

## ***The Wonder of Jesus*** ***The Efficacy of His Priestly Ministry***

Lesson #12 for June 21, 2008

Scriptures: Exodus 20:18-20; 25:8; Daniel 7:9-14; Zechariah 3:1-5; Matthew 27:50,51; Acts 7:54-56; Hebrews 6:19,20; 7:23-28; 8:1,2,7; 9; 10:1-17.

1. This lesson is about the “sanctuary” in heaven, and, according to the Bible study guide, what Jesus is doing there now for us. What are we supposed to learn from the sanctuary service described in the Old Testament about the ministry of Christ in heaven right now?
2. The first hints of a sacrificial system apparently were given to Adam and Eve outside the gates of the Garden of Eden. Some have suggested that God told Adam and Eve to sacrifice that first lamb. It is possible that the skins of that lamb were used for their clothing. Try to imagine the scene as God Himself instructed Adam to kill that first lamb. How did Adam do it? With a stone? When the blood appeared, did Adam say, “This is making me nauseated”? “This is making me sick”? “I feel awful”? Did God then proceed to instruct them about the consequences of sin? Did He explain that an innocent victim would die because of their sin? There is no evidence that there was any kind of mediation involved. Adam was the only “priest” of his family. The same was true for thousands of other families for thousands of years!
3. The first hint in the Bible of any mediation being “required” is found in Exodus 20:18-20. God did not recommend a mediator, but the people begged for one!
4. The Hebrew sanctuary system replaced its predecessor in the form of that first sacrifice outside the gates of Eden. The conditions surrounding that first sacrifice suggested to Adam and Eve the following points: 1) Sin led to separation from God and thus to death. 2) Sin had separated them from the tree of life, from God's daily presence, and from daily conversations with God. 3) But God had provided a way for that relationship to be restored.
5. Thousands of years later when the sanctuary system was established at the foot of Mount Sinai, the same three basic lessons were emphasized: 1) Sin has separated us from God and thus, sin leads to death. 2) While God wants to dwell among us, His holiness and His righteousness cannot coexist with sin. Therefore, He “existed” in the most holy place “separated” by numerous “barriers” from the common sinner. 3) But a way had been provided to “deal with” the sinner's past behavior and sins. The sins were to be “transferred” from the sinner to the innocent victim, and then, through the innocent victim's blood, to the sanctuary. Then, on the Day of Atonement, the “sins” were to be “carried” far away from the sanctuary and separated from the camp of Israel forever. (Leviticus 16) In the sanctuary system, there were many “barriers” between God and the people.
6. Those lessons were to be reinforced by the imposition of the death penalty for virtually any “deliberate sin.” (Numbers 15:30,31) Sacrifices were for “unintentional sins.”
7. In connection with that first sanctuary, the people promised three times at the time of the first covenant to obey everything which God had told them to do. (Exodus 19:8; 24:3,7) But, as we know, the people's promise was flagrantly broken almost immediately.
8. Inside of the holy place, the seven branched lampstand and the shewbread on the table symbolized light, truth, and life.
9. Blood was “everywhere”! In fact, “According to the Law almost everything is purified by blood, and sins are forgiven only if blood is poured out.” (Hebrews 9:22, *Good News Bible*) What does

blood do for sin or sinners? Is blood being poured out now in the heavenly sanctuary?

10. But many questions are raised by examining that ancient system.

1) Is it really possible to “take” our sins and “place them” on an innocent lamb? Can sins be “moved around” in that way? Or are our past sins a permanent part of the record of the great controversy? When judgment time comes, apparently God will be able to recall everything. (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14)

2) We are reminded by Hebrews 8:7,13 that the first system did not work. Read Hebrews 10:1-4. The ancient sacrificial system seemed only effective in reminding people of their sins, year after year. Paul wrote emphatically, “For the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sins.” And for emphasis he repeated that idea in Hebrews 10:11.

3) If that ancient system served only to remind people of their sins, and if it is also true that by beholding we become changed, (GC 555) wouldn't that serve only to make them greater sinners?

11. So, how was the sacrifice of Christ different? Does it just serve in a more comprehensive way to remind us of our sins? Why is Christ's single sacrifice “effective forever”? (Hebrews 10:12) If the sacrifice of Jesus allows us to “come boldly” to the “throne of grace,” does that mean that Enoch, Job, and Abraham could not, since the sacrifice had not yet been given? We know that Job and Abraham spoke very boldly to God! (See Job 6:8; 13:3,19-28; 23:1-17; 29-31 and Genesis 18)

12. At the dedication of the tabernacle in the wilderness, God's glory was “poured out” and because of that, not even God's best friend, Moses, could enter into that “dazzling light” of the Lord's presence. (Exodus 40:34,35) Something very similar happened at the dedication of Solomon's Temple. (2 Chronicles 5:11-14) At those moments in time, it seemed that God was pleased with what they were doing. Hundreds of thousands of sacrifices were made.

