

## Jesus' Ministry and the Sanctuary



### *Sabbath Afternoon*

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 9 and 10.**

**MEMORY TEXT:** “Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself” (Hebrews 7:27, NRSV).

**KEY THOUGHT:** Hebrews uses images from both the daily and yearly services to show we have complete access to the Father.

**WE HAVE ALREADY STUDIED THE SANCTUARY LANGUAGE** of the Epistle to the Hebrews. We have also noticed that the author knows the old system very well. For him the earthly sanctuary is a shadow of the real heavenly sanctuary. In addition to the real tabernacle, there is a real sacrifice, which surpasses all animal sacrifices atoning for the sins of humanity. There is also a real priesthood.

Hebrews has some strong allusions to the Day of Atonement. What conclusions can we draw from those allusions? What conclusions are not warranted? This week we'll take a look at some texts and issues that are of special significance to Seventh-day Adventists.

**THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:** Why does Hebrews talk about both the daily and yearly services? What is the meaning of “within the veil”? We say that Jesus is our High Priest in heaven, but what does that mean? What does He do for us as High Priest, as Intercessor and Mediator?

\*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 30.

*Sunday*

*August 24*

**THE DAILY SERVICE IN HEBREWS.**

**“Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people” (Heb. 9:6, 7).**

No question, the author of Hebrews used the Old Testament wilderness sanctuary and its sacrificial services as the model, the type, to help provide insights into Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Separated from that context, the verses about blood of goats and bulls, the tent, the veil, the high priest, and so forth make little sense. Paul used the earthly realities to explain heavenly ones; we should, as well.

Thus, it’s not surprising that, in agreement with the Old Testament type, he distinguished between a ministry in the first compartment of the tabernacle, the Holy Place, and a ministry in the second apartment, the Most Holy Place. In the former, the priests and the high priest, serving on a daily basis, offered sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people. In the Most Holy Place, the high priest made final atonement for—and cleansed the sanctuary from—sin (Leviticus 16). The daily seemed to deal with sin on an individual basis; in the yearly, the whole service took on a corporate component, dealing with the nation as a whole.

**In Hebrews 9:7, the word translated “errors” comes from a Greek word that means sins committed through ignorance or thoughtlessness. What does the fact that even these kinds of sins needed to be atoned for tell us about just how serious they are?**

**In addition to Hebrews 9:6, the daily ministry in the earthly sanctuary is specifically mentioned in Hebrews 7:26, 27 and 10:11, 12. What’s the one point that both are making as they compare the daily sacrifices to Christ’s sacrifice? (See also Heb. 9:28.)**

Of all the good news found in Hebrews, these texts contain some of the best, which is that Jesus’ sacrifice was all-sufficient and complete. No more blood needs to be shed, no more animals need to be sacrificed, and no more deaths need to atone for sin. Christ’s death was enough.

**Read Hebrews 2:9. How does that text help us understand why Christ’s once-and-for-all sacrifice was sufficient?**

## TEACHERS COMMENTS

**Key Text: Hebrews 10:19-22.**

**Teachers Aims:**

1. To study the daily and yearly services described in Hebrews.
2. To understand the meaning of “through the veil” (Heb. 10:20).
3. To explore the role of Christ as our High Priest in heaven and to contemplate what it means for Him to serve as our Mediator before God.

**Lesson Outline:**

**I. Daily and Yearly Services of the Earthly Sanctuary.**

- A. The priests, on a daily basis, offered sacrifices to atone for the sins of individuals.
- B. Once a year the priest entered the Most Holy Place and offered atonement for the nation as a whole.
- C. Once a year the sanctuary was completely cleansed of sin.

**II. Our Heavenly Intercessor.**

- A. Christ tore down barriers between God and humanity.
- B. Humanity can approach God through Christ.
- C. Christ stands before God as our Representative.

**III. The Divine-Human Mediator.**

- A. In the earthly sanctuary, the priest was a flawed representative—a sinner himself.
- B. In the heavenly sanctuary, our High Priest is perfect in every way.
- C. Christ mediates for us, not with our sin-tainted righteousness but with His perfect, flawless righteousness.

**Summary:** Hebrews gives us a good description of how the earthly sanctuary represented the heavenly sanctuary. While both have similar roles, the delineating factor is Christ’s intercession on our behalf.

