

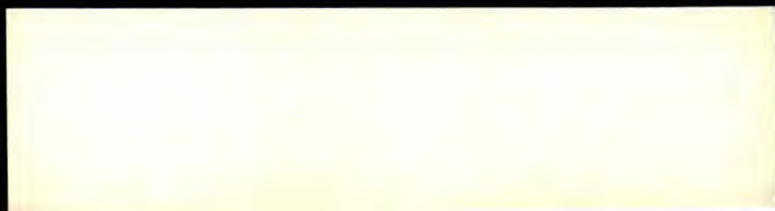
ADVENTIST Review

READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER

Calvary and Beyond



**What Jesus
Does for Us Today**



ADVENTIST Review

"Behold, I come quickly . . ."

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ through stories of His matchless love, news of His present workings, help for knowing Him better, and hope in His soon return.

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All illustrations by Terry Crews

God Wants to Dwell With Us

A Message From the Officers of the General Conference

When God created Adam and Eve, He placed them in a garden. That was their home. They cared for the flowers, for the animals, and for each other. It was indeed Paradise! Our first parents had the presence of God in their home, and happiness was their lot. However, as sin stained the world, our parents had to be driven from their first home. Now they needed shelter. They needed a place with a roof over their heads. They needed to build a house or a tent to protect themselves against the inclement weather.

As it was in the beginning, God always wants to live with us. To protect us. To care for us. He wants to dwell with us, and make us happy. The psalmist says that God dwells in the heavens (Ps. 123:1). The beautiful truth is that this powerful God wants to be with us. In Exodus 25:8 God says: "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them."

The word "sanctuary" comes from the Hebrew word "qodesh," meaning holiness, set apart, separated for a holy or sacred purpose. It's a beautiful term and, in this context, points to God dwelling among His people to care for their needs. Through the sanctuary God met and communicated with His people.

The message of the ancient sanctuary, furthermore, was that a holy God needed to establish a special people, a people who would be different from all other nations, a people dedicated to God, a covenant people through whom God's will and blessings could be channeled to the world.

Paul says that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16). The Lord wants to live within us. When the wilderness tabernacle/sanctuary was finished, "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:34).

Just so today the glory of the Lord can cover our lives. God wants us to be separate from the world. He wants us to live as a people redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. He wants us to partake daily of the bread of life. He wants us to be in constant communion with Him, our prayers ascending like incense to the throne of grace. He wants us to have the oil of the Spirit flowing in our lives, our homes, and our churches! God wants us to experience the cleansing water of His grace, keeping constantly before our minds our need of the Lamb of God, sacrificed for our sins—Jesus Christ, our Saviour!

As we study these precious lessons during this week of prayer and revival, let us remember once more that the sanctuary is the model of a God who wants to dwell with His people and within each heart, to make us ready for His kingdom.



Leo Ranzolin

Leo Ranzolin

Leo Ranzolin is a general vice president of the General Conference.

The Trail of Altars

ROBERT S. FOLKENBERG

God's answer to our deepest questions

In his powerful book *Night*, Holocaust survivor and human rights advocate Elie Wiesel told about an incident in the Nazi concentration camp, where he spent his early teenage years as an inmate, his only crime being a Jew. In the camp there was a boy, probably not more than 12, who had been caught stealing food, probably a few crumbs to put into his hollow, emaciated frame. Caught by the guards, he was to be hanged that day.

However, his wasn't to be a solitary death: the guards lined up the prisoners to watch.

Aghast, the inmates stood in formation as the child, scared, shivering, went to the gallows. But there was a problem: he was so light (having lost weight in the camp) that the force of gravity couldn't do its deadly work. Instead, the child just hung there by his thin little neck, twitching, squirming, flailing his birdlike arms and legs in a macabre dance. The prisoners watched in horror, helpless to do anything as the child gasped, gagged, and jerked in painful spasms but still clung to life. The scene continued, on and on—the child just would not die—and in the midst of this senseless evil, one of the prisoners finally in frantic desperation cried out, "Where is God?"

Where is God? Where was God? Why did God let this happen? These cries have been echoed from humanity for the thousands of years that the race has suffered, that we have in a sense helplessly flailed our birdlike arms and legs against what appears to be the overwhelming tide of evil. From ethnic cleansing in Bosnia to children dying in a Christmas home fire in Philadelphia, from an earthquake in India to the sinking of a ferry off the coast of Finland that killed hundreds, the force of evil in the world has time and again wrenched from hearts the cry "Where was God?"

The answer is as simple as it is profound: God was at Calvary, dying for the sins of the world. This is the only true answer that can help us, we who "see through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12), in our attempt to make sense of a world that in so many ways seems to make no sense at all. And for thousands of years the lessons of Calvary have been taught through

the sacrificial system, first instituted after the fall in Eden.

Though the modern mind tends to write off the Genesis story of the Edenic lapse as mere allegory, as Adventists—particularly with the insight given us from the Spirit of Prophecy—we accept it as a literal account of the origin of evil and of the suffering that has followed since its introduction to our world.

The Expensive Cure

What I want to look at now, though, isn't so much the origin of evil, but the cure. Because sin is violation of God's holiness (His character as expressed in the law), the fall of Adam and Eve created a barrier between the Creator and His sinful creatures, and no amount of repentance and remedial effort on their part could remove the problem. Instantly, particularly with the background of the great controversy between God and Satan, the problem caused by Adam and Eve became bigger than just them, or even humanity as a whole.

It was like Gavrilo Princip's shooting of the archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary, an assassination that led to World War I. The issue suddenly

became bigger than just Gavrilo Princip, a fanatical anarchist. It was the same with the Fall, only in this case, it would take more than American and Allied Forces to end the problem. It required the life of the Son of God Himself.

"Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son. Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63).

Christ's decision to take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin began what has been called "the everlasting covenant," in which the Son volunteered to lay aside the glories of heaven, take on Himself the nature of humanity,

*By His death
Christ flung
open the gates
of Paradise
to every
repentant soul.*

and in our place accept the consequences of sin. He would give His life, and thus allow the penalty of death to be carried out upon Himself, so that it need not fall on any person who, in faith, comes to the Redeemer: "Who, though he [Jesus Christ] was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:6-8, RSV).

However amazing that truth, people needed to know about it, needed to know and understand the great sacrifice made in their behalf, so they could respond and receive the benefits derived from what Christ had done. God wanted humans to understand, in particular, two crucial truths: that of the terrible nature of rebellion against God, and the amazing sacrifice required to bring salvation to repentant sinners and end the rebellion in a manner that will guarantee it would never happen again. And these truths were taught, to some degree, through the sanctuary system, which stood as a model, a pictorial representation of the plan of salvation.

In Eden God warned Satan (masquerading as the serpent) that the descendant of the woman whom he had led astray would rise up to confront him. Although that Son of the woman would suffer terribly in the conflict, it would spell victory for that Son and destruction for Satan. Then, before Adam and Eve, God performed a strange act: "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21, RSV). The animals, over which they had been given respon-



sibility, were slain. Thus began the first sacrificial service, and the grim lessons it taught about the cost of sin. Because sin is so abhorrent to God, and so in violation of His holy nature, it could end only in death. No doubt the bloodied carcass of their favorite lamb, or goat, or sheep, strewn on the grass before them, brought home the message loud and clear to Adam and Eve that the wages of sin is death, and that acceptance with God could come only through the sacrifice of an innocent victim in their stead.

Of course, God isn't bloodthirsty. Blood doesn't appease His anger, not in the sense of vengeance, as is often the case with humans. God doesn't get revenge; instead, He in a divine manner administers both justice and mercy. In fact, not only did the flow of blood demonstrate to humans the gravity of sin and the seriousness of their rebellion; it reinforced the principle of both His justice and mercy—justice, that sin cannot run unopposed; and mercy, that God is willing to forgive those who

have fallen into sin. Because the creation came forth in harmony with the character of a God of order, violation of that order brings disastrous consequences. And these consequences would deprive the sinner of the most elemental of God's gifts, that of life itself.

Thus the sacrifices required blood, symbol of what redemption costs. Abel's offering was accepted; Cain's was not. The vital difference? Cain's offering parallels every attempt to redeem ourselves through our own efforts, according to our own judgment; in contrast, Abel acknowledges the truth that only through the supreme sacrifice of an innocent victim can humans be reconciled to their Maker. Cain's represented salvation by works, Abel's by faith. Only the latter works.

Even the patriarchs, living in the day of the "type," nevertheless understood much of this truth. Everywhere the patriarchs left a trail of altars, where they had performed the act of faith in the coming Saviour, who would atone for their sins. That act, of course, was sacrifice. Emerging from the ark, Noah gathers his small family around a newly constructed altar to offer sacrifice to God. Alone in a vast, vacant world, this handful of people would set forth to repopulate its landscape, again with more sinners. By beginning the new world before the altar of God, Noah was praying earnestly that he, his family, and those that would emerge from his loins would serve Him alone.

Abraham's altars stood long afterward as memorials to his faith. It was not simply the performance of a ritual that brought virtue, but the depth of belief invested and the act of faith behind it, which alone leads to being counted as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). Today, too, it's not surface worship that brings us truly before God. Instead, as in Abraham's day, it's the inner trust and love that results in surrender in

faith from the depth of our selves that brings meaning to the act of worship. Anyone can go to church and sing songs, just as anyone can kill an animal. That's not what salvation is about.

Sacrifice was all through the Bible, symbols of God's plan to atone for sin, redeem humanity, and bring an end to the evil that causes so much suffering. From the Levitical sacrifices, the priests presiding at altars in the tabernacle and later the Temple, to Samuel, Elijah, David, Solomon, all leading their people before the throne of God—the sacrifice always was to drive into their souls the truth that sin brings deadly consequences. While offering their sacrifice before the altar, they recognized the weakness of their position before God. They could come to Him only with their hands out in appeal, confident that never would He turn a repentant soul away. It was not in fear that they came before the altar, but with the blessed assurance that here they received reconciliation, restoration to peace with their Creator, and everlasting hope.

By His Death

But every sacrifice became meaningful only as it pointed to the Redeemer, whose sacrifice would triumph over Satan, over the power of death, and eventually over all evil. The prophet Isaiah gave glimpses of this sacrifice: "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth" (Isa. 53:6, 7, RSV).

Repeatedly the biblical writers acknowledge the connection between the sacrificial altar and Jesus. At His baptism John the Baptist calls forth to the watching crowd, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" (the lamb, of course, being a sacrificial image). The apostle Peter writes, "You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that

of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake. Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 Peter 1:18-21, RSV).

In the book of Hebrews Christ is depicted as a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, ministering the virtue of His own blood, the one pure sacrifice capable of sweeping away all guilt and restoring those covered by the blood to full harmony with God. "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11, 12).

By His death Christ flung open the gates of Paradise to every repentant soul who comes humbly at the foot of the altar of faith. We, who were doomed to destruction, hopelessly, helplessly entrapped in the death web of sin, are now delivered by His blood. We have passed from death into life, even here, even now. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12).

In the book of Revelation, Jesus is often presented as the Lamb. The opening of each great prophetic sequence has the Lamb of God at ministry in His sanctuary. First He appears among the seven lamps, soon at the altar, then at the mercy seat, where in the earthly sanctuary the high priest had offered the blood of the Lord's sacrifice. Then He appears as the Almighty Lamb, in triumph proceeding down the corridors of space to redeem His people, a people qualified to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These are the redeemed inhabitants of the glorious kingdom to come, the restored world at last in harmony with its Maker. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow,

nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

Today we look at this trail of altars through the light of Calvary, the only way that their messages can fully be understood. Thus, with the light from the cross shining on each sacrifice, we should be filled with gratitude, love to God, and hope that soon we shall see Him, face-to-face, and fall before His feet in overflowing joy. We are promised, thanks to the cross, thanks to the fulfillment of every one of those sacrifices, that every disappointment and burden of this life will be swept away and we will enter into a walk with God at a level beyond our grandest imagination.

This hope guides us and sustains us day by day, moment by moment. This is the hope that we have, even amid the evil around us, a hope born from a love that transcends the suffering that seems so utterly incomprehensible to us now. It's a love that cries out from the cross and says, "*Trust Me, I love you. Trust Me, I died for you. Trust Me, one day I will answer all your questions, even the ones that seem unanswerable, such as a boy hanging by a neck that will not break.*"

That's the message from the sacrificial system. That's the message from the cross. May God grant us the ears, not just to hear, but to listen.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does the cross help me to explain the problem of suffering and evil in the world and in my personal life?
2. What spiritual lesson might I learn from the trail of altars built by the patriarchs in their travels? What is the theological significance of these altars?

Robert S. Folkenberg is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



A Sanctuary for God

ANGEL MANUEL RODRIGUEZ

Our Father wants to come close to us.

It had been a long and exhausting journey. The Israelites had finally reached a key geographical point in their pilgrimage; they could rest for a while.

