

Preparation For The End Times: Lesson 5

Christ In The Heavenly Sanctuary

Memory Text: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.” (Philippians 2:9, 10)

Setting The Stage: One of the reasons problems don't get solved is that too often we misunderstand the true nature of the problem. *Pontiac & vanilla ice cream story.*

The problem in today's world isn't the wars that slays its millions, or the incessant crime that fills multitudes hearts with fear, or the broken marriages and homes that emotionally scar children, or the disease that fills our hospitals and saps the vitality of many, or even the problem of a restless human heart suffering under the burden of guilt. Sin is the problem. It is the root, and everything else is its fruit. And sin is God's problem. He wants us to be with Him. Yet sin made the separation, so sin must be removed for the separation to end. But how can this be? And is it possible?

Sunday – Supreme Sacrifice

2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 John 3:5; Psalm 77:13; Hebrews 8:1, 2, 5

Why would it be a problem to get rid of sin? Couldn't God just do away with it, burn it up? God would like to destroy sin, but look at the problem He has. Those He loves are infected by it. So in order to save us He must separate sin from the sinner. Possible? Isa. 43:11 says, “I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no savior.”

What or who is offered up as a sacrifice for our salvation?

2 Corinthians 5:19: “That God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”

1 John 3:5: “And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.”

Where can the center of God's plan of salvation be found?

Psalm 77:13: “Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; who is so great a God as our God?”

It is the place where God's people have turned their eyes and poured out their prayers in hope and faith: “I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all Your name.” (Ps. 138:2) “In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried

out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears.” (Ps. 18:6)

Does God want us to become familiar with the work going on in the sanctuary?

Hebrews 8:1, 2, 5: “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man...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.’ “ (cp. Ex. 25:8, 9)

By studying the earthly sanctuary and the services conducted here, we can better understand the services of the heavenly sanctuary and therefore be prepared to cooperate with Christ in solving the sin problem.

(For details of the sanctuary read Hebrews 9:1-5; 8:1-6; PP 343-358)

Monday – The Lamb Of God

1 Peter 3:18; Leviticus 4:32, 33; Hebrews 10:4; John 1:29

What is basic to the plan of salvation?

1 Peter 3:18: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”

From the day that man fell, God sought to reveal this plan. In the sacrificial system He showed that He would accept a substitute in the sinner’s place. In His wisdom, God gave humanity an opportunity to exercise both faith and choice by participating in the sacrificial ceremonies. To more fully reveal the significance of the plan of salvation, through Moses, God instituted the sanctuary service in the wilderness.

Leviticus 4:32, 33: “If he brings a lamb as his sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish. Then he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering [cp. Lev. 5:5], and kill it as a sin offering at the place where they kill the burnt offering.”

To find freedom from the burden of sin, the repentant sinner brings his lamb to the courtyard, near to the brazen altar (the altar of burnt offerings). Here the sinner meets the priest. The sinner lays her hands on the head of the victim implying confession of sin. In symbol the sin has transferred from the sinner to the innocent victim. And so the lamb must die. And who kills the sacrifice? The repentant sinner slays the lamb (see GC 418).

What is the lesson that this typical shadow has for us?

Hebrews 10:4: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”

John 1:29: “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’ “

In the typical service when the contrite sinner transferred his sin to the innocent lamb, the lamb became the sin bearer. So concerning Christ, the Bible says, “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

As the penitent sinner brought a substitute to die in his place, so every penitent sinner can come to Calvary, and looking at the crucified Son of God, say, He “loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20) Here we find genuine repentance as we realize that it was because of our deliberate sin that Jesus was slain. It is here that sin begins to lose its vice-grip hold.

Dropped clock illustration. I was sorry, but when I found out how much it cost, do you think I was sorrier than I was an hour or so ago? You bet. What made the difference? I found out what it cost. Jesus wants to show us how much sin cost. He wants us to see the dying Lamb hanging on Calvary, to understand that it was our sins that nailed Him there so that He can take away our sin.

Tuesday/Wednesday – Our High Priest/Our Intercessor

Hebrews 5: 1; 7:25; Leviticus 4:13-20; Romans 4:7; Psalm 103:12; Leviticus 4:27-35; Hebrews 9:28

Jesus is not only the Lamb that dies for us, but He is also the High Priest that lives for. And what does a priest do? He “is obtained to offer gifts and sacrifices” to God (Heb. 8:3). But can’t we present our own gifts? No, we can’t approach God directly (Isa. 59:2). Sin can only be atoned for and mankind brought back to God by the shedding of blood of an innocent victim. But the shed blood isn’t enough. It needs to be presented in the sanctuary. But we can’t do that.

Hebrews 5:1: “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.”

Hebrews 7:25: “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

As we look at the movements of the priest in the earthly sanctuary we can learn more about the ministry of our great High Priest in heaven’s sanctuary.

Leviticus 4:13-20. The shedding of the substitute’s blood and the sprinkling of that blood before the inner veil and on the horns of the golden altar (altar of incense), provided forgiveness.

Romans 4:7: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.”

When God forgives sin, He covers it with blood, and “the blood of it is for the life thereof” (Lev. 17:14). Jesus’ blood represents His perfect life, and the shed blood shows the life poured out in sacrifice. So when the Father looks at us, He doesn’t see the filthy garments of our own righteousness, He instead sees the perfect life of Jesus.

The service also represents the transfer of sin from the sinner through the substitute into the sanctuary. In the great antitypical service, Jesus our Substitute died for us, bearing our sins. Then He rose from the dead and entered heaven as our High Priest. By His own blood He enters the sanctuary in heaven there to cover our iniquities with His blood. Thus He transfers our sins to the sanctuary above.

