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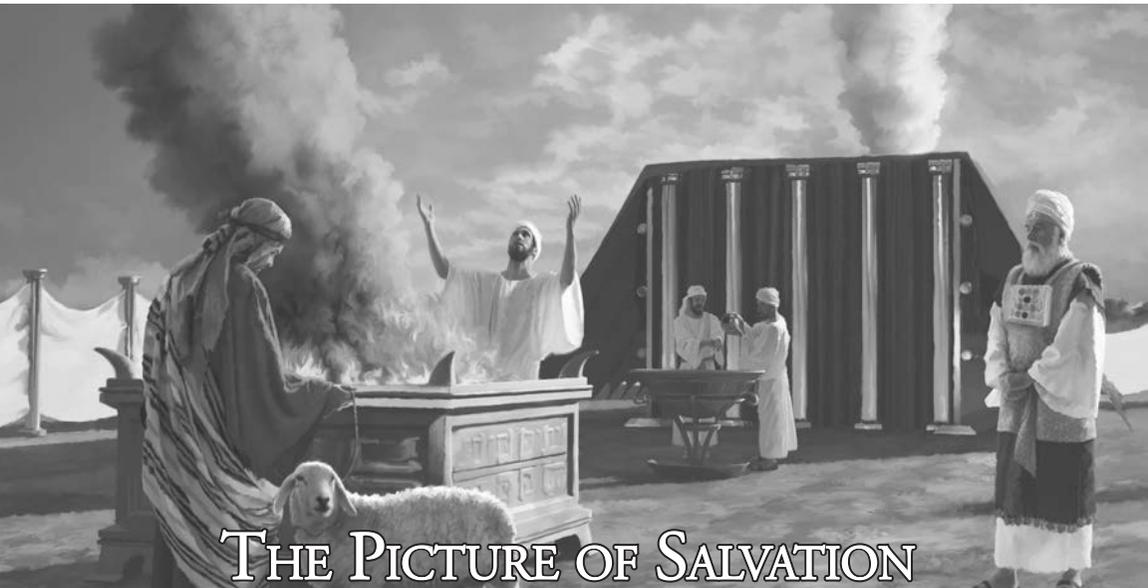
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Sabbath School Personal Ministries

The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Manuscript Evaluation Committee, whose members serve as consulting editors. The published guide reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s).



THE PICTURE OF SALVATION

Unquestionably, the greatest revelation of the love and character of God was at the cross, where the Lord offered Himself in the person of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for the sins of a world that never had to sin to begin with. To help us understand better what this great sacrifice meant, God devised the earthly sanctuary, a pictorial representation of the plan of salvation. This earthly sanctuary, however, only modeled the heavenly one, which is the true center of God's presence and of His activity in the universe.

When God established the sanctuary on earth, He used it as a teaching tool. The Israelite sanctuary and its services displayed important truths about redemption, about the character of God, and about the final disposition of sin.

The sanctuary formed the template to help us understand Jesus as our Sacrifice and High Priest. When John the Baptist told his disciples that Jesus was the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (*John 1:29, 36, NKJV*), they understood what John meant because they understood something of the sanctuary. The book of Hebrews presupposed a knowledge about the ancient Israelite priesthood so that the original recipients of the letter could grasp what Jesus was doing for them in heaven. Sanctuary terminology was also used to teach truths about Christian living. In short, knowledge of the sanctuary system became a foundation for the new message of salvation in Christ.

However, throughout much of the Christian era, the sanctuary message was largely

forgotten. Not until the middle of the nineteenth century, when Seventh-day Adventists began to appreciate God's paradigm of salvation anew, including the message of the pre-Advent judgment, was a fresh emphasis placed on the sanctuary.

“The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great advent movement and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people.”
—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 423.

As the key for a complete system of truth, the sanctuary and Christ's priestly ministry became the basis for the Seventh-day Adventist faith—and still remains so. In fact, the sanctuary message is the Adventists' unique doctrine. At the same time, no other doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (with the possible exception of the Sabbath) has faced so many challenges. Fortunately, throughout the years, these challenges have not only been withstood, they have increased our understanding of this crucial teaching and have made us, as a people, stronger in our understanding of salvation.

The sanctuary formed the temple to help us to understand Jesus as our Sacrifice and High Priest.

Ellen G. White recommended focusing our highest attention on the sanctuary because “the sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin. It is of the utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 488. Thus, we can “exercise the faith which is essential at this time” and “occupy the position which God designs [us] to fill.”—Page 488.

The sanctuary discloses the heart of God. Studying the sanctuary will bring us close to the presence of the Supreme and to the personality of our Savior and draw us into a deeper personal relationship with Him.

Hence, our study for this quarter: God's sanctuary, both His earthly model and the heavenly original.

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How to Use This Teachers Edition

Get Motivated to Explore, Apply, and Create

We hope that this format of the teachers edition will encourage adult Sabbath School class members to do just that—explore, apply, and create. Each weekly teachers lesson takes your class through the following learning process, based on the Natural Learning Cycle:

1. Why is this lesson important to me? (Motivate);
2. What do I need to know from God’s Word? (Explore);
3. How can I practice what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Apply); and
4. What can I do with what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Create).

And for teachers who haven’t had time to prepare during the week for class, there is a one-page outline of easy-to-digest material in “The Lesson in Brief” section.

Here’s a closer look at the four steps of the Natural Learning Cycle and suggestions for how you, the teacher, can approach each one:

Step 1—Motivate: Link the learners’ experiences to the central concept of the lesson to show why the lesson is relevant to their lives. Help them answer the question, Why is this week’s lesson important to me?

Step 2—Explore: Present learners with the biblical information they need to understand the central concept of the lesson. (Such information could include facts about the people; the setting; cultural, historical, and/or geographical details; the plot or what’s happening; and conflicts or tension of the texts you are studying.) Help learners answer the question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Step 3—Apply: Provide learners with opportunities to practice the information given in Step 2. This is a crucial step; information alone is not enough to help a person grow in Christ. Assist the learners in answering the question, How can I apply to my life what I’ve learned?

Step 4—Create: Finally, encourage learners to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (*James 1:22*). Invite them to make a life response to the lesson. This step provides individuals and groups with opportunities for creative self-expression and exploration. All such activities should help learners answer the question, With God’s help, what can I do with what I’ve learned from this week’s lesson?

When teachers use material from each of these four steps, they will appeal to almost every student in their class: those who enjoy talking about what’s happening in their lives, those who want more information about the texts being studied, those who want to know how it all fits in with real life, and those who want to get out and apply what they’ve learned.

The Heavenly Sanctuary



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Jer. 23:23, 24; Ps. 89:14; Revelation 4, 5; Ps. 11:4–7; Deut. 25:1; Heb. 8:1, 2.*

Memory Text: “‘[T]hen hear in heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause’ ” (*1 Kings 8:49, NKJV*).

Where does God live?” This innocent question of a six-year-old could be quite perplexing. It could easily lead to more difficult ones, such as, “If God lives in one place, how is it possible that He is everywhere?” Or, “Does God need a dwelling place?” Or, “If He doesn’t need one, why does He have one?” Or, “If He does need one, why does He need it?”

These are good questions, and, given the little we know (and the lot we don’t), they are not so easy to answer.

Nevertheless, we can answer with what we do know. As Seventh-day Adventists, we know from the Bible that God dwells in heaven, that He is actively working in our behalf “up there,” and that the center of His work is in the heavenly sanctuary.

Scripture is clear: the heavenly sanctuary is a real place, and from it we can learn truths about the character and work of our God. Thus, the focus of this week’s lesson is the heavenly sanctuary and what God is doing there for us, because what He is doing in the sanctuary is, indeed, for us.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 5.*

God’s Residence

We often say that “God is everywhere.” Or that He is “omnipresent,” which means that He is present throughout the universe. “ ‘Am I a God near at hand, . . . and not a God afar off? . . . Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ ” (*Jer. 23:23, 24, NKJV*). David understood, too, that nobody can flee from God (*Psalms 139*). Indeed, as Paul argues, God is close to everyone, at least in a spiritual sense (*Acts 17:27, 28*).

Complementing God’s attribute of omnipresence is His eternal existence. God has neither beginning nor end (*Ps. 90:2*). He has always been and will always be (*Jude 1:25*).

Read 1 Kings 8:49 and Psalm 102:19. What do they teach us about the place where God dwells? How are we to understand what this means? Can we understand it?

The Scriptures are full of statements about God’s residence being in heaven (*1 Kings 8:30, 43, 49*). Does this mean that God is more present in heaven than He is anywhere else? God obviously dwells in heaven in a special way, in His glorious presence and pure holiness. The greatest manifestation of God’s presence exists in heaven.

There is a difference, however, between God’s “general presence” and His “special presence.” God is generally present everywhere; yet, He chooses to reveal Himself in a special way in heaven and, as we will see, in the heavenly sanctuary.

Of course, we have to admit that we are limited in our understanding of His physical nature. He is spirit (*John 4:24*) and, as such, cannot be contained in any structure or dimension (*1 Kings 8:27*). Even so, the Bible presents heaven (*John 14:1–3*) and the heavenly sanctuary as real places (*Heb. 8:2*) where God can be seen (*Acts 7:55, 56; Rev. 4:2, 3*). We have to believe that even heaven and the heavenly sanctuary are places where God condescends to meet His creation.

There are many things that are difficult for us to imagine or understand, such as the dwelling place of God. Yet, the Bible says that this dwelling place is real. How can we learn to trust in all that the Bible teaches us, no matter how hard it is sometimes to understand? Why is it important for us to learn to trust even when we don’t understand?

Throne Room

Read Psalms 47:6–9; 93:1, 2; 103:19. What do these texts teach us about God and His throne?

Several visions of the heavenly throne occur in the Bible. Most depict a kind of heavenly assembly with God as King. Interestingly enough, most of them are concerned with human affairs—usually presenting God as acting for or speaking in behalf of the righteous.

The Bible also reveals God as sovereign. For instance, the kingship of the Lord is a recurring theme in the Psalms. God is not only King of heaven but also “King of all the earth” (*Ps. 47:7, NKJV*), and not only in the future but already in the here and now (*Ps. 93:2*).

That God’s throne is established in heaven has several ramifications. One of them is that God is independent and superior to the rest of the universe.

Read Psalms 89:14, 97:2. What do these texts teach us about the character of God and how He rules?

God’s rule encompasses righteousness and justice, as well as love and truthfulness. These moral qualities describe how He acts in the human world and underscore His position in the entire universe. These qualities, which compose His rule, are also the same as those that He wants His people to manifest in their lives (*Mic. 6:8, compare with Isa. 59:14*), and it is our sacred privilege to do so.

“As in obedience to His natural laws the earth should produce its treasures, so in obedience to His moral law the hearts of the people were to reflect the attributes of His character.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 144.

How can we better manifest goodness, righteousness, and justice in a world filled with evil, unrighteousness, and injustice? Why *must* we do these things?

Worship in Heaven

Read Revelation 4 and 5. What do these two chapters teach us about the heavenly dwelling place of God? In what way is the plan of salvation revealed in these texts, as well?

The vision of the heavenly throne room is a vision of the heavenly sanctuary. This is made evident from the language referring to the Hebrew religious system. For instance, the words for “door” and “trumpet” in Revelation 4:1 appear often in the Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament) in reference to the sanctuary. The three precious stones in Revelation 4:3 are part of the High Priest’s breastplate. The seven lampstands are reminiscent of the lampstands in Solomon’s temple. The twenty-four elders remind us of the twenty-four divisions of service for the temple priests throughout the year and their prayer offering in the golden bowls of “incense” (*Ps. 141:2*). All of these verses point back to the Old Testament worship service, which centered on the earthly sanctuary.

Finally, the slain Lamb of Revelation 5 points, of course, to Christ’s sacrificial death. Christ, the Lamb, is the only Mediator of divine salvation and is accounted worthy because of His triumph (*Rev. 5:5*), His sacrifice (*Rev. 5:9, 12*), and His divinity (*Rev. 5:13*).

“Christ took upon Himself humanity, and laid down His life a sacrifice, that man, by becoming a partaker of the divine nature, might have eternal life.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 141.

What we see in these two chapters, centering on God’s throne, is a depiction of God’s work for the salvation of humanity. We can see, too, that this work has unfolded before the other intelligent beings in heaven, a key theme in the great controversy motif.

Think about what it means that Christ, as God Himself, took on our humanity and died as our Substitute; that is, whatever wrongs you have done for which you yourself should be punished fell on Him instead. Why should this truth motivate everything that you do?

Courtroom

Read Psalm 11:4–7 and Habakkuk 2:20. What else does God do in His heavenly temple, and why is this important for us to know?

Many Psalms reveal that the Lord is not indifferent to the needs of the righteous or to the injustices that they often face. He will react to the issues that cry out for redress, and He will “ ‘justify the righteous and condemn the wicked,’ ” just as any good judge would do (*Deut. 25:1, NKJV*).

When God judges, the throne room becomes a courtroom and the heavenly throne a judgment seat. The One enthroned is the One who judges (*see Ps. 9:4–8*), a concept known in the ancient Near East where kings often functioned as judges, as well.

Divine judgment involves both the wicked and the righteous. While the wicked receive a punishment similar to that received by Sodom and Gomorrah, the upright “will behold His face” (*Ps. 11:6, 7, NASB*). The classic combination of throne room and judgment appears in Daniel 7:9–14 (a significant passage that we will study later). There again, the judgment consists of two strands: a verdict of vindication for the saints and a sentence of condemnation for God’s enemies.

In the book of Habakkuk, after Habakkuk asks God why He is silent about injustice (*Habakkuk 1*), God answers that He will certainly judge (*Hab. 2:1–5*). While idols have no “breath” or “spirit” (*Hab. 2:19*), the Creator God is enthroned in His temple, the heavenly sanctuary, and He is ready to judge.

The prophetic appeal is “ ‘Let all the earth be silent before Him’ ” (*Hab. 2:20, NASB*). The appropriate attitude toward God’s ruling and judging is awed silence and hushed reverence.

The place where God reveals His special presence and where He is worshiped by the heavenly beings is the same place where He is rendering righteous judgment for all humans: the sanctuary in heaven. God is just, and all our questions about justice will be answered in God’s time, not ours.

However much we cry out for justice, we often don’t see justice in the present. Why, then, must we trust in God’s justice? Without that promise, what hope do we have?

Place of Salvation

Read Hebrews 8:1, 2. What is Christ doing at the throne of God?

The book of Hebrews teaches that Christ is ministering in the heavenly sanctuary as our High Priest. His work there is focused on our salvation, for He appears “in the presence of God for us” (*Heb. 9:24, NASB*). He sympathizes with us, giving us assurance that we will not be rejected but instead receive mercy and grace (*Heb. 4:15, 16*) because of what He has done for us. As in the earthly sanctuary, the heavenly one is where “atonement” (or “reconciliation”) is made for the sins of the believers (*Heb. 2:17*). The Jesus who died for us is the One now ministering in heaven “for us,” as well.

Read Revelation 1:12–20, 8:2–6, 11:19, and 15:5–8. What sanctuary imagery appears in these passages?

The verses in today’s study are just some of the places in the book of Revelation where sanctuary imagery appears. In fact, most of the major sections of the book begin with or contain a sanctuary scene.

The first introductory scene shows Christ, clothed as High Priest, walking among the seven lampstands (*Rev. 1:12–20*). The second shows the heavenly throne room, and the verses reveal a wide variety of sanctuary imagery: throne, lamps, sea, slain Lamb, blood, and golden bowls of incense (*Revelation 4, 5*). The third scene refers to the continual service of intercession in the context of the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary (*Rev. 8:2–6*). The fourth and central scene gives us a glimpse of the ark of the covenant in the second apartment (*Rev. 11:19*). The fifth scene brings the entire tabernacle in heaven into view (*Rev. 15:5–8*). The sixth scene is unique in that it does not contain any explicit references to the sanctuary, perhaps to illustrate that Christ’s work there is finished (*Rev. 19:1–10*). The final scene is all about the glorious Holy City on earth, which is portrayed as the tabernacle “coming down out of heaven” (*Rev. 21:1–8, NASB*).

A careful study of these scenes reveals that they are interconnected, showing an internal progression in the salvation accomplished by God: from Christ on earth to His heavenly ministry in the first and second apartments to His high priestly ministry’s end and finally to the new earth tabernacle.

Further Study: “Paul had a view of heaven, and in discoursing on the glories there, the very best thing he could do was to not try to describe them. He tells us that eye had not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him. So you may put your imagination to the stretch, you may try to the very best of your abilities to take in and consider the eternal weight of glory, and yet your finite senses, faint and weary with the effort, cannot grasp it, for there is an infinity beyond. It takes all of eternity to unfold the glories and bring out the precious treasures of the Word of God.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1107.

“The abiding place of the King of kings, where thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him (Daniel 7:10); that temple, filled with the glory of the eternal throne, where seraphim, its shining guardians, veil their faces in adoration, could find, in the most magnificent structure ever reared by human hands, but a faint reflection of its vastness and glory. Yet important truths concerning the heavenly sanctuary and the great work there carried forward for man’s redemption were taught by the earthly sanctuary and its services.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 414.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Look at the last statement in Friday’s study from Ellen G. White. What does she mean when she says that many “important truths” for our salvation were taught in the earthly sanctuary and its services? What are some of those truths, and why are they important?
- ❷ What does it mean that God “dwells” in heaven? How do you understand that concept?
- ❸ This week’s lesson touched on the idea that the onlooking universe sees the work that God is doing in behalf of humanity. Why is that a crucial concept to grasp? How does this concept help us to understand the great controversy motif and what that motif means in the whole plan of salvation? What does it tell us about the character of God, that He would leave His ways open to the scrutiny of beings that He Himself created?

The Lesson in Brief

▶ **Key Text:** *1 Kings 8:49*

▶ **The Student Will:**

Know: Grasp the reality and basic functions of the heavenly sanctuary.

Feel: Appreciate the warmth and intimacy of the heavenly sanctuary as God’s home.

Do: Accept the biblical picture of a real heavenly sanctuary and internalize its message of “God with us.”

▶ **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The Reality and Functions of the Heavenly Sanctuary

A The Bible repeatedly affirms the reality of the heavenly sanctuary. Why is it important that the heavenly sanctuary be a real place in heaven and not just a metaphor for salvation?

B There are five main functions of the heavenly sanctuary: God’s residence; command center of the universe; place of worship; celestial courtroom; and center of salvation. Which of these were present even before sin, and which will continue even after the great controversy is over?

II. Feel: The Sanctuary as God’s Home

A The heavenly sanctuary is described in Scripture as God’s own dwelling place. How does it affect your feelings about the heavenly sanctuary when you view it as more than a celestial courtroom—as also the personal home of God?

III. Do: The Heavenly Sanctuary and God’s Character

A How can the understanding of the heavenly sanctuary as the place where “God is with us” (and not just a place of judgment) expand our view of God’s character?

▶ **Summary:** The heavenly sanctuary reveals a loving God who has condescended to dwell with His creatures from the beginning of Creation.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *1 Kings 8:49*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The heavenly sanctuary demonstrates the “Immanuel [God with us] principle” from the beginning of Creation throughout eternity: God comes down out of heaven into time and earthly space to take up residence with His creatures, invites them to intimate fellowship with Him (worship) and (after sin) makes a way for this intimate relationship to be restored.

Just for Teachers: We focus this quarter on a subject that is probably more pervasive and foundational in Scripture than any other: the sanctuary. In 1906 Ellen G. White wrote, “The correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith.”—*Evangelism*, p. 221. Adventist pioneer Uriah Smith forcibly describes the importance he found in the sanctuary message: “The Sanctuary! Momentous subject! Grand nucleus around which cluster the glorious constellations of present truth! How it opens to our understanding the plan of salvation! How it lifts the veil [sic] from the position of our Lord in heaven! What a halo of glory it throws upon his ministry! What a divine harmony it establishes in the word of God! What a flood of light it pours upon past fulfillment of prophecy! How it fortifies the mighty truths of these last days! What a glory it sheds upon the future! With what hope and joy and consolation it fills the heart of the believer! Glorious subject! Its importance can neither be overdrawn nor overestimated.”—“Reflections on the Sanctuary,” *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 25, 1858.

Opening Activity: Ask your class to imagine and describe what they think the heavenly sanctuary looks like. Ask them to share why they think an omnipresent God needs to reside in a heavenly sanctuary.

Consider This: Jesus in His incarnation is called “‘Immanuel,’” “‘God with us’” (*Isa. 7:14, Matt. 1:23, NKJV*). Was the “Immanuel principle” already operative before the Incarnation when God dwelled in a location in heaven that He called His sanctuary? Explain. See Exodus 25:8 for God’s stated purpose for the sanctuary. When did the heavenly sanctuary originate? Was there a heavenly sanctuary even before the need to solve the sin problem in the universe? Give reasons for your answer.

► STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: The Bible contains scores of references to the heavenly sanctuary. These many passages, coming from all parts of the Bible, repeatedly underscore the reality of the heavenly sanctuary as an actual place in heaven (*see, for instance, Rev. 4:2, 11:19*). Scripture mentions five main functions of the heavenly sanctuary: it is (1) God’s residence; (2) the command center of the universe, where God rules from His throne; (3) the place of heavenly worship; (4) the heavenly courtroom, where God conducts righteous judgments; and (5) the place (along with the Cross) for solving the sin problem. Seventh-day Adventists often emphasize the fourth and fifth functions, which came into view after sin, and these important purposes will be the focus of several future lessons. But because the first three basic, original (and eternal) purposes of the heavenly sanctuary are often neglected, we will highlight these functions in what follows.

Bible Commentary

I. God’s Heavenly Home (*Review 1 Kings 8:49 with your class.*)

In the Old Testament, the heavenly sanctuary is often spoken of as a “temple.” These texts show that God is in His temple (*Ps. 11:4, Isa. 6:1, Mic. 1:2, Hab. 2:20, et cetera*). The Hebrew word for “temple,” *hekal*, is derived from the ancient Sumerian word *EGAL*, which means “great house.” The sanctuary is often called “the house of the Lord” (*for example, see Ps. 23:6*) and God’s “habitation” (*NKJV*) or “dwelling” (*NIV*) (*see Deut. 26:15, Ps. 68:5, Jer. 25:30, Zech. 2:13*). Thus, the heavenly sanctuary/temple is ultimately God’s residence—His home!

This heavenly temple has been in existence since the beginning of Creation (*see Jer. 17:12, whose language reflects Gen. 1:1*). Though the metaphysics of God’s existence is hard to understand, He condescended to dwell in space and time, to be close to His creatures—“God with us.” And Jesus is now preparing “‘rooms’ ” for us to live eternally in His “‘Father’s house’ ” (*John 14:1–3, NIV*), which refers to the heavenly sanctuary.

Consider This: How does understanding the heavenly sanctuary as God’s own home, where He invites His creatures for fellowship (and one day to live with Him), broaden your perspective of God as a warm, friendly, inviting Person?

II. The Command Center of the Universe (*Review Psalm 47:6–9 with your class.*)

Many passages of Scripture depict God in His throne room and speak of the heavenly sanctuary as God’s throne room. (*See especially 1 Kings 22:19; Pss. 93:1, 2; 97:2; 103:19, 20.*) Just as Solomon, the earthly king in Israel, built a “Hall of Judgment” along with his personal residence (*see 1 Kings 7:1, 7, 8, NKJV*) where he administered the affairs of Israel, so we may visualize that the heavenly King has a throne room or “Hall of Judgment” (the Most Holy Place) and His personal residence (the Holy Place). From His “command center” in the heavenly sanctuary, God conducts the “affairs of state” for the universe.

Consider This: What kind of administrative “affairs of state” do you imagine God conducting from His throne room before and after the rise of sin?

III. The Place of Heavenly Worship (*Review Revelation 4 and 5 with your class.*)

Many biblical passages describe the heavenly sanctuary as a place of worship. Isaiah 14:12–21 and Ezekiel 28:11–19 not only depict the fall of Lucifer and the rise of evil but also portray the heavenly sanctuary’s existence even before sin, with Lucifer as the “‘anointed cherub who covers’ ” (*vs. 14, NKJV*), or covering cherub (*see Exod. 37:9*). Here, Lucifer’s position as the covering cherub implies the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary on the “‘mountain of God’ ” (*Ezek. 28:14, NKJV*). The function of this pre-Fall sanctuary is stated in the parallel passage: it is the “‘mount of assembly’ ” (*Isa. 14:13, NIV*). At the heavenly sanctuary, the unfallen created intelligences assembled to worship their Creator. After the entrance of sin, the praise (doxological) function of the heavenly sanctuary continued. Isaiah is shown the heavenly temple when it is astir with doxology; the seraphim chant their praise antiphonally: “‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’ ” (*Isa. 6:3, NKJV*). Revelation 4 and 5 depict a similar worship scene in the heavenly sanctuary after Jesus’ ascension: the heavenly creatures praise their Creator (*Revelation 4*) and Redeemer (*Revelation 5*). And doxology will continue to emanate from the sanctuary throughout the climax of the great controversy and for eternity (*Rev. 19:1–5, Isa. 66:23, Rev. 21:1–3*).

Consider This: What is your reaction to the following theological aphorism: “Before soteriology [the plan of salvation] is doxology [worship]”? What does this statement say about the character of God and His original, eternal purpose in establishing the heavenly sanctuary?

► **STEP 3**—Apply

Just for Teachers: It is vital to grasp that the original purpose of the heavenly sanctuary was to reveal part of the essential nature of God’s character—“Immanuel”—God with us. That God condescends to live in

a heavenly sanctuary among the created heavenly beings reveals that He is not aloof, distant, cold, and forbidding. He longs to be close to His creatures, to dwell with us.

Thought Questions:

- 1 Is the heavenly sanctuary a real place in space and time, or is it only a metaphor? Support your answer from Scripture.
- 2 Much of the Christian world (following the thought of Platonic dualism) still believes that God is essentially “timeless”; that is, He does not come down to dwell in space and time. How does the historical reality of the heavenly sanctuary become a key to providing a correct view of the nature of God? Why is this important?

Application Question:

How does understanding the “Immanuel principle,” in regard to the heavenly sanctuary, affect your personal understanding of the sanctuary doctrine and sharpen your perspective on the character of God?

► STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Try to help your students visualize the warmth and intimacy of the heavenly sanctuary as being God’s own home. An interior decorator in Russia, who became a theology teacher after the fall of Communism, wrote a paper entitled “An Interior Decorator Looks at the Heavenly Sanctuary.” She pointed out that professional interior decorators can tell much about the character of the person who lives in a house by the way the home is decorated. She suggested that the furnishings of the heavenly sanctuary, God’s home, reveal much about God’s character, even before they came into play with regard to the sin problem.

Activity: Think about the various “furnishings” of the heavenly sanctuary (God’s home) as described in Revelation and as partially reflected in their earthly counterparts; visualize what these furnishings of God’s home tell us about God, even before they became symbols of salvation. (For example, how might the table of bread connote God’s “dining room,” where “table fellowship” takes place between God and His heavenly “house guests”—the heavenly intelligences who assemble to worship Him?) What about the lampstand, the incense, the ark? What insights might these furnishings reveal about God’s character?

“Heaven” *on* Earth



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Gen. 1:31–2:3; Exod. 39:32, 43; 25:9; Heb. 8:5; John 2:19–21; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Rev. 21:1–22.*

Memory Text: “Who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain’ ” (*Hebrews 8:5, NKJV*).

Though the sanctuary in heaven is the original, the one where God Himself is ministering “for us,” the Lord has revealed truths about this sanctuary in different ways to us here on earth.

God created the Garden of Eden as a symbol of the sanctuary. The heavenly sanctuary and its function in salvation were represented in the earthly tabernacle and the larger structure of the Israelite temples.

In Jesus, of course, the temple was made manifest in a human being. And, finally, the heavenly temple will come down to the new earth.

As we will see, God has used concepts relating to the heavenly sanctuary to reveal truth. This week we will study some of those concepts.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 12.*

The First “Sanctuary” on Earth

Bible students have noted that many features of the Garden of Eden correspond to the later sanctuaries in Israel, indicating that Eden was the first symbolic “temple” on earth. Some parallels between Eden and the sanctuary include:

1. At the end of the Creation account and the report describing the construction of the wilderness tabernacle, the same three elements—approval, completion, and blessing—are expressed with the same key words (*compare “all,” “finish,” and “bless” in Gen. 1:31–2:3 with Exod. 39:32, 43; 40:33*).
2. Just as God was “walking in the Garden” (*Gen. 3:8, NASB*), so He was in the midst of His people in the sanctuary (*2 Sam. 7:6, 7*).
3. Adam was to “tend” and “keep” the Garden (*Gen. 2:15, NKJV*). The same two verbs are used for the service of the Levites in the tabernacle (*Num. 3:7, 8*).
4. Gardenlike imagery appears all throughout the sanctuary (*Exod. 25:31–36, 1 Kings 6:18*).
5. Cherubim guarded the Garden (*Gen. 3:24*); two cherubim were stationed in the Most Holy Place (*Exod. 25:18–22*).
6. Just as Creation took six days, each day being introduced by “God said” and all of them together followed by the Sabbath, so there are six “the LORD spoke to Moses” sections concerning the tabernacle (*Exod. 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1*), followed by a seventh section about the Sabbath (*Exod. 31:12–17*).
7. The sanctuary was finished on the first day of the first month (*Exod. 40:17*), the Hebrew New Year’s Day, which recalls the completion of the world at Creation.

Genesis 2 did not need to be explicit about these parallels; the ancients understood them. For example, a Jewish writing of the second century B.C. claims that “the garden of Eden was the holy of holies and the dwelling of the Lord.”

The Garden of Eden is called the “garden of God” (*Isa. 51:3, Ezek. 28:13, 31:9*). It was God’s dwelling on earth, the place where our first parents were intended to worship and commune with Him. Therefore, the greatest loss of the Fall was not the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden but the loss of being in the immediate presence of God.

Dwell on the concept of the word *sanctuary* itself. What comes to your mind? What things form a “sanctuary” for you now? How does your understanding of these sanctuaries on earth help you to understand better what God’s sanctuary in heaven provides for us?

Copy of the Pattern

Read Exodus 25:9, 40; Hebrews 8:5; 9:23, 24. What is the relationship between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries?

The Scriptures clearly teach that Moses did not invent the tabernacle but built it according to the divine instruction that he received on the mountain (*Exod. 26:30, 27:8, Num. 8:4*). The earthly sanctuary was to be constructed after the “pattern” (*Exod. 25:9, 40*). The Hebrew word for “pattern” (*tabnit*) expresses the idea of a model or copy; thus, we can conclude that Moses saw some kind of miniature model that represented the heavenly sanctuary and that this model served as the pattern for the earthly one.

Therefore, the heavenly temple is the original, the model for the Israelite sanctuaries. What is also obvious is that we cannot equate the sanctuary in heaven with heaven itself. The heavenly temple is “in heaven” (*Rev. 11:19, 14:17, 15:5*); thus, heaven contains it. The two are not synonymous.

The book of Hebrews explains in unmistakable terms that the heavenly sanctuary is real. The sanctuary in heaven is called the “true tabernacle” (*Heb. 8:2, NKJV*), as well as the “greater and more perfect tabernacle” (*Heb. 9:11, NKJV*), while the earthly is a “copy and shadow” of the heavenly one (*Heb. 8:5, NKJV*). As a shadow is always a mere representation of something real, and an imperfect and faint representation at that, the earthly sanctuary is a mere representation of the heavenly. Whatever its limitations, however, the earthly sanctuary does reflect the reality of the heavenly one in important ways.

The relationship between the two is called typology. Typology is a divinely designed, prophetic prefiguration that involves two corresponding historical realities, called type (original) and antitype (copy). Because the correspondence runs from the type (original) to the antitype (copy), we can see in Hebrews that the heavenly model that Moses had seen is referred to as “type” or “pattern” (*Heb. 8:5*) and the earthly sanctuary as “antitype” or “copy” (*Heb. 9:24*). This truth presents more evidence that the heavenly one existed prior to the earthly one. As Seventh-day Adventists, we are on solid biblical ground when we emphasize the physical reality of the heavenly sanctuary.

Jesus as the Sanctuary

Read John 2:19–21. Why is Jesus’ body compared to the temple? See also John 1:14.

One of the themes in the Gospel of John is that, with Jesus, the better “temple” has come. Tabernacle imagery is used as early as in John 1:14. Jesus is the Word who “dwelt” among men, and they saw His “glory.” The Greek word used for “to dwell” (*skenoō*) is the verbal form of the Greek noun for “tabernacle” (*skene*); so, one could translate verse 14 as the Word “tabernacled among us.” In this context, the word *glory* recalls the glory of God that filled both the wilderness tabernacle (*Exod. 40:34, 35*) and Solomon’s temple at its inauguration (*2 Chron. 7:1–3*). So, when Christ came to earth as a human, He fulfilled God’s temple promise to dwell among His people.

As the texts above show, Jesus declared Himself to be the temple, signifying already the end of the earthly temple’s significance after His death (*John 2:19–21, Matt. 27:51*). Also, when Jesus said that He is the Bread of Life (*John 6:35*) and the Light of the world (*John 8:12*), He might have been pointing beyond the manna on the table to the bread of the presence and the lampstand, objects in the earthly sanctuary. A definite reference to the sanctuary is the designation of Jesus as the sacrificial “Lamb of God” who will bear the sin of the world (*John 1:29*).