Around an impressive mountain they were ordered to set up camp, and as they began to pitch their tents they glanced at Mount Sinai. At this mountain the Israelites would witness the most glorious display of God's glory, and would hear Him speak. Such excitement! The Lord was coming to be with them in a visible way (Ex. 19:11).

In fact, Sinai would become Israel's first sanctuary, and the experience would be perpetuated in the Israelite sanctuary. For at Sinai the Lord instructed Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst" (Ex. 25:8, RSV).

By exploring the nature and function of this earthly sanctuary we can better understand the nature and function of the heavenly sanctuary. The Israelite sanctuary functioned on earth in a way that symbolizes how the heavenly sanctuary functions with respect to the rest of the universe.

A Dwelling Place

The idea of a deity dwelling in a sanctuary or temple was not exclusive to the Israelites, but was rather common throughout the ancient Near East. At that time the image of the god, which was believed to contain a divine essence, was placed in the temples in order that worshipers might supply the god's needs through their gifts and sacrifices. Since the gods were believed to have physical needs similar to those of humans, sacrifices were regarded as food for the gods. In other words, by providing for the needs of the resident deity, worshipers believed they could buy divine favor and blessings.

By contrast, Israel's sanctuary was not established to provide for the physical needs of the Lord, but rather for God to provide for the needs of the people. Through the sanctuary, God was giving to Israel His holy presence. He was becoming personally available to Israel in this specific fraction of space. By this act God graphically communicated the glorious truth that as an ever-present God He was willing to

enter into the space where His people existed. This divine act of condescension presupposes God's love for all and not a divine wrath that would need to be propitiated. The sanctuary is, therefore, a witness to God's loving presence.

Scripture teaches that God has also a *heavenly temple* of which the Israelite sanctuary was a pale copy or shadow (Heb. 8:1, 2, 5). John refers several times to this heavenly sanctuary (Rev. 11:19; 14:17). The psalmist says that "the Lord is in his *holy temple*, the Lord's *throne is heaven*" (Ps. 11:4). The heavenly temple is the place where the royal throne is located, where God dwells among heavenly beings (Dan. 7:9, 10; Rev. 4:2-7).

The Bible indicates that God cannot be circumscribed by space. Solomon said, "Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee" (1 Kings 8:27, RSV). The Creator is infinitely greater than all that has been created.

A Meeting Place

Shortly before the exodus from Egypt, God made an appointment with the Israelites. He commanded Moses to bring the people to Sinai, to meet with

Him at the mountain (Ex. 3:12). The mountain was a provisional meeting place, and once they had arrived there, the Lord requested that a sanctuary be constructed because "there I will meet with the people of Israel" (Ex. 29:43, RSV).

The verb translated as "meet" comes from the Hebrew verb *yâ'ad*. It could be rendered in English as "come, appear, have an appointment." These ideas are closely associated. To have an appointment implies willingness to come or appear in the place for the encounter. The place of encounter is the sanctuary which is also called the "tent of meeting" (Ex. 28:43, RSV).

What a beautiful concept. The Israelites knew where to find God. For them, God was a person with whom they could make an appointment. They could go to the place where God was dwelling and meet with Him. God was not distant or inaccessible, but an ever-present Redeemer and Lord. Thus their need for spiritual fellowship with God,

*For the
Israelites, God
was a person
with whom they
could make an
appointment.*

their Creator, was satisfied.

In order to facilitate the encounter, the sanctuary was placed right in the middle of the Israelite camp (Num. 2). Being at the center of the camp, the Lord provided cohesiveness, orientation, and security.

This meeting place was the Israelites' center of worship (Ps. 132:7). Here they bowed before the Lord, gave thanks (Ps. 138:2), prayed for help and protection (Ps. 28:2), and sang praises to God (Ps. 43:2-4).

Later, when the tent became a temple, groups of pilgrims arrived there for festivals, went into its courts, and walked around the altar singing and praising the Lord for His goodness (Ps. 68:24-26; 42:4). Going to the Temple to appear before God was probably one of the most joyful experiences any Israelite could have had.

Today we need to recapture the joy of worship when coming before the Lord. God is available to us; we may rejoice in His presence. This joy is not emotional sentimentalism that produces a superficial experience of euphoria. This joy comes from knowing that we are in the presence of our God and Saviour, the very source of our lives and blessings (Ps. 132:14, 15).

By the same token, the *heavenly sanctuary* is the place where God meets with heavenly beings. I imagine them coming from all over the universe to God's heavenly sanctuary to meet with the Lord. Job tells us about two of those occasions when "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord" (Job 1:6; 2:1).

Today, we too have access, by faith, to the heavenly sanctuary through Christ our Saviour. Because of Christ's blood, we can "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16; see also Heb. 10:19, 20), where Jesus ministers on our behalf (Heb. 7:25).

We are members of the heavenly family (Eph. 2:18, 19), and when we worship the Lord in our private devotions or collectively in the church, we are in fact worshipping God in the heavenly sanctuary in the company of myriads of heavenly beings. Soon what we experience today by faith will

become a visible reality (Rev. 7:13-17; 14:1-3).

A Place From Which God Rules

From the Israelite temple God reigned as king over all the peoples of the earth (Ps. 99:1; 47:7, 8). God's presence in a particular fraction of space on this planet testified to His universal rulership.

The sanctuary was the place from which God made His will known. From the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary, God spoke to Moses and gave him commands for the people (Ex. 25:22). God also used the priests to instruct the people, teaching them all the statutes that the Lord had revealed to Moses (Lev. 10:11). At times God's will was revealed through the Urim and Thummim, two precious stones placed on the high priest's dress (Num. 27:21; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 351).

When a person violated God's will but repented, and sought a revelation of God's forgiving grace, it was in the sanctuary that forgiveness was available. God had made provision for atonement through the sacrificial system (Lev. 17:11). The individual came loaded with the burden of sin—bearing sin (Lev. 5:1)—but left the sanctuary forgiven (Lev. 4:31).

The Israelite sanctuary was a dynamic center of life, power, blessing, protection, and forgiveness because it was God's dwelling place among His people. There God revealed His ruling power over the nations of the earth as universal king, judge, and protector.

God's *heavenly temple* is the place in the universe from which our God rules, not just over the earth, but over the whole cosmos. Not a fraction of creation lies outside God's kingly rule: "The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all" (Ps. 103:19, RSV).

The Israelites knew that there was a close connection between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries. We see this in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the sanctuary. As God's people offered their prayer toward the earthly sanctuary, God is seen as listening to their prayers in heaven (1 Kings 8:38,

39). And when the people asked for forgiveness they were to believe that God granted it from this heavenly abode (verse 30). From heaven God blessed them and the land (Deut. 26:15). The Lord, whose presence was manifested in the earthly sanctuary, really dwelt in the heavenly sanctuary.

It is reassuring to know that God is still king over the universe and rules over it from the heavenly sanctuary. God's heavenly dwelling place among His creatures guarantees us that a loving King controls the cosmos and will lead us toward a particular goal: the eradication of evil from it. As judge, God is the moral arbiter of that universe and rules in righteousness and mercy. We can approach God in this heavenly place and "receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16, RSV). This is possible because, through Christ, God opened the gates of the heavenly sanctuary to us.

Questions for Discussion

1. In what ways do we see a similarity between the Israelite sanctuary and temples to other gods in ancient times? In what ways do we understand the Israelite sanctuary to be different from temples in surrounding cultures of the time? How important were those differences? How did these differences affect Israel's understanding of their God?

2. In ancient times the Israelites had visible evidences of God's presence—in the sanctuary, by lightning and thunder on Mount Sinai, by the pillar of cloud and fire. What evidences of God's presence do we have today? List several that are encouraging to you.

3. How has studying about the earthly sanctuary helped you better understand the heavenly sanctuary? Give some examples.

Angel Manuel Rodriguez is associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.



Treasures of the Temple

A reflection on the place where Jesus works

Newspapers and magazines often provide insights into spiritual truths, but none had more to say to Seventh-day Adventist Christians than the front pages of three American journals about a year ago.

The first magazine heralded a baseball player who had moved from the sports pages to prominence on the front page nearly every day for a week. Why? Because he set a record when he matched the highest number of consecutive games played by any one player. He had not missed a scheduled baseball game in more than 13 years. His honor that night at his ballpark near Baltimore's Inner Harbor was a five-minute standing ovation.

But the next night, when he surpassed the record that had stood for 56 years, admiration poured in from nearly 50,000 fans, young and old, rich and poor—including both the president and vice president of the United States. The standing ovation lasted for more than 20 minutes!

America may have needed that good news in the midst of all the stories of violence, intrigue, and deception. But I thought of the One who really deserves adulation and praise, the only One who could change the course of events recorded in the news.

The site of His work contrasts sharply with that of the Maryland ballpark called Camden Yards. And this One has been setting records for 6,000 years, in a unique way for nearly 2,000 years, and in a venue more splendid than an American ballpark.

Elegant Workplace

Though our eyes have not seen nor our ears heard, nor have we even imagined how beautiful the surroundings must be (1 Cor. 2:9), we do have some indication of the elegance of His workplace. God spent precious time on the mountain explaining in minute detail how Moses should construct a miniature similarity in the desert wilderness.

None of earth's languages can describe the glory of reflections off the seven-branched golden candlestick radiating from gold-plated walls set in silver sockets. The solid-piece candlestick itself is exquisitely ornamented with flowerlike

lilies. Then come the burnished table, and the altar for incense, and the ceiling and fine-twined linen curtains of gorgeous blues, purples, and scarlets inwrought with threads of gold and silver and all hanging from loops of pure gold. (These threads in the earthly version were in the forms of cherubim to represent the angelic host who minister with this One in the heavenly: Their glorious harmonies could not be replicated fully on earth.)

Robes of the Advocate are stunning as well, with their gold, blue, purple, and scarlet linens of fine needlework overlaid by a breast-plate with four rows of jewels. Each row contains three different gems set in gold and engraven with names. Golden bells hang around the hem of the robes.

Inner Chamber

He has moved His work today into the Judge's inner chamber, so to speak, which He calls the Most Holy Place. There the sole piece of furniture is a chest of special wood overlaid with gold and overarched by two cherubim.

Inside is the standard of the law by which our characters are judged, but forming the top is another specially designed golden formation called the mercy seat.

Amid all of this beauty wafts the precious fragrance of divine incense—"of His own merits in our behalf," represented by the golden altar crafted by the children of Israel.

The privileged work of this One came to mind when headlines around the world screamed—some in giant letters—"Not Guilty." A jury had found a sports figure innocent of murder.

But this Advocate/Intercessor/Judge wrapped into one makes that declaration every day, innumerable times a day, from a price paid long ago on a rugged cross. "He qualified Himself to be, not only the representative of the race, but their Advocate [and Judge], so that every soul if he will may say, I have a Friend at court" (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, p. 930).

"As the prayers of the sincere and contrite ones ascend to heaven [He] says to the Father, 'I will take their sins. Let them stand before you innocent'" (*ibid.*).

We have but to acknowledge our guiltiness and ask for

*Jesus is the only
one who
deserves the
applause of
the universe.*

forgiveness. "There are no sins He will not forgive" (*ibid.*, p. 913). Now, that's good news!

Divine Advocate

History proves it. To the woman taken in adultery, He said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).

To the paralytic let down through the roof when the doorway was clogged, He said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5).

In another instance, He pleaded, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34, NRSV).

Have you thought lately about where and when that was said? Listen to what Ellen White says in *The Desire of Ages*:

"The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. . . .

"He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life, offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee" (p. 755).

How can we restrain ourselves from exclaiming, "Behold, what manner of love is bestowed upon us" (see 1 John 3:1)?

"Not Guilty"

Our Advocate Himself paid the Attorney's fee for the privilege of representing us in the original court called the sanctuary. No matter what we've done—cheated on a spouse, abused a child verbally or physically, misrepresented a business deal, compromised sexual standards, kept home supplied with pens from the office, lowered someone's self-esteem, falsified an expense account, shoplifted food for the family, spent God's tithe on something else, used God's name for other



than praise—whatever in our quiet meditative moments haunts us.

He's still waiting to say, "No longer guilty; I've cast that sin behind My back [Isa. 38:17]. That sin has been cast into the depths of the sea [Micah 7:19]. I've blotted out those transgressions and won't even remember them anymore [Isa. 43:25]. Let Me commute the sentence."

That takes us to the third headline only a few days after the other two. On the cover of a major U.S. news magazine was the portrait of Pope John Paul, who was making his fourth papal visit to the United States. "Honor Thy Father," the headline read.

He looks kind enough, and he had some good things to say about America's need to get back to the basics of moral ethics described in the Bible. But John Paul's not our Father; he's not the One who laid down those guidelines to make us decent citizens; he's not the One who "offered up His broken body to purchase back God's heritage, to give man another trial" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 156).

John Paul may be the shepherd of a billion-member flock around the world; but our Father—our Shepherd—created them and the rest of us and knows *each* of us by name.

