

Jesus' Wonderful Work as High Priest



SABBATH—JUNE 14

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 25:8; Matthew 27:50, 51; Acts 7:54–56; Hebrews 6:19, 20; Hebrews 7:23–28; Hebrews 8:1, 2; Hebrews 9.

MEMORY VERSE: “Here is the point of what we are saying. We have a high priest like that. He sat down at the right hand of the throne of the King, the Majesty in heaven” (Hebrews 8:1, NlrV).

NOT LONG AFTER THE CREATION . . . our first parents fell into sin. . . .

After this terrible event, God's first concern was to bring fallen people back to Him and to protect the universe for eternity (forever; for all time). So, the death of a member of the Godhead was planned in advance in the council of God. (Read Revelation 13:8.)

“God wanted to get humans [people] involved to cooperate with Him in this important project. So He moved quickly to inform our first parents [Adam and Eve] of the plan. At the same time, He put in place a teaching tool to keep it always in their minds and in the minds of those who would live after them.”
—Adapted from Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary*¹ (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1993), pages 17, 18. That teaching tool was the sanctuary service.

The sanctuary became the center of Hebrew worship. Through its services the sanctuary pointed its worshipers to a better understanding of human salvation² in a coming Messiah (read Hebrews 9) and of the ministry (work) of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. This week we will look at that heavenly sanctuary and Christ's ministry (work) there.

1. sanctuary—the place in heaven where Jesus works as our high priest before the throne of God.

2. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life; being saved.

SUNDAY—JUNE 15**POINTERS (LESSONS) FROM THE
OLD SANCTUARY
(Exodus 25:9, 40)**

Moses was told to build the sanctuary from the pattern (model, example) God had shown him on Mount Sinai (Exodus 25:9, 40). Common sense would lead us away from the idea that every board and nail of the sanctuary (and later the temple) had religious meaning. But we should be very serious about the working model of the Old Testament sanctuary system.³ Even so, we have very little information, or none at all, on the meaning of the symbols.⁴ But we do try to put together the little we find in the Old Testament with what we have in the New Testament. And we are able to arrive at a fairly good understanding of the meaning of certain parts of the ancient-sanctuary system and service. They point beyond themselves to something greater. For example:

1. The morning and evening sacrifice (offering) (Exodus 29:38–42; Numbers 28:1–6)
2. The shewbread and candlesticks (Exodus 25:23, 30, 31, 37)
3. The Day of Atonement services⁵

(Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9:1–12)

4. The high-priestly clothes (Exodus 28:6–21)

The morning and evening sacrifices symbolized “the daily process of the nation becoming holy and dedicating itself to God. They also pointed to the cleansing blood of Christ.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Leaders in Early Bible times] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*, page 352. Many examples of bread in the New Testament seem to suggest that the bread in the tabernacle/sanctuary pointed forward to Christ (read, for example, Matthew 26:26; John 6:48–51). “Both the manna and the shewbread pointed to Christ, the living Bread, who is always with God for us.”—Page 354, adapted. The candlesticks also seem to point to Jesus who said: “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12, NIV). “Those rather valuable jewels [stones] on the [high priest’s] breastplate . . . carried the names of the tribes of Israel. Ellen G. White says that they suggest Christ our Great High Priest pleading His blood before the Father. He carries upon His heart the name of every repentant, believing soul.”—Adapted from Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary*, page 38; read *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 351.

3. sanctuary system—the offering of the blood of animals that represented Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. After Jesus died, this law was not needed.

4. symbols—objects, marks, signs, or persons that stand for, or mean the same as, other objects, ideas, or things.

5. Day of Atonement services—a yearly event in which the earthly sanctuary (house of God) was cleansed of sin; Day of Atonement services represented a cleansing from sin and a renewed relationship with God for all His people.



The morning and evening sacrifice pointed to the cleansing blood of Jesus.

Review the earthly sanctuary service. How does it help you understand the plan of salvation?

MONDAY—JUNE 16

ALL POINTERS (LESSONS) LED TO JESUS (John 1:29)

What is the meaning of John calling Jesus the “Lamb of God” in John 1:29?

The wilderness sanctuary stood at the center of Israelite worship for hundreds of years. And as long as Israel remained faithful to God, they looked upon this holy sanctuary as the place of salvation. It was the place of atonement (cleansing, peace, and unity) between God and His people. God's actions that followed the dedication of the sanctuary (read Exodus 40: 34, 35) had made deep impressions

on those who witnessed them.

In Solomon's day, a permanent (forever) house was built for God in Jerusalem. The presence of God at the temple's dedication gave no hint of the temple's stormy future. Completely destroyed by the Babylonian army, the temple later was rebuilt, but not up to its former glory. But this was the temple Jesus knew. It was the one that felt His footsteps. And one Friday afternoon Jesus died upon a cross outside Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. Inside the Most Holy Room of this very temple, the curtain was mysteriously torn in two, from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51).

