, He Himself was the offering—the most perfect offering possible.

Jesus fulfilled both the Aaronite and the Melchizedek high priesthood in a better way than either of those priests, or priesthoods, ever did or could. Both types met their antitype in Christ.

Advocate and Intercessor

Read Romans 8:31–34. What great hope and promise is offered us here?

The background of verses 31–34 is a courtroom scene in which we should visualize ourselves on trial. Questions are asked: Who is against us? Who will bring a charge against us? Who condemns us? Such a situation could easily send shivers down our spines. After all, are we not well aware of our human imperfection and sinfulness?

However, we do not need to fear. The promise that nothing and no one can separate us from God’s love centers on several important points: God is for us (*vs. 31*), God delivered His Son for us (*vs. 32*), God freely gives us all things (*vs. 32*), and God justifies us (*vs. 33*). Jesus Christ is on our side. Jesus is the answer to any fear of condemnation, for He died, was raised, and is now continuously interceding for us in the heavenly sanctuary at the right hand of God (*vs. 34*).

If someone goes so far as to die willingly for us, we should feel confident of His love. The assurance revealed in Romans 8:31–39 is really telling us about the kind of God we believe in. If we understand that our God loves us so much that nothing can thwart His purposes for us (*vs. 35–39*), the divine courtroom becomes a place of joy and jubilation.

This truth becomes even clearer in 1 John 2:1, 2. The Greek *parakletos* designates a legal assistant or advocate, someone who appears in another’s behalf as “intercessor.” Jesus is our Advocate, and He defends us because otherwise we would have no hope.

Our Advocate is “righteous,” which gives us the assurance that the Father will hear Christ’s intercession, for Christ could do nothing that His righteous Father would reject. Christ intercedes for those who have sinned, presenting Himself—the One who has not sinned—as the Righteous One who stands in their stead.

How can you better experience the marvelous truth that nothing will separate you from God’s love? How can you use this assurance as a motivation to live as God would have you live, as opposed, perhaps, to how you are living now?

Mediator

“Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Tim. 2:4–6, NKJV). How do these verses help us to understand just what Christ is doing for us in heaven?

Christ is called the one Mediator between God and man. There is no one else because, in fact, no one else is necessary. Through Christ’s position as Mediator, salvation and knowledge of truth are universally available (1 Tim. 2:4). The crucial question for us all is whether or not we will take advantage of what Christ has offered to each of us, regardless of our status, race, character, or past deeds.

Mediator is a term from the ancient Greek commercial and legal world. It describes someone who negotiates or acts as arbitrator between two parties in order to remove a disagreement or to reach a common goal in order to inaugurate a contract or covenant.

In Hebrews, Christ as Mediator is connected to the new covenant (Heb. 8:6, 9:15, 12:24). He has made reconciliation. Though sin had destroyed the close communion between humanity and God and would have led to the destruction of the race, Christ came and restored the connection. This is reconciliation. He alone is the link between God and humanity, and through this link we can enjoy a full covenant relationship with the Lord.

Paul’s reference to Him as the “man Christ Jesus” expresses His unique quality of being both human and divine (1 Tim. 2:5). Salvation and mediation are anchored precisely in Jesus’ humanity and His voluntary self-offering. By being both God and human, Jesus is able to link heaven and earth with ties that can never be broken.

“Jesus Christ came that He might link finite man with the infinite God, and connect earth that has been divorced by sin and transgression from heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, p. 253.

Think: there is a human being in heaven right now, mediating in your behalf. What should this tell you about your importance in the eyes of God? How should this truth influence how you live and how you treat others?

Great High Priest

What do the following texts reveal about Christ’s ministry as High Priest? *Heb. 2:17, 18; 3:6; 4:14, 15; 7:24–28; 8:1–3.*

Jesus is the “great High Priest” (*Heb. 4:14, NKJV*). He is superior to all high priests and rulers of earth. Jesus is the true and only High Priest. The Bible assigns a number of qualities to Jesus as great High Priest:

Merciful and faithful. The two characteristics of merciful and faithful (*Heb. 2:17*) fit Christ’s role as Mediator, for He bestows His gifts on us (is “merciful”) and is loyal to His Father and to us (is “faithful”).

With us. Jesus can sympathize with us (*Heb. 2:18; 5:2, 7*). Because He has lived as a human, we can trust that He is a compassionate and perfect Helper. Yet, He is not in the same situation as we are, because He is “without sin” (*Heb. 4:15*).

Over us. Jesus as High Priest is not in the community of believers as Moses was; He is over us, like a son presides over the house of his father (*Heb. 3:6*). Christ enjoys full authority among the saints.

As we are. Jesus’ divine origin did not give Him any exclusive rights. He was tempted just as we are (*Heb. 4:15*). The selected temptations in the Judean desert show that He was tempted in the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions (*Matt. 4:1–11*).

For us. Christ appears in the heavenly sanctuary in the presence of God “for us” (*Heb. 9:24*), and He also is making intercession for us (*Heb. 7:25*). Thank God that we have a Divine Representative to appear in the judgment in our place.

Jesus is in heaven “for us.” What does that mean? How can you draw some assurance and security from this wonderful truth?

The One Sacrifice

As we have seen, a crucial purpose of the earthly sanctuary service was to reveal—in symbols, in types, in mini-prophecies—the death and high priestly ministry of Jesus. Sin is something too terrible to be solved merely by the death of animals (as sad and unfortunate as those deaths are). Instead, all of that spilled blood was to point to the only solution for sin, and that was the death of Jesus Himself. That it took His death, the death of the One who was equal to God (*Phil. 2:6*), in order to atone for sin, shows just how bad sin really is.

Read Hebrews 10:1–14. How does this passage contrast the function and work of the earthly sanctuary service with the death and high priestly ministry of Jesus?

Many crucial truths ring out of these texts, one of the most important being that the deaths of all those animals was not sufficient to deal with the sin problem. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (*Heb. 10:4, NKJV*). They merely point to the solution; they were not the solution themselves. The solution was Jesus, His death, and then His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf.

Notice another crucial point in these texts: the complete sufficiency of Christ’s one death. Though the animal sacrifices had to be repeated time and time again, day after day, year after year, Jesus’ single sacrifice was sufficient (after all, look at who was sacrificed!) to cover the sins of all humanity. God powerfully revealed this crucial truth when the inner veil of the earthly sanctuary was torn supernaturally after the death of Jesus (*Matt. 27:51*).

Look around at the world, look at the damage that sin has caused: the pain, the loss, the fear, the hopelessness. How can we learn day by day, moment by moment, to cling to Jesus as the only solution to the sin problem in our own lives?

Further Study: “The Atonement, Part II—High-Priestly Application of Atoning Sacrifice,” pp. 476–488, in Appendix C of *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7A.

“Step away from Satan’s voice and from acting his will, and stand by the side of Jesus, possessing his attributes, the possessor of keen and tender sensibilities, who can make the cause of afflicted, suffering ones his own. The man who has had much forgiven will love much. Jesus is a compassionate intercessor, a merciful and faithful high priest. He, the Majesty of heaven—the King of glory—can look upon finite man, subject to the temptations of Satan, knowing that he has felt the power of Satan’s wiles.”—Ellen G. White, *Christian Education*, p. 160.

“The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification. We may enjoy the favor of God. We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 32, 33.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Read Hebrews 2:17. Why was it necessary for Jesus to become human and to suffer before He could become our High Priest?
- 2 Dwell on the second Ellen G. White statement listed above. Look especially at the line: “We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute.” How does this help us to understand what comes before, when she talks earlier about being “made perfect in Christ Jesus”?
- 3 Our High Priest, Jesus Christ, is the Surety of our salvation, and He administers the effects and benefits of His sacrifice and blood. With Him on our side, we have nothing to fear. How can we take these wonderful truths, so powerfully expressed in the book of Hebrews, and apply them to ourselves, especially at times of great temptation?
- 4 The book of Hebrews is very clear that Jesus’ once-and-for-all sacrifice was all that was needed for dealing with sin. What should that tell us about any religious practice that claims to repeat this sacrifice as a necessity for the forgiveness of sins?

On Jesus' Side

Mee Mee comes from a poor family living in a small village in Myanmar (Burma). Her family had to sell their land to feed their children. Her parents couldn't afford to send her to school, so she went to work in the rice paddies when she was 13.

When Mee Mee was 18, she learned that a Christian family in another town needed a house helper. Her parents let her go, but they warned her, "Don't let these people make you become a Christian." Her friend had told her that the Christian family was kind, but still she was afraid.

Mee Mee was surprised that her new employers treated her as part of the family. She refused their invitation to join them for worship, but she listened from the next room as the family sang songs and prayed. A few days later she shyly joined the family for worship. *How can Christians be so evil that my parents don't want me to worship with them?* she wondered.

On Friday Mee Mee and her host mother worked hard to clean the house and prepare food for Saturday, which she called "Sabbath." Mee Mee declined the invitation to worship in the church that met upstairs in the family's home. Then her host father asked her to take Grandma up the stairs and help her during worship. Mee Mee felt awkward, but the worshipers were so kind that soon she became more comfortable.

When Mee Mee's father called to check on her, she told him about how loving her host family was. He was glad, but he repeated his warning, "Remember, don't become a Christian."

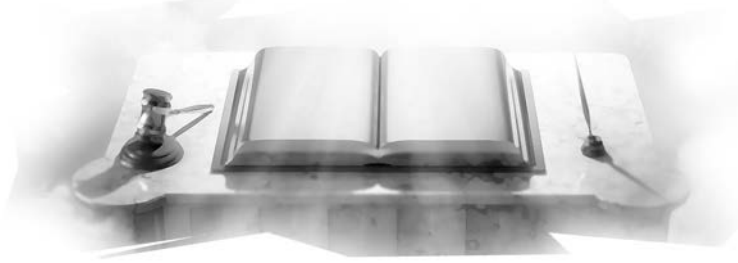
Mee Mee continued joining the family for worship. Little by little God's love seeped through the barriers of her heart. Her host mother gave her a Bible, and she took turns reading it during worship. Something in her heart stirred, and she felt drawn to Jesus.