What's more, the pontiff is not the One pleading our cases in that celestial courtroom. He's not the One who inspired the Book that needs more of our attention, the One who

describes both the sanctuary and the ministry going on in it.

He's not the One who made the true sign of the cross that absolves our guilt. He's not the One with authority to throw sins in the depths of the sea.

The Treasure

Jesus is the only one who can do that, and He's *the* Treasure of the sanctuary. He's the one who deserves lengthy standing ovations—the applause of all the universe. Jesus has the sole right to say "Not guilty."

Treasures of the heavenly sanctuary are more than glittering beauty and angelic music and blotted-out records. The greatest Treasure of all is Jesus—Perceptive Investigator, Qualified Examiner, Divine Petitioner, Heavenly Intercessor, Merciful Mediator, Loving Forgiver.

Questions for Discussion

1. Perhaps the most solemn thought of all may come from Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16, NKJV). How does this thought impact my life?

2. If you and I are His temples, the earthly dwelling places for this One who's accustomed to the refined and dazzling glories of eternity, what kinds of temples are we presenting Him to walk in today?

3. How are we preparing for that awesome Presence to be with us day by day, here and now?

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Calvary

Where Jesus died on the altar for us

In Revelation 4 and 5 we come to a scene in which the book sealed with seven seals is placed before us, but there can be found no one worthy to open the seals. The case seems hopeless, but all is not lost, for one Person does qualify, one called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who has overcome, and He can open the scroll with the seven seals.

Immediately before us appears a central figure, "a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6).^{*} The Lamb steps forward, takes the scroll, whereupon the entire assembly falls upon its face in adoration: "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (verses 9, 10). In response, a vast assembly of unnumbered angels in chorus proclaims, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (verse 12).

What we are witnessing in Revelation is adoration of the ascended Jesus, now exalted by all the hosts of heaven as victor over all who would challenge God. We are fascinated to find Him described as both the conquering Lion of Judah and the Lamb. Both symbols tell us something important about the Saviour. In Him are combined the strength of steel sheathed in gentle velvet.

At once He is mighty to deliver, having overcome all opponents, while at the same time His tender compassion ceaselessly reaches out to those of us battered by the harshness of life.

Revelation introduces us to the triumphant Christ, victor over Satan and all those who follow him and promote his program. He stands now in heaven flanked on all sides by adoring angels and the redeemed from among all people, united in choruses of praise and adoration.

Three Interventions

Three times God has intervened in an incomparable manner in the affairs of our world. *First* was to create the planet and people it with unique persons made in His image, endowing them with some of the qualities of His Being, shared with us.

The *second* magnificent intervention was the Incarnation. It was unique, something never before seen in all eternity. The Creator took on the nature of the created. Not only did He stoop to the form of a created being, but He took the status of the most lowly among us. There was nothing in Him that we should esteem Him. Stooping even further, He took upon Himself the load of guilt accumulated among us humans, ending in a death so potent that it covered the sins of the world. Henceforth, anyone who humbly comes to Him in trust and

acceptance will find the merits of His flawless purity available to wash away every sin. His death on Calvary was for us.

The *third* intersection is yet future. As the angels reported to wide-eyed disciples while they watched Jesus rise into the air out of sight, "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). He will return. It is to this glorious event our eyes are focused today. Then will come the third magnificent intervention of God in earthly affairs, this time to put an end to sin and to restore to its original perfection the universe of God.

Of God's three magnificent interventions, the center is the Incarnation. There God came among us to reverse the damage sin had done and to rescue us from our sad condition. We are familiar

with how the Son laid aside His heavenly glory to become one of us. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (John 1:14).

The climax of Christ's ministry fell at the Passover. Some 1500 years earlier, the Passover had been instituted among God's people. A lamb was slain, the blood was applied to the doorway of each believing family, and the angel of death passed over that home; its inhabitants were delivered. So the Passover prefigured deliverance from sin for all who put their trust in Christ; therefore the Scriptures speak of Christ our Passover.

The story of that final week in the life of Jesus is so familiar. Along a trail of injustice our Saviour was led, moving as a lamb led to slaughter. In the midst of fleeing disciples, He was

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arrested, carried through a series of mock hearings and unjust procedures, finally to be condemned and led to the place of the cross. At the close of several hours of agony on the cross, Jesus cried out "It is finished," and died. Never have so few words carried such great meaning. Jesus the sacrifice was dying on the altar for humanity, few of whom understood or even showed much concern.

Mercy Above Logic

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for our sins. It is true, the One of ultimate worth was laying down His life for those unworthy. What a magnificent display of selfless love. Jesus had taught us to love others, even our enemies, and the lesson was hard. Now He demonstrates in deed what He meant; He lays down His own life for us, ungrateful ones. But with His example we began a pilgrimage of understanding. How much He loves us! As the Creator, how easily He could have dismissed us as sinners, turning to a new creation. Instead He exhausts the resources of heaven in order to rescue us from the foolishness of sin with its deadly consequences.

As Adventists we have an insight into something additional at work when Jesus died. Not only is our little world involved, which surely it is, but the watching universe gazed with bated breath as the spectacle played out its course. Lucifer's claim on us, every one of us entrapped in his net of sin, insists that a just God cannot exercise mercy without violating justice. The law of cause and effect must be upheld. If indeed the wages of sin is death, then every sinner must be carried to the grave, not only the sleep of death, but final obliteration. The logic seems unshakable.

In His unspeakable love the Creator was confronted with a dreadful choice. The watching universe waited. What they witnessed was a marvel of all marvels. The very Creator would become one of us, subject Himself to the stained world of sin where we must live, and voluntarily lay down His life to meet the requirements of justice. Indeed, the wages of sin is death. The consequences of rebellion are inescapable, and they must work their course. He will bare His shoulders to

receive the accumulated guilt of humanity. The Lord will lay upon Him that guilt that must end in oblivion. Life must cease. So at Calvary our Saviour received the guilt of us all and suffered its consequences. He died the second death.

But the grave could not hold Him, for in Him was no sin, so He came forth at the call of His Father. "Therefore God has highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9). We began our thoughts with the glorified Christ. Now we understand why such praise is more than appropriate. He came forth from the tomb victorious over sin and death, and what is more, with the right to give that victory to every person who believes. He carried our sin and guilt to the cross. He lifted the veil of our punishment—fully, with great power. He lives evermore to grant freedom and peace in the abundance of His grace. And we, wholly unworthy, become the beneficiaries of His generosity. Now we understand even more fully why salvation is in Christ, solely in Christ, for He grants His righteous standing to all who that truly surrender their will to Christ. This is the reason that those in heaven join in a mighty chorus to cry out praises to the Lamb—the Lamb of God who took away sin. This unique event, but once done in all eternity, was done for our salvation.

So through His sacrifice we are saved. And all the universe has gained new insight as well. God is indeed love—love of a quality that is beyond imagination. The universe witnessed the lengths to which the Saviour would go to rescue the inhabitants of one small world among the billions of worlds. How precious in His sight is every one of His creatures. Now all the false claims of Lucifer against Him have fallen, and the utter benevolence of His character is displayed for all to see. Openly He triumphed over Satan. Now all can understand why his doom is sure and just.

Finished!

The conflict between Satan and Christ reached its height during Christ's earthly ministry. At the very beginning of His service Satan plied his wiles on Jesus, to no avail. And at the conclusion, the sinister foe accosted Christ again.

Ellen White notes that in the unruly mob gathered around the cross stalked a sinister figure, masquerading in human form. He who, as Lucifer, had begun the rebellion in heaven was present in Jerusalem at this most crucial of moments. We can only imagine what passed between them as the eye of Christ from the cross met the eye of His arch-enemy, Lucifer, standing in the rabble. Would Christ, the Creator of all, actually go through with the plan and die for His creatures, or would He return to heaven and the presence of the Father? That presence that had sustained Jesus was withdrawn, and the veil of sin fell across Him, snuffing out His life.

With His final death cry, "It is finished," the story passes the point of no return. He had completed the task; henceforth the doom of Satan was assured. Righteousness and mercy embraced each other. And in that moment our salvation was assured. The gates of heaven opened for every believer.

Today we carry the glorious message of Christ's salvation to all the lands of earth, calling everyone to the foot of the cross, where salvation is assured. Ours is the most wonderful message ever, sent to all who will give Him the key to their heart. It is our privilege to bear that witness to all; looking for the coming again of Jesus, our Saviour and Lord.

Questions for Discussion

1. How have you encountered Jesus as "lion" and "lamb" in your own life? Give a few examples.
2. In what practical ways do the facts of Creation, Incarnation, and Advent affect your daily life and the decisions you make or do not make? How immediate, how real, are these events to you?

* Bible texts in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

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Jesus, the Heavenly Intercessor

Our source of confidence and hope

When Adam sinned, he surrendered to Satan the dominion entrusted to him. Satan became the prince of this world (John 14:30), and Adam and Eve fell under the sentence of destruction. If Adam and Eve, and in them the whole human race, were to overcome Satan and sin and be restored to the blissful estate from which they had fallen, they would need a Saviour, a Mediator, an Intercessor.

In God's foreknowledge and great love, such a provision had already been made. A plan of salvation was encompassed in the covenant made by the Three Persons of the Godhead, who possessed the attributes of Deity equally. In order to eradicate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, one of the divine Beings accepted, and entered into, the role of Father, another the role of the Son. The remaining divine Being, the Holy Spirit, was also to participate in effecting the plan of salvation. All of this took place before sin and rebellion transpired in heaven.

By accepting the roles that the plan entailed, the divine Beings lost none of the powers of Deity. With regard to their eternal existence and other attributes, They were one and equal. But with regard to the plan of salvation, there was, in a sense, a submission on the part of the Son to the Father. This is a mystery. A mystery demonstrated in the incarnation of the Son—still fully God, yet fully man (Phil. 2:5-7).

This Father/Son relationship involved great responsibilities and sacrifices on the part of both. The Father would be called upon to permit His Son to be humiliated; to be subjected to all the fury and wrath that Satan, wicked angels, and evil men could devise; to witness the temptations of the Son during His sojourn on earth; to see Him suffer and die in order to endure the penalty of the sins of all generations. The Son would be designated as lamb (1 Peter 1:19, 20), priest (Ps. 110:4) and mediator (1 Tim 2:5), advocate (1 John 2:1), and intercessor (Heb. 7:25). Still, the "Son of God shared the

Father's throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 36).

That the heavenly temple of God existed before the origin of evil is implied in the phrase "thou art the anointed cherub that covereth" (Eze. 28:14). This temple, "the true tabernacle which the Lord built" (see Heb. 8:2), was from its construction the center for the worship of God by every intelligent being in the universe. It was also the center of God's government. When sin emerged in heaven, and subsequently on

earth, the crisis had to be met within the context of the heavenly temple. As a member of the Godhead, the preincarnate Jesus participated in all the activities of the divine Beings in the holy places. He shared the glory of the Father before the world was (John 17:5).

Handling the Crisis

As sin progressively developed in heaven and later, on earth, so the plan to deal with it was progressively revealed—the divine Beings entered into the roles they had agreed upon before the foundations of the world were laid (see 1 Peter 1:20). When there was war in heaven (Rev. 12:7), Michael (the preincarnate Christ) waged war against Lucifer. After Adam and Eve sinned, the same preincarnate Christ manifested Himself to His servants through the centuries and sent the Holy Spirit to give instruction, doctrine, reproof, and correction through the "holy men of God"

(1 Peter 1:10, 11; 2 Peter 1:21).

What must not be overlooked is Jesus' heavenly intercession throughout the Old Testament. Forgiveness of sins, cleansing from sin, the experience of the new creation, the resurrection of the righteous dead to glory, the translation of the righteous living to heaven—all of these were accomplished on the basis of the promised, though not fully implemented, plan of salvation. Throughout Old Testament history, men and women came to the experience of faith (Heb. 11) and experienced salvation by grace through faith (Rom. 5:19, 20; 2 Tim. 3:15, 16; Gal. 3:5-8). Then, during Jesus'

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earthly ministry—before His death, resurrection, and ascension—He prayed His high priestly intercessory prayer (John 17) and served as priest at His own sacrifice at Calvary, “Himself the priest, Himself the victim” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25). The gospel was made known and its provisions experienced during Old Testament, as well as New Testament, times (Heb. 4:1, 2; 1 Peter 3:18-4:6; Rom. 1:1-3; Eph. 2:8-10).

Of course, Jesus’ heavenly intercession took on an added significance at His death, resurrection, and ascension. He now had “somewhat also to offer” (Heb. 8:3). Upon His ascension Jesus was “enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven’s communication that the Redeemer’s inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise, He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 38, 39).