“All who did service in connection with the sanctuary were being educated constantly in regard to the intervention of Christ in behalf of the human race. This service was designed to create in every heart a love for the law of God, which is the law of His kingdom. The sacrificial offering was to be an object lesson of the love of God revealed in Christ—in the suffering, dying victim, who took upon Himself the sin of which man was guilty, the innocent being made sin for us.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 233.

Because of our sinful natures, it’s so easy to think that God is angry with us. How does the revelation of God’s love, as seen in the life and death of Jesus, help each of us to realize on a personal level that God loves us despite our faults? In what ways should this realization encourage us to gain victories over self?

The Church as the Sanctuary

After Christ's ascension to heaven and His inauguration as High Priest in the sanctuary there, the temple on earth no longer had any real purpose in the plan of salvation (*see Matt. 27:50, 51*). However, God still seeks to dwell among His people on earth, which was now possible through the Holy Spirit. The apostles use temple imagery to convey this truth.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 6:16; and Ephesians 2:19–22. Notice the sanctuary imagery in these texts. What truth does the Bible teach us here?

Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 to the church as a corporate unity, and he presents to them the temple themes of ownership (*1 Cor. 3:16*) and of holiness (*1 Cor. 3:17*). He applies the same principles in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 to the individual believer. As a temple, the believer is holy terrain and, as such, is under divine obligation to live in holiness. Paul uses the temple imagery to emphasize his call for pure and holy living, which in this context he identifies as sexual purity over immorality (*1 Cor. 6:15–18*). Paul's last reference to the church as a divine sanctuary fits into this pattern. There is no common ground between believers and unbelievers (*2 Cor. 6:14–7:1*), for the church is in a covenant relationship with God and, thus, is exclusively His (*2 Cor. 6:18*).

At the same time, the church is not only God's temple but also a holy priesthood (*1 Pet. 2:5, 9*). No doubt, with such a privilege as this, important responsibilities follow. How crucial that we surrender our lives in faith and obedience to the Lord who has given us so much and who, therefore, asks much of us in return.

Of course, we are saved by Christ's righteousness, which covers us completely. However, because of what we have been given in Christ by grace, what does God ask of us in return? And even more important, how can we best do that which He asks of us?

New Creation

Read Revelation 7:15–17. Where are the redeemed, and how does this passage portray them?

These verses describe the redeemed as kings and priests who serve in God’s palace and temple (*Rev. 1:6, 5:10, 20:6*). The promise that “He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them” (*Rev. 7:15, NASB*) alludes to God’s presence in the wilderness sanctuary, where He dwelt among ancient Israel as its Leader. On the new earth, the sanctuary once more becomes the perfect place of relationship where God and the redeemed meet. It guarantees shelter, protection, and the ultimate fulfillment of life in the presence of God and His Christ. The One who once tabernacled among men (*John 1:14*) now spreads the tabernacle over His saints so that they may “tabernacle” in His place.

Read Revelation 21:1–22. How is the New Jerusalem described? What parallels do you find between the Holy City and the sanctuary in these texts?

John does not see a temple in the New Jerusalem (*Rev. 21:22*), but this does not mean that there is no temple. Rather, the New Jerusalem itself is the temple and the “tabernacle of God” (*Rev. 21:3, NKJV*). Several sanctuary elements are assigned to the New Jerusalem: it is “holy” and of heavenly origin (*Rev. 21:2, 10*); it has the same cubical form as did the Most Holy Place (*Rev. 21:16, 1 Kings 6:20*); similar to the temple precincts, “nothing unclean” is allowed into the city (*Rev. 21:27*); and, most important of all, God is present. In the sanctuary of God, we can live with Him in the closest relationship possible (*Rev. 21:3, 7*). This is the goal of salvation.

An eternity in a close relationship with God? Why is it, then, so crucial for us to walk, as Ellen G. White says over and over, “in close communion with God” now?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “The School of the Hereafter,” pp. 301–309, in *Education*; “The Controversy Ended,” pp. 673–678, in *The Great Controversy*.

“A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured His disciples that He went to prepare mansions for them in the Father’s house. Those who accept the teachings of God’s word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. And yet, ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.’ 1 Corinthians 2:9. Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 674, 675.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Why do you think it is important for us to understand that God’s heavenly sanctuary is a real place? At the same time, why must we be careful not to make too detailed a comparison between the earthly temple and the heavenly temple?
- ❷ In class, dwell more on the idea of the church as a “sanctuary.” How do you understand this truth? Also, how can we as a church better fulfill this crucial teaching?
- ❸ “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:16, 17). What do these texts teach us, and how can we apply their teachings to the way that we live?
- ❹ Dwell more on this idea that we are “priests” now and that we will function as priests after the Second Coming. What are those functions for us now, and what will they be after Jesus returns? Why does even the use of the word *priests* show us just how central the concept of the sanctuary is to the plan of salvation?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Hebrews 8:5*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Comprehend the foundations of sanctuary typology.

Feel: Appreciate the beauty of Christ's life and the power of His promises as revealed in sanctuary typology.

Do: Decide to contemplate Christ's life and claim His promises that were foreshadowed in sanctuary typology.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The Foundations and Fulfillment of Sanctuary Typology

A The Garden of Eden was earth's first sanctuary. Why was a sanctuary on earth needed even before humans sinned?

B The earthly sanctuary was a copy of the heavenly original. How can sanctuary typology help us to understand Christ's ongoing ministry in the heavenly sanctuary?

C The main contours of the earthly sanctuary and its services find fulfillment in the earthly life of Christ, in the church, and at the end of earth's history. How does this fulfillment of sanctuary typology expand your understanding of the gospel?

II. Feel: The Sanctuary, Jesus, and the Church

A What sanctuary types pointing to Christ are most meaningful to you personally?

B How can claiming the Bible promises implied in sanctuary typology help us to live more Christlike lives?

III. Do: Contemplate Christ and Claim His Sanctuary Promises

A Determine this next week to make Christ's character more vivid in your mind through sanctuary typology.

B Which of the precious promises that are implied in sanctuary typology will you choose to claim?

► **Summary:** Sanctuary typology is a powerful aid in assisting us to understand the major facets of the gospel.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Hebrews 8:5*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The earthly sanctuary—a copy of the original heavenly sanctuary—pointed forward to a three-phase fulfillment of the work done in its heavenly counterpart, as seen in (1) Christ’s first advent; (2) His body, the church; and (3) the final events of earth’s history.

Just for Teachers: The Greek word *typos* (from which we get our English word *type*) has the basic meaning of a “hollow form or mold” (think of a jelly/gelatin mold, an ice sculpture mold, or a bread/scone pan). When we grasp the basic functions of the hollow mold, then we can understand the basics of sanctuary typology: (1) the hollow mold and the end product shaped by the mold are both spatial-temporal realities; so, the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries are historical realities; (2) the hollow mold is not the original but is shaped from a previously existing prototype; so, the earthly sanctuary is a copy of the original heavenly sanctuary; (3) the hollow mold shows in advance the basic contours of the end product that will be shaped by it; likewise, the Old Testament sanctuaries reveal the basic contours of the New Testament fulfillments of the sanctuary types; and (4) the end product is greater than the hollow mold and fulfills the function for which the mold was designed; likewise, the New Testament fulfillments are greater than the Old Testament sanctuary types, and they fulfill the function for which they were designed.

Opening Activity: Bring a hollow mold (bread/scone pan, gelatin/jelly mold, or even an empty milk carton that could be used to shape a liquid frozen in it) and explain the meaning of sanctuary typology using the illustration described above.

Consider This: The Old Testament sanctuary types not only point *forward* (horizontally) to their New Testament fulfillment, but they also point *upward* (vertically), showing that the heavenly sanctuary was in existence (as the prototype) even before the earthly sanctuary was. Why do you think God gave to human beings the earthly sanctuary types to point forward and upward to the sanctuary antitypes?

► STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: In this section we will explore the following main ideas: (1) the biblical foundation for identifying sanctuary typology and (2) how the sanctuary types have one New Testament fulfillment in three phases.

Bible Commentary

I. The Earthly Sanctuary: A Copy of the Heavenly Sanctuary (*Review Exodus 25:9, 40 with your class.*)

God told Moses to make the tabernacle according to the “pattern” (Hebrew *tabnit*), that he would be shown in the mountain. *Tabnit* means “a copy of an original that serves as a [miniature] model for another copy.” Moses was first given a glimpse of the original heavenly sanctuary in all its vastness and glory (*Exod. 24:10*; see Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 343) and then shown “a miniature model of the heavenly sanctuary” (Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 269) to serve as a pattern for constructing the earthly sanctuary. Thus, the earthly sanctuary was ultimately a copy of the original heavenly sanctuary/temple.

Solomon’s temple was also made according to the divine “pattern” (*tabnit*) of the original heavenly temple (*1 Chron. 28:11, 12, 18, 19*). Even though the tent tabernacle of Moses and the solid-structure temple of Solomon were architecturally very different, the basic contours were the same: the same tripartite division of space, the same spatial proportions, the same kinds of furniture, a veil or curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, and the same system of sacrifices and priesthood and daily/yearly services. These are the very contours that the author of Hebrews summarizes in Hebrews 9:1–7. We should focus our attention on the essential contours of typology that remain constant in the various Old Testament sanctuaries.

Consider This: How does recognizing the basic contours of sanctuary typology help us to avoid going to extremes and fixating upon minute sanctuary details (pins, pegs, pillars, et cetera) that differ between various earthly sanctuaries?

II. The Three Phases of New Testament Sanctuary Typology

A. Inaugurated: Christ’s Earthly Life and Death (*Review John 2:19–21 with your class.*)

All the basic contours of sanctuary typology find their basic fulfillment in Christ as He inaugurates the “last days” (*Heb. 1:1, 2, NKJV*) at His first advent. In addition to what was mentioned in the standard edition of the study guide, note, for example, that Christ is the High Priest (*Hebrews 7–10*), the Laver (Greek *lutron*, *Titus 3:5*), the Mercy Seat (Greek *hilasterion*, *Rom. 3:25*), His merits, the incense (*Rev. 8:3*), and His righteousness, the linen (*Isa. 61:10*). He is everything toward which the sanctuary points. We need to keep this Christ-centered focus foundational in our sanctuary study.

B. Appropriated: The Church (Corporate and Individual) (*Review 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 6:19 with your class.*)

When the church, as a whole, is incorporated into Christ’s body, it also becomes a temple or sanctuary. Thus, the sanctuary typology that pointed to Jesus can be appropriated by the church corporately and individually. Beyond the examples given in the standard lesson, Scripture assures us that we may become, through Christ’s promised power, a “living sacrifice” (*Rom. 12:1, NKJV*), the light of the lampstand (*Rev. 1:20; see also Matt. 5:14*), and that our prayers may become like incense (*Rev. 5:8, 8:3*) and our righteous works like fine linen (*Rev. 19:8*).

C. Consummated: The New Jerusalem as the Eternal Tabernacle (*Review Revelation 21:2, 3; 15, 16, 21, 22 with your class.*)

The sanctuary also finds fulfillment in the finale of the great controversy. Revelation 21 makes clear that the New Jerusalem is the “tabernacle [*skene*] of God,” employing the same term as used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) for the sanctuary. So, John did not see a temple *in the city*, because the *whole city* was now God’s sanctuary (in fact, the equivalent of the Most Holy Place—cubical in shape).

Consider This: What other aspects of the sanctuary are fulfilled in Christ, the church, and in the final climax of salvation history? What is the significance of the New Jerusalem’s “tabernacle” being in the shape of a cube?

► **STEP 3—Apply**

Just for Teachers: Christian writers usually apply sanctuary typology only to Christ. A few see its implications for the church, but the unique Seventh-day Adventist contribution is also to point out the final fulfillment phase of sanctuary typology in the heavenly sanctuary during the windup of the great controversy.

Thought Questions:

- 1 How does understanding sanctuary typology reaffirm that the heavenly sanctuary is a real physical place in heaven and not merely a metaphor for salvation?
- 2 In what ways has your confidence been strengthened in the biblical soundness of the beliefs that the Old Testament sanctuary types reveal the basic features of Christ's ongoing ministry in the heavenly sanctuary?
- 3 How is our understanding of sanctuary typology impoverished if we concentrate only on its fulfillment phase in heaven since 1844 and fail to recognize its historical fulfillment phase in Christ and in the church?

Application Questions:

- 1 What is your response to the realization that every aspect of the sanctuary fulfillment in Jesus is also available for the church, His body, and you individually?
- 2 How does it rejoice your heart to think of actually living with God in His "tabernacle" (the New Jerusalem) for eternity?

► STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Seek to impress upon the class the richness of seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament sanctuary typology and the power of appropriating the promises of sanctuary types for ourselves.

Activities:

- 1 Ellen G. White suggests that "it would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83. Determine to spend some hours this week contemplating Christ's life and ministry and death as the beautiful fulfillment of sanctuary typology.
- 2 Peter writes about the "exceeding great and precious promises" of God's Word through which we may be "partakers of the divine nature" (*2 Pet. 1:4*). This week, consider a whole new set of Bible promises to claim—the ones implied in the rich typology of the sanctuary.

Sacrifices



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Gen. 3:9–21; Exod. 12:21–27; Lev. 2:1–3; Gen. 22:1–19; Lev. 17:10, 11; Phil. 4:18.*

Memory Text: “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship” (*Romans 12:1, NASB*).

Central to the entire gospel is the concept of sacrifice. In the biblical languages, the words for “sacrifice” often depict the idea of drawing near and of bringing something to God. The basic meaning of the Hebrew for *offering* or *sacrifice* describes the act of approaching, the act of bringing something into the presence of God. The Greek equivalent means “gift” and describes the presentation of a sacrifice.

Similarly, the English word *offering* comes from the Latin *offerre*, the presentation of a gift. The word *sacrifice* is a combination of the Latin *sacer* (holy) and *facere* (make) and refers to the act of making something sacred.

This week we will look at some of the sacrifices that believers have offered to God. We will discover that God has always been calling for sacrifices, and He is still doing so today.

Of course, and most important, God provided the ultimate sacrifice, that of Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 19.*

The First Sacrifice

Read Genesis 3:9–21. What was God’s response to Adam and Eve after they sinned?

Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world, in a sanctuary-like garden, and God granted them face-to-face communion with their Creator. Their first sin opened a nearly insurmountable breach in their relationship to God. However, God had already planned how to counter such a breach of trust, and even before there came any judgment against them, He gave them the hope of a Savior (*Gen. 3:15*).

“Adam and Eve stood as criminals before their God, awaiting the sentence which transgression had incurred. But before they hear of the thorn and the thistle, the sorrow and anguish which should be their portion, and the dust to which they should return, they listen to words which must have inspired them with hope. Though they must suffer . . . , they might look forward to ultimate victory.”—Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 16.

The Lord showed them the ultimate foundation of that victory when, immediately after His judgment speech, He made for them garments of skin to cover their nakedness and shame. Although unstated, it may be reasonable to assume that an innocent animal had to die for this, and perhaps even that it was understood as a kind of sacrifice (*Gen. 3:21*).

God’s provision of clothes for the culprits became a symbolic act. Just as the sacrifices in the desert sanctuary guaranteed the special relationship between God and His people, so the clothing in the Garden assured the guilty of God’s unchanging goodwill toward them.

So, from the earliest days of human history, sacrifices taught that sinful humans could find union with God, but only through the death of Jesus, who was prefigured in those sacrifices.

Reread Genesis 3:9–21. What does it say to you that even before God spoke any words of judgment to the guilty pair He gave them the promise of “ultimate victory”? What does this say about God’s attitude toward us, even in our fallen state?

Types of Offerings

In Old Testament times, believers could bring offerings on different occasions and in different personal circumstances. Different objects they were allowed to “offer” included clean animals, grain, or drink, as well as other things. The animal sacrifice is the oldest element in the sanctuary service and, together with the priestly service, belongs at the center of the Israelite service. Religious life without sacrifice was inconceivable.

Which kinds of offerings are described in the following texts? *Exod. 12:21–27, Lev. 2:1–3, Exod. 25:2–7, Lev. 4:27–31.*

God established the sacrificial system so that believers could enter into a close relationship with Him. This is why offerings could be brought in all different kinds of situations: for thanksgiving, for an expression of joy and celebration, for a gift, for a petition for forgiveness, for a penitential plea, for a symbol of dedication, or for restitution.

Among the most important types of offerings were the burnt offering (*Leviticus 1*) and the grain offering (*Leviticus 2*), as well as the peace, or well-being, offering (*Leviticus 3*), the purification offering (*Leviticus 4*), and the reparation (trespass) offering (*Lev. 5:14–6:7*). The first three were voluntary offerings, which were to remind the giver (and us) that, in the end, everything that we are and all that we have belong to God. The burnt offering symbolizes the total dedication of the one making the offering. The grain offering symbolizes the dedication of our material possessions to God, whether they be food, animals, or something else. The well-being offering is the only sacrifice in which the participant receives a part of the offering for personal consumption.

The other two sacrifices were obligatory. They reminded the people that, though wrongs have consequences, those wrongs can be “healed.” The purification offering, often called “sin offering,” was offered after ritual defilement or after the person became aware of a moral defilement through sin.

The widespread function of the offerings shows that every aspect of our lives must come under God’s control. How can you learn to surrender completely everything you have, or are, to Him? What happens when you don’t do this?

Sacrifice at Moriah

Read Genesis 22:1–19. What did Abraham learn about sacrifice?

What was God’s purpose in this incredible challenge to Abraham’s faith? The patriarch’s life with God had always been accompanied by divine promises: the promise of land, of descendants, and of blessings; the promise of a son; and the promise that God would take care of Ishmael. Abraham sacrificed, but it was always in the light of some promise. However, in the situation described in Genesis 22, Abraham did not get any divine promise; instead, he was told to sacrifice the living promise, his son. Following through on God’s command, Abraham showed that God was more important to him than anything else.

“It was to impress Abraham’s mind with the reality of the gospel, as well as to test his faith, that God commanded him to slay his son. The agony which he endured during the dark days of that fearful trial was permitted that he might understand from his own experience something of the greatness of the sacrifice made by the infinite God for man’s redemption. No other test could have caused Abraham such torture of soul as did the offering of his son. God gave His Son to a death of agony and shame.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 154.

Concerning the sacrifice, Abraham understood two essential principles. First, no one but God Himself can bring the true sacrifice and the means of salvation. It is the Lord who will, who must, provide. Abraham eternalizes this principle by naming the place “YHWH Jireh,” which means “The-LORD-Will-Provide.” Second, the actual sacrifice is substitutional, one that saves Isaac’s life. The ram is offered “in the place of” Isaac (*Gen. 22:13, NASB*). That animal, which God provided, prefigures the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, on whom “the LORD has laid . . . the iniquity of us all” (*Isa. 53:6, 7; Acts 8:32, NKJV*).

What an astonishing surrender to God! Who can imagine what that experience must have been like for Abraham? Think about the last time that you had to reach out in sheer faith and do something that caused you a lot of anguish. What did you learn from your actions, and how well has the lesson stuck?

Life for a Life

Read Leviticus 17:10, 11. What function does God give to the blood?

In a passage where God instructs the Israelites not to eat any blood, He provides an interesting reason for this prohibition: blood stands for life, and God has made sacrificial blood a ransom for human life. One life, represented by the blood, ransoms another life. The principle of substitution, which became explicit on Mount Moriah when Abraham offered the blood of the ram in the place of the blood of his son, is firmly anchored in God's legal requirements for ancient Israel.

As in Genesis 22, God shows that it is He Himself who provides the means for atonement; in the Hebrew, the *I* in “ ‘ ‘I have given it to you” ’ ” (*Lev. 17:11, NKJV*) is emphasized. We cannot provide our own ransom. God must give it.

The concept is different from that of other religions that use sacrifices. In the Bible, it is not a human who approaches God and knows how to appease Him; it is God, rather, who provides the means for a person to come into His holy presence. And in Christ, He Himself provides the blood for ransom.

Read 1 Samuel 15:22 and Micah 6:6–8. What are some of the dangers of the ritual system?

God never intended the sacrificial service to be a substitute for the attitude of the heart; on the contrary, the sacrifices were to open the heart of the believer to the Lord. If we lose sight of the fact that sacrifices express a spiritual relationship between God and us and that they all point to a much greater sacrifice, Jesus Christ, we could easily mistake the sacrificial ritual for an automatic apparatus for making atonement. Besides sacrifice, God really wants our hearts to be right with Him (*Ps. 51:16, 17*). Consistently the Israelite prophets accused the people of false piety and called for them “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (*Mic. 6:6–8, NRSV; compare Isa. 1:10–17*).

In what ways do we face the same danger as expressed above? Why is it often so hard to realize that we could be doing exactly what the ancient Israelites did in this area? How can we avoid this mistake?

Sacrifices Today/Living Sacrifice

Though after Christ’s sacrificial death there was no more need for animal sacrifices, the New Testament does talk about the need for another kind of sacrifice instead.

According to these texts, what kind of offerings are we to bring to God today? *Rom. 12:1, 2; Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:15, 16; 1 Pet. 2:5.*

Terminology from the sacrificial system worked very well in describing the early Christian concept of what it meant to live a life totally consecrated to God. In fact, even when Paul was thinking about his martyrdom, he described himself as a drink offering (*Phil. 2:17, 2 Tim. 4:6*).

What specific message is given to us in Romans 12:1? In what ways are we to manifest this truth in our own lives?

A “living sacrifice” means that the entire person is given to God. It includes the dedication of the body (*Rom. 12:1*) as well as the transformation of the inner being (*vs. 2*). We are to be set apart (“holy”) for the sole purpose of serving the Lord. Christians will present themselves wholly to the Lord because of the “mercies of God,” as described in Romans 12:1–11, which presents Christ as our Sacrifice, the means of our salvation.

In this context, Paul’s appeal is for Christians to imitate Christ. A true understanding of God’s grace leads to a life consecrated to God and to a loving service for others. Surrender of self and the desires of self to the will of God is the only reasonable response to Christ’s ultimate sacrifice for us.

In the end, there has to be a harmony between our understanding of spiritual and doctrinal truth and our service to others. Every aspect of life should express the believer’s genuine commitment to God. True worship is never only inward and spiritual; it must encompass outward acts of selfless service. After all, think about what our Lord has done for us.

Further Study: “It had been difficult even for the angels to grasp the mystery of redemption—to comprehend that the Commander of heaven, the Son of God, must die for guilty man. When the command was given to Abraham to offer up his son, the interest of all heavenly beings was enlisted. With intense earnestness they watched each step in the fulfillment of this command. When to Isaac’s question, ‘Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ Abraham made answer, ‘God will provide Himself a lamb;’ and when the father’s hand was stayed as he was about to slay his son, and the ram which God had provided was offered in the place of Isaac—then light was shed upon the mystery of redemption, and even the angels understood more clearly the wonderful provision that God had made for man’s salvation.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 155.

Discussion Questions:

- ① “Our feet will walk in his paths, our lips will speak the truth and spread the gospel, our tongues will bring healing, our hands will lift up those who have fallen, and perform many mundane tasks as well like cooking and cleaning, typing and mending; our arms will embrace the lonely and the unloved, our ears will listen to the cries of the distressed, and our eyes will look humbly and patiently towards God.”—John Stott, *Romans* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994), p. 322. In what ways does this quote show what it means to be a “living sacrifice”? Why is it that only through death to self could we ever be able to live like this?
- ② As we saw during the week’s lesson, one of the great problems that the people faced was seeing the sacrificial system as an end in itself instead of a means to an end—that end being a life wholly consecrated to God, a consecration that reveals itself in loving service to others. In what ways are Seventh-day Adventists (who have been given so much light) especially in danger of going down the same path, because perhaps we now think that the great truths we possess are an end in and of themselves, instead of a means to the end?
- ③ Dwell more on the story of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. However troubling this story is, one could argue that it was meant to be troubling, to cause consternation and distress. Why do you think anyone would argue that it was meant, among other things, to evoke those emotions in the reader?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Genesis 22:1–19*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Understand the significance of the Old Testament sacrificial system.

Feel: Sense from the Old Testament sacrifices the awful nature of sin and the terrible cost of our salvation.

Do: Determine to contemplate regularly the fulfillment of the sacrificial system in Christ the “Lamb of God.”

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The Old Testament Sacrificial System

A The sacrificial system was introduced by God after the Fall (*Gen. 3:15, 21*). How does the first gospel promise (*Gen. 3:15*) imply the substitutionary atonement of the Messiah?

B The meaning of the sacrificial system was grasped by Abraham, especially through his experience on Mount Moriah. What features of Genesis 22 reveal the love of the Father in not withholding His only Son from dying for us?

C The Passover service (*Exodus 12*) provides one of the most comprehensive prefigurations of the sacrifice of Christ. What basic elements of His sacrifice are foreshadowed in this service?

II. Feel: The Awfulness of Sin and the High Cost of Atonement Portrayed in the Animal Sacrifices

A How can visualizing the Old Testament sacrifices help us to better appreciate the heinousness of sin and the infinite cost of Christ’s atoning death?

III. Do: Contemplating Christ in the Shadows

A Resolve to spend quality time this next week contemplating the atoning work of Christ as prefigured in the Old Testament sacrificial system.

► **Summary:** The Old Testament sacrificial system provides a powerful portrait of the many-faceted meaning of Christ’s sacrificial death on Calvary.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *John 1:29*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The Old Testament sacrificial system provided a portrait in advance of the profound meaning of the sacrifice of Christ. It also typified the experience of Christians in offering themselves as a “living sacrifice” (*Rom. 12:1, NKJV*).

Just for Teachers: A seminary professor tells the experience of when she reluctantly accompanied her husband through the conflict-torn region of the Holy Land to the top of Mount Gerazim at Passover time. Here, the few surviving Samaritans on earth still sacrifice Passover lambs. As the lambs were led to the slaughter, she averted her eyes. But at the last minute, she looked. How utterly awful their deaths were. As she beheld the innocent creatures struggling against the knife, her soul revolted against the callousness of the priest, who was offering the sacrifice. But even more, she found revolting the whole idea of the sacrificial system. Why did innocent animals have to die to point forward to the death of Jesus? On the way back that night, in the light of the full Passover moon, she poured out her bitterness against God for the awfulness of the animal sacrifices until suddenly light from heaven penetrated her darkened mind. She finally began to understand the point: sin is so awful that it cost the life of the innocent Lamb of God. This Sacrifice was the only way that God could get people with their hardened human hearts to see how terrible sin was, how costly our salvation is.

Opening Activity: Share the seminary professor’s story, asking for class responses to the sacrificial system.

Consider This: Some Christians teach that God did not actually create the sacrificial system but simply condescended to use a pagan concept to reach His people where they were. Why does the Bible not support this view?

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Just for Teachers: This week we will examine the sacrificial system as introduced to Adam and Eve, as practiced in the patriarchal period, and as amplified in the laws of Moses. We will explore this system’s typological significance for understanding the heart of the gospel.

Bible Commentary

I. The Sacrificial System Introduced in Eden *(Review Genesis 3:9–21 with your class.)*

In the first gospel promise, found in Genesis 3:15, the substitutionary sacrifice of the Messianic Seed is already powerfully portrayed. Visualize it: the Seed, Christ, takes off His sandal, as it were, bares His heel, and steps voluntarily on a venomous viper. It is a picture of the Seed voluntarily giving up His life to slay the serpent. Christ volunteered to consciously step on the head of the most deadly viper in the universe, the serpent Satan himself, knowing full well that it would cost Him His life.

Genesis 3:21 indicates that God clothed Adam and Eve with skins—implying the sacrifice of animals. How do we know that this clothing refers to more than just covering their physical nakedness in order to keep them warm from the chilled, post-Fall atmosphere? We know because the text makes it clear that their nakedness after the Fall was more than physical nudity. After they had covered themselves with fig leaves, Adam confessed to God that he was still naked (*vs. 10*). Thus, the nakedness included a nakedness of soul—i.e., guilt, which needed to be covered by more than physical garments. Instead of the fig leaves of their own works with which they unsuccessfully tried to cover their nakedness, God covered them with the robes of a Substitute. Instead of their blood, the blood of an innocent victim was shed (in parallel with the sin offering of Leviticus 4:29, the human sinners probably slaughtered the sacrificial animal themselves). Here is intimated the Messiah’s substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of humanity. God Himself instituted and instructed Adam and Eve concerning the sacrificial system.

Consider This: Ellen G. White writes: “The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, ‘Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man’s place. He shall have another chance.’ ”—Ellen White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1085. Why is the substitutionary aspect of Christ’s sacrifice so important in our salvation?

II. Abraham and the Sacrificial System *(Review Genesis 22:1–19 with your class.)*

The narrative of Genesis 22 describes the divine test of Abraham in which God asks him to offer up his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. This test may be the very apex of Old Testament gospel prefigurations, revealing in advance how both the Father and Son were to be involved in the anguish of the atoning sacrifice. Jesus remarked that “ ‘Abraham rejoiced to see

My day, and he saw it and was glad' ” (*John 8:56, NKJV*).

When did Abraham see Jesus' day? The apostle Paul quotes from Genesis 22 (*vs. 18*) and specifically points out that Scripture “announced the gospel in advance to Abraham” (*Gal. 3:8, NIV*). In the Hebrew of Genesis 22:17, 18, as in Genesis 3:15, the word for “seed” (*zera* ‘) first is used in a collective sense to refer to numerous descendants and then narrows to a singular meaning (marked by singular pronouns, although some modern translations do not show this) to focus on the one Messianic Seed in whom “ ‘all the nations of the earth shall be blessed’ ” (*Gen. 22:18, NKJV*). The experience of Isaac on Mount Moriah is thus explicitly linked to the sacrifice of the coming Messiah. Paul also points to the sacrificial spirit of the Father, who “did not spare [withhold] His own Son” (*Rom. 8:32, NKJV*), using the same language as God had twice used of Abraham on Mount Moriah (*Gen. 22:12, 16*).

Consider This: How does Genesis 22 and the related narrative of Abraham’s sacrifice in Genesis 15 (*see especially verses 6–18*) help us to better understand the gospel of justification by faith?

III. The Levitical Sacrificial System: The Passover (*Review Exodus 12:21–27 with your class.*)

Among the many sacrifices in the Levitical system, perhaps none provides such a comprehensive, advance presentation of the sacrifice of Christ as the multifaceted Passover service. Ponder the following points:

1. Foundational significance: Passover marks the “beginning of months” (*Exod. 12:2*).
2. Focus on the lamb (a symbol of Jesus) (*Exod. 12:3, John 1:29*).
3. Perfect timing (*Exod. 12:5, John 13:1, 18:28, 19:14*): Jesus died at 3:00 P.M. on the fourteenth day of Nisan, just as the first Passover lambs were to be slain.
4. A perfect, complete sacrifice (*Exod. 12:5, 46; 1 Pet. 1:19; John 19:33, 36*).
5. An ample, all-inclusive sacrifice (*Exod. 12:4; John 3:16; Romans 3:23, 24; 5:6, 8, 18; 1 Tim. 4:10*).
6. Personal appropriation of the sacrifice (*Exod. 12:7, 8; John 6:53; 1 John 1:7, 9*).
7. Propitiatory, substitutionary sacrifice. The lamb was to be “roasted in fire” (*Exod. 12:8, NKJV*). The fires of divine wrath were poured out upon Jesus, as He took upon Himself the sins of the world and received the punishment we deserved.

The word *Passover* in Hebrew encapsulates the term by which the feast is named. “Passover” in Hebrew is *pesach*, which means “to pass or spring over.” God announced to Moses, “And when I see the blood, I will pass over [*pasach*] you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (*Exod. 12:13, NKJV; compare vs. 23*). Here is a

prefiguration of the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus.

Consider This: The sacrifice of the coming Messiah runs like a “red thread” throughout the Old Testament. Cite other passages setting forth this foundational theme of the gospel.

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Seek to assist the class to see the awfulness of taking an innocent animal’s life—the gruesome sight of animal slaughter, the stench of blood and burning carcasses—in order to better appreciate the cost of Christ’s death for our sin.

Thought Question:

Will sacrifices still be offered even after sin and sinners are no more? Discuss. (See *Heb. 13:15* for a hint.)

Application Questions:

- 1 How may we personally “apply the merits of Christ’s blood . . . to the soul”?—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 277.
- 2 What does Paul mean by urging us to “present your bodies as a living sacrifice” (*Rom. 12:1, ESV*)?

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: In the familiar passage of Ellen G. White, which we quoted last week—“it would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83)—she concludes the paragraph: “As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit.”

Activity: Decide to spend thoughtful hours this next week focusing on the sacrifice of Christ, especially as prefigured in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. Report the following week on the effect that this contemplation has had on your level of confidence in, and love for, Him and reception of His Spirit.