“It was the hour of the evening sacrifice. The lamb representing Christ had been brought to be slain.” But the earth shakes, and “with a loud noise the inner veil [curtain] of the temple is torn from top to bottom by an unseen hand. The holy place that is filled with God's presence is exposed to the watching crowd.” In one smooth action, this place where “God had lived,” and where “God had shown His glory above the mercy seat,” is now open to public view! “The most holy place of the earthly sanctuary is no longer holy.” Then in a great show the earth brings the message home: “All is terror and confusion. The priest is almost ready to kill the lamb. But the knife drops from his nerveless [not able to move] hand, and the lamb escapes. Type [lamb] has met [been replaced by] antitype [the Lamb; Christ] in the death of God's Son. The great sacrifice has been made. . . . It

was as if a living voice had spoken to the worshipers: There is now an end to all sacrifices and offerings for sin. The Son of God is come according to His word.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 756, 757.

Many Christians today are looking toward the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem as a sign of the end. Suppose such a temple were rebuilt, and sacrifices were made again. Why would those sacrifices fail to work in dealing with the sin problem?



The inner veil (curtain) of the temple was torn from top to bottom by an unseen hand.

TUESDAY—JUNE 17

OUR HIGH PRIEST (Hebrews 7:25)

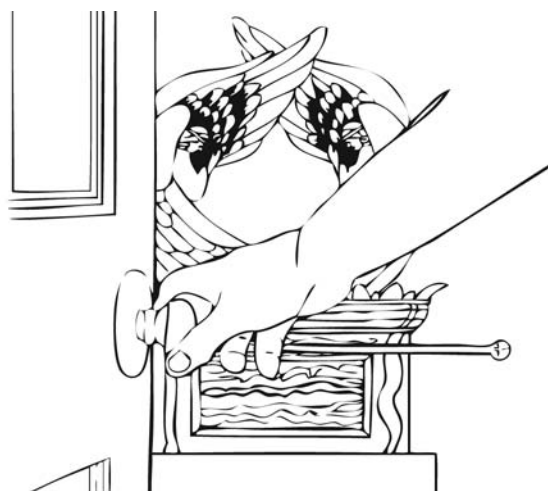
Paul had been saying a lot of things in the first chapters of Hebrews about angels, about Moses and his wilderness experience, about Joshua and the land of Canaan, about the prophets and Abraham and Melchizedek. But as Paul reaches chapter 8, verse 1, he quickly calls us back to focus.

What is the main point in Hebrews 8:1, 2?

Within the Israelite camp in Moses' day, the common Israelite worshiper stood far away from the sanctuary's Most Holy Room. To be able to enter this holy room, a person would need to get by priests and Levites and no-go areas around the Most Holy Room. But now, Paul says, Christ, our heavenly Priest-Mediator,⁶ has opened the door so that people can reach the heavenly sanctuary itself and the throne room of the living God. Paul says, "So let us boldly approach the throne of grace. Then we will receive mercy. We will find grace to help us when we need it" (Hebrews 4:16, NIV). Jesus is our Intercessor⁷ in heaven.

6. priest-mediator—Jesus is our Priest-Mediator. He forgives our sins and presents to God the Father His perfect life in place of our sinful life. It is because He presents His perfect life in place of our sinful life that He can forgive our sins. He also offers our prayers to God and works to help us and save us.

7. intercessor—a person working to make peace between two parties that are against each other; a go-between; a lawyer.



Christ, our High Priest, has opened the door to God.

We do not know the exact kind of work Jesus does for us in heaven. But the Bible offers examples of the idea from a human point of view. Two of these took place in the life of Moses. They happened in connection with the rebellion at Kadesh (Numbers 14:10–20) and in connection with the golden calf (Exodus 32:9–14, 30–32). These are powerful sets of verses. “‘But now,’” Moses pled with God in that last event, “‘please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot [remove] me out of the book you have written’” (verse 32, NIV). We also witness examples of praying for others in Daniel (Daniel 9) and in Jesus’ great prayer before His crucifixion (death on the cross) (John 17).

Examine the following key verses from Hebrews as examples of what our heavenly High Priest does for us: Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 7:25;

Hebrews 8:3–10; Hebrews 9:11–14; Hebrews 10:11–17. Most important, ask yourself: How can I as a person receive a blessing in my walk with the Lord by knowing that Jesus is doing these things for me? How can I use these promises in my life?

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 18

THE DIFFERENCE JESUS MAKES—PART 1 (Hebrews 4:16)

What promise is there for us in Hebrews 4:16? What advice is there for us to follow? What hopes does this offer us? How can you use what is here in your own life?

Do those who know Jesus as Savior and High Priest have a spiritual advantage (gain) over others who know Him only as Savior? We will deal with this question today and tomorrow. But perhaps we can begin by studying how Hebrews 9 helps to answer the question.

There are several ways to read the chapter. One is to carefully study the meaning of words and phrases. This study is followed by squeezing out the meaning of the verses. But another way is better than all that. It simply involves reading the chapter and observing what it says. When we do that, here is what we find:

1. What happened under the first covenant⁸ (the Old Testament sanctuary services) was only a part of the bigger picture. Unable to bring about

8. covenant—a promise or agreement between God and His people.

change within a person, the offerings and services pointed beyond themselves to something bigger.

