



# Recognizing Heavenly Realities

CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY JULY 10, 2013

**One of the most meaningful themes of Scripture is the sanctuary. From a historical view, it flows from the early patriarchal altars through the Mosaic tabernacle and the Temple of Jerusalem, reaching its climax at Christ's sacrifice on the cross and His priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.**

From a theological perspective, the sanctuary is the abiding place of God (Ex. 25:8; Isa. 6:1; Rev. 11:19), the depository of His law (Ex. 25:16; 31:18; Rev. 11:19), and the place where salvation is available to all human beings (Heb. 4:14-16; 1 John 2:1, 2). No wonder early Seventh-day Adventists saw the sanctuary as a major integrating factor of their doctrinal system.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White speaks of the earthly sanctuary and its rituals as “a compacted prophecy of the gospel,”<sup>2</sup> and of the heavenly sanctuary and its ministry as “the very center of Christ's work in behalf of [men and women]”(Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 488.)) and “the foundation of our faith.”<sup>3</sup> But Satan

hates these great truths, and “invents unnumbered schemes to occupy our minds, that they may not dwell upon the very work with which we ought to be best acquainted.”<sup>4</sup> So nothing should take our eyes away from Christ, as “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2), and His glorious priestly ministry on our behalf.

## THE NATURE OF THE SANCTUARY

Many Christians have difficulty conceiving of the existence of a heavenly sanctuary. For them, heaven is only a spiritual, immaterial dimension as portrayed by Greek philosophers. By contrast, the Bible speaks of a real heaven, with a real city in which God’s glorious sanctuary-temple is located. The book of Hebrews refers to that entity as “the true tabernacle which the Lord erected” (Heb. 8:2) and “the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation” (Heb. 9:11).

Seventh-day Adventist Church co-founder, Ellen White, explains that God not only presented to Moses “a view of the heavenly sanctuary” itself, but also gave him a “plan,” “a miniature representation of the heavenly temple,” as a model for the earthly sanctuary (Ex. 25:9,40).<sup>5</sup> “Moses made the earthly sanctuary after a pattern which was shown him. Paul teaches that that pattern was the true sanctuary which is in heaven. And John testifies that he saw it in heaven.”<sup>6</sup>

With a clear understanding of the heavenly sanctuary as “the great original, of which the sanctuary built by Moses was a copy,” White could argue consistently that “as the sanctuary on earth had two apartments, the holy and the most holy, so there are two holy places in the sanctuary in heaven.”<sup>7</sup>

## THE MINISTRY OF THE SANCTUARY

The book of Hebrews affirms that Christ began His priesthood offering Himself as an atoning sacrifice on the cross of Calvary for the sins of the world (Heb. 8:1-5; 9:11- 28). Having made a complete and perfect sacrifice, He ascended into heaven to become a High Priest “at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb.8:1; cf. Zech. 6:13).

As our mediator and advocate, He intercedes on our behalf by the merits of His own blood. So meaningful is His priestly ministry that, in White’s words, “the intercession of Christ in man’s behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross.”<sup>8</sup> But with the end of the 2,300 symbolic days/years of Daniel 8:14 in 1844, Christ began the pre-Advent investigative judgment (see Dan. 7:9-14; 8:9-14) announced in Revelation 14:7 as “the hour of His judgment has come.”

Describing the installment of that judgment, Daniel 7 mentions that “thrones were put in place” (verse 9); the movable throne of God had wheels like “burning fire” (verse 9); and the Son of Man [Christ] went to the Ancient of Days [God the Father] (verse 13). White describes that event as follows: “I saw the Father rise from the throne, and in a flaming chariot go into the holy of holies within the veil, and sit down. Then Jesus rose up from the throne, and the most of those who were bowed down arose with Him. Then a cloudy chariot, with wheels like

flaming fire, surrounded by angels, came to where Jesus was. He stepped into the chariot and was borne to the holiest, where the Father sat.”<sup>9</sup> Daniel 7:21-27 explains that the judgment is at the same time against the “horn” that persecuted the saints and “in favor of the saints of the Most High.”

## THE MEANING OF THE SANCTUARY

Some Christians fragment sacred history into several dispensations, each with a message distinct from the others. But instead of mentioning different gospels, the Bible speaks of one “everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6) and warns against the acceptance of “any other gospel” (Gal. 1:6-9). The everlasting gospel flows through the sanctuary motif, integrating the plan of salvation into an unfolding whole.

White explained that “around the sanctuary and its solemn services mystically gathered the grand truths which were to be developed through succeeding generations.”<sup>10</sup> So in the post-1844 Adventist experience, the study of the sanctuary “opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious.”<sup>11</sup>

A clear view of the heavenly sanctuary helps us to better understand Christ’s work for our salvation. It reveals not only that in the past He died for our sins and in the future He will come again to liberate us from this sinful world, but also that presently He is helping us to overcome sin. For this reason, Hebrews 4:16 appeals to us: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” The psalmist adds: “One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple” (Ps. 27:4). All of us have to dwell by faith in God’s heavenly sanctuary-temple until the glorious day when we will worship Him “in His temple” (Rev. 7:15).

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1. See Alberto R. Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels’ Messages: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1995).[\[↵\]](#)
  2. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 14.[\[↵\]](#)
  3. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 221.[\[↵\]](#)
  4. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 488.[\[↵\]](#)
  5. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890), p. 343.[\[↵\]](#)
  6. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 415.[\[↵\]](#)
  7. Ellen G. White, *Vie Spirit of Prophecy* (Oakland, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn.. 1884), vol. 4, p. 260[\[↵\]](#)

8. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 489.[\[↵\]](#)
9. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882), p. 55.[\[↵\]](#)
10. Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), p. 194.[\[↵\]](#)
11. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 423.[\[↵\]](#)

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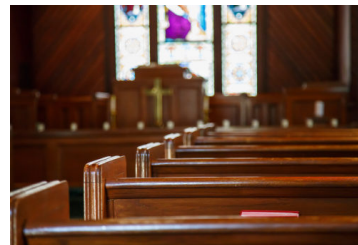
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