Lessons From *the* Sanctuary

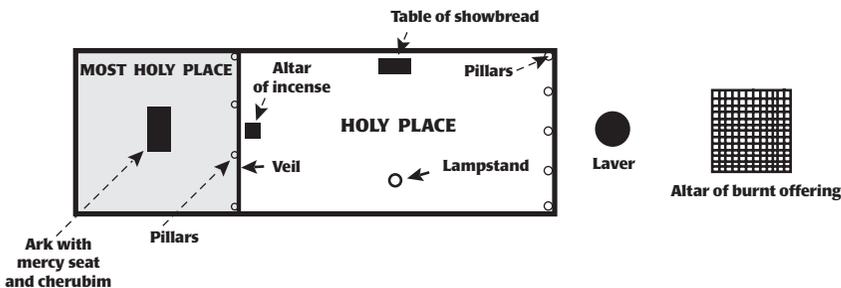


SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Exod. 40:9, 10; Lev. 19:2; 1 Pet. 1:14–16; Exod. 31:2–11; Rom. 3:25–28; 1 Kings 8:31–53; Ps. 73:1–17.*

Memory Text: “ ‘Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them’ ” (*Exodus 25:8, NASB*).

The sanctuary is one of God’s major devices to teach us the meaning of the gospel. As we study the sanctuary this week, the drawing below will be helpful:



This week’s lesson focuses on some of the major insights provided by the earthly sanctuary. We will study the sacrificial system later.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 26.

Place of the Presence

According to Exodus 25:8, what was the purpose of the earthly sanctuary in the wilderness? What amazing truth does this teach us about God's love for us?

In the Garden of Eden, sin had broken the face-to-face relationship between God and humanity. Sin forfeited our first parents' unhindered communion with God. However, the Creator still desired to draw us to Himself and to enjoy a deep covenant relationship with fallen humanity, and He began this process right there in Eden. Centuries later, in saving Israel out of Egypt and establishing the sanctuary and the sacrificial system, God again took the initiative in bringing humanity back into His presence.

The sanctuary thus testifies of God's unceasing desire to dwell among His people. This is God's idea (*Ps. 132:13, 14*). His ultimate goal is relationship, and the sanctuary services were His chosen means to illustrate that relationship. The sanctuary is the tangible evidence of God's presence with His people on earth.

From the description in Numbers 2, it is evident that the tabernacle was located in the center of the square encampment, where, as was customary in the ancient Near East, the king would place his tent. So, the tabernacle symbolizes that God is the King over Israel.

The Levites, meanwhile, placed their tents around the tabernacle (*Num. 1:53*), and the other tribes put theirs farther around at a "distance" in groups of three (*Num. 2:2*). This illustrates in a tangible way both the nearness and the distance of God.

Another purpose of the sanctuary was to provide a location for a centralized, divinely ordained system of worship. Because God's presence in the midst of the people was jeopardized by their impurities and moral failings, He provided a system of sacrifices and offerings through which unholy people could live and remain in the presence of a Holy God.

So, in this context, the sanctuary revealed details regarding the plan of redemption, which included not only the sacrifices but the ministry of the priesthood, which was an integral part of the plan of redemption, as well.

With the sanctuary, the Creator of the universe, the One who made all that was made (see John 1:1–3), lowered Himself to dwell among homeless wanderers in the desert. How should this fact alone help us avoid harboring ethnic, class, or cultural prejudices against anyone?

“Be Ye Holy”

“And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof: and it shall be holy.

“And thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy” (*Exod. 40:9, 10*).

Exodus 40:9, 10 shows us that the sanctuary was to be regarded as “holy.” The basic idea of holiness is separateness and uniqueness, in combination with one’s belonging to God.

“The typical service was the connecting link between God and Israel. The sacrificial offerings were designed to prefigure the sacrifice of Christ, and thus to preserve in the hearts of the people an unwavering faith in the Redeemer to come. Hence, in order that the Lord might accept their sacrifices, and continue His presence with them, and, on the other hand, that the people might have a correct knowledge of the plan of salvation, and a right understanding of their duty, it was of the utmost importance that holiness of heart and purity of life, reverence for God, and strict obedience to His requirements, should be maintained by all connected with the sanctuary.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1010.

Read Leviticus 19:2 and 1 Peter 1:14–16. What is the primary reason for the people to be holy?

God’s holiness transforms us and sets us apart. His holiness is the ultimate motivation for the ethical conduct of His people in all spheres of life (*see Leviticus 19*), whether that be observing the dietary laws (*Lev. 11:44, 45*), respecting the priest (*Lev. 21:8*), or not conforming to former lusts (*1 Pet. 1:14*). Obviously, God wants us to grow in holiness as we become closer to Him. This change can come about only through a self-surrender of our sinful natures and through a willingness to do what is right, regardless of the consequences.

Think about yourself, your habits, your tastes, your activities, et cetera. How much of what you are, and what you do, would be considered “holy”? It is kind of a tough question to face, isn’t it?

Instruments of the Sanctuary

Read Exodus 31:2–11. What do these verses teach us about the making of the objects in the earthly sanctuary? What link is there with Genesis 1:2? See also *Exod.* 25:9.

Of all the objects in the sanctuary, the ark of the testimony was the supreme symbol of God’s presence and holiness. The name derives from the two stone tablets of the law, called the “testimony” (*Exod.* 32:15, 16), that were placed inside the ark (*Exod.* 25:16, 21).

On top of the ark was placed the “mercy seat,” with two cherubim overshadowing the cover with their wings (*Exod.* 25:17–21). It is appropriately called the “atonement cover” (*NIV*), for it conveys the idea that our compassionate and gracious God has reconciled the people with Himself and made every provision for them to maintain a covenant relationship with Him.

This is the place where, once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur in the Hebrew), atonement for the people and the sanctuary took place (*Lev.* 16:14–16). In Romans 3:25, Paul refers to Jesus as “atonement cover” (usually translated as “propitiation” or “sacrifice of atonement”), for Jesus Himself is the place of Redemption, the One through whom God has made atonement for our sins.

In the Holy Place, the first compartment, the lampstand continually provided light (*Lev.* 24:1–4), and the altar of incense produced the protective smoke that concealed the presence of God from the priest (*Lev.* 16:12, 13). On the table for the bread of the presence were placed twelve loaves of bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Dishes, pans, jars, and bowls (*Exod.* 25:29, 30) also were placed on the table. Although little information is given about the significance of these items, it seems that they represented the elements of a covenant meal (*recalling Exod.* 24:11) and served as a constant reminder of God’s covenant with the people.

Read Romans 3:25–28. What great hope can we take from the promise of salvation “by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (*NKJV*)?

Center of Divine and Communal Activity

Read 1 Kings 8:31–53. What more does this text teach us about the function of the sanctuary?

At the dedication ceremony of the newly built temple, King Solomon offered seven kinds of specific prayers that could be offered at the temple. The seven functions exemplify the extensive role of the temple in the lives of the Israelites. The temple was a place for seeking forgiveness (*vs. 30*); for oath swearing (*vss. 31, 32*); for supplication when defeated (*vss. 33, 34*); for petition when faced with drought (*vss. 35, 36*) or other disasters (*vss. 37–40*). It was also a place for the foreigner to pray (*vss. 41–43*), as well as a place to petition for victory (*vss. 44, 45*).

That the temple was intended to be a “‘house of prayer for all the peoples’ ” (*Isa. 56:7, NASB*) becomes evident from the fact that Solomon envisioned the individual Israelite, the foreigner, and the entire population as petitioners.

The sanctuary was the ideological center of basically all activity in Israel. Religion was not just part of the believer’s life, even if it was a major part; it was life. What does this tell us about the role that our faith should play in our own lives?

When the people wanted to receive advice or judgment, or if they repented of their sins, they went to the sanctuary. The sanctuary was also the hub of life during the desert years of Israel. When God desired to communicate to His people, He did so from the sanctuary (*Exod. 25:22*). Therefore, it is appropriately called the “tent of meeting” (*for example, Lev. 1:1, NASB*).

Think about your prayer life. How deep, how rich, how faith-affirming and life changing is it? Perhaps the first question you need to ask yourself is: how much time do I spend in prayer?

“Until I Went Into the Sanctuary of God”

Time and again, the Psalms show that the sanctuary plays a significant part in the relationship between believers and God. Well known is the firm conviction David expressed at the end of Psalm 23 that he “will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (*vs. 6, NKJV*). David’s foremost wish in Psalm 27 was to be in the presence of Yahweh, a presence that was best experienced in the sanctuary. In order to show how much he cherished the sanctuary, David used the full range of expressions to refer to it, calling it the house of the Lord, the temple, the tabernacle, and the tent. It is there that one can meditate and “behold the beauty of the LORD” (*Ps. 27:4, NKJV*).

The activities of God in the sanctuary illustrate some crucial points: He keeps the worshiper safe and hides him in His sanctuary, even in tough times (*Ps. 27:5*). God provides secure refuge and assures peace of mind for all who come into His presence. These expressions connect the beauty of God to what He does for His people. In addition, the sanctuary service with its symbolic significance shows the goodness and justice of God.

The ultimate object of David’s deepest desire was not only simply to be in the sanctuary but for Yahweh to be present with him. That is why David resolves to “seek” God (*Ps. 27:4, 8*).

Read Psalm 73:1–17. Which insights did Asaph receive after entering the sanctuary?

In Psalm 73, Asaph addressed the problem of suffering. He could not understand the apparent success of the wicked (*vss. 4–12*) while the faithful were afflicted. He himself almost slipped (*vss. 1–3*), but going into the sanctuary made the difference for him (*vss. 13–17*). There, Asaph could see the same power and glory of God that David mentions in Psalm 63:2 and recognize that the present conditions will one day change and justice will be done. He could reflect anew on the truth and receive reaffirmation that, in the end, the wicked are on slippery ground (*Ps. 73:18–20*) and the faithful are secure (*vss. 21–28*). For those who seek God, the sanctuary becomes a place of confidence and a stronghold of life, one where God will set them “high upon a rock” (*Ps. 27:5, NKJV*). From the truth that the sanctuary service teaches, we can indeed learn to trust in the goodness and the justice of God.

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “The Tabernacle and Its Services,” pp. 343–358, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“For the building of the sanctuary great and expensive preparations were necessary; a large amount of the most precious and costly material was required; yet the Lord accepted only freewill offerings. ‘Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take My offering’ was the divine command repeated by Moses to the congregation. Devotion to God and a spirit of sacrifice were the first requisites in preparing a dwelling place for the Most High.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 343.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Dwell more on the question of God’s justice. We see so little justice in this world now. Why, then, without the ultimate hope of God’s justice, would there be no hope of justice at all?
- ❷ Someone wrote: “The tabernacle is a piece of holy ground amid a world that has lost its way.” What does that mean to you?
- ❸ Read 1 Peter 1:14–16. In what way do you understand God’s holiness? What does it mean to be holy yourself? How can we become holy?
- ❹ The sons of Eli are an example of people who were “close” to God but who lost their appreciation of His holiness (*1 Sam. 2:12–17*). How can you avoid losing a sense of God’s holiness? Why are prayer, study, and obedience crucial in helping us to preserve the awareness of His holiness?
- ❺ “The most important part of the daily ministration was the service performed in behalf of individuals. The repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle, and, placing his hand upon the victim’s head, confessed his sins, thus in figure transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice. By his own hand the animal was then slain, and the blood was carried by the priest into the holy place and sprinkled before the veil, behind which was the ark containing the law that the sinner had transgressed. By this ceremony the sin was, through the blood, transferred in figure to the sanctuary.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 354. How does this quote help us to understand the ways in which “salvation by faith” was revealed in the sanctuary service?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Psalms 27:4–14*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Comprehend God’s beauty, truth, and goodness in the sanctuary message.

Feel: Emulate David’s experience in the sanctuary.

Do: Choose to experience not only “sanctuary prayer” but “sanctuary life.”

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Beauty, Truth, and Goodness in the Sanctuary

A David’s quest was centered in the sanctuary (*Ps. 27:4*). Was this only temporary, or was it his life goal?

B David desired to “see the beauty of the Lord” reflected in the sanctuary. What did this actually involve?

C David also desired to “inquire [investigate God’s truth] in His temple.” What is the “present truth” of the sanctuary message to be investigated closely in these last days?

D David also saw “the goodness of the Lord” in the sanctuary (*Ps. 27:13, NKJV*). What experiences were included in this encounter (*Ps. 27:6–12*)?

E The sanctuary message is a way of life; it is possible now to enter the heavenly sanctuary boldly by faith and remain there (*see Heb. 4:16; 6:19, 20; 10:19–22; 12:22–24*). Does this refer to a prayer experience or to something more, as well?

II. Feel: Making the Sanctuary Experience Real

A How can we emulate David’s desire to be at the sanctuary? How can we experience God’s beauty, truth, and goodness in the sanctuary as a way of life?

III. Do: Living the Sanctuary Life

A Choose to experience “sanctuary prayer” and more unceasing “sanctuary life.”

► **Summary:** We may learn and experience lessons of beauty, truth, and goodness in the sanctuary.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Psalms 27:4*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The lessons of the sanctuary may be encapsulated by three qualities: “beauty, truth, and goodness,” which are summarized in David’s song for the sanctuary (*Psalms 27*).

Just for Teachers: In *Psalms 27:4*, David boldly identifies his single-minded goal in life, his one great request: “One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life” (*NIV*). The “house of the LORD” is another term for the sanctuary. David’s single-minded quest was focused upon the sanctuary! In *Psalms 27*, he summarizes the threefold experience he wished to have in the sanctuary. Verse 4 gives two facets of this experience: “to behold the *beauty* of the LORD, and to inquire [after truth] in his temple” (*NKJV*). (The Hebrew word translated as “inquire,” *baqar*, refers to careful examination of evidence in order to determine the truth of a matter.) Toward the end of the psalm (in the verse exactly paralleling verse 4), David pinpoints the third aspect of the sanctuary experience that he longs to have: “to see the *goodness* of the LORD” (*vs. 13*). Beauty, truth, goodness—these three things constitute, according to the philosophers, the “triple star of value,” what is really worth living and even dying for. (See Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 595, for the same emphasis upon these three qualities.) David insists that all of these values are encapsulated in the message of the sanctuary. This week, let’s explore how this is so!

Opening Activity: Ask the class, “If you had only one request to make of the Lord, only one goal to seek in life, what would you choose?” Let the various members of the class share their answers, and then read the inspired answer to this question in *Psalms 27:4, 13*.

Consider This: When David wrote *Psalms 27*, he was “a hunted fugitive, finding refuge in the rocks and caves of the wilderness.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 164. Discuss: Was David’s central focus upon the sanctuary unique to this time of special circumstances, or did it remain the passion of his life? (*See 2 Sam. 7:1–13; 1 Chronicles 22, 28 and 29:1–9*; and the numerous Davidic psalms referring to the sanctuary.)

► STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: This week we will look at important lessons that we can learn from the sanctuary. We have summarized these under the categories supplied by David in his inspired encapsulation of the sanctuary experience (*Ps. 27:4, 13*): beauty, goodness, and truth. Psalm 27 may be called the “Song for the Sanctuary”—it has more references to the sanctuary than any other psalm.

I. Bastion of Beauty (*Review Psalm 27:4 with your class.*)

The Hebrew word *no‘am*, here translated as “beauty,” is a dynamic term, describing beauty that moves the beholder by its loveliness, its pleasantness. David longed to behold in the sanctuary this beauty of the Lord—a beauty that the Lord has within Himself (His character) and also a beauty that the Lord imparts. The psalmist writes elsewhere: “Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary” (*Ps. 96:6*). “Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (*Ps. 29:2, 96:9*). At least 14 different Hebrew words for “beauty” are employed by the inspired biblical writers in their description of this aesthetic experience in connection with the sanctuary.

The wilderness sanctuary was “a magnificent structure. . . .

“No language can describe the glory of the scene presented within the sanctuary . . . ; all but a dim reflection of the glories of the temple of God in heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 347–349. Imagine just the precious metals: according to Exodus 38:24, 25, the construction of this portable wilderness tent utilized over a ton of gold (29 talents, 730 shekels = 2,205 lb = 1,000 kg) and almost four tons of silver (100 talents, 1,775 shekels = 7,583 lb = 3,440 kg). Visualize the unsurpassed beauty of the Solomonic temple, which Ellen G. White indicates was “the most magnificent structure ever reared by human hands” and yet only a “faint reflection” of the “vastness and glory” of the heavenly sanctuary.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 414.

To assist your imagination, consider that, in 1 Chronicles 22:14, David collected for use in the temple 100,000 talents of gold—about 3,500 tons (worth billions of U.S. dollars in today’s monetary value)—and one million talents of silver—about 35,000 tons. From this beautiful sanctuary we learn that (1) God is a great lover of that which is beautiful (*Exod. 28:2, 40; 2 Chron. 3:6*); (2) God’s character as revealed in the sanctuary is beautiful—for example, His holiness (*Lev. 19:2, Ps. 96:9*); (3) God’s ways of salvation, typified in the sanctuary (*Ps. 77:13*), are stunningly beautiful; and (4) He longs to give us that same beautiful character (*1 Pet. 1:16*).

Consider This: In what ways should our church “sanctuaries” (architecture and decorations) be beautiful today?

II. Temple of Truth *(Review Psalm 27:4, part b, with your class.)*

David not only longed to see the beauty of the Lord in the sanctuary but “to inquire [after truth] in His temple” (NKJV). The sanctuary message is not only an experience of awesome beauty; it is also a reflective, diligent search for truth.

In the 150 psalms, there is an average of one explicit reference to the sanctuary per psalm, and these references give insights into many truths connected with the sanctuary, such as worship and praise (*Ps. 96:9, 150:1*), judgment (*Ps. 11:4, 5*), and prayer (*Ps. 28:2*). The psalmist went to the sanctuary when he was trying to understand why the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer, and in the sanctuary (perhaps while watching the fire consuming the sacrifice, representing divine retribution upon sin) he “understood their end” (*Ps. 73:17, NKJV*). The present truth of the sanctuary message for these last days is particularly concentrated in the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation, which we will study in later lessons. Every one of us must study the sanctuary message for ourselves, diligently seeking to understand its truth in the light of Scripture.

Consider This: What aspects of the “present truth” of the sanctuary message are most central and also most strongly challenged today?

III. Garrison of Goodness *(Review Psalm 27:5–13 with your class.)*

It is not enough to see the beauty of sanctuary typology or to grasp the truth of the sanctuary for these last days. The sanctuary is not just an object of aesthetic contemplation or intellectual stimulation. It is a living reality. David shows how the “goodness of God” found in the sanctuary is experienced in practical life. He describes how he found protection and vindication in the sanctuary (*vss. 5, 5a, 11, 12*) and that this understanding led him spontaneously to joyous worship (*vs. 6b*). And at the very apex of the psalm, David sets forth the ultimate meaning of the sanctuary as personal fellowship with the God of the sanctuary: “You have said, ‘Seek my face.’ My heart says to you, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek’ ” (*vs. 8, ESV*). The psalm for the sanctuary ends with a hope for the future when final vindication will come along with a full revelation of the Lord in His sanctuary (*vs. 14*).

Consider This:

1. How is the subject of the sanctuary a message of beauty, truth, and goodness for you?
2. What is the relevance of the sanctuary doctrine for your personal life? In what ways is it a living reality?

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: The floor plan of the wilderness sanctuary is actually in the shape of a cross (see Sunday’s daily study). The arrangement of the various articles of furniture in the sanctuary illustrates the main steps in coming to Jesus and remaining in connection with Him in worship and prayer. Follow the priest in God’s “way of the sanctuary”:

- Come into His presence (courts) with thanksgiving (*Ps. 100:4*).
- Experience repentance, confession, and forgiveness at the altar of sacrifice, which represents the Cross (*Heb. 13:10–13, Leviticus 4—see Lesson 5*).
- Find cleansing from sin and daily renewal at the laver (*Titus 3:5*; Greek word *loutron* for “washing” also means “laver”).
- Find daily spiritual nourishment from God’s Word at the table of showbread (*John 6:48, 63; Deut. 8:3*).
- Receive the power of the Holy Spirit at the lampstand (*Rev. 4:5*).
- Offer prayers of intercession at the altar of incense (*Rev. 8:4*).
- Find deep cleansing at the throne of God, represented by the ark (*Lev. 16:30; see Lesson 6*).

Thought Question:

How do these steps coincide with the beginning of the Christian life and also with the maintenance of the Christian walk?

Application Question:

How can these steps be applied in a practical way in one’s daily prayer life? (Some have called this “sanctuary prayer.”)

Activity: Develop your own “sanctuary prayer” based upon the steps above.

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: The book of Hebrews gives a most powerful lesson from the sanctuary: we may NOW enter the heavenly sanctuary by faith, with boldness and by faith—even “live” in the heavenly sanctuary. (*Read Heb. 4:16; 6:19, 20; 10:19–22; 12:22–24.*)

Activity: Invite your class to experience “sanctuary prayer” as described in the previous section and then, even better, to choose “sanctuary LIFE”!

Atonement: Purification Offering



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: 2 Chron. 33:12, 13; 2 Sam. 14:1–11; Lev. 4:27–31; Jer. 17:1; Lev. 10:16–18; Mic. 7:18–20.

Memory Text: “Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18, 19, NASB).

The sacrificial system is probably the best-known part of the sanctuary service because it's the part that points directly to Christ's sacrifice. The blood of the animal that died for the sinner becomes a symbol for the blood of Christ, who died for us.

This week we will study several concepts linked to the “purification offering” (also called “sin offering”), which was God's appointed way of helping us to understand better how He is reconciling us to Himself through the only true Sacrifice, Jesus Christ. At times, this lesson uses the term “purification offering” instead of “sin offering” to avoid the impression that an act that required an offering, such as giving birth, be regarded as a moral fault (*Lev. 12:5–8*). Such a sacrifice is best understood as a purification offering for a woman's ritual impurity and not as a sacrifice because of sin.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 2.*

Sin and Mercy

As anyone who knows the Lord can testify, sin separates us from God. The good news is that the Lord has put in place a system to heal the breach caused by sin and to bring us back to Him. At the center of this system is, of course, the sacrifice.

There are basically three kinds of sin depicted in the Old Testament, each corresponding to the sinner's level of awareness while he or she committed the transgression: inadvertent or unintentional sin, deliberate or intentional sin, and rebellious sin. The "purification offering" prescribed in Leviticus 4:1–5:13 applied to cases of unintentional sin, as well as some cases of deliberate sin (*Lev. 5:1*). While an offering was available for these first two categories, none is mentioned for rebellious sin, the most heinous kind. Rebellious sin was done "in the face" of God, with a high hand, and the rebel deserved nothing less than to be cut off (*Num. 15:29–31*). However, it seems that even in these cases, such as with Manasseh, God offered forgiveness (*see 2 Chron. 33:12, 13*).

Read Deuteronomy 25:1, 2 and 2 Samuel 14:1–11. What does 2 Samuel 14:9 reveal about mercy, justice, and guilt?

Is God justified in forgiving the sinner? After all, is not the sinner unrighteous and therefore worthy of being condemned (*see Deut. 25:1*)?

The story of the woman of Tekoa can illustrate the answer. Pretending to be a widow as instructed by Joab, this woman went to King David, seeking his judgment. Joab contrived a story that he asked her to tell David: about her two sons, one having killed the other. Israelite law demanded the death of the murderer (*Num. 35:31*), even though he was the only male left in the family. The woman pleaded with David (who functioned as judge) to let the guilty son go free.

Then, interestingly enough, she declared: " 'Let the iniquity be on me and on my father's house, and the king and his throne be guiltless' " (*2 Sam. 14:9, NKJV*). Both the woman and David understood that if the king would decide to let the murderer go free, then the king himself would acquire the guilt of the murderer, and his throne of justice (that is, his reputation as judge) would be in jeopardy. The judge was morally responsible for what he decided. That is why the woman offered to take over this guilt herself.

Similarly, God takes over the guilt of sinners in order to declare them righteous. For us to be forgiven, *God Himself must bear our punishment*. This is the legal reason Christ had to die if we were to be saved.

Laying On of Hands

Read Leviticus 4:27–31. What ritual activities were performed along with the sacrifice?

The goal of the offering was to remove sin and guilt from the sinner, to transfer responsibility to the sanctuary, and to let the sinner leave forgiven and cleansed. (In extremely rare cases, one could bring a certain amount of fine flour as a purification offering. Although this purification offering was bloodless, it was understood that “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” [*Heb. 9:22, NASB*]).

The ritual itself included the laying on of hands, the death of the animal, blood manipulation, the burning of fat, and the eating of the animal’s flesh. The sinner who brought the offering was granted forgiveness, but only after the blood ritual.

A crucial part of this process involved the laying on of hands (*Lev. 1:4, 4:4, 16:21*). This was done so that the offering “may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf” (*Lev. 1:4, NASB*). The offering applied only for the one who put his hands on the animal’s head. According to Leviticus 16:21, the laying on of hands would be accompanied by a confession of sin; this would acknowledge the transfer of sin from the sinner to the innocent animal.

The slaughter was, of course, basic to any animal offering. After the animal was killed, the spilled blood was used to make atonement on the altar (*Lev. 17:11*). Because the sins had been transferred to the animal by the laying on of hands, we should understand the death of the animal as a substitutionary death. The animal died in the place of the sinner. This may explain why the act of killing the animal had to be performed by the sinner, or the guilty one, and not by the priest.

Next time you are tempted to sin, envision Jesus dying on the cross and see yourself putting your hands on His head and confessing your sins over Him. How might this concept, played out in your mind, help you to understand just what it cost in order to be forgiven? How could this idea help you to resist succumbing to that temptation?

Transfer of Sin

“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars” (Jer. 17:1).

After the laying on of hands and the death of the animal, the next ritual activity in the offering was the handling of the blood. The priest applied the sacrificial blood to the horns of the altar. Because blood was involved, this ritual part had to do with atonement (*Lev. 17:11*). If the sinner was a commoner or a leader, the blood was applied on the altar of burnt offering (*Lev. 4:25, 30*); if the high priest or the entire congregation was the sinner, the blood was applied to the inner altar, the altar of incense (*Lev. 4:7, 18*).

What did it mean to smear blood on the horns of the altar? The horns were the highest points of the altar and, as such, could signify the vertical dimension of salvation. In this way, the blood was brought into the presence of God.

Jeremiah 17:1 is of particular importance for understanding what happens: the sin of Judah is engraved “upon the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars” (*NASB*). Although the text is referring to altars involved in idolatrous worship, the principle remains the same: the altar reflected the moral condition of the people. Blood transferred the guilt of sin. The blood smeared on the horns of the altar transferred sin away from the sinner to the sanctuary, a crucially important truth in order for us to understand the plan of salvation as revealed in the earthly sanctuary service, which symbolizes the work of Christ in heaven for us.

Because the blood carried sin, it also defiled the sanctuary. We find an example of this defiling in cases where the blood of the purification offering splashed accidentally on a garment. The garment needed to be cleansed, not just anywhere, but only “in a holy place” (*Lev. 6:27, NKJV*).

Finally, the burning of the fat on the altar indicated that everything relating to the purification offering belonged to God (*Lev. 3:16*).

Thanks to the death of Jesus, symbolized by these sacrifices, our sin has been taken away from us, placed on Him, and transferred to the heavenly sanctuary. This is central to the plan of salvation.

How does the sanctuary service help us to understand our utter dependence on God for forgiveness of our sins? What comfort does this truth bring you? At the same time, what important responsibilities follow? See 1 Peter 1:22.

Bearing Sin

Read Leviticus 6:25, 26; 10:16–18. What crucial truth is revealed here?

By eating the offering at a holy place, the officiating priest would “bear away the guilt” of the offender. The meat of this offering was not just payment for the priests’ services (otherwise Moses would not have been so angry with Aaron’s sons for not eating of it) but a crucial part of the atonement.

How does the eating of the sacrifice contribute to the process of atonement? Eating was required only of those offerings in which blood did not enter the Holy Place; that is, the offerings of the leader and the commoner. The Bible explicitly said that by eating the sacrifice the priests would “bear away the guilt,” which would “make atonement” for the sinner. To carry the sinner’s guilt implies that the sinner now goes free.

In the Hebrew, Exodus 34:7 says that God “carries iniquity,” the same two Hebrew words used in Leviticus 10:17, where it’s clear that the act of the priest’s carrying the sin is what brings forgiveness to the sinner. Otherwise, without that transfer, the sinner would have to bear his own sin (*Lev. 5:1*), and that, of course, would lead to death (*Rom. 6:23*).

The priest’s work of bearing another’s sin is exactly what Christ did for us. He died in our place. We conclude, then, that the priestly work at the earthly sanctuary typifies Christ’s work for us, because He has taken upon Himself the guilt of our sins.

“The blessing comes because of pardon; pardon comes through faith that the sin, confessed and repented of, is borne by the great Sin-bearer. Thus from Christ cometh all our blessings. His death is an atoning sacrifice for our sins. He is the great medium through whom we receive the mercy and favor of God. He, then, is indeed the Originator, the Author, as well as the Finisher, of our faith.”—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 302.

Imagine standing before God in judgment. What would you lean on—your good works, your Sabbath keeping, all the nice things you have done and all the bad things you haven’t done? Do you really think this would be enough to justify you before a holy and perfect God? If not, what’s your only hope in that judgment?

Forgiveness

Read Micah 7:18–20. What picture of God do we find in this passage?

The last three verses of the book of Micah focus on the relationship of God with His remnant. The text beautifully describes why God is unrivaled. He is incomparable because of His forgiving love and grace. The outstanding characteristic of God, as revealed in Micah (and elsewhere), is His willingness to forgive. Micah emphasizes this point by using various expressions for God’s attributes (*vs. 18*) and achievements (*vss. 19, 20*). His attributes and achievements are explained in the language of the Israelite Credo in Exodus 34:6, 7, one of the most beloved biblical descriptions of the character of God.

Interestingly, several crucial words in Micah 7:18–20 are also used in the Servant Song in Isaiah 53, pointing to the fact that the means of forgiveness comes from the One who is suffering for the people.

Unfortunately, not everyone will enjoy God’s saving grace. God’s forgiveness is neither cheap nor automatic. It involves loyalty. Those who have experienced His grace respond in kind, such as we see in Micah 6:8, a central text in the book. Just as God “delights in unchanging love” (*NASB*), He calls His remnant to “love kindness” (*NASB*). His people will imitate God’s character. Their lives will reflect His love, compassion, and kindness.

In the Bible, Micah 7:18–20, with its emphasis on forgiveness, is immediately followed by Nahum 1:2, 3, with its emphasis on judgment. This unfolds the two dimensions of God’s dealings with us; He forgives the repentant and punishes the wicked. Both sides belong to God. He is Savior and Judge. These two aspects of God’s character are complementary, not contrary. A compassionate God can also be a just God. Knowing this, we can rest assured in His love, in His forgiveness, and in His ultimate justice.

Read Micah 6:8. What good is a profession of faith without these principles to reveal the reality of that profession? What’s easier, to claim faith in Jesus or to live out that faith, as expressed in Micah 6:8? How can you better do the latter?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “The Tabernacle and Its Services,” pp. 343–358, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“As Christ at His ascension appeared in the presence of God to plead His blood in behalf of penitent believers, so the priest in the daily ministration sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice in the holy place in the sinner’s behalf.

“The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Some have argued that the whole concept of substitution is unfair. Why should the innocent die in the place of the guilty? However, because this is a truth that is not only clearly taught in the Bible but is central to the core theme of the Bible, how do we answer that charge? Might the “unfairness” of it all help us to understand the grace that was displayed in order to bring us forgiveness? That is, in what ways might this “unfairness” help to show just how great and merciful and loving our God really is?
- ❷ As a class, read Micah 6:8. What are we being told here? More important, how can we learn to fulfill this explicit command? How do we learn to do all these things, including to “walk humbly with thy God”? What does that mean? How can walking humbly with God translate into walking humbly with others?
- ❸ Think about what it means that the only way we could be saved was through the death of Jesus. What does this amazing truth teach us about just how bad sin is and why any effort to save ourselves by our own works is as fruitless as scrubbing a pig in hopes of making it kosher?
- ❹ In class, go over the final question at the end of Wednesday’s lesson. Discuss your answers and the implications of your answers in terms of the gospel and that which God has done for us in order to save us.

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Leviticus 4*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Comprehend the typology of the sin offering (also called “purification offering”).

Feel: Appreciate the work of Jesus as prefigured in the sin offering.

Do: Experience the forgiveness of sin that the sin offering prefigured.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Typology of the Sin Offering (*Leviticus 4*)

A The repentant sinner (1) brought his sin offering to the sanctuary, (2) laid his hand upon the innocent animal, and (3) killed it. The animal sacrifice (4) was eaten by the priest (for the commoner or ruler), or (5) its blood was carried inside the Holy Place (for the priest or congregation). Thus (6), the sinner was cleansed from his sin, and (7) the sanctuary was defiled by the record of the sin. What does each of these steps prefigure in the antitype?

II. Feel: The Joy of Christ’s Forgiveness

A The Old Testament sin-offering ritual makes vivid the steps of forgiveness through the sacrifice and priestly ministry of Christ. What are your feelings about Christ’s work as you relive this typology?

III. Do: Experience God’s Forgiveness

A The typology of the Old Testament sin may be experienced in reality as we receive forgiveness through Christ our Substitute. Have you determined that you will personally experience this gracious forgiveness?

