

The Promise: God's Everlasting Covenant

New Covenant Sanctuary

Lesson #11 for June 12, 2021

Scriptures: Exodus 25:8; Isaiah 53:4-12; Hebrews 8:1-6; 9:14; 10:4; 1 Timothy 2:5-6.

1. In this lesson we will try to discover what we can learn about salvation from the Old Testament sanctuary and its services. Notice these important words:

Hebrews 10:1: The Jewish Law is not a full and faithful model of the real things; it is only a faint outline of the good things to come. The same sacrifices are offered for ever, year after year. How can the Law, then, by means of these sacrifices make perfect the people who come to God?—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Hebrews 10:1). New York: American Bible Society.[†]

2. What steps has God taken to help us fallible, doubting humans become more like Him? Exodus 25:8 made it clear to the children of Israel that God wanted to dwell in the midst of them. So, why does God want to do that?

Leviticus 26:11-12: ¹¹ [The LORD said:] “I will live among you in my sacred tent, and I will never turn away from you. ¹²I will be with you; I will be your God, and you will be my people.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*‡}

3. **Our Bible study guide and my theology hold very different views about the topic for this week, including why Jesus had to die.** Our Bible study guide suggests that the sanctuary provides the means by which fallen, sinful people **can be accepted by the Lord** and why that is so important. What does that have to do with forming a covenant?
4. What does it mean to *be accepted by the Lord*? Is He against us? What would it take to change His mind? Leviticus 1-7 give a detailed account of all the sacrificial offerings that were supposed to be offered in the ancient sacrificial system. In that system there was a lot of blood shed. So, what was “the role of the blood”?

The person who had sinned—and thus had broken the covenant relationship and the law that regulated it—could be restored to full fellowship with God and humanity by bringing an animal sacrifice as a substitute. **Sacrifices, with their rites, were the God-appointed means to bring about cleansing from sin and guilt. They were instituted to cleanse the sinner, transferring individual sin and guilt to the sanctuary by sprinkling blood and reinstating communion and full covenantal fellowship of the penitent with the personal God who is the saving Lord.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, June 7.[†]

5. That sounds like a good solution to the problem. But, does that fit with Hebrews?

Hebrews 10:4,11: ⁴For the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sins....

¹¹But these sacrifices can never take away sins.—*Good News Bible*.^{*‡}

Hebrews 10:3: The sacrifices serve year after year to remind people of their sins.—*Good News Bible*.^{*‡}

6. Read Isaiah 53:4-6. This prophecy from Isaiah which Christians believe is a prophecy of the future life and death of Jesus strongly suggests that Christ took our place. What does that mean? Without the plan of salvation, every one of us would die. God's plan makes provision for us if we accept His conditions to return our allegiance to Him and have eternal life. What a substitution!

The Old Testament animal sacrifices were the divinely ordained means for ridding the sinner of sin and guilt. They changed the sinner's status from that of guilty and worthy of death to that of forgiven and reestablished in the covenantal God-human relationship. But there was a sense in which the animal sacrifices were prophetic in nature. After all, no animal was an adequate substitute in atoning for humanity's sin and guilt. Paul states it in his own language: "It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (*Heb. 10:4, RSV*). Thus, an animal sacrifice was meant to foreshadow the coming of the divine-human Servant of God, who would die a substitutionary death for the sins of the world. It is through this process that the sinner is forgiven and accepted by the Lord, and the basis of the covenant relationship is established.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, June 7.^{†§} [Is this scriptural? And, is this correct?][‡]

7. So, we see that our Bible study guide suggests that the ancient sanctuary system provided a key to salvation while the Bible verses referenced seem to disagree!

Galatians 1:4: In order to set us free from this present evil age, **Christ gave himself for our sins**, in obedience to the will of our God and Father.—*Good News Bible.*†*

Romans 8:3: What the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin in human nature by sending his own Son, who came with a nature like sinful human nature, **to do away with sin**.—*Good News Bible.*†*

There is no question: one of the key themes (if not *the* key theme) of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ died as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. This truth is the foundation of the entire plan of salvation. **Any theology that denies the blood atonement of Christ denies the heart and soul of Christianity. A bloodless cross can save no one.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, June 8.^{†§} [This is a claim.][‡]

8. What does that mean to you? Do we know why Jesus died?

Jesus Himself told us why He died. John 17:3-6: ³ "And eternal life means knowing you, the only true God, and knowing Jesus Christ, whom you sent. ⁴I have shown your glory on earth; I have finished the work you gave me to do. ⁵Father! Give me glory in your presence now, the same glory I had with you before the world was made.

⁶ "I have made you known to those you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me. They have obeyed your word."—*Good News Bible.*†* [Compare John 14:8.][‡]

9. **Notice the bold, emphasized words in Christ's prayer and remember that these words were spoken before He died.** How could Jesus have "finished the work" before He died on the cross if blood was needed for salvation of humans? What about the great controversy?
10. Paul is the only one in the Scripture who made an attempt to explain directly why Jesus had to die. Look at Romans 3:25-26.

