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Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Rom. 8:3, John 1:29, Rev. 5:12, Heb. 7:1–28. 9:11–15. Lev. 16:13. Heb. 9:20–23.

Memory Text: "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Philippians 2:9, 10, NIV).

alking about Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary, the book of Hebrews says: "where the forerunner has entered for us, even ∠ Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:20, NKJV).

Scripture, especially the New Testament, is so clear about Christ's role as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary—a role He took after He completed His work as our sacrifice here on earth (see Heb. 10:12).

This week we will explore the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. His intercessory work is crucial to the preparation of His people to be ready for the end time. So, we have been given this crucial admonition: "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."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 488.

What is Christ doing for us in the heavenly sanctuary, and why is it so important for us to understand it, especially in the last days?

^{*} Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 5.

Supreme Sacrifice

Studying the supreme sacrifice of Christ does so much to prepare believers for the end time. Often humans look to the goal ahead of them, and that makes sense. But it is also good to realize that the goal is behind them. We speak of Calvary. The goal, reached here by Jesus for us, is irreversible and final, and it gives certainty to the goal ahead, as well.

	God send His Son into the world?
fles die. Hin A like the of C hun nine usee	and sent Christ to be a sin offering in order to condemn sin in the theorem of the Lord became a human, taking our mortality was a self so that He could die as our substitute. In though divine, and although in nature God, Jesus took on "humess," and He humbled Himself "by becoming obedient to death cross (<i>Phil. 2:6–8, NIV</i>). In a way known only to God, the divicant did not die when Jesus died on the cross. In some way beyonan comprehension, the divinity of Jesus was quiescent during the months in the womb and in the days in the tomb, and Jesus and it to aid His humanity during His life and ministry here. **Luke 9:22. What does this tell us about the intentionality rist's death?
in e	hrist was born to die. We can imagine that there was never a mor ternity when He was free from thoughts of the mocking, the f g, and the heartbreaking crucifixion that He would face. The

What can we humans do in the face of this kind of love but fall down and worship in faith and obedience? What does the reality of the Cross tell us about the worthlessness of human merit?

The Lamb of God

ing	Then John the Baptist called Jesus the "Lamb of God," he was an unmistakable reference to the sanctuary. Even more direct
fulf Heb Inde	making a reference to Christ's death for sin as the one and illment of all the lambs (and every other sacrificial animal prew sanctuary ritual) that had ever been slain as a sacrifice for ed, the four Gospels, whatever else they teach, ultimately to yof what Jesus did in His role as the Lamb of God who takes sins of the world.
the F	ut the story of Jesus and His work for our salvation does not e Gospels, even with His death and resurrection. rom the beginning, the book of Hebrews touches on the ther ist as the High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary after His work
Sacı Cro Jesi	rificial Lamb. From the first mention of Him in this role after seas (<i>Heb. 1:3</i>), succeeding chapters in the book make referer as as High Priest. The depiction of His work in the heavenly sea is developed fully in detail in Hebrews 7:1–28.
n d 1	Hebrews 7:1–28. What is the author saying here about Jest

Although these verses are so deep, so rich, the essence of what they are saying is that Jesus Christ has a better priesthood than did the priests from the line of Aaron in the earthly sanctuary service. But now, instead of an earthly priesthood in an earthly sanctuary, we have a heavenly High Priest ministering for us in the sanctuary in heaven. So when we focus our eyes on Jesus, we can focus them on Him as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

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Our High Priest

Read Hebrews 7:24–27, 8:6. What great hope do these texts give to us?

Christ is able to save completely because of several qualifications that no other priest could ever have. He is God, who has authority to forgive sins. He has a permanent priesthood. During the Christian era, He is interceding all the time for His people with the same loving compassion as when He healed the sick and comforted the lonely on earth. He is also human but was born sinless and remained that way. And, as the sinless One. He died under the staggering weight of the sum total of human sin. Only He, then, as the God-man, can intercede for sinners in heaven's sanctuary.

What these texts show, too, is that Christ's sacrifice was once and for all. It needed to happen only one time, and it was sufficient to bring salvation to every human being.

After all, considering who it was who died on the cross, how could such an offering not be sufficient for every human being?

Read Hebrews 9:11–15. What has Christ obtained for us through His death and now His ministry in heaven?

