

The Sanctuary

Exhortations from the Sanctuary

Lesson #13 for December 28, 2013

Scriptures: Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-25; Exodus 24:8; James 4:7-8; John 13:34.

1. In this lesson we will try to summarize some of the important things that we have learned from our studies during the last three months. We will do so by focusing on Hebrews 10:19-25. The book of Hebrews—our Christian interpreter for the sanctuary system in the Old Testament—suggests that theology has practical implications. What we know about God should lead to changes in how we live our lives.
2. Hebrews 10:19-25 is one very long and complex sentence in Greek. There are two statements of fact:
 - 1) ¹⁹“We have, then, my friends, complete freedom to go into the Most Holy Place by means of the death of Jesus. ²⁰He opened for us a new way, a living way, through the curtain—that is, through his own body”; and
 - 2) ²¹“We have a great priest in charge of the house of God.” (GNB)Then, there are exhortations or things we should do.
 - 1) ²²“So let us come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith, with hearts that have been purified from a guilty conscience and with bodies washed with clean water.”
 - 2) ²³“Let us hold on firmly to the hope we profess, because we can trust God to keep his promise.” He promises to open the way for us into the Most Holy Place.
 - 3) ²⁴“Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good.”
 - 4) ²⁵“Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer.” (GNB) Can we help each other to understand God?
3. What do the two statements of fact mean to you? What do the exhortations mean to you?
4. We can be fairly confident that the book of Hebrews was written by Paul some time in the 60s A.D. We cannot know for sure, but several of his statements suggest that he understood that the Jewish sanctuary system with its temple in Jerusalem was about to come to an end—and it did in A.D. 70. For that reason he was encouraging his Jewish-Christian friends to look not to the earthly temple or sanctuary but to turn their eyes upward to the heavenly sanctuary. What are the implications of doing that?
5. Read Hebrews 4:16; 6:19-20; 10:19-21. Melchizedek was a king and a priest. As you look to the heavenly sanctuary, what are you thinking and expecting? On what do you base your confidence that your prayers are heard and that you have a chance of salvation? Is it because Jesus is there pleading for you? Or, is it because of your understanding about the life and death of Jesus that you realize after reading John 16:25-27 that the Father also loves us as does the Holy Spirit, and there is no need for someone to plead with the Father?
6. Of course, this raises the question: What is our High Priest doing? The greatest questions in the plan of salvation are: 1) Why did Jesus have to come and die? And 2) What is He doing now in the heavenly sanctuary? After studying the life of Jesus here on this earth, are you more comfortable with the God of the Old Testament? Who was the God of the Old Testament from beginning to end? (Luke 24:44; John 5:39; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4) When you get to heaven, would you feel comfortable in going up to the Father and giving Him a big hug? What about the Holy Spirit? Read John 17:20-21. Is it really possible that we could have the same relationship with all three Members of the Godhead as They have with each other?
7. We know that there are many passages in Scripture and in the writings of Ellen White that

refer to pleading. And there is a lot of talk about intercession and mediation. How do you understand the following passage?

What does intercession comprehend? It is the golden chain which binds finite man to the throne of the infinite God. The human agent whom Christ has died to save importunes the throne of God, and his petition is taken up by Jesus who has purchased him with His own blood. Our great High Priest places His righteousness on the side of the sincere suppliant, and the prayer of Christ blends with that of the human petitioner.—Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 78.2; *Sabbath School Worker*, February 1, 1896 par. 3.