Mee Mee knows that her parents will be angry when she tells them that she wants to become a Christian. But she's convinced that Jesus is the true God. She feels torn between respect for her family and their traditions and God's call.

"I know that I must stand on Jesus' side," Mee Mee says. "I'm praying for courage to stand true. Please pray for me."

Becoming a Christian in Myanmar isn't easy. Please pray for those like Mee Mee who have discovered the truth and want to follow Christ. And remember that your mission offering helps make evangelism in this largely Buddhist country possible.

The Pre-Advent Judgment



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 7, Gen. 3:8–20, 2 Tim. 2:19, Ps. 51:4, Ps. 96:11–13, 2 Cor. 5:10.*

Memory Text: “ “Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him” ’ ” (*Daniel 7:27, NASB*).

As the book of Hebrews so clearly shows, after His death and resurrection, Jesus began a new phase of work for us. He became our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. The visions in Daniel 7 and 8 reveal that at some point in history this heavenly work of Christ in our behalf had entered a new phase, the judgment. This is sometimes called the “eschatological Day of Atonement”: eschatological, because it pertains to the end time; Day of Atonement, because it is prefigured by the Day of Atonement service in the earthly sanctuary.

Daniel 7, our focus this week, contains a sequence of kingdoms, symbolized by four animals, that parallels the sequence in Daniel 2: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

As we study, we’ll see that the judgment is good news, because our Lord God works for His people. He judges in their behalf before the onlooking universe and grants them entrance into Christ’s eternal kingdom, the culmination of all their hopes as followers of the Lord.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 30.*

The Vision and the Judgment

“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened” (*Dan. 7:10*).

Read Daniel 7:1–14. What is happening here?

After Daniel sees the four beasts, he observes another horn coming up among the horns of the fourth beast. This “little horn” becomes the main enemy of God and His saints. Then, suddenly, Daniel’s attention turns from the dark earth to a bright judgment scene in the heavenly throne room (*Dan. 7:9–14*).

The judgment scene is the pivot of the entire vision and involves two key figures, the Ancient of Days and the Son of man. Angels also are there, witnesses to the judgment. The scene unfolds in three steps: first is the court scene (*vss. 9, 10*), then the outcome of the judgment on the beastly powers on earth (*vss. 11, 12*), and finally the transfer of dominion and kingdom to the Son of man (*vss. 13, 14*). God the Father is portrayed as the majestic Ancient of Days, the wise and sage judge par excellence. The Son of man represents humanity, Jesus Himself, in the heavenly court. Jesus used this title many times to refer to Himself, and at least twice He clearly evoked the images of Daniel 7 (*Matt. 24:30, 26:64*).

The Day of Atonement functions as the most natural typological setting for this heavenly temple scene. In fact, it is portrayed as if the heavenly High Priest comes, surrounded by clouds of incense, to the Ancient of Days. In Daniel 7:10, the “books were opened.” Books play a major role in the heavenly judgment. There are several books of heavenly origin known in the Bible: the “book of life” (*Ps. 69:28, Phil. 4:3, Rev. 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, NASB*), the “book of remembrance” (*Mal. 3:16*), the books of “deeds” (*Rev. 20:12*), and God’s “book” (*Exod. 32:32, 33; Ps. 56:8*).

Imagine being judged by God. (You will be.) Imagine everything you have ever done being judged. (It will be.) If you have to stand on your record, your own deeds, your own good works, what hope do you have? What, then, is your only hope in judgment?

Judgment Pattern

Read Genesis 3:8–20. What does God do before He pronounces judgment?

The concept of an investigative judgment is biblical. God’s judicial procedure often includes a phase of investigation and inquiry. A first instance is reported in Genesis 3, where God investigates before He pronounces the verdict (*Gen. 3:8–19*). God’s dealings with Cain (*Genesis 4*), Babel (*Genesis 11*), and Sodom (*Genesis 18, 19*) follow a similar pattern. We see God undertaking the same action that He requires of the judges in Israel: namely, to “investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly” (*Deut. 13:14, NASB; see also Deut. 19:18*).

Investigation involves deliberation and fairness. It is often public. God allows others to see for themselves what He is doing. In this way, when God announces the verdict—be it salvation or condemnation—onlookers are assured that God’s action is the best. This is exactly the reason why the heavenly judgment in Daniel 7 involves books. The books are not for God’s sake, so that He would remember more easily, but for the benefit of the celestial beings surrounding Him, who, unlike God, don’t know all things.

How does judgment turn out for the saints? *Dan. 7:22*.

In talking about the judgment, Ellen G. White wrote: “The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves. . . . But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 471, 472.

How do these words help us to understand why the judgment is such good news?

Time of the Judgment

Read Daniel 7:7–10, 21, 22, 25, 26. When does the judgment of Daniel 7 take place?

Both in the vision and in the angelic interpretation, the judgment follows as God’s response to the horn’s presumption and climaxes with the transfer of the kingdom to God’s saints. The Bible describes the judgment as occurring during the time when the horn power is still in existence (*Dan. 7:8, 9*). The horn’s dominion is taken away only after the court sits in judgment; then, when the judicial procedures are ended, all earthly kingdoms are destroyed (*vs. 26*).

What this means, clearly, is that the judgment must take place before the Second Coming. It is a pre-Advent judgment that begins sometime after “a time, times, and half a time” (*vs. 25, NASB*). How could there be a final reward or punishment if there were not a judgment that preceded it?

Indeed, the saints are rewarded at the time of Christ’s advent, which presupposes that they have already been judged. Similarly, the wicked, including the demonic powers, will be judged during the millennium before God executes the final judgment (*see Revelation 20*).

Why does God need a judgment? Doesn’t “the Lord know those who are His’ ”? *2 Tim. 2:19, NASB*.

Of course our omniscient God is fully aware of who His people are. He does not need a judgment in order to decide who is going to be saved. The pre-Advent judgment, rather, shows the Judge to be just in the saving of His people. Heavenly beings need to be sure that the saints are safe to save. As we seek to understand the meaning of the judgment, we need to remember the reality of the great controversy scenario, which is hinted at in these texts, because we see the angelic host witnessing the judgment. Other beings have an interest in the final outcome of the plan of salvation.

“ ‘The Lord knows those who are His’ ” (*NASB*). How can you be sure you are one of “His”? What’s the only way to be sure? (*Rom. 8:1*).

When the Judgment Ends

Read Daniel 7 again. What are the results of the pre-Advent judgment?

The judgment results in several far-reaching actions:

1. *The Son of man is crowned.* He receives “dominion, glory, and a kingdom” (*Dan. 7:14, NASB*).

2. *The saints receive the kingdom forever.* The judgment is for the benefit of the saints who will receive God’s kingdom (*Dan. 7:22*). Unmistakably, the Son of man and the saints have a very close relationship. When the Son of man receives His kingdom, He invites the saints to join Him. His kingdom is their kingdom (*Dan. 7:27*). This judgment leads to a time when the King of the everlasting kingdom is reunited with His people. This is their greatest reward and His.

3. *The rebellion is defeated and destroyed.* The enemies of God’s people are judged. After the horn makes war with the saints, it is defeated itself and destroyed forever (*Dan. 7:25, 26*).

4. *The absolute justice of God is demonstrated.* Because the judgment in the heavenly court is public and the angels attend the inquiries into human affairs, all can see for themselves that God is fair in His actions. He is able to uphold both love and righteousness. Thus, in the end, God Himself will be vindicated, and all will acknowledge that God is just and that God is love. The whole procedure ensures that the universe will be a secure place for eternity (*see Ps. 51:4, Rom. 3:4*).

The pre-Advent judgment results in fulfilling the hopes of both God and the believers. God’s desire is to save His people and eradicate sin while leaving no doubt about His love and justice. Humanity’s yearning is to have salvation from sin and its oppression in every form and to enjoy eternal life in the presence of the One who loves them. The judgment thus becomes the guarantee for an eternal and trusting relationship between God and His creation.

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

Responsible Assurance

Read Psalm 96:11–13. What is the reason for all creation to rejoice?

Why would anyone cry out “Judge me, O LORD” (*Ps. 7:8, NKJV*)? The reason is simple. Judgment means salvation: “Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your power” (*Ps. 54:1, NASB*). Psalm 26 is a heartbreaking plea for justice and righteousness. David expresses marvelously the idea that God, the Judge, is always on the side of His loyal people and that His judgment is more than desirable (*Pss. 26:1, 35:24, 43:1, 54:1*). This is because judgment also implies vindication.

So, does the pre-Advent judgment threaten our assurance of salvation? No, because the outcome of this judgment is certain. It is “in favor of the saints” (*Dan. 7:22, NKJV*). God’s work in the judgment reaffirms our forgiveness and intensifies our assurance by making our sins eternally irrelevant. Judgment is actually another manifestation of the salvation that is ours. The judgment is not the time when God decides to accept or reject us; rather, it is the time when God finalizes our choice of whether or not we have truly accepted Him, a choice revealed by our works.

For the believer, then, judgment increases assurance. To put it more radically, judgment lies at the heart of the doctrine of Christian assurance.

Read Romans 14:10–12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10. How should the reality of judgment affect the way in which we live?

To exempt the righteous from judgment is not what the Bible teaches. Though the righteous are vindicated in the judgment and their sins are forever blotted out, the anticipation of the judgment encourages them to live a life of loyalty and accountability. The assurance of salvation is thus accompanied by the motivational impetus for moral behavior. Because God has done so much for us, we love Him and seek to express that love through being faithful in all that He asks of us.

Suppose a fellow believer expresses his or her fear of God and especially of the judgment. How can you help that person to understand the good news about the judgment and to develop a personal sense of assurance regarding salvation?

Further Study: “He who dwells in the heavenly sanctuary judges righteously. His pleasure is more in His people, struggling with temptation in a world of sin, than in the host of angels that surround His throne.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 176.

