

A NEW REVELATION

What I learned about the sanctuary when I perused a new line of investigation

We know all about the Book of Revelation, don't we? The seven churches (and don't forget which one we are!). The seven seals. The seven whatever's. The beasts of chapter 13: one from the sea, one from the land. The war in the heavens. A union of church and state. Persecution. Babylon. The Millennium. The Holy City. The two witnesses. The woman and the lamb. The 144,000—though we really aren't all quite sure who they are.

Some of us even know that *chiasmic* describes the literary structure John used in writing his book. Which book, he said, was to show us things that soon must take place. Which book, we should remind ourselves, is really the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

But, of course, this article is to be about the sanctuary. And the books that one must examine to be literate

on that doctrine are Daniel, Leviticus, Hebrews, and, as I explained in my first article in this series, Ezekiel. And there is yet much to learn.

Are you ready for a humbling exposure? One I had to go through?

The Book of Revelation is saturated with sanctuary imagery, something that most of us in our preoccupation with book's prophetic beasts, failed to discern.

What a Revelation!

It is only in the past two decades that diligent research by the Daniel and Revelation Committee has produced significant breakthroughs in sanctuary theology. In the previous

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two articles in this series, I explored some of the new insights (and excites) that expanded our concepts while confirming historic Adventist understanding. We looked particularly at the Books of Daniel and Ezekiel. However, the committee has opened windows into an unexpected depth and richness of sanctuary theology in a book heretofore not exploited as a source. Yes, the Book of Revelation!

For one exciting example: We've known that Revelation is structured by a series of visionary sequences; but only recently have we perceived that each of the visions opens with an introductory sanctuary scene! What is more, these scenes move in sequence through the sanctuary. The three series of visions dealing with the sweep of history through the Age of the Church—the churches, seals, and trumpets—focus on the Holy Place realities of the sanctuary! They describe activities in the temporal setting of Christ's "daily" ministry in the Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary (see Revelation 1; 4, 5; 8:2-6).

Then as the focus moves to the Great Controversy, just before the close of probation, the fourth introductory sanctuary scene (see chapter 11:19) shifts to the Most Holy Place, and we view events of the antitypical Day of Atonement. Adventist theologian Kenneth Strand has shown that in this same chapter (chap. 11:1) a clear allusion is made to the cleansing of the sanctuary as

described in Leviticus 16.

In the fifth sanctuary scene (15:1 to 16:1), the angels of the seven last plagues come out of the Most Holy Place. The temple is filled with smoke and no one can enter: Probation is closed. All that follows in the Book of Revelation occurs after the close of probation.

Thus the introductory sanctuary scenes not only structure the entire Book of Revelation but also serve as a guide to where we are in the sweep of salvation history. They confirm that the first half of the book is historical, delineating the Christian Age and the Holy Place ministry of Christ up to the antitypical Day of Atonement. From chapter 11, the book moves to the eschatological events of the investigative judgment and the new earth.

The book reveals many facets of the investigative judgment, one of which, in particular, needs more attention in our church. If we are in Christ, what should be our attitude toward the investigative judgment? The book reveals that we need not fear the judgment; rather, we should welcome, and even long for, it. That is why God's saints (pictured as martyred souls under the altar) cry out: "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (Rev. 6:10, NIV).

Their cry is not a spiteful demand for vengeance; it is a cry for justice.

“How long will it be until Heaven’s Court of Appeals investigates our cases and reverses the false verdicts of earthly courts? How long until justice is done?” The saints’ appeal has as its background the law of malicious witness in Deuteronomy 19:16-19, where the judge investigates (the literal meaning of the Hebrew word) the case of the one maligned. If the judge finds the accused innocent, he vindicates him and executes judgment against the false witness.

This is the context in which the Psalmist cried out, “Lord, judge me!” If we are in Christ, this can be our cry. How we should welcome the judgment! When its books are opened and our case examined, we’ll be vindicated! And God himself will be vindicated of the false charges brought against him for his mercy to us. Then the false accusers will receive their just sentence. This perspective is not new to Adventism, but it has not always been properly emphasized. In 1883 Ellen White expressed it this way:

“John in holy vision beholds the faithful souls that come up out of great tribulation, surrounding the throne of God, clad in white robes, and crowned with immortal glory. What though they have been counted the [rabble] of the earth? In the investigative judgment their lives and characters are brought in review before God, and that solemn tribunal

reverses the decision of their enemies. Their faithfulness to God and to His word stands revealed, and Heaven’s high honors are awarded them as conquerors in the strife with sin and Satan” (*Our High Calling*, p. 361).