8. Which gives you greater hope? The fact that Jesus is pleading on your behalf before the Father in heaven? Or, that it is not necessary for anyone to plead with the Father?
9. But, there are still things to do! Read Hebrews 10:22. If we really want to worship God as we should, there are at least four things we must do:
 - 1) Come to Him with a sincere heart. Of course, this does not imply that we are already perfect. It simply implies that we honestly want a growing relationship with Him.
 - 2) Come with confidence built upon faith. And remember that faith is built upon evidence. That evidence is found in the inspired records that are now so readily available to us.
 - 3) Read Exodus 24:8; Leviticus 8:23-24; Hebrews 9:9,13-14. In the ancient sanctuary, Moses inaugurated and dedicated the tabernacle, the priests, and the people by sprinkling blood on them. However, that is no longer necessary. In our day, we need to understand what Christ was actually trying to accomplish through those ancient ceremonies and come to God honestly with a clear conscience. That is what it means to come with our hearts sprinkled clean from a guilty conscience—being forgiven.
 - 4) Come with our bodies washed with pure water. Read Ephesians 5:26. Spiritual washing comes about not only through baptism and our repeated dedication to our baptismal vows through the ordinance of humility but also through reading our Bibles and drawing closer to God through the application of biblical principles.
10. Read James 4:7-8. Are we still “double minded,” i.e., hypocrites? Do we make great professions on the Sabbath and pursue worldly interests during the rest of the week? Only God can change all of that, but He will change us only if we allow Him to do so. We must make certain painful choices. And what of those painful choices? Like God, we must learn to be loving instead of selfish. We must model our lives after Jesus Christ instead of Satan. We must put God first in everything. We need to recognize that is the best thing we can do for ourselves.
11. In light of all of that, do you feel comfortable in coming boldly and with confidence to the throne of God? Or, do you think that you need to go through Jesus first and have Him speak to the Father on your behalf? Read Exodus 20:18-20. Have we not made any progress since the foot of Mount Sinai?
12. The book of Hebrews is full of comments about trust, faith, confidence, and hope. Read Hebrews 3:6,14; 4:16; 6:11; and 11:1. Do these texts encourage you? What do they imply about how we should live our Christian lives?
13. Does faith lead to confidence? Does our relationship with God and getting to know Him better give us greater confidence in His love and care for us? (Ephesians 1:7-10; 3:7-12; Colossians 1:19-20) Notice in these verses that by means of the church “the angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly world might learn of His wisdom in all its different forms.” (*GNB*) How could that possibly be? Many things can be learned from the life of Jesus. We are not the only ones who need to learn about God through faith and the evidence provided through Scripture.

14. Read 1 Timothy 3:13. What happens to us and to our faith as we take time to serve God and serve others? As we learn to depend upon God for success in this work, does it give us greater freedom to speak boldly? As we seek to explain the wonderful message of the gospel, isn't it true that as we do so more and more that we will become comfortable with the truths of the gospel and thus be able to speak about them more boldly?
15. In light of all that, what challenges do you see to your faith? What are the biggest stumbling blocks that you see affecting Christians? Isn't the biggest one Satan?
16. Do you feel comfortable holding on with hope, confidence, assurance, and confession to the Lord Jesus Christ through the relationship of faith? Do we need to have confidence in our own Christian experience? Or, only confidence in what Jesus Christ has done for us?
17. As we look through the stories in the Bible, we find many times when God's promises have proven true even though His people were facing apparently impossible circumstances. Consider the case of Abraham and Sarah. (Romans 4:19-21) What about His promise to take the children of Israel out of Egyptian slavery? And what about His promise to bring the Israelites back to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity?
18. Is there any reason to doubt God's abilities at cleansing us and saving us? God must prove true though every man be false. (2 Timothy 2:13; Romans 3:1-4)
19. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. Christianity was never intended to be a solitary experience. Although we have spoken about the individual experience, it must always happen in the context of the group. Love—which is the characteristic of God's government—does not happen individually or individualistically. We need to learn how to get along with our friends and associates. We even need to learn to love our enemies. (Matthew 5:43-45) It is only in the context of community that love and good deeds can show themselves.
20. Should Christ's return be a major incentive for Christian behavior? Is it fear of what might happen to us at the second coming that is to motivate us to action? Consider these words from Ellen White.