► **Summary:** The sin offering foreshadows the way in which repentant sinners receive forgiveness through the sacrifice and priestly ministry of Christ. It also prefigures the way in which the heavenly sanctuary is defiled by the record of forgiven sins.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Isaiah 53:6*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The Old Testament sanctuary ritual of the sin offering (also called “purification offering”) foreshadows the way in which repentant sinners receive forgiveness through the sacrifice and priestly ministry of Christ. It also points to the way that the heavenly sanctuary is defiled by the record of forgiven sin.

Just for Teachers: In his classic book on the sanctuary, Adventist pioneer Stephen N. Haskell wrote about the sin offering: “In none of the types was the individual worshiper brought into so close touch with the sanctuary service as in the sin-offering. There is no part of religious worship that brings the worshiper into such close touch with the Lord as when he kneels at the Saviour’s feet, confessing his sins, and knowing the strength of the promise [1 John 1:9 cited]. . . . It is then that the repentant sinner touches the hem of the Master’s garment, and receives His healing power in the soul.”—*The Cross and Its Shadow* (South Lancaster, Mass.: The Bible Training School, 1914), p. 123.

Opening Activity: Ask the class to visualize themselves bringing a sin offering in Old Testament times. Then ask them to describe the various steps in the process of receiving forgiveness.

Consider This: Why was there need of a sin offering in the type, and, antitypically, why did Jesus need to die as our Substitute? What does the sin offering teach about the nature of divine justice and mercy?

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Just for Teachers: In this section we will summarize the major steps in the sin-offering ritual and their antitypical meaning and clarify the kinds of sins that were dealt with by the sin offering.

I. An Overview of the Sin-Offering Ritual (*Review Leviticus 4 with your class.*)

Leviticus 4 describes two different procedures for the sin offering—one for the priest or congregation and the other for an individual ruler or a common citizen.

A. Steps in Common. The first four steps are the same for all involved:

1. Recognition of Guilt. The Hebrew word *'asham* (vss. 13, 22, 27) implies both legal status (“are guilty,” *NKJV*) and subjective experience (“realize their guilt,” *ESV*).

2. Animal substitute, repentance, and confession. The repentant sinner brings his animal sacrifice to the door of the tabernacle (vss. 4, 14, 23, 28). “By the act of bringing the offering to the sanctuary, the individual confessed himself a sinner, deserving the wrath of God, and signified his repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood would remove the guilt of the transgressor.”—Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, July 15, 1880.

3. Hand-laying, thus, in symbol, effecting the transference of sin to the sacrifice. The repentant sinner lays his hand on the head of the innocent animal (vss. 4, 15, 24, 29), symbolically transferring his or her sin to the innocent animal substitute, representing Christ our Substitute (see *Leviticus 1; 4; 16:21; 17:11*; Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 354, 355).

4. Death of the sin-bearing substitute. The repentant sinner then slays the animal before the Lord (*Lev. 4:4, 15, 24, 29*). This underscores that it is our sins that ultimately caused the death of the Lamb (see *Isa. 53:5, 6, 8*), who bore our sins as our Substitute on the cross (*2 Cor. 5:14, 15; 1 Pet. 2:24*).

B. Differences in the Two Procedures. In the last phases of the two procedures, there are distinct differences in what the priest does with the animal.

For a sin of *the priest and the whole congregation*, the priest brings some of the blood into the Holy Place (*Lev. 4:5, 16*), dips his finger in the blood and sprinkles some of it seven times before the Lord in front of the inner veil (vss. 6, 17), daubs some of the blood on the horns of the altar of incense (vss. 7, 18), pours the rest of the blood at the base of the outer altar (vss. 7, 18), removes the suet (vss. 8–10, 19), burns the suet on the altar (vss. 10, 19), carries the remainder of the animal to a clean place outside the camp (vss. 12, 21), and incinerates the remainder of the animal (vss. 12, 21).

For a sin of the *individual ruler and individual common person*, the priest collects the blood (vss. 25, 30), daubs with his finger some of the blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering (vss. 25, 30), pours the rest of the blood at the base of the altar (vss. 25, 30), removes the suet (vss. 26, 31), burns the suet on the altar (vss. 26, 31), and eats the meat of the sin/purification offering (*Lev. 6:25–30*).

The ultimate result is the same for both procedures: the priest “shall make atonement for” (that is, purge or remove the sin from; see *NKJV* and *NIV*) the repentant sinner(s), who “will be forgiven” (*Lev. 4:20, 26, 31*). The verb translated “will be forgiven” is in the passive (Hebrew *nif'al*) and implies that it is God who does the forgiving, not the priest.

The basic difference in these two procedures may be summarized by

this principle: when the blood goes into the sanctuary's Holy Place, the meat of the sacrifice is not eaten; but when the blood does not go in, the meat of the sacrifice is eaten by the priest. Why this difference? The answer seems to be that in the cases of the priest or of the whole congregation (which would also include the priest), the priest cannot become the carrier of his own guilt, so the blood goes directly into the sanctuary as the agent of transfer carrying the sin away from the sinner into the Holy Place. But in the case of the ruler and the individual commoner, the priest is not involved in the sin; and thus, he can be the carrier of the sin from the sinner onto himself (*see Lev. 10:16, 17*). In this latter case, the sin is transferred to the sanctuary via the priests when the priests offer their own sin offering and the blood is taken into the sanctuary.

Ellen G. White supports this latter view: "The sins of the people were transferred in figure to the officiating priest, who was a mediator for the people. The priest could not himself become an offering for sin, and make an atonement with his life, for he was also a sinner. Therefore, instead of suffering death himself, he killed a lamb without blemish; the penalty of sin was transferred to the innocent beast, which thus became his immediate substitute, and typified the perfect offering of Jesus Christ."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 230.

C. Common Results of the Sin Offering. By means of the sin offering, the sinner is cleansed from the sin, he is forgiven, and the sin is transferred to the sanctuary. In its typological fulfillment, Christ is both the Lamb of God and the Priest-Mediator (*John 1:29; Heb. 8:1, 2*). He had no sin in Himself; so, as the Priest, He could "bear the guilt of the congregation"—yes, of the whole world!—in His own body. He also could minister the benefits of His spilled blood in the New Covenant heavenly sanctuary.

Consider This: What is the function of the blood in the sin offering? What does it cleanse, and what does it defile? Can blood be an agent of cleansing and defilement at the same time? (*See Lev. 6:27.*)

II. The Kind of Sin Involved in the Sin Offering (*Review Leviticus 5:1; 6:2, 3 with your class.*)

Some interpreters maintain that only unintentional (inadvertent) sins could be forgiven through the sacrificial system, but there is explicit mention of deliberate (nonrebellious) sins also being forgiven through this system (*Lev. 5:1, 10; 6:2, 3, 7*). The word *shegahah*, used throughout Leviticus 4 (*vss. 2, 13, 22, 27*) and often translated as "unintentional" or "inadvertent," derives from a verb meaning "to wander, go astray," and can refer to both inadvertent and conscious (deliberate but nonrebellious) sins of "going astray" (*Num. 35:11, Eccles. 5:6, 10:5, Job 12:16, Ps. 119:67, Prov. 5:20*). (*See R. Laird Harris,*

“Exodus,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990], pp. 547, 548.)

Consider This: Numbers 15:22–31 contrasts sins of “going astray” (*shegagah*) with “high-handed” rebellious sins of presumption. Why was there no atonement in the sacrificial system for “high-handed” sins? Could people who committed “high-handed” sins be forgiven by God if they repented?

► **STEP 3—Apply**

Just for Teachers: Note that the Hebrew word *chatt’at*, “sin offering,” may also be translated as “purification offering” (especially when it refers to purification from nonmoral ritual defilement, as in Leviticus 12:5–8).

Thought Questions:

- 1 What is the symbolism of the burning of the fat (suet) of the sacrificial animal on the altar and the incineration of its carcass outside the camp? (See Lev. 3:16, 17; Gen. 45:18; Heb. 13:11–13.)
- 2 Are the concepts of substitutionary atonement and transfer of sin optional in understanding the gospel?

Application Questions:

- 1 What is your response to this Ellen G. White statement: “We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute” (*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 32, 33)?
- 2 If we receive forgiveness for sin when we accept Christ as our Substitute, why does the record of that sin remain in the heavenly sanctuary? Discuss: Is there an aspect of atonement beyond forgiveness? Give reasons for your answer.

► **STEP 4—Create**

Just for Teachers: Return to the visualization of the sin offering, but now summarize the antitypical meaning of its various steps.

Activity: Have the class explain what each step of the sin-offering ritual signifies in the antitype. Determine to accept Jesus anew as your Substitute.

The Day of Atonement



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Leviticus 16, Lev. 23:27–32, Deut. 19:16–21, Matt. 18:23–35, Isa. 6:1–6.*

Memory Text: “Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities underfoot. Yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (*Micah 7:18, 19, NASB*).

The Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, as revealed in Leviticus 16, is the most solemn Old Testament ritual. It is deliberately placed in the heart of the book of Leviticus, which is itself at the center of the Five Books of Moses, in order to help to illustrate the “most holy” character of this ritual. Also referred to as the Sabbath of Sabbaths (*Lev. 16:31*), the day calls for the cessation of all work, which is unique for an Israelite yearly festival. This fact places the day squarely within the concept of the Sabbath—it is a time to rest in what God, as Creator and Redeemer, has done (and will do) for us.

This week we will study what happened on the Day of Atonement in the earthly sanctuary, specifically the rituals with the two goats, which helps us to better understand deeper truths regarding salvation and the final disposition of sin.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 9.*

The Yearly Cleansing

Read Leviticus 16:16, 30. What is purged on the Day of Atonement?

Throughout the year, all kinds of sins and ritual impurities were transferred to the sanctuary. With the Day of Atonement comes the time for their removal. There are three main parts to the Day of Atonement:

1. *The purification offering for the priest.* The high priest slaughtered a bull for his sins, making sure that he (the priest) would be clean when entering the sanctuary so that he could perform the ritual to cleanse it.

2. *The purification offering of the goat “for the LORD” (Lev. 16:8, NKJV).* During the year, the purification offerings “brought” all the sins of the Israelites into the sanctuary. The Day of Atonement was the time to remove these sins from the sanctuary; this process was done through the blood of the goat “for the LORD.”

3. *The elimination ritual with the live goat for Azazel.* God wanted to get the sins of His people away from the sanctuary and the camp. Therefore, another live goat was sent out into the desert.

Read Leviticus 16:15. What happened to this goat, and what did it symbolize?

Because there was neither confession of sin nor laying on of hands involved with the goat for the Lord, its blood was not a carrier of sin. Thus, it did not defile; rather, it cleansed. The effect is clearly described in verses 16 and 20. The high priest made atonement with the blood of the Lord’s goat, cleansing the entire sanctuary. The same procedure also effected the purification of the people so that, when the sanctuary was cleansed from all the people’s sins, the people themselves were cleansed too. In this sense the Day of Atonement was unique, for only on this day were both the sanctuary and the people cleansed.

The Day of Atonement was the second stage of a two-phase atonement. In the first phase, during the year, the Israelites were forgiven. Their sins were not blotted out but were entrusted to God Himself, who promised to deal with them. The second phase did not have much to do with forgiveness; the people were already forgiven. In fact, the verb *forgive* does not occur at all in Leviticus 16 or in Leviticus 23:27–32. What this shows us is that the entire plan of salvation deals with more than just the forgiveness of our sins, a point that makes even more sense when understood in the wider context of the great controversy.

Beyond Forgiveness

Read Leviticus 16:32–34. What was the main task of the high priest on the Day of Atonement?

The primary function of the high priest was to mediate between God and humankind. Regarding the sanctuary, he administered the system and performed various rituals of sacrifices and offerings (*Heb. 8:3*). His task on the Day of Atonement was enormous. He performed almost every ritual, except for leading the goat for Azazel into the wilderness, though he gave the command to send the goat away.

On the Day of Atonement, the “great” priest, as he was also called, became a living example of Christ. Just as the attention of God’s people was focused on the high priest, Jesus is the exclusive center of our attention. As the activities of the high priest on earth brought cleansing to the people, Jesus’ work in the heavenly sanctuary does the same for us (*Rom. 8:34, 1 John 1:9*). Just as the only hope of the people on the Day of Atonement was in the high priest, our only hope is in Christ.

“The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357.

According to Leviticus 16:16–20, the high priest had to enter the Most Holy Place and purge it from the ritual impurities, transgressions, and sins. He then transferred all the iniquities, all the transgressions, and all the sins of Israel onto the live goat and sent them away, through the goat, into the desert. Thus, all the moral faults of Israel were gone. This achieved the unique goal of the Day of Atonement: a moral purification that went beyond forgiveness. There was no new forgiveness necessary on this day. God had already forgiven their sins.

As we struggle with all our God-given strength to put away all sin, how can we learn to lean totally on Christ’s merits as our only hope of salvation?

Azazel

Read Leviticus 16:20–22. What happened to the live goat?

The ritual with the live goat was not an offering. After the lot decided which of the two goats was to be for Yahweh and which one was for Azazel (often translated as “scapegoat”), only the goat for Yahweh is referred to as a purification offering (*vss. 9, 15*). By contrast, the goat for Azazel is called the “live goat.” It was never slain, probably to avoid any idea that the ritual constituted a sacrifice. The live goat came into play *only after* the high priest had finished the atonement of the entire sanctuary (*vs. 20*). This point cannot be overemphasized: the ensuing ritual with the live goat had nothing to do with the actual cleansing of the sanctuary or of the people. They already had been cleansed.

Who or what is Azazel? Early Jewish interpreters identified Azazel as the original angelic sinner and the primary author of evil, even as the leader of evil angels. We know him, of course, as a symbol of Lucifer himself.

The ritual with the live goat was a rite of elimination that accomplished the final disposal of sin. Sin would be brought upon the one responsible for it in the first place and then carried away from the people forever. “Atonement” was made upon it in a punitive sense (*Lev. 16:10*), as the goat carried the ultimate responsibility for sin.

Does Satan then play a role in our salvation, as some falsely charge we teach? Of course not. Satan never, in any way, bears sin for us as a substitute. Jesus alone has done that, and it is blasphemy to think that Satan had any part in our redemption.

The ritual with the live goat finds a parallel in the law of the malicious witness (*Deut. 19:16–21*). The accuser and the accused stand before the Lord, represented by the priests and judges. An investigation is held; and if the accuser is found to be a malicious witness, he shall receive the punishment he intended for the innocent (for example, vicious Haman who put up a gallows for loyal Mordecai).

Thank God again for His merciful forgiveness and the fact that He will remember our sin no more (*Jer. 31:34*). How can we learn not to remember our sins once they are forgiven? Why is it so important for us to do this?

On the Day of Atonement

“Thus in the ministration of the tabernacle, and of the temple that afterward took its place, the people were taught each day the great truths relative to Christ’s death and ministration, and once each year their minds were carried forward to the closing events of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 358.

Read Leviticus 16:29–31 and 23:27–32. What did God expect the Israelites to do on Yom Kippur? How do these principles apply to us today, living as we are in the “antitypical Day of Atonement”?

If someone in ancient Israel did not follow these instructions, he was to be cut off and destroyed (*Lev. 23:29, 30*). The Day of Atonement was truly about nothing less than life and death. It demanded the believer’s complete loyalty to God.

Imagine that someone had confessed his sins during the first phase of atonement during the year (that is, the daily sacrifices), but then did not take the Day of Atonement seriously. By his disregard of what God had planned to demonstrate on this day, such a person proved himself to be disloyal to God.

What this means is that a person who professes faith in God can still lose salvation. As Seventh-day Adventists, we do not believe in once-saved-always-saved, because the Bible does not teach it. We are secure in Christ just as long as we live in faith and surrender to Him, claiming His power for victory when tempted and His forgiveness when we fall.

Read Matthew 18:23–35. What lesson should we take away from this powerful parable?

Isaiah’s Personal Yom Kippur

In Isaiah 6:1, Isaiah sees the heavenly King sitting on a throne in the temple, “high and exalted.” The vision is a judgment scene that presents God as coming for judgment (*Isa. 5:16*). Isaiah beholds the true King, identified in the Gospel of John as Jesus Christ (*John 12:41*).

Even though Isaiah was God’s prophet and he called others to repentance, he understood that in God’s presence he was doomed. Confronted with God’s holiness and glory, Isaiah perceived his own sinfulness and also the uncleanness of his people. Holiness and sin are incompatible. Like Isaiah, we all need to come to the conclusion that we cannot pass through the divine judgment on our own. Our only hope is to have a Substitute.

What parallels to the Day of Atonement appear in Isaiah 6:1–6?

The combination of a temple filled with smoke, an altar, judgment, and atonement for sin and uncleanness recalls strongly the Day of Atonement. Isaiah experienced his own “personal Day of Atonement,” as it were.

Functioning like a priest, a seraph (literally “burning one”) took a burning coal from the altar, presupposing some kind of offering, to purge the prophet’s sin. This is an apt image for the cleansing from sin that is possible through the sacrifice of Jesus and His priestly ministry of mediation. Isaiah recognized this as a cleansing ritual, and he kept still as the coal touched his lips. Thereby his “iniquity is taken away” and his “sin is forgiven” (*Isa. 6:7, NASB*). The passive voice in verse 7 shows that forgiveness is granted by the One sitting on the throne. The Judge is also the Savior.

God’s work of cleansing brings us from “Woe is me” to “Here am I, send me.” In other words, understanding the heavenly work on the Day of Atonement leads to a readiness for proclamation because a true understanding leads to assurance and surety. This is because we know that in judgment we have a Substitute, Jesus Christ, whose righteousness alone (symbolized by the blood) will enable us to stand without fear of condemnation (*Rom. 8:1*). Gratitude motivates mission. Acquitted sinners are God’s best ambassadors (*2 Cor. 5:18–20*) because they know what God has delivered them from.

Further Study: “Now the event takes place foreshadowed in the last solemn service of the Day of Atonement. When the ministration in the holy of holies had been completed, and the sins of Israel had been removed from the sanctuary by virtue of the blood of the sin offering, then the scapegoat was presented alive before the Lord; and in the presence of the congregation the high priest confessed over him ‘all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat.’ Leviticus 16:21. In like manner, when the work of atonement in the heavenly sanctuary has been completed, then in the presence of God and heavenly angels and the hosts of the redeemed the sins of God’s people will be placed upon Satan; he will be declared guilty of all the evil which he has caused them to commit.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 657, 658.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Why would any understanding of the plan of salvation be incomplete if it leaves out or minimizes the work of Christ as our High Priest? What does the sanctuary teach us about just how central the work of intercession in the sanctuary is to the plan of salvation? The bulk of an entire New Testament book, Hebrews, is dedicated to the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. In view of this, just how important is that work?
- ❷ Someone once wrote that the work of Christ, from His death to His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, is simply part of “God’s orderly method” of dealing with the sin problem in a way that will help to answer all questions regarding His justice, fairness, and love. Dwell on the implications of that thought, especially in light of the great controversy and what it teaches us about the grand issues involved in the sordid tragedy of sin.
- ❸ Many Seventh-day Adventists were taught about the Day of Atonement in a way that has left them without assurance of salvation. Such a view comes from a false understanding of the purpose of the Day of Atonement. Think about the word *atonement*. What does it mean? How is atonement achieved? Who does the work of atonement? How is it accomplished? How should these answers help us understand why the Day of Atonement is actually good news?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Leviticus 16*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Grasp the essentials of Day of Atonement typology.

Feel: Sense the importance of the Day of Atonement message.

Do: Choose to participate in the special privileges of God’s people on the antitypical Day of Atonement.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The Day of Atonement Activities (*Leviticus 16, 23:26–32*)

A The “continual” (*tamid*) sacrifice burned on the altar throughout the Day of Atonement (*Num. 29:11*). What does this teach us about the basis of our acceptance with God during the investigative judgment?

B The blood of the Lord’s goat cleansed the sanctuary from the accumulated record of confessed sins (*Lev. 16:3–19*). How does the antitypical Day of Atonement go beyond forgiveness?

C The scapegoat (or Azazel) represents Satan (*Lev. 16:5–10, 20–23*). Is Satan our “sin-bearer”? Explain. (*See Deut. 19:15–19, Rev. 12:10, 20:10.*)

D Congregational activities were required of ancient Israel during the Day of Atonement (*Lev. 16:30, 23:26–32*). How do these apply to the antitypical Day of Atonement?

II. Feel: Assurance in the Judgment

A The Day of Atonement involves repentance, cleansing, and investigative judgment. How can one have joyous assurance of salvation throughout this process?

III. Do: Eyes on Jesus!

A Choose to participate in the privileges of spiritual Israel as you “turn your eyes upon Jesus” during the investigative judgment.

► **Summary:** The Day of Atonement services point forward to Christ’s work of investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary and reveal the special activities of God’s people during this time.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Leviticus 16:29, 30*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The Old Testament Day of Atonement rituals prefigure the work of Christ and the responsibilities of His people during the antitypical Day of Atonement.

Just for Teachers: Have you ever wondered or been asked: “Why do Seventh-day Adventists spend so much time studying the Day of Atonement, a topic whose main biblical support is tucked away in a single chapter of an obscure part of the Pentateuch, Leviticus 16?” Consider this observation: Moses organized the entire Pentateuch into a beautiful symmetrical structure and placed Leviticus at the very high point of that structure!

Why was this chapter placed at the center of the Pentateuch? The Day of Atonement was the holiest day of all the year, during which time the holiest person of all Israel (the high priest) went into the holiest place on earth (the Most Holy Place) to perform the holiest work of all (the cleansing of the sanctuary, the work of final atonement). The name “Day of Atonement” in Hebrew is actually *Yom Hakippurim* [plural of intensification of *kippur*], the “Day of [ultimate] Atonement” (*Lev. 23:27*).

Opening Activity: Share with the class the symmetrical structure of the Pentateuch and then ask: What makes the Day of Atonement so central for spiritual Israel during the antitypical Day of Atonement?

Consider This: The antitypical Day of Atonement comprises the climactic period of salvation history (the time of the end). During this period, Christ, the High Priest of the universe, goes into the holiest place in all the universe (the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary) to do the holiest work of all time (the final work of atonement)!

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Just for Teachers: In this lesson we will look at the typology of the Day of Atonement and its antitypical fulfillment.

I. The Main Rituals of the Day of Atonement

A. The “Daily” Offering (*Review Numbers 29:11 with your class.*)

The “daily” (*tamid*) ministry of the priests was not suspended on the Day of Atonement (*Num. 29:11; see Exod. 30:8, 10*). The people were still constantly dependent upon the blood of the sacrifice and the priestly intercession of incense. The basis of acceptance before God during the antitypical Day of Atonement remains the same as before: the blood of Christ our Substitute and His righteousness imputed to us.

B. The Lord’s Goat (*Review Leviticus 16:3–19 with your class.*)

A number of important truths emerge from the offering of the “Lord’s goat.”

1. Sin-free blood. No hands were laid on the head of the Lord’s goat (*vss. 9, 15*), and hence, no sin was transferred to it; its blood was “sin-free.” As “sin-free” blood, its function when applied to the sanctuary was not to defile but to cleanse it.

2. Outward movement. The atoning work on the Day of Atonement moved outward, from the Most Holy Place to the courtyard (*vss. 15–18*), symbolically showing that the blood of the Lord’s goat did not defile the sanctuary but cleansed it.

3. Investigative judgment. The Day of Atonement implied a day of divine investigative judgment. Those who did not “afflict their souls” (literally, “humble themselves” in repentance) on the Day of Atonement would be “cut off,” i.e., come under divine investigative judgment concerning their afterlife (*Lev. 16:29, 31; 23:27, 29, 32*). Modern Jewish theologians recognize this function of the Day of Atonement.

4. Atonement beyond forgiveness. There is no mention of forgiveness (Hebrew *salach*) in Leviticus 16 (or any other passage referring to the Day of Atonement). During the year, God had taken responsibility for the forgiven sins upon Himself, as it were, in the sanctuary. On the Day of Atonement He was able to cleanse the sanctuary as He demonstrated His justice in having forgiven sinners throughout the year.

5. Cleansing. The Day of Atonement involved a work of corporate cleansing for God’s people. (*See Lev. 16:30; Ezek. 36:25–27; Mal. 3:2, 3.*) But note that it is God who takes responsibility for the cleansing of those who allow Him to do this work in their lives.

C. The Scapegoat (Azazel) Ritual (*Review Leviticus 16:5–10, 20–23 with your class.*)

Many lines of biblical evidence support the conclusion that the “scapegoat” (Azazel) ritual points to Satan and not to Christ.

1. Parallelism of personal beings. According to Leviticus 16:8, one of the two goats designated by lots was *leYHWH* “[standing] for [or belonging to] Yahweh,” and the other was *la’aza’zel* “[standing] for [or belonging

to] Azazel.” If the first expression “for the Lord” refers to a personal being, Yahweh, then in natural parallelism the second expression “for Azazel” would refer to a personal being in contradistinction to Yahweh, i.e., Satan.

2. Timing. The Azazel ritual takes place after the work of atonement for the sanctuary is already completed (*Lev. 16:20*).

3. Nonsacrificial. Unlike the Lord’s goat, Azazel’s goat is not slain; rather, it is led out alive into the wilderness (*vss. 20–22*). Azazel’s goat is not part of, nor linked with, the sacrifice of the sin offering.

4. Elimination rite. The Azazel ritual is not a sacrificial ritual but an elimination rite. Azazel is the “tote goat”—a “garbage truck,” as it were—to ritually carry the moral “garbage” out of the camp after it has been atoned for.

5. Azazel and the goat demons. Leviticus 17:7 warns the Israelites not to offer sacrifices to the “goat demons” (*ESV, RSV*, Hebrew *se’irim*). Elsewhere in Scripture these “goat demons” are associated with the wilderness (*Isa. 13:21, 34:14, RSV*). Azazel’s goat being led out into the wilderness is thus associated with the demonic powers represented by hairy goats.

6. Revelation 20. The typology of Azazel finds a striking fulfillment in the fate of Satan during the millennium. In a clear allusion to Leviticus 16, John the revelator in Revelation 20:1–3 describes Satan being “bound” (by a chain of circumstances) to the desolate earth (Greek *abyssos*, the same word used for the desolate earth in Jeremiah 4:23).

7. Malicious witness. Satan bears the iniquities of the righteous, not in the sense of being their Savior but as the “accuser of our brothers” (*Rev. 12:10, NIV*). He receives just retribution according to the principle of the malicious witness (*Deut. 19:15–19, Rev. 20:10*).

II. The Activities of the Congregation on the Day of Atonement (*Review Leviticus 23:26–32 with your class.*)

The five activities of the congregation of Israel on the Day of Atonement each have antitypical application for spiritual Israel today:

A. Gather at the Sanctuary for a Holy Convocation (*vs. 27*). “God’s people are now to have their eyes fixed on the heavenly sanctuary” (Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, p. 278; *compare Heb. 4:16; 10:19, 20*).

B. Identify With the Offering Made by the Priest (*vs. 27*). *See Heb. 12:22–24*. “One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other—Christ our righteousness.”—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 259.

C. Refrain From Work (*vss. 28, 30, 31*). *See Heb. 4:3, 9*; Ellen G. White speaks of the “rest of grace.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 928.

D. Afflict (Humble) One’s Soul (*vss. 27, 29, 32*). *See Isa. 58:5–11*. “It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 456.

E. Undergo a Work of Cleansing (*Lev. 16:30*). *See Mal. 3:2, 3; Ezek. 36:25–27*.

► STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: The word for “cleanse” in Daniel 8:14 is *nitsdaq*, which has a broad range of meanings, including “cleanse,” “restore,” and “vindicate.” How do each of these meanings match the activities of the high priest on the Day of Atonement?

Thought Questions:

- 1 If people living in the antitypical Day of Atonement are not saved on a different basis from those living before this time, why is there a special work of cleansing?
- 2 What is the importance of having “atonement” beyond forgiveness, as typified in the Day of Atonement?
- 3 Why is it necessary for Satan to bear the punishment of the sins of the saints whom he has falsely accused?

Application Questions:

- 1 What practical application of the five activities of the congregation on the Day of Atonement can be made to our personal lives in the antitypical Day of Atonement?
- 2 How does the Day of Atonement judgment message help to give us assurance of salvation?

► STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Look again at the symmetrical structure of the Pentateuch in the introduction of the Learning Cycle for this lesson. Notice how in this structure the key word of Leviticus building up to Leviticus 16 is “blood,” and flowing forth from Leviticus 16 is “holiness.”

Activity: Ask the class to discuss the placement of the Day of Atonement (*Leviticus 16*) right in the heart of the Pentateuch, with blood (“justification”) as its basis and holiness (“sanctification”) as its fruit. How does this illustrate the balanced gospel of assurance in the judgment (saved completely by grace but judged according to works/fruits)?

Christ, Our Sacrifice



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Isa. 53:2–12, Heb. 2:9, Heb. 9:26–28, Heb. 9:12, Exod. 12:5, Heb. 4:15.*

Memory Text: “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (*1 Peter 2:24, NASB*).

Catholic priest Maximilian Kolbe was imprisoned in Auschwitz for providing shelter to refugees from Greater Poland, including 2,000 Jews. When a prisoner in his barracks vanished (perhaps he escaped), the SS picked ten prisoners to be starved to death in reprisal. One of the selected men cried out, “Oh, my poor wife, my poor children. I shall never see them again.” At that point Kolbe offered himself in the man’s place; that is, he asked that he be the one to starve, not the distraught family man. The surprised SS officer agreed, and Kolbe joined the ranks of the doomed while the other man survived.

However moving, Kolbe’s sacrifice is only a shadow of the One who willingly took our place, an act symbolized in the sanctuary service. The New Testament identifies Jesus with the two major aspects of the Old Testament sacrificial system: He is our Sacrifice (*Hebrews 9, 10*), and He is our High Priest (*Hebrews 5–10*).

This week we will study different aspects of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice and see what His once-and-for-all death has provided for us.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 16.*

Jesus in Isaiah 53

Read Isaiah 53:2–12. What do these verses teach about what Christ did for us?

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is a powerful description of Christ’s death for the sins of the world. Several aspects in this passage provide clear evidence that Jesus’ death is atonement in the form of penal substitution, which means that He took the penalty that others deserved and, in fact, died as a Substitute for them. Here are some of the implications of this passage for Jesus’ ministry for us:

1. Jesus suffered *for* others. He took their grief and sorrows (*vs. 4*), transgressions, iniquities (*vss. 5, 6, 8, 11*), and sin (*vs. 12*).
2. He brings great benefits to those for whom He suffers: peace and healing (*vs. 5*) and justification (*vs. 11*).
3. It was God’s will for Jesus to suffer and be crushed (*vs. 10*). God put our iniquity on Him (*vs. 6*) because it was God’s plan that He died in our stead.
4. Jesus is righteous (*vs. 11*), without violence or deceit (*vs. 9*).
5. He was a guilt offering, an atoning sacrifice for sin (*vs. 10*).

Read Luke 22:37, Acts 8:32–35, and 1 Peter 2:21–25. How do these New Testament authors interpret Isaiah 53?

The New Testament allusions to Isaiah 53 establish beyond doubt that Jesus Christ fulfills this prophecy. Even He identified Himself with the person depicted there (*Luke 22:37*). Christ took our sins upon Himself so that we could be forgiven and transformed.

Dwell on all that Isaiah 53 says that Christ did for us. How can you make this personal, and know that no matter what you have done, the assurances here can apply to you if you give yourself to the Lord in faith and surrender?

Sufficient Substitution

Read Hebrews 2:9. What does it mean that Jesus “taste[d] death for everyone”? See also Heb. 2:17, 9:26–28, 10:12.

Jesus died for sinners. He was without sin (*Heb. 4:15*) so that when He gave His life as a sacrifice He would not die for His own sin. On the contrary, He was “to bear the sins of many” (*Heb. 9:28, NKJV*), to “make propitiation for the sins of the people” (*Heb. 2:17, NKJV*), and to put away sin forever (*Heb. 9:26*).

According to Hebrews 2:9, the purpose of making Jesus “lower than the angels” is so that He could suffer death. The point is to explain why Jesus’ death is an indispensable requirement for His exaltation. In simple terms, in order for humanity to be saved, Jesus had to die. There was no other way.

In this passage, the goal of the Incarnation is the death of the Son. Only through the suffering of death could Jesus become the Author of salvation (*Heb. 2:10*).

Why was it fitting for God to let Jesus suffer? The context in Hebrews 2:14–18 suggests that Jesus’ death was necessary in order to rescue God’s children from the slavery of death, from the devil, from the fear of death, and to qualify Jesus to become a “merciful and faithful High Priest” (*NKJV*).

In short, the Cross had to precede the crown.

“Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

Christ, the Creator of the universe, died as a human being for your sins. Dwell on what this means. Think of the incredible good news that it is. Think of the hope it offers you personally. How can you make this amazing truth the chief motivation of all that you do?

Christ's Blood

The concept of redemptive blood pervades the entire Bible. Starting from the earliest sacrifices after Adam and Eve sinned, blood was always present when animal sacrifices occurred. Blood rituals characterized the Israelite sacrificial system in order to illustrate the crucial truth that, without blood, we would not have any chance to be forgiven our sins and to enter into the presence of God. Blood was the only way to receive God's mercy and to have community with Him.

