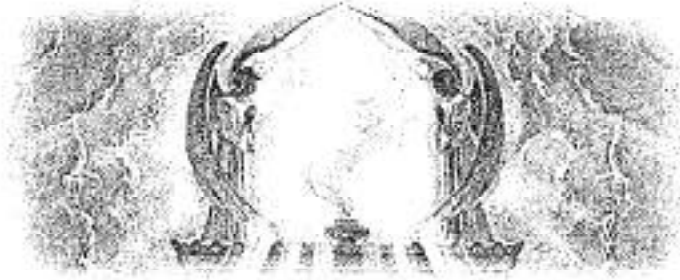


Jesus' Ministry (Work) and the Sanctuary



SAB
PM

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 9 and 10.

MEMORY VERSE: “He [Jesus] is not like other high priests; he does not need to offer sacrifices every day for his own sins first and then for the sins of the people. He offered one sacrifice, once and for all, when he offered himself” (Hebrews 7:27, TEV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: Hebrews uses symbols from both the daily services and yearly services of the earthly sanctuary. All the symbols make the same point: Through Jesus we can reach the Father.

WE ALREADY HAVE STUDIED THE SANCTUARY LANGUAGE of the letter to the Hebrews. We also have noticed that Paul knows the earthly sanctuary very well. For him the earthly sanctuary is a shadow (symbol) of the real heavenly sanctuary. In addition to the heavenly sanctuary there is a real sacrifice forgiving all sins, which is far greater than all the animal sacrifices of the earthly sanctuary. There is also a real priesthood.

Hebrews has some strong connections with the Day of the Atonement.¹ What lessons can we learn from those connections?

This week we will take a look at some verses and questions that are important to Seventh-day Adventists.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: Why does Hebrews talk about both the daily services and yearly services of the earthly sanctuary? What is the meaning of

¹Day of Atonement—a yearly service in which the high priest did a special service in the earthly sanctuary that offered cleansing, forgiveness, and renewal for another year. This is the work Jesus does for us as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

“within the veil [curtain]”? What does it mean that Jesus is our High Priest in heaven? What does He do for us as our Intercessor² and Mediator?³

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

SUN THE DAILY SERVICE IN HEBREWS.

Read Hebrews 9:6, 7. The author of Hebrews used the earthly sanctuary and its sacrificial services as the model, the type (symbol), to help us better understand Jesus’ ministry (work) in the heavenly sanctuary.

Using the earthly sanctuary as an example, Paul showed a difference between the ministry in the first room of the sanctuary (the Holy Place) and the ministry in the second room of the sanctuary (the Most Holy Place). In the earthly sanctuary, the priests and the high priest offered daily sacrifices to atone for⁴ the sins of the people. Once a year in the Most Holy Place, the high priest made final atonement⁵ for the sanctuary (Leviticus 16). The daily services seemed to deal with the sin of individuals. The yearly services dealt with Israel as a nation.



Sacrificing a lamb to represent Jesus’ death for our sins was part of the daily sanctuary service.

In Hebrews 9:7, the word translated “errors” comes from a Greek word that means sins done without knowledge or without thinking. Even these kinds of sins needed to be cleansed and forgiven. What does this tell us about how serious these types of sins are?

The daily service in the earthly sanctuary also is mentioned in Hebrews 7:26, 27 and Hebrews 10:11, 12. What point are these verses making? (Read also Hebrews 9:28.)

Hebrews 9:6, Hebrews 7:26, 27, and Hebrews 10:11, 12 tell us the best news possible. Jesus’ sacrifice is all we need. No more blood needs to be shed. No more animals need to be sacrificed. No more deaths are needed to cleanse and forgive sin.

How does Hebrews 2:9 help us understand why Jesus’ sacrifice is enough?

MON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT IN HEBREWS.

Hebrews uses symbols from the daily

²Intercessor—An intercessor is someone who goes to another person for us when we cannot. We cannot go directly to God. But Jesus goes to Him for us. So He is our Intercessor.

³mediator—Jesus works to make peace between God and us. He is our Lawyer in the heavenly court.

⁴atone for—cleanse; forgive.

⁵atonement—cleansing; Jesus dying on the cross in our place.

work of the earthly sanctuary. Hebrews also uses symbols from the yearly work of the earthly sanctuary. The yearly work is called the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was the last sanctuary service of the year.



The high priest enters the Most Holy Place to cleanse it with blood.

