

# **Preparation for the End Time**

## **Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary**

Lesson #5 for May 5, 2018

Scriptures: Romans 8:3; John 1:29; Revelation 5:12; Hebrews 7:1-28; 9:11-15,20-23; Leviticus 16:13; Philippians 2:9-10.

1. This lesson will focus on the scriptural teaching about the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. How important is that ministry in the heavenly sanctuary?

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. Every individual has a soul to save or to lose. Each has a case pending at the bar of God. Each must meet the great Judge face to face. How important, then, that every mind contemplate often the solemn scene when the judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened, when, with Daniel, every individual must stand in his lot, at the end of the days.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 488.2.

2. So, what is Christ doing for us in the heavenly sanctuary? Why is it so important for us to understand it, especially in the last days?
3. The great controversy began in heaven; (Revelation 12:7-10) it has been and will be an ongoing battle from that day until the third coming. The panorama of the great controversy will be seen by all—both righteous and wicked—and no one will be left with any question about the fairness and rightness of God’s plan. At the third coming which is after the millennium, (Revelation 20) even the Devil will be on his knees, admitting that Christ did it right. (Philippians 2:10-11) So, what is the purpose of the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary? See Romans 8:3; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16; Daniel 9:27; and 1 Corinthians 15:53.
4. The ultimate purpose of the great controversy is to fully and completely eliminate sin. But, this can only happen by causing a real change in God’s people. We are all sinners; so, that must change. We must see and believe that God the Father is just like His Son and that They can be trusted. Then, we must be willing to follow God’s guidance for us.
5. Somehow, God needed to demonstrate the truthfulness of His statement made back in the Garden of Eden as recorded in Genesis 2:16-17. Does sin really lead to death? Or, not? God said it does; Satan responded by saying that is a lie! So, in order to once and for all permanently answer the question, Christ became a Human Being, laying aside His divinity, living that incredible life, and, finally, dying the death of a common criminal. (Philippians 2:6-8) In a way that we cannot possibly fully understand, the divinity of Christ did not die when Jesus died on the cross. Although Jesus had access to His divinity throughout His ministry and, no doubt, even earlier in His life, that divinity was apparently quiescent during the nine months He was in the womb and during the time He was in the tomb. He never took advantage of His divinity to make His human life any easier. But, after His death on the cross and that brief time in the tomb, He was ready to resume His position in heaven.
6. **When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ’s tomb, saying, Thy Father calls Thee, the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself.** Now was proved the truth of His words, “I lay down My life, that I might take it again.... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” Now was fulfilled the prophecy He had spoken to the priests and rulers, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John 10:17, 18; 2:19.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*\* 785.2.
7. He came to the world to display the glory of God, that man might be uplifted by its restoring power. God was manifested in Him that He might be manifested in them. **Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His**

**followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was.—*Ibid.*\* 664.4. [Bold type is added.]**

8. Many Christians focus on the fact that Christ's life was only for one purpose and that was to die, i.e., He came to die to pay the price for sin. (Luke 9:22) Since we know that the plan of salvation was put in place back in eternity and because of His omniscience, Jesus knew way back then what was coming. His omniscience was never sacrificed. (Revelation 14:6-7)
9. So, how early in His life on this earth as He grew up as a child and then as a youth did He realize that He would eventually die to deal with sin? (Romans 8:3)
10. How does it make you feel to realize that the King of the universe died just for you? There is nothing we can do to earn a place in heaven. Jesus did everything that was necessary by fully and completely representing the truth about the Godhead, about Satan, and about sin and its results.
11. Read John 1:29; Revelation 5:12; and 13:8. These passages and many others that we could quote speak of Christ as the Lamb of God. The Hebrew expression *Lamb of God* implies that He is divine. He is the divine Lamb. To a Jew living in the times of Jesus or even in Old Testament times, speaking about the Lamb—a sacrificial lamb—was an unmistakable reference to the sanctuary. But, we know that thousands and thousands of lambs were offered as sacrifices in the times of the Old Testament; and those sacrifices continued right through the time of Jesus on this earth. But, when Jesus died and the curtain of the sanctuary was torn from top to bottom, (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45) there was no longer any role for offering lambs. The ultimate final sacrifice of the Lamb of God had been offered.
12. The author of Hebrews, who conservative Christians believe was Paul, repeatedly touched on the theme of Christ as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Read especially Hebrews 7:1-28. There we see that Jesus, in the order of Melchizedek, offered, once and for all, His own blood as a sacrifice for sin. Following that sacrifice, He will continue to reign as King and High Priest forever. In this passage we see that Jesus is superior to the Levitical priesthood because although He was a member of the tribe of Judah and not the tribe of Levi, His priesthood is not an earthly priesthood but a heavenly priesthood. More than that, He was the sacrifice, and He was the priest. He was sinless, and He will be our High Priest forever.