Read the following passages in Hebrews about Christ's blood and the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices. What do they teach us about the blood?

Heb. 9:12 _____

Heb. 9:14 _____

Heb. 9:18 _____

Heb. 9:22 _____

Heb. 10:19 _____

Heb. 12:24 _____

Heb. 13:12 _____

Heb. 13:20 _____

Christ's blood does not refer to His life, but instead it is a symbol of His substitutionary death. As such, it describes the functional aspect of that death. Christ's shed blood is amazingly multifunctional. Christ's blood obtains eternal redemption for us, provides us with cleansing from sin, provides us with forgiveness and sanctification, and is the reason for the resurrection.

In Hebrews, there is a powerful contrast: Christ's blood is better than any other blood. In fact, no other blood can really provide forgiveness; Christ's death is the only reason sins are forgiven, before and after the Cross (*Heb. 9:15*). The shedding of Christ's blood, and its effects, are clear evidence that Christ's death was substitutionary, which means that He took the penalty that we deserve.

How should an understanding of Christ's death help to free us from any notion that our own works can save us?

Spotless Sacrifice

Which criteria does a sacrificial animal need to meet? Read *Exod. 12:5, Lev. 3:1, 4:3*.

The selection of a sacrificial animal required great care. A person could not just take any animal for an offering; the animal needed to fulfill several criteria, depending on the kind of offering.

However, there is one criterion that all offerings had to meet. They had to be “unblemished.” The Hebrew word *tamim* could also be translated as “complete,” “unscathed,” “without fault,” or “perfect.” It expresses the idea that something meets the highest standard possible. Only the best was good enough.

Pertaining to people, the word is used to characterize their relationship with God as being “blameless” (*Gen. 6:9, 17:1, NASB*).

How do these texts describe Jesus? *Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 9:14; and 1 Pet. 1:18, 19*. Why was it crucial that Jesus be sinless?

Jesus, the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (*John 1:29, NKJV*), perfectly fulfills the Old Testament criterion of a spotless sacrifice. His pure life established Jesus as a perfect sacrifice. This is the guarantee of our salvation, for only a sinless one could bear our sin for us, and it is His perfect righteousness that covers us, now and in the judgment. That righteousness is our hope of salvation.

Like its Hebrew equivalent, the Greek word for “without blemish” (*amomos*) is used to describe not only Jesus and His flawless sacrifice but also the character of His followers.

“By comparing their lives with Christ’s character, they will be able to discern where they have failed to meet the requirements of God’s holy law; and will seek to make themselves perfect in their sphere even as God is perfect in his sphere.”—Ellen G. White, *The Paulson Letters*, p. 374.

Through Christ’s death and His ministry, we are presented blameless before God (*Jude 24*). This is possible only because the Blameless One stands in our place.

Why can the concept of being “holy and blameless” cause uneasiness? How can the knowledge that Christ is our Substitute help you to accept that you are “holy,” as well? How should our new status before God impact the way in which we live?

A Great Danger

In the book of Hebrews, Paul not only focuses on the theological understanding of Christ's sacrifice, but he also explains some of its practical implications. At several places he shows what happens if someone ignores this sacrifice.

Read Hebrews 6:4–6 and 10:26–31. About what is Paul warning us? What kinds of attitudes does he describe?

In the book of Hebrews, Paul demonstrates how magnificent God's salvation is, how God has revealed Himself, and what He has done and is doing for the believers. However, there is at least one main, problematic issue that Paul has to address. It is the danger that Christ's sacrifice could gradually be taken for granted. He describes such a danger as "drifting away" from the goal (*Heb. 2:1*). The imagery behind Paul's words is that of a ship that is veering off course and does not reach the port of destination. So, the main task is to stay on course.

Some of those who reject God do so deliberately, which means that their lives after receiving the gospel are virtually the same as they were before these people received the gospel. These people do not, in fact, have any efficacious sacrifice for their sins (*Heb. 10:26–31*). It seems that not many believers would forthrightly reject Christ's sacrifice or even think about such a thing. Still, Paul sounds a warning. The real danger of disregard and neglect is that it is often a subtle and very gradual process. The transition can be unnoticeable. Gradually, the work of Christ is not appreciated enough, similar to Esau's failure to appreciate his birthright anymore (*Heb. 12:15–17*). Christ's sacrifice should never become so familiar that we regard it as commonplace.

Paul does not want to make his readers fearful; nevertheless, he needs to show them the consequences of veering away from God. He does not want such a thing to happen. On the positive side, he encourages them vividly to "hold fast" to all the good things of salvation (*Heb. 3:6, 14; 10:23*) and to fix their eyes on Jesus (*Heb. 12:2*).

What about you? Have you simply become "used to" the amazing truth about the Cross? Why is this such a terrible thing to do? How can we protect ourselves from the danger that Paul warns about here?

Further Study: “The Atonement, Part I—Atoning Sacrifice,” pp. 457–476, in Appendix C of *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7A.

What Martin Luther frequently called a “wonderful exchange” or “joyous exchange” of Christ’s righteousness for human sin, Ellen G. White describes in a classic statement as follows: “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

“Nothing less than the death of Christ could make His love efficacious for us. It is only because of His death that we can look with joy to His second coming. His sacrifice is the center of our hope. Upon this we must fix our faith.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 660.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Some don’t like the idea of Jesus as our Sacrifice. They think it makes God sound bloodthirsty or vengeful, like the pagan deities of the past. (In fact, some argue that the language of blood and sacrifice and so forth in the Bible is simply a reflection of these pagan concepts.) What is so dramatically wrong with this perception of the Cross? How do the concepts of death, sacrifice, and blood help to show us just how serious sin and its consequences are? How should this realization of the cost of sin help us to seek God’s power to put sin out of our lives?
- ❷ Some people struggle with the issue of works and how they relate to salvation. How can keeping before us Christ’s substitutionary death, and what He accomplished for us by that death, help to protect us from falling into the trap of salvation by works? After all, what could our works possibly add to what Christ has done for us by dying in our stead?
- ❸ Ellen G. White said it would be good to spend a thoughtful hour every day focusing on the life of Jesus, especially the closing scenes. How could such an exercise help to strengthen our relationship with Christ, as well as increase our appreciation of what He has done for us?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *1 Peter 2:24 and Isaiah 53:5, 6*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Recognize God’s self-sacrifice on our behalf and His unconditional and unselfish love toward people.

Feel: Foster the feeling of gratitude toward God for loving and sacrificing in order to give us the assurance of salvation.

Do: Submit to God’s plan of salvation, praise Him for His unreserved acceptance, and thoughtfully serve as He serves us.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: God’s Incomprehensible Sacrifice for Sinners

A Why did Jesus have to take on human nature and die on the cross in order to save humanity? Compare with Isaiah 53.

B Why is it not possible for God simply to forgive our sins in order to solve the problem of sin?

II. Feel: God’s Self-Sacrificing Love Warms Human Hearts

A How can you express your thankfulness to God for His love and condescension to our human level?

B How does it make you feel to know that Jesus became an atoning sacrifice for you, took upon Himself a condemnation that you rightly deserve, and gave you eternal life?

III. Do: God’s Grace Restores and Changes Sinners

A Why is it so important to proclaim to the world God’s forgiveness?

B How do God’s gracious actions toward sinners help you to act toward those who err?

C Why is it so tragic if a person rejects the death of Christ?

► **Summary:** When we accept God’s love and sacrifice for us, God forgives our sins, changes our status, blesses us, and leads us into a new path of life.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Isaiah 53:4–6*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: In a powerful way, the prophet Isaiah presents the mission of the Messiah, who is called the Servant of the Lord. This is the best description of the role of our Savior. This Servant brings hope, and His death saves humanity from their sins.

Just for Teachers: This week’s lesson should help the members of your class understand the meaning of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as predicted in the life of the Servant of the Lord of Isaiah 53 and as seen in the larger biblical context. This Servant of the Lord was “a man of sorrows,” “a guilt offering,” and out of love He voluntarily died for our sins.

Opening Discussion: If you were asked to describe in one chapter the most important aspects of the mission of the Messiah, what would you write about Him? What crucial points should not be omitted?

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Just for Teachers: In the second part of the book of Isaiah are five songs of the Servant of the Lord that are also called the songs of the Suffering Servant (*Isa. 42:1–9, 49:1–7, 50:4–9, 52:13–53:12, and 61:1–3*). God wants to save His people even though they do not recognize His love. He, therefore, wants us to understand and appreciate His great sacrifice for humanity. In Isaiah 53, this sacrifice can be best described as a substitutionary death that has brought victory over sin, as well as death and justification for those who accept His solution for their sinful situation.

Bible Commentary

Our eternal life depends on the fulfillment of the mission of the Servant of the Lord. His gracious sacrifice and suffering for us is the source of our justification and salvation. Understanding these passages is so vital for our spiritual life that we will explore them this week with a special emphasis on the fourth song. Follow the main thoughts of the biblical material and engage your class in the Bible study summarized in the following sections.

I. The First and Second Songs of the Servant of the Lord (*Review Isaiah 42:1–9 and 49:1–7 with your class.*)

Consider carefully Isaiah’s texts, which describe Christ’s universal mission. The first song does not reveal the identity of the Servant of the Lord but pictures His gigantic task: He will bring justice and law to the whole world and will be a covenant and a light to the world. Even though He is a King, He will not act as a conqueror, but His manner will be gentle and humble. His strength and power will be in the Word and the Spirit of God.

The second song identifies the Servant as Someone who has to fulfill a crucial role in bringing Israel and her remnant back to God (so the Servant cannot be Israel or the remnant of Israel; *see Isa. 49:6*). He is not only an Agent communicating about salvation, but He is, in His person, the Salvation to the entire world. For the first time in this song, one also finds allusion to the mental suffering and glorification of the Servant (*Isa. 49:7*).

Discussion Question: The literal translation of Isaiah 49:6 highlights the fact that the Servant of the Lord is the Salvation for the world. Compare with your class different translations of this verse and discuss with the members the difference between the declaration that Jesus Christ is the Salvation for the whole world and the statement that the Servant will bring or proclaim God’s salvation to the entire world.

II. The Third Song (*Review Isaiah 50:4–9 with your class.*)

This song is called the “Servant’s Gethsemane,” because the Servant Himself speaks about His own experience, intense suffering, and trust in the Lord. The prophet Isaiah first paints an incredibly beautiful picture of the Servant’s appointments and close relationship with God. The Lord awakens Him morning by morning in order to reveal His task for the day. The Servant’s obedient discipleship is described in this passage.

For the first time the physical suffering of this Servant is mentioned. He will be flogged, beaten, tortured, and greatly humiliated by mocking and spitting (*vs. 6*). However, in His anguish He trusts that the Lord will help Him.

Discussion Question: What from this passage of the book of Isaiah proves that the Servant of the Lord suffered voluntarily? What does it mean in Isaiah 50:7 that the Messiah set His “face like a flint” (*NKJV*)?

Activity: Ask members of your class to open their Bibles and share other verses that are dear to them about God’s love and His promises of care during our distressing times.

III. The Fourth and Fifth Songs (Review Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and 61:1–3 with your class.)

The prophet Isaiah comes to the core of the matter in his fourth song. In five stanzas, each consisting of three verses, we encounter the most sublime passage about the Servant's sacrificial life. This splendid masterpiece contains the most glorious message about the mission and accomplishments of the Messiah and describes them in the following scenario:

1. *Paradox of the Servant's life—highly exalted and deeply humiliated (Isa. 52:13–15).* The puzzle of His life seems unsolvable. But as Isaiah progresses further in this poem, the enigma becomes clearer: the Servant's journey will be through suffering and sacrificial death to glorification.

2. *Rejection of the Servant, Man of Sorrows (Isa. 53:1–3).* People do not believe in Him, and twice in this passage it is underscored that He is despised. This realistic description ends with a sad statement that no one respects Him.

3. *Atonement of the Servant of the Lord who took upon Himself our transgressions (Isa. 53:4–6).* This core of the song explains why the Servant has to go through all the suffering and humiliation: Note the passive voice of verbs in verse 5, which explains what was done for us by the Servant. Because of the Servant's voluntary and substitutionary death for us, we are healed (salvation is healing), and we may live.

4. *Suffering, trial, death, and burial of the Servant of the Lord (Isa. 53:7–9).* Isaiah now describes the Servant's complete submission to the will of God and that His grief, sorrow, and suffering were not His own but were because of "the transgression of my people."

5. *Glorification of the Servant of the Lord (Isa. 53:10–12).* This song climaxes with an explanation of the many wonderful results of the Servant's sacrificial death: resurrection, justification of many, and the sharing of His victory and spoil with others. He continues His work for sinners for whom He suffered death: He intercedes for them.

The fifth and final song (*Isa. 61:1–3*) declares that the Servant is anointed by the Lord and enabled by the Spirit to proclaim good news and apply all He has accomplished in His life and death to sinners in order to bring freedom and victory to them so that they can serve others and be His faithful servants (*Isa. 61:4–6*).

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Why can the first reading of Isaiah 53 about the Servant of the Lord be confusing? See the story of the Ethiopian high official in Acts 8:26–40.
- 2 Why did God lead Isaiah to explain in such detail the events related to the death of the Servant of the Lord? How does Isaiah interpret the meaning of the Servant's death and its wonderful results?

► STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Jesus applied to Himself Isaiah 61:1, 2 when He proclaimed: “ ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’ ” (*Luke 4:16–22, NIV*). To what extent can you apply this passage to yourself when God calls you to proclaim His good news to the world? Discuss with your class how it can be properly and wisely done.

Application: Regarding the Servant of the Lord, God states through Isaiah that “the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (*Isa. 53:6, NIV*), “my righteous servant will justify many” (*Isa. 53:11, NIV*), and “he bore the sin of many” (*Isa 53:12, NIV*). Discuss with your class how you can reconcile this seeming discrepancy between “all” and “many”? Discuss with your class how this can be done properly and wisely (see how the apostle Paul applied Isaiah 49:6b to his situation according to Acts 13:47).

► STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Isaiah uses rich imagery to describe the mission and accomplishments of the Servant of the Lord in these five passages we have studied. What are the advantages of such illustrative teaching?

Activities:

1 Isaiah graphically pictures the suffering of the Servant of the Lord and goes through the most vital points by using a vast biblical vocabulary. Ask your class to rewrite chapter 53 of the book of Isaiah, using our modern language to correctly describe what happened in the life of Christ. How can one best express in today’s culture the meaning of His victorious substitutionary death for us? Be faithful to the biblical text, but express the same thoughts in a clear, simple, and different way. Ask your class to come up with modern, twenty-first-century pictures, metaphors, similes, and concepts that would speak to the mind and heart of our postmodern society. Be creative. Especially aim this exercise toward the youth. How can we communicate to them the depth of this extraordinary message?

2 Find in your hymnal songs about Christ’s death and its results for us. Invite your class to learn the best ones by heart.

Christ, Our Priest



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Ps. 110:1–5; Gen. 14:18–20; Heb. 7:1–3; Rom. 8:31–34; 1 Tim. 2:4–6; Heb. 8:6; Heb. 2:17, 18; Heb. 3:6; Heb. 10:1–14.*

Memory Text: “Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man” (*Hebrews 8:1, 2, NASB*).

After His resurrection and ascension to the heavenly sanctuary, Christ entered into a new phase of the plan of redemption (*Heb. 2:17*). With the indispensable requirement of His sacrifice fulfilled, He was inaugurated as Priest and began His priestly ministry in order to mediate His perfect sacrifice in behalf of those covered, by faith, by His blood. His priestly ministry consists of two phases, both foreshadowed in the earthly sanctuary: the daily ministry and the yearly ministry during the Day of Atonement.

This week we will study the work of Jesus during His daily ministry and see some of the practical ramifications that His work has for us. We can, indeed, draw great comfort from knowing that Jesus is now standing in the presence of God, ministering the merits of His sacrifice in our behalf. The sanctuary message offers hope and encouragement to even the weakest of His followers.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 23.*

Our High Priest

The New Testament book that speaks the most about Christ as Priest is Hebrews. The Old Testament backbone of Hebrews consists of two verses quoted from Psalm 110. Verse 1 is cited to confirm that Christ is exalted above all because He sat down at the right hand of God. This is a recurring theme in Hebrews, one that emphasizes Jesus' divinity and Messiahship (*Heb. 1:3, 4:14, 7:26, 8:1, 12:2*). Psalm 110:4 is used to demonstrate that Christ's priesthood has been foreshadowed by Melchizedek (*Heb. 5:6*).

In what ways does Christ fulfill the divinely promised priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek? Compare Gen. 14:18–20, Ps. 110:4, and Heb. 7:1–3.

The Bible does not provide much information regarding Melchizedek. Yet, what it does reveal shows remarkable similarities to Jesus. Melchizedek is the king of the city of Salem (Salem means “peace,” so he is the “King of Peace”). His name means “King of Righteousness,” which speaks of his character. He is detached from history, as his familial line is not given. His birth and death are not mentioned. So, it seems as if he had no beginning and no end, and he is “priest of the Most High God.” Melchizedek’s priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood, because through Abraham, Levi gave tithes to Melchizedek (*Heb. 7:4–10*). Melchizedek, then, is a type of Christ.

But Christ is even more. Aaron was the first high priest in Israel. Hebrews 5:1–4 describes an idealized Aaronic high priestly office: divine appointment, representative of men, mediation before God, compassionate, and offering sacrifices for the people and for himself.

The book of Hebrews portrays Christ as the new High Priest. He is of a better order than even Aaron; not only does He fulfill the requirements of the Aaronite priesthood, He enhances them. Jesus had no sin, was fully obedient, and did not need to bring an offering for Himself. On the contrary, He Himself was the offering—the most perfect offering possible.

Jesus fulfilled both the Aaronite and the Melchizedek high priesthood in a better way than either of those priests, or priesthoods, ever did or could. Both types met their antitype in Christ.

Advocate and Intercessor

Read Romans 8:31–34. What great hope and promise is offered us here?

The background of verses 31–34 is a courtroom scene in which we should visualize ourselves on trial. Questions are asked: Who is against us? Who will bring a charge against us? Who condemns us? Such a situation could easily send shivers down our spines. After all, are we not well aware of our human imperfection and sinfulness?

However, we do not need to fear. The promise that nothing and no one can separate us from God’s love centers on several important points: God is for us (*vs. 31*), God delivered His Son for us (*vs. 32*), God freely gives us all things (*vs. 32*), and God justifies us (*vs. 33*). Jesus Christ is on our side. Jesus is the answer to any fear of condemnation, for He died, was raised, and is now continuously interceding for us in the heavenly sanctuary at the right hand of God (*vs. 34*).

If someone goes so far as to die willingly for us, we should feel confident of His love. The assurance revealed in Romans 8:31–39 is really telling us about the kind of God we believe in. If we understand that our God loves us so much that nothing can thwart His purposes for us (*vss. 35–39*), the divine courtroom becomes a place of joy and jubilation.

This truth becomes even clearer in 1 John 2:1, 2. The Greek *parakletos* designates a legal assistant or advocate, someone who appears in another’s behalf as “intercessor.” Jesus is our Advocate, and He defends us because otherwise we would have no hope.

Our Advocate is “righteous,” which gives us the assurance that the Father will hear Christ’s intercession, for Christ could do nothing that His righteous Father would reject. Christ intercedes for those who have sinned, presenting Himself—the One who has not sinned—as the Righteous One who stands in their stead.

How can you better experience the marvelous truth that nothing will separate you from God’s love? How can you use this assurance as a motivation to live as God would have you live, as opposed, perhaps, to how you are living now?

Mediator

“Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Tim. 2:4–6, NKJV). How do these verses help us to understand just what Christ is doing for us in heaven?

Christ is called the one Mediator between God and man. There is no one else because, in fact, no one else is necessary. Through Christ’s position as Mediator, salvation and knowledge of truth are universally available (1 Tim. 2:4). The crucial question for us all is whether or not we will take advantage of what Christ has offered to each of us, regardless of our status, race, character, or past deeds.

Mediator is a term from the ancient Greek commercial and legal world. It describes someone who negotiates or acts as arbitrator between two parties in order to remove a disagreement or to reach a common goal in order to inaugurate a contract or covenant.

In Hebrews, Christ as Mediator is connected to the new covenant (Heb. 8:6, 9:15, 12:24). He has made reconciliation. Though sin had destroyed the close communion between humanity and God and would have led to the destruction of the race, Christ came and restored the connection. This is reconciliation. He alone is the link between God and humanity, and through this link we can enjoy a full covenant relationship with the Lord.

Paul’s reference to Him as the “man Christ Jesus” expresses His unique quality of being both human and divine (1 Tim. 2:5). Salvation and mediation are anchored precisely in Jesus’ humanity and His voluntary self-offering. By being both God and human, Jesus is able to link heaven and earth with ties that can never be broken.

“Jesus Christ came that He might link finite man with the infinite God, and connect earth that has been divorced by sin and transgression from heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, p. 253.

Think: there is a human being in heaven right now, mediating in your behalf. What should this tell you about your importance in the eyes of God? How should this truth influence how you live and how you treat others?

Great High Priest

What do the following texts reveal about Christ’s ministry as High Priest? *Heb. 2:17, 18; 3:6; 4:14, 15; 7:24–28; 8:1–3.*

Jesus is the “great High Priest” (*Heb. 4:14, NKJV*). He is superior to all high priests and rulers of earth. Jesus is the true and only High Priest. The Bible assigns a number of qualities to Jesus as great High Priest:

Merciful and faithful. The two characteristics of merciful and faithful (*Heb. 2:17*) fit Christ’s role as Mediator, for He bestows His gifts on us (is “merciful”) and is loyal to His Father and to us (is “faithful”).

With us. Jesus can sympathize with us (*Heb. 2:18; 5:2, 7*). Because He has lived as a human, we can trust that He is a compassionate and perfect Helper. Yet, He is not in the same situation as we are, because He is “without sin” (*Heb. 4:15*).

Over us. Jesus as High Priest is not in the community of believers as Moses was; He is over us, as a son presides over the house of his father (*Heb. 3:6*). Christ enjoys full authority among the saints.

As we are. Jesus’ divine origin did not give Him any exclusive rights. He was tempted just as we are (*Heb. 4:15*). The selected temptations in the Judean desert show that He was tempted in the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions (*Matt. 4:1–11*).

For us. Christ appears in the heavenly sanctuary in the presence of God “for us” (*Heb. 9:24*), and He also is making intercession for us (*Heb. 7:25*). Thank God that we have a Divine Representative to appear in the judgment in our place.

Jesus is in heaven “for us.” What does that mean? How can you draw some assurance and security from this wonderful truth?

The One Sacrifice

As we have seen, a crucial purpose of the earthly sanctuary service was to reveal—in symbols, in types, in mini-prophecies—the death and high priestly ministry of Jesus. Sin is something too terrible to be solved merely by the death of animals (as sad and unfortunate as those deaths are). Instead, all of that spilled blood was to point to the only solution for sin, and that was the death of Jesus Himself. That it took His death, the death of the One who was equal to God (*Phil. 2:6*), in order to atone for sin shows just how bad sin really is.

Read Hebrews 10:1–14. How does this passage contrast the function and work of the earthly sanctuary service with the death and high priestly ministry of Jesus?

Many crucial truths ring out of these texts, one of the most important being that the deaths of all those animals was not sufficient to deal with the sin problem. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (*Heb. 10:4, NKJV*). They merely point to the solution; they were not the solution themselves. The solution was Jesus, His death, and then His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf.

Notice another crucial point in these texts: the complete sufficiency of Christ’s one death. Though the animal sacrifices had to be repeated time and time again, day after day, year after year, Jesus’ single sacrifice was sufficient (after all, look at who was sacrificed!) to cover the sins of all humanity. God powerfully revealed this crucial truth when the inner veil of the earthly sanctuary was torn supernaturally after the death of Jesus (*Matt. 27:51*).

Look around at the world, look at the damage that sin has caused: the pain, the loss, the fear, the hopelessness. How can we learn day by day, moment by moment, to cling to Jesus as the only solution to the sin problem in our own lives?

Further Study: “The Atonement, Part II—High-Priestly Application of Atoning Sacrifice,” pp. 476–488, in Appendix C of *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7A.

“Step away from Satan’s voice and from acting his will, and stand by the side of Jesus, possessing his attributes, the possessor of keen and tender sensibilities, who can make the cause of afflicted, suffering ones his own. The man who has had much forgiven will love much. Jesus is a compassionate intercessor, a merciful and faithful high priest. He, the Majesty of heaven—the King of glory—can look upon finite man, subject to the temptations of Satan, knowing that he has felt the power of Satan’s wiles.”—Ellen G. White, *Christian Education*, p. 160.

“The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification. We may enjoy the favor of God. We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 32, 33.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Read Hebrews 2:17. Why was it necessary for Jesus to become human and to suffer before He could become our High Priest?
- ❷ Dwell on the second Ellen G. White statement listed above. Look especially at the line: “We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute.” How does this help us to understand what comes before, when she talks earlier about being “made perfect in Christ Jesus”?
- ❸ Our High Priest, Jesus Christ, is the Surety of our salvation, and He administers the effects and benefits of His sacrifice and blood. With Him on our side, we have nothing to fear. How can we take these wonderful truths, so powerfully expressed in the book of Hebrews, and apply them to ourselves, especially at times of great temptation?
- ❹ The book of Hebrews is very clear that Jesus’ once-and-for-all sacrifice was all that was needed for dealing with sin. What should that tell us about any religious practice that claims to repeat this sacrifice as a necessity for the forgiveness of sins?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Hebrews 7:25 and 8:1, 2*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Know our High Priest, Jesus Christ, and the meaning of His intercessory ministry.

Feel: Foster the feeling of love toward sinners as God intercedes for them.

Do: Pray for sinners to repent as Jesus wants to help each one in their daily struggles, save them, and vindicate them against Satan’s accusations.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Jesus Our High Priest

- A** Why do we need Jesus Christ’s mediatory and intercessory work?
- B** Why is Jesus the only true Intercessor? What disqualifies Mary and the saints for this role?
- C** Who is the only One who can bring assurance into our lives, and why?

II. Feel: No Competition Between Christ’s Intercession and the Father’s Love

- A** How can Jesus be closer to you when you understand with Paul that our Intercessor is the “man Jesus Christ”?
- B** Jesus’ intercessory ministry does not mean that the Father is angry, and it does not mean that Christ has to appease His wrath or change His “negative” attitude. Why is this so?

III. Do: Jesus Vindicates Against Satan’s Accusations

- A** Explain the way in which Jesus is the Great High Priest.
- B** What does it mean that we can come to Jesus as we are but not just in any manner?

► **Summary:** Our only spiritual safety is in the acceptance of both Christ’s great sacrifice for our past and His daily intercession for us in the present. In this way, our future is secured because it lies in God’s hands.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Hebrews 7:25 and 8:1, 2*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Christ intercedes for His people in the heavenly sanctuary and is always ready to help them even though they struggle with the reality of sin. He not only wants to make sinners aware of their destructive behavior but especially assists them through His infinite love. As their Mediator and Intercessor, He desires to give them victory over sin. In spite of their failures, He does everything possible to win their trust and to build meaningful relationships with them.

Just for Teachers: This week’s lesson should help class members to understand the meaning of Jesus’ intercessory ministry for them. He wants to save them completely and help them in their everyday struggles. Nothing and nobody can separate us from His love, save our own stubborn choices to remain in sin.

Opening Discussion: Many people struggle to understand the meaning of the intercessory ministry of Jesus. They cannot grasp the necessity and importance of Christ’s work for us today. Philip Yancey openly declares: “Would it not have been better if the Ascension had never happened? If Jesus had stayed on earth, he could answer our questions, solve our doubts, mediate our disputes of doctrine and policy. . . . By ascending, Jesus took the risk of being forgotten.”—Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), pp. 297–299. What do you think: Why do you need Christ as your Intercessor and Advocate?

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Just for Teachers: The popular understanding of an intercessor is of one who is a go-between for two antagonistic parties. This model of two opposed sides and a mediator or intercessor coming between them and trying to reconcile them by changing their mutual hatred, misunderstanding, prejudices, feelings, and attitudes toward each other lies at the heart of this misunderstanding. The implications of such an understanding of Christ’s mediation are quite devastating. The Lord is seen as an angry God who has to be begged, bended, and changed in His attitude toward humans in order to give them grace and grant them mercy. What a horrible picture of God. This distortion of

God's character has terrible consequences in popular Christian thinking: Jesus is not powerful enough to intercede; He needs help. Thus, Mary is pleading with God and, in addition, Peter, Paul, the apostles, plus all international, national, and local saints. In this way, God is depicted as a monster, an angry deity who is not easy to appease. But the biblical model of intercession is completely different!

Bible Commentary

I. What does it not mean for Jesus Christ to be our Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary? (Review 2 Cor. 5:19–21 with your class.)

1. Jesus does not need to plead with the Father on our behalf or beg Him to be merciful toward us, because our heavenly Father loves us (*see John 16:26, 27*).
2. Jesus does not need to change the Father's attitude toward us or appease an angry God so that He will give us a little bit of His grace, and this is because He provides the means of reconciliation: " 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life' " (*John 3:16, NIV*).
3. Jesus does not need to reconcile God with us, but we humans are in need of being reconciled with Him! Paul explains that as God's ambassadors our message is: "Be [you people] reconciled to God" (*2 Cor. 5:20, NIV*).

Discussion Question: Jesus Christ is our only Intercessor (*1 Tim. 2:2–6*). Paul's assertion was intended to counter the Gnostic teaching of his time. There is no power that can stand between God and this world. He is our Intercessor, because He gave Himself for humanity in order to redeem us. He is our Mediator because He is our Savior. His intercession is actually a continuation of His saving activity on our behalf. In reality it is the realization and actualization of His work for us on the cross. He needs and wants to apply to our lives today what He did two thousand years ago. We need His death and life in order to be alive, in order to be His followers today. Why are Jesus' incarnation and death prerequisites for Christ's intercessory ministry for us?

II. What Does the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Mean? (Review Hebrews 7:25 and Revelation 12:10–12 with your class.)

1. Jesus Christ and the heavenly Father meet together (in biblical languages "to intercede" means "to meet") in order to help humans in their everyday struggles against evil. The first tangible result of that meeting between the

heavenly Father and Jesus was the giving of the Holy Spirit to the believers (see *Acts 2*). All heaven is united to help us in our struggles with sin, Satan, and temptation (*John 15:5, Phil. 4:13*). Jesus Christ did not come to save us “in” sin but “from” sin (*Matt. 1:21*). Hebrews 4:16 spells out eloquently why the intercessory ministry of our High Priest is needed for us: “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (*NIV*). We are constantly in need of Jesus and are completely dependent upon Him, as well as upon the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is called *parakletos*, which means that “He is Someone called for help,” “Someone to stand by” (*John 14:26*).

2. Jesus Christ saves completely by forgiving our sins and justifying us (*Heb. 7:25*). Jesus identifies with us when we give our lives to Him; He becomes one with us. This identification is so close that it is compared to a very sensitive part of the body: “For this is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘. . . whoever touches you touches the apple of his [Lord’s] eye’ ” (*Zech. 2:8, NIV*). Other clear examples of His identification with His believers are the following statements: “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (*Matt. 25:40, NIV*); “I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me” (*Matt. 25:45*); “He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked. ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied” (*Acts 9:4, 5, NIV*). “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (*Luke 10:16, NIV*). Jesus saves all who come to Him, as they are, confessing their sins openly, honestly, and sincerely in order for Him to transform them by His grace.

3. Jesus Christ vindicates us against the accusations of Satan (see *Rev. 12:10–12*). He personally stands against Satan’s accusations. Our victory is in Him, because He is the Victor. Because Jesus Christ is our Intercessor and He is vindicating us in front of the whole universe, we can have no fear for the day of judgment (*1 John 2:28, 4:17*).

Activity: Ask the members of your class to discuss a clear definition of God’s anger, which is often misunderstood. Consider carefully the following explanation: on the cross, Jesus took upon Himself God’s anger, which was aimed against sin and not against people (unless they associate with sin; see *John 3:36*). It means that God’s anger is His uncompromised No to sin, His passionate reaction toward evil. Jesus died for us in our place, experiencing God’s anger and punishment in order that we may live when we put our faith in Him (*Rom. 3:21–26; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19, 21; Gal. 3:13, 14*). Only through Christ’s atoning sacrifice can we be at one with our heavenly Father.

III. Jesus Is Praying for You (Review *John 17:20, 21* with your class.)

According to John 17, Jesus prays for us. He prays for His disciples and the successive generations of His followers to be united and faithful. He did the same specifically for Peter (*Luke 22:32*). So, the intercession of Jesus means that Jesus is praying for us so that we do not fall. This is an example for us of how we should pray for one another.

Discussion Question: Why are even God’s people more interested in God’s blessings of Jesus’ ministry for them than in wholehearted obedience?

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: The book of Hebrews stresses that Jesus is our High Priest and Intercessor. Discuss with your class how they feel when they know that Someone is there for them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. He loves, forgives, justifies, helps, sanctifies, delivers from the power of sin, and vindicates against the accusations of Satan. What else could we need that He has not already taken care of!