**Commentary.**

Aaron and his successors needed to present a sin offering for the people and one offering for themselves. This was preeminently true on the annual ritual of the Day of Atonement. But Jesus has no need to present a daily sacrifice or, for that matter, a yearly sacrifice for His people’s sins.

Instead, He presented a permanent sin offering on their behalf when He offered up His own life, an offering so perfect and effica-

*Monday*

*August 25*

**THE DAY OF ATONEMENT IN HEBREWS.**

**B**esides using images from the daily (or first-apartment) ministry, Hebrews uses images from the yearly ministry, the Day of Atonement, the climactic sanctuary ritual of the year. This shouldn't be surprising, because a book finding its basic types from the earthly-sanctuary service hardly would be expected to ignore one of the most solemn sanctuary rituals.

**Besides Hebrews 9:7, references to the Day of Atonement may be found very clearly in Hebrews 9:25, 26 and 10:1-4. As with the references to the daily (see yesterday's study), what's the main point the texts are making, and how does that point fit in with the entire theme of Hebrews that we have looked at so far?**

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**Another fascinating text with Day of Atonement overtones is Hebrews 9:23. "Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (NASB). After reading the text in context, ask yourself this question: Given the overall contrasts being made in the book of Hebrews, particularly in chapter 9, what are the "heavenly things" that need cleansing?**

Following a passage on the dedication of the sanctuary, this text argues that just as the earthly things (i.e., the earthly sanctuary and all that was in it) require purification, the "heavenly things" (the sanctuary in heaven) do, as well. Except that, in this case, the heavenly cleansing demanded "better sacrifices." It's no coincidence that the word translated "cleansed" is used in Leviticus 16 to describe the purification of the sanctuary at the Day of Atonement. The author sees this earthly ritual as a symbol of something better in heaven.

**Though Hebrews does not elaborate more on this theme and does not say *when* these "heavenly things" are or would be cleansed (for example, either at the Cross or beginning in 1844), what it does do is affirm the Adventist teaching that not only is there a sanctuary in heaven but that it needs to be "purified" or "cleansed." How do you understand this verse in the context of our 1844 sanctuary message?**

## TEACHERS COMMENTS

scious it needs no repetition. Jesus' ministry in heaven is not, as some would have us believe, shadowy, unreal, or just a mental notion. It is not the temple in heaven that is a copy of the earthly. It is the tabernacle that Moses built that is a copy (shadow) of the model from heaven.

### I. The "Shadow" of the Heavenly Sanctuary.

The word *shadow* is used not so much in the Platonic sense of a copy of a heavenly and eternal ideal as in the sense of foreshadowing. Jesus' ministry in the sanctuary is as real as the heavenly sanctuary is real.

What is the distinction Paul makes in the book of Hebrews between the words *shadow* and *image*?

The *shadow* is but an *image* of the reality itself. The *image* is thus something superior to the "copies" or patterns. The implication of Paul's argument is that Jesus enters into the heavenly sanctuary, not a copy or image but the real thing.

Not only was the earthly sanctuary a shadow of the heavenly but its services also were a shadow. This is true even to the cleansing of the sanctuary, which was a shadow of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary.

### II. Jesus and His Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary.

Ellen G. White clearly points out "the subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill.

"The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 488.

Jesus Christ by His sacrifice has accomplished once for all what generations of Levitical sacrifices had never done, and this is to pay the penalty for sin. After hundreds of years, those sacrifices were no nearer the attainment of their aim than they had been at the beginning. It is very important to understand this aspect of Jesus' ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

It is, then, in no earthly copy of the heavenly dwelling place of God that Jesus ministers as His people's High Priest but in the heavenly dwelling place itself; His ministry is far superior to any earthly ministry. And it is because of the superiority of the covenant in the power of which it is exercised, the covenant of which Jesus is Himself the Mediator. Jesus Christ, the Mediator who offered the supreme sacrifice for the sins of His people.

Ellen G. White writes, "Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary, and he is there to make an atonement for the people. He is there to present his wounded side and pierced hands to his Father. He is there to plead

*Tuesday*

*August 26*

**WITHIN THE VEIL.**

**Read Hebrews 6:13-20. What hope is the author giving to his readers? What seems to be the point of this discourse?**

There's been much discussion over the years regarding the phrase "within the veil." Because this phrase is used almost exclusively (though not always; see Num. 18:7) as a reference for the Most Holy Place in the Hebrew Bible, some have tried to argue on the merit of this verse that Hebrews has put Jesus in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, thus voiding the 1844 message.

