

## ***Growing in Christ***

### ***Last Things: Jesus and the Saved***

Lesson #12 for December 22, 2012

Scriptures: Hebrews 8:1-5; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:24,25; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:23; Acts 3:19-21.

1. Our church began with the preaching about the second advent of Christ. This lesson will focus on what we believe is happening between 1844 and the second coming, some details about the second coming itself, and the resurrection of the righteous dead.
2. William Miller began preaching about the second coming because of his understanding and interpretation of Daniel 8 and 9. As a result of further study on that subject, Seventh-day Adventists believe that: (Fundamental Belief #24)

There is a sanctuary in heaven—the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative [pre-advent] judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. (Heb. 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16,17; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13,14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6; Lev. 16; Rev. 14:6,7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12.)

3. As Seventh-day Adventists, we are unique in our understanding of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and our interpretation of the 2300-day-year prophecy. To be honest, we need to recognize that our understanding of this doctrine raises a number of questions that our Christian friends have raised in the past.
4. What does it mean to say that God is on His throne in the heavenly sanctuary when we also believe that God is omnipresent? Does that include both the Father and the Holy Spirit at this point? What is Christ doing right now in the heavenly sanctuary? In the earthly sanctuary constructed by the children of Israel as they came out of Egypt, there were three phases of the sanctuary service: a substitutionary sacrifice, priestly mediation, and judgment.
5. In what sense is Christ's death on the cross substitutionary? Read Isaiah 53:4-6; Romans 3:24-26; and 2 Corinthians 5:21. Because of Christ's life and death, I do not have to die.
6. It should be abundantly clear that if Christ had not come and lived and died as He did, we would have no hope of salvation. In that broadest possible sense, His death was substitutionary. Jesus died of sin to show us what that death would be like for sinners.
7. Read 1 Timothy 2:5 and Hebrews 7:25. We believe that Christ is the sole Mediator before the Father and the angels in heaven. These verses suggest that through His mediation, He brings God and man together. Read also Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 9:24.
8. What does it mean to say that Jesus is pleading before God on our behalf? Does Someone need to plead with the Father before He will forgive us? Is the Son more loving and caring than the Father and that is why He is pleading for us? (*That I May Know Him*, p. 338) If that is true, how do we explain John 3:16 and 14:9? If the Father needs to be pleaded with, maybe our Roman Catholic friends are correct in suggesting that we should have lots of people—called saints—to help Jesus plead. Jesus said He would not do that! (John 16:25-27)

9. One of the main obstacles to accepting our understanding of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is the fact that most of our Christian friends believe in the immortality of the "soul"; and thus, people go immediately to their reward when they die. So, how could there be a [pre-advent] judgment just before the second coming if people are already in heaven or hell?
10. An even more perplexing theological question is this one: Why would an omniscient God need an "investigative" judgment? In more recent times, we have suggested that it should be called a "pre-advent" judgment instead of an investigative judgment. Does that help? It should be clear that if the righteous are to be taken to heaven at the second coming, Someone is going to have to decide who is righteous and who is not righteous. There are two chapters in the writings of Ellen White in which she discussed these issues in some detail: *Great Controversy*, Chapter 28, formerly known as "The Investigative Judgment" and now called "Facing Life's Record"; and "Joshua and the Angel" in *Prophets and Kings*, Chapter 47. These chapters are based largely on Daniel 7:9-14; Zechariah 3:1-5; and Revelation 12:1-12. They also include several ideas from other parts of the book of Revelation. Jesus is defending us before the entire universe.
11. So, what is actually happening in heaven right now? Let us look at what the Bible says about it in Daniel 7:9,10,13,14. Notice who is involved in those events in heaven. It is not only the Father and the Son, but also hundreds of millions of angels are there.
12. More than that, who is making accusations against us as our cases are being brought up? Look at Zechariah 3:1-5 and Isaiah 64:6; compare Revelation 12:7-12. Throughout the history of the great controversy, it has been Satan who has been the "accuser of the brethren."

As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names rejected.

The deepest interest manifested among men in the decisions of earthly tribunals but faintly represents the interest [484] evinced in the heavenly courts when the names entered in the book of life come up in review before the Judge of all the earth. [They are the jury in our cases.] The divine Intercessor presents the plea that all who have overcome through faith in His blood be forgiven their transgressions, that they be restored to their Eden home, and crowned as joint heirs with Himself to "the first dominion." Micah 4:8.

While Jesus is pleading for the subjects of His grace, Satan accuses them before God as transgressors. [Zechariah 3:1-5; John 16:25-27]

Jesus does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith, and, claiming for them forgiveness, He lifts His wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels, saying: I know them by name. I have graven them on the palms of My hands....Their names stand enrolled in the book of life, and concerning them it is written: "They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." Revelation 3:4.—*Great Controversy* 483.3-484.0 Note that content in brackets is added.