Psalm 103:12: “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

Guilt, fear, worry, concern over sin are driving people sick. Millions suffer from ulcers, heart attacks, and nervous breakdowns. If the burden of sin presses down on your soul, bring your sins to the sanctuary and put it on the Lamb of God. Confess it. Give it to Him. Let him be your Sin Bearer. Let His death take the place of your death.

Leviticus 4:27-35. Here God made provision for bringing a goat or lamb when one of the “common people” had transgressed. After the sin had been transferred to the animal by confession, the substitute was slain, and the priest dipped his finger in the blood and dabbed it upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering. The promise of forgiveness applied in this case just as when the priest sprinkled the blood in the holy place.

But how did the sin get into the sanctuary? The priest ate a portion of the sacrifice (Lev. 6:25, 26). Concerning this, Moses told the priests, “God has given it [to] you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord.” (Lev. 10:17, 18)

Similarly, Christ bears our sins in His own body—not only on Calvary, but also in the heavenly sanctuary.

Hebrews 9:28: “So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.” (He was “offered in sacrifice in order that He might bear the sins of many.” Weymouth)

On the cross He bore our sins as the dying Lamb. In the sanctuary, He bears them as the living Priest. **So how long must He carry them?**

Thursday – The Day Of Atonement

Hebrews 9:22-23, 26, 28

Hebrews 9:22, 23: “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.”

The Bible presents the cleansing of the sanctuary in type and antitype. As the earthly sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animals, the sanctuary in heaven must be cleansed with better sacrifices, even Christ’s precious blood. Notice it says, “necessary.” It must be done because this is the goal of the sanctuary.

When did the cleansing of the sanctuary take place? On the morning of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) two goats were presented at the door of the sanctuary. The priest cast lots, one for the Lord, and the other for Azazel (Satan). After preliminary services, the high priest killed the Lord’s goat and carried its blood into the most holy place...

In the heavenly service Christ appears for us in the sanctuary above, first in the holy place and finally in the most holy place. In the ancient sanctuary, the priest repeated the round of service year after year. But Christ’s ministry is “once for all” (Heb. 10:10). Once for all he died upon the cross for you and me. Once for all He carried on His priestly ministry in the holy place. Once for all He entered the most holy, there to remain until His purpose is accomplished:

Hebrews 9:26: “To put away sin (“to do away with sin” “to abolish sin” – Weymouth, New English Bible] by the sacrifice of Himself.”

What’s the difference between the sprinkled blood in the holy place and the most holy? The first provides a covering for sin, the second a blotting out.

Why doesn’t God just blot out sin as soon as the sinner confesses their transgression? Simply, God has given us the power of choice. If we chose to leave our sins in the sanctuary, Jesus will one day blot them out in the closing work of the judgment. On the other hand, if we want to return to a life of sin, God won’t forcibly prevent us. The sins we have given up we can take up again if we so chose.

Can God deliver us from an evil temper, from lust, from covetousness, or from any form of perversion? Yes, Christ’s ministry in the sanctuary will accomplish it. At the close of the antitypical Day of Atonement, Jesus will have a clean sanctuary and a clean people. Then He can close the sanctuary and come for His waiting people.

Hebrews 9:28: “So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, without sin unto salvation.”

Notice that He was offered once “in sacrifice in order that He might bear the sins of many” (Weymouth). Remember Jesus was the sin-bearing lamb. Then in the holy place we behold Him as the sin-bearing priest. And He must bear this burden until the final blotting out of sin. He appears “the second time without sin.” His sacrifice will then have accomplished its goal. His ministry as Priest will be over. He will have “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” (Heb. 9:26)

Let’s think of some practical implications. The sanctuary service will not run forever. There will come an end to its ministry, and we call that event the close of probation. In order for sins to be brought to the sanctuary they must first be carried into the sanctuary. Before God can blot out sins, He must first pardon and cover them. The first is to get the sins into the sanctuary. The second is to get them out.

Suppose in this community we have only one laundry. Day by day the work goes on, getting the clothes in and then getting them out. Perhaps we could say that the sanctuary is God’s laundry. “Christ...loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” (Eph. 5:25-27)

Suppose the next time you take a load of dirty clothes to the laundry you see a big sign: “This laundry will close Dec. 31.” What would you think? Suppose you notice a second sign: “Classes are now being held daily to show you how to keep your clothes clean.” Would you attend? You would if you believed the sign – unless you didn’t care whether you had dirty clothes or not.

Sad to say, some people will never clean up. And concerning them God will soon have to declare, “He which is filthy, let him be filthy still.” Rev. 22:11. Yes, the laundry is going to close, but classes are now being held at the heavenly sanctuary.

Jesus wants to teach us how to get clean and stay clean. It can be done. It will be done. I would hate to think that Jesus must stand there forever taking care of the sins that people keep sending in. There must come an end to the defiling stream if the sanctuary is ever going to be cleansed.

When can mom have a clean floor if the kids keep tracking mud into the kitchen? That depends on how long the kids will keep tracking in mud, right? Always remember that the thing that keeps Jesus in the sanctuary and delays the finishing of His work in the most holy place is not the sins of the world but of God’s people. If we really want Jesus to come, we will confess every past sin so that He can pardon it, and then we will learn from Him how to quit our habitual lawbreaking.

But I can hear somebody saying, “Impossible!” Then the sanctuary will have to stay open. But thank God that there will come a time when the sanctuary will close when Christ has demonstrated to all the universe that He has “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” (Heb. 9:26)

Friday – Further Thoughts

“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)