“Satan has an accurate knowledge of the sins that he has tempted God’s people to commit, and he urges his accusations against them, declaring that by their sins they have forfeited divine protection, and claiming that he has the right to destroy them. He pronounces them just as deserving as himself of exclusion from the favor of God. . . . But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have not given themselves up to be controlled by the satanic agencies. They have repented of their sins and have sought the Lord in humility and contrition, and the divine Advocate pleads in their behalf. He who has been most abused by their ingratitude, who knows their sin and also their penitence, declares: ‘The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. I gave My life for these souls. They are graven upon the palms of My hands. They may have imperfections of character; they may have failed in their endeavors; but they have repented, and I have forgiven and accepted them.’”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 588, 589.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Where did questions about God’s justice, law, and fairness first arise, on earth or in heaven? What are the implications of your answer, especially in the context of helping us to understand why there is a heavenly judgment of any kind?
- ❷ The Seventh-day Adventist Church has proclaimed the message of the judgment for many years now. Still, Christ has not returned. How are we to respond to what seems to be a very long time? Why is it so important to remember that, as humans, we have a very limited understanding of time itself? Think about some of the very long time prophecies in the Bible and how someone living in those times could easily have been discouraged about what, from their perspective, seemed to be taking forever.
- ❸ Many Christians believe in the biblical concept of judgment. (How could they not? It’s all throughout the Bible.) How, though, does linking the judgment to the sanctuary help to reveal crucial truths about the nature of judgment and the assurance that it offers us?

Spreading the Light

High on a lush mountaintop in Papua New Guinea (PNG) stands the village of Kora. People live in simple houses made of roughly cut wood and a thatched roof. They raise crops of yams, bananas, and sweet potatoes.

Most of the older people can't read, and they speak only the local language, which we call wontok [*one talk*]. Teaching them the Bible was a challenge. But your mission offerings have made it easier. Many adults come to the children's Sabbath School to hear Bible stories. We now have flip charts, modern picture rolls, to illustrate the week's lessons. These picture rolls were given to us because people around the world gave a special Thirteenth Sabbath Offering a few years ago. The flip charts help focus the attention of children and adults while they hear the stories.

Recently we received MP3 players, audio devices that contain the entire Bible plus children's lessons on them. Because the Bible and the stories are in pidgin, I listen and then translate the story or Bible text into the wontok. For those who understand pidgin, I turn up the volume so they can hear the story in pidgin, and then I translate it so everyone can understand it.

I teach the kindergarten Sabbath School, and the lessons are on the MP3 player. So, if I can't get a Sabbath School lesson quarterly, I can still hear the story and tell the children. To the children, it's like listening to the radio, only they're hearing God's Word.

Another important mission project has vastly improved the lives of the people living in Kora and in similar villages across the rugged Papua New Guinea terrain. Several years ago, the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped purchase a mission plane for PNG. The plane brings us our Sabbath School supplies, drops off missionaries or other church officials, and sometimes carries seriously ill or injured villagers to the hospital just 30 minutes away. Without the mission plane, it would take days of difficult and dangerous hiking to cross several mountain ridges to the nearest town.

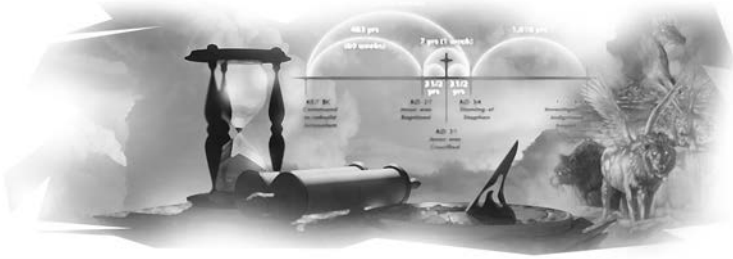


Recently, another Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped raise funds to open medical clinics in several isolated areas. The offering will help thousands more hear God's Word on MP3 players and will help buy Bibles for children to share with their families across the South Pacific.

The people of Kora and across the South Pacific thank church members in places they've never heard of for helping in so many ways to teach them about Christ.

NELSON URINA is a Pathfinder leader and Sabbath School teacher in Kora, Papua New Guinea.

The Eschatological Day of Atonement



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Daniel 8; Rev. 14:6, 7; Num. 14:34; Dan. 9:24–27.*

Memory Text: “And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (*Daniel 8:14*).

For a better understanding of the sanctuary message, study this chart, which shows how the great judgment scene of Daniel 7 (studied last week) is the same event as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14.

Daniel 7	Daniel 8	Interpretation
Lion	—	Babylon
Bear	Ram	Media-Persia
Leopard	He-goat	Greece
Fourth beast Little horn	Little horn	Rome—pagan Rome—papal
Pre-Advent Judgment	Cleansing of the sanctuary	Eschatological Day of Atonement
Transfer of kingdom to saints (Second Coming)		Second Coming and beyond

This week we will study Daniel 8. We will discover the real issue of the conflict between the horn power and God, and we will see why the cleansing of the sanctuary, beginning in A.D. 1844, is God’s perfect answer to that challenge.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 7.*

The Little Horn's Attack

Read Daniel 8, focusing especially on verses 9–14 and verses 23–25. What does the little horn power attack?

The horn power interferes with the worship of the divine “Prince of the host” (*vs. 11, compare with Josh. 5:13–15*). It removes from Him (*Dan. 8:11, 12*) “the daily” (in Hebrew *tamid*)—a word that refers over and over to the daily sacrificial service in the earthly sanctuary service. Because the agent of *tamid* activities at the sanctuary is a priest, often the high priest, the horn sought to usurp the role of the (high) priest, command its own counterfeit “host,” and take away “the daily.” In this case, given the prophetic context (during the time of papal Rome), it’s obviously Christ’s high priestly ministry that is attacked.

The horn power thus usurps the responsibilities of the heavenly Priest and interrupts the continual worship of God on earth. It acts like another “captain of the host,” waging a religious war against the divine heavenly Prince, His sanctuary, and His people. It becomes an earthly instrument of Satan; it is said to be “mighty, but not by his own power” (*Dan. 8:24, NKJV*), and its activities reflect a cosmic war that is fought on two levels, the earthly and the heavenly.

The little horn follows right after the ram (Media-Persia) and the he-goat (Greece); therefore, it must be identified historically as Rome, which came after the kingdoms of Media-Persia (*Dan. 8:20*) and Greece (*Dan. 8:21*). Though the little horn started out as imperial Rome, the greater emphasis is on papal Rome, the primary focus of the vision.

As said before, the “daily” (*tamid*) refers to Christ’s continual, priestly mediation in the heavenly sanctuary (*Heb. 7:25; 8:1, 2*). The “taking away of the daily” by the horn power represents the introduction of such papal innovations as a mediating priesthood, the sacrifice of the mass, the confessional, and the worship of Mary, by which it has successfully taken away knowledge of, and reliance upon, the continual ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

None of us is immune to the danger of trying to play God. How might you, however subtly, be doing the same thing?

“How Long?”

The presumption of the little horn leads to the cry for judgment. As the ram and the he-goat became great and then were broken (*Dan. 8:4, 7, 8*), so the horn power exalts itself (*Dan. 8:9–11*). Thus, the question comes, How long will the vision be?

What specific issues are prompting the question in Daniel 8:13?

Although the question singles out a few activities of the horn, perhaps the most horrible ones, it still asks for the length of the entire vision; that is, it is asking about the events shown in the vision of Daniel 8.

In the Scriptures, the question “How long?” always asks for the present situation to be changed. It is found directed to people by God and by His prophets (*Exod. 10:3, Num. 14:27, and 1 Kings 18:21*). It is also directed to God by His people (*Ps. 94:3, Rev. 6:10*) and by the angel of Yahweh (*Zech. 1:12*). The angelic cry “How long?” (*Dan. 8:13, 12:6*) is a lament over continuous distress, a plea for change, and a call for divine judgment. Such a question expresses the expectation that God will finally triumph.

As in Zechariah 1:13, where Yahweh replied with “gracious words, comforting words” (*NASB*), the answer to the question in Daniel 8:13 comes right away: restoration will be underway beginning with a period of “2,300 evenings and mornings” (*vs. 14, NASB*).

Once we understand the human condition and the prophetic time in which we live, we cannot remain silent. The cry “How long?” needs to be put forth. As we look around at our world, how can we not plead for the Lord to come and usher in a new world “in which righteousness dwells” (*2 Pet. 3:13, NKJV*)? Although God is now at work, as promised in Daniel 8:14, we want Him to end the reign of evil here and return in the glory that He has promised time and again.

In which situations have you asked God the question, “How long?” How do you maintain the assurance that God is indeed in control, however dismal your immediate prospects might seem and no matter “how long” it is taking to resolve the things you want changed?

Restoration of the Holy

Read Daniel 8:14. What happens at the end of the 2,300 “evenings and mornings”?

The phrase “evenings and mornings” reflects language from the Creation account that signifies a day (*Gen. 1:5, 8, et cetera*). It implies that God, using His own creative force, will counter the destructive activities of the horn and its host. The Creator causes a change of situation, which is actually called for by the question in Daniel 8:13.

The answer in Daniel 8:14 can be read as, “Until 2,300 evenings-mornings, then will the holy [sanctuary] be restored [cleansed].” A study of the terms that are parallel to “restore” (from the Hebrew word *zdq*) shows that it has three major meanings: in a relational context, it denotes restoration (*Isa. 10:22*); in the context of the sanctuary, it denotes cleansing or purification (*Job 4:17, 25:4*); and in a legal context, it denotes vindication (*Job 34:5*). The same verb is used for God’s intervention in judgment when the righteous are vindicated, or declared to be righteous (*1 Kings 8:32, Isa. 50:8*). The word *holy*, used in Daniel 8:14 (often translated as “sanctuary”), is also used in association with holy people (*Dan. 12:7*). In fact, Daniel 8:24 makes it clear that the little horn power, like the little horn power in Daniel 7, attacks God’s “holy” people.

Thus, the restoration of the “holy” (or “sanctuary”) in Daniel 8:14 encompasses the solution to all the problems mentioned previously in the question. Not only will judgment be rendered against the little horn power, but the sanctuary will be cleansed, and God’s people and God’s sanctuary will be given their rightful state. This finds a parallel in what happened on the Levitical Day of Atonement (*Lev. 16:20, 30*).