The Key That Unlocks Mysteries

In my article on the investigative judgment in Ezekiel, I confessed my initial doubts about the sanctuary as well as my determination to follow truth wherever it would lead. I did so, and not only confirmed my confidence in Adventist sanctuary theology but also discovered fascinating new aspects of the sanctuary doctrine. It did, indeed, prove to be the key that unlocks mysteries. I little dreamed of all that I’d find behind the sanctuary doors!

In this article, I invited you to join me in stepping through them into the Book of Revelation. Because of my own experience, I hope that truths about the investigative judgment revealed there will lead you to join me in anticipating, even longing for, its verdict.

As professor of Old Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, I delight in sharing my confidence in the truthfulness, timeliness, and richness of the sanctuary doctrine. I am thrilled by the testimony of students who, some for the first time, understand what the investigative judgment really means.

One recently wrote on his final report: “I came to this class a sanctuary doubter; but after confronting the issues and the scriptural evidence, I leave a sanctuary believer, and I can’t wait to get back to my conference where I can share the beauty of this doctrine. . . .”

Let me share a last thrilling conviction: The depths of the sanctuary doctrine have not yet been fully plumbed! “Truths vast and profound”

are still to be discovered “in its rites and symbols.” And perhaps even more importantly, a deeper experience is yet to be gained in this antitypical Day of Atonement. We must capture the fervor of the day: the fervor of repentance, affliction of soul and putting away of sin; the fervor of assurance in the substitutionary death of Christ; and the fervor of joy over a “good judgment” in Christ and the soon coming Jubilee! □

DOES THE BOOK OF HEBREWS CONTRADICT LEVITICUS?

A colleague once told me that he left the church because Adventists follow Leviticus in their sanctuary doctrine rather than the Book of Hebrews, which, being in the New Testament, is the norm for judging what is in the Old.

Does Hebrews contradict Leviticus? Or is there a fundamental continuity between sanctuary type and antitype in the two books?

Recent studies show that the author of Hebrews does not manipulate the Old Testament type to fit the antitype. Rather, he argues from Old Testament earthly type to New Testament heavenly antitype. The author insists upon the reality of the heavenly sanctuary, the great original of which the earthly was a copy. And he finds the earthly copy in its basic contours to be instructive for our understanding of the original. We don’t have to decide between Leviticus and Hebrews, Old Testament and New Testament. Their typology is in harmony.

Further, the major contours of the Adventist understanding of the sanctuary doctrine are clearly taught in the epistle. Following

are four proofs:

First: Christ's death is the antitypical fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrificial system, including all sacrifices, even those of the Day of Atonement, since according to Psalm 40, all Old Testament sacrifices were to coalesce into the one Sacrifice. (See Hebrews 10:1 to 10 for the exegesis of Psalm 6 to 8.)

Second: Christ ascended in A.D. 31 not to immediately commence the antitypical Day of Atonement but to inaugurate the entire heavenly sanctuary. The Greek word *egkainizo*, used in Hebrews 10:20 and 9:18, means to "inaugurate," and is the same word used in the LXX for the inauguration ceremonies described in Numbers 7. The goats and calves and bulls mentioned in Hebrews 9:12, 13 are the very animals described in Numbers 7 and Leviticus 9 to be used as sacrifices for the inauguration ceremonies.

Third: The ongoing work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary at the time the Epistle to the Hebrews was written was not the yearly Day of Atonement ministry, but the daily, Holy Place ministry. Repeatedly, Christ's continuing first-century work is compared with the daily work of the earthly priest (see especially Hebrews 7:25 to 27; 10:11 to 14; 13:10 to 12).

Fourth: From the point of view of the apostle, the Day of Atonement work of judgment was still in the future, as Hebrews 9:23 to 28 documents. However, Adventist theologian George Rice has shown that the entire epistle is structured by a five-fold warning of future judgment. That judgment includes an investigative as well as executive judgment involving specifically the professed people of God. (See, for example, Hebrews 10:26 to 31.)

In short (having abbreviated evidence that would take several pages), the Epistle to the Hebrews is fully consistent with Leviticus—and with the Adventist understanding of the sanctuary doctrine. Because its focus is primarily upon first-century Christians, Hebrews does not provide a detailed picture of sanctuary typology still future to the apostle.—R.D.