Christ is able to save completely because of several qualifications that no other priest could ever have. [(1)] He is God, who has authority to forgive sins. [(2)] He has a permanent priesthood. [(3)] 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. [(4)] He is also human but was born sinless and remained that way. And, [(5)] 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.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Tuesday, May 1. [Content in brackets is added.]

13. What is implied by the words *the staggering weight of the sum total of human sin*? Does that mean that, somehow, all the sins that have ever been committed by human beings were placed on Jesus at the cross? Did that happen also in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus fell dying to the ground? (*DA* 693.1) What needs to happen for sin to be “dealt with” once and for all? Satan's accusations and questions against God needed to be answered. The truth about God only needed be demonstrated once for the benefit of human beings as well as all the beings in the rest of universe. Jesus, through His life and death, proved the truthfulness of God's statements back in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:17)
14. It has been stated that Christ's death on the cross was sufficient for every human being. What does that imply? Did He answer all of Satan's accusations and questions? Does it mean that every human being, if they would choose to follow God's will for their lives, could be saved? Does it mean that all human beings will be convinced of the truthfulness of God's statement? Or, does it mean that the payment was sufficient to satisfy the Father's wrath?

15. Read Hebrews 9:11-15. What has Christ accomplished for us? It is clear that the New Testament specifically says that the sacrifice of Christ was sufficient. (Romans 8:3) Did that sacrifice “pay the price”? Did it answer the questions? Did it assuage God’s wrath? Did it convince all humans to believe in God? There is no difference between Jesus and the Father.
16. The most important questions that have been raised in the great controversy are about God. Jesus was God Himself even while He was living the human life to answer those questions. By answering all of Satan’s accusations and questions about God, Jesus is prepared to deal with Satan’s accusations and questions about us if we are faithful to Him!
17. Read Ephesians 2:18 and 1 Peter 3:18. These verses make it quite clear that all people could be saved by the sacrifice of Christ. Christ dealt with sin once and for all. Was it that the Father was reluctant to accept us until Jesus paid the price? Does Jesus need now to go to heaven and plead with the Father before he will accept us?

**John 16:25-27:** <sup>25</sup> “I [Jesus] have used figures of speech to tell you these things. But the time will come when I will not use figures of speech, but will speak to you plainly about the Father. <sup>26</sup>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. He loves you because you love me and have believed that I came from God.”—*Good News Bible\** (John 16:25-27). [Word in brackets and bold type are added.]

18. While the Old Testament priestly system seemed to suggest that a priest must always be present to plead with God for us, Jesus Himself on His last night with His disciples in the upper room said pleading with the Father would not be necessary! (See also Romans 8:26-35.)
19. So, what should we learn about the heavenly sanctuary from the earthly sanctuary system? In the earthly sanctuary system, there were two separate services: One taking place on a daily basis in the holy place, and a second taking place once a year in the most holy place. As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that Jesus has entered the heavenly sanctuary and is our High Priest forever. There, since 1844 which was the start of the pre-advent judgment, He has been answering the accusations of Satan against us and against God. (Zechariah 3:1-5; Revelation 12:10; Daniel 7:9-14) Thus, we see in the heavenly sanctuary ministry there also were two separate parts. Christ continues to deal with our sins on a day-by-day basis. But, since 1844, a pre-advent judgment has been taking place which is the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement pictured in Leviticus 16.

