

# Jesus *and the* Sanctuary



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## SABBATH Afternoon

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Exod. 24:5-8, 25:8, 29:12, 30:10, Lev. 10:18, Isaiah 53.*

**Memory Text:** “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (*Isaiah 53:11*).

**I**n the context of war and devastation, the poet W. H. Auden wrote that humans were like children “lost in a haunted wood,” afraid of the night, and who “have never been happy or good.”

This depressing verse captures the human situation. Fortunately, God wants to lead us out of this moral and physical morass. Ellen White has said that the moment there was sin there was a Savior. Through the ages the Savior has revealed Himself and salvation, hope, and eternal life for lost and fearful beings who are neither very happy nor very good.

For centuries, the main way that He has revealed Himself and His thoughts was through the earthly-sanctuary service, which provided a model for the plan of salvation.

This week we look at that service and what the Lord was telling His people through it. This way, we can claim the hope that God graciously offers to us—we who, to some degree, are reflected in Auden's verse.

**The Week at a Glance:** What was the meaning of those sacrifices? What was the purpose of the Old Testament sanctuary? How was Christ prefigured in the sacrificial rituals? Why was blood so central to the whole process?

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 15.*

## The Pre-Sanctuary Sacrifices

Last week's lesson sketched some of the earliest examples of sacrifice mentioned in the Old Testament. Interestingly enough (and perhaps you noticed), no real explanation of the origin, or purpose, of the sacrifices is given in the texts. The Bible just tells about them being offered.

**No matter the different circumstances surrounding each account, the Cain and Abel story (*Gen. 4:4*), the Flood story (*Genesis 6–8*), and the account of Abraham and Isaac (*Gen. 22:13*), all have one crucial thing in common: What is it, and why is it so important?**

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In all these presanctuary accounts, the worship centered on sacrifice, on blood, on the death of an *innocent* animal. Though the texts themselves say little about the purpose of the sacrifices, the death of the animal was still central. There was something about these deaths that made the act itself acceptable to God (contrast the Lord's reaction to Cain's offering with His response to Abel's). This is seen also in Noah's sacrifice right after exiting the ark.

**Read Genesis 8:21, 22. Notice the link between the sacrifices Noah offered and the Lord's intent never to "curse the ground any more for man's sake" (*see also Gen. 9:8-17*). What's implied in these texts, if not explicitly stated? How do we see the plan of salvation foreshadowed here?**

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Even here, long before the Cross, we are given a glimpse of the great plan of salvation, of God willing to forgive us, but only because of a sacrifice offered in our stead. God accepted—in behalf of the world—the sacrifice that Noah offered, even though “the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.”

**The Bible records Noah's first act after getting off the ark as one of building an altar and offering sacrifices to the Lord. What should that tell us about the importance of keeping the Lord first in our lives, not just in words but in concrete acts of worship, thanksgiving, and praise?**

## The Earthly Sanctuary

From the start, with the fall of Adam and Eve, we can see how one result of sin is separation between humanity and God. God is holy, humanity is unholy, and the question remains, How can a holy God come close to an unholy race? The earthly-sanctuary service helps provide an answer.

**Read Exodus 25:8.** Why does God ask the Hebrews to make a sanctuary?

The sanctuary functions as a meeting place between God and His people. The name of the sanctuary itself, the “tent of meeting” (often translated as “tent of the congregation”), carries this idea: The sanctuary was a place for the Lord, a holy God, to meet with sinful, fallen humanity. It was through the medium of the sanctuary that the Lord, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, interacted with His covenant people on a daily basis. Here is the place in which He issued judgments (*Exodus 16*), forgave sin (*Leviticus 4*), guided their journeying (*Num. 9:15-21*), cleansed them from impurity (*Lev. 14:31*), and communed with them (*Exod. 25:22*). It was the center of their worship, the center of divine revelation, and the place where the people came to in order to enjoy the benefits of this covenant relationship with God.

**Was the sanctuary the only place in which God had interacted with His people in a special way? How do Exodus 12 and Exodus 20 help answer that question?**

Of course, the Lord was not limited to interacting with His people via the sanctuary; nevertheless, that was the chosen means through which He tabernacled and communicated and interacted with them. Why He did it this specific way, Scripture doesn't say: The crucial thing is that, through this medium, He, a holy God, was able to manifest Himself to the people in order that they would be able to meet and commune with Him in a manner that allowed them to understand His will for their lives.