The work of restoration in Daniel 8 equals the divine judgment in Daniel 7, where judgment was given in favor of the saints and against the evil little horn power.

The world needs to know that justice and judgment, as predicted in Daniel 8:14, will come and that now is the time to accept the salvation offered us in Jesus.

Read Revelation 14:6, 7. How do these verses tie in directly with the judgment of Daniel 7 and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8?

Day of Atonement in Daniel 8

The target of the horn's assault is God's heavenly sanctuary and His people. What does the future hold for them? That is what the question in Daniel 8:13 asks. However, only the Day of Atonement can bring the sanctuary and the people of God back to their rightful state and, thus, justify God in His dealings. So, the answer in Daniel 8:14 must be a Day of Atonement activity. In fact, the Day of Atonement is the only ritual day that shows the same combination of prominent themes as shown in the climax of the vision of Daniel 8: sanctuary imagery, purification of sanctuary and people, judgment, and creation.

There are also several terms in Daniel 8 that allude to the Day of Atonement. The horn acts in "rebellion" (*Dan. 8:12, 13, NIV*), a term that occurs specifically in Leviticus 16:16, 21 (*NIV*). It describes a defiant sin, and only on the Day of Atonement can the sanctuary be cleansed from it. The word *holy* (*qodesh*) explicitly links Daniel 8:14 with Leviticus 16, where it occurs to designate the Most Holy Place (*Lev. 16:2, 3, 16, 17, 20, 23, 27, 33*). That the "holy" is restored to its rightful place is reminiscent of the Day of Atonement, when the "holy" is purified from "rebellion" (*Lev. 16:16, NIV*). The specific use of the animal imagery of the ram and he-goat also alludes to the Day of Atonement (*Lev. 16:5*), as does the further designation of the goat as the "shaggy" one (*Dan. 8:21, NASB*), a description used for the two goats at the Day of Atonement.

The horn's war in the realm of religion is countered and cut short by divine intervention carried out in the context of an eschatological Day of Atonement. At last, terror finds its end, and God's people, the true worship, and the sanctuary are restored to their rightful position and, in the final analysis, God Himself is vindicated. As God demonstrated on the Day of Atonement that He is just in His dealings and judgments by forgiving the loyal and judging the disloyal and rebellious, so the eschatological Day of Atonement will verify that God is just when He saves and when He punishes.

Whatever else we can learn from Daniel 8:14, it should tell us that, even after all these long centuries, the Lord has not forgotten His promises to us and that He will punish evil and reward His saints. How can you learn to hold on to those promises, especially during times of trial? After all, without these promises, what hope do you have?

Daniel 8 and 9

The term for “vision” (in Hebrew, *chazon*) in the question in Daniel 8:13 refers to the entire vision in Daniel 8:3–11 (*see Dan. 8:1, 2, 13, 15*) and encompasses the time of Media-Persia (ram), Greece (he-goat), and papal Rome (little horn). When the length of the vision is given as “2,300 evenings and mornings,” we should therefore understand it as covering the span from Media-Persia to the end time. The text repeatedly emphasizes that the vision pertains to the “time of the end” (*Dan. 8:17, 19*) and “many days in the future” (*Dan. 8:26, NASB*). Because of its length, a literal 2,300 days is nowhere near long enough to cover the time span of the vision. Therefore, we need to interpret it by the day-year principle as 2,300 years, following the example of Ezekiel 4:5, 6 and Numbers 14:34.

The question remains: When do the 2,300 years begin?

Bible scholars, both Jewish and Christian, have seen a strong link between Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:24–27, long viewed as a powerful prophecy pointing to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

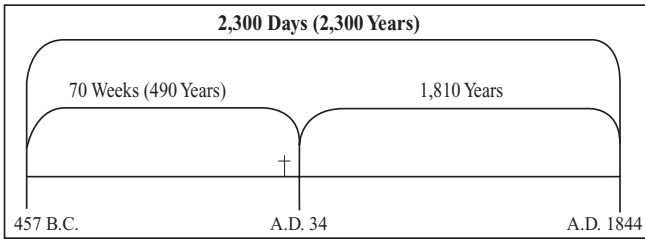
Read Daniel 9:24–27. What is happening in these verses? How is this linked to Daniel 8:14?

While the word *vision* (*chazon*) refers to the entire prophecy of Daniel 8, another word, *mareh*, translated as “vision,” points specifically to the “vision [*mareh*] of the evenings and mornings” (*Dan. 8:26, NASB*). It is this *mareh*, that of the 2,300 days, that Daniel did not understand (*Dan. 8:27*). The angel had explained everything else.

Several years later, the same angel, Gabriel, appeared to Daniel to give him a message so that he would “understand the vision [*mareh*]” of the 2,300 days (*Dan. 9:23, NKJV*). The 70-week prophecy in those verses helps us to understand the prophetic time element of Daniel 8:14. It is the verb *decreed* at the beginning of Daniel 9:24, which is best translated as “apportioned” or “cut off,” that specifically suggests that the 70 weeks compose a part of the longer period of 2,300 days. Thus, the 70-week prophecy is “cut off” from the larger 2,300 day prophecy of Daniel 8:14. This gives us the starting point for the prophetic time period depicted in Daniel 8:14. (See tomorrow’s study for more details.)

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “What Is the Sanctuary?” pp. 409–422; “The Holy of Holies,” pp. 423–432, in *The Great Controversy*.

In Daniel 9:24–27, the beginning of the 70 weeks is marked by “the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem” (*Dan. 9:25, NASB*). The book of Ezra reports on three decrees that concern Jerusalem and the temple, but the third, reported in Ezra 7:12–26, is the most effective one. The Persian King Artaxerxes I issued the decree in 457 B.C. It involves both the reconstruction of the temple and the rebuilding of Jerusalem as a political and administrative center (*Ezra 7:25, 26*). In the Bible, only this decree is followed by thanksgiving that praises God for influencing the king (*Ezra 7:27, 28*). Furthermore, only with 457 B.C. as a starting point do the 70 weeks (that is, 490 years) reach the time of Christ, the “Messiah, the Prince” of Daniel 9:25–27. Thus, the prophecy of the 70 weeks provides the precise event to date for the beginning of the 2,300 evenings and mornings. They start in 457 B.C. and end after 2,300 years in A.D. 1844.



Discussion Questions:

- 1 If possible, get a more detailed explanation of the link between Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:24–27 and study the close connection between them. What should it tell us about the importance of the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 that it is so closely linked to such a major prophecy as Daniel 9:24–27?
- 2 Ellen G. White wrote: “The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 488. What do you think she meant by this? Why are these things so important for us to understand?
- 3 When talking about the little horn, the prophecies of Daniel 7 and 8 are dealing solely with Rome, and nothing else—not communism (as some have said in the past) or Islam (as some now say). How, though, do we remain faithful to our beliefs without causing undue hurt to others? Why must we show that our concern is with a system, not with the people caught up in it?

Stubborn Atheist

I was an atheist. I taught physics and astronomy in a secondary school in Bulgaria and was responsible for teaching atheism. Then my brother became a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. I knew nothing about what he had gotten into, but I was sure it was trouble.

My brother told me of a man in his workplace who read his Bible during work breaks. He gave my brother some Bible literature and signed him up for a Bible course. My brother invited me to study the Bible course, too, but I refused to listen to one word about God. Karl Marx had said that religion is the opiate of the people, and I refused to be tainted by it.

He kept urging me to study the Bible, and I finally agreed to read the lessons, but only so I could show him the errors of these studies. I read through them quickly until I got to the lesson about the second coming of Christ. It caught my interest. I went back and reread the earlier lessons and even filled in the study sheet. I grew impatient for the next lesson to arrive.

I began to visit my brother's church. It was small and quite conservative. I experienced God's presence and love in that church. I was learning to love others just because Jesus loves them. He relies on us to be His light in this world.

In my attempt to prove my brother's new faith wrong, I found the Savior.

My brother eventually became a pastor, and I prayed that God would send me to a certain village to share my faith. God answered my prayer in an unexpected way. I was asked to become women's ministries director for the Western Bulgaria Conference. I had been thinking of teaching a few old ladies in a village, but suddenly the church entrusted to me the care of all women in western Bulgaria! I am amazed that God could trust me with such a responsibility.



God has used this new role to help me minister to mothers with children who are not in the faith and to families experiencing abuse and to help women find and fulfill their roles in ministry to their families, their church, and their society.

Your mission offerings help strengthen churches around the world and equip members to reach others for Christ. If my brother's colleague hadn't given him material to read, who knows where I would be today. Thank you.

TATIANA MODREVA shares her faith in Vratsa, Bulgaria.

Our Prophetic Message



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Revelation 10; Dan. 12:4–9; Revelation 14; 11:17, 18; Revelation 13; Gen. 7:11; 11:1–9; Jeremiah 50, 51.*

Memory Text: “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ” (*Revelation 14: 6, 7, NKJV*).

The judgment message of Daniel 7 and 8 links directly to the great controversy scenario depicted in Revelation 12–14. Here we find the three angels’ messages, which contain the themes of creation, judgment, and gospel (*Rev. 14:6–12*). These texts present God’s urgent and final call to prepare for the second coming of Jesus.

The message of the first angel is indeed the “everlasting gospel” because it’s the same truth that the apostles preached when they said that people “should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them” (*Acts 14:15, NKJV; compare with Act 4:24*). Highlighting the importance of the message is the fact that the word *gospel* itself appears only here in the book of Revelation. Whatever we preach about end-time events, we must make certain that the “gospel” is at the core.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 14.*

Time of Disappointment

Read Revelation 10. What is the message of the angel with the little scroll? What does it mean to “prophecy again”?

The portrayal of the angel recalls the description of Christ (*Rev. 1:13–16*) and of the divine-like “man in linen” in Daniel’s last vision (*Dan. 10:5, 6; 12:5–7*), suggesting that they are identical. In Daniel 12:6, 7, He swore by the One who lives forever as He gave the prophecy of three and a half times (1,260 years). This is a repetition of the crucial prophecy given in Daniel 7:25, describing that God’s people would face terrible persecution, another truth that is repeated in Daniel 12:7, as well.