**In Hebrews 9:3, the phrase "second veil" refers to the veil between the Holy Place and Most Holy Place of the earthly sanctuary. The question arises, Why didn't he use that same phrase in Hebrews 6:19 if he meant, specifically, the second apartment?**

It is rather suspect that the author of Hebrews didn't use the phrase "second veil" here; the obvious phrase he meant the text to mean was the second veil; that is, the inner veil that stood before the Most Holy Place. In fact, there is nothing in the immediate context of Hebrews 6:19, 20 that alludes to the Day of Atonement. More than likely, considering the whole context of the book, the phrase alludes to our complete access to God in the heavenly sanctuary.

Again, the author is using Old Testament imagery to teach New Testament truths regarding the greater efficacy of Christ's death and high-priestly ministry, one that gives us "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," in contrast to the old, inefficient Levitical system.

There's no question that all the sacrifices, including those of the Day of Atonement, had their fulfillment in Jesus at the Cross. Yet, to focus exclusively on this phrase is to miss the whole point of Hebrews, which is that through Jesus all barriers between God and humanity have been broken and that through Christ's death and mediation we now have full access to the Father. That verse, along with other Day of Atonement images (interestingly enough, no mention is made in Hebrews of the scapegoat, a key element in the yearly service), doesn't prove that the Day of Atonement ritual itself was fulfilled at the Cross. Hebrews doesn't address that issue.

**Dwell on Hebrews 6:18, 19, focusing on such words as "immutable," "refuge," "anchor," "steadfast," and "sure." Rephrase the two texts in your own words in a way that helps you understand the hope the author is trying to give us.**

## TEACHERS COMMENTS

for his Church that is upon the earth. He is cleansing the sanctuary from sins of the people.”—*The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Jan. 28, 1890.

This affirms it was necessary that the heavenly things be purified with better sacrifices than the blood of calves and goats. The only blood that can do this is the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord. For this reason, Jesus, by virtue of His own blood, entered the heavenly places, there to appear before the face of God in our behalf (Heb. 9:24).

Paul invites us to have a personal sanctuary experience, to enter into the Most Holy Place and to come boldly to the royal throne of grace. The Old Testament gives us a portrait of one who boldly approached a royal throne—albeit an earthly one—in need of grace and mercy: Queen Esther. She wished to intercede to save her people from the death penalty. To save them, she risked her life to appear, without invitation, before her husband the king. If her husband re-

## INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

**Texts for Discovery: Leviticus 23:27, 28; Matthew 25:34-40; Romans 8:26; 1 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 8:1, 2; 9:1-14.**

1. The book of Hebrews puts special emphasis on the Day of Atonement as observed in the Old Testament era. What relevance do you think the Day of Atonement has for Adventist Christians in the present day?
2. Arguments over the meaning of the various terms used to describe Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary can become quite involved and technical. How would you respond to someone who claims such issues are merely a distraction?
3. Christ is our Representative before God. Does this have anything to do with the fact we represent Christ to our fellow humans?
4. Even though we no longer have imperfect humans (priests) making atonement for us, we still face the sometimes confusing and disillusioning fact of our own and others' imperfections in the church. How do you feel it is possible for God to work with such flawed material?
5. In recent years, many have for one reason or another found traditional Adventist teachings on the sanctuary to be problematic. They claim it robs them of any kind of assurance of salvation. Is the problem, however, with the doctrine itself or how some have gone about teaching it? How can we understand Christ's high-priestly ministry in a way that helps give us greater assurance of salvation?

*Wednesday*

*August 27*

**OUR HEAVENLY INTERCESSOR.**

**“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).**

Perhaps, in many ways, the key theme of Hebrews can be found in the simple phrase within this text: that He can save to the uttermost those who “come unto God by him.” The Greek word translated “by” here means “through” or “by the means of.”

We must, again, remember the purpose of the epistle: Paul is telling these people, Don’t go back to your old ways. The new way offers something much better, something that can accomplish what the old never could. The new way offers you the opportunity to come to God as you never could before. And that’s because you now can come to God through, or by the means of, Jesus.