Hebrews 9:12 says that Christ has "obtained eternal redemption" (NKJV). The Greek word translated as "redemption" also means "ransoming," "releasing," and "deliverance." It's the same word used in Luke 1:68, when Zacharias declares that God has "visited and redeemed His people" (NKJV). The reference to Christ's blood—the blood of the only sufficient sacrifice—means that it was Christ, as the sacrificial Lamb, who obtained this redemption, this deliverance. And the great news of the gospel is that Christ obtained this not for Himself but for us, and it becomes efficacious for all who accept Christ's sacrifice for them.

Dwell on the idea that Christ has "obtained" "eternal redemption" for us and that only after He accomplished this did He enter into His work in the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf. What hope does this offer us regarding what Christ is doing for us in the heavenly sanctuary?

Our Intercessor

Although sin brought a fearful separation between God and humanity, through Christ's sacrificial death we as human beings are brought to God and can continue to have access to Him. See Eph. 2:18, 1 Pet. 3:18.

"Wh	fast, and w runner is a after the o verses, wha	hich ent for us en rder of N	ereth i itered, Melchiz	nto th even J zedek"	at wi Jesus, ' (Hel	thin t , mad	the v le an	eil; w high	hither the priest fo	e fore- r ever
Rea	Hebrev includes?	vs 9:24.	What	does	this	text	say	that	Christ's	work

Jesus is the forerunner, having entered as our Representative into the heavenly sanctuary, even into the very presence of God *for us*. That is, Jesus is standing before the Father, ministering the merits of His atonement, the "eternal redemption" that He "obtained" in our behalf.

Yes, when we accepted Jesus our sins were forgiven, and we stood before God pardoned and cleansed. But the fact remains that even though we have become Christians, we at times still sin, despite all the wonderful promises of victory. In such cases, Jesus intercedes as our High Priest in heaven. He represents the repenting sinner, not pleading our merits (for we have none) but pleading His own on our behalf before the Father. "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" (Heb. 7:25, NKJV).

What born-again Christian does not sense his or her own need of Christ's continuing mercy and grace? That is, despite the new life we have in Jesus, despite the wonderful changes in our existence, who doesn't realize his or her own constant need of pardon and forgiveness? Why, then, is the knowledge of Christ as our High Priest so precious to us?

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The Day of Atonement

The book of Hebrews teaches that the earthly Hebrew sanctuary service was a model of the heavenly sanctuary, the one that Christ entered and inaugurated as our High Priest. The earthly service, with its two apartments and its sacrificial and cleansing rituals, was "the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle" (Heb. 8:5, NKJV).

And just as the earthly sanctuary ritual included a ministry in the two compartments, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, so also does Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. In the earthly sanctuary, the concept of judgment was represented on the Day of Atonement, which resulted in the cleansing of the sanctuary, as depicted in Leviticus 16. This was the one time a year when the High Priest entered into the second compartment, the Most Holy Place (Lev. 16:12–14), to do a work of cleansing and atonement on behalf of the people.

Read Hebrews 9:20–23. What needs to be purified and cleansed why is this a clear reference to the Day of Atonement minist Christ?					

Scholars have been surprised by the statement that the heavenly sanctuary itself needed to be cleansed or "purified." However, once this is understood as a Day of Atonement reference, the problem vanishes. Hebrews 9:23 shows that the work Christ does in the heavenly sanctuary is the true expression of what the earthly high priest did in the yearly Day of Atonement service in the Israelite sanctuary. The ministry of the earthly priest in cleansing the earthly sanctuary foreshadowed the work that Christ would do one day in the heavenly. The text does not say that this heavenly cleansing takes place immediately after Christ's ascension. From the study of the book of Daniel, we can see that this phase of ministry began in the year 1844. So as Christians facing the last days, we need to understand the solemnity of the time that we are in but rest in the assurance of what Christ has done for us in the past and is doing for us now in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary.

The first angel's message declares: "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7, NKJV). The reality of the judgment points to the nearness of the end. How should this reality impact how we live?