The book of Daniel was supposed to be sealed until the end of time. Then it would be opened, and many would gain knowledge from it (*Dan. 12:4–9*). When the prophesied period of 1,260 years ended, the time had come to open the book for further knowledge. This is symbolized by the open book in the hand of the angel in Revelation 10. From then on, Daniel’s prophecies were to be better understood.

At the same time, Revelation 10 reveals that the experience would not be totally pleasant. John ate the book as commanded, and it was sweet in his mouth but bitter to his stomach. John stands symbolically for the people who internalized the book of Daniel. This prophetic description, we believe, was fulfilled in the Millerite movement, which arose in the first half of the nineteenth century amid great worldwide interest in end-time events. It also describes the bitter disappointment of those who understood that the long-time prophecies in Daniel referred to their time, but not in the way they had first thought. The “2,300 evenings and mornings” did not signal the return of Christ but, rather, the beginning of the great judgment scene of Daniel 7.

Right after the bitter experience, John was told to “prophecy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings” (*Rev. 10:11, NASB*). This is being fulfilled as Seventh-day Adventists preach the “everlasting gospel” to the world.

Disappointment isn’t alien to Christians, especially when they misinterpret the meaning of events. Certainly the experience of the disciples between their Master’s death and His resurrection was a disappointment. Such was the experience of the Millerites in 1844. How can we handle disappointments without losing our faith? What Bible promises can you hold on to during your own times of disappointment?

Fear God!

The first angel's message tells us to "fear God." What does that mean? See *Ps. 34:7–22*.

Fear could be understood in two ways. First, there is a fear that shows itself in reverence and respect. This kind is what the first angel wants to bring to our attention. Those who fear God are true believers in Him (*Rev. 11:18*). To fear God means to honor Him (*Rev. 14:7*), praise Him (*Rev. 19:5*), obey Him (*Rev. 14:12*), and glorify His name (*Rev. 15:4*). The fear of God in the first angel's message also acknowledges God as Judge and as Creator, and it calls us to worship Him as such.

Second, there is a fear in the sense of being afraid that sooner or later God will judge this world. To the unfaithful, the message of the judgment is a message of terror. That's why we often call the three angels' messages God's last warning to the world. Inherent in the very notion of a "warning" is something to be feared, and if we read about that which the lost will face, they indeed do have something to fear.

However, as long as mercy is available, God always desires to move the lost to repentance, and the fear of God could be an incentive to start seeking Him (*see Rev. 11:13*). Though ultimately a saving relationship with God is one based on love, sometimes people need a good dose of fear to open their eyes. And if it takes a warning to get their attention, why not?

We know that "God is love," and nothing reveals this love more than the Cross. We know, too, that God loves this world, and it must pain Him tremendously to see what sin has done to it. A God of love and justice isn't going to sit by forever and let evil go unpunished. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (*Heb. 10:31, NKJV*). How can we strike the right balance in understanding both God's love for us and understanding His wrath against the evil that has done us all so much harm?

The Rage of Nations

Read Revelation 14:7. What judgment is this verse talking about?

The judgment proclaimed here begins before the return of Christ, which is described in Revelation 14:14–20. It is, therefore, the same as the pre-Advent judgment of Daniel 7. Its beginning, which Daniel 8:14 anchors in the year 1844, coincides with the fact that the three angels' messages call people to worship God and turn away from the beast and its "image." This "image" came into existence only after the prophetic 42 months, as with the 1,260 days (because they are the same thing), which ended in A.D. 1798 (*Rev. 13:3–5, 12–14*).

As the final call in Revelation 14:6–12 goes out, the door of mercy is still open, because people are still being called to turn away from Babylon and worship the true God.

What does God's judgment encompass? *Rev. 11:17, 18.*

God reacts to the rage of the nations by revealing His power. Revelation 13 depicts this rage, which Satan's wrath has incited (*Rev. 12:17*). From the perspective of the oppressed believers, whose perennial plea is the call for divine judgment (*Rev. 6:10*), the judgment might seem long overdue. However, it begins at the prophesied time, and the eschatological Day of Atonement takes its course all according to God's plan.

Revelation 11:17, 18 gives a short overview of God's judgment. It begins in heaven and is brought to earth, when God destroys the wicked powers that corrupted humanity (*Rev. 19:2*). God's wrath originates in the heavenly sanctuary and is poured out in the seven plagues (*Revelation 15–18*).

At the Second Advent, God will also reward the faithful (*Rev. 22:12*). Finally, God judges the dead and eradicates evil (*Rev. 20:11–15*). When all is over, God's character stands vindicated before the onlooking universe. Everyone can see that He is just and fair in all His ways. For now, our challenge is to cling to Him with all our hearts and souls and minds, trusting that all this will come to pass in God's appointed time.

Worship the Creator

The heart of the book of Revelation is about worship. While the dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth (often called “the false trinity”) join forces to unite the world in worshipping them (see *Rev. 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11*), God calls the human race to worship the Creator (*Rev. 14:7*). Those who do not worship the “image of the beast” risk losing their temporal lives (*Rev. 13:15; see also Daniel 3*), while those who do worship that image lose eternal life (*Rev. 14:9–11*).

What a choice!

Read Revelation 14:12. What does this teach us about the role of God’s commandments in the final conflict?

Worship is inextricably connected with God’s commandments. Revelation 13 and 14 are full of allusions to the Ten Commandments: “image” (*Rev. 13:14, 15; 14:9, 11*), idolatry (*Rev. 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11*), blasphemy (*Rev. 13:1, 5, 6*), the Sabbath (*Rev. 14:7*), murder (*Rev. 13:10, 15*), and adultery (*Rev. 14:4, 8*). The final “contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 188.

Since the rise of the theory of evolution, it has become particularly important for us to uphold and affirm our belief in a six-day Creation. This teaching is the foundation of our worship of the Lord as Creator. Evolution, even a kind that purports to believe in the Bible, guts Seventh-day Adventism of all that it stands for. Without Creation, the belief in the “everlasting gospel,” among other teachings (such as the Sabbath), is seriously compromised, even negated.

The verse that describes God as having “made heaven and earth, [and] the sea” alludes to the Sabbath commandment (*Exod. 20:11*). The Sabbath is the central issue in the conflict over God’s commandments. As with no other commandment, the designated day of worship is suited for a test of loyalty because it cannot be deduced by logical reasoning. We keep it only because God has commanded us to do so. Creation also goes hand in hand with judgment. The phrase “springs of water” (*Rev. 14:7*) alludes to the Flood (*Gen. 7:11*) and points to God as the righteous Judge of the world (*2 Pet. 3:5–7*).

Nothing we believe as Seventh-day Adventists makes sense when taken apart from the Lord as Creator, and nothing in the Bible is as clear a sign of God’s creatorship as the Sabbath. How seriously do you take the Sabbath? How can you have a deeper experience with the Lord through obedience to this commandment?

The “Patience” of the Saints

The second and third angels’ messages of Revelation are a warning to all who do not heed the divine call of the first angel’s message. If people continue on their wrong path, they will partake of God’s seven last plagues, which are seen as “the wine of the wrath of God” (*Rev. 14:10*), and this wine will be poured out on those who remain in Babylon.

In the Bible, Babylon stands for rebellion against God (*Gen. 11:1–9; Jeremiah 50, 51*). Babylon arrogantly assumes the place of God and is the enemy of God’s people. By the time of the New Testament, Babylon had become a code word for Rome (*1 Pet. 5:13*). In the book of Revelation, the harlot Babylon is a religious-political power in opposition to God and to His people and, as such, attempts to control the world. Revelation 13:15–17 describes the “Babylonian crisis” when the beastly powers of Revelation 13 join forces to persecute the remnant of God. Babylon is thus a symbol of the end-time alliance of apostate churches together with the corrupt political powers of the world.

The message of the three angels calls God’s followers in Babylon to come out and join the faithful and visible end-time remnant of God (*Rev. 18:4, 5*). Yes, there is still a faithful remnant in Babylon, and they need to hear the Seventh-day Adventist end-time message.

As we saw yesterday, Revelation 14:12 clearly depicts God’s faithful remnant. The “perseverance,” or “patience,” of the saints does not describe so much a passive endurance of hostile activities but, rather, a steadfast awaiting of Christ. The believers not only follow the commandments but also proclaim them to the world.

At the same time, the “faith of Jesus” can refer to the believers’ “faith in Jesus” (*NASB*) and also to Jesus’ loyalty that carries the believers faithfully through. The end of the third angel’s message directs our eyes to Christ. Through His merits and His loyalty, God’s people are able to persevere and keep His commandments. “Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel’s message, and I have answered, ‘It is the third angel’s message in verity.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372.

However central the commandments of God are to the final crisis, Ellen G. White says that justification by faith is the third angels’ message “in verity.” How does this help us to understand why, first and foremost, we must rely only on Jesus and His merits for salvation as the great hope that will get us through the final crisis?

Further Study: For the view of the three angels' messages by Ellen G. White, see the following: for the first angel's message, see "Heralds of the Morning," pp. 299–316, "An American Reformer," pp. 317–342, "Light Through Darkness," pp. 343–354, "A Great Religious Awakening," pp. 355–374, in *The Great Controversy*. For the second angel's message, see "Prophecies Fulfilled," pp. 391–408, "What Is the Sanctuary?" pp. 409–422, "In the Holy of Holies," pp. 423–432, in *The Great Controversy*. For the third angel's message, see "God's Law Immutable," pp. 433–450, "A Work of Reform," pp. 451–460, in *The Great Controversy*.

"Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out. It is at the cross of Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. The sinner must be led to look to Calvary; with the simple faith of a little child he must trust in the merits of the Saviour, accepting His righteousness, believing in His mercy."—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, pp. 156, 157.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Warnings play a significant role in our society and in our daily dealings with each other. In most cases, warnings are for the good of those being warned. How can we present the fearful warnings found in the three angels' messages in a way that reveals the wonderful hope that they offer?
- 2 Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and evolution are inherently contradictory. To paraphrase a fundamentalist atheist, evolution is an "acid" that erodes everything it touches. This would especially include the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, which have the central theme of Creation and Redemption, two truths nullified by evolution, even a "theistic" kind. (Who would want to worship a theos who created like that, anyway)? Why must we as a church never allow the false science of evolution to make any inroad into our teachings?
- 3 In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 are a treasured beacon that encapsulates the divine end-time message that we are called to proclaim. Although many church members have certainly heard about these messages, some may still have questions about what they really mean. How would you explain briefly the meaning of the last call of God to this world, and what it entails?