Life Application: Find biblical examples of humans mediating or interceding for others and compare these instances with Jesus’ intercessory ministry for us. Why is Christ’s intercession superior? How can you act like Jesus by being there for others and by helping them to see God’s goodness in their lives?

►STEP 4—Create

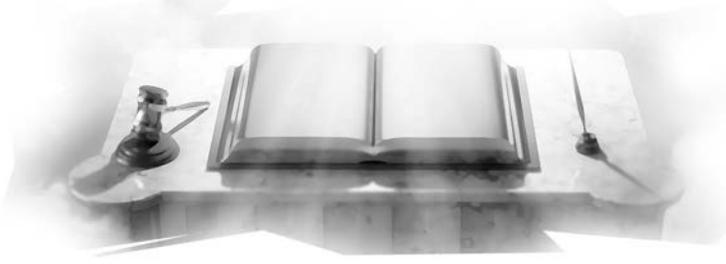
Just for Teachers: Our God does everything in order for us to know that He is for us and never against us. The intercessory ministry of Jesus on our behalf proves it. As our Intercessor, He died for us so that we can live. Intercession is built on a sacrifice. Discuss with your class different possibilities of how we can sacrifice something in our own lives to help people in need to be more comfortable. How can you show love to people who are homeless or to those who refuse your kind attention or notoriously (mis)use your goodness?

Activities:

① With your class members, create a list of people who need your prayers and then pray that God can help them to live a happy and victorious life in Christ Jesus, however difficult the circumstances of their lives may be.

② During this week, personally visit people who you think may need your assistance. They may be sick, financially broken, discouraged, disappointed, or have lost a loved one, friends, or a job.

The Pre-Advent Judgment



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 7, Gen. 3:8–20, 2 Tim. 2:19, Ps. 51:4, Ps. 96:11–13, 2 Cor. 5:10.*

Memory Text: “ ‘ “Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him” ’ ” (*Daniel 7:27, NASB*).

As the book of Hebrews so clearly shows, after His death and resurrection Jesus began a new phase of work for us. He became our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. The visions in Daniel 7 and 8 reveal that at some point in history this heavenly work of Christ in our behalf had entered a new phase, the judgment. This is sometimes called the “eschatological Day of Atonement”: eschatological, because it pertains to the end time; Day of Atonement, because it is prefigured by the Day of Atonement service in the earthly sanctuary.

Daniel 7, our focus this week, contains a sequence of kingdoms, symbolized by four animals, that parallels the sequence in Daniel 2: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

As we study, we'll see that the judgment is good news, because our Lord God works for His people. He judges in their behalf before the onlooking universe and grants them entrance into Christ's eternal kingdom, the culmination of all their hopes as followers of the Lord.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 30.*

The Vision and the Judgment

“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened” (*Dan. 7:10*).

Read Daniel 7:1–14. What is happening here?

After Daniel sees the four beasts, he observes another horn coming up among the horns of the fourth beast. This “little horn” becomes the main enemy of God and His saints. Then, suddenly, Daniel’s attention turns from the dark earth to a bright judgment scene in the heavenly throne room (*Dan. 7:9–14*).

The judgment scene is the pivot of the entire vision and involves two key figures, the Ancient of Days and the Son of man. Angels also are there, witnesses to the judgment. The scene unfolds in three steps: first is the court scene (*vss. 9, 10*), then the outcome of the judgment on the beastly powers on earth (*vss. 11, 12*), and finally the transfer of dominion and kingdom to the Son of man (*vss. 13, 14*). God the Father is portrayed as the majestic Ancient of Days, the wise and sage judge par excellence. The Son of man represents humanity, Jesus Himself, in the heavenly court. Jesus used this title many times to refer to Himself, and at least twice He clearly evoked the images of Daniel 7 (*Matt. 24:30, 26:64*).

The Day of Atonement functions as the most natural typological setting for this heavenly temple scene. In fact, it is portrayed as if the heavenly High Priest comes, surrounded by clouds of incense, to the Ancient of Days. In Daniel 7:10, the “books were opened.” Books play a major role in the heavenly judgment. There are several books of heavenly origin known in the Bible: the “book of life” (*Ps. 69:28, Phil. 4:3, Rev. 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, NASB*), the “book of remembrance” (*Mal. 3:16*), the books of “deeds” (*Rev. 20:12*), and God’s “book” (*Exod. 32:32, 33; Ps. 56:8*).

Imagine being judged by God. (You will be.) Imagine everything you have ever done being judged. (It will be.) If you have to stand on your record, your own deeds, your own good works, what hope do you have? What, then, is your only hope in judgment?

Judgment Pattern

Read Genesis 3:8–20. What does God do before He pronounces judgment?

The concept of an investigative judgment is biblical. God’s judicial procedure often includes a phase of investigation and inquiry. A first instance is reported in Genesis 3, where God investigates before He pronounces the verdict (*Gen. 3:8–19*). God’s dealings with Cain (*Genesis 4*), Babel (*Genesis 11*), and Sodom (*Genesis 18, 19*) follow a similar pattern. We see God undertaking the same action that He requires of the judges in Israel: namely, to “investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly” (*Deut. 13:14, NASB; see also Deut. 19:18*).

Investigation involves deliberation and fairness. It is often public. God allows others to see for themselves what He is doing. In this way, when God announces the verdict—be it salvation or condemnation—onlookers are assured that God’s action is the best. This is exactly the reason the heavenly judgment in Daniel 7 involves books. The books are not for God’s sake, so that He would remember more easily, but for the benefit of the celestial beings surrounding Him, who, unlike God, don’t know all things.

How does judgment turn out for the saints? *Dan. 7:22*.

In talking about the judgment, Ellen G. White wrote: “The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves. . . . But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 471, 472.

How do these words help us to understand why the judgment is such good news?

Time of the Judgment

Read Daniel 7:7–10, 21, 22, 25, 26. When does the judgment of Daniel 7 take place?

Both in the vision and in the angelic interpretation, the judgment follows as God’s response to the horn’s presumption and climaxes with the transfer of the kingdom to God’s saints. The Bible describes the judgment as occurring during the time when the horn power is still in existence (*Dan. 7:8, 9*). The horn’s dominion is taken away only after the court sits in judgment; then, when the judicial procedures are ended, all earthly kingdoms are destroyed (*vs. 26*).

What this means, clearly, is that the judgment must take place before the Second Coming. It is a pre-Advent judgment that begins sometime after “a time, times, and half a time” (*vs. 25, NASB*). How could there be a final reward or punishment if there were not a judgment that preceded it?

Indeed, the saints are rewarded at the time of Christ’s advent, which presupposes that they have already been judged. Similarly, the wicked, including the demonic powers, will be judged during the millennium before God executes the final judgment (*see Revelation 20*).

Why does God need a judgment? Doesn’t “ ‘the Lord know those who are His’ ”? *2 Tim. 2:19, NASB*.

Of course our omniscient God is fully aware of who His people are. He does not need a judgment in order to decide who is going to be saved. The pre-Advent judgment, rather, shows the Judge to be just in the saving of His people. Heavenly beings need to be sure that the saints are safe to save. As we seek to understand the meaning of the judgment, we need to remember the reality of the great controversy scenario, which is hinted at in these texts, because we see the angelic host witnessing the judgment. Other beings have an interest in the final outcome of the plan of salvation.

“ ‘The Lord knows those who are His’ ” (*NASB*). How can you be sure you are one of “His”? What’s the only way to be sure? *See Rom. 8:1.*

When the Judgment Ends

Read Daniel 7 again. What are the results of the pre-Advent judgment?

The judgment results in several far-reaching actions:

1. *The Son of man is crowned.* He receives “dominion, glory, and a kingdom” (*Dan. 7:14, NASB*).

2. *The saints receive the kingdom forever.* The judgment is for the benefit of the saints who will receive God’s kingdom (*Dan. 7:22*). Unmistakably, the Son of man and the saints have a very close relationship. When the Son of man receives His kingdom, He invites the saints to join Him. His kingdom is their kingdom (*Dan. 7:27*). This judgment leads to a time when the King of the everlasting kingdom is reunited with His people. This is their greatest reward and His.

3. *The rebellion is defeated and destroyed.* The enemies of God’s people are judged. After the horn makes war with the saints, it is defeated itself and destroyed forever (*Dan. 7:25, 26*).

4. *The absolute justice of God is demonstrated.* Because the judgment in the heavenly court is public and the angels attend the inquiries into human affairs, all can see for themselves that God is fair in His actions. He is able to uphold both love and righteousness. Thus, in the end God Himself will be vindicated, and all will acknowledge that God is just and that God is love. The whole procedure ensures that the universe will be a secure place for eternity (*see Ps. 51:4, Rom. 3:4*).

The pre-Advent judgment results in fulfilling the hopes of both God and the believers. God’s desire is to save His people and eradicate sin while leaving no doubt about His love and justice. Humanity’s yearning is to have salvation from sin and its oppression in every form and to enjoy eternal life in the presence of the One who loves them. The judgment thus becomes the guarantee for an eternal and trusting relationship between God and His creation.

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

Responsible Assurance

Read Psalm 96:11–13. What is the reason for all creation to rejoice?

Why would anyone cry out “Judge me, O LORD” (*Ps. 7:8, NKJV*)? The reason is simple. Judgment means salvation: “Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your power” (*Ps. 54:1, NASB*). Psalm 26 is a heartbreaking plea for justice and righteousness. David expresses marvelously the idea that God, the Judge, is always on the side of His loyal people and that His judgment is more than desirable (*Pss. 26:1, 35:24, 43:1, 54:1*). This is because judgment also implies vindication.

So, does the pre-Advent judgment threaten our assurance of salvation? No, because the outcome of this judgment is certain. It is “in favor of the saints” (*Dan. 7:22, NKJV*). God’s work in the judgment reaffirms our forgiveness and intensifies our assurance by making our sins eternally irrelevant. Judgment is actually another manifestation of the salvation that is ours. The judgment is not the time when God decides to accept or reject us; rather, it is the time when God finalizes our choice of whether or not we have truly accepted Him, a choice revealed by our works.

For the believer, then, judgment increases assurance. To put it more radically, judgment lies at the heart of the doctrine of Christian assurance.

Read Romans 14:10–12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10. How should the reality of judgment affect the way in which we live?

To exempt the righteous from judgment is not what the Bible teaches. Though the righteous are vindicated in the judgment and their sins are forever blotted out, the anticipation of the judgment encourages them to live a life of loyalty and accountability. The assurance of salvation is thus accompanied by the motivational impetus for moral behavior. Because God has done so much for us, we love Him and seek to express that love through being faithful in all that He asks of us.

Suppose a fellow believer expresses his or her fear of God and especially of the judgment. How can you help that person to understand the good news about the judgment and to develop a personal sense of assurance regarding salvation?

Further Study: “He who dwells in the heavenly sanctuary judges righteously. His pleasure is more in His people, struggling with temptation in a world of sin, than in the host of angels that surround His throne.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 176.

“Satan has an accurate knowledge of the sins that he has tempted God’s people to commit, and he urges his accusations against them, declaring that by their sins they have forfeited divine protection, and claiming that he has the right to destroy them. He pronounces them just as deserving as himself of exclusion from the favor of God. . . . But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have not given themselves up to be controlled by the satanic agencies. They have repented of their sins and have sought the Lord in humility and contrition, and the divine Advocate pleads in their behalf. He who has been most abused by their ingratitude, who knows their sin and also their penitence, declares: ‘The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. I gave My life for these souls. They are graven upon the palms of My hands. They may have imperfections of character; they may have failed in their endeavors; but they have repented, and I have forgiven and accepted them.’”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 588, 589.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Where did questions about God’s justice, law, and fairness first arise, on earth or in heaven? What are the implications of your answer, especially in the context of helping us to understand why there is a heavenly judgment of any kind?
- ❷ The Seventh-day Adventist Church has proclaimed the message of the judgment for many years now. Still, Christ has not returned. How are we to respond to what seems to be a very long time? Why is it so important to remember that, as humans, we have a very limited understanding of time itself? Think about some of the very long time prophecies in the Bible and how someone living in those times could easily have been discouraged about what, from their perspective, seemed to be taking forever.
- ❸ Many Christians believe in the biblical concept of judgment. (How could they not? It’s all throughout the Bible.) How, though, does linking the judgment to the sanctuary help to reveal crucial truths about the nature of judgment and the assurance that it offers us?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Daniel 7:27*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Understand the good news of the pre-Advent judgment, which gives the believer assurance of salvation because of Jesus Christ taking the initiative to affirm in front of a heavenly court that we belong to Him.

Feel: Foster the feeling of love toward God, who pronounces judgment in favor of the saints, gives them courage and strength to live, and condemns the little horn with its followers.

Do: Submit to God's plan and be part of His solution for humanity.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Jesus Christ Our Judge

- A** How can you know that Jesus is for you and not against you?
- B** Why does truth really matter?
- C** Why is it so important to unmask the activities of the antichrist?

II. Feel: Jesus Christ Secures Your Heavenly Place

- A** How do you feel knowing that Christ is not only your Judge but also your Advocate?
- B** When and how will Jesus pronounce judgment in favor of His children?
- C** What is so destructive, repulsive, and evil in the little horn's activities?

III. Do: Rejoice in the Lord, Your Judge

- A** How can God secure His victory over Satan and evil for all eternity?
- B** Can Jesus be "bribed" by our exemplary moral behavior, good deeds, or excellent service? Why, or why not? Why can these different ethical activities not make God more merciful to us?

► **Summary:** When God judges His people, He justifies, delivers, and vindicates; but on the other hand, He condemns, punishes, and destroys evil.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14, 22–27*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The pre-Advent judgment gives more assurance of salvation than if it did not occur. God takes the cases of His faithful followers and presents them in the heavenly court. The purpose is to affirm our decision for Him during our lifetime in front of the representatives of the whole universe and thus secure our place in heaven for all eternity. This judgment also condemns the little horn and all who follow him, thus confirming that evil will cease to exist.

Just for Teachers: This week’s lesson provides insight into understanding the pre-Advent judgment. The explanation is given from the perspective of a believer in Christ Jesus and is very positive, because God is for us and never against us. Judgment is an integral part of the gospel, a unity that needs to be presented in a right way in order not to scare people but bring them hope.

Opening Discussion: What is the first reaction and feeling of the members of the class when they hear that God will judge them? This question has been asked on all continents to people from various backgrounds, and the answer has always been “fear.” Why do we fear God’s judgment? One of the main reasons is that we have a narrow understanding of the nature of judgment and a one-sided definition. What, really, is divine judgment, and how should it be biblically defined?

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Just for Teachers: Daniel 7 is written in a beautiful literary structure that helps one to grasp the main points of the chapter. After an introduction (*vs. 1*), a vision follows (*vss. 2–14*), then its interpretation (*vss. 15–27*), and finally the epilogue (*vs. 28*). The vision is divided into different parts, which are expressed in a chiasm:

- (A) Setting a background—*vss. 2, 3*
- (B) Description of the three beasts—*vss. 4–6*
- (C) Terrifying fourth beast—*vs. 7*
- (D) Activity of the little horn—*vs. 8*
- (E) Heavenly judgment—*vss. 9, 10*
- (D’) Little horn—*vs. 11a*
- (C’) Fate of the fourth beast—*vs. 11b*

(B') Fate of the first three beasts—*vs. 12*

(E') Glorious triumph in judgment—*vss. 13, 14.*

Thus, the heavenly pre-Advent judgment is at the center of the vision and is its climax. In chapter 7, there are three key passages written in poetry: the two heavenly scenes (*vss. 9, 10, 13, 14*) and the crucial interpretation of the vision (*vss. 23–27*).

Bible Commentary

I. Divine Judgment as Gospel—God’s Smile for His People (*Review Daniel 7:22 with your class.*)

Daniel explains what will occur in the pre-Advent judgment in chapter 7 and points to two kinds of judgment:

1. Judgment of condemnation in connection with the little horn (*Dan. 7:26*).

2. Judgment of salvation. Before Daniel underscores the judgment of destruction, he clearly interprets what will happen to the believers. The judgment will be proclaimed to their advantage, “for” them: “ ‘Until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom’ ” (*Dan. 7:22, NKJV*). Glory and hallelujah to God!

Activity: Compare different translations of John 5:24. According to the NKJV, Jesus states: “ ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and **shall not come into judgment**, but has passed from death into life’ ” (*emphasis author’s*). The NIV puts this statement in the following words: “ ‘I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and **will not be condemned**; he has crossed over from death to life’ ” (*emphasis author’s*). Which translation is correct? According to the original Greek, both versions are correct, and there is good reason to believe that this textual ambiguity is intentional. The truth is that those who believe in Christ and His gospel will not be condemned, and they will not even come into judgment.

How does one understand this? Is Jesus in contradiction with Paul who assures that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (*2 Cor. 5:10a, NIV*)? What does Jesus mean when He states that those who believe will not come into judgment? It means that they will not come under the judgment of condemnation. There is only one judgment that is 100 percent condemnation, and it is the last judgment at the end of the millennium when all the wicked will

be annihilated. At that time, all the redeemed are already in the New Jerusalem with Christ, so they will not come into this judgment (*Rev. 20:6, 9–15*). Believers in Christ do not need to fear any divine judgment, because “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (*Rom. 8:1, NIV*).

Discussion Question: How can you train your mind to see God’s judgment as being positive and not scary?

II. God’s Judgment as “for” His People (*Review Isaiah 35:4 with your class.*)

Consider carefully the following texts, which prove that our definition of judgment is biblical. There are plentiful scriptural examples of divine positive judgments, but study at least these few examples:

1. The book of Judges. When God’s people were under the oppression of their enemies, they cried to God for help, and He sent them judges—i.e., deliverers who liberated and protected them.

2. David prayed several times to God: “Judge me, O Lord” (*Pss. 7:8, 26:1, 35:24*). He does not ask for condemnation but vindication from enemies who were against him and wanted to destroy him.

3. For God, to judge really means to save: “From heaven you pronounced judgment, and the land feared and was quiet—when you, O God, rose up to judge, to save all the afflicted of the land” (*Ps. 76:8, 9, NIV*).

4. Through the prophet Isaiah, God powerfully encourages: “Say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you’ ” (*Isa. 35:4, NIV*). This text plainly but beautifully explains that we need to trust in the Lord (not in ourselves) in order to have assurance of salvation.

Discussion Questions: When Paul explains the “in Christ” motif, he states that after we surrendered to God and believed in Him, He in His rich mercy “raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (*Eph. 2:6, NIV*). What does it mean that by faith we sit already with Christ in the heavenly realms, i.e., at the right hand of the heavenly Father (*see Eph. 1:20*)? Why do we not need to worry and doubt that one day we will be physically with Him in heaven?

III. God’s Judgment and Joy (*Review Psalm 96:11–13 with your class.*)

We usually associate divine judgment with fear and condemnation, but the psalmist put judgment together with joy. Study the verbs he uses in Psalm 96:11–13 and the reason he gives: “Let the heavens **rejoice**, let the earth **be glad**; let the sea **resound**, and all that is in it; let the fields **be jubilant**, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will **sing for joy**; they will

sing before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth” (*NIV*; *emphasis author’s*). Divine judgment brings final victory for God’s people and the end to evil. The redeemed will sing with joy at the second coming of Jesus: “ ‘Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. . . . let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation’ ” (*Isa. 25:9, NIV*).

Discussion Question: Why can believers in Christ rejoice about divine judgment? Be sure that your reasons are unselfish.

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Explain to your class why it is necessary that God stands for justice when He executes the judgments of condemnation. Why can’t love and truth exist without justice?

Activity: Read aloud with your class 1 John 2:28 and 4:17 and discuss these pertinent texts in small groups of two or three people. On what condition did John build his assertion that we can have bold assurance in the day of judgment and the second coming of Christ? What does it mean to “continue in Him” or “stay in Christ”? Jesus assures that we can bear fruit only if we abide in Him (*see John 15:1–17, Hosea 14:8*). Apply this saying to practical life. How can we remain in God in order to be fruitful?

►STEP 4—Create

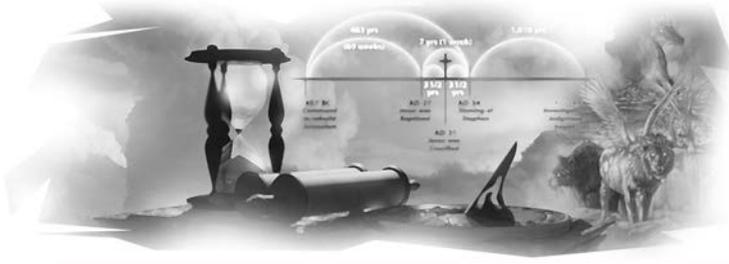
Just for Teachers: Contrast for the members of your class the positive and negative dimensions of God’s judgment activities. Invite them to give biblical examples and apply them to modern life.

Activities:

① How can you help your friends or church members who have doubts about their salvation, are not certain that God can accept them, and live in spiritual schizophrenia, because they fear God’s judgment?

② Ask your class to go to the Web site of the Adventist Theological Society, www.atsjats.org, and find in the archives of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* Jiří Moskala’s article entitled “The Gospel According to God’s Judgment: Judgment as Salvation.” This article will provide further details, study, and discussion about today’s topic.

The Eschatological Day of Atonement



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 8; Rev. 14:6, 7; Num. 14:34; Dan. 9:24–27.*

Memory Text: “And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (*Daniel 8:14*).

For a better understanding of the sanctuary message, study this chart, which shows how the great judgment scene of Daniel 7 (studied last week) is the same event as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14.

Daniel 7	Daniel 8	Interpretation
Lion	—	Babylon
Bear	Ram	Media-Persia
Leopard	He-goat	Greece
Fourth beast Little horn	Little horn	Rome—pagan Rome—papal
Pre-Advent Judgment	Cleansing of the sanctuary	Eschatological Day of Atonement
Transfer of kingdom to saints (Second Coming)		Second Coming and beyond

This week we will study Daniel 8. We will discover the real issue of the conflict between the horn power and God, and we will see why the cleansing of the sanctuary, beginning in A.D. 1844, is God's perfect answer to that challenge.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 7.*

The Little Horn's Attack

Read Daniel 8, focusing especially on verses 9–14 and verses 23–25. What does the little horn power attack?

The horn power interferes with the worship of the divine “Prince of the host” (vs. 11, compare with Josh. 5:13–15). It removes from Him (Dan. 8:11, 12) “the daily” (in Hebrew *tamid*)—a word that refers over and over to the daily sacrificial service in the earthly sanctuary service. Because the agent of *tamid* activities at the sanctuary is a priest, often the high priest, the horn sought to usurp the role of the (high) priest, command its own counterfeit “host,” and take away “the daily.” In this case, given the prophetic context (during the time of papal Rome), it’s obviously Christ’s high priestly ministry that is attacked.

The horn power thus usurps the responsibilities of the heavenly Priest and interrupts the continual worship of God on earth. It acts like another “captain of the host,” waging a religious war against the divine heavenly Prince, His sanctuary, and His people. It becomes an earthly instrument of Satan; it is said to be “mighty, but not by his own power” (Dan. 8:24, NKJV), and its activities reflect a cosmic war that is fought on two levels, the earthly and the heavenly.

The little horn follows right after the ram (Media-Persia) and the he-goat (Greece); therefore, it must be identified historically as Rome, which came after the kingdoms of Media-Persia (Dan. 8:20) and Greece (Dan. 8:21). Though the little horn started out as imperial Rome, the greater emphasis is on papal Rome, the primary focus of the vision.

As said before, the “daily” (*tamid*) refers to Christ’s continual, priestly mediation in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 7:25; 8:1, 2). The “taking away of the daily” by the horn power represents the introduction of such papal innovations as a mediating priesthood, the sacrifice of the mass, the confessional, and the worship of Mary, by which it has successfully taken away knowledge of, and reliance upon, the continual ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

None of us is immune to the danger of trying to play God. How might you, however subtly, be doing the same thing?

“How Long?”

The presumption of the little horn leads to the cry for judgment. As the ram and the he-goat became great and then were broken (*Dan. 8:4, 7, 8*), so the horn power exalts itself (*Dan. 8:9–11*). Thus, the question comes, How long will the vision be?

What specific issues are prompting the question in Daniel 8:13?

Although the question singles out a few activities of the horn, perhaps the most horrible ones, it still asks for the length of the entire vision; that is, it is asking about the events shown in the vision of Daniel 8.

In the Scriptures, the question “How long?” always asks for the present situation to be changed. It is found directed to people by God and by His prophets (*Exod. 10:3, Num. 14:27, and 1 Kings 18:21*). It is also directed to God by His people (*Ps. 94:3, Rev. 6:10*) and by the angel of Yahweh (*Zech. 1:12*). The angelic cry “How long?” (*Dan. 8:13, 12:6*) is a lament over continuous distress, a plea for change, and a call for divine judgment. Such a question expresses the expectation that God will finally triumph.

As in Zechariah 1:13, where Yahweh replied with “gracious words, comforting words” (*NASB*), the answer to the question in Daniel 8:13 comes right away: restoration will be under way beginning with a period of “2,300 evenings and mornings” (*vs. 14, NASB*).

Once we understand the human condition and the prophetic time in which we live, we cannot remain silent. The cry “How long?” needs to be put forth. As we look around at our world, how can we not plead for the Lord to come and usher in a new world “in which righteousness dwells” (*2 Pet. 3:13, NKJV*)? Although God is now at work, as promised in Daniel 8:14, we want Him to end the reign of evil here and return in the glory that He has promised time and again.

In which situations have you asked God the question “How long?” How do you maintain the assurance that God is indeed in control, however dismal your immediate prospects might seem and no matter “how long” it is taking to resolve the things you want changed?

Restoration of the Holy

Read Daniel 8:14. What happens at the end of the 2,300 “evenings and mornings”?

The phrase “evenings and mornings” reflects language from the Creation account that signifies a day (*Gen. 1:5, 8, et cetera*). It implies that God, using His own creative force, will counter the destructive activities of the horn and its host. The Creator causes a change of situation, which is actually called for by the question in Daniel 8:13.

The answer in Daniel 8:14 can be read as “Until 2,300 evenings-mornings, then will the holy [sanctuary] be restored [cleansed].” A study of the terms that are parallel to “restore” (from the Hebrew word *zdq*) shows that it has three major meanings: in a relational context, it denotes restoration (*Isa. 10:22*); in the context of the sanctuary, it denotes cleansing or purification (*Job 4:17, 25:4*); and in a legal context, it denotes vindication (*Job 34:5*). The same verb is used for God’s intervention in judgment when the righteous are vindicated, or declared to be righteous (*1 Kings 8:32, Isa. 50:8*). The word *holy*, used in Daniel 8:14 (often translated as “sanctuary”), is also used in association with holy people (*Dan. 12:7*). In fact, Daniel 8:24 makes it clear that the little horn power, like the little horn power in Daniel 7, attacks God’s “holy” people.

Thus, the restoration of the “holy” (or “sanctuary”) in Daniel 8:14 encompasses the solution to all the problems mentioned previously in the question. Not only will judgment be rendered against the little horn power, but the sanctuary will be cleansed, and God’s people and God’s sanctuary will be given their rightful state. This finds a parallel in what happened on the Levitical Day of Atonement (*Lev. 16:20, 30*).

The work of restoration in Daniel 8 equals the divine judgment in Daniel 7, where judgment was given in favor of the saints and against the evil little horn power.

The world needs to know that justice and judgment, as predicted in Daniel 8:14, will come and that now is the time to accept the salvation offered us in Jesus.

Read Revelation 14:6, 7. How do these verses tie in directly with the judgment of Daniel 7 and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8?

Day of Atonement in Daniel 8

The target of the horn's assault is God's heavenly sanctuary and His people. What does the future hold for them? That is what the question in Daniel 8:13 asks. However, only the Day of Atonement can bring the sanctuary and the people of God back to their rightful state and, thus, justify God in His dealings. So, the answer in Daniel 8:14 must be a Day of Atonement activity. In fact, the Day of Atonement is the only ritual day that shows the same combination of prominent themes as shown in the climax of the vision of Daniel 8: sanctuary imagery, purification of sanctuary and people, judgment, and creation.

There are also several terms in Daniel 8 that allude to the Day of Atonement. The horn acts in "rebellion" (*Dan. 8:12, 13, NIV*), a term that occurs specifically in Leviticus 16:16, 21 (*NIV*). It describes a defiant sin, and only on the Day of Atonement can the sanctuary be cleansed from it. The word *holy* (*qodesh*) explicitly links Daniel 8:14 with Leviticus 16, where it occurs to designate the Most Holy Place (*Lev. 16:2, 3, 16, 17, 20, 23, 27, 33*). That the "holy" is restored to its rightful place is reminiscent of the Day of Atonement, when the "holy" is purified from "rebellion" (*Lev. 16:16, NIV*). The specific use of the animal imagery of the ram and he-goat also alludes to the Day of Atonement (*Lev. 16:5*), as does the further designation of the goat as the "shaggy" one (*Dan. 8:21, NASB*), a description used for the two goats at the Day of Atonement.

The horn's war in the realm of religion is countered and cut short by divine intervention carried out in the context of an eschatological Day of Atonement. At last, terror finds its end, and God's people, the true worship, and the sanctuary are restored to their rightful position and, in the final analysis, God Himself is vindicated. As God demonstrated on the Day of Atonement that He is just in His dealings and judgments by forgiving the loyal and judging the disloyal and rebellious, so the eschatological Day of Atonement will verify that God is just when He saves and when He punishes.

Whatever else we can learn from Daniel 8:14, it should tell us that, even after all these long centuries, the Lord has not forgotten His promises to us and that He will punish evil and reward His saints. How can you learn to hold on to those promises, especially during times of trial? After all, without these promises, what hope do you have?

Daniel 8 and 9

The term for “vision” (in Hebrew, *chazon*) in the question in Daniel 8:13 refers to the entire vision in Daniel 8:3–11 (see *Dan. 8:1, 2, 13, 15*) and encompasses the time of Media-Persia (ram), Greece (he-goat), and papal Rome (little horn). When the length of the vision is given as “2,300 evenings and mornings,” we should therefore understand it as covering the span from Media-Persia to the end time. The text repeatedly emphasizes that the vision pertains to the “time of the end” (*Dan. 8:17, 19*) and “many days in the future” (*Dan. 8:26, NASB*). Because of its length, a literal 2,300 days is nowhere near long enough to cover the time span of the vision. Therefore, we need to interpret it by the day-year principle as 2,300 years, following the example of Ezekiel 4:5, 6 and Numbers 14:34.

The question remains: When do the 2,300 years begin?

Bible scholars, both Jewish and Christian, have seen a strong link between Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:24–27, long viewed as a powerful prophecy pointing to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

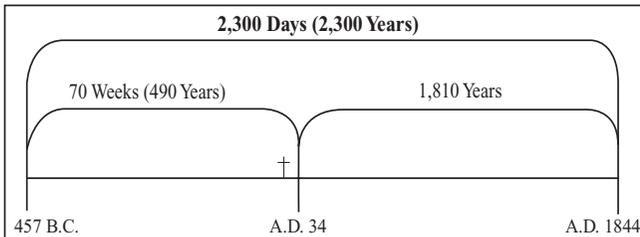
Read Daniel 9:24–27. What is happening in these verses? How is this linked to Daniel 8:14?

While the word *vision* (*chazon*) refers to the entire prophecy of Daniel 8, another word, *mareh*, translated as “vision,” points specifically to the “vision [*mareh*] of the evenings and mornings” (*Dan. 8:26, NASB*). It is this *mareh*, that of the 2,300 days, that Daniel did not understand (*Dan. 8:27*). The angel had explained everything else.

Several years later, the same angel, Gabriel, appeared to Daniel to give him a message so that he would “understand the vision [*mareh*]” of the 2,300 days (*Dan. 9:23, NKJV*). The 70-week prophecy in those verses helps us to understand the prophetic time element of Daniel 8:14. It is the verb *decreed* at the beginning of Daniel 9:24, which is best translated as “apportioned” or “cut off,” that specifically suggests that the 70 weeks compose a part of the longer period of 2,300 days. Thus, the 70-week prophecy is “cut off” from the larger 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14. This gives us the starting point for the prophetic time period depicted in Daniel 8:14. (See tomorrow’s study for more details.)

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “What Is the Sanctuary?” pp. 409–422; “The Holy of Holies,” pp. 423–432, in *The Great Controversy*.

In Daniel 9:24–27, the beginning of the 70 weeks is marked by “the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem” (*Dan. 9:25, NASB*). The book of Ezra reports on three decrees that concern Jerusalem and the temple, but the third, reported in Ezra 7:12–26, is the most effective one. The Persian King Artaxerxes I issued the decree in 457 B.C. It involves both the reconstruction of the temple and the rebuilding of Jerusalem as a political and administrative center (*Ezra 7:25, 26*). In the Bible, only this decree is followed by thanksgiving that praises God for influencing the king (*Ezra 7:27, 28*). Furthermore, only with 457 B.C. as a starting point do the 70 weeks (that is, 490 years) reach the time of Christ, the “Messiah, the Prince” of Daniel 9:25–27. Thus, the prophecy of the 70 weeks provides the precise event to date for the beginning of the 2,300 evenings and mornings. They start in 457 B.C. and end after 2,300 years in A.D. 1844.