Further Thought: The book of Hebrews points to the earthly sanctuary as the model, the type, of what Christ would do for us both on earth as our sacrifice and in heaven as our High Priest. The Israelite sanctuary was meant always to be an object lesson of the gospel. It was to teach the Jews the plan of salvation, which included sacrifice, intercession, judgment, and the final end of sin. The book of Daniel, meanwhile, adds more light in terms of helping readers to understand the apocalyptic (end time) dimension of Christ's final work in the heavenly sanctuary. "With its emphasis on cleansing, judgment, and vindication, the apocalyptic visions of Daniel project the imagery of the Day of Atonement to the very end of earth's history. The cleansing is connected directly to the heavenly sanctuary and to the work of the Messiah as king and priest. The visions introduce the time element, making it possible for the reader to identify a specific moment within salvation history when the Messiah would begin His work of final cleansing, judgment, and vindication in the heavenly dwelling of God."—Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2000), p. 394.

Discussion Questions:

- **1** Look at this quote from Ellen G. White: "As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded. But before this can be accomplished, there must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement."—The Great Controversy, pp. 421, 422. What does she say are the two things that reveal those who are entitled to the "benefits of His atonement"? Why is it so important for God's people to grasp what these two things are, especially in the trials of the last days?
- **2** Read Leviticus 16:15, 16. What is the significance of the blood? What did the blood represent? Why was the blood so crucial to the Day of Atonement ritual back then, and what does it mean for us today?

INSIDE Story

On Czech Television

by Andrew McChesney, Adventist Mission

Irena Metzova doesn't know why she narrowly missed boarding a passenger jet that crashed into the Atlantic Ocean. But the sparing of her life allowed her to share the Sabbath on national television.

Irena had planned to fly from New York to her native Czech Republic after a summer of working as a volunteer cook for a group of student literature evangelists, including her college-age son. But the airline, KLM, suspended flights amid an industrial strike and rebooked her on a Swissair flight at the last minute. She alerted her sister in the Czech Republic about the change of plans, and the sister agreed to meet her at the Prague airport the next day.

In the morning, the sister woke up to the news that a Swissair DC-10 jet had crashed about two hours after takeoff from New York. It was her sister's plane.

In tears, she called Irena's husband. "I lost my sister. You lost your wife," she said.

But Irena hadn't taken the flight. When Irena approached the Swissair desk to check in for Flight 111 at New York's John F. Kennedy Airport, the Swissair representative said something that changed everything.

"Mrs. Metzova, you are Czech," the airline representative said. "We can put you on a direct flight from here to the Czech Republic on Czech Airlines. How would you like that?"

Irena liked the idea of not having to change planes in Geneva, and the airline representative printed her a new boarding pass.

"You have 15 minutes to catch the plane," the airline representative said. "Run!"

At 10:30 p.m. on September 2, 1998, the Swissair plane crashed off Canada's coast, killing all 229 people onboard, including a Seventh-day Adventist college student planning to study for a year in France. An in-flight fire was blamed for the tragedy.

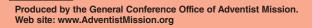
As the world mourned, Irena's sister learned about the change in the itinerary. Irena, now 68, can't explain what happened. But several years after the tragedy, she was given the opportunity to speak about her faith on Czech national television. On the television program, *Answered Prayers*, Irena told about God's goodness amid repressions in Communist-era Czechoslovakia.

She read the fourth commandment about the Sabbath.

Many people heard about the biblical seventh-day Sabbath for the first time, said her son, Kamil Metz, international coordinator for the Giving Light to Our World (GLOW) tracts ministry.

"After the program aired, other Adventists told us that their relatives had called them and said, 'We never knew that the Sabbath was in the Bible,' "he said.

All because Irena somehow missed a flight.



The Lesson in Brief

▶Key Text: Hebrews 9:12

The Student Will:

Know: Examine and understand the function and meaning of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

Feel: Appreciate the proximity of Christ as his or her Intecessor, and appreciate the message of the close connection between heaven and earth.

Do: Determine why and how the heavenly ministry of Christ has relevance for us, especially in the last days.

Learning Outline:

- I. Know: The Priest in Heaven
 - A What role does Jesus play in the heavenly sanctuary?
 - **B** What is the meaning of His intercession?
 - Why is this heavenly service necessary for the salvation of the world?

II. Feel: The Priest in My Heart

- A Why is Christ's heavenly ministry important?
- B What does Christ's priestly ministry teach about God's care for us?
- What does this truth teach me about God's intimate presence in my heart?