**What does it mean to come to God “by him,” that is, through Jesus? Write down your understanding of what Jesus has done so that we can, through Him, come to God. What texts can you find to back up your answer? Also, what does it mean to come to God?**

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No question, its through Christ as your great High Priest that we can have access to God. But how? How can we, as sinners, have access to a holy God?

Of course, we don’t (at least not now) stand in the physical presence of God. But we don’t have to. Someone else does it for us, and that’s Jesus, who by virtue of His perfect life stands before the Father—*for us*. He stands *in our place*, representing us, not because of our own worth but because of His. He alone has the perfect righteousness to stand in the presence of the Father.

Just as in the daily and the yearly service in the old covenant the priests entered into the presence of God in the sanctuary, Jesus does so for us in the heavenly sanctuary. He is our Representative there, doing for us what we can never do for ourselves.

**Read Romans 8:34; Hebrews 6:20; 9:24; 10:20. What is the one similar point they are all making? What hope, what promises, are found there for us?**



## TEACHERS COMMENTS

fused to hold out his scepter to her, she would die. Esther wore her loveliest garments and, perfumed and beautified, appeared before the king, who was so overcome with her beauty he extended his scepter of mercy to her and heard her petition.

Like Esther, we have need of recommending ourselves to the King. But we have no beauty of our own. The garments of our character are filthy rags. But Christ makes provision for our nakedness and our spiritual ugliness. He clothes us in the robe of His beautiful character, and we enter the sanctuary through the veil “that is, his flesh” (Heb. 10:29). The word *flesh* has several meanings: (1) meat, (2) the physical body, (3) the carnal fleshly passions, and (4) the character and personality. The only interpretation of *flesh* that makes sense here is the last one. To enter within the veil, then, is to be clothed by faith in Christ’s righteousness over our rags, His character covering our nakedness.

## WITNESSING

Enlisted in the various branches of the military are thousands of men and women who count it an honor to serve their country. When necessary, these servicemen and servicewomen proudly fight for those who cannot fight for themselves.

This week’s lesson speaks of how the priest would go where others could not go, to represent them. He did for the people what they could not do for themselves. The people could not go into the Holy and Most Holy Places of the sanctuary. But the high priest could go into these chambers as mediator, to minister on behalf of the people. Jesus does the same in the heavenly sanctuary. He does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

We cannot save ourselves from sin and death. Jesus redeems us by His blood. Sin separates us from

God. Jesus removes all barriers so we may “come boldly” to the Father. By ourselves, we are powerless to overcome sin and temptation. But by the power of Christ, we can “resist the devil, and he will flee” (James 4:7).

In the earthly-sanctuary services, the sins of the people were symbolically transferred to the animal sacrifice. Unless our sins are transferred to Christ, we must pay the penalty of sin, which is death. But when we confess our sins, He will forgive us and “cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Let us be faithful witnesses so not only our words but our actions tell others what Christ’s ministry in the sanctuary is all about. He has fought for us on earth’s battlefield and gained the victory over sin and death. Now He intercedes for us in the heavenly sanctuary above.

*Thursday*

*August 28*

**OUR HEAVENLY MEDIATOR.**

**Look up the texts below. What are they all saying to us? What do they mean for us? What is your understanding of a mediator? Why do we need one?**

**1 Tim. 2:5** \_\_\_\_\_

**Heb. 8:6** \_\_\_\_\_

**Heb. 9:15** \_\_\_\_\_

**Heb. 12:24** \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus as Mediator cannot be separated from Jesus as Sacrifice and Jesus as our High Priest. All are part of the same plan of salvation. By virtue of His perfect life and complete sacrifice, Jesus now stands as our High Priest in heaven, where He stands in the presence of God for us as our Mediator.

In the old covenant–sanctuary service, the priest would take the blood of animals and bring it into the earthly sanctuary. He would, as a representative of others, go where others could not go. The priests would have to do this day after day in the daily service, year after year in the heavenly service.

Under the new covenant, instead of earthly and sinful priests, we have Jesus, the Mediator of “a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” Sinners today don’t have to find an animal, don’t have to bring it to an earthly sanctuary, and don’t need another sinner to mediate that blood for them. Mediation is being done for us through Jesus, through whom we can have access to God at any time, at any place.