The Ghost Dancer, Part 1

I am Daniel—at least that is the name I have taken. I live in the country of Benin, the birthplace of voodoo.

My grandmother was a voodoo priestess; so was my mother. People would come and whisper their problem or their wish into a seashell, which the priestess throws on the ground. How it lands tells the priestess what the problem is. The priestess tells the person what they must do and bring to receive what they wish. The person pays with money, alcohol, or an animal.

My father worshiped the spirits of dead people and called on them to bring peace to people who were troubled.

My father initiated me into the secrets of voodoo. He invited me to be a ghost dancer, a person who dances during certain voodoo ceremonies. He told me that if I danced well, people would give me money, and he warned me that if others became jealous of me, they would try to kill me. I agreed to join the ghost dancers.

The dancing ghosts were hired to perform for a ceremony. We all danced, but I danced very well and got a lot of money. I didn't think anyone was jealous, but when I returned home I did not feel well.

My legs swelled and became painful. My father suspected that someone had put a curse on me. He said it was urgent that I get treatment immediately, or I could die. I was afraid. I went to an old voodoo priest, and a few days later I felt better. But I decided this devil dancing was too dangerous and I needed to get out of it—fast.

I had met some Christians, but I didn't think their God was any different from voodoo gods. But after my brush with death, I wasn't willing to make fun of anyone's God. So when I heard an evangelist speaking one day, I stopped to listen.



I felt that the speaker spoke right to me. I continued to attend the meetings, and when the speaker invited people to follow Jesus Christ, I decided I must obey. But I knew my parents would be angry, so I didn't tell them.

I studied the Bible with the pastor who had spoken at the meetings. When I was ready, I went to a distant city to be baptized. I realized that sooner or later, I'd have to tell my parents. But I didn't look forward to it.

(Continued next week.)

DANIEL lives in southern Benin, West Africa.

The Cosmic Conflict Over God's Character



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Ezek. 28:12–17, Isa. 14:12–15, Job 1:6–12, Zech. 3:1–5, 1 John 4:10, 2 Tim. 4:8, Ezek. 36:23–27.*

Memory Text: “And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments” (*Revelation 16:7*).

Seventh-day Adventists understand reality through the biblical concept of the “great controversy between Christ and Satan.” To use a term from philosophy, the great controversy is the metanarrative—the grand, overarching story that helps to explain our world and the things that happen in it.

Central to this controversy is the sanctuary, which, as we have seen, presents a recurrent theme that runs from the beginning to the end of salvation history: Redemption of humanity through the death of Jesus. Properly understood, the sanctuary message also helps to illustrate God's character, which Satan has been attacking since the great controversy first began in heaven.

This week we will study some milestones in the great conflict between Christ and Satan that reveal the truth about God's character and that expose Satan's lies.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 21.*

Revolt in the Heavenly Sanctuary

Read Ezekiel 28:12–17 and Isaiah 14:12–15. What do these verses teach about Lucifer’s fall?

At first glance, Ezekiel 28:12 seems to be talking about only an earthly monarch. Several aspects, however, suggest that this verse is really referring to Satan.

For starters, this being is referred to as the anointed cherub “who covers” (*Ezek. 28:14, NKJV*), which recalls the Most Holy Place of the earthly sanctuary, where two cherubim covered the ark and the presence of the Lord (*Exod. 37:7–9*). This celestial being also walked in the midst of the fiery stones, that is, on the “holy mountain of God” (*Ezek. 28:14*) and in the center of “Eden, the garden of God” (*Ezek. 28:13, NKJV*)—both of which are sanctuary images. The covering of precious stones described in verse 13 contains nine stones that are also found in the high priestly breast garment (*Exod. 39:10–13*), indicating another reference to the sanctuary.

After having described the surpassing splendor of the cherub, the text moves to his moral fall. His glory went to his head. His beauty made his heart haughty, his splendor corrupted his wisdom, and his “trading”—which probably refers to his slandering of the character of God and stirring up rebellion—made him violent.

Also, arrogant earthly powers seek to move from earth toward heaven. In Isaiah 14:12–15, the “son of the morning” (Latin *lucifere*, from which comes the name Lucifer) goes in a different direction: he falls from heaven to earth, indicating his supernatural rather than earthly origin. Other phrases like “throne above the stars of God,” “mount of the congregation” in the far north, and “Most High” reinforce the impression that this is a celestial being. While verses 12 and 13 are in past tense, verse 15 suddenly changes to the future. This change in time signals that there was first a fall from heaven to earth (*Isa. 14:12*) and that there will be a second fall, from earth to Sheol (the grave), sometime in the future (*Isa. 14:15*). This does not refer to any Babylonian king; it is, instead, a clear reference to Lucifer.

A perfect being created by a perfect God falls into sin? What does this tell us about the reality of moral freedom in God’s universe? And what does such freedom reveal to us about God’s character?

The Accusations

After his fall from heaven, Satan attempted to distort and slander God’s character. He did this in Eden (*Gen. 3:1–5*), in the midst of the first “sanctuary” on earth. Satan brought his rebellion, which originated in the heavenly sanctuary, down to the earthly sanctuary of Eden. After initiating contact with Eve through the medium of the serpent, he openly planted the idea in her mind that God was depriving both Adam and her of something that would be good for them, that He was holding something back that they should have. In this way, however subtly, he was misrepresenting God’s character.

The fall of Adam and Eve set Satan temporarily on the throne of this world. Several texts suggest that Satan had gained access to the heavenly court again, but now as the “ruler of this world” (*John 12:31, NKJV*), as one who possesses the earth but does not own it, much like a thief.

Read Job 1:6–12 and Zechariah 3:1–5. How is the great controversy revealed in these texts?

These texts give us a glimpse of the heavenly side of the great controversy. Satan presents Job’s righteousness as simply self-serving: if I am good, God will bless me. The implication is that Job doesn’t serve God because God is worthy, but because it’s in Job’s best interests. Once it becomes clear that serving God won’t bring blessing, Job will abandon his faith.

In the case of the high priest Joshua (a sanctuary motif) and of other believers (*see Rev. 12:10*), Ellen G. White says that Satan “is accusing the children of God, and making their case appear as desperate as possible. He presents before the Lord their evil doings and their defects.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 167.

In both cases, though, the real issue is the justice of God. The question behind all accusations is whether or not God is fair and just in His dealings. God’s character is on trial. Is it fair when God saves sinners? Is God just when He declares the unrighteous to be righteous? If He is just, He must punish the unrighteous; if He is gracious, He must forgive them. How can God be both?

If God were only a God of justice, what would be your fate, and why would you deserve it?

Vindication at the Cross

From the very beginning, God left no doubt that He would invalidate Satan's accusations and demonstrate His ultimate love and justice. His justice demands that there be payment of the penalty for humanity's sin. His love seeks to restore humanity into fellowship with Him. How could God manifest both?

How did God demonstrate both His love and justice? *1 John 4:10, Rom. 3:21–26.*

God's character of love and justice has been revealed in its fullest manifestation by the death of Christ. God loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning Sacrifice for our sins (*1 John 4:10, John 3:16*). By paying in Himself the penalty for violating the law, God showed His justice: the demands of the law had to be met. They were met at the cross, but in the person of Jesus.

At the same time, by this act of justice, God was also able to reveal His grace and love, because Jesus' death was substitutionary. He died for us, in our stead, so that we don't have to face that death ourselves. This is the amazing provision of the gospel, that God Himself would bear in Himself the punishment that His own justice demanded, the punishment that legitimately belonged to us.

Romans 3:21–26 is a biblical jewel on the theme of God's righteousness and the redemption in Jesus Christ. Christ's sacrificial death is a demonstration of God's righteousness so "that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (*Rom. 3:26, NASB*).

Again, sanctuary imagery provides the framework for Christ's death. In previous weeks, we have seen that His death is a perfect, substitutionary sacrifice and that Christ is the "atonement cover" (*Rom. 3:25*). In short, both Testaments reveal that Christ's mission was typified by the earthly sanctuary service.

"With intense interest the unfallen worlds had watched to see Jehovah arise, and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth. . . . But instead of destroying the world, God sent His Son to save it. . . . At the very crisis, when Satan seemed about to triumph, the Son of God came with the embassy of divine grace."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 37. **What does this quote tell you about the character of God?**

Vindication in the Judgment

As Scripture has shown, God’s judgment is good news for those of us who believe in Him, who trust in Him, and who are loyal to Him, even though “we cannot answer the charges of Satan against us.” —Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 472. However, the judgment is not only for us. It also serves the purpose of vindicating God before the entire universe.

How is God’s character presented in the following texts about judgment? *Ps. 96:10, 13; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 16:5, 7; 19:2.*

God’s character will be revealed in His judgment. What Abraham had already understood will, in the end, be manifest to all humanity: “ ‘Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?’ ” (*Gen. 18:25, NASB*). The different phases of judgment, with their open-book investigation, make sure that the angels (in the pre-Advent judgment) and the righteous (in the millennial judgment) can prove and be reassured that God is just in His dealings with humanity and that He has been merciful in each case.

Read *Philippians 2:5–11*. What amazing event do these verses depict?

Verses 9–11 predict the exaltation of Christ. The main two actions express the same thought: Jesus is Lord, and all creation will acknowledge Him as such. First, “every knee should bow” (*vs. 10, NASB*). The bowing of the knee is a customary act for recognizing the authority of a person. Here it refers to rendering homage to Christ and recognizing His supreme sovereignty. The dimension of the homage is universal. “In heaven and on earth and under the earth” (*NASB*) comprises every living being: the supernatural beings in heaven, the living on earth, and the resurrected dead. Those who will pay homage don’t seem to be limited to the saved. Everyone will acknowledge His lordship, even the lost.