**Review the things that God did for His people by dwelling with them in the sanctuary. In what ways does Jesus, by having dwelt with us in the flesh (*John 1:14*), do the same things for us now?**

## Blood and the Sanctuary

Yesterday's study shows how the sanctuary was the means through which a holy God could dwell among and interact with sinners. Yet, it wasn't as though the building itself provided some kind of special filter that enabled the people to approach, worship, and have fellowship with the Lord. Something else was involved, something that a building itself could never provide.

**Read** **Leviticus 17:11.** What is the crucial element here, and why is it so important in allowing sinful humanity to approach a holy God?

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**Look up** **Exodus 24:5-8, 29:12, 30:10, Leviticus 4:17, and 10:18.** What's the one point all have in common?

Even the most cursory reading of the Old Testament—sanctuary ritual reveals the centrality of blood to the entire ritual. Innocent animals—lambs, bulls, goats—were slain in various services, everything from first ratifying the covenant between the people and God (*Exod. 24:5-8*) to making atonement for a priest who sins (*Lev. 4:3-7*) to purification rituals (*Lev. 15:25-30*), even to the communal offering on the Day of Atonement (*Leviticus 16*). What all this shows is how pivotal the sacrifices and blood were to the function of the earthly sanctuary. Whatever spiritual lessons were to be taught through the tabernacle service, the sacrifice of these animals, the spilling of their blood, was central to the whole process.

This shouldn't be surprising. As sinners, we should be destroyed, because sin leads to death. Yet God, in His grace, has provided a way of escape: the innocent dying for the guilty (*Rom. 5:8*). Jesus Himself would lose His life; that is, spill His blood, in order that we, as sinners, could stand forgiven (*Gal. 1:4, 1 Pet. 1:19*). Because blood represented life, spilled blood represented death, and the death of each sacrifice pointed to the death of Jesus, the means by which sinful humanity could be restored, in full, with the Creator.

**The sacrifice of innocent animals appears cruel, even crude. And maybe it's supposed to appear that way. What should this tell us about how bad sin is, that it takes something so hard and harsh in order to deal with it?**

## The Sanctuary and Sin

Through the sacrificial ritual, the sanctuary provided a means through which God's covenant people could enter into His divine presence. Yet, the questions are: What were those sacrifices all about that allowed people this access to God? and How is all this a prefiguring of what Christ has done for us?

**Read** the following texts: **Leviticus 5:1, 17; 17:16; 19:17; 20:17, 20.** **From the immediate context of these texts, what do you think the phrase about people or the individual "bearing . . . iniquity" means?**

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The basic idea presented here is that people are responsible for their own sin and iniquity. Excuses aren't allowed. God called His people into a covenant relationship with Him; He has allowed them to participate in His holiness (*Exod. 19:6, Lev. 19:2, 20:7*), and they could do this by living in faith and obedience to Him (*Lev. 20:8*). Sin and impurity, violations of the covenant law, could disrupt this covenant relationship. Unless sin were dealt with, His people would be punished, for they would be left to bear their own iniquity. The Lord, however, through His grace, offered them a way of being forgiven iniquity and a way to be cleansed from it. This provision was at the heart of the sacrificial system that centered on the sanctuary.

In order to be forgiven, those who were bearing their own sin brought a sacrifice to the Lord (*Lev. 5:5, 6*). The exact type of animal or ritual depended upon numerous factors, but the basic idea was the same: The sin and iniquity that a person was bearing were transferred to the innocent animal, and the animal itself suffered the death that, otherwise, would have been the sinner's. This is part of the process that's called atonement.

**What is atonement equated with in these texts? *Lev. 4:20, 6:7, 19:22, Num. 15:25.* How do the following texts help us understand what we have been offered through Jesus? *Ps. 130:3, 4; Eph. 1:7; 4:32; Col. 1:14.* How have you experienced for yourself the reality of this wonderful promise?**

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## The Supreme Sin Offering

**In light** of yesterday's study, where we looked at the idea of sin and iniquity transferred to the innocent animal as a means of forgiving the sinner, what are the following texts telling us about Jesus? *Isa. 53:11, Heb. 9:28, 1 Pet. 2:2.*

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The message is clear: Jesus became our Sin Bearer, taking upon Himself our sins and being punished for them, the only means of salvation and forgiveness for fallen humanity. This is, in many ways, the great truth foreshadowed in the earthly-sanctuary service.

**Read Isaiah 53.** How does this chapter, in its own unique way, teach us the idea of Christ's substitutionary death in our stead?