When we sin, we confess our sins, and Jesus, because of His merits, His perfect righteousness, stands “in the presence of God for us,” representing us, not with our righteousness but with His own, the merits that He Himself wrought out for us while here in the flesh, the merits that become ours by faith. In short, He’s applying in our behalf the benefits of His perfect life and death, the only means by which we, as sinners, can be accepted by God.

**Read 1 John 2:1 in light of today’s study. How does this text fit in with the whole theme of Hebrews? You need to be able to see the great hope and promises we have, knowing that “Jesus Christ the Righteous” intercedes for us, that He stands in God’s presence for us, and that He is our Mediator. Dwell on these themes until you grasp their importance for you personally.**

## TEACHERS COMMENTS

### *LIFE-APPLICATION APPROACH*

**Icebreaker:** It has been theorized that Leonardo da Vinci painted his own profile in shadowy detail along the edge of the veil draped around Mona Lisa's face. (See "theory" at <[www.monalisaprofile.com](http://www.monalisaprofile.com)>. Cited May 2002.) Proponents of this theory illuminate the hidden outline of the artist's profile within the veil.

Similarly, the book of Hebrews speaks of a veil that hid God from humanity. Just as da Vinci's face lay hidden from view in the painting for centuries, the presence of God lay hidden behind a veil that separated the seen from the unseen, the earthly from the heavenly, until Christ came and tore down that veil. While a literal veil partitioned the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in the earthly sanctuary, a symbolic veil also existed that hid the Divine presence. To be within the veil meant to be in the very presence of God. How, then, is Christ the Way through the veil into God's presence?

#### **Thought Questions:**

1. As observers of the human race and as ones who have "been in our shoes," what words of wisdom and advice do you think Enoch, Moses, and Elijah might have for us? In what ways do you think they might appreciate Jesus' ministry in the sanctuary more than we do? Think of three questions you want to

ask Jesus about His role in the sanctuary.

2. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is uniquely blessed with its insights on the sanctuary message. What are the advantages of having this message? Many consider the Seventh-day Adventist Church a "cult" because of our "strange" beliefs and theology. How important are our beliefs in the bigger scheme of things? Are there other things that take precedence over our belief system? Are there times to be ecumenical? Explain your answers.

#### **Application Question:**

Animal sacrifice leaves the sinner uncured; it leaves the barrier between the sinner and God. One Christian author compares it to ineffective medicine through the following illustration: A man is ill. A bottle of medicine is prescribed for him. If that medicine effects a cure, every time he looks at the bottle thereafter, he will say: "That is what gave me back my health." On the other hand, if the medicine is ineffective, every time he looks at the bottle he will be reminded that he is ill and that the recommended cure was useless. Why do you think people are generally skeptical of cure-alls? How can you share Jesus, the only Cure-All, to those who think they are terminally ill (spiritually)?

**Friday**

**August 29**

**FURTHER STUDY:** Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, pp. 188–212.

“All is terror and confusion. The priest is about to slay the victim; but the knife drops from his nerveless hand, and the lamb escapes. Type has met antitype in the death of God’s Son. The great sacrifice has been made. The way into the holiest is laid open. A new and living way is prepared for all. No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest. Henceforth the Saviour was to officiate as priest and advocate in the heaven of heavens.”  
—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 757.

“By the rending of the veil of the temple, God said, I can no longer reveal My presence in the most holy place. A new and living Way, before which there hangs no veil, is offered to all. No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest.”  
—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1109.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- 1. Look at these Ellen White quotes in light of this week’s lesson. How do they harmonize with our understanding of Christ’s two-phased ministry in heaven?**
- 2. After much study by some of our best scholars, a report was given on Hebrews. Two questions were asked. Does Hebrews teach Christ’s two-phased priestly ministry? Does Hebrews deny Christ’s two-phased priestly ministry? The committee answered No to both questions. Discuss the implications of their answer.**
- 3. Hebrews is very clear that the earthly and heavenly sanctuary are closely tied together. Though we don’t want to make an exact comparison, demanding that every stick of furniture in the earthly must have a corresponding counterpart in heaven, why does the reality of a two-phased earthly ministry—which was so crucial to the function of that sanctuary—provide powerful biblical evidence for a two-phased heavenly ministry, as well?**

**SUMMARY:** The book of Hebrews, using the old covenant–sanctuary service as its model, employs images from the daily and yearly services. All these point to the greater, better hope we have in Jesus, our Intercessor, Mediator, and High Priest in heaven.