

# **The Sanctuary**

## **Christ, Our Priest**

Lesson #8 for November 23, 2013

Scriptures: Psalm 110:1-5; Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 2:17-18; 3:6; 7:1-3; 8:6; 10:1-14; Romans 8:31-34; 1 Timothy 2:4-6.

1. The only unique doctrine Seventh-day Adventists have is the doctrine about the sanctuary. Seventh-day Adventists believe and teach that the religious calendar of the ancient Jews is a type of the history of sin and salvation on this earth. We believe that we are now living in the antitypical day of atonement which began on October 22, 1844.
2. This lesson will focus on the heavenly sanctuary and the role of Christ as our High Priest. Of course, we have no direct way of viewing anything that is happening in the heavenly sanctuary. We have two ways of understanding it: 1) Considering what happened in the earthly sanctuary as a model; and 2) The description of what is happening in the heavenly sanctuary as mainly spelled out in the book of Hebrews. Last week, we talked about Christ as our Sacrifice; this week we will talk about Him as our High Priest. This complicates the picture even more. Obviously, the earthly sanctuary could not have a high priest who was both sacrifice and high priest, or he would cease to live! An additional complication is the fact that the priesthood of Christ is compared to the priesthood of Melchizedek.
3. Read Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4; and Hebrews 7:1-3. We know virtually nothing about the priesthood of Melchizedek. We know nothing about his family line or what his religious background was. All we know is that he served—at least briefly—as a kind of priest to Abraham and that he is known as the king of righteousness (Melchizedek) and the king of peace (Salem). Apparently, he was the king of Jerusalem during the time of Abraham.
4. So, why does the Bible call Jesus a High Priest in the order of Melchizedek? There seem to be at least two main reasons: 1) Melchizedek was both a king and a priest. Jesus came from the tribe of Judah and was of the lineage of David—the kingly line. But, according to Jewish thinking, He was not eligible to be a priest. To be a priest one needed to be from the tribe of Levi, specifically, from the line of Aaron. By comparing Christ and Melchizedek, the author of Hebrews 10 was suggesting that He is qualified to be both King and Priest. 2) Since Abraham offered to pay tithe to Melchizedek, the implication is that he was prior to and even superior to Abraham in some ways; and thus, superior to either Levi or Aaron. (Hebrews 7:4-10) By suggesting that Jesus was in the order of Melchizedek, the author of Hebrews could claim that Jesus came from a higher order priesthood even than that of Aaron.
5. Of course, as Christians we would recognize that Christ as our High Priest is of a better order than either Aaron or Melchizedek. Jesus never sinned; He was fully obedient to the law; and thus, He did not need to bring any offering on His own behalf. Thus, He could be the perfect Offering as well as a High Priest after His resurrection.
6. Read Romans 8:26-39; Revelation 12:10-12; and Zechariah 3:1-5. With these passages in mind, it should be very clear that in the heavenly courtroom Christ is serving as our High Priest and that Satan is accusing us. That could be a fearsome thought! However, on the other side, we discover in Romans 8:26 that the Holy Spirit pleads for us. God the Father is on our side, and certainly we know that Jesus is on our side. So, while Satan is against us, all three Members of the Godhead are for us. (Romans 8:26-39) God's love is so immense that nothing can separate us from it except our own choice.
7. Read 1 John 2:1. It suggests that Jesus is our *Paraklētōs*. A *paraklētōs* was a person who

came to the aid of another person in war or in various other settings. Also, we need to notice that the Holy Spirit is called a *paraklētos*. (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7) So, if we think we need someone to plead for us, we have two Members of the Godhead already doing so.

8. So, what does the pleading of Christ consist of? Is He there only to answer the accusations of Satan? (Zechariah 3:1-5) When Jesus stepped down to take the role of Michael the Archangel among the angels, was He being a Mediator to the angels? That was before sin entered our universe. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Christ will continue to be our Mediator for the rest of eternity. That cannot be just to get the Father to accept us! After sin is done and gone, why would Christ need to continue to be a Mediator? Will He continue to teach us about God for the rest of eternity? Would that be as a Teacher rather than as a Mediator? We have often suggested that God reaches us where we are and speaks a language we can understand. At this point in time, do we need a Translator because we cannot understand God's language? Would it be fair to call Jesus a Translator?
9. We believe that Christ not only deals with our sins (Romans 8:3) but also He deals with the root of our sin—our selfishness and rebellion. And when He offers us salvation, it includes healing.
10. So, we come back to our basic question: In what sense does Christ stand in our stead or in our place? He was a Mediator before sin, and He will continue to be a Mediator after sin has been defeated and eliminated. So, what is He doing?
11. There are numerous passages in Scripture suggesting that God the Father Himself loves us. (John 3:16; 16:25-27; 1 Timothy 2:4-6) If we are to come to a knowledge of the truth, does that require education? All three Members of the Godhead are on our side, and only Satan is against us! Are those odds stacked in our favor?
12. Several words are used to describe the role of a mediator in Scripture: Mediator, Intercessor, Intermediary, even Go-between. Notice these words from the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 97,98:

The popular understanding of an intercessor is of one who is a go-between for two antagonistic parties. This model of two opposed sides and a mediator or intercessor coming between them and trying to reconcile them by changing their mutual hatred, misunderstanding, prejudices, feelings, and attitudes toward each other lies at the heart of this misunderstanding. The implications of such an understanding of Christ's mediation are quite devastating. The Lord is seen as an angry God who has to be begged, bended, and changed in His attitude toward humans in order to give them grace and grant them mercy. **What a horrible picture of God. This distortion of God's character has terrible consequences in popular Christian thinking: Jesus is not powerful enough to intercede; He needs help. Thus, Mary is pleading with God and, in addition, Peter, Paul, the apostles, plus all international, national, and local saints. In this way, God is depicted as a monster, an angry deity who is not easy to appease. But the biblical model of intercession is completely different!** [Bold supplied]