In His glorified capacity as priest and king, Jesus could enter all of the activities of the divine Beings in heaven. In His high priestly work, which is incidental to the original purposes of the heavenly sanctuary, Jesus performed the first phase of His ministry in that sanctuary until 1844. This work corresponded to the ministry of the Aaronic priests in the earthly sanctuary that took place throughout the year (the “daily” ministry). A new dimension was added to the intercession of Jesus in heaven, by virtue of His atoning sacrifice having been accomplished. No longer were the provisions of the plan of salvation extended to penitent sinners on the basis of the promises. The same provisions extended to penitent Old Testament sinners through the intercession of the Lamb-designate are still available to penitent sinners through the continuing intercession of

the Lamb-exalted. Beginning in 1844, Christ entered the final phase of His heavenly intercession.

Even Before 1844

We frequently hear the remark that the antitypical day of atonement began in 1844. This statement is not accurate and should be stated in a more careful way. In a sense, the incarnation of Christ was an antitypical day of atonement event. “As the high priest laid aside his gorgeous pontifical robes, and officiated in the white linen dress of the common priest, so Christ took the form of a servant, and offered sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25).

In a sense, the death of Jesus was an antitypical day of atonement event. Christ was a sin-bearing sacrifice (Isa. 53:6; 1 Peter 2:24), the antitype of those sacrifices offered through the centuries. However, in and of Himself, Christ was sinless (1 Peter 2:22) and in His death He was the antitype of the Lord’s goat, over whose head no sins were confessed.

In 1844 Christ began the final phase of His intercessory heavenly ministry, typified in the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary by the high priest. This cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is referred to in the judgment scene in Daniel 7:9-13, 22, 26 and 8:14. Here, Jesus refers to the pre-Advent judgment when He refers to those “which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead” (Luke 20:35); and when He gave the admonition to “watch . . . and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36). This “accounting” must take place before the resurrection and before the Son of man appears. This work pertains only to those whose names are in the book of life:

“In the typical service only those who had come before God with confession and repentance, and whose sins, through the blood of the sin offering, were transferred to the sanctuary, had a part in the service of the Day of Atonement. So in the great day of

final atonement and investigative judgment, the only cases considered are those of the professed people of God” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 480).

“The book of life contains the names of all who have ever entered the service of God” (*ibid.*).

Our Part

Although the second phase of Christ’s heavenly ministry commenced in 1844, His intercession on behalf of penitent sinners (His first apartment ministry) continues, just as the daily ministry also continued on the Day of Atonement in ancient Israel. We may still receive by faith all of the blessings provided in the great plan of salvation.

Since Christ is now engaged in the final phase of His intercessory ministry, and since we may avail ourselves of the benefits of His intercession, it rests with us to “give diligence to make [our] calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10), to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). We must “repent, and turn [ourselves] from all [our] transgressions; so iniquity shall not be [our] ruin” and “make [us] a new heart and a new spirit” (Eze. 18:30, 31).

In these closing scenes of the conflict of the ages, faithful men and women the world over will receive, through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the blessings and grace that our heavenly High Priest dispenses, render loving obedience, and reveal Christ’s Spirit, character, and love.

Questions for Discussion

1. How would you explain the separate roles of the Godhead in human salvation to a non-Christian?
2. Of what importance is it to understand Jesus’ present ministry in the Most Holy Place?

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Reconciling Grace

We must abandon self and turn to Jesus

Over three decades on Christian college campuses, I have collected unique expressions uttered by students in the fell clutches of troubling circumstances. A student who receives an unwanted grade might say "Mercy me!" or "Have mercy!"

While expressions may vary and circumstances differ, one basic truth remains constant in all of us: If you are born of man and woman and take part in this journey called the human race, life will often find you circumscribed by the need for special understanding. In short, grace is our only hope.

Who Needs It?

Not all persons sense the need to be understood, but we know a lot about the need to be underscored. We seek credit and congratulations that our achievements are not only sufficient in ourselves but are better than those of others.

Jesus addresses this kind of self-sufficiency in the parable of Luke 18:9-14. He describes two types of persons likely found in church worship on any given day. One is the proud church member who brags,

"God, I thank You that I am not like other people." The second is the more modest attendant who prays, "God, be merciful unto me, a sinner." Taking dead aim at one of our recurring problems, Jesus warns us that too often we get "too good" for God.

A buddy of mine was a great golfer—he struck the ball cleanly, and his scores danced around even par. Amazingly, he hadn't even begun to reach his full potential. But like many of us who get "good" at something, he made a fatal mistake. At the peak of his game, he made a haughty remark that caused his professional golf teacher to respond, "Well, I guess there's nothing more I can do for you." Result? Lessons stopped. My friend's golfing prowess diminished, and now his game shows only flickers of his bygone brilliance. He reached that zone of dangerous goodness, and he fell—hard.

How like our spiritual lives! When will we learn that our best falls far short of the absolute standard God wants for us? Is there not always room for improvement, much more land to be possessed? Even during our victories and progress "toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called

[us] heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14, NIV), we must swallow any tilt toward personal pride and be ever ready, through the merits of our Saviour, to "approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:16, NIV).

Jesus Targets the Temple

Now back to the parable of Luke 18. In verse 10 Jesus places the setting of the story at the sanctuary: "Two men went up to the temple to pray" (NIV). The temple, rather than a synagogue, is a significant detail doubtless intended by Jesus. Many in number, and located in various cities, synagogues were where Jews gathered for reading and expounding Scripture. The temple, or sanctuary, however, loomed more significant in Jewish liturgy and life because only at that location were lambs sacrificed—pointing prophetically to Calvary and to Christ, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

Because the setting of this parable is clearly public worship at the sanctuary and because no feast is mentioned, we

may assume the event is the mid-afternoon sacrifice offering of the lamb, held in full view of all the worshipers—including the pharisee and the publican. Both see the same sacrificial lamb being offered for their sins. Both are participants in the same worship service. But each responds differently.

Self Versus Sanctuary

The Pharisee looks at the sacrificial lamb—that divine deed of God for lost sinners—but instead of envisioning his Saviour, he sees only his own good deeds and others' misfortunes. Even the Greek word for "stood" in Luke 18:11 suggests that during this temple service he dramatically stood proudly, perhaps ostentatiously, in a physically upright position of self-satisfaction, head thrown back, nose turned up, eyes glancing askance, arms akimbo, God in his hip pocket. Then he prays (brags) and testifies (self-glorifies) and toots his horn, and out of his mouth gushes those damning words: "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a

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important
thing.*

week; I give a tenth of all my income” (verses 11, 12, NRSV).

Jesus then offers a better model. Beginning with verse 13, the tone of the parable takes a sudden turn, an about-face, a pivoting on the word “but.” “But the tax collector . . .” Although some Bible translations begin this verse with “And the publican . . .,” the movement of the story demands a contrast between the first worshiper and the second. “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner’” (verse 13, NIV).

What contrast! To the Pharisee, church is a right; to the publican, it’s a privilege. The Pharisee stood in cocksurety, the publican in a contrite spirit. The Pharisee had everything in his favor except the most important thing. The publican had nothing in his favor except the most important thing. The Pharisee was long on religiosity, short on Christianity. The publican was short on religious formality but long on Christian attitude.

In “Two Worshipers” in *Christ’s Object Lessons*, Ellen White uses these words to describe the first worshiper: “self-praise,” “self-satisfied,” “self-satisfaction,” “self-righteousness,” “self-confidence,” “self-sufficiency,” “self-trust,” “self-glorification,” “self-esteem,” and “self-love.” Only one phrase traces the second worshiper—“renunciation of self.” Both worshipers beheld the same sacrificial lamb when worshipping in the Temple. One saw only himself; the other saw his Saviour. What do you and I see when we gather in God’s house?

Beholding the Mercy Seat

When the publican prays, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” he is asking for a different type of mercy than that found in some of our well-known texts: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7); or “God, who is rich in mercy for his great love where-with he loved us” (Eph. 2:4); or “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). The Greek word *eleos*, translated

“mercy” in these verses, describes a mercy that wears clothes of sympathy, compassion, and understanding.

But the publican reaches for something much deeper in Luke 18:13. Beholding with open gaze the sacrificial offering for his sins in the court of the Temple, he uses a word different from *eleos*. His actual expression is from *hilastērion*, translated “mercy” by some, but because it is a sanctuary term, it would probably be best rendered here as “atonement”: “God, make an atonement for me,” the publican was saying, in effect. Paul employs the same word in Romans 3:24, 25: “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [*hilastērion*] through faith in his blood” or to be “a sacrifice of atonement” (NIV). The publican’s word is also used by John the Beloved when he assured us of One who speaks in our defense before the Father, even Christ Jesus, who is “the atoning sacrifice [*hilastērion*] for our sins” (1 John 2:2, NIV).

If we may press this special word from the publican’s prayer a bit further, we find that it is the same applied by the Septuagint (the translation of the Old Testament into the Greek language) when a word in Greek was chosen for the Hebrew *kapporeth*, meaning “lid, covering of the covenant” or “covering of the mercy seat.” So the publican is seeking reconciliation and praying in essence, “O God, make an atonement for me by covering my sins with Thy mercy seat.”

What is the mercy seat? When God inspired architectural drawings for the first earthly sanctuary, the second compartment, or Most Holy Room, was to house the most sacred piece of furniture, the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:17-22). The ark contained God’s ten commandments. “The cover of this ark,” explains Ellen White, “was called the mercy seat, to signify that although death was the penalty for transgressing the law, mercy came through Jesus Christ to pardon the repentant, believing sinner. The only hope of any man lies through Jesus Christ, who brought

the robe of His righteousness to put upon the sinner who would lay off his filthy garments” (*Youth’s Instructor*, Aug. 18, 1886).

When you come into the presence of God and get a good look at Jesus Christ, you won’t feel like calling attention to your own goodness, which, if it is indeed your own, disqualifies itself from saving you into God’s kingdom. Only the goodness of Christ can save us.

“What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus;

What can make me pure within?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

“Oh precious is the flow.

That makes me white as snow;

No other fount I know,

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

—Robert Lowry

Do you acknowledge that you are a sinner whose life is either separated from God or has not yet reached its full spiritual potential? I commend to you God’s reconciling grace, His unlimited, all-inclusive and transforming love. Come to the mercy seat and fervently kneel.

“From every stormy wind that blows,

From every swelling tide of woes,

There is a calm, a sure retreat;

’Tis found beneath the mercy seat.”

Questions for Discussion

1. In what ways have you relied on outdoing others so that you could feel good about yourself?
2. The parable in Luke 18 carries a clear lesson for Pharisees. Does it also carry a lesson for publicans?
3. Name one specific way you can get closer to achieving your “spiritual potential.”

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Jesus at the Center

Sanctuary themes in the book of Revelation

The book of Revelation reputedly belongs to that literary genre described as apocalyptic; specifically, "biblical apocalyptic." It is the New Testament counterpart to the book of Daniel.

Apocalyptic prophecy provides special revelations from God based on the inspired visions and dreams of the prophet. The main purpose is to concentrate our attention on events at the end of human history when earthly nations will be destroyed and the kingdom of Christ established for eternity. It is also to awaken and nurture hope in Christ's soon return and to inspire spiritual dependence upon Him as the way to get ready to meet our Lord. Urging Christians to give their best attention to this book, Ellen White writes: "The solemn messages that have been given in their order in the Revelation are to occupy the first place in the minds of God's people. Nothing else is to be allowed to engross our attention" (*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 302). When we as a people understand what this book means to us, "there will be seen among us a great revival" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 113).

The Central Figure

In the vast sweep of human history covered in the book of Revelation, Christ is the dominant figure. And the book's Christocentric purpose is emphasized in Revelation 1:1 and 22:6. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."

Revelation is the book of the Lamb "in the midst of the throne." Christ's sacrifice is central in all He does for us, and He is the Lord of the church. Another prominent role of Jesus is brought out clearly in Revelation 1:7, 8: He is the coming king (verse 7), "the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," the Lord "who is, and who was and who is to come" (verse 8, NKJV). Christ is the one who "lives, and was dead," and is "alive for evermore." He has the "keys of Hades and of Death" (verse 18, NKJV).

What a wonderful assurance is given to those oppressed and downtrodden! What comfort there is for us to know that our Lord is with us even now, no matter how deplorable our conditions! What hope we can gain by recognizing that one day

Christ will set right a topsy-turvy world for His people, as He comes quickly to reward everyone according to his or her work! (Rev. 22:12).

No wonder, then, that John, in longing anticipation, exclaimed, as many Christians have echoed since: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (verse 20).

The heavenly sanctuary is a central pivot of the message of Revelation. Let us look at four scenes in the book as they relate to prophecy and to Jesus Christ as the minister of the sanctuary.

*Christ is with
His church as
its Pastor,
Priest, and
Shepherd.*

1. The Seven Churches

Before John heard Jesus deliver His letter to the seven churches, he first saw Him represented as walking among the lampstands (or candlesticks) of the Holy Place. Jesus identified the lampstands as the church, which must reflect to the world His light. Christ is with His church serving as its pastor, priest, and shepherd, encouraging and purifying it, helping it to burn brightly with His own pure and loving light.