**Hebrews 9:24:** For Christ did not go into a Holy Place made by human hands, which was a copy of the real one. He went into heaven itself, where he now appears on our behalf in the presence of God.—*Good News Bible\** (Hebrews 9:24).

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.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Wednesday, May 2.

20. So, what does *ministering the merits of His atonement* mean? How does that deal with Satan’s accusations against us and his accusations against God? And what about our future neighbors and friends? Do they have a right to see what is going on and who will be coming into their heavenly home to be their future neighbors?
21. In order to correctly understand what the Scriptures teach, we need to remember that Christ is pleading before the Father in response to the accusations of Satan before the entire universe (Daniel 7:9-10) and against our accuser. (Zechariah 3:1-5; Revelation 12:10)
22. If we did not have Jesus Christ to answer Satan’s accusations against us, our cases would be hopeless. Satan would paint the worst possible picture of every sinner and, then, claim that he

is the rightful one to deal with their lives. Considering all the terrible and unfair accusations that Satan has made against God who is completely perfect and faultless, what kind of accusations can Satan make against us as sinners and rebels against God?

23. Read Hebrews 9:20-23. How do you understand Hebrews 9:22? What does it mean to suggest that “sins are forgiven only if blood is poured out”?
24. It might seem strange to suggest that blood needs to be poured out in the heavenly sanctuary? Will there need to be death and the pouring out of blood even in heaven? Some scholars have been surprised and critical of this idea. But, when Hebrews 9:23 is understood in the context of the yearly day-of-atonement service from the Israelite sanctuary, objections tend to fade away.
25. Some scholars make a big deal out of the idea that Jesus entered the holy place at the time of His ascension and not the most holy place where the Father sits on His throne. But, this distinction is not talking about physical location but about Christ’s heavenly responsibilities.
26. After having a clear understanding of the earthly sanctuary service and then adding to it what we read in Daniel 7-9, it should be easier to understand how the events of the earthly sanctuary are being played out on a larger scale in the heavenly sanctuary. But, we must remember that the earthly sanctuary services were only a “faint outline” or “faint shadow” of the true sanctuary in heaven. (Hebrews 10:1)

“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.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Friday, May 4].

27. Ellen White had a number of very significant things to say about the sanctuary service in heaven. Notice these important words.

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 cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation—a work of judgment. This work must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people; for when He comes, His reward is with Him to give to every man according to his works. Revelation 22:12. —Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy\** 421.3-422.0. [Bold type and italic type are added.]

28. So, what are the two things that she pointed out that must happen in order for us to benefit from His atonement?
  - (1) Our sins must be transferred to the heavenly sanctuary and be blotted out.
  - (2) A pre-advent judgment must take place to see who is “entitled” to salvation.
29. So, in order to better understand exactly what happened in the earthly sanctuary system, read

Leviticus 16:15-16 where it describes the events of the Day of Atonement.

**Leviticus 16:15-16:** <sup>15</sup> After that, he shall kill the goat for the sin offering for the people, bring its blood into the Most Holy Place, and sprinkle it on the lid and then in front of the Covenant Box, as he did with the bull's blood. <sup>16</sup>In this way he will perform the ritual to purify the Most Holy Place from the uncleanness of the people of Israel and from all their sins. He must do this to the Tent, because it stands in the middle of the camp, which is ritually unclean.—*Good News Bible\** (Leviticus 16:15-16).

30. In this study, it is absolutely essential to understand clearly who is the accuser and who is our Defender in the great controversy. We must understand clearly the role of Satan and the role of each Member of the Godhead in the judgment. (Romans 8:26,31-36) We must understand the concerns of the rest of universe as our cases are being considered.
31. We must understand why Jesus had to come and die to demonstrate the truth about God's character and government. We must recognize the major questions that have been raised in the great controversy and how God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ have answered those questions. We must recognize that we are now in the antitypical day of atonement when every case must be finally decided.
32. God has pledged not to leave any question unanswered. The entire universe must be convinced of the rightness of His plan of salvation. Since He plans to bring some of us rebels back into the heavenly kingdom, those who already live there have a right to know for sure that it will be safe.
33. So, how important is this?