III. Do: The Priest in My Life

- A Why should I live a holy life?
- **B** How is Christ's heavenly ministry relevant to my life today?
- How does Christ's heavenly ministry help me in my struggle with sin?

Summary: Christ is still at work to ensure the process of judgment and to help us prepare for the kingdom of God in our hearts.

Learning Cycle

►STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: Hebrews 9:11-14

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The great model of Christ, praying for the salvation of the world, obliges me to join Him in prayer to implore God's kingdom to come.

Just for Teachers: The contemplation of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary will increase our sensitivity to the atrocity of sin and awaken our responsibility for our neighbors. Salvation is a process that concerns the world; the salvation of the individual is related to the salvation of the world.

Opening Discussion: Christ's intercessory ministry in behalf of sinners is one of our most challenging doctrines, not only because it concerns the heavenly realm, but also because our understanding of it makes us almost unique among Christians and other believers. It is not enough to repeat that this topic is important. We should learn to think about the meaning and the significance of this process that takes place in heaven and concerns our personal destiny and the destiny of the world. Engage with your class in a frank discussion of Christ's high-priestly work, searching for ways to make this topic clear, convincing, and relevant.

Questions for Discussion:

- Why is Jesus' ministry in heaven important? Find biblical stories or passages that underscore the connection between heaven and earth (for example, the ladder of Bethel, in Genesis 28:12).
- 2 According to Daniel, what is the difference between the God of Israel and the gods of the Chaldeans? (See Dan. 2:10, 11, 28.)
- **3** Why is Christ's intercessory ministry in heaven so crucial—not only for us as Seventh-day Adventists, but also for the destiny of the world? Why are other Christians largely inattentive to this aspect of Christ's ministry? How can we translate and communicate this message to postmodern minds?

▶STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: This lesson will cover the three main phases of Christ's ministry: (1) His sacrifice as the Passover Lamb, (2) His high-priestly ministry in heaven, and (3) the eschatological Day of

Atonement. Be sure to avoid merely enunciating this point of doctrine; instead, approach it with creativity and the urgent sense of its existential and historical relevance. Relate your presentation and discussion to the crises of our church, concerning the sanctuary doctrine (the Great Disappointment of our pioneers, false teachers, and the havoc wrecked by their theories within our ranks, etc.). Discuss and address their mistakes. Although our views are not accepted by many Christians, show that Adventists are not alone in holding this apocalyptic reading; other religious traditions (Jewish and Muslim) attest to the same emphasis.

Bible Commentary

I. The Lamb of God (Review John 1:29 with your class.)

The sacrifice of the lamb at Passover was a "type," pointing to the sacrifice of Christ. It is thanks to the blood of this lamb that the angel of death "passed over" the doors of the Israelite houses, thus preparing for the Exodus salvation (Exod. 12:13, 14). Along the same lines, Isaiah compares the atoning "lamb" to the Suffering Servant, who will save the world by taking their sins on Himself (Isa. 53:7; compare with Acts 8:32).

The same association of thoughts is found in the New Testament. Luke uses the word "decease," or *exodus* in Greek, to refer to Jesus' death (*Luke 9:31*), thus alluding to the spiritually liberating and redemptive effect of His death. Yet, when John the Baptist identified Jesus as "the Lamb of God," he added to the Passover lamb another surprising dimension: divinity. For this Lamb was of a divine character. The phrase "lamb of God" means in Hebrew grammar "the divine lamb." For John, God had become this Lamb that was sacrificed at Passover. Significantly, the "lamb" is the most important and most frequent symbol in the book of Revelation, where it appears from the beginning to the end (*Rev. 5:6, 22:3, etc.*). To save humankind, the great God of the universe identified Himself with the most vulnerable victim.

Consider This: In light of Jesus' statement in Luke 9:22, discuss the following questions:

- 1. Why was it necessary for God to die for our sins?
- 2. Couldn't it have been possible for God to forgive our sins without having to die on the cross? Explain.
- 3. What is the logical explanation for the sacrifice of Christ?