The shortness of time is frequently urged as an incentive for seeking righteousness and making Christ our friend. This should not be the great motive with us; for it savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God should be held before us, that we may be compelled to right action through fear? It ought not to be so. Jesus is attractive. (*RH*, August 2, 1881 par. 6; *ST*, March 17, 1887 par. 6; *BEcho*, June 25, 1894 par. 7; *TMK* 320.3; *LHU* 98.3)

21. Can you think of someone in your Sabbath school class, your church, or among your friends who needs encouragement right now? What can we do to help build the faith of those around us?

The Mediator, in his office and work, would greatly exceed in dignity and glory the earthly, typical priesthood. . . . This Saviour was to be a mediator, to stand between the Most High and his people. **Through this provision, a way was opened whereby the guilty sinner might find access to God through the mediation of another.** The sinner could not come in his own person, with his guilt upon him, and with no greater merit than he possessed in himself. Christ alone could open the way, by making an offering equal to the demands of the divine law. He was perfect, and undefiled by sin. He was without spot or blemish. **The extent of the terrible consequences of sin could never have been known, had not the remedy provided been of infinite value.**—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 11.

22. Is your access to God threatened? What kinds of things can block our access to God? What

has Jesus done to remove those blockades? Do you fully believe that we have complete access to God at this point in time? What does that mean? How would you determine if the assurance which you have based on your faith is not just presumption? God emptied all of heaven, giving Himself as our Substitution and Surety. We have discussed these questions before. But, in this context, what do they mean?

23. As we associate with others of like faith, does it help to grow our faith? Does it keep us from going off in wrong directions?
24. What is it about the life and death of Jesus Christ that gives us confidence? Is it because we believe that our High Priest is now pleading on our behalf in heaven? Or, is it because we believe that He has fully and completely answered all the accusations and questions raised by Satan down through the generations? Do we see God pictured clearly enough in Scripture so that we have no reason left to doubt?
25. Does it help to build our faith when we encourage others? Help the weak? And try to explain the reasons for our faith?
26. Hebrews 10:24-25 suggest that we should fellowship together. What does that mean to you? Do you think first of Sabbath potlucks? Or, of Bible study together? Shouldn't social gatherings be an opportunity for witnessing and learning together?
27. So, what have we learned from this series of lessons? There should not be any question about the fact that the author of Hebrews considered Jesus to be superior in every way to anything or anybody else. He is superior to angels, to the ancient priests, even to Moses, and to anything and anyone else we could name.
28. Read Hebrews 2:14-18 and 4:14-16. What do these verses say to you? Do you sometimes worry that God the Father or, perhaps, God the Holy Spirit does not fully understand you? Do you have any questions about how well Jesus understands you? Do all three Members of the Godhead understand our fragility, vulnerability, weaknesses, temptations, problems, troubles, and difficulties?
29. Hebrews 10:24-25 should encourage us with a sense of belonging to Christ and to each other in the Christian family. (Hebrews 10:19; John 1:12; 1 Corinthians 12; 1 John 3:1) Shouldn't God's love lead us to come together in love for our fellow believers? (2 Corinthians 5:14)
30. Do we accept the teachings of Romans 8:26,31-39 about how we are to relate to the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son? All Three of Them are on our side! Who opposes us? Satan!
31. What does the book of Hebrews tell us about the work of the Holy Spirit? (Hebrews 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8,14; 10:15,29) Surely, we believe that the Holy Spirit is alive and well and that His greatest blessing to us has been His inspiration of prophets and apostles down through the generations as they have written out God's Word for us.
32. So, why did Paul need to end up with words such as Hebrews 10:31 and 12:29? Was the author of Hebrews trying to use a few scare tactics to end his presentation? God is appealing to each one of us? Read Hebrews 4:7; 3:7. Are we ready to respond to God's requests? Do you look forward to the coming of Christ as the day of the Lord? Do you see it as a day of promise? Or, a day of terror?
33. In imagination, do you feel comfortable entering the courtyard and then the holy place and even entering the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary? Through the book of Hebrews, is God welcoming us to do that?

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