2. That bigger something has now happened. Christ has come. He is the real High Priest (Hebrews 9:11). "He [Christ] did not enter [the heavenly sanctuary] by spilling the blood of goats and calves. He entered the Most Holy Room by spilling His own blood. He did it once and for all time. He paid the price to set us free from sin forever" (verse 12, NIV).

3. The offerings under the old system gained results (verse 13) but could not change a person on the inside. But the blood of Christ reaches to our inside, washing "from our minds our feelings of guilt for committing [doing] sin! Sin always leads to death. But now we can serve the living God" (verse 14, NIV).

4. Christ shed His blood once for our sake. And now He appears for us in the presence of God as our High Priest. (verses 24–28).



Jesus appears for us in the presence of God as our High Priest.

What is the important message Hebrews 9 is giving us? What promises are found in there that you find encouraging?

THURSDAY—JUNE 19

THE DIFFERENCE JESUS MAKES—PART 2 (Hebrews 10:19–25)

The knowledge and acceptance of Jesus as our High Priest should make us kind and merciful and patient. These are the same traits He has shown toward us. It should make us merciful and kind, in the same way He has shown mercy and grace⁹ toward us. And it should make us righteous (holy) and thankful for the great sacrifice He made for us. But any Adventist who has fellowshiped with Christians of other churches would admit that they have found them equally kind, merciful, patient, and righteous. So, then, what real difference does "our message of the sanctuary" make?

It probably has something to do with loyalty and faithfulness. When Paul, the author of Hebrews, wanted to make his readers stronger in the faith, he turned to the sanctuary theme.

What useful message is given to us here in Hebrews 10:19–25? How is this a message that should influence (change) how we live our lives and how we fellowship with others?

9. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

The book of Hebrews invites us to approach (reach for) “the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16). The reasons here are many. But one of them gets to the question before us just now. The way has been made for us, through Jesus, to reach God in the heavenly sanctuary. And to follow Jesus by faith into the sanctuary is to have one’s soul cleansed by His marvelous grace and to experience a better understanding of His unchangeable law (read Hebrews 8:10). These experiences are important to have in “the great controversy [war] between good and evil.” They show the difference the sanctuary teaching makes for us.

By faith we enter with full faith into that holy place where Jesus ministers (works). And there we hold on to the One whose unchangeable promise is symbolized by the ark of the covenant. It is at the throne of the living God Himself, based on justice and mercy. In this way, we do not backslide into a belief that we do not need to keep God’s holy Sabbath. And we do not fall into the trap of believing in the theory of evolution, which tries to unseat the living God from His own universe. So, the doctrine of the sanctuary protects us against disobeying God’s law. It also gains for God a faithful remnant¹⁰ in a rebellious (sinful) world.

FRIDAY—JUNE 20

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “In the Holy of Holies,” pages 423–426, in *The Great Controversy [War]*; “The Tabernacle and Its Services,” pages 350–358, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844.¹¹ It opened to view a complete system of truth. It showed that God’s hand had directed the great Advent Movement and brought to light the position and work of His people.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, “In the Holy of Holies,” page 423, in *The Great Controversy [War]*.

“The heavenly sanctuary is the dwelling place [home] of God, the seat [capital] of His government, and the nerve center of the universe. For these reasons it has always been there. But with the fall of Adam and Eve it added another role. It was to solve the problem of rebellion [sin] and make the universe safe. It is how we imagine it when we think of the Old Testament sanctuary system of sacrifice. We see it through a glass colored by the ministry for the removal of sin.”—Adapted from Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary*, page 71.

“I do not picture an empty heavenly

10. remnant—a small group of people who are very faithful to God.

11. the disappointment of 1844—the time when thousands of God’s people interpreted Daniel 7 and 8 to mean that Jesus would return in 1844. They thought the earth was the sanctuary. When Jesus did not return they were disappointed.

sanctuary. The throne of God is there, surrounded by crowds of angels. Best of all, our All-sufficient High Priest, Jesus Christ Himself, is there! He fills it full! He stands before the throne of God for us! And that's [that is] enough for me!"—Page 71, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ How does our understanding of the pre-Advent judgment¹² fit in with our understanding of Christ as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary? Why should the judgment be an important part of our sanctuary message? Most important, how can we teach the judgment as part of the

good news of Jesus as our Substitute¹³ in judgment?

❷ What does Christ's high-priestly ministry (work) in heaven mean to you as a person? What experience(s) can you share about how this teaching has helped you spiritually?

❸ Go back over the week's lesson and make a list of all the benefits (good things) we get from Christ as our High Priest. Bring them to class and discuss these benefits and how they should influence (change) our lives. How can we better take advantage of these promises in order to press forward our witness and mission to the world?

12. pre-Advent judgment—the judgment that will take place before Jesus' second coming. Adventists believe that God's judgment comes in three parts. The first part began in 1844 and continues until the Second Coming. This is the pre-Advent judgment. The pre-Advent judgment is also called the investigative judgment. It examines the lives of all saints before Jesus comes to take them home.

13. substitute—someone or something that takes the place of another person or thing. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.