Hebrews 9:7 describes the Day of Atonement. Hebrews 9:25, 26 and Hebrews 10:1-4 also describe the Day of Atonement. What is the main point of these verses? How does that point fit in with the entire theme of Hebrews?

Read Hebrews 9:23. This verse is also about the Day of Atonement. What are the “heavenly things” that need cleansing?

Hebrews 9:23 says that just as the earthly things (the earthly sanctuary) require cleansing, the “heavenly things” (the sanctuary in heaven) need cleansing, too. But there is one exception: Heavenly cleansing demanded (required) “better sacrifices.” The word translated “cleansed” is used in Leviticus 16 to describe the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. The author of Hebrews sees that the earthly service was a symbol of something better in heaven.

Hebrews does not say when these “heavenly things” would be cleansed. But it does support the Adventist teaching that there is a sanctuary in heaven and that it needs to be “purified” or “cleansed.” How do you understand Hebrews 9:23 in view of our 1844 sanctuary Day of Atonement message?⁶

TUE “WITHIN THE VEIL [CURTAIN].”

What hope is Paul giving his readers in Hebrews 6:13-20? What point are these verses making?

There has been much discussion about the words “within the veil.” These words are most often used to talk about the Most Holy Place in the Old Testament. (However, in Numbers 18:7, the words “within the veil” do not refer to the

⁶1844 sanctuary Day of Atonement message—Adventists believe that in 1844 Jesus entered the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary to begin the process of judging His followers. This is the same as the Day of Atonement in the earthly sanctuary.

Most Holy Place.) Because the words “within the veil” most often refer to the Most Holy Place in the Old Testament, some people believe that Hebrews 6:13-20 puts Jesus in the Most Holy Place right after He returned to heaven. Because they believe that Jesus entered the Most Holy Place right after He returned to heaven, they void⁷ the 1844 sanctuary Day of Atonement message.

Read Hebrews 9:3. We know that in this verse, Paul uses the words “second veil” to mean the veil between the Holy Place and Most Holy Place, because in Hebrews 9:4, 5, he talks about the things in the Most Holy Place. Now read Hebrews 6:19. Many Bible students believe that this verse also proves Jesus entered the Most Holy Place right after He returned to heaven, making void the 1844 sanctuary Day of Atonement message. But in Hebrews 6:19, Paul just writes “the veil.” If Paul was talking about the Most Holy Place in Hebrews 6:19, why did he not write the “second veil”?

There is nothing in the context⁸ of Hebrews 6:19 that reminds us of the Day of Atonement. So the point of this verse is not whether Jesus entered the Most Holy Place right after He went to heaven, but that we can reach God in the heavenly

sanctuary anytime through faith in Jesus.

Paul was using Old Testament symbolism to teach the New Testament truth that Jesus' death and high-priestly work in heaven are better than the death of animals and the work of human priests. Jesus' death and high-priestly ministry give us “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.”⁹

All the earthly sacrifices, including those of the Day of Atonement, were fulfilled in Jesus at the Cross. But if we focus on the meaning of “within the veil,” we miss the whole point of Hebrews. This point is that through Jesus, all blocks between God and humanity¹⁰ have been broken. Through Jesus' death and work, we can now reach the Father. Hebrews 9:3 does not prove that the Day of Atonement services were fulfilled at the Cross.

Use Hebrews 6:18, 19 to focus on such words as *immutable*,¹¹ *refuge*, *anchor*, *steadfast*, and *sure*. Then write the two verses in your own words to help you understand the hope Paul is trying to give us.

WED OUR HEAVENLY INTERCESSOR.

Read Hebrews 7:25. Maybe the most important theme of Hebrews can be found in Hebrews 7:25—Jesus can save people “who come to God through Him [Jesus].”

⁷void—do away with.

⁸context—setting of a verse; what the verses before and after a verse mean will determine what that verse means.

⁹steadfast—strong; cannot be moved.

¹⁰humanity—all the people of the world.

¹¹immutable—cannot be changed.

We must remember why Paul wrote to the Hebrew Christians: He is telling them not to go back to their old ways. The new way offers them something much better. The new way can do what the old way never could. The new way offers you the opportunity to come to God as you could never come to Him before. That is because you can now come to God through Jesus.



We can go to God, because Jesus is our High Priest in heaven.

What does it mean to come to God through Jesus? What has Jesus done so we can come to God through Him? What verses can you find to support your answer? What does it mean to come to God?

Through Jesus as our great High Priest, we can come to God. But how can we, as sinners, come to a holy God?