Romans 3:25-26: God offered him, so that by his blood [Footnote in *GNB*: 3.25-26 by *his blood*; or by *his sacrificial death*.] he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him. **God did this in order to demonstrate that he is righteous.** In the past he was patient and overlooked people's sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, **in order to**

demonstrate his righteousness. In this way God shows that **he himself is righteous** and that he puts right everyone who believes in Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†§}

11. Notice that Paul said three times that the purpose of the “blood,” that is, the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, was to demonstrate God’s righteousness, and then, finally, he said it is to put right everyone who believes in Jesus. What did Ellen White say?
12. *Christ came primarily to reveal the truth about God.*

Christ came to represent the Father. We behold in him the image of the invisible God. **He clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to the world that the erroneous ideas Satan had been the means of creating in the minds of men, in regard to the character of God, might be removed....**

Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that men might lose the true views of God’s character, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth. He had caused truth of vital importance to be so mingled with error that it had lost its significance. The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and **God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary.** He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. **The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him** before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes....**

The Father was revealed in Christ as altogether a different being from that which Satan had represented him to be. Said Christ, “Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”... The men of his own nation, the leaders of the people, were so ensnared by the deceptions of Satan that the plan of redemption for a fallen race seemed to their minds indistinct and unexplainable....

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” [John 17:6,4] When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*,* January 20, 1890, par. 5-9.^{†‡}

13. And please note that there is nothing about shed blood or about substitution anywhere in those words from Ellen White. **Is it possible that the revelation of the truth about God was the whole purpose of Christ’s coming to this earth? Is it possible that Jesus had finished the work that God had given Him to do even before He died or even before the trials and before He was crucified? (John 17:4) Or, was Jesus wrong?**

Substitution is the key to the entire plan of salvation. [This is an opinion.] Because of our sins, we deserve to die. Out of His love for us, Christ “gave himself for our sins” (*Gal. 1:4*). He died the death that we deserve. **The death of Christ as the Substitute for sinners is the great truth from which all other truth flows.** [This is an opinion.] **Our hope, that of restoration, of freedom, of forgiveness, of eternal life in Paradise, rests upon the work that Jesus did, that of giving Himself for our sins.** [What does that mean?] **Without that, our faith would be meaningless. We might as well place our hope and trust in a statue of a fish. Salvation comes only through the blood, the blood of Christ.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, June 8.^{†§} **[Wouldn’t that be hematolatriy?][‡]**

14. Romans 8:3 tells us very clearly that Christ died “to do away with sin.” Doesn’t that seem like a direct way to deal with the problem? And notice these words from Jesus Himself:

Matthew 26:28: [Jesus said:]²⁸ “This [the grape juice at the Last Supper] is my blood, which seals God’s covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you, I will never again drink this wine until the day I drink the new wine with you in my Father’s Kingdom.”—*Good News Bible.*^{*‡}

15. It is interesting to notice that the “blood” that He was talking about in this passage was really grape juice!
16. Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 9:14; and 1 Peter 1:19 make it clear that the costly sacrifice of Christ was intended to bring us closer to God.

From these scriptures it is evident that it is not God’s will that you should be distrustful, and torture your soul with **the fear that God will not accept you** because you are sinful and unworthy. “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” [James 4:8] Present your case before him, pleading the merits of the blood shed for you upon Calvary’s cross. **Satan will accuse you of being a great sinner, and you must admit this,** but you can say: “I know I am a sinner, and that is the reason I need a Saviour. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. ‘The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.’ [1 John 1:7] ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ [1 John 1:9] I have no merit or goodness whereby I may claim salvation, but **I present before God the all-atoning blood of the spotless Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.** This is my only plea. The name of Jesus gives me access to the Father. His ear, his heart, is open to my faintest pleading, and he supplies my deepest necessities.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,* July 4, 1892, par. 3.^{†‡} [Satan is accusing us before the entire universe.][‡]

17. What promises do you see in this passage? Why is Satan mentioned specifically? And what is God’s long-term plan for us?