The second action is that everyone “should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (*vs. 11, NASB*). In the end, all will acknowledge the justice of God in exalting Christ as Lord. In this way, all creation will acknowledge the character of God, which has been at the center of the great controversy, as just and faithful. Even Satan, the archenemy of Christ, will acknowledge God’s justice and bow to the supremacy of Christ (see Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 670, 671).

The Cosmic Spectacle

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus utters these amazing words: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (*Matt. 5:16*). With this, He reveals a principle that, though easily misunderstood, is nevertheless seen throughout the Bible. It tells how, as followers of Christ, we can bring glory or shame to God by our actions.

Read Ezekiel 36:23–27. How was God going to vindicate His name in ancient Israel?

These verses comprise one of the classic passages on the new covenant. God desires to work a dramatic transformation among His people. He will cleanse them (*vs. 25*) and grant them a new heart and a new spirit (*vs. 26*) so that they will become a holy people who will follow His commandments. What God wants to accomplish is to justify and sanctify believers so that by their lives they will honor God for who He is and what He does (*vs. 23*).

Of course, the key element in vindicating God’s character before the universe is the Cross. “Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 761.

At the same time, the New Testament followers of Christ are called a “spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men” (*1 Cor. 4:9, NKJV*). That is, what we do is being seen not only by other people but by heavenly intelligences, as well. What kind of witness do we present? By our lives we can make known the “manifold wisdom of God . . . to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (*Eph. 3:10, NASB*). Or our lives can bring shame and reproach on the name of the Lord whom we profess to serve.

What kind of spectacle, both to other people and to angels, does your life present? Is it one in which God is glorified, or one in which Satan can exult, especially because you profess to be a follower of Jesus?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “Why Was Sin Permitted?” pp. 33–43, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “The Character of God Revealed in Christ,” pp. 737–746, in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5.

“There stood in the world One who was a perfect representative of the Father, One whose character and practices refuted Satan’s misrepresentation of God. Satan had charged upon God the attributes he himself possessed. Now in Christ he saw God revealed in His true character—a compassionate, merciful Father, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Him in repentance, and have eternal life.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 254.

“The mission of Christ, so dimly understood, so faintly comprehended, that called Him from the throne of God to the mystery of the altar of the cross of Calvary, will more and more unfold to the mind, and it will be seen that in the sacrifice of Christ are found the spring and principle of every other mission of love.”—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 319.

Discussion Questions:

❶ Dwell on the idea that, by the time the whole great controversy ends, every intelligent creature in the universe, including Satan and the lost, will acknowledge the justice and fairness and righteousness of God in His dealing with sin and rebellion. Though it is a very heavy concept for us to grasp, what does this tell us about the character of God? What does it teach us about the reality of moral freedom and just how sacred and basic freedom is to the kind of universe that God has created?

❷ There are many Christians who deny the existence of Satan, seeing him as merely an ancient superstition held by primitive people who were looking to explain evil and suffering in the world. Think about how great a deception such a view is. It’s hard to imagine what kind of Christianity could deny the reality of a power that is so often revealed in the Bible, especially the New Testament, as a real being. What does this tell us about just how powerfully influenced some churches are by the inroads of modernism and secularism? What can we, as Seventh-day Adventists, learn from the mistakes that we see others making in order that we not fall into the same deception, as well? Without a literal Satan, what happens to the whole great controversy theme?

The Ghost Dancer, Part 2

Shortly after my baptism, my father called me to dance in a big ghost festival in our home village. I was shaking as I told my father, “No, I don’t dance anymore.” Father urged me to dance, but I took a deep breath and told him, “I have found a power that is stronger than witchcraft.” I knew that my words were a challenge to my father and the ghost dancers. I prayed that my God would protect me from whatever evil would befall me.

When I didn’t show up for the ghost dancers’ practice session in the bush, some dancers came to remind me it was time to dance. I told them I wasn’t going to dance. They argued and tried to convince me to go with them, but I refused. Then these dancers grabbed me and forced me to go with them.

We arrived at the place where the ghost dancers were preparing for the dance. I told them again that I wasn’t going to dance. Someone forced me to drink something, and I lost consciousness. They tried to wake me, but I didn’t wake up until the next day, the day of the ceremony. The ghost dancers tried to get me to dance, but I couldn’t even stand up. Finally my father came and told them to leave me alone. I slept through the entire ghost ceremony.

After the ceremonies ended, my father took me aside and reminded me of vows I had taken to not tell anyone what we did in our dancing. Then a friend told me that I must leave the village or face death. I left my village and haven’t returned.

I was 18 years old. I had no job and no money. I’d had just three years of education and wasn’t sure what I could do. I prayed, and God hasn’t abandoned me. I am learning a trade now so that I can support myself.

It’s not safe for me to go to my father’s village, for I know that there are people there who would try to kill me. I’m not afraid of them, for I believe that Jesus is stronger than voodoo gods. But until God sends me back to my parents’ village, I feel it’s wise to stay away.

I found Christ when a pastor shared God’s love with me. Your mission offering helps spread the good news that Jesus is the only true God. Millions in Benin and around the world are waiting to hear. Thank you for giving them a chance.



DANIEL lives in southern Benin, West Africa.

Exhortations From *the* Sanctuary



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Heb. 10:19–25; Heb. 4:16; Exod. 24:8; James 4:7, 8; John 13:34; Heb. 10:24, 25.*

Memory Text: “And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (*Hebrews 10: 21, 22, NASB*).

Throughout the book of Hebrews, passages about Christian faith alternate with passages about Christian living. In other words, theology has practical implications. The “what” of faith leads to the “how” of living that faith. In Hebrews, after the author has painted the magnificent theological picture of Christ as our Sacrifice and High Priest (*Heb. 7:1–10:18*), he encourages and exhorts believers to live according to the implications of these truths. This exhortation is especially seen in Hebrews 10:19–25.

This passage is one long, complex sentence in Greek. It consists of two basic facts that lead to three exhortations, each starting with the phrase “let us,” and each containing the familiar triad of faith, hope, and love. Also, each “let us” section contains another facet of Christian faith.

This week we will study Hebrews 10:19–25 and its practical exhortations for Christian living.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 28.*

Access to the Heavenly Sanctuary

Read Hebrews 4:16; 6:19, 20; and 10:19–21. To what do believers have access, and what does this mean for us? What hope is offered here, and more important, what impact should this hope have on our life and faith?

Believers have spiritual access to the heavenly sanctuary, to the very throne of God. We can seek closeness to God because our “entry” was made possible by the blood of Christ and by His representation in our behalf as our High Priest. The texts assure us that our soul has an anchor, Jesus Christ, who is in the very presence of God (*Heb. 4:14–16; 6:19, 20*). The assurance for us is that Christ gained full access to God after He was inaugurated as the heavenly High Priest (*Heb. 6:20*). At the inauguration, Christ sat on the heavenly throne, an image that demonstrates His royal status (*Rev. 3:21*).

The good news for us is that our Representative is in the presence of the Father. No mere earthly priest, who himself is sinful, serves on our behalf. We have the better Priest. Nothing separates the Father from the Son. Because Christ is perfect and sinless, there does not need to be a veil that shields God’s holiness from Jesus, our High Priest (*Heb. 10:20*).

“What does intercession comprehend? It is the golden chain which binds finite man to the throne of the infinite God. The human agent whom Christ has died to save importunes the throne of God, and his petition is taken up by Jesus who has purchased him with His own blood. Our great High Priest places His righteousness on the side of the sincere suppliant, and the prayer of Christ blends with that of the human petitioner.”—Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 78.

What assurance we have that we can have close communion with the Father, all because of what Jesus has done and is doing for us!

Dwell on what it means that Jesus is interceding for you in heaven. Why do you need that intercession so greatly?

Cleansed and Sincere

Read Hebrews 10:22. What conditions for approaching God in the heavenly sanctuary are laid down in this verse?

According to this verse, worshipers should meet four conditions when they draw near to God:

1. *Come with a sincere heart.* The heart is our inner being, our thoughts, our motivations, our emotions, our will, and our character. God wants us to be sincere. However, the heart can become sincere only if it is cleansed. This doesn't mean that we are perfect, just that we are striving toward revealing the character of Christ.

2. *Come in full assurance of faith.* As we saw in yesterday's study, there is no more reason to doubt that we will gain access to God.

3. *Come with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.* The sprinkling of the heart is sanctuary language that refers back to the blood sprinkled upon the people at the wilderness tabernacle (*Exod. 24:8; Lev. 8:23, 24*), which made them ritually clean but could not cleanse their conscience (*Heb. 9:9, 13*). The cleansing in the true tabernacle in heaven, however, is a cleansing of the conscience, brought about by the blood of Christ (*Heb. 9:14*). The justification of the repentant sinner is symbolized by this cleansing. We can have a clear conscience because we have been forgiven.

4. *Come with our bodies washed with pure water.* This sounds like an allusion to Christian baptism, but we can also understand it in a more spiritual sense as the "washing of water with the word" (*Eph. 5:26, NASB*), reading the Bible and applying its principles to our lives.

In James 4:7, 8, James struggles with the "double-minded" attitude of his readers. They have apparently lost their single-mindedness toward God. They have compromised and are in immediate danger. He uses language associated with purity at the sanctuary. It is truly a sanctuary concept that approaching God is possible only if purification takes place.

It should be clear that only God can cleanse our hearts. The question is: what painful choices do we make that allow Him to do this work of grace in our lives?

Faith: Be Confident

Read Hebrews 10:19–25 again. One theme appears again and again, and that is “confidence.” The Greek word for “confidence” (*Heb. 10:19*) refers to a boldness, courage, and fearlessness that in the New Testament describes our new relationship with God.

Originally, the word referred to an openness of speech, which, in this context, could specifically mean that one can freely approach God in prayer. This type of openness in our relationship with God produces a joyful confidence. The reason and object of our confidence is that we have a High Priest in heaven through whom we can have access to the presence of God. This access is unlimited and not blocked by anything but ourselves and our wrong choices. We have an open invitation to come into the heavenly sanctuary.

Where does this confidence come from? It is not produced by ourselves but by recognizing, again, that the blood of Jesus has won access to God’s presence for us.