13. But when we read Haggai 2:9, we discover something quite surprising. There was no manifestation of God's glory at the dedication of the “rebuilt” temple in the days of Haggai and Zechariah. But God told Haggai that the temple built in his day would be more glorious than any of the previous ones. Why would that be? God Himself—then in human form—would enter that temple and sit down quietly and teach His people the great truths of the gospel. Could it be that a quiet discussion of truth is more to God's liking than magnificent manifestations of His majesty and power? Does that tell us anything about the whole purpose of the sacrificial, sanctuary service?

14. Read Hebrews 9. Our Bible study guide suggests that we should learn the following lessons from Hebrew 9. Do you agree?

1. What happened under the first covenant (the Old Testament sanctuary services) was provisional only. Fundamentally inadequate to bring about internal change, the offerings and ceremonies pointed beyond themselves to something bigger. [Were the people ever told that the offerings and ceremonies symbolized something “bigger”? If so, when and where?]

2. That bigger something now has happened. Christ has come. He is the real High Priest (*Heb. 9:11*). His entrance into the heavenly sanctuary was not through “the blood of goats and calves; but . . . once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” (*vs. 12, NIV*).

3. The offerings under the old system achieved external results (vs. 13) but could not effect internal change. But the blood of Christ reaches to our inner being, cleansing “our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (vs. 14, NIV)

4. Christ shed His blood once, on our behalf; and now He appears for us in the presence of God as our High Priest (vs. 24-28). (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Wednesday, June 18, 2008)

15. How does that actually work? Was God wasting His time for thousands of years focusing on the “earthly” sanctuary system. Is there any hint in the Books of Moses or elsewhere in the Old Testament that all of that system was to point forward to a “Future Sacrifice”? Or is it not until the book of Hebrews that we find that concept? Did the Jews of Jesus time “look forward to” a “Future Sacrifice”?
16. If we practiced the actual words of God through Moses—that only unintentional sins would be covered by that system, and that intentional sins should be punished by death—how would that affect the church today? Did the people take Moses’ words seriously in their day?
17. Have we taken seriously these words from Ellen White?

Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. (*The Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1893 and December 22, 1914; *The Messenger* June 7, 1893; *Bible Echoes* July 15, 1893; *That I May Know Him* 366)

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.” John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. (*Patriarchs and Prophets* 68,69 (1890); *Reflecting Christ* 60 (1985))

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels...Not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God’s wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which “angels desire to look,” [1 Peter 1:12] and it will be their study throughout endless ages. (*The Desire of Ages* 19 (1898); *Reflecting Christ* 15 (1985))

To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, “It is finished,” had a deep

significance for the masses was that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. Not the death of Christ, which Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion. (*The Desire of Ages* 758 (1898))

18. Read Daniel 7:9-14 and Zechariah 3:1-5. (For more details see *PK*, “Joshua and the Angel,” and *GC*, “The Pre-Advent [Investigative] Judgment.”) These passages introduce several important ideas regarding what is happening in the “heavenly sanctuary” now.
  1. God conducts His “heavenly business” in the sanctuary in heaven in a completely open manner. The entire universe is watching everything that God does. God is the center of everything that happens in the entire universe. What happens in the “sanctuary” in heaven is about God; it is not just about us. It was in heaven that sin started—in God’s presence.
  2. Satan is the one who accuses us! And he also accuses God! So God, in His usual very open way, systematically answers Satan’s questions and accusations one by one for the whole universe to see.
  3. We discover that our salvation is only a small part of something that is much “larger” and much more important—the vindication of God’s character and His government—through the reasons why Jesus came to this small planet and died.
  4. If God were the kind of Person that Satan has made Him out to be—arbitrary, vengeful, exacting, unforgiving, and severe—would we even want to be saved to live with Him forever?
  5. By revealing the truth to us, Our Great High Priest, Jesus, through His life and His death, has convinced us that we can and should want to be a part of God’s eternal government. We become convinced that living God’s way of love—as hard as that is for naturally self-centered human beings—is the only “safe” way to live together for all eternity. Then, Satan’s selfish ways lose their attraction and we turn away from them.
  6. The message of the sanctuary and the sacrificial system is not that God has somehow inexplicably “paid the price” for our sins and so now we can be saved. He “paid what it cost” to demonstrate the truth about what is at the very core of God’s government. He has once and for all answered all of Satan’s questions and accusations. Therefore, when it becomes necessary for God to eliminate Satan and all his followers who insist on clinging to their sins, no one will serve God out of fear—even though sinners cease to exist.
  7. We needed a Mediator, not to speak on our behalf to God, but rather to speak on God’s behalf to us! There has never been any deficiency in God’s knowledge or understanding. The problem has always been on our side. We are deficient and defective.
  8. Have we fully learned how deadly sin is? Are we ready to give up those “cherished sins”?
  9. The sanctuary system is not just about us and how God goes about saving us. That is a very self-centered approach. The sanctuary is about God and how He runs His universe. He is asking us to “look higher” and see the “larger” issues in the great controversy.

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