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Introduction

The Picture of Salvation¹

It is said that the greatest example of the love of God was at the cross. It was there that the Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. But God wanted to help us better understand what this great sacrifice meant. So, He designed the earthly sanctuary² as an example of the plan of salvation. But this earthly sanctuary was just an example of the heavenly one. The heavenly sanctuary³ is the true center of God's presence and His work in the universe.

So, God instructed Moses on how the sanctuary on earth should be built. He planned to use it as a teaching tool. The Israelite sanctuary and its services showed important truths about salvation, about the character (who God is) of God, and about the final end to sin.

The sanctuary also was the model to help us to understand Jesus as our Sacrifice and High Priest. For example, John the Baptist told his disciples that Jesus was the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, NKJV). His disciples understood what John meant because they had seen the sanctuary as an example. The book of Hebrews assumes that the reader already knows basic information about the ancient Israelite priesthood in Bible times. Because of this knowledge, the readers of the letter to the Hebrews were able to understand what Jesus was doing for them in heaven. Sanctuary teachings also were used to teach truths about Christian living. In short, knowledge of the sanctuary system became a foundation (basis; start) for the new message of salvation in Christ.

But, throughout much of Christian history, the sanctuary message was largely forgotten. It was forgotten until the mid-1800s when Seventh-day Adventists began to understand God's example of salvation through the sanctuary. This new understanding also included the message of the pre-Advent judgment.⁴

"The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It helped the believers to understand a complete system of truth. This truth showed that God's hand had led the great Advent movement and helped the believers to better understand their position and work."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, page 423.

1. salvation—God's plan for people to be saved.

2. earthly sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times. Here the high priest offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

3. heavenly sanctuary—the place in heaven where Jesus works as our High Priest before the throne of God.

4. pre-Advent judgment—Seventh-day Adventists believe that judgment comes in three parts. The first part is the pre-Advent judgment, which is ongoing from Adam and Eve's time to the second coming of Jesus.

As the key for a complete system of truth, the sanctuary and Christ's work as High Priest became the basis for the Seventh-day Adventist faith. And it still is. In fact, the Seventh-day Adventist sanctuary message is not like any other belief taught by other churches. At the same time, no other doctrine (teaching) 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 been well defended. And they have increased our understanding of this very important teaching. They also have made us, as a people, stronger in our understanding of salvation.

Ellen G. White recommended that we pay close attention to the sanctuary. This is because "the sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work for the sake of all people. It concerns every person living upon the earth. It shows the plan of redemption.⁵ It brings us to the very close of time and shows the victory of righteous [holy] people in their war against sin. Therefore, it is very important that all study these subjects well."—Adapted from *The Great Controversy*, page 488. So, we can "use the faith needed at this time" to "fill the position which God plans [us] to fill."—Adapted from *The Great Controversy*, page 488.

The sanctuary shows the heart of God. Studying the sanctuary will bring us close to the presence of God and help us to understand the personality of our Savior. Studying the sanctuary will also lead us to a deeper personal relationship with Him.

So, this quarter we will study: God's sanctuary, both His earthly model (example) and the real, heavenly one.

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5. redemption—Christ's plan to save sinners through His sacrifice on the cross.