The book of Revelation is basically a letter, written and sent to the seven churches in Asia Minor. These churches were chosen because their spiritual needs and general conditions represented the state of the various parts of the universal church at any one time and throughout history. Every generation of Christians is found in all, and Christ's corrections, consolations, commendations, and practical counsels are appropriate to their various situations.

Some Christians today have lost their first love (Ephesus, Rev. 2:1-7). Some are faced with tribulations and persecution (Smyrna, verses 8-11). Some are tolerating error and apostasy (Pergamum, verses 12-17). Some are committing spiritual immorality by their involvement in the religious systems symbolized as "Jezebel" (Thyatira, verses 18-27). Some have lost that living faith that works by love (Sardis, Rev. 3:1-6). Some are working faithfully for Christ while at the same time trusting in His intercessory and judgment ministry (Philadelphia, verses 7-13). Some are spiritually lukewarm, self-satisfied, lost, and empty (Laodicea, verses 14-18).

These precious messages are for our admonition. Jesus says in Revelation 3:18-22: "Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white gar-

ments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. . . . Be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him" (RSV).

2. The Seven Trumpets

Indeed, the Revelation is the word of One who knows the end from the beginning. Verse 3 of chapter 8 begins the prophecy of the seven trumpets with a clear reference to the heavenly sanctuary. It is a graphic description of the end of Christ's intercessory ministry and the ushering in of God's judgment upon the world. The thunder, lightning, and earthquake dramatize the close of human probation.

Ellen White pictures it beautifully: "Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the ten commandments, throw down the censer. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, 'It is done.' And all the angelic host laid off their crowns as Jesus made the solemn declaration 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still'" (*Early Writings*, pp. 279, 280).

When the work of the pre-Advent judgment closes, your destiny and mine will have been decided for life or death. "Watch



ye therefore, . . . lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping" (Mark 13:35, 36).

3. The Great Controversy Scene

In Revelation 12 the dragon stands up against God and His church. The "woman" is identified as God's true followers, His church. In the last verse of the chapter, we are introduced to the "remnant" of the woman's seed, who are bitterly opposed by the evil one. The vital questions are: "Who are they?" And what is "the testimony of Jesus"?

The remnant of Revelation 12:17 refers to those of Christ's true followers who would remain after the close of the 1260 years of 1798. I am convinced that the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church fits the specifications laid down in this passage—that of keeping

the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Another chapter of the "great controversy" between truth and error is depicted in Revelation 13 under the symbolism of "the beast." The beast represents the satanic forces that are pressing for the allegiance of every living being. But the chapter also assures us that the devil will face final destruction by virtue of Christ's successful sacrifice at Calvary.

The new scene that begins with Revelation 14:6 takes us back to a time before the vision described in verses 1-6. The focus of Revelation 14:1-5 is on victors, not victims. Ellen White refers to these victors as

"virgins" because they possess a pure faith (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 406).

Verses 6-12 of chapter 14 have special application to the period immediately preceding the second coming of Christ. The three-part message contained in these verses prepares the 144,000 for God's final sealing. This message brings about a final separation between those who accept and those who reject God's call. It is an earnest appeal for the worship of the true God and for reverence for His name. Each one of us shall be an agent for Christ to proclaim these messages to the uttermost parts of the world.

The third section of the chapter describes in symbolic terms the harvest of the righteous and the wicked at the coming of Jesus (verses 14-20). These messages are for our time. They focus on

today's people, today's problems, today's deceptions and needs. They result in separation from the world—a final separation of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:23-30), of the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31-46), of the righteous and the unrighteous. They deal with issues of central concern to all humanity. God is appealing to all human hearts as the final judgment draws near. It is a call for reverence; it is a call to loyal worship of Christ at a time when the majority of the world's people have turned to worship another power (Rev. 13:3).

4. The Seven Last Plagues

The events of Revelation 15 and 16 occur just before the harvest. They describe a time of tribulation between the close of probation (Rev. 22:11) and the second coming of our Lord.

The seven last plagues are the most fearful judgments ever poured out on the human race. They will fall upon those

who have declared their final loyalty to the demonic powers, upon those who have turned their backs on Bible truths and on God's many calls for repentance and surrender.

But it is comforting to know that the wrath of God will not fall upon a single soul that seeks refuge in Jesus. God Himself has declared it: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Ex. 12:13).

Now is our time to listen to the words of the Most High. Jesus is still in the sanctuary. He sends the closing gospel of the judgment hour to all the world in love and mercy. He is appealing to men and women, boys and girls, to turn to God and turn away from sin. When the pre-Advent judgment concludes, the seven last plagues will be poured out, and Jesus will appear in consuming glory.

But the final victory for the faithful is certain; for the Lord of the church, the Lamb that was slain, is not only worthy

but also able. His promises are sure. He does not fail. May the day of the Lord find us under the protection of the Almighty.

Questions for Discussion

1. If the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 represent the church in all ages, then where does your own local church fall? Which one does it resemble? And what can you do about it?

2. If Christ is, indeed, the center of the book of Revelation, how does that fact change the way I present it to other people?

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S E C O N D S A B B A T H

Christ in the Sanctuary

Our gaze should center on Him.

The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. They were intended to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin that caused death.

To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate.¹

Not only the sanctuary itself, but the ministration of the priests, was to "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5). . . . The ministration of the sanctuary consisted of two divisions, a daily and a yearly service. The daily service was performed at the altar of burnt offering in the court of the tabernacle and in the holy place; while the yearly service was in the Most Holy. . . .

The daily service consisted of the morning and evening burnt offering, the offering of sweet incense on the golden altar, and the special offerings for individual sins. And there were also offerings for sabbaths, new moons, and special feasts.

Every morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning

ELLEN G. WHITE

blood of Christ. God expressly directed that every offering presented for the service of the sanctuary should be "without blemish" (Ex. 12:5). . . .

In the offering of incense the priest was brought more directly into the presence of God than in any other act of the daily ministration. . . . The incense, ascending with the prayers of Israel, represents the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people, and which can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God. . . .

As the priests morning and evening entered the holy place at the time of incense, the daily sacrifice was ready to be offered upon the altar in the court without. This was a time of intense interest to the worshipers who assembled at the tabernacle. Before entering into the presence of God through the ministration of the priest, they were to engage in earnest searching of heart and confession of sin. They united in silent prayer, with their faces toward the holy place. Thus their petitions ascended with the cloud of incense, while faith laid hold upon the merits of the promised Saviour prefigured by the atoning sacrifice. . . .

The most important part of the daily ministration was the service performed in behalf of individuals. The repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle, and, placing his hand upon the victim's head, confessed his sins, thus in figure transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice. By his own hand the animal was then slain, and the blood was carried by the priest into the holy place and sprinkled before the veil, behind which was the ark containing the law that the sinner had transgressed. By this ceremony the sin was, through the blood, transferred in figure to the sanctuary. . . .

Such was the work that went on day by day throughout the year. The sins of Israel being thus transferred to the sanctuary, the holy places were defiled, and a special work became necessary for the removal of the sins. God commanded that an atonement

be made for each of the sacred apartments, as for the altar, to "cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel" (Lev. 16:19).²

The Great Day of Atonement

Once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, the priest entered the Most Holy Place for the cleansing of the sanctuary. The work there performed completed the yearly round of ministration. . . . The whole ceremony was designed to impress the Israelites

*The union of
justice and
mercy fills all
heaven with
wonder and
adoration.*

with the holiness of God and His abhorrence of sin; and, further, to show them that they could not come in contact with sin without becoming polluted. Every man was required to afflict his soul while this work of atonement was going forward. All business was to be laid aside, and the whole congregation of Israel were to spend the day in solemn humiliation before God, with prayer, fasting, and deep searching of heart.

Important truths concerning the atonement are taught by the typical service. A substitute was accepted in the sinner's stead; but the sin was not canceled by the blood of the victim. A means was thus provided by which it was transferred to the sanctuary. By the offering of blood the sinner acknowledged the authority of the law, confessed his guilt in transgression, and expressed his desire for pardon through faith in a Redeemer to come; but he was not yet entirely

released from the condemnation of the law.

On the Day of Atonement the high priest, having taken an offering from the congregation, went into the Most Holy Place with the blood of this offering, and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, directly over the law, to make satisfaction for its claims. Then, in his character of mediator, he took the sins upon himself and bore them from the sanctuary. Placing his hands upon the head of the scapegoat, he confessed over him all these sins, thus in figure transferring them from himself to the goat. The goat then bore them away, and they were regarded as forever separated from the people.

Such was the service performed "unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." And what was done in type in the ministration of the earthly sanctuary is done in reality in the ministration of the heavenly sanctuary.³

The Heavenly Sanctuary

The sanctuary in heaven, in which Jesus ministers in our behalf, is the great original, of which the sanctuary built by Moses was a copy. . . . The holy places of the sanctuary in heaven are represented by the two apartments in the sanctuary on earth. . . . In vision the apostle John . . . saw an angel "having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne" (Rev. 8:3). . . .

The ark that enshrines the tables of the law is covered with the mercy seat, before which Christ pleads His blood in the sinner's behalf. Thus is represented the union of justice and mercy in the plan of human redemption. This union infinite wisdom alone could devise and infinite power accomplish; it is a union that fills all heaven with wonder and adoration.

The cherubim of the earthly sanctuary, looking reverently down upon the mercy seat, represent the interest with which the heavenly host contemplate the work of redemption. This is the mystery of mercy into which angels desire to look—that God can be just

while He justifies the repenting sinner and renews His intercourse with the fallen race; that Christ could stoop to raise unnumbered multitudes from the abyss of ruin and clothe them with the spotless garments of His own righteousness to unite with angels who have never fallen and to dwell forever in the presence of God.⁴

After His ascension our Saviour began His work as our high priest. Says Paul: "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24).

The ministration of the priest throughout the year in the first apartment of the sanctuary, "within the veil" which formed the door and separated the holy place from the outer court, represents the work of ministration upon which Christ entered at His ascension. It was the work of the priest in the daily ministration to present before God the blood of the sin offering, also the incense which ascended with the prayers of Israel. So did Christ plead His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners, and present before Him also, with the precious fragrance of His own righteousness, the prayers of penitent believers. Such was the work of ministration in the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven.⁵

The Cleansing of the Sanctuary

What is the cleansing of the sanctuary? That there was such a service in connection with the earthly sanctuary is stated in the Old Testament Scriptures. But can there be anything in heaven to be cleansed? In Hebrews 9 the cleansing of both the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary is plainly taught. "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these [the blood of animals]; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb. 9:22, 23), even the precious blood of Christ.⁶

For eighteen centuries this work of

ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record. As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so before Christ's work for the redemption of men is completed

A work of judgment must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people.

there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. This is the service which began when the 2300 days ended. At that time, as foretold by Daniel the prophet, our High Priest entered the Most Holy, to perform the last division of His solemn work—to cleanse the sanctuary.

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 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 (Rev. 22:12).⁷

Conclusion

Solemn are the scenes connected with the closing work of the atonement. Momentous are the interests involved therein. The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. . . . At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Saviour's admonition: "Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:33). . . . "Watch ye therefore: . . . lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping" (verses 35, 36).⁸

Questions for Discussion:

1. Which aspect of the ancient sanctuary service do you find most appealing personally? Why?
2. Does the idea of an antitypical day of atonement bring you fear or confidence or both? How would you explain your reaction to this teaching?
3. What do you think should be our approach as we seek to share this message with those not of our faith?

¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 68.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 351-355.

³ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 419, 420.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 414, 415.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 420, 421.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 417.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 421, 422.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 490, 491.

Ellen G. White was one of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her work continues to be a prophetic voice within it.



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The Sanctuary—God's Plan for Our Rescue



BY CLAIRE EVA

A Note to Parents and Teachers

Describing the Old Testament sanctuary gives us a picture of salvation, for it tells of the wonderful work of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I hope you will receive as great a blessing in studying about the sanctuary as I did in preparing these talks.

A few suggestions of things you could do together this week are:

1. Make a model of the sanctuary. You can make a shoe box diorama, using clay or other materials.
2. Draw pictures of the sanctuary. You can have the furnishings lie flat or stand up.
3. Have fun baking some unleavened bread in rounds like the shew-bread.
4. Light candles when you discuss the candlestick or burn some sweet-smelling incense.
5. Use the discussion questions to talk over what you are studying this week. Let them stimulate other related topics you may want to discuss.

Sabbath

How Can God Love Me So Much?

Memory Gem

1 John 3:1: "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (NIV).

Caught in a Rainstorm

In the memory gem you read the word "lavished." Another word that means almost the same thing is "showered." Have you ever been caught in a rain shower?

When I was in the third grade, I walked to school and back. One afternoon as I walked home the sky filled with dark clouds. With a loud crash of thunder, it seemed to open wide, drenching me with cool, cleansing water! At first I wished I had an umbrella. But because I couldn't do anything else, I just let the rain pour over my head, into my eyes and mouth. It soaked my clothes and flooded over me like a rushing waterfall.