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. [Isn’t that a change?] The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. **When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 668.3.^{†‡}

18. This is God's plan for our lives. It is not that we just go on sinning, hoping that the blood of Jesus Christ will atone for our sins.
19. Read Hebrews 8:1-6. The author of Hebrews, probably Paul, was giving instructions, probably to a group of young men training to be future missionaries or pastors. Notice how he contrasted the former work of earthly priests with the work of Jesus in heaven.
20. **Hebrews 10:4,11 tell us that the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin. Why then does the blood of Christ accomplish that goal?** Is this some kind of mystical or magical transaction that we cannot understand?
21. If you have recently come to Christianity and are first discovering the truth about sin and its implications, to believe that Jesus died to pay the price for your sins is surely an attractive message. It is very appropriate to tell someone who is burdened down with doubts and thoughts about his/her sinful life. **But, God's ultimate plan is for us to go far beyond that step as we come to understand the "big picture."**

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*.*†

22. What is implied by that? What is Jesus doing there? **Is He trying to persuade the Father to forgive us? No! The Father Himself loves us. Reread John 16:25-27.**

Zechariah 3:1-5: ¹In another vision the LORD showed me the High Priest Joshua standing before the angel of the LORD. And there beside Joshua stood **Satan, ready to bring an accusation against him.** ²**The angel of the LORD said to Satan, "May the LORD condemn you, Satan! May the LORD, who loves Jerusalem, condemn you.** This man is like a stick snatched from the fire."

³ Joshua was standing there, wearing filthy clothes. ⁴The angel said to his heavenly attendants, "Take away the filthy clothes this man is wearing." Then he said to Joshua, "I have taken away your sin and will give you new clothes to wear."

⁵ He commanded the attendants to put a clean turban on Joshua's head. They did so, and then they put the new clothes on him while the angel of the LORD stood there.—*Good News Bible*.*†

Daniel 7:9-14: ⁹ While I was looking, thrones were put in place. One who had been living for ever sat down on one of the thrones. His clothes were white as snow, and his hair was like pure wool. His throne, mounted on fiery wheels, was blazing with fire, ¹⁰and a stream of fire was pouring out from it. There were many thousands of people there to serve him, and millions of people stood before him. The court began its session, and the books were opened....

¹³ During this vision in the night, I saw what looked like a human being. He was approaching me, surrounded by clouds, and he went to the one who had been living for ever and was presented to him. ¹⁴He was given authority, honour, and royal power, so that the people of all nations, races, and languages would serve him. His authority would last for ever, and his kingdom would never end.—*Good News Bible*.*

Think about what that means. We, sinful, fallen humanity; we, who would be consumed by the brightness of God's glory if we faced it now; we, no matter how bad we have been or how blatantly we have violated God's holy law, have Someone who appears in the presence of God *for us*. We have a Representative standing before the Father on our behalf. Think of how loving,

forgiving, and accepting Christ was when here on earth. *This same Person is now our Mediator in heaven!*—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, June 10.[§] [But, remember John 16:25-27 which says, “The Father himself loves” us. (*GNB**) Is the Father not loving and forgiving?][‡]

23. Is Jesus trying to convince the Father of something that the Father does not understand and accept? Remember that our cases are being presented before the entire universe.

1 Peter 2:24-25: ²⁴Christ himself carried our sins in his body to the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. It is by his wounds that you have been healed. ²⁵You were like sheep that had lost their way, but now you have been brought back to follow the Shepherd and Keeper of your souls.—*Good News Bible.**

24. While we may not understand fully what it means to say that “Christ himself carried our sins in his body to the cross,” it is important to notice in the next verse that we are to be brought back to follow the example of our Shepherd and Keeper, Jesus Christ.

Jesus, as both God and Man (a sinless, perfect Man) is the only One who could bridge the gap caused by sin between humanity and God. The crucial point to remember in all this (though there are many) is that there is now a Man, a human being, **who can relate to all our trials, pains, and temptations** (*Heb. 4:14, 15*), representing us before the Father.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, June 10.^{†§}

25. **Are we to understand from this that God the Father cannot “relate to all our trials, pains, and temptations”? Where is His omniscience? What about John 16:25-27?**

26. **Jesus Christ is standing before God, not to affect God’s attitude toward us but to respond to and disprove Satan’s accusations against us, while providing convincing evidence to the onlooking universe that it will be safe to live next door to us for eternity.** God already knows every detail of our lives. Nothing is hidden from Him; so, there is nothing that Jesus Christ could say to Him that He does not already know. But, **the onlooking universe needs to see the evidence.** They need to hear Satan’s unjust accusations and then see the truth as presented by Jesus Christ. Jesus does not cover over the sinner with some miraculous coat that gets him/her into heaven even though s/he is still a sinner! Everyone in the vast universe is there listening to learn the truth about us, not to be deceived about us! God’s government is totally transparent! Why does Satan keep accusing Christians?

Pray and meditate over the idea of a human being, Someone who has experienced temptation to sin, standing before God in heaven. What does that mean to you personally? What kind of hope and encouragement does that bring?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, June 10.

27. That “Human Being” is God Almighty, the Creator of the universe! He knew all about us before the creation of this world. It may be more comforting for us to realize that the One who is standing before the Father, refuting Satan’s accusations against us, had at one time walked this earth as a humble Human Being; but, we must never forget who He really is! He is God!