13. In a discussion about finding treasures hidden in a field, Ellen White made this comment about the treasures of truth that we need to search for and find:

As you find them, what then? Why, you find that there is truth, beautiful truth, jewels of truth, riches of truth, and you accept them. What do they do? They bind you by the golden links to the eternal God, for Jesus Christ came that He

might link finite man with the infinite God, and connect earth that has been divorced by sin and transgression from heaven. What riches, what treasures, what love, are here revealed! It is impossible, yes, it is impossible, to conceive of the love of God that is bestowed upon fallen humanity.—Ellen G. White, *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, p. 253.1

14. In light of what we have said so far, try to picture what you think is going on in the heavenly courtroom right now. It may be helpful to review Daniel 7:9-10. Will it be a court with books? Is that talking about the final judgment?
15. Satan is continually making accusations against God's people and against God Himself. We need to recognize that the Scriptures make it clear that when Satan attacks God's people, God regards that as a direct attack against Himself. (Zechariah 2:8; Matthew 25:40,45; Acts 9:4-5; Luke 10:16)
16. What additional requirements has Christ fulfilled in order to be a true High Priest for us? (Hebrews 2:17-18; 3:6; 4:14-15; 7:24-28; 8:1-3) Jesus does not need to convince the Father to love us. God has always loved us, and He never changes. But, in order for us to understand something about God, Christ mediates to us by becoming like us. He calls us His house. He sympathizes with us in God's presence. He is the faultless Sacrifice; and in the heavenly sanctuary, He lives forever to make intercession for us. Does that include after the third coming?
17. Why is it important for Jesus to have come and lived His life on this earth in order to be a Mediator for us? Was there anything about us that He did not understand before He came? Or, was His coming to this earth exclusively for our benefit—so that we can come to understand something about Him?
18. Ellen White often spoke of Christ as our "Substitute and Surety." What is a surety? In legal terms a surety is a guarantee—usually a kind of insurance purchased by one or both parties of an agreement—so that if the covenant or agreement should fail, they will not suffer large financial losses. So, what do we mean when we say that Jesus is our Surety? Jesus has become prominently identified with the human race. We had to pay nothing so that we could have a Surety; God has paid everything.
19. We have noted very clearly in previous lessons that one of the main purposes of the earthly sanctuary services was to point out that sin leads to death. In the larger context of the great controversy and the salvation of human beings, it required the death of Jesus Himself. (Philippians 2:5-11) How does God accomplish that? It will take a great panorama!
20. While there are lessons we can learn from the earthly sanctuary and its services, Hebrews 10:1-14 make it clear that all those things were simply a shadow or very faint outline of what is really happening in the heavenly sanctuary. Clearly, "the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins." (Hebrews 10:4) Those ancient ceremonies simply point to the solution—the death of Jesus and His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. While the earthly sanctuary required the offering of animal sacrifices morning and evening and often many times in a day, the fact that the death of Jesus was a once-for-all Offering is demonstrated by the fact that the temple curtain between the holy place and the most holy place was ripped from top to bottom at the time when Jesus died. (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38) That curtain was 30 feet vertically!
21. So, now we are totally dependent upon the once-for-all Sacrifice that Christ made. None of us is still offering animal sacrifices.
22. So, is the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf adequate?

The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification. We may enjoy the favor of God. **We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute.**—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 32, 33.

**If whenever God looks at any sinner He sees Christ, what should we conclude? On that basis, couldn't everyone be saved?** What is implied by the last sentence in the quotation above?

23. If we are willing to comply with God's recommendations and to plan our lives to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, we have absolutely nothing to fear.
24. In light of what we have studied so far in this series on the sanctuary, are you fully convinced that there is no reason to be afraid of God? Are you convinced that the Father loves us just as much as does the Son? As some Christians believe, do you wonder if perhaps we might need Mary or the apostles or the other saints to be pleading for us in addition to Christ? Do you feel more comfortable with the whole heavenly court scene when you recognize that Jesus has become permanently a Human Being to identify Himself with us? Hopefully, none of us still believes that the Father is angry with us and that Christ somehow needs to appease His wrath!
25. Does Christ's intercession in the heavenly sanctuary include some aspect of His helping us in our daily troubles on this earth? What do you think of the following quote from Philip Yancey and the questions in the *Adult Teachers Guide*, p. 97:

Would it not have been better if the Ascension had never happened? If Jesus had stayed on earth, he could answer our questions, solve our doubts, mediate our disputes of doctrine and policy. . . . By ascending, Jesus took the risk of being forgotten.—Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), pp. 297-299. What do you think: Why do you need Christ as your Intercessor and Advocate?

26. Read 2 Corinthians 5:19-21. Does that teach us anything about Christ's intercession in the heavenly sanctuary? Once again, we need to remember what it says in John 16:26-27a (GNB): "When that day comes, you will ask him in my name; and I do **not** say that I will ask him on your behalf, <sup>27</sup>for the Father himself loves you." We need to be reconciled to God; God does not need to be reconciled to us. (2 Corinthians 5:20) [Bold supplied]
27. Have we as Adventists always been careful to picture Satan in the scene of the heavenly sanctuary, accusing us instead of suggesting that the Father is somehow accusing us?
28. Do we need to review the nature of God's wrath? (Romans 1:18,24,26,28; 4:25; Matthew 27:46; Hosea 11:7-9)
29. How does it make you feel to realize that according to John 17:20-21, right now, Jesus is praying for you in the heavenly sanctuary? Could we ask for any more help than that?

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