There are other texts in Hebrews that speak about confidence and assurance: Hebrews 3:6, 14; 4:16; 6:11; 11:1. What kind of confidence do these texts describe?

Assurance and confidence do not anchor us in ourselves but only in Christ. These conditions are not dependent upon who we are but who our Mediator is. Interestingly, there is no mention that believers would have anything less than “full assurance” (*Heb. 6:11, 10:22*). Obviously, the new way that has been forever opened through Jesus’ death will lead without fail to full confidence. Nothing less is expected.

There are two ways to obtain Christian confidence and maintain it in faith. One is through faith itself (*Eph. 3:12*); the other is through faithful Christian service for others (*1 Tim. 3:13*). Both aspects are necessary and important. In Hebrews, too, assurance of faith and exhortation to prove oneself as a Christian go hand in hand. Christian living is never detached from Christian faith.

What things in life challenge your confidence in God or your full assurance of His good will for you? What can you do to help to protect yourself from this spiritual danger?

Hope: Be Steadfast and Unswerving

Look up the texts below. What do they all have in common? What should believers hold on to?

Heb. 3:6 _____

Heb. 3:14 _____

Heb. 4:14 _____

Heb. 6:18 _____

Heb. 10:23 _____

Besides having the assurance of salvation, it is important to persevere and uphold the hope offered us all. In Hebrews, to hold fast is a serious appeal. One gets the impression that some believers were slipping away from their Christian faith and hope. The apostle had to encourage them not to let go. The text expresses, quite similarly, the things that are worth holding on to: hope, confidence, assurance, and confession. All of these terms refer in an objective sense to the Christian belief. We can do these things because our hope isn't in ourselves but in Jesus and what He has done for us. The moment we forget that crucial truth, we will surely lose confidence.

These texts challenge us to be steadfast from the “beginning” (*Heb. 3:14*) and “until the end” (*Heb. 3:6, 14; 6:11*). To do so “without wavering” (*Heb. 10:23, NKJV*) refers to an immutable and unshaken faith. Whatever the circumstance may be, our hope remains the same and our commitment to God is unchanged because we can trust that He is faithful and will do what He has promised.

There is no question that God is true to His Word. He fulfilled the promise that He made to Abraham and Sarah (*see also Rom. 4:19–21*); He fulfilled the promise of Christ's first coming (*Gal. 3:19*); and He will also fulfill the promise of His return (*Heb. 12:26*). God's ultimate promise, however, is eternal life, which He promised even before time began (*Titus 1:2, 1 John 2:25*).

God's faithfulness is immovable. Even “if we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself” (*2 Tim. 2:13, NASB*). Our unfaithfulness or disbelief will not change God's intention for us. His promises remain unshaken by our moral lapses. The promises will still be available for us because faithfulness is part of the divine nature.

It is so easy to become discouraged because of our sins. How can we overcome those sins, and yet, at the same time, not give up when we fail? Why must we cling to these promises, especially when we fail?

Love: Encourage One Another

“And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (*Heb. 10:24, NASB*).

Whereas the exhortation in Hebrews 10:23 focuses on the individual attitude, the next one in Hebrews 10:24 has the community of believers in view. We do not walk alone on our path with Christ. We should care for one another consistently.

The challenge to love one another is a traditional component of Christian behavior (*John 13:34, 35; Gal. 5:13*). However, loving one another does not just happen naturally. The act of “considering” suggests concentrated and careful pondering. We are urged to pay attention to our fellow believers and see how we could incite them to love others and to do good works. Unfortunately, it is easier to provoke and antagonize others than it is to spur them on to Christian love, isn’t it?

Then let us consolidate our efforts to work for the best of the community so that, because of our inducements to love, others cannot help but love and perform good works, as well.

Read Hebrews 10:24, 25. What do “love” and “good deeds” have to do with the “assemblies”?

One point that Hebrews stresses is that we can express love toward one another in Christian gatherings. If someone does not come to worship, how can he or she ever fulfill Christ’s law of love? Some people may think that they have “good” reasons to stay away from Christian meetings. Hebrews, however, touches on the sensitive issue that, in the end, it might be their own apathy that keeps them away. If one wants, one can always find reasons to avoid church attendance or other Christian gatherings. Those reasons, however, pale in contrast to one of the reasons for coming: to be a blessing to others.

Such behavior is all the more pressing as the day of Christ’s return comes nearer and nearer. At the beginning of Hebrews 10:19–25, the author admonished believers to draw near to God in the heavenly sanctuary, and at its conclusion he reminds them that the Day of the Lord draws near to them. Christ’s return should always be a major incentive for Christian behavior.

Who in your church do you want to encourage with your words, deeds, or just by your presence? If you are deliberate in that intention, you can make a big difference in people’s lives and, in turn, be blessed yourself.

Further Study: “The Mediator, in his office and work, would greatly exceed in dignity and glory the earthly, typical priesthood. . . . This Saviour was to be a mediator, to stand between the Most High and his people. Through this provision, a way was opened whereby the guilty sinner might find access to God through the mediation of another. The sinner could not come in his own person, with his guilt upon him, and with no greater merit than he possessed in himself. Christ alone could open the way, by making an offering equal to the demands of the divine law. He was perfect, and undefiled by sin. He was without spot or blemish. The extent of the terrible consequences of sin could never have been known, had not the remedy provided been of infinite value.”—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 11.

“Faith in the atonement and intercession of Christ will keep us steadfast and immovable amid the temptations that press upon us in the church militant.”—Ellen G. White, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7A, p. 484.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Skim through the book of Hebrews. What are all the times in this book that we are called to act in certain ways, ways that directly result from our faith?
- 2 Dwell more on the idea that we have full access to God. What does that mean? How should this influence our lives, especially in times of temptation or in times of discouragement over our spiritual state?
- 3 What is the difference between “full assurance” of faith and a presumptuous attitude?
- 4 Dwell on this line taken from the Ellen G. White quote in Friday’s further study: “The extent of the terrible consequences of sin could never have been known, had not the remedy provided been of infinite value.” What does that tell us about just how bad sin is that it cost something of “infinite value,” the life of Jesus? How do we understand the idea of “infinite value”? How does the fact that Jesus is the Creator help us to grasp this amazing truth? Knowing these things, how can our lives not be transformed? How can we know these things and not want to teach them to others?
- 5 How can we develop spiritual friendships in which we encourage one another to be more loving and to live a life of good deeds? What spiritual benefits do you gain from “assembling together”? What would you miss if you could not worship with other Christians in church?

Nurturing Spiritual Roots

Mi Eh Kim was disappointed. She had arrived in Tokyo from China to study, but she couldn't find a Chinese Seventh-day Adventist congregation and didn't yet understand enough Japanese to understand people. She was used to worshipping God every Sabbath in China, and she worried about her spiritual life when she couldn't go to church. She prayed to find a place to live closer to a church.

While Mi Eh studied Japanese, she prayed that God would lead her to a university located near a Seventh-day Adventist church. She was accepted at a university outside Tokyo, and to her joy discovered that a Seventh-day Adventist church was nearby. Members offered to pick her up on Sabbaths. What an answer to prayer!

The pastor of the small group of worshippers welcomed her and introduced her to the members. Instantly Mi Eh felt the warmth of fellowship and enjoyed the spiritual feast in the town her friends had told her was cold to foreigners. She looked forward to Sabbaths with an intensity she found hard to imagine.

When she graduated she moved back to Tokyo to work. Once more she searched for a church in which to worship. But this time she learned that a Chinese-speaking congregation was worshipping in one of the Japanese churches in the city. How precious it was to worship God in her mother tongue.

Mi Eh has been in Japan for ten years now, and sometimes she still feels like a foreigner. She knows the stress people feel in a foreign country, and she knows how happy they are to meet with people who speak their own language. Her church family helps nourish her spiritual roots and makes a huge difference in her life.

Part of a previous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering has helped nourish this Chinese-speaking church in Tokyo. It has now formed a second congregation so that more Chinese-speaking people can find spiritual nurture in a foreign land.



Mi Eh Kim (left) is one of thousands of Chinese studying or working in Japan.

Christ's example of disciple-making must be the model that believers follow in answering the Great Commission (*Matt. 28:19*).

In our study for the first quarter 2014, entitled *Discipleship*, by Dan Solis, we will look at discipleship as the process by which we become followers of Jesus and, as such, become better soul winners.

How did Jesus attract His followers? What can we learn from Christ's example that would enable us to effectively lead others to Him?

These are not merely discussion questions that stimulate intellectual interchange; rather, they are a crucial area of study for Christians whose desire is to follow Jesus' example of guiding lost sheep to the loving Shepherd.

Our study this quarter will focus on these important aspects of discipling.

Lesson 1—Disciples and Scripture

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Jesus and the Bible** (*Luke 4:1–12, 16–21*)

MONDAY: **The Authority of Scripture** (*Matt. 5:17–20, 12:3–8*)

TUESDAY: **Public Proclamation** (*Matt. 5:17–39*)

WEDNESDAY: **Personal Ministry** (*John 13:18–20, Luke 10:25–28*)

THURSDAY: **The Next Generation** (*Matt. 12:15–21, Mark 1:1–3*)

Memory Text—*John 5:39*

Sabbath Gem: All of our disciple-making endeavors must, ultimately, be about Jesus and what He has done for us.

Lesson 2—Discipling Through Metaphor

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Old Testament Examples** (*2 Sam. 12:1–7, Isa. 28:24–28*)

MONDAY: **Architectural Wisdom** (*Matt. 7:24–27*)

TUESDAY: **Agricultural Analogies** (*Matt. 13:1–30*)

WEDNESDAY: **The Revolutionary's War** (*Matt. 21:28–32*)

THURSDAY: **Christ's Creative Legacy** (*1 Cor. 3:10–15*)

Memory Text—*Matthew 13:34, 35, NIV*

Sabbath Gem: Complex concepts like justification, righteousness, and sanctification were easily grasped through the Master Storyteller's art. In other words, concepts that are often difficult to grasp in ordinary language can be taught through symbols and metaphors.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired: The regular *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.