Discussion Questions:

- ❶ If possible, get a more detailed explanation of the link between Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:24–27 and study the close connection between them. What should it tell us about the importance of the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 that it is so closely linked to such a major prophecy as Daniel 9:24–27?
- ❷ Ellen G. White wrote: “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 Great Controversy*, p. 488. What do you think she meant by this? Why are these things so important for us to understand?
- ❸ When talking about the little horn, the prophecies of Daniel 7 and 8 are dealing solely with Rome, and nothing else—not communism (as some have said in the past) or Islam (as some now say). How, though, do we remain faithful to our beliefs without causing undue hurt to others? Why must we show that our concern is with a system, not with the people caught up in it?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Daniel 8:14*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Understand that the cleansing of the sanctuary is the same as the pre-Advent judgment and that Daniel 7–9 describes complementary prophetic events.

Feel: Foster the sense of assurance of salvation, because Jesus presently reveals and affirms in heaven that His grace is sufficient for His people.

Do: As Jesus is for and never against His followers, so we should always encourage and help our brothers and sisters.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: God Restores

A Why is it crucial to understand the issues behind the usurpation of the “daily ministry” of Jesus Christ by the little horn?

B According to Daniel 8:14, the sanctuary will be *nitzdaq*, a Hebrew word meaning “cleansing,” “justifying,” “restoring,” and “vindicating.” Explain how these nuances respond to the distorting activities of the little horn.

II. Feel: God of His People

A How does the sense of belonging to God’s end-time people give you a feeling of urgency for fulfilling God’s mission?

B How does the prophetic time limit of the activities of the little horn make you feel, and why?

III. Do: God Assures

A How can you take part in the restoration of truth that has been put down by the little horn’s activities?

B What is the task of the remnant in the time of the end?

► **Summary:** To take part in God’s last movement means to have an urgent sense of mission in order to fulfill His goal of saving all people.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1—Motivate**

Spotlight on Scripture: *Revelation 15:3, 4:* “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. . . . All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed” (*NIV*).

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: In order to understand the meaning of God’s pre-Advent judgment, it must be seen from a broader perspective and not in isolation. In our explanations of the pre-Advent judgment, our High Priest Jesus, and His activities, must be the most attractive reality and His cross its foundation. Only in this way will the pre-Advent judgment be a meaningful experience for believers by bringing them closer to God, giving them the assurance of safety by being in His hands; consequently, they will rejoice over God’s work in their behalf.

Just for Teachers: This week’s lesson should help members of your class to see the beautiful panorama of God’s judgment activity. The pre-Advent judgment should be explained from the perspective of the Cross. The year 1844 cannot be dissected from A.D. 31 but must be its starting point.

Opening Discussion: God’s judgment on the cross was, and is, the foundation of all other divine judgments. Ellen G. White powerfully encourages that all our teachings must be explained from the viewpoint of the Cross: “The Sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 315. As during the Day of Atonement in ancient Israel, the most important person was the high priest and what he was doing (*see Leviticus 16*). Consequently, Christ and His cross must be the central point of the pre-Advent judgment. How can the pre-Advent judgment be explained from the standpoint of the Cross?

► **STEP 2—Explore**

Just for Teachers: One of the major themes of the pre-Advent

judgment is Christ's affirmative of our affirmative decisions made for Him. Full evidence is given in front of the heavenly beings in order to secure our place in heaven for all eternity. For this reason, we call the investigative judgment an affirmative judgment, because Christ reveals and affirms to heaven that we belong to Him and that His grace is sufficient. As a result, all heaven will applaud Jesus' work for us, because they will see that God's transforming grace has prepared His followers to become part of the heavenly family.

Bible Commentary

I. Pattern of God's Judgments *(Review Genesis 18:25 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 with your class.)*

The scriptural teaching about judgment lies at the center of God's revelation. It is the crux of the biblical message and gives a profound paradigm for our thinking. Next to the fundamental proclamation that God is the Creator (*Genesis 1–2*), in the Garden of Eden the Lord is presented as the Judge, and the first reference to a trial judgment is given (*Gen 3:8–24*), wherein God's grace and justice are intermingled. The biblical Flood narrative is an account about judgment (*Genesis 6–9*). Already Abraham calls God “the Judge of all the earth” (*Gen. 18:25*). And we can continue to demonstrate judgment after judgment in the Bible. Judgment is an integral part of God's nature; it is His divine prerogative, His very characteristic. To understand God means to know and comprehend His comprehensive judgments. Through the study of His judgments, we can know who He is and His character.

Discussion Question: Why did Jesus say in John 14:1–3 that He would go to heaven to prepare a place for us? It must mean something more than only preparing mansions because as our Creator, He could do them in “a few days.” Why would it take so long? What, then, is involved in Jesus' statement?

II. An Overview of the Seven Phases of God's Universal Judgment *(Review Revelation 15:3, 4 with your class.)*

The gospel according to divine judgment is perfect as seen from the perspective of a genuine believer in Jesus:

1. Pedagogical or typological judgment in pre-Cross time. God gives us educational lessons, “mini-judgments,” from the Old Testament past. From this historical background, we may know that He is truly the God of grace, love, justice, truth, order, and guarantor of freedom. He loves people but hates sin. We are responsible for our actions, and there are consequences to what we do.

2. Central and cosmic judgment on the cross. Jesus Christ took upon Himself our sins, died for us, and thus experienced the judgment of condemnation in order that we may live and never be condemned to the second death. Also, Satan and evil were defeated.

3. Decisive judgment during our lifetime. If we surrender to Jesus, He applies what He accomplished at the Cross to our present experience. He justifies and changes us by His amazing grace, Word, and Spirit. He gives eternal life, peace, joy, and full assurance of salvation, and He sets us with Him in heaven on His throne.

4. Affirmative judgment (called also investigative judgment) before the second coming of Jesus, from 1844 on. Christ, as our True Witness and Intercessor, secures legally and transparently our place in heaven by revealing and affirming in front of the universe that we have truly accepted His righteousness (justification is the basis of salvation) and have cultivated a relationship with Him. Consequently, we are fitted (sanctification is the fruit of salvation) by His transforming grace, Word, and Spirit and may safely be admitted into the heavenly family and enjoy eternal life.

5. Realization judgment at the second coming of Christ. At Christ's second coming, He personally comes to the earth in order to give His faithful followers tangible and physical eternal life.

6. Attestation judgment during the millennium. Jesus Christ takes time to explain to the saved His thinking and decisions in order to help them to understand His judgments, cope with the eternal loss of their loved ones (if applicable), and gain deeper insights into the great controversy, His struggles with Satan and evil. He provides time for healing.

7. The executive judgment or last judgment at the end of the millennium. Finally, God Himself forever annihilates all evil—Satan, evil angels, the wicked, and sin—so that only love, truth, justice, peace, and harmony will reign. As Creator, He will re-create for His people the new earth and new heaven. Thus, true and meaningful life can be fully secured and enjoyed eternally.

Discussion Question: Ellen G. White outstandingly summarizes the gospel of salvation in the following way: “If you give yourself to Him [Christ], and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 62. Out of the seven phases of God’s judgment described above, which phase is impacted the most by our decision to follow Christ? What consequences does this phase have on other phases of divine judgment?

► **STEP 3—Apply**

Just for Teachers: Your joy, enthusiasm, and conviction have great

influence. Contemplate how to make the judgment message relevant to young people.

Application Questions:

- 1 Just imagine that you are physically present at the investigative/affirmative judgment in the heavenly court. Where would you like to be in that court? Express your feelings.
- 2 What would you do if you knew that the book with your life in it had just been opened and your case was being discussed?

Activity: How would you paint the scene of the heavenly judgment? Concentrate especially on the repentant sinner’s position in relationship to Jesus. Would you draw a distance between them? If yes, why? If not, how would you express their relationship? What about human faces? Would you paint them to look serious, smiling, or sad? Why?

► STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Create with your class a list of questions that you think Jesus or the angels will ask about our individual lives. Justify your questions. What kind of questions would you like to be asked in the heavenly court about the activities of the little horn? Make another list.

Activity: With the class, develop reasons that demonstrate that the visions of Daniel 8 and 9 belong together and that the 70-week prophecy forms an actual part of the 2,300-evenings-and-mornings prophecy. Take into consideration the following: (A) the angel Gabriel gave both visions (8:16, 9:21); (B) the same vocabulary of “understanding” and “vision” (8:27b, 9:23) is at the end of the vision of chapter 8 and in the beginning of the vision described in chapter 9; (C) the specific Hebrew term *nechtak* (from the root *chatak*) given at the beginning of the 70-week prophecy means “cut off” and thus shows that the period of the 70-week prophecy should be taken from the previous prophetic unit of 2,300-evenings-mornings prophecy (9:24a); (D) a prophetic time element is usually given at the end of a vision, but in chapter 9, it is given at the beginning of the vision, hinting that it is connected with the previous vision (8:14, 9:24); (E) Daniel usually has a dream or vision and then follows it with an interpretation (see chapters 2, 7, 8, and 10–12); however, in chapter 9 there is no vision but only an interpretation, thus pointing back to the explanation of the previous vision of chapter 8. Give your class a special assignment to find different reasons for the validity of the year-day principle in interpreting apocalyptic prophecy. Share the results next week.

Our Prophetic Message



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Revelation 10; Dan. 12:4–9; Revelation 14; 11:17, 18; Revelation 13; Gen. 7:11; 11:1–9; Jeremiah 50, 51.*

Memory Text: “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ” (*Revelation 14:6, 7, NKJV*).

The judgment message of Daniel 7 and 8 links directly to the great controversy scenario depicted in Revelation 12–14. Here we find the three angels' messages, which contain the themes of creation, judgment, and gospel (*Rev. 14:6–12*). These texts present God's urgent and final call to prepare for the second coming of Jesus.

The message of the first angel is indeed the “everlasting gospel” because it's the same truth that the apostles preached when they said that people “should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them” (*Acts 14:15, NKJV; compare with Act 4:24*). Highlighting the importance of the message is the fact that the word *gospel* itself appears only here in the book of Revelation. Whatever we preach about end-time events, we must make certain that the “gospel” is at the core.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 14.*

Time of Disappointment

Read Revelation 10. What is the message of the angel with the little scroll? What does it mean to “prophesy again”?

The portrayal of the angel recalls the description of Christ (*Rev. 1:13–16*) and of the divine-like “man in linen” in Daniel’s last vision (*Dan. 10:5, 6; 12:5–7*), suggesting that they are identical. In Daniel 12:6, 7, He swore by the One who lives forever as He gave the prophecy of three and a half times (1,260 years). This is a repetition of the crucial prophecy given in Daniel 7:25, describing that God’s people would face terrible persecution, another truth that is repeated in Daniel 12:7, as well.

The book of Daniel was supposed to be sealed until the end of time. Then it would be opened, and many would gain knowledge from it (*Dan. 12:4–9*). When the prophesied period of 1,260 years ended, the time had come to open the book for further knowledge. This is symbolized by the open book in the hand of the angel in Revelation 10. From then on, Daniel’s prophecies were to be better understood.

At the same time, Revelation 10 reveals that the experience would not be totally pleasant. John ate the book as commanded, and it was sweet in his mouth but bitter to his stomach. John stands symbolically for the people who internalized the book of Daniel. This prophetic description, we believe, was fulfilled in the Millerite movement, which arose in the first half of the nineteenth century amid great worldwide interest in end-time events. It also describes the bitter disappointment of those who understood that the longtime prophecies in Daniel referred to their time, but not in the way they had first thought. The “2,300 evenings and mornings” did not signal the return of Christ but, rather, the beginning of the great judgment scene of Daniel 7.

Right after the bitter experience, John was told to “prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings” (*Rev. 10:11, NASB*). This is being fulfilled as Seventh-day Adventists preach the “everlasting gospel” to the world.

Disappointment isn’t alien to Christians, especially when they misinterpret the meaning of events. Certainly the experience of the disciples between their Master’s death and His resurrection was a disappointment. Such was the experience of the Millerites in 1844. How can we handle disappointments without losing our faith? What Bible promises can you hold on to during your own times of disappointment?

Fear God!

The first angel’s message tells us to “fear God.” What does that mean? See *Ps. 34:7–22*.

Fear could be understood in two ways. First, there is a fear that shows itself in reverence and respect. This kind is what the first angel wants to bring to our attention. Those who fear God are true believers in Him (*Rev. 11:18*). To fear God means to honor Him (*Rev. 14:7*), praise Him (*Rev. 19:5*), obey Him (*Rev. 14:12*), and glorify His name (*Rev. 15:4*). The fear of God in the first angel’s message also acknowledges God as Judge and as Creator, and it calls us to worship Him as such.

Second, there is a fear in the sense of being afraid that sooner or later God will judge this world. To the unfaithful, the message of the judgment is a message of terror. That’s why we often call the three angels’ messages God’s last warning to the world. Inherent in the very notion of a “warning” is something to be feared, and if we read about that which the lost will face, they indeed do have something to fear.

However, as long as mercy is available, God always desires to move the lost to repentance, and the fear of God could be an incentive to start seeking Him (*see Rev. 11:13*). Though ultimately a saving relationship with God is one based on love, sometimes people need a good dose of fear to open their eyes. And if it takes a warning to get their attention, why not?

We know that “God is love,” and nothing reveals this love more than the Cross. We know, too, that God loves this world, and it must pain Him tremendously to see what sin has done to it. A God of love and justice isn’t going to sit by forever and let evil go unpunished. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (*Heb. 10:31, NKJV*). How can we strike the right balance in understanding both God’s love for us and understanding His wrath against the evil that has done us all so much harm?

The Rage of Nations

Read Revelation 14:7. What judgment is this verse talking about?

The judgment proclaimed here begins before the return of Christ, which is described in Revelation 14:14–20. It is, therefore, the same as the pre-Advent judgment of Daniel 7. Its beginning, which Daniel 8:14 anchors in the year 1844, coincides with the fact that the three angels' messages call people to worship God and turn away from the beast and its "image." This "image" came into existence only after the prophetic 42 months, as with the 1,260 days (because they are the same thing), which ended in A.D. 1798 (*Rev. 13:3–5, 12–14*).

As the final call in Revelation 14:6–12 goes out, the door of mercy is still open, because people are still being called to turn away from Babylon and worship the true God.

What does God's judgment encompass? *Rev. 11:17, 18.*

God reacts to the rage of the nations by revealing His power. Revelation 13 depicts this rage, which Satan's wrath has incited (*Rev. 12:17*). From the perspective of the oppressed believers, whose perennial plea is the call for divine judgment (*Rev. 6:10*), the judgment might seem long overdue. However, it begins at the prophesied time, and the eschatological Day of Atonement takes its course all according to God's plan.

Revelation 11:17, 18 gives a short overview of God's judgment. It begins in heaven and is brought to earth, when God destroys the wicked powers that corrupted humanity (*Rev. 19:2*). God's wrath originates in the heavenly sanctuary and is poured out in the seven plagues (*Revelation 15–18*).

At the Second Advent, God will also reward the faithful (*Rev. 22:12*). Finally, God judges the dead and eradicates evil (*Rev. 20:11–15*). When all is over, God's character stands vindicated before the onlooking universe. Everyone can see that He is just and fair in all His ways. For now, our challenge is to cling to Him with all our hearts and souls and minds, trusting that all this will come to pass in God's appointed time.

Worship the Creator

The heart of the book of Revelation is about worship. While the dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth (often called “the false trinity”) join forces to unite the world in worshipping them (*see Rev. 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11*), God calls the human race to worship the Creator (*Rev. 14:7*). Those who do not worship the “image of the beast” risk losing their temporal lives (*Rev. 13:15; see also Daniel 3*), while those who do worship that image lose eternal life (*Rev. 14:9–11*).

What a choice!

Read Revelation 14:12. What does this teach us about the role of God’s commandments in the final conflict?

Worship is inextricably connected with God’s commandments. Revelation 13 and 14 are full of allusions to the Ten Commandments: “image” (*Rev. 13:14, 15; 14:9, 11*), idolatry (*Rev. 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11*), blasphemy (*Rev. 13:1, 5, 6*), the Sabbath (*Rev. 14:7*), murder (*Rev. 13:10, 15*), and adultery (*Rev. 14:4, 8*). The final “contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 188.

Since the rise of the theory of evolution, it has become particularly important for us to uphold and affirm our belief in a six-day Creation. This teaching is the foundation of our worship of the Lord as Creator. Evolution, even a kind that purports to believe in the Bible, guts Seventh-day Adventism of all that it stands for. Without Creation, the belief in the “everlasting gospel,” among other teachings (such as the Sabbath), is seriously compromised, even negated.

The verse that describes God as having “made heaven and earth, [and] the sea” alludes to the Sabbath commandment (*Exod. 20:11*). The Sabbath is the central issue in the conflict over God’s commandments. As with no other commandment, the designated day of worship is suited for a test of loyalty because it cannot be deduced by logical reasoning. We keep it only because God has commanded us to do so. Creation also goes hand in hand with judgment. The phrase “springs of water” (*Rev. 14:7*) alludes to the Flood (*Gen. 7:11*) and points to God as the righteous Judge of the world (*2 Pet. 3:5–7*).

Nothing we believe as Seventh-day Adventists makes sense when taken apart from the Lord as Creator, and nothing in the Bible is as clear a sign of God’s creatorship as the Sabbath. How seriously do you take the Sabbath? How can you have a deeper experience with the Lord through obedience to this commandment?

The “Patience” of the Saints

The second and third angels’ messages of Revelation are a warning to all who do not heed the divine call of the first angel’s message. If people continue on their wrong path, they will partake of God’s seven last plagues, which are seen as “the wine of the wrath of God” (*Rev. 14:10*), and this wine will be poured out on those who remain in Babylon.

In the Bible, Babylon stands for rebellion against God (*Gen. 11:1–9; Jeremiah 50, 51*). Babylon arrogantly assumes the place of God and is the enemy of God’s people. By the time of the New Testament, Babylon had become a code word for Rome (*1 Pet. 5:13*). In the book of Revelation, the harlot Babylon is a religious-political power in opposition to God and to His people and, as such, attempts to control the world. Revelation 13:15–17 describes the “Babylonian crisis” when the beastly powers of Revelation 13 join forces to persecute the remnant of God. Babylon is thus a symbol of the end-time alliance of apostate churches together with the corrupt political powers of the world.

The message of the three angels calls God’s followers in Babylon to come out and join the faithful and visible end-time remnant of God (*Rev. 18:4, 5*). Yes, there is still a faithful remnant in Babylon, and they need to hear the Seventh-day Adventist end-time message.

As we saw yesterday, Revelation 14:12 clearly depicts God’s faithful remnant. The “perseverance,” or “patience,” of the saints does not describe so much a passive endurance of hostile activities but, rather, a steadfast awaiting of Christ. The believers not only follow the commandments but also proclaim them to the world.

At the same time, the “faith of Jesus” can refer to the believers’ “faith in Jesus” (*NASB*) and also to Jesus’ loyalty that carries the believers faithfully through. The end of the third angel’s message directs our eyes to Christ. Through His merits and His loyalty, God’s people are able to persevere and keep His commandments. “Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel’s message, and I have answered, ‘It is the third angel’s message in verity.’”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372.

However central the commandments of God are to the final crisis, Ellen G. White says that justification by faith is the third angel’s message “in verity.” How does this help us to understand why, first and foremost, we must rely only on Jesus and His merits for salvation as the great hope that will get us through the final crisis?

Further Study: For the view of the three angels' messages by Ellen G. White, see the following: for the first angel's message, see "Heralds of the Morning," pp. 299–316, "An American Reformer," pp. 317–342, "Light Through Darkness," pp. 343–354, "A Great Religious Awakening," pp. 355–374, in *The Great Controversy*. For the second angel's message, see "Prophecies Fulfilled," pp. 391–408, "What Is the Sanctuary?" pp. 409–422, "In the Holy of Holies," pp. 423–432, in *The Great Controversy*. For the third angel's message, see "God's Law Immutable," pp. 433–450, "A Work of Reform," pp. 451–460, in *The Great Controversy*.

"Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out. It is at the cross of Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. The sinner must be led to look to Calvary; with the simple faith of a little child he must trust in the merits of the Saviour, accepting His righteousness, believing in His mercy."—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, pp. 156, 157.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Warnings play a significant role in our society and in our daily dealings with each other. In most cases, warnings are for the good of those being warned. How can we present the fearful warnings found in the three angels' messages in a way that reveals the wonderful hope that they offer?
- ❷ Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and evolution are inherently contradictory. To paraphrase a fundamentalist atheist, evolution is an "acid" that erodes everything it touches. This would especially include the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, which have the central theme of Creation and Redemption, two truths nullified by evolution, even a "theistic" kind. (Who would want to worship a theos who created like that, anyway?) Why must we as a church never allow the false science of evolution to make any inroad into our teachings?
- ❸ In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 are a treasured beacon that encapsulates the divine end-time message that we are called to proclaim. Although many church members have certainly heard about these messages, some may still have questions about what they really mean. How would you explain briefly the meaning of the last call of God to this world and what it entails?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Revelation 14:6, 7*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Explore the meaning of the three angels' messages in order to become deeply acquainted with the gospel for today. This summary message of hope helps to recognize the most essential truth needed to be proclaimed.

Feel: Foster the presence of God in everyday life.

Do: Worship the Creator God in truth and spirit.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Everlasting Gospel to the Whole World

- A** What is the meaning of the phrase “everlasting gospel,” which occurs only once in the whole Bible?
- B** Why does God command in Revelation 10 to “prophesy again”? How can you be a part of this fulfillment?
- C** Explain how the three angels' messages teach or reflect the doctrine of justification by faith.

II. Feel: God's Three Imperatives

- A** Why does God command us to fear and worship Him?
- B** How can fear and love be combined?
- C** How can you show respect for God and give Him glory?
- D** In what ways can you build a meaningful, personal relationship with your God?

III. Do: Characteristics of the True Followers of God

- A** According to Revelation 14:12, what are the three essential signs of God's people?
- B** What are the characteristics of Babylon? How can you historically recognize these features?

► **Summary:** The three angels' messages prepare people to face the last-day deceptions and be ready for the second coming of Christ. One's attitude toward this message is a matter of life or death.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Revelation 14:6, 7*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The three angels' messages are, as a unit, the core message of Seventh-day Adventism. These proclamations are like a tripod on which our theology stands and are the reason that we exist. Together they are an outstanding summary of the gospel for today, with God at the center and justification by faith as the basis.

Just for Teachers: This week's lesson should help the class members understand better the relevance, importance, and beauty of the message aimed at people living before the second coming of Christ. It is the eternal gospel and has a simple literary structure (introduction—vs. 6; first presentation of the gospel—vs. 7; second presentation of the gospel—vs. 8; third presentation of the gospel—vss. 9–12; voice from heaven—vs. 13). Chapter 14 consists of three principal parts: (1) the Lamb with the 144,000—vss. 1–5; (2) the three angels' messages—vss. 6–13; and (3) the second coming of the Son of man, presented as the Reaper of the harvest—vss. 14–20.

Opening Discussion:

1 The phrase “everlasting gospel” is used only once in the entire Bible; namely, in Revelation 14:6. It is by design and not by chance that it is employed in relation to the time of the end. The purpose is to underline that the gospel preached today is not a new invention, but it is a gospel that was always valid and has never changed. Forms and emphases can be different in time, but the principal message is always the same. There is only one gospel; what is it?

2 Ellen G. White wrote in an article entitled “Repentance the Gift of God” the following statement: “Several have written to me, inquiring if the *message of justification by faith* is the third angel's message, and I have answered, ‘It is the third angel's message *in verity.*’ ”—*The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 1, 1890 (*emphasis supplied*). Where in Revelation 14:6–13 can you find references to the doctrine of justification by faith?

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Just for Teachers: You can appreciate and perceive the relevance

and urgency of the three angels' messages when you study them in their context and see what the two beasts under the leadership of the dragon want to accomplish, according to Revelation 13. They mandate the full obedience of humanity. Key words in Revelation 13 are *worship* (vss. 4 [twice], 8, 12, 15), *authority* (vss. 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12), and *power* (vss. 2, 7, 14, 15). This satanic trinity (the dragon, the beast out of the sea, and the beast out of the earth) attempts to lead the whole world into false worship by usurping God's authority and using force. Revelation 14:6–13 is God's answer to these false activities. It is God's ultimatum to the world.

Bible Commentary

The principal theme in the three angels' messages is not the beast or the mark of the beast or obedience but Christ the Lamb, occurring at the very center.

I. "I Saw the Lamb" (Review Revelation 14:6, 10 with your class.)

Consider carefully the key words of the three angels' messages that connect all the messages together. What are the direct verbal connections among these three messages? There is a thematic connection (about judgment) between the first and second messages, but there is no direct word that connects them. The link between the first and the third messages is the term *worship* used in contrast: the first message calls for worshipping the Creator, and the third message warns against worshipping the beasts. The connection between the second and the third messages is the word *wine*, and, again, it is in contrast: Babylonian-maddening wine of false teaching, given as a drink to all nations (the second message), and the wine of God's wrath that will be poured out on the unrepentant (the third message). The true worshiper will not drink from any of those wines. The connecting word between the third message and the voice of God is *rest*: there is no rest for the wicked, according to the third message, but the Holy Spirit assures that there is a rest for those who live and die in the Lord. The result is clear: the third message really connects all messages together. It is like a magnet that holds them together as a unit.

When you teach about Revelation 14:6–13, your audience needs to see the Lamb, Jesus Christ. We need to teach them how to trust in the Lord and help them to cope with their fears. The best compliment you can get from people after your presentation is that they say: "Thank you for showing me the Lamb." The main message of Revelation 13 and 14 is not about the beasts, the mark of the beast, the number 666, the patience of the saints, keeping the commandments of God, et cetera. All these topics are important, but it is about the Lamb. If you point to the Lamb, then you do what John the Baptist was doing (see *John 1:29, 36*).

Activity: Find out and study with your class all the occurrences of the word *lamb* in the book of Revelation and compare them with the rest of the New Testament. Here are some hints for you: the Greek word *to arnion* for “the lamb” occurs 30 times in the entire New Testament, and out of these 30 instances, this particular word is used in the book of Revelation 29 times—referring 28 times to Jesus (for the first time in 5:6) and once to a brutal beast that pretends to act like a lamb (13:11). (Be careful in your study, because another word for a “lamb” in Greek, *ho amnos*, is used four times in the New Testament [*John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; and 1 Pet. 1:19*]).

Discussion Questions:

- 1 How can you present the three angels’ messages as messages of hope and not as ones of condemnation? Ellen G. White excellently states: “The third angel’s message must be presented as **the only hope** for the salvation of a perishing world.”—*Evangelism*, p. 196; emphasis supplied.
- 2 What is the characterization of people to whom the three angels’ messages need to be preached? Is there a difference between living and sitting on the earth? These people also live in a divided world with different nations, tribes, languages, and peoples. How can the eternal gospel unite humanity and be a remedy for their many problems?

II. The Three Key Imperatives (*Review Revelation 14:7 with your class.*)

God through John stresses that we need to fear God, give Him glory, and worship the Creator. The reason is given: “because the hour of his judgment has come” (*NIV*). It means that God desires to justify, save, deliver, and vindicate people. Consequently, He invites them to live in His presence, to allow Him to change them so they can reflect in their characters God’s character of love, and to maintain a meaningful relationship with Him. These actions of obedience are the results of accepting and responding to God’s grace.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 How is worshipping the Creator relevant in our postmodern world, where the theory of evolution is the most popular explanation for the origin of life?
- 2 What role does the observance of the Sabbath play in the context of maintaining a fresh awareness that the living God is our Creator?

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: In Revelation 18:4, it is stated that God’s people live in Babylon, because God calls them: “ ‘Come out of her [Babylon], my people’ ” (NIV). How can you denounce the sins of Babylon and still love Babylonians? How can you preach the fall of Babylon and still be in good relationship with them?

Application Questions:

- 1 Study the Scriptures and find out if a human being may also be called “an angel” or, more accurately, “a messenger.” An excellent hint can be found in Malachi 3:1. How can you personally be such an angel/messenger?
- 2 In Revelation 14:6, what is the meaning of the angel/messenger who is proclaiming the eternal gospel and flying in midair? What is this symbolic language and rich imagery trying to communicate? How can you and your congregation make the three angels’ messages attractive for the community in which you live?

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Study with your class the meaning of the term *Babylon*. What are different characteristics of Babylon in the Bible? How does Babylon behave, and what is its attitude toward others?

Activities:

- 1 Help your class to imagine in a very practical way God’s presence in their lives. Encourage them to do, for at least one week, things that remind them that Jesus is always physically present with them. For example, suggest putting another plate on the table to remind them that He is eating with them or place another chair beside them while reading, watching TV, or working on their computers. This will be a new experience for the members of your class and can change their thinking and lifestyles forever.
- 2 Discuss with your class how family worship can be meaningful, even though everyone may be too busy and individualistic. Be creative in discussing different possibilities and new forms of worship that would be especially attractive to the children and young adults.

The Cosmic Conflict Over God's Character



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Ezek. 28:12–17, Isa. 14:12–15, Job 1:6–12, Zech. 3:1–5, 1 John 4:10, 2 Tim. 4:8, Ezek. 36:23–27.*

Memory Text: “And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments” (*Revelation 16:7*).

Seventh-day Adventists understand reality through the biblical concept of the “great controversy between Christ and Satan.” To use a term from philosophy, the great controversy is the metanarrative—the grand, overarching story that helps to explain our world and the things that happen in it.

Central to this controversy is the sanctuary, which, as we have seen, presents a recurrent theme that runs from the beginning to the end of salvation history: Redemption of humanity through the death of Jesus. Properly understood, the sanctuary message also helps to illustrate God's character, which Satan has been attacking since the great controversy first began in heaven.

This week we will study some milestones in the great conflict between Christ and Satan that reveal the truth about God's character and that expose Satan's lies.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 21.*

Revolt in the Heavenly Sanctuary

Read Ezekiel 28:12–17 and Isaiah 14:12–15. What do these verses teach about Lucifer’s fall?

At first glance, Ezekiel 28:12 seems to be talking about only an earthly monarch. Several aspects, however, suggest that this verse is really referring to Satan.

For starters, this being is referred to as the anointed cherub “who covers” (*Ezek. 28:14, NKJV*), which recalls the Most Holy Place of the earthly sanctuary, where two cherubim covered the ark and the presence of the Lord (*Exod. 37:7–9*). This celestial being also walked in the midst of the fiery stones; that is, on the “holy mountain of God” (*Ezek. 28:14*) and in the center of “Eden, the garden of God” (*Ezek. 28:13, NKJV*)—both of which are sanctuary images. The covering of precious stones described in verse 13 contains nine stones that are also found in the high priestly breast garment (*Exod. 39:10–13*), indicating another reference to the sanctuary.

After having described the surpassing splendor of the cherub, the text moves to his moral fall. His glory went to his head. His beauty made his heart haughty, his splendor corrupted his wisdom, and his “trading”—which probably refers to his slandering of the character of God and stirring up rebellion—made him violent.

Also, arrogant earthly powers seek to move from earth toward heaven. In Isaiah 14:12–15, the “son of the morning” (Latin *lucifere*, from which comes the name Lucifer) goes in a different direction: he falls from heaven to earth, indicating his supernatural rather than earthly origin. Other phrases like “throne above the stars of God,” “mount of the congregation” in the far north, and “Most High” reinforce the impression that this is a celestial being. While verses 12 and 13 are in past tense, verse 15 suddenly changes to the future. This change in time signals that there was first a fall from heaven to earth (*Isa. 14:12*) and that there will be a second fall, from earth to Sheol (the grave), sometime in the future (*Isa. 14:15*). This does not refer to any Babylonian king; it is, instead, a clear reference to Lucifer.

A perfect being created by a perfect God falls into sin? What does this tell us about the reality of moral freedom in God’s universe? And what does such freedom reveal to us about God’s character?

The Accusations

After his fall from heaven, Satan attempted to distort and slander God’s character. He did this in Eden (*Gen. 3:1–5*), in the midst of the first “sanctuary” on earth. Satan brought his rebellion, which originated in the heavenly sanctuary, down to the earthly sanctuary of Eden. After initiating contact with Eve through the medium of the serpent, he openly planted the idea in her mind that God was depriving both Adam and her of something that would be good for them, that He was holding something back that they should have. In this way, however subtly, he was misrepresenting God’s character.

The fall of Adam and Eve set Satan temporarily on the throne of this world. Several texts suggest that Satan had gained access to the heavenly court again, but now as the “ruler of this world” (*John 12:31, NKJV*) as one who possesses the earth but does not own it, much like a thief.

Read Job 1:6–12 and Zechariah 3:1–5. How is the great controversy revealed in these texts?

These texts give us a glimpse of the heavenly side of the great controversy. Satan presents Job’s righteousness as simply self-serving: if I am good, God will bless me. The implication is that Job doesn’t serve God because God is worthy but because it’s in Job’s best interests. Once it becomes clear that serving God won’t bring blessing, Job will abandon his faith.

In the case of the high priest Joshua (a sanctuary motif) and of other believers (*see Rev. 12:10*), Ellen G. White says that Satan “is accusing the children of God, and making their case appear as desperate as possible. He presents before the Lord their evil doings and their defects.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 167.