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Isaiah 53, linked with the last three verses of the fifty-second chapter, encapsulates the gospel. Isaiah's beautiful presentation of the Savior and of His redeeming work is set against the backdrop of humankind's ingratitude. Woven through these verses is a very clear and unmistakable presentation of the substitutionary nature of Christ's sacrifice, as prefigured in the earthly-sanctuary service: "This chapter [Isaiah 53] should be studied. It presents Christ as the Lamb of God. Those who are lifted up with pride, whose souls are filled with vanity, should look upon this picture of their Redeemer, and humble themselves in the dust. The entire chapter should be committed to memory. Its influence will subdue and humble the soul defiled by sin and uplifted by self-exaltation."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1147.

**Read again Isaiah 53 and write down every place it talks about humanity. What kind of picture does it present? How accurate of a portrayal is it? In what ways do you see yourself reflected in there? At the same time, what hope is offered there for fallen beings such as ourselves?**

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**Further Study:** See also Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 1147, 1148; Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 78, 458; *Evangelism*, p. 612; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 358, 359; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 690–692.

“To many it has been a mystery why so many sacrificial offerings were required in the old dispensation, why so many bleeding victims were led to the altar. But the great truth that was kept before men, and imprinted upon mind and heart, was this, ‘Without shedding of blood is no remission’ (Heb. 9:22). In every bleeding sacrifice was typified ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29).

“Christ Himself was the originator of the Jewish system of worship, in which, by types and symbols, were shadowed forth spiritual and heavenly things. . . .

“A lesson was embodied in every sacrifice, impressed in every ceremony, solemnly preached by the priest in his holy office, and inculcated by God Himself—that through the blood of Christ alone is there forgiveness of sins.

“Anciently believers were saved by the same Saviour as now, but it was a God veiled. They saw God’s mercy in figures. . . . Christ’s sacrifice is the glorious fulfillment of the whole Jewish economy. . . . All can now approach God through the merits of Christ. . . . They need not depend on priest or ceremonial sacrifice. Liberty is given to all to go directly to God through a personal Saviour.

“The whole mind, the whole soul, the whole heart, and the whole strength are purchased by the blood of the Son of God.”—Ellen G. White, *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 155.

## Discussion Questions:

- ① In what essential ways did the services of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and afterward, in the temple at Jerusalem, prophetically symbolize the gospel?
- ② As Christians, we see the death of Christ foreshadowed in the earthly-sanctuary service. Yet, the earthly service was not limited merely to the death of the animal. The priests also ministered in behalf of the people in the earthly sanctuary after the sacrifice had already been offered. Discuss the implications of that important fact in light of our understanding of Christ as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

## The Interrupted Rock Concert

by Juan Gratica Silva

A group of youth held evangelistic meetings in their town plaza in central Chile. They showed part of a movie about Jesus each evening before they spoke. About 100 people came each evening to listen. On the last evening the youth prayed for God's blessing, then they began setting up for the meetings.

A large truck stopped nearby and began playing rock music loudly through his speakers. The youth stopped in dismay. How could they preach over this loud noise?

Someone asked the truck driver to turn the music down, but he refused, saying he had been paid to play the music and had a permit to stay there. The youth had no special permit and could do nothing.

People were gathering for the meeting, but it would be impossible to hear over the music. The youth hurried to a nearby member's home to pray while the rest of the group stayed at the plaza.

Some of the people who had come to hear their message suggested that the youth come back another night. "You can't speak over the music," they said.

The pastor wondered if maybe they should postpone their final meeting. But, sure that God would honor their desire to share their faith, he called the remaining youth together. "We cannot do anything about the music, but God can. Let's pray." They prayed that God would step in and stop the music.

The youth who had gone to pray returned to the plaza and began setting up chairs. In record time the plaza was ready for a meeting.

The pastor turned on the video system, and a picture of Jesus flashed on the screen. At that moment the music blaring from the truck suddenly stopped. The silence was electric. Some 200 people who had gathered to listen to the rock music, stopped dancing and stood in silence. The man in the truck gathered his equipment and announced he was going elsewhere. Then he told one youth, "God told me to leave this place. Please forgive me for disturbing you."

A singer began a song, and the crowd who had been listening to the rock music turned to listen to God's music while pictures of Jesus flashed on the screen.

On previous nights, the meetings had drawn 100 to 135 people; but this night more than 250 stayed to listen. The youth, inspired by what they had seen God do, spoke with enthusiasm. During an altar call, 35 people came forward to commit their lives to Jesus.

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