**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. We must by faith enter within the veil, "whither the forerunner is for us entered." Hebrews 6:20. There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected. There we may gain a clearer insight into the mysteries of redemption. The salvation of man is accomplished at an infinite expense to heaven; the sacrifice made is equal to the broadest demands of the broken law of God. Jesus has opened the way to the Father's throne, and through His mediation the sincere desire of all who come to Him in faith may be presented before God.—Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*,\* vol. 4, 313.2 (1884); *Great Controversy*\* 489.1 (1888); *7SDABC*\* 478.2; *FLB*\* 203.3; *AG*\* 69.4; *LHU*\* 329.4. [Bold type is added.]

34. God's government has been and continues to be completely transparent. Nothing is done quietly or behind closed doors. So, before Christ brings any of us former rebels into the heavenly sanctuary, He must present our cases before the heavenly council which includes the entire onlooking universe. (Daniel 7:9-10) He must answer all of Satan's accusations against God and against us (Revelation 12:10; Zechariah 3:1-5) before He comes to take us home. Every detail of our lives is open and apparent to the onlooking universe and especially to God who reads our thoughts and motives.
35. So, how should that impact us? If we are willing to recognize that our lives are an open book, then we will be more careful about our actions. Furthermore, we can rejoice that Jesus Christ is in heaven, pleading our cases before the entire universe and answering the accusations of our adversary.

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.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 66.

36. So, why do so few of our Christian friends understand and believe in this teaching?
1. Many of them do not believe in the prophecies of the book of Daniel.
  2. Because of their understanding of the nature of man, they do not believe in a pre-advent judgment. Why would God conduct a judgment for dead people who are already either in heaven or hell?
  3. Satan is doing everything he possibly can to prevent people from understanding his true position and role in the great controversy.
  4. Our Christian friends have never been exposed to the ideas of the great controversy.
37. Daniel made it very clear that there is only one God and that He is omniscient and can reveal secrets.
38. Many people, including many Christians, are uncomfortable with the idea that Someone is able to read their thoughts and motives and will, one day, judge them! They have never heard of the great controversy over the character of God, and they doubt even the existence of the Devil.
39. In this lesson we have briefly covered: (1) Christ's sacrifice as the Passover Lamb on Calvary, (2) His high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and (3) The eschatological day of atonement. The second and third of these points are points which are largely held only by Seventh-day Adventists. So, we come to some final questions:
1. Did Jesus really have to die to deal with our sins? It was necessary to completely and finally answer all the accusations and questions about God and His plan to save you and me. (Romans 3:3-4,25-26)
  2. Why wasn't it possible for God to forgive our sins without having to die on the cross?
40. He did not die of crucifixion; He died of separation from God, the Source of life. That is what led to His cry: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46, *NKJV\**) This was to prove the truthfulness of God's statement to Adam back in the Garden of Eden:
- <sup>16</sup>He said to him, "You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, <sup>17</sup>except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day."—*Good News Bible\** (Genesis 2:16-17).

The entire universe needed to see the proven results of sin and Satan's form of government.

41. One of the most difficult parts to understand about this whole scenario is that Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb; but, He is also the High Priest. This seems paradoxical. The author of Hebrews recognized that Jesus was not a member of the tribe of Levi but of the tribe of Judah; and so, he compared Jesus to Melchizedek who was not a descendant of Abraham at all. We know nothing about the priestly work of Melchizedek. We only know about that single encounter he had with Abram/Abraham. (Genesis 14:17-23)
42. So, why are the cross and the judgment two complementary events? Just as Jesus through His life and especially by His death answered all of Satan's accusations against God, He now is answering Satan's accusations against God's people. At the cross, He decisively and finally proved the falsehood of Satan's claims against God. It is now time for a pre-advent judgment to find out which of the people from this earth are prepared to be a part of God's eternal family in heaven.

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