II. The Priest Forever (Review Psalm 110 and Hebrews 7:20–28 with your class.)

Paradoxically, Jesus is identified not only as the "lamb" that is sacrificed; He is also identified as the priest who slaughters the lamb. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, following Psalm 110, compares Jesus to Melchizedek "a priest forever" (Heb. 7:21, NKJV; compare with Ps. 110:4), a way of affirming the everlasting and universal scope of the priesthood of Christ (Heb. 7:24). The author of Hebrews refers here to the priestly function of Christ in heaven. According to this new covenant, salvation and forgiveness are no longer limited in time and in space; they are available now to everyone and have a permanent effect.

That the divine priesthood, located in heaven, is in the hands of the eternal Son of God has tremendous significance. It means that we have now direct access to God and do not need to offer sacrifices. But more important, it means that Jesus' priesthood has an effect on the history of the whole world: Jesus' priesthood in heaven concerns the preparation for the heavenly kingdom of God. Jesus' sacrifice has, at the cross, replaced the old Levitical sacrifices and thus moved the process of forgiveness and salvation to heaven. Now, the new horizon is cosmic and aims at the future kingdom of God in heaven.

Consider This: Why did the priestly intercession move from earth to heaven? Explain why the event of the Cross does not complete the process of salvation. Why did Stephen see Jesus "'at the right hand of God'" in heaven (*Acts 7:56, NKJV; compare with Ps. 110:1*)? What does this vision mean in regard to the new covenant (*Dan. 9:27*)?

III. The Day of Atonement in Heaven (Review Hebrews 9:26–28 and Daniel 8:14 with your class.)

The last phase of the process of salvation is represented by the author of Hebrews and by biblical prophecy as a day of judgment/Atonement (in Hebrew kippur). After referring to the sacrifice of Christ, whose function was to "put away sin" (Heb. 9:26, NKJV; compare with Dan. 9:24), the author of Hebrews clearly refers to that event of "judgment," which he parallels to the Second Coming: "As it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. . . . He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Heb. 9:27, 28, NKJV).

For the author of Hebrews, just as human death parallels Christ's death, the judgment parallels Jesus' second coming. The book of Daniel projects the same historical trajectory. While the 70-weeks prophecy leads to the sacrifice of Christ (Dan. 9:26), the 2,300-evenings-and-mornings prophecy leads to the day of judgment or the Day of Atonement at the end of time, just before the coming of the Son of man (Dan. 8:14; compare with Dan. 7:9–14). God's plan of salvation did not stop at the cross. The prophecy refers also to the Day of Atonement/judgment in heaven that should mark

the time of the end, just before Jesus' coming.

The additional event of the pre-Advent judgment may come as a surprise to many Christians. Yet, this event is a very important and crucial step in the process of salvation. For it is this event that finally opens to the kingdom of God, the ultimate historical manifestation of salvation. It is particularly significant that biblical prophecy describes this special moment in terms of the Day of Atonement. Just as the Levitical Day of Atonement was needed by "all the people" (Lev. 16:33; compare with verse 17), in order that "all their sins" might be atoned (Lev. 16:34, NKJV), this final Day of Atonement is made necessary for the salvation of the world. The message of the Day of Atonement is that salvation is essentially a cosmic event. Salvation cannot take place unless there is a "new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1, NKJV; compare with Isa. 65:17).

Discussion Question: Why are the Cross and the judgment two complementary events?

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Why is the biblical truth of the judgment often difficult to understand and teach? Compare it with other important truths, such as scientific truths (physics, medicine, etc.). Why is it necessary that some of these truths be difficult to grasp?

Application Question: How could we communicate the important and profound truth of the judgment to people of today?

▶STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: An important lesson we learned this week is the sophistication and beauty of God's work in the salvation of the world. The complexity of this lesson suggests just how serious God's work and attention are in this matter.

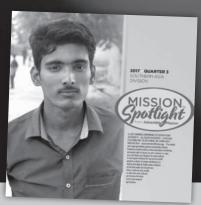
Activities: Expose various ideologies that have been put forth to save the world (socialism, liberalism, absolutism, anarchism, etc.). Why did all these propositions fail? Why is the creation of a new world the only solution to the problem of the world? Why, and how, does the biblical truth of the eschatological Day of Atonement respond to that question?



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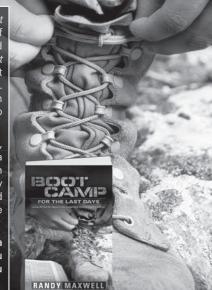
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