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Sabbath School Bible Study Guide.

The Rest of the Story

The heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps. 19:1). And they do, at least to a point. What Christian hasn’t looked up into the sky on a night in which the stars shimmered in a panoply of outrageous incandescence and not come away awed by the power and the greatness of God?

The heavens do have a story to tell. Or, perhaps, more precisely, they reveal that a story has already been told. By looking at the heavens, we can catch parts of the plot but not the whole narrative itself. No matter how far our telescopes peer into the cosmos, they can reveal only so much, because only so much is revealed there. The rest of the story, the story of the Incarnation, the story of Redemption, the story of Jesus and the eternal life He offers—these are not found in the heavens, no matter how much of God’s glory is, otherwise, declared there.

Yet, what the heavens do not tell us, the Holy Scriptures do. The details not written in the stars are written, instead, in God’s Word. Scripture takes us places where rocket ships and telescopes can never go. The Bible reveals things that Hubble, no matter how focused and finely tuned its lenses, will never detect.

For instance, the book of Hebrews, the topic of this quarter’s lesson, gives us a window into the universe, a view of the heavens that would otherwise remain hidden, despite the efforts of the world’s greatest astrophysicists and astronomers.

“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).

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb. 8:1, 2).

“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 in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:11, 12).

These are truths about the heavens that the heavens themselves—no matter how deeply and intently we peer into them—could never reveal.

Though shrouded in some mysteries itself (Who wrote it? When was it written? To whom was it addressed? What specific problems was it confronting?), the book of Hebrews radiates with light, truth, and details regarding salvation history, regarding what Jesus has done for us, what He is doing for us now, and what He will do for us throughout eternity. It reveals not only what Christ accomplished by His life and death (Heb. 1:3; 2:9; 7:27; 9:12, 28) but it presents the most explicit explanation of Christ as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:15, 16; 7:25; 9:24) found anywhere else in Scripture.

Though the Scriptures do give us scattered glimpses into heaven, no other book takes us so deeply, and intimately, into heavenly places while simultaneously giving us such a clear explanation of what we see when we’re there.

Before starting this quarter’s lesson, read through the entire book of Hebrews. Tremble at its fierce warnings against apostasy and backsliding, heed its emotional exhortations to faithfulness and obedience, but, most of all—rejoice in the hope, in the promises, in the assurance that exudes from every page of this faith-affirming book, which boldly declares to us that “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). And if Christ is now standing in the presence of God “for us”—what have we to fear?

As you read, notice two outstanding and undeniable truths within these sacred pages: the reality of Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and the importance of that ministry to His people on earth, truths that we as Adventists have been unabashedly proclaiming to the world. In Hebrews, we find key elements of our sanctuary message, and that message is nothing if not the Cross revealed in the only context that can fully reveal it: that of the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ now ministers His blood in our behalf, “having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:12) through His life and death here on the earth.

Hebrews is all about Jesus, a fuller and clear revelation of Jesus. That is the direction this study takes: We will focus on Jesus as He appears in Hebrews. “Jesus, Our King”; “Jesus, Our High Priest”; “Jesus, Our Assurance”; “Jesus, Our Sacrifice and Salvation”—these are some of the weekly topics we will study in the powerful exhortation to faithfulness and obedience that is at the heart of Hebrews.

This quarter’s author is Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller, a native of Germany and now an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference, in Silver Spring, Maryland. A New Testament scholar, Dr. Mueller takes us on an incredible voyage into the heavens themselves, where Jesus, our High Priest, “ever liveth to make intercession” for us, a truth about the heavens that the heavens themselves can never reveal.

That is why it has to be told to us, which is exactly what Hebrews does. This quarter, let’s listen carefully to what it says.

PPPA ad

Please,
just
some
cool,
clean,
water.



Water is life. Just as our souls require Christ, the Living Water, so our bodies require pure water. Help provide that water. Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help build a water system at the University of Eastern Africa in Baraton, Kenya.

MISSION

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering on September 27 supports projects in the East-Central Africa Division.