The highest angel in heaven had not the power to **pay the ransom** for one lost soul. Cherubim and seraphim have only the glory with which they are endowed by the Creator as His creatures, and **the reconciliation of man to God could be accomplished only through a mediator who was equal with God, possessed of attributes that would dignify, and declare him worthy to treat with the infinite God in man’s behalf, and also represent God to a**

fallen world. Man's substitute and surety must have man's nature, a connection with the human family whom he was to represent, and, as God's ambassador, he must partake of the divine nature, have a connection with the Infinite, in order to manifest God to the world, and be a mediator between God and man....

Jesus presents the truth before His children that they may look upon it, and by beholding it, may become changed, being transformed by His grace from transgression to obedience, from impurity to purity, from sin to heart-holiness and righteousness of life.

Some among the redeemed will have laid hold of Christ in the last hours of life, and in heaven instruction will be given to those who, when they died, *did not understand perfectly* the plan of salvation. Christ will lead the redeemed ones beside the river of life, and will open to them that which while on this earth they could not understand.—Undated Manuscript 150.—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*,* Book 1, 257.1-262.2.† [Italic type is added for emphasis. All of the above with minimal differences (but excluding the last paragraph) is in *Review and Herald*, December 22, 1891.] [How many of us do “not understand perfectly the plan of salvation”?]‡

28. As part of His instruction to His disciples before their first missionary journey:

[Jesus said:] As you confess Me before men, so I will confess you before God **and the holy angels**. You are to be My witnesses upon earth, channels through which My grace can flow for the healing of the world. So I will be your representative in heaven. The Father beholds not your faulty character, but He sees you as clothed in My perfection. I am the medium through which Heaven's blessings shall come to you. And everyone who confesses Me by sharing My sacrifice for the lost shall be confessed as a sharer in the glory and joy of the redeemed.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 357.1.†‡

29. Notice that it is not only before the Father but also **before the holy angels** that Jesus is presenting our cases.

30. If God looks at us but cannot see our faulty characters and only sees the righteousness of Christ and His perfection, does this mean that there is something wrong with the Father's vision? Is His omniscience faulty? Is Christ trying to fool the Father? Or, is it possible that the faithful, contrary to Satan's accusations, are truly savable and safe to live next door to for eternity?

Hebrews 9:15: For this reason Christ is the one who arranges a new covenant, so that those who have been called by God may receive the eternal blessings that God has promised. This can be done because there has been a death which sets people free from the wrongs they did while the first covenant was in force.—*Good News Bible*.*

31. If the death of Christ really sets people free from the wrongs they did without any change on their part, why doesn't that save everyone?

Through the sanctuary system, Israel's new relationship with Yahweh was indicative of how Calvary would become a crimson cushion of grace that would counterbalance the stealthy intrusion of human sin. This new relationship would center in blood-sprinkled ceremonial rituals, which became the redemptive portal out of which self could be snatched off its throne and crucified. This is the plan of salvation.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 145.

32. What does all that exotic, bloody language mean to you?
33. When Christ died on the cross, sin was conquered in our behalf. For us, then, to live in that victory, we must die, in a sense, as well. We must be dead to self and alive to God. When called by God to Christ, we really are called to “come and die.”
34. How does the death of Christ imply a death from sin in us? How is that related?

“Christ is our righteous substitute.

“The plan to send a second Adam, a substitute, was not formulated at the time of the first transgression. It was a provision ‘foreordained before the foundation of the world’ (1 Peter 1:20).

“The Substitute was to succeed where Adam had failed. He was to prove that Adam did not have to sin, that Adam could have prevailed over temptation, that the commandments are both possible to obey and profitable for the human race. . . .

“Adam fell in a perfect Eden—Jesus succeeded in a wicked Nazareth. Bearing the burdens of His Father’s honor and His people’s redemption, Christ fought the battle of sin in our inadequate armor, these weak human bodies.

“And He won! *The Lamb prevailed!*”—Calvin Rock, *Seeing Christ: Windows on His Saving Grace* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1994), pp. 65-67.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 146].^{‡§}

35. One of the most comprehensive statements about Jesus Christ as our Mediator is found in Hebrews 8:1-12. Notice that those verses end by quoting Jeremiah 31:33-34.
36. Every day we have opportunity to study God’s Word and experience His work in our lives. When we open our minds to His activity, He enters and transforms us into His likeness.
37. There is a lot of argument over what the word *atonement* means. In this lesson we are encouraged to believe that *atonement* means “covering.” Is that a strictly legal transaction? Are we covered by the righteousness of Christ?
38. But we need to remember that *atonement* really means “at-one-ment.” It represents God’s plan to make us like Himself.
39. So, does all of this process make any change in us? Is it supposed to? If we are actually changed, do we still need a Mediator?

Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God *without a mediator*. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God’s people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 425.1. [Italic type is added for emphasis.][‡]

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