And I loved it! I felt completely drenched and totally happy. God had lavished me with His wonderful, wet creation!

God and Jesus Had a Plan

I'll bet you can't count the number of times you have sung "Jesus Loves Me." But do you *know* that Jesus loves you?

How do you feel when you make a bad choice? Maybe you took something that wasn't yours? Or looked on another student's paper? Or hurt someone with stinging words or actions?

How do your parents treat you when you make bad choices? Do they still love you when you choose wrong instead of right?

Long ago, our great-, great- (and many times more great!) grandparents, Adam and Eve, made a seriously poor choice. They chose to believe Satan instead of their Creator, Jesus, who loved them. Because they did not trust Jesus, they sinned.

The good news for Adam and Eve and all of us is that God had a plan to

deal with their wrong choice. God knew that Adam and Eve *could* choose to disobey Him, and so God the Father and God the Son made a perfect plan to save Their children.

You know the Bible verse "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . ." Now that Adam and Eve had broken God's law, the natural result would be for them *and* their children to die. But Jesus loved us *so much* that He was willing to take our place and die for our sin. Jesus would live a perfect life, and He would give that perfect life to us. He has been called the Second Adam because He rescues the world the first Adam lost.

When Adam and Eve sinned, the plan of sacrifice began. An innocent lamb would die. And the death of the lamb would remind God's people how terrible sin is and make us think of our innocent Lamb—Jesus—who would die for our sins.

Wow! Isn't it amazing, boys and girls! Long before you were born, and long before God created Adam and Eve, God had a plan to rescue you! We have been given life because Jesus died for us. Jesus has truly showered His love on us. God truly *does* love you, doesn't He?

Discussion

What do you do when you make bad choices and sin against your Saviour?

Jesus and God had a plan for an emergency. What kind of plan do you have in your house when you have emergencies? Do you have a plan if you have a fire in your home?

Activity

With your family, go over plans for emergencies—a family fire drill and what to do if someone gets hurt.

How Close Does God Want to Be?

Memory Gem

Exodus 25:8: "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them."

People We Love

How close does God want to be to you? When you love someone, you naturally want to be close to them.

Before Kerri and Adam were old enough to go to school, they would get so excited when they heard a familiar car pulling into the driveway. They knew it was their father coming home. They loved their dad, and this was a happy time! He would come into the family room, and they would rush to meet him. More often than not, they would spend time wrestling playfully around on the carpet, and they would both end up sitting snugly on his lap for a story or just a talk.

As the children got older they still looked forward to bedtime sessions with Dad. He would talk to them about the happy and sad experiences of their day. He would read to them and pray with them. Most of the time they would try to coax him to stay just a little bit longer!

And how do you think Dad felt about all of this? The truth is, he couldn't wait to get home each day. He loved the way Kerri and Adam welcomed him when he got home! It made him feel so special and so loved. It was fun to play with his children, and fun to spend time with them.

Jesus—Close to Us

It's true. When you love someone, you want to be close to them. When Jesus was here, He said to God, His Father: "Father, I want those you have given me [that's us!] to be with me where I am" (John 17:24).

Jesus wants to be close to us.

How close? In the same talk with God that I mentioned above, Jesus prayed that all of us "may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us" (verse 21, NIV). He also said, "I am the vine; you are the branches" (John 15:5, NIV). That means we are all a part of the same plant! That's how close Jesus wants to be to us.

And so when God rescued His children and brought them out of Egypt and out of their awful life of slavery, He said, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8).

You see, God had been with the children of Israel all during their journey. Do you remember the pillar of cloud God sent during the day? In the hot desert God sent the pillar of cloud to block out the harmful rays of the sun and protect His children from the scorching heat.

At night He sent a pillar of fire. What did that do? The desert can get very cold at night—just the opposite of the blistering daytime. The pillar of fire warmed God's children. He thought of everything, didn't He?

And even more, the cloud moved and led the way when the time came for the people to travel to a new place. And the cloud stayed put when they were supposed to stay in a certain spot.

But you know what? That wasn't enough for God! He said, "I want to live with them. I want to take care of them and let them experience and understand My plan for them. That's how much I love them!"

The People Build a Sanctuary

And so God asked Moses to have the children of Israel bring offerings so that they could build a sanctuary—a holy place. They needed offerings of precious materials such as gold and brass and silver and fine cloth. But God wanted only the offerings that His children would give Him freely and happily. And guess what? The people brought so many beautiful gifts of love that Moses had to stop them from bringing more! How happy God must have been!

Then God called Moses up the mountain for a talk and commanded him to make the earthly sanctuary. It would be patterned after the one He showed him.

Moses followed God's instructions carefully. It took about six months to build the sanctuary. It was so beautiful that our words can hardly describe it. But the earthly sanctuary was only just a blurry reflection of the sanctuary in heaven.

Tomorrow, will you go on an imaginary journey with me? We will walk through the sanctuary together and look at all of God's treasures it holds. Together we will discover more about His fantastic love for us.

Discussion

How do you like to spend time with the people you love?

What kind of gifts can we freely give God today?

Can you think of a project for Him that would be exciting and fun to carry out?

Activity

Think of a way that you could make a model of the sanctuary. You might use a shoe box and make a diorama with paper or cardboard models. You could also use clay. You might be interested in drawing a blueprint model of a sanctuary as we study. Or just draw the sanctuary treasures on paper.



Seeing God's Treasures

Memory Gem

Exodus 25:9: "In accordance with all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, so you shall make it" (NRSV).

Stories Rooms Tell

It's a special treat to be able to go home with a friend after school, isn't it? What's it like the first time you go home with a new friend? You're probably curious to see where your friend lives and what kind of things they have and are interested in.

You can tell a lot about a friend by seeing his or her room.

Kimberly's room has bookshelves and a couple books on her nightstand. She has a neatly organized collection of dolls and a lovely dollhouse with a variety of miniature furnishings.

What can you tell about Kimberly by her room? Kimberly loves to read. She also likes pretty things such as dolls and dollhouses. And you know she cares about them because they are neatly arranged.

Ryan's room is less neat than Kimberly's, but still fascinating. He has a box of Legos. In one corner he has been building a space center. Ryan also has a computer and programs such as *Mental Math* and *Math Blaster*, and a space program for his CD-ROM and some neat Bible games.

What can you tell about Ryan? He likes to put things together. He is intrigued by outer space, shuttles, and space travel. He wants to be an astronaut someday. You can also tell that Ryan likes math. This space adven-

turer is also a Christian who enjoys his Bible games and loves Jesus.

God's Treasures

Just as we can tell a lot about Ryan and Kimberly and what they are interested in by their rooms, we can tell a lot about God and what He is like by the treasures in the earthly sanctuary. Let's take an imaginary walk through the tabernacle and look at its furnishings. Tomorrow we will look at what these things tell us about God.

The Tabernacle

We must go back in time to the Middle Eastern desert traveled by peo-



ple long ago. We approach the tabernacle. How big do you picture it to be? It is 55 feet long, 18 feet wide, and 18 feet tall. The tabernacle can be taken down and put up again, because the children of Israel move from place to place.

Our First Approach!

The whole building looks like solid gold shimmering on the desert floor. As we get closer we see why—the walls are covered with gold! How beautiful it is!

As we look carefully, we see that the roof is made of four sets of curtains. We step inside and look up. (Actually, only the Levites and priests could have gone inside.) On the inside of the roof we see fine linen and colors of blue, purple, and scarlet. Cherubim, or angels, are worked into the curtains with golden threads. The next three layers on top of this first one are made of goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, and the final or top layer is made from seal skins.

The Outer Court

As we approach the tabernacle, we step into an open space called the courtyard, surrounded by screens of fine linen. These screens are half as high as the walls of the tabernacle, so people outside, even though they can't go in, can see the outer materials of the tabernacle tent.

A **brazen or brass altar** in the court near the entrance is used for burnt offerings made to the Lord.

Between the altar and the door of the tabernacle is a **brass laver**. A laver looks like a washbasin. The priests use it to wash their hands and feet before serving at the altar or entering the sanctuary.

The Holy Place

We walk reverently through the entrance (facing east) to the holy place, through the first curtain.

Now we learn that the tabernacle is divided into two sections (called apartments) by a beautiful inner curtain. This curtain, like the one at the entrance, hangs from gold-covered pillars and is made from blue, purple, and scarlet materials. Threads of gold and silver run through it and in the angel patterns on it.

On the right side of the holy place is the **table of shewbread**, covered with pure gold. Every Sabbath the priests place 12 new cakes on it in two piles—six in

each stack. They give off a lovely fragrance, for they have been sprinkled with frankincense. The loaves that are taken away can be eaten only by the priests.

Across from the shewbread to our left is the **seven-branched candlestick**. Beautiful golden lilies decorate the branches. The whole thing is made from one piece of solid gold! It is the only light in the sanctuary. Its brightness amazes us. Then we remember that the gold-covered walls reflect the light, making the sanctuary shine like hundreds of glistening mirrors.

Just in front of the curtain that separates the holy place from the Most Holy Place we see the **golden altar of incense**. Here the priest burns incense every morning and evening. On special occasions he will sprinkle the horns of this altar with the blood of a sin offering. The burning incense fills the holy places with its fragrance.

The Most Holy Place

God's presence abides in the Most Holy Place. This place is so holy that only the high priest can go in, and then only once a year!

Inside we see the **ark of the covenant**. This chest is made of acacia wood and covered inside and outside with gold! It has a crown of gold on the top. The ark contains the tables of stone on which God wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger, a bowl of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the book of the law.

The ark's cover is called the mercy seat. It too is made from one piece of solid gold. Two golden cherubim stand at each end, facing each other and "looking" reverently down at the ark. On each angel, one wing stretches up and the other folds over the body, showing respect and reverence. The scene fills us with awe!

Above the mercy seat is the Shekinah, the cloud of God's presence. God communicates with the high priest by a voice from the cloud.

As we continue our journey through the sanctuary, we wonder, "What does all of this mean?" Tomorrow we will talk about what these treasures tell us about our God.

Tuesday

$$2 + 3 + 2 = \text{One}$$

Memory Gem

1 Corinthians 1:30, 31: "It is because of him [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption" (NIV).

What Is a Shadow?

I remember, when I was a child, trying to catch my shadow on the ground. Sometimes I would try to jump away from it. Either way it's a pretty impossible task.

The Bible says that the earthly sanctuary was a *copy* or *shadow* of something greater in heaven (Hebrews 8).

When Israel came out of Egypt, where they had been slaves, they escaped a hard life. They had no books to read, so they passed on stories from person to person.

The earthly sanctuary, given by God and built by Israel, has been called a "picture book" illustration. All of the furniture and services were pictures from God to His children. God used them like a book to tell about His plan for saving us.

Remember how Kimberly's and Ryan's rooms told us about them? Let's look at God's sanctuary on earth to see what God told His people about Himself.

Looking at God Through the Courtyard

Yesterday as we walked through the courtyard, we noticed the laver and described it as the place where the priests washed their hands and feet.

Why do you think they washed? And what does it tell us about God? Do you recall when Moses saw the burning bush? He was amazed to find that the bush didn't burn up! God was in that bush—just as He was in the cloud and *also* in the sanctuary. At the burning bush God asked Moses to take off his sandals because he stood on holy ground.

The sanctuary was holy too because God was there. So priests did not wear shoes in the sanctuary and washed their hands and feet so they would not pollute the holy place. This tells us that God is holy and that nothing unclean can be in His divine presence.

If the Brazen Altar Could Speak

Imagine that this altar could speak! It might say something like this: "Every morning and evening a lamb is burned upon me. This perfect lamb, without blemish or fault, reminds the children of Israel of the perfect Lamb who is to come—the Messiah, Jesus Christ. This offering is to help them see that they must always depend upon Jesus, the Lamb of God, to save them from their sins."

The Furnishings of the Holy Place

Remember the three pieces of furniture in the holy place—the table of shewbread, the seven-branched candlestick, and the altar of incense? What do they tell us about God?

The priests kept bread on the **table of shewbread** and called it the "bread of the presence" because it was always before the Lord. Why do you think there were 12 loaves? The number reminds us of the 12 tribes of Israel, which represent all of God's people. God gives real and spiritual food to *all* of His children who depend on Him.

The shewbread pointed to Jesus, the living bread, who is in God's presence for us. The incense, which was burned as an offering when the new bread was brought to the table, stood for Jesus' sweet life, which pleased God the Father.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry" (John 6:35, NIV).

The **candlestick's seven lamps** were never out. This tells us that light is important. Light helps us to find our way. Are you, or have you ever been afraid of the dark? Jesus said: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12, NIV).

Just as the candlestick was the only light of the sanctuary, Jesus is the light of the world. He is the one light we

need to lead us. We will never be left to walk alone in the darkness.

What about the **golden altar of incense**? When the priest made the daily offering of incense, he got closer to the presence of God than at any other time. Remember, the curtain in front of the Most Holy Place did not reach the top of the ceiling of the building. So the priest, who could not enter the Most Holy Place, could look up at that narrow opening toward the ark. As it burned, the incense created a cloud of fragrant smoke that rose and filled both apartments.