13. *Prophets and Kings* adds:

Satan has an accurate knowledge of the sins that he has tempted God's people to commit, and he urges his accusations against them, declaring, that by their sins they have forfeited divine protection, and claiming that he has the right to

destroy them. He pronounces them just as deserving as himself of exclusion from the favor of God. "Are [589] these," he says, "the people who are to take my place in heaven, and the place of the angels who united with me? They profess to obey the law of God; but have they kept its precepts? Have they not been lovers of self more than lovers of God? Have they not placed their own interests above His service? Have they not loved the things of the world? Look at the sins that have marked their lives. Behold their selfishness, their malice, their hatred of one another. Will God banish me and my angels from His presence, and yet reward those who have been guilty of the same sins? Thou canst not do this, O Lord, in justice. Justice demands that sentence be pronounced against them.—*Prophets and Kings* 588.3-589.0 (1917); *Maranatha* 213; *5T* 473; *Review and Herald* January 9, 1908

14. In light of these passages, we continue our questions. Who is the one accusing us before the Father? If Satan cannot go to heaven, how can he accuse us before the Father? Is it in the same way that our prayers can go up before God even though we never leave this earth!
15. Did God have to wait until 1844 to discover who is savable? Do the angels have any questions about the people God is about to bring into heaven to live there forever as their neighbors? Looking at us, why shouldn't they? God will not finish the judgment until all are in agreement.
16. Why do things in heaven need to be cleansed? What actually will happen on the antitypical day of atonement? (Hebrews 9:23)
17. If our sins are to be "blotted out," (Acts 3:19-21) how can the record of the great controversy be preserved as an eternal safeguard against future rebellion? Will all Bibles need to be destroyed? The Bible is full of the records of the sins of the saints!

The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God. That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels...The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God. The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. *Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1889 par. 4

18. Is all that necessary?

The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 489.

19. So then, if we are suggesting that Christ has to plead with His Father on our behalf to convince Him to love us, forgive us, and save us, we are presenting a pagan picture of God!

20. Surely, as Seventh-day Adventists, we do not have any questions about the second coming of Jesus Christ. Not only are there many references in the New Testament to the second coming, but also we could ask the very probing question: If Jesus does not plan to come back the second time, what was the purpose of His coming the first time?

21. Careful students of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White realize that in our day there are no more prophecies to be fulfilled except those directly connected with the second coming.

As the second appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ draws near, satanic agencies are moved from beneath. Satan will not only appear as a human being, but he will personate Jesus Christ, and the world that has rejected the truth will receive him as the Lord of lords and King of kings.—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 14, 1896 par. 6; 5BC 1105.8-1106.0 (1900); *Last Day Events* 168.3; *Maranatha* 276.2; See also 1 Peter 5:8

22. Not long after Satan attempts to impersonate Christ, the real Christ will appear in the clouds of heaven in a literal, personal, and visible event that will impact the entire world. In fact, Revelation 1:7 assures us that every eye will see Him. It will be no secret rapture! Surely, we need to be alive and awake and not sleeping! (Matthew 25:1-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

23. But, that is no reason for us to be overly anxious or even to set timetables for the second coming. Jesus Himself told us plainly in John 13:19 and 14:29 that the purpose of the signs is so that when they take place they will help establish our faith. Looking back, we can recognize that God knew all along exactly what was coming.

24. One of the blessed hopes of Christians is the hope that those who have died believing in Jesus Christ will be resurrected at the second coming in time to join the righteous who are still living and that together both groups will ascend to heaven with Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 4:12-16; 1 Corinthians 15:13-25; Romans 8:11; Philippians 3:20,21) In these verses Paul made some very powerful arguments for why he believed that Christ was able to raise the dead to life. The main example, of course, was Jesus Christ Himself.

25. As Christians, we believe that Christ has ended the power of death. (2 Timothy 1:8-10) And thus, in light of 1 Corinthians 15:51-54, we believe that our mortal bodies will take on immortality in “the blinking of an eye.”

26. Seventh-day Adventists have studied and memorized John 14:1-3. Are there any questions left in your mind about whether or not Christ will come again? Do you believe that we are living in the antitypical day of atonement and that the judgment of all people is currently taking place? We get many of our ideas about what is going on in the heavenly sanctuary by looking at the earthly sanctuary. In the earthly sanctuary, there were a lot of animal sacrifices. In fact, that seemed to be the primary purpose of the sanctuary. Will there need to be animal sacrifices in heaven? If we say, “No, because Jesus was the One, all-sufficient sacrifice for the heavenly sanctuary,” what is the purpose of having a sanctuary that sits there in heaven with nothing to do? Is it a museum piece?

27. While we may not be able to give a thorough, well-thought-out, and well-reasoned explanation of every detail of our teachings about the second coming of Jesus Christ and the pre-advent judgment that precedes it, does it make sense to us? Are we truly looking forward to the second coming? Are we ready? How soon will we be ready?

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