We do not now stand in God's pres-

ence. But we do not have to. Jesus stands in God's presence for us. Jesus stands in front of the Father for us because of His perfect character. He stands in our place. He represents us because of His worth, not ours. He alone has the perfect righteousness (holiness) to stand in the Father's presence.

In the daily service and the yearly service in the earthly sanctuary, the priests entered into God's presence. In the same way, Jesus enters into God's presence for us in the heavenly sanctuary.

What point are the following verses making? Romans 8:34; Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 9:24; Hebrews 10:20. What promises do we find in these verses? Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 9:24; Hebrews 10:20; Romans 8:34.

THU OUR HEAVENLY MEDIATOR.

What do the following verses say to us? What is your understanding of a mediator? Why do we need one?

1 Timothy 2:5 _____

Hebrews 8:6 _____

Hebrews 9:15 _____

Hebrews 12:24 _____

Jesus as Mediator, Jesus as Sacrifice, and Jesus as our High Priest are all part of salvation. Through His perfect life and complete sacrifice, Jesus now stands as our High Priest in heaven. He stands in God's presence for us as our Mediator.

In the Old Testament sanctuary service the priest would take the blood of animals and bring it into the earthly sanctuary. As a representative of other people, he would go where other people could not go. The priests would have to do this day after day in the daily services and year after year in the yearly service (the Day of Atonement).

Under the new covenant, instead of earthly and sinful priests, we have Jesus. He is the Mediator of "a better covenant" (agreement), which was established upon better promises." Sinners today do not have to find an animal. They do not have to bring the animal to an earthly sanctuary. They do not need to have a human priest apply that blood to our sins. It is all being done for us through Jesus. Through Jesus, we can come to God any time, any place.

When we sin, we confess¹² our sins. And because of His perfect righteousness (holiness), Jesus stands "in the presence of God for us." He represents us with His own righteousness, not our righteousness. He represents us with His own righteousness through the good

works He did while He was on earth. These good works become our good works by faith. He is using the benefits (advantages) of His perfect life and character for our sake. This is the only way God can accept sinners.

How does 1 John 2:1 help us understand today's lesson? We need to be able to see the great hope and promises we have because "Jesus Christ¹³ the Righteous [Holy]" works in heaven for us as our Intercessor and Mediator. Think about this until you fully understand why it is important to you that Jesus is your Mediator and Intercessor.

FRI **ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, pp. 188–212.

The following quote shows what happened when Jesus died on the cross: "All is terror and confusion. The priest is about to kill the animal. But the knife drops from his frozen hand, and the lamb escapes. Type¹⁴ has met antitype¹⁵ in the death of God's Son. Jesus has made the great sacrifice. The way into the holiest is laid open. A new and living way is prepared for all sinners. No longer do sinners need to wait for the coming of the high priest. From now on, the Savior was

¹²confess—to say you have sinned.

¹³Jesus Christ—another name for Jesus.

¹⁴type—symbol; the lamb was a symbol of Jesus.

¹⁵antitype—what the symbol represented. The lamb represented Jesus. So Jesus is the antitype.

to work as Priest and Intercessor in heaven.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 757.

“By the tearing of the veil (curtain) of the temple, God said, I can no longer show My presence in the Most Holy Place. A new and living way (Jesus) is now offered to all sinners. There is no veil between Jesus and us. As sinners, we no longer need to wait for the coming of the high priest.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1109.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do we understand the above quotes in connection with Jesus’ two-part ministry (work) in heaven?
2. After much study by some of the best Seventh-day Adventist Bible experts, a report was given on Hebrews. They asked two questions: (1) Does Hebrews teach Jesus’ two-part priestly work? (2) Does Hebrews deny Jesus’ two-

part priestly work? The committee answered No to both questions. Discuss what their answer means to us.

3. Hebrews is clear that the earthly sanctuary and heavenly sanctuary are closely connected. But we do not want to demand that the heavenly sanctuary is exactly the same as the earthly sanctuary.
4. What is important about the earthly sanctuary is the two-part work: (1) The daily services and (2) the yearly service (the Day of Atonement). How do the daily services and yearly service of the earthly sanctuary help prove that the heavenly sanctuary also has a two-part work?

SUMMARY: The book of Hebrews uses the Old Testament sanctuary service as its model. The Old Testament sanctuary points to the greater, better hope we have in Jesus. He is our Intercessor, Mediator, and High Priest in heaven.