What does the incense tell us about God? Did you know that God gave Moses the recipe for the incense? It was a special formula not to be used anywhere else. We may think of this incense as the prayers of the people ascending to God.

This one-of-a-kind incense stood for the merits of Christ—His perfect goodness. Jesus mixes His beautiful, spotless life with all of our prayers and worship. Because of Him, our worship and prayers become pleasing and beautiful to God. We need His righteous life because we are imperfect.

The Most Holy Place

The Most Holy Place contained the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat. What do they tell us about God?

The **ark of the covenant** contained the Ten Commandments, a bowl of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded.

The manna in the ark reminds us that God takes care of all of our needs. God says, "Don't worry! I will take care of you."

Aaron's rod that budded reminded the people that God had chosen Aaron and his family to be priests for Him. God tells us today that we can trust God and that we should respect our leaders.

The Ten Commandments in the ark tells us the importance of God's law—the great rule of goodness. God wrote it with His own finger and gave it to Moses. God knew that if we followed His law of love, we would be happy. His law is perfect,

true, and holy. No one can sin against God's law and live in His presence.

The sad news is that we have all sinned against our God. But the good news is that covering the ark is the mercy seat. The mercy seat shows God's presence and tells us that because of Jesus' one-time sacrifice, forgiveness has been given to those who are sorry for their sins.

The Bible says, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16, NIV).

2 + 3 + 2 = One

We have looked at the sanctuary up close. What does it tell you about God? You have heard about the laver and the altar in the courtyard, the three pieces of furniture in the holy place, and the ark and mercy seat in the Most Holy Place. If you could see one picture there, who or what would you see? Who is the sacrifice, the bread, the light shining from the candlestick? Whose life is the sweet, fragrant incense? And who wrote the law of God with His own finger and lived the law perfectly for you and me? Who is our mercy seat? Yes, it is Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Everything in the earthly sanctuary adds up to One—the one and only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

God's plan is so beautiful, and He has followed it all for you. We have a Friend at the throne of God. That's what the sanctuary shows us.

Discussion

Can you describe the sanctuary furnishings and tell what they stand for?

With your family, take turns sharing something new that you have learned about the sanctuary.

Wednesday

Two Lambs— One Saviour

Memory Gem

Hebrews 10:11, 12: "*Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God*" (NIV).

A Precious Possession

Have you ever lost someone or something you loved dearly? In the book *The Legend of Blue Bonnet*, by Tommy Depaola, we read the story of a Native American girl from the Comanche tribe. She-Who-Is-Alone was the only member of her family left alive. Her parents and grandparents had died from starvation because of a drought (a long time of no rain). The rest of her tribe had adopted her. She had one precious possession left: a little cloth doll with the bright blue feathers of a blue jay in its hair. According to legend, She-Who-Is-Alone willingly gave up her beloved doll to save her people.

Do you have a precious possession? Perhaps a pet or a toy you've had a long time, or something you made.

In our story from yesterday we talked about how the sanctuary and its services focused on one Person—the God-man, Jesus Christ. Today we will talk a little more about Jesus at the altar of sacrifice and what that means.

Jesus the Real Sacrifice

Remember, the priests made all sacrifices at the brazen altar. Besides daily sin offerings made by the Israelites, and other special offerings, a 1-year-old lamb was offered upon the altar each morning and evening. This showed that the people of God depended totally on the precious sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

This lamb should be “without blemish” (Ex. 12:5). The priest examined every animal brought as a sacrifice and turned away any with a scar or flaw. What do you think the unblemished lamb was to point to? Yes, it was Jesus’ perfect life and death for you and me.

During the events of Jesus’ crucifixion, you may remember that the Jewish holiday called the Passover was taking place. Jesus died on Friday around 3:00 in the afternoon. This was the time for the evening sacrifice at the Temple.

During the time that Jesus died, darkness came over the earth. People heard thunder and saw flashes of lightning, and the ground shook. Back at the Temple, a priest had just lifted his knife to slay the little lamb on the altar when he felt the earth tremble. Then something happened that made his hair stand on end. An unseen hand seemed to sweep through the Temple. It ripped the curtain that hung between the holy place and the Most Holy Place from top to bottom!

The badly shaken priest dropped the knife. The little lamb escaped unharmed. I can hear you say “Yea!” as the innocent lamb escaped. Yet at the same time another Lamb died. And you know who that Lamb was, don’t you? Jesus. Jesus died in that little lamb’s place. Boys and girls, in a way you and I are that lamb. I don’t mean that we are “unblemished” or without fault. We know better than that. But we were set free while the Lamb of God took our place.

When Jesus died, the plan that God and Jesus had made long ago was completed. Remember, when Jesus died He said, “It is finished!” Jesus’ work to save us was finished. Called the Second Adam, Jesus rescued the world that the first Adam had lost.

The Sanctuary a Picture

You see, boys and girls, God temporarily used the sanctuary to point forward to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world. When Jesus arrived, He became the “once for all time” sacrifice that fulfilled (and ended) the sanctuary service (Hebrews 10:10).

Let me tell you a story to help illustrate this.

Ronda’s father had been called to go to war in Saudi Arabia. Ronda and her family missed him. All Ronda could talk about was the day her dad would return. When he left, Dad gave Ronda a picture of himself. He said, “When you look at this picture, it will remind you that I love you and will come home to you.”

Ronda loved the picture. Finally the long-awaited day arrived. Ronda’s father came home, and how happy they were!

I have a question for you. When Ronda’s father returned, what was most important to her—the picture or her dad himself? Her dad, of course. And so it was with the sanctuary. When Jesus arrived, that finished the old sacrificial system. Jesus is the one whom all of the sacrifices pointed to. He is the true Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world.

Discussion

What is a precious possession that you value?

Would you be willing to give it up for someone you love? for Jesus?

How has God shown you His love this week? today?

Thursday

Who Takes Up for You?

Memory Gem

Hebrews 7:25: “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (NIV).

That Poor Cat!

Amad was a curly-haired, bright-eyed boy in second grade. I loved his enthusiasm. He had a wonderful sense of humor and imagination.

Each morning at the end of classroom worship, the children took turns

requesting special prayer. Amad was concerned about his cat. A neighborhood dog had been attacking it, and he asked us to pray that the dog would stop. We prayed for some time about the cat, but the problem continued.

One morning a few weeks later, Amad told us about another attack on his pet. The story got longer and more ferocious as he told it. All of a sudden a thought came to my mind. I paused and quietly asked Amad, “Amad, do you really have a cat?”

He dropped his head, ashamed to look into my face.

I could see mouths fall open with amazement. We had been praying for weeks about Amad’s cat, and it *didn’t exist!* Putting my finger to my lips in a gesture to remain quiet, I said, “Amad, you *wish* you had a cat, don’t you?” You see, Amad lived in an apartment building where animals were not allowed, and he wanted one so much.

The children sat silent. It was Kortney’s turn to pray that day. At the close of her prayer she said, “Please, dear God, bless all of Amad’s wishes. Amen.”

I believe the Holy Spirit spoke to her heart. She cared about Amad’s feelings. Can you imagine how he felt, after his feelings of shame, to hear her pray for him? Kortney took up for Amad.

Someone Takes Up for You

Have you ever had a hard time and someone you cared about took up for you? Today I want to talk about Someone who takes up for you all the time. What does this have to do with the sanctuary? Everything. God has given us another picture in the person of the high priest of the tabernacle. Let’s talk about what he did and what this has to do with God’s plan for you and me.

The High Priest—What an Outfit!

The high priest wore beautiful clothing. While the other priests wore simple white linen robes, his clothing came from expensive materials.

The high priest did wear a white linen robe, but he wore a **blue robe** over it. Small golden bells and pome-

granates made of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn hung around the bottom of the blue robe.

On top of this he wore a shorter robe called an **ephod**, made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and white. He tied the ephod at the waist with a **belt** of the same colors. The sleeveless ephod had gold designs on each shoulder. Each design held a **dark onyx stone**. And written on these two stones were the **names of the 12 tribes** of Israel—six on each stone.

On top of this short robe was a **breastplate**—the most holy part of the high priest's clothing. It hung from his shoulders by a blue cord and was fastened at the waist like a vest. On the breastplate were **12 stones** set in gold arranged in four rows with three stones in each row. Each of the 12 stones was named after one of the **12 tribes** of Israel.

On the right and left sides of the breastplate were two more shining stones called the **Urim and Thummim**. When the high priest asked God a question, God responded with a halo of light to shine around the stone on the right if His answer was yes or a cloud on the left stone if it was no.

Why do you think God chose this clothing for the high priest? Because He wanted the people to see and know that the high priest had a holy and special work.

The High Priest's Work

Before the high priest entered the Most Holy Place on the **Day of Atonement** each year, the children of Israel prepared for the sacred event. They cleaned their camp and spent time in prayer, confessing their sins to God. This was a day of judgment and blessing. Would the sacrifices be accepted? Would their sins be forgiven? Would the sanctuary be made pure and clean?

On this holy day, before he entered

the sanctuary, the high priest took off his costly clothing. God had commanded him to put on a sacred linen tunic, tie a linen sash around his waist, and put a linen turban on his head.

I'm sure the high priest trembled as he entered. The people waited and prayed for God to give His blessing. They couldn't go in, but they followed their high priest in their hearts. They listened carefully for the ringing of the



bells on his robe. Anxiously they waited for him to come out. They knew that if their sins or the high priest's sins were not confessed, he might be destroyed by the glory of God's presence.

On the **Day of Atonement** they chose a **young bull** and **two goats**. They offered the bull first for the sins of the high priest and his family. Next they offered one of the goats for the sins of the people.

Before taking the blood of these sacrifices into God's presence, the high priest took two handfuls of **incense**

into the Most Holy Place. He also took **burning coals** from the altar before the Lord. He put the incense on the fire so that the smoke from the incense covered the mercy seat. In this way his life was protected from the glory of God's presence.

Next the high priest took the blood of the bull and sprinkled it on the mercy seat above the Ten Commandments. Then he sprinkled the blood in front of the mercy seat seven times (a perfect number). He did the same with the blood of the goat. When he left the sanctuary, the sins of the people had been transferred to him and he carried their guilt.

Then the high priest went out to the tent of meeting and altar, sprinkling the blood there and cleansing them also.

What happened to the other goat? The fate of the two goats was decided when the high priest cast lots for them. This was sort of like drawing straws. One goat was chosen for the burnt offering, and the other goat was chosen as the **scapegoat**.

After the high priest came out of the sanctuary and the offerings had been accepted by God, he placed his hands on the scapegoat's head and confessed the sins of the children of Israel that he now carried. Then the goat was taken into the wilderness and

let go. The scapegoat took away all of the sins with it. How wonderful the people felt knowing their sins were gone! (see *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 355).

Jesus Christ—Our High Priest

Jesus is our high priest (see the book of Hebrews). What does this mean? Remember, the earthly sanctuary is a shadow or reflection of the heavenly sanctuary. And so the earthly high priest is a reflection of Jesus, our great high priest. Let's see

what God was trying to tell us.

The expensive clothing the high priest wore shows us the holiness of his work. Jesus' work for us is holy and honored by God. Do you remember the 12 stones on the high priest's breastplate? He wore these stones over his heart to show that all 12 tribes were important.

Do you suppose that Jesus carries us over His heart? You'd better believe it! We are not just over His heart—we are in it!

The high priest entered the presence of God in the Most Holy Place. After His death and resurrection, Jesus, our high priest, went into the presence of our heavenly Father. How was this different from the earthly high priest? Jesus was a perfect high priest—holy, blameless, and pure. And He entered the greater and more perfect tabernacle—not one that is made by human beings, but heaven itself (Hebrews 7:26; 9:24).

Jesus went into God's presence by His own blood, not with the blood of bulls and goats. You see, the high priest of the earthly sanctuary had to go into God's presence year after year with sacrifices that could not take away sins. Jesus went in *once* with His own blood, and that was enough to do away with sin and rescue us for all eternity (Hebrews 9:12, 27).

Do you remember that when Jesus died, the curtain to the Most Holy Place tore from top to bottom? The Bible says that by the blood of Jesus, a new way opens for us through the curtain, which is His body. When Jesus' body was "torn" for us as He died on the cross, the way opened for us to draw near to God. Jesus is both our sacrifice and our high priest (Hebrews 10:19, 20).

Jesus saves us completely if we come to God through Him. He is our door. He is our curtain. He has opened the way to the throne of God.

Our memory verse says that Jesus intercedes for us. To intercede means that Jesus not only took our place but also takes up for us. Jesus is like an attorney in a courtroom who takes up for his client. He is Kortney, who took up for

Amad! Jesus is at the right hand of God (that's the good side) taking up for us.

Tomorrow we will continue to look at the important work Jesus is doing for us in heaven.

Discussion

Take turns talking about a time when you felt really loved by someone.

Can you remember a time when someone took up for you? How did you feel about that person?

Friday

Safe in Jesus

Memory Gem

Hebrews 9:27: *"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him"* (NIV).

The Judgment

I have always enjoyed reading about Daniel, who was taken away from his home to Babylon. Daniel's bravery amazes me. While he studied and learned to serve in the courts of a pagan king, he refused to eat the kind of food served at the king's table. He prayed to his God, even when it meant he might die. He followed God no matter what it cost him. And God blessed and rescued Daniel.

When Daniel was much older, God gave him a vision (Daniel 8). In that vision God told Daniel about the first coming of Jesus. He even told Daniel when Jesus, the Messiah, would die! In this prophecy God also told Daniel about the final judgment and the end of the world.

Daniel 8:14 says: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days [or years in prophecy time]; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." These "days," or years, ended in 1844. At that time we believe that Jesus began a special work of judgment in the heavenly sanctuary.

Yesterday we looked at the Day of

Atonement and the work of the high priest. Because of the uncleanness of the Israelites, the high priest presented the blood of the sacrifices to God (Leviticus 16:16). We talked about how the high priest sprinkled the blood of the offerings to "cleanse" the sanctuary from the sins of the Israelites.

Let's review. In the heavenly sanctuary, who is our High Priest? Yes, Jesus! And who truly took our sins upon Himself and died for them at the cross? Jesus.

But then on the Day of Atonement we see the high priest taking the sins of the people and placing them on the scapegoat. Who might that goat be associated with? Who is the angel who was first to sin in heaven and tempted Adam and Eve? Yes, it is Lucifer, who is now called Satan. The goat is associated with him.

When the final judgment is over, Jesus will banish him, and he will never be able to bother us again!

The Meeting Place

The Most Holy Place held the ark, and the ark contained the holy law of God. Above the law was the mercy seat. And above this the Shekinah glory of God. Why did God have Moses arrange the furniture of the Most Holy Place this way?

God was telling us that His law is holy, pure, and good, just as He is holy, pure, and good. The law cannot be changed. If it could, Jesus would not have had to die. But we know that Jesus *did* die for you and me. Yesterday we said that He went in to the Father in heaven to present His sacrifice to God for us, just like the high priest went into the Most Holy Place for the people of Israel. And God accepted Jesus' sacrifice!

Satan argued that the law of God could not be kept. He said this made the law unfair. But Jesus kept it perfectly and proved Satan wrong.

Why, then, did God place the mercy seat above the law? How could He honor His holy law and save sinners like you and me? Let me tell you a story to help you see how Jesus, our Saviour and Defender, deals with

Satan—our accuser—in the judgment.

Joshua and the Angel

God gave Zechariah the prophet a vision. In this vision God shows Zechariah a high priest named Joshua. Joshua stands in front of the Angel of the Lord, with Satan at his right side accusing him.

Joshua is not dressed like the high priest on the Day of Atonement. He is dressed in filthy clothes as he appears in front of the Angel. The filthy clothes stand for the sins of the people, which Joshua now carries on himself.

Satan argues, "It's not fair!" He shows the Angel the sins of God's people. And Satan says, "See! These sins are the reason You cannot save these people!"

Joshua cannot defend himself or his people from Satan's attacks. He *knows* that Israel is guilty. He confesses their guilt to the Angel. The high priest is counting on the mercy of Jesus.

Then the Angel (who is Jesus) says, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick [who has been] snatched from the fire!" Then Jesus commands, "Take off his filthy clothes." And Jesus looks at Joshua and says, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you" (Zechariah 3:2-4, NIV). He covers Joshua with Jesus' robe of righteousness.

Just like Joshua, we stand in the unclean clothes of our own sin. But Jesus, our high priest, stands in front of God for us. He has defeated Satan by His sacrifice at Calvary. And this is how He defends us. No one who accepts Jesus as Lord and Saviour can be taken from His hand!

Being Safe in Him

Another way of saying we wear Jesus' robe of righteousness is to say we are "in Him." This term is used many times in the New Testament.

What does it mean to be "in Christ"? Here's an illustration of what it means. You will need a Bible and a bookmark or a small piece of paper. Let's pretend that the Bible you have stands for Jesus. When God looks at

Jesus, what does He see? He sees His beloved, perfect Son!

When God looks at you and me, what does He see? I know He loves us very much, but we are sinners.

Now open your Bible near the middle. Take the piece of paper or the bookmark and place it in the Bible and close it. Who did we say the Bible is? Yes, Jesus. And who is the bookmark? You. When God looks at you this time, what does He see? Only Jesus! Just as the bookmark is hidden in the Bible, when we are in Christ we are hidden in Him. And when God looks at you, He sees only the beautiful, perfect life of Jesus.

This, boys and girls, is how we can stand in the final judgment. If we accept Jesus as the Lord and Saviour of our lives, He will stand in our place. He is our righteousness, our goodness.

Discussion and Activity

Take a look at the book of Ephesians and count the number of times it says "in Him" or "in Christ."

Someone has said that when we wear the robe of Jesus' goodness, it warms us inside and helps to make us more like Him. Talk with your family about how this could be true.

Sabbath

Heaven on Earth

Memory Gem

Revelation 21:2, 3: "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. . . . And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

I'll Be Right Back!

The airplane was jammed with people as it stopped for a short time before taking off for its final destination. Several new passengers boarded to fly on to the next city.

My pastor-husband was on that plane. He noticed a young mother

coming aboard with two children. One child was a baby and had to be carried. The other was a young girl about 4-years old. She had curly golden hair and round blue eyes.

The mother, like most mothers with an infant, had her arms loaded. Not only was she carrying the baby, but she had other things like a diaper bag and a stroller. But she couldn't find a place to put the stroller. So the mother had to leave to find a place to store the stroller.

Explaining this to her 4-year-old daughter, she had her sit down in the seat and gave her a book to look at. Before she walked down the aisle with the baby, her last words to her daughter were "I'll be right back."

The little girl's eyes followed her mommy down the aisle. She really didn't look happy about her mother leaving. Do you think she spent much time looking at her book? No! She wanted to know when her mother was coming back. She gazed anxiously at the entrance to the plane.

That mother was not gone long—just a few minutes. But to that little lady it probably seemed like forever. You can imagine how her face lit up when her mother reappeared. What a reunion it was! The little girl became lively and cheerful again. Her mother had promised to return, and like all good mothers, she did!

This Same Jesus

The story I just shared with you reminds me of a Bible story. Acts 1:9-11 says that after Jesus had spoken His last words to the disciples He was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight. They looked intently up into the sky as He disappeared. Suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (NIV). He'll be back!

From the Throne Room of God

God gave the book of Revelation

through John the disciple to show us what would happen on the earth. It's called "Revelation" because the book reveals or tells us about Jesus. It is the story of the end-time. John had been made a prisoner on the island of Patmos, because he shared the Word of God and followed his Lord, Jesus Christ. And while the aging disciple sat on that lonely island, Jesus gave him a vision of what was to come before He returned to earth.

In the book of Revelation, John tells us that in his vision he saw into the throne room in heaven. He saw the throne and God sitting on it. He saw many beings worshiping God. He looked and saw a slain Lamb and a Lion of the tribe of Judah. And angels were busily carrying out God's will from the throne room.

In Revelation 5 God holds a scroll in His right hand. The scroll is sealed with seven seals—God's perfect number! An angel speaks in a loud voice: "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it" (verses 2, 3, NIV).

John cried because no one could open this important scroll. Why do you think he cried? I believe John knew that if the scroll couldn't be opened by someone worthy, he had no hope.

But then someone in the throne room said, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals" (verse 6, NIV).

Then instead of a lion, John saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been killed. And the Lamb was standing in the center of the throne. All the creatures and elders knelt before the Lamb, and thousands and thousands of angels surrounded the throne and sang, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive

power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (verse 12, NIV). Added to this huge crowd, "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them" fell down and worshiped the Lamb and sang praises to Him (verse 13, NIV).

Revelation continues to tell the story of the end-time of the earth as we know it. Because Jesus, our Lamb, is worthy and able, the seals are opened. Powerful angels go from God's throne room to complete God's will on earth. The people of earth are judged,

high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the **names of the twelve tribes of Israel**" (Revelation 21:11, 12, NIV).

Read the description of the city in Revelation. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. John names the *same* stones found in the breastplate of the high priest! Just as our High Priest carried us over His heart, He now surrounds us with His love.

The Holy City in our memory gem will be on earth. The true sanctuary of God will be with us forever!

When Jesus was on earth He prayed, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world" (John 17:24, NIV).

When Jesus comes again then we will see Him face-to-face. There will be nothing between us. We will see His glory!

In the Meantime

If we love Jesus, we will keep His commandments and follow Him wherever He leads us. We are important to Him, and He needs to be important to us.

Let us keep our eyes on Jesus. God tells us that by looking at Jesus Christ, we become like Him. Nothing

"can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus; not because we hold Him so firmly, but because He holds us so fast" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 553).

Jesus tells us, "I am coming soon!" "Oh, yes! Please come, Lord Jesus!" (see Revelation 22:20).



and God's children are saved. First, those who have died in Christ are taken to meet Jesus in the air, and then we who are alive will go to be with Him.

The Holy City Comes Down

In his vision, John saw the Holy City, where God and His people live. It came down from heaven. A happy John described it: "It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great,

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After the Empty Tomb

A Message From the President

The main theme of this year's Week of Prayer readings centers on two truths: Christ crucified and Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. These two are a perfect combination, because not until we grasp the sanctuary in the context of the cross can we understand present truth. At the same time, the sanctuary itself sheds crucial light on the cross. In fact, we don't fully understand one without the other.

The concept of the sanctuary is as old as sin itself. Worship of the true God, the same one whom we worship today, began at an altar—the first “sanctuary”—6,000 years ago. There God provided a secure place where sinful humans, sensing their aloneness and vulnerability, could be renewed in the solid promises of God. Though we don't have an altar today, we are given the same solid promises.



Thousands of year ago, after God had liberated His people politically by calling them out of Egypt, He sought to liberate them spiritually as well—and He did that by provid-

ing them with the sanctuary system, which would point them to the Saviour and His work of atonement, which, in turn, would free them from the guilt of sin and its tragic consequences. With the settling of the Hebrews in the Promised Land, the tabernacle was replaced by a permanent temple that, in one form or another, endured to the time of Jesus (not counting, of course, the Babylonian destruction).

Of the temples, the one where Jesus ministered was, by earthly standards, the grandest of all. Yet for many in the Hebrew nation, the admiration of the Temple came to transcend the real meaning of the sacrifices themselves.

Jesus came, among other things, to restore the true worship of God, which had long been lost in formalism and man-made laws. However splendid, Herod's Temple couldn't save a single soul. Only the death of the One foreshadowed in the Temple sacrifices could.

Christ's Ministry Clarifies Our Mission

While many Christians understand that Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb to whom the prophecies pointed, God has shared—through the sanctuary service—a fuller understanding of His purposes. Christ, the Lamb of God, is our Saviour, and the cross becomes a rustic altar where the one sacrifice, to whom all others pointed (and the only sacrifice that can bring atonement), happened almost 2,000 years ago. Jesus is our mercy seat, His

blood is the cleansing agent sweeping away guilt for every repentant believer, and His blood is the symbol of life everlasting. His death and resurrection bring the promise of eternal life to us, guaranteed by the empty tomb.

But if the tomb was empty, it meant that Jesus went somewhere next. The book of Hebrews, the clearest exposition of Christ's work after the cross, shows not only where Christ went after the tomb was emptied, but also what He is doing there. Here it is clearly taught that Christ ascended to the heavens, where He makes intercession for us, pleading His blood in our behalf. At the conclusion of the 2300-year prophetic period of Daniel 8 and 9, Christ began His heavenly intercession in the Most Holy.

This great truth provided us with an understanding of our times and with much of the impetus that has thrust the Adventist witness into almost every nation on the planet.

No one should challenge the efficacy of Calvary's sacrifice or question His right to grant forgiveness to those for whom He paid the price. This is the glory of the gospel, and we are its grateful, unworthy recipients. Jesus paid the ransom for our souls. We can be sure He will return and receive that for which He paid such a dear price.

My challenge for our church is to maintain our hold on Christ as our personal sacrifice and high priest. That kind of walk with Him will result in a transformed life. Instead of looking at others as objects for criticism, we should come to see every other person as Jesus does: utterly precious and a potential candidate for the kingdom of God. What a different people we would be if we walked daily in the sense of how Christ intercedes for us at every moment of that day.

The *Adventist Review*, through which these readings come to you, is committed to strengthening you in that walk. I commend it to your weekly inspiration.*

I hope this Week of Prayer will introduce you once more, and more deeply, to the wondrous Saviour in whom we have our confidence. God bless you in your Christian growth.

Sincerely your brother,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert S. Folkenberg".

Robert S. Folkenberg is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

* For information on how to subscribe, see ad on page 21.