In both cases, though, the real issue is the justice of God. The question behind all accusations is whether or not God is fair and just in His dealings. God’s character is on trial. Is it fair when God saves sinners? Is God just when He declares the unrighteous to be righteous? If He is just, He must punish the unrighteous; if He is gracious, He must forgive them. How can God be both?

If God were only a God of justice, what would be your fate, and why would you deserve it?

Vindication at the Cross

From the very beginning, God left no doubt that He would invalidate Satan’s accusations and demonstrate His ultimate love and justice. His justice demands that there be payment of the penalty for humanity’s sin. His love seeks to restore humanity into fellowship with Him. How could God manifest both?

How did God demonstrate both His love and justice? *1 John 4:10, Rom. 3:21–26.*

God’s character of love and justice has been revealed in its fullest manifestation by the death of Christ. God loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning Sacrifice for our sins (*1 John 4:10, John 3:16*). By paying in Himself the penalty for violating the law, God showed His justice: the demands of the law had to be met. They were met at the cross, but in the person of Jesus.

At the same time, by this act of justice, God was also able to reveal His grace and love, because Jesus’ death was substitutionary. He died for us, in our stead, so that we don’t have to face that death ourselves. This is the amazing provision of the gospel, that God Himself would bear in Himself the punishment that His own justice demanded, the punishment that legitimately belonged to us.

Romans 3:21–26 is a biblical jewel on the theme of God’s righteousness and the redemption in Jesus Christ. Christ’s sacrificial death is a demonstration of God’s righteousness so “that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (*Rom. 3:26, NASB*).

Again, sanctuary imagery provides the framework for Christ’s death. In previous weeks, we have seen that His death is a perfect, substitutionary sacrifice and that Christ is the “atonement cover” (*Rom. 3:25*). In short, both Testaments reveal that Christ’s mission was typified by the earthly sanctuary service.

“With intense interest the unfallen worlds had watched to see Jehovah arise, and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth. . . . But instead of destroying the world, God sent His Son to save it. . . . At the very crisis, when Satan seemed about to triumph, the Son of God came with the embassy of divine grace.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 37. What does this quote tell you about the character of God?

Vindication in the Judgment

As Scripture has shown, God’s judgment is good news for those of us who believe in Him, who trust in Him, and who are loyal to Him, even though “we cannot answer the charges of Satan against us.” —Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 472. However, the judgment is not only for us. It also serves the purpose of vindicating God before the entire universe.

How is God’s character presented in the following texts about judgment? *Ps. 96:10, 13; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 16:5, 7; 19:2.*

God’s character will be revealed in His judgment. What Abraham had already understood will, in the end, be manifest to all humanity: “‘Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?’ ” (*Gen. 18:25, NASB*). The different phases of judgment, with their open-book investigation, make sure that the angels (in the pre-Advent judgment) and the righteous (in the millennial judgment) can prove and be reassured that God is just in His dealings with humanity and that He has been merciful in each case.

Read *Philippians 2:5–11*. What amazing event do these verses depict?

Verses 9–11 predict the exaltation of Christ. The main two actions express the same thought: Jesus is Lord, and all creation will acknowledge Him as such. First, “every knee should bow” (*vs. 10, NASB*). The bowing of the knee is a customary act for recognizing the authority of a person. Here it refers to rendering homage to Christ and recognizing His supreme sovereignty. The dimension of the homage is universal. “In heaven and on earth and under the earth” (*NASB*) comprises every living being: the supernatural beings in heaven, the living on earth, and the resurrected dead. Those who will pay homage don’t seem to be limited to the saved. Everyone will acknowledge His lordship, even the lost.

The second action is that everyone “should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (*vs. 11, NASB*). In the end, all will acknowledge the justice of God in exalting Christ as Lord. In this way, all creation will acknowledge the character of God, which has been at the center of the great controversy, as just and faithful. Even Satan, the archenemy of Christ, will acknowledge God’s justice and bow to the supremacy of Christ (see Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 670, 671).

The Cosmic Spectacle

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus utters these amazing words: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (*Matt. 5:16*). With this, He reveals a principle that, though easily misunderstood, is nevertheless seen throughout the Bible. It tells how, as followers of Christ, we can bring glory or shame to God by our actions.

Read Ezekiel 36:23–27. How was God going to vindicate His name in ancient Israel?

These verses comprise one of the classic passages on the new covenant. God desires to work a dramatic transformation among His people. He will cleanse them (*vs. 25*) and grant them a new heart and a new spirit (*vs. 26*) so that they will become a holy people who will follow His commandments. What God wants to accomplish is to justify and sanctify believers so that by their lives they will honor God for who He is and what He does (*vs. 23*).

Of course, the key element in vindicating God’s character before the universe is the Cross. “Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 761.

At the same time, the New Testament followers of Christ are called a “spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men” (*1 Cor. 4:9, NKJV*). That is, what we do is being seen not only by other people but by heavenly intelligences, as well. What kind of witness do we present? By our lives we can make known the “manifold wisdom of God . . . to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (*Eph. 3:10, NASB*). Or our lives can bring shame and reproach on the name of the Lord whom we profess to serve.

What kind of spectacle, both to other people and to angels, does your life present? Is it one in which God is glorified, or one in which Satan can exult, especially because you profess to be a follower of Jesus?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “Why Was Sin Permitted?” pp. 33–43, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “The Character of God Revealed in Christ,” pp. 737–746, in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5.

“There stood in the world One who was a perfect representative of the Father, One whose character and practices refuted Satan’s misrepresentation of God. Satan had charged upon God the attributes he himself possessed. Now in Christ he saw God revealed in His true character—a compassionate, merciful Father, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Him in repentance, and have eternal life.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 254.

“The mission of Christ, so dimly understood, so faintly comprehended, that called Him from the throne of God to the mystery of the altar of the cross of Calvary, will more and more unfold to the mind, and it will be seen that in the sacrifice of Christ are found the spring and principle of every other mission of love.”—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 319.

Discussion Questions:

❶ Dwell on the idea that, by the time the whole great controversy ends, every intelligent creature in the universe, including Satan and the lost, will acknowledge the justice and fairness and righteousness of God in His dealing with sin and rebellion. Though it is a very heavy concept for us to grasp, what does this tell us about the character of God? What does it teach us about the reality of moral freedom and just how sacred and basic freedom is to the kind of universe that God has created?

❷ There are many Christians who deny the existence of Satan, seeing him as merely an ancient superstition held by primitive people who were looking to explain evil and suffering in the world. Think about how great a deception such a view is. It’s hard to imagine what kind of Christianity could deny the reality of a power that is so often revealed in the Bible, especially the New Testament, as a real being. What does this tell us about just how powerfully influenced some churches are by the inroads of modernism and secularism? What can we, as Seventh-day Adventists, learn from the mistakes that we see others making in order that we not fall into the same deception, as well? Without a literal Satan, what happens to the whole great controversy theme?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Revelation 16:7*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Understand the core of Satan's attack against God in the original revolt in heaven and how God's judgments reflect His love and justice.

Feel: Appreciate and see how God's loving character was revealed in Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

Do: Constantly be in the service of the Lord by letting God be the God of his or her life.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The First Revolt in the Heavenly Sanctuary

- A** How do Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 describe Satan before his fall?
- B** What were Satan's original claims against God?
- C** What does it mean that we were created as free moral beings?

II. Feel: God's Vindication on the Cross

- A** What lessons did the Cross teach the angels?
- B** Sin started with pride and was defeated by Jesus' humility. What about pride is so treacherous that even Lucifer, God's perfect creation, could fall into it?
- C** How can God be just and gracious at the same time?

III. Do: The Church and Individual Believers as Players in the Theater of the Universe

- A** How can our faith and obedience vindicate God's character of love?
- B** How can believers in God live to His shame and reproach His name?
- C** Rebellion in heaven was advanced by gossip. How can you stop participating in any form of gossiping?

► **Summary:** By God's actions, He vindicates Himself in front of the entire universe. His moral power of love wins.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Job 1:6–12, Ezekiel 36:26, 27*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: God wants us to understand the great controversy issues and know the part we play in this spiritual warfare between good and evil, Christ and Satan. We are not spectators but part of the drama; we are on stage. If we stay in close relationship with the living God, we will be partakers of His final victory over evil, which is secured because of His victory on the cross.

Just for Teachers: God actually invites us to understand His decisions in order that we are able to see that He is the God of love and justice (*Rom. 3:4; Pss. 51:4; 34:8; Phil. 2:10, 11*). His authority, word, and character were challenged and ridiculed from the very beginning (*Gen. 3:1–5; see also Isa. 14:12–15, Ezek. 28:11–19*). It is interesting that the Hebrew root *rakal* (used in *Ezekiel 28:16*) can also mean to “go around to gossip or slander,” which reveals Satan’s method of working, such as when he accused God of injustice (Hebrew *‘avelah*). This week’s lesson should help the student of the Bible to understand the issues in the great controversy. In the exploration section, we will focus on the book of Job, which provides significant insight into the spiritual-warfare theme.

Opening Discussion: Four main figures play dominant roles in the book of Job, and their characters are revealed: God, Satan, Job, and his friends. How are these main protagonists categorized in the book? What can one say about each of them?

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Just for Teachers: The book of Job opens with a prologue that describes two heavenly scenes of intense controversy between God and Satan (*1:6–12, 2:1–7*). There is pictured a heavenly assembly before the Sovereign Ruler of the universe in which the sons of God are gathered before Him. Satan, the adversary, “also came among them” (*1:6, NKJV*). The word *also* suggests that he was not a regular member of that group. The immediate context gives the impression that he behaves like the one to whom the earth belongs, “roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it” (*vs. 7, NIV*). Satan

is characterized as an intruder; playing the roles of the accuser and the possessor of planet Earth.

Bible Commentary

I. The First Issue: Is God Right While Justifying Sinners? (*Review Job 1:8–11 and Romans 3:26 with your class.*)

Satan does not agree with God pronouncing Job as righteous, and he tackles Him with a seemingly innocent question: “ ‘Does Job fear God for nothing’ ” (1:9, *NIV*)? At first glance, it is directed against Job, but in reality it is an attack on God by attempting to disprove His statement about Job. The real drama turns on the fact that God is for us and proclaims us just. Thus, the main theme of the book of Job is the justice of God (theodicy): Is God just when He is justifying us?

Discussion Question: Why are God’s people seemingly more tested than unbelievers, going through difficult trials in life? What special purpose is there behind such trials?

II. The Second Issue: From What Motives Do Believers Serve God? (*Review Job 1:9, 2:3 with your class.*)

To understand Satan’s cynical question (“ ‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’ ”), which introduces the theme and the plot of the book, it is necessary to study the question’s key expression, “for nothing.” The Hebrew term *chinnam* for this expression occurs four times in the book (1:9, 2:3, 9:17, 22:6). It can be translated also as “gratis,” “without a reason,” “for naught,” “freely,” “for no purpose,” “in vain,” and “without cause.” Satan’s question can be stated thus: does Job serve God disinterestedly? Is his piety unselfish and his devotion wholehearted? Or, expressed differently: does he serve God out of love, i.e., for nothing? Thus, in front of the whole universe, it must be clarified as to what motivates us to serve God. Is it out of fear and in order to escape punishment and death? Is it for the reward of eternal life and many other blessings? Or do we obey Him out of gratitude, because we love Him for His Person, for who He is?

Discussion Question: Why are our motives so important that they need to be revealed in the heavenly court?

Activity: Ask members of your class to discuss their own motives as to why they follow God. What role do our motives play in life? What differences do they make?

III. The Third Issue: Whom Do We Trust and Obey? (Review Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:4 and Job 13:15 with your class.)

Job confesses his full trust in the Lord even though he does not understand what is going on in his life. He knows God from his previous experience as a good, loving, and caring God; so, he stays with Him:

“ ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him’ ” (*Job 13:15, NKJV*). And on another occasion, he strongly proclaims his personal faith in a personal God: “ ‘I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another’ ” (*Job 19:25–27, NIV*).

Ultimately, what is really crucial is, Whom do we trust? Do we follow God and His instructions, or do we live according to our own selfish views and Satan’s offers? Our orientation and directions in life are the things that must be clearly revealed in the great controversy.

The prophet Ezekiel announces God’s promise to give His Spirit to His people in order that they may obey His laws (*Ezek. 36:26, 27, NIV*). The heart transplant is needed in order for us to be able to follow God and His precepts. The circumcision of the heart can be performed only by the heavenly Surgeon. This Spirit changes and transforms lives—He is the Indweller, Sanctifier, and re-Creator. He is the transforming Spirit abiding with and in us. The Spirit of God brings new life (*Ezek. 37:1–14*).

God’s law is put into our hearts only by the work of the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel 36:27 literally reads: “I will give my Spirit in you, and I will do that you will walk in my statutes and keep my laws, and you will do” (*author’s translation*). In other words, God says: “I will do that you will do,” which means that God will move us or cause us to obey by His Spirit. The Lord commands obedience, and we must make a decision to obey, but we are unable to follow our decision and obey. However, when we cooperate with God, He gives us His Spirit to make that obedience happen. What God commands of His people, He always helps them to do. What He requires, He provides. Obedience is God’s gift, not our own performance or achievement, and it proves also that God is right.

Discussion Questions: How can God teach us to do His will and lead us by His Spirit? How can you recognize God’s will for your life? Why does David ask, “Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground” (*Ps. 143:10, NIV*)?

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: The book of Job sheds light on many important issues besides those already mentioned in this lesson (e.g., God is not the

author of suffering; the Lord is not responsible for evil in the world; whether God's followers are willing to do God's will and die for Him rather than secure their own lives; the sovereignty of God and human freedom). Discuss with your class the practical implications of these many issues.

Activities:

- 1 Discuss with your class David's prayer: "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me" (*Ps. 51:11, NIV*). Why is the presence of the Holy Spirit so important in our lives?
- 2 When God responded to Job's complaints (*chapters 38–41*), He pointed to the fact that He is the Creator. Why is it so crucial to believe in the biblical Creation? How does belief in Creation help one to cope with such perplexing issues when calamities and tragedies of life strike?

► STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: When Job suffered, his friends visited him even though their theology was wrong. The solidarity we show to those who suffer is the most important thing. What those who suffer need are not our explanations but presence. Discuss with your class those whom you should visit in order to make a difference in their lives.

Activities:

- 1 Discuss with your class the possible motives of people who come to evangelistic meetings or church. Why do people not come? What could we do to change that?
- 2 Visit the elderly people of your congregation and ask them what has given them power and strength to cope with evil and the difficulties of life. Where did they find courage to handle their problems? Ask the same questions of younger people in your church and compare their answers.
- 3 What resources would you recommend to young people in the church to enable them to better understand the great controversy issues?

Exhortations From *the* Sanctuary



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Heb. 10:19–25; Heb. 4:16; Exod. 24:8; James 4:7, 8; John 13:34; Heb. 10:24, 25.*

Memory Text: “And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (*Hebrews 10:21, 22, NASB*).

Throughout the book of Hebrews, passages about Christian faith alternate with passages about Christian living. In other words, theology has practical implications. The “what” of faith leads to the “how” of living that faith. In Hebrews, after the author has painted the magnificent theological picture of Christ as our Sacrifice and High Priest (*Heb. 7:1–10:18*), he encourages and exhorts believers to live according to the implications of these truths. This exhortation is especially seen in Hebrews 10:19–25.

This passage is one long, complex sentence in Greek. It consists of two basic facts that lead to three exhortations, each starting with the phrase “let us,” and each containing the familiar triad of faith, hope, and love. Also, each “let us” section contains another facet of Christian faith.

This week we will study Hebrews 10:19–25 and its practical exhortations for Christian living.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 28.*

Access to the Heavenly Sanctuary

Read Hebrews 4:16; 6:19, 20; and 10:19–21. To what do believers have access, and what does this mean for us? What hope is offered here, and more important, what impact should this hope have on our life and faith?

Believers have spiritual access to the heavenly sanctuary, to the very throne of God. We can seek closeness to God because our “entry” was made possible by the blood of Christ and by His representation in our behalf as our High Priest. The texts assure us that our soul has an anchor, Jesus Christ, who is in the very presence of God (*Heb. 4:14–16; 6:19, 20*). The assurance for us is that Christ gained full access to God after He was inaugurated as the heavenly High Priest (*Heb. 6:20*). At the inauguration, Christ sat on the heavenly throne, an image that demonstrates His royal status (*Rev. 3:21*).

The good news for us is that our Representative is in the presence of the Father. No mere earthly priest, who himself is sinful, serves on our behalf. We have the better Priest. Nothing separates the Father from the Son. Because Christ is perfect and sinless, there does not need to be a veil that shields God’s holiness from Jesus, our High Priest (*Heb. 10:20*).

“What does intercession comprehend? It is the golden chain which binds finite man to the throne of the infinite God. The human agent whom Christ has died to save importunes the throne of God, and his petition is taken up by Jesus who has purchased him with His own blood. Our great High Priest places His righteousness on the side of the sincere suppliant, and the prayer of Christ blends with that of the human petitioner.”—Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 78.

What assurance we have that we can have close communion with the Father, all because of what Jesus has done and is doing for us!

Dwell on what it means that Jesus is interceding for you in heaven. Why do you need that intercession so greatly?

Cleansed and Sincere

Read Hebrews 10:22. What conditions for approaching God in the heavenly sanctuary are laid down in this verse?

According to this verse, worshipers should meet four conditions when they draw near to God:

1. *Come with a sincere heart.* The heart is our inner being, our thoughts, our motivations, our emotions, our will, and our character. God wants us to be sincere. However, the heart can become sincere only if it is cleansed. This doesn't mean that we are perfect, just that we are striving toward revealing the character of Christ.

2. *Come in full assurance of faith.* As we saw in yesterday's study, there is no more reason to doubt that we will gain access to God.

3. *Come with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.* The sprinkling of the heart is sanctuary language that refers back to the blood sprinkled upon the people at the wilderness tabernacle (*Exod. 24:8; Lev. 8:23, 24*), which made them ritually clean but could not cleanse their conscience (*Heb. 9:9, 13*). The cleansing in the true tabernacle in heaven, however, is a cleansing of the conscience, brought about by the blood of Christ (*Heb. 9:14*). The justification of the repentant sinner is symbolized by this cleansing. We can have a clear conscience because we have been forgiven.

4. *Come with our bodies washed with pure water.* This sounds like an allusion to Christian baptism, but we can also understand it in a more spiritual sense as the "washing of water with the word" (*Eph. 5:26, NASB*), reading the Bible and applying its principles to our lives.

In James 4:7, 8, James struggles with the "double-minded" attitude of his readers. They have apparently lost their single-mindedness toward God. They have compromised and are in immediate danger. He uses language associated with purity at the sanctuary. It is truly a sanctuary concept that approaching God is possible only if purification takes place.

It should be clear that only God can cleanse our hearts. The question is: what painful choices do we make that allow Him to do this work of grace in our lives?

Faith: Be Confident

Read Hebrews 10:19–25 again. One theme appears again and again, and that is “confidence.” The Greek word for “confidence” (*Heb. 10:19*) refers to a boldness, courage, and fearlessness that in the New Testament describes our new relationship with God.

Originally, the word referred to an openness of speech, which, in this context, could specifically mean that one can freely approach God in prayer. This type of openness in our relationship with God produces a joyful confidence. The reason and object of our confidence is that we have a High Priest in heaven through whom we can have access to the presence of God. This access is unlimited and not blocked by anything but ourselves and our wrong choices. We have an open invitation to come into the heavenly sanctuary.

Where does this confidence come from? It is not produced by ourselves but by recognizing, again, that the blood of Jesus has won access to God’s presence for us.

There are other texts in Hebrews that speak about confidence and assurance: Hebrews 3:6, 14; 4:16; 6:11; 11:1. What kind of confidence do these texts describe?

Assurance and confidence do not anchor us in ourselves but only in Christ. These conditions are not dependent upon who we are but who our Mediator is. Interestingly, there is no mention that believers would have anything less than “full assurance” (*Heb. 6:11, 10:22*). Obviously, the new way that has been forever opened through Jesus’ death will lead without fail to full confidence. Nothing less is expected.

There are two ways to obtain Christian confidence and maintain it in faith. One is through faith itself (*Eph. 3:12*); the other is through faithful Christian service for others (*1 Tim. 3:13*). Both aspects are necessary and important. In Hebrews, too, assurance of faith and exhortation to prove oneself as a Christian go hand in hand. Christian living is never detached from Christian faith.

What things in life challenge your confidence in God or your full assurance of His good will for you? What can you do to help to protect yourself from this spiritual danger?

Hope: Be Steadfast and Unswerving

Look up the texts below. What do they all have in common? What should believers hold on to?

Heb. 3:6 _____

Heb. 3:14 _____

Heb. 4:14 _____

Heb. 6:18 _____

Heb. 10:23 _____

Besides having the assurance of salvation, it is important to persevere and uphold the hope offered us all. In Hebrews, to hold fast is a serious appeal. One gets the impression that some believers were slipping away from their Christian faith and hope. The apostle had to encourage them not to let go. The text expresses, quite similarly, the things that are worth holding on to: hope, confidence, assurance, and confession. All of these terms refer in an objective sense to the Christian belief. We can do these things because our hope isn't in ourselves but in Jesus and what He has done for us. The moment we forget that crucial truth, we will surely lose confidence.

These texts challenge us to be steadfast from the “beginning” (*Heb. 3:14*) and “until the end” (*Heb. 3:6, 14; 6:11*). To do so “without wavering” (*Heb. 10:23, NKJV*) refers to an immutable and unshaken faith. Whatever the circumstance may be, our hope remains the same, and our commitment to God is unchanged because we can trust that He is faithful and will do what He has promised.

There is no question that God is true to His Word. He fulfilled the promise that He made to Abraham and Sarah (*see also Rom. 4:19–21*); He fulfilled the promise of Christ's first coming (*Gal. 3:19*); and He will also fulfill the promise of His return (*Heb. 12:26*). God's ultimate promise, however, is eternal life, which He promised even before time began (*Titus 1:2, 1 John 2:25*).

God's faithfulness is immovable. Even “if we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself” (*2 Tim. 2:13, NASB*). Our unfaithfulness or disbelief will not change God's intention for us. His promises remain unshaken by our moral lapses. The promises will still be available for us because faithfulness is part of the divine nature.

It is so easy to become discouraged because of our sins. How can we overcome those sins and yet, at the same time, not give up when we fail? Why must we cling to these promises, especially when we fail?

Love: Encourage One Another

“And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Heb. 10:24, NASB).

Whereas the exhortation in Hebrews 10:23 focuses on the individual attitude, the next one in Hebrews 10:24 has the community of believers in view. We do not walk alone on our path with Christ. We should care for one another consistently.

The challenge to love one another is a traditional component of Christian behavior (*John 13:34, 35; Gal. 5:13*). However, loving one another does not just happen naturally. The act of “considering” suggests concentrated and careful pondering. We are urged to pay attention to our fellow believers and see how we could incite them to love others and to do good works. Unfortunately, it is easier to provoke and antagonize others than it is to spur them on to Christian love, isn’t it?

Then let us consolidate our efforts to work for the best of the community so that, because of our inducements to love, others cannot help but love and perform good works, as well.

Read Hebrews 10:24, 25. What do “love” and “good deeds” have to do with the “assemblies”?

One point that Hebrews stresses is that we can express love toward one another in Christian gatherings. If someone does not come to worship, how can he or she ever fulfill Christ’s law of love? Some people may think that they have “good” reasons to stay away from Christian meetings. Hebrews, however, touches on the sensitive issue that, in the end, it might be their own apathy that keeps them away. If one wants, one can always find reasons to avoid church attendance or other Christian gatherings. Those reasons, however, pale in contrast to one of the reasons for coming: to be a blessing to others.

Such behavior is all the more pressing as the day of Christ’s return comes nearer and nearer. At the beginning of Hebrews 10:19–25, the author admonished believers to draw near to God in the heavenly sanctuary, and at its conclusion he reminds them that the Day of the Lord draws near to them. Christ’s return should always be a major incentive for Christian behavior.

Who in your church do you want to encourage with your words, deeds, or just by your presence? If you are deliberate in that intention, you can make a big difference in people’s lives and, in turn, be blessed yourself.

Further Study: “The Mediator, in his office and work, would greatly exceed in dignity and glory the earthly, typical priesthood. . . . This Saviour was to be a mediator, to stand between the Most High and his people. Through this provision, a way was opened whereby the guilty sinner might find access to God through the mediation of another. The sinner could not come in his own person, with his guilt upon him, and with no greater merit than he possessed in himself. Christ alone could open the way, by making an offering equal to the demands of the divine law. He was perfect, and undefiled by sin. He was without spot or blemish. The extent of the terrible consequences of sin could never have been known, had not the remedy provided been of infinite value.”—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 11.

“Faith in the atonement and intercession of Christ will keep us steadfast and immovable amid the temptations that press upon us in the church militant.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7A, p. 484.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Skim through the book of Hebrews. What are all the times in this book that we are called to act in certain ways, ways that directly result from our faith?
- ❷ Dwell more on the idea that we have full access to God. What does that mean? How should this influence our lives, especially in times of temptation or in times of discouragement over our spiritual state?
- ❸ What is the difference between “full assurance” of faith and a presumptuous attitude?
- ❹ Dwell on this line taken from the Ellen G. White quote in Friday’s further study: “The extent of the terrible consequences of sin could never have been known, had not the remedy provided been of infinite value.” What does that tell us about just how bad sin is that it cost something of “infinite value,” the life of Jesus? How do we understand the idea of “infinite value”? How does the fact that Jesus is the Creator help us to grasp this amazing truth? Knowing these things, how can our lives not be transformed? How can we know these things and not want to teach them to others?
- ❺ How can we develop spiritual friendships in which we encourage one another to be more loving and to live a life of good deeds? What spiritual benefits do you gain from “assembling together”? What would you miss if you could not worship with other Christians in church?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Hebrews 10:19–25*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Recognize the Source of our confidence, Christ, our High Priest, who died for us and lives to help us to serve God and others.

Feel: Appreciate God’s care for us by encouraging His followers to positively respond to His exhortations.

Do: Cultivate the feeling of love toward sinners as God has and encourage them to go forward no matter how big their obstacles.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Our Only Confidence

A Why is our confidence not built on our performance or achievements but solely rooted in God’s work for us?

B Why do Christians need to cultivate faith, hope, and love?

II. Feel: God Exhorts His People

A How do you feel when God encourages you to follow Him? What does it say about His care for His people?

B How can you draw near to God when He is always with His people and takes the first step in restoring a genuine relationship with us?

III. Do: Encourage Others

A How can you help people to experience and grow in a meaningful relationship with God?

B How can you encourage a friend, a member of your church, or a former member to worship God by regularly attending church?

► **Summary:** Our faith in God is shown by our care for others. When you encourage the weak, you strengthen your own relationship with God. We need each other and need to walk together to the New Jerusalem.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Hebrews 4:14–16, 6:19–20, 10:19–25*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: God is the Great Encourager, and He wants us to obtain the ultimate, positive sanctuary experience. We can have bold confidence to enter the heavenly sanctuary and have sure access to God through Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who opens the way for us. From this cosmic command center, He blesses His people, gives us full assurance of faith, strengthens our hope, and deepens our love so that we can spiritually grow and be ready for the day of judgment.

Just for Teachers: This week’s lesson should help individuals to know how important it is to never give up, to encourage one another, and to stay in close fellowship with one another. We depend on one another and need to be in touch with brothers and sisters as they also need us. Because God encourages us, we can encourage one another.

Opening Discussion: Can you remember when you were down and someone encouraged you? What were your feelings, and what was most helpful for you in that situation? Were you encouraged by a smile, gesture, greeting, hug, financial help, song, sermon, prayer, welcome, or a simple word?

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Just for Teachers: The major theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that Jesus is superior, better, and higher than anything or anybody else. This superiority of Christ should lead His followers to a new lifestyle in such a way that He is always their priority.

Bible Commentary

I. Enter the Sanctuary and Approach the Throne of Grace With Confidence
(Review *Hebrews 4:14–16* with your class.)

We may boldly enter with full confidence and assurance into the heavenly sanctuary, because we have a great High Priest, our Intercessor, who has gone ahead of us. He understands our fragility, vulnerability, weaknesses, temptations, problems, troubles, and difficulties, because He went through

similar experiences while living on earth as a human being. Thus, He is able to sympathize with us and help us in life's struggles. This is why the author of the letter to the Hebrews encourages: "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence [Greek word *parresia* means also "boldness," "assurance," "courage"], so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (4:16, *NIV*).

Discussion Questions:

- 1 How is our boldness in approaching God connected with the claiming of His promises? Support your answer with biblical evidence.
- 2 How can you grow in love? Be practical and concrete in your answers. How can you tie your answers to Paul's explanation about what is true love in 1 Corinthians 13:4–10?

II. Let Us Not Give Up Meeting Together (Review Hebrews 10:24, 25 with your class.)

The author of Hebrews underlines the fellowship of believers (10:24, 25; 12:22–24), which is the result of a new reality accomplished by Christ. Christians need this community in order to stay focused, and they should never abandon this fellowship (10:25). The sense of belonging to Christ and to one another forms one family of brothers and sisters (10:19; see *John 1:12; 1 Cor. 12; 1 John 3:1*). This close bond must be strong among believers. It is actually Christ's love that draws and joins His followers together (2 *Cor. 5:14*).

Discussion Questions:

- 1 What is the reason that the author of Hebrews gives for not abandoning meeting together?
- 2 Why should we build a community of faith, as opposed to living individualistically and independently? Why do we need one another?

III. Never Give Up! Persevere in Doing God's Will! (Review Hebrews 10:35, 36 with your class.)

That God is for us is also shown through the work of the Holy Spirit. There are seven references to the Holy Spirit in the book of Hebrews (*Heb. 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29*), which assert how the Holy Spirit

brings divine confirming witness of the definitive word spoken through Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the Source of Scripture’s inspiration and speaks through it (3:7, 9; 9:8; 10:15). Through the Spirit, the Written Word remains current and contemporary: “So, as the Holy Spirit says” (3:7, *NIV*). The words of Scripture are “living” words (*Heb. 4:12*). The Holy Spirit interprets Scriptures for today and enables us to walk in the new covenant (*Jer. 31:31–33, Ezek. 36:24–28*).

The phrase “Spirit of grace” (*Heb. 10:29*) draws attention to the power and presence of God in our lives. The work of the Spirit is an expression of divine grace. Insulting the Spirit of grace would mean insulting everything that has come from God. Welcoming the Spirit of grace would mean opening one’s way, via the Spirit, to the very “throne of grace” where divine helping grace (available through our great High Priest) is anchored, offered, and assured. Here the transformational work in relation to the new covenant experience is fully realized in the heart (10:15). To be partakers of the Holy Spirit means to be partakers of Christ.

The author of Hebrews appeals: “Persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised” (10:36, *NIV*). Perseverance is important; it is one characteristic of God’s people before the second coming of Jesus (*Rev. 14:12; see also the experience of Moses—Heb. 11:27 and James’ appeal in 5:7–12*).

There are many exhortations in the book of Hebrews. They can be summarized by God’s appeal: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” (4:7, *NIV*). God’s call is actually a call of the Holy Spirit (3:7), and it demands total dedication to God. When we realize that something needs to be changed and put in harmony with Him and His will in our lives, we should respond to His calling immediately.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 The author of the Epistle of Hebrews states that we should encourage one another “all the more as you see the Day approaching” (*Heb. 10:25, NIV*). What kind of Day is it—the Day of Judgment/Atonement or the Day of Jesus’ second coming? Support your answer with the Bible.
- 2 How can we hope without wavering? What does it mean to “hold unswervingly to the hope” (*Heb. 10:23, NIV*)?
- 3 How can believers in Christ insult “the Spirit of grace” (*Heb. 10:29, NIV*)?

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Help people to understand the real value of prayer.

What does it mean to come to God with bold assurance and courageous confidence in order to “receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (*Heb. 4:16, NIV*)?

Discussion Questions:

- 1 What does it mean that believers can freely approach God? Is God so far from us that we need to draw near to Him?
- 2 Jesus Christ entered into the heavenly sanctuary in order to do His mediatorial work and provide the benefits of His intercession for His followers. How, and for what, can we obtain help from our Intercessor?
- 3 Ask the members of your class to discuss how to make the life of the congregation attractive for youth, church members, and friends.

Activity: Discuss with your class the difference between a destructive and a constructive critique. What is the nature of true encouragement? How can one avoid being judgmental or putting people down while helping them to grow in certain areas of life?

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Practice in a concrete way with your class what to say and how to encourage people who are disappointed, hurt, or spiritually weak. How can you motivate people to regularly worship, be part of the community of faith, and study the Word of God?

Activities:

- 1 The summary of the Epistle to the Hebrews is simple: “Do not forsake Jesus. He brought a whole new dimension to your life, opened heaven for you, and brought reality toward which all the Old Testament types pointed.” What techniques can you use in order to remember Jesus’ work for humanity and keep it fresh in your mind in order to experience it?
- 2 Divide your class into two groups and ask each group to discuss the meaning of Jesus’ entry “within the veil” (*Heb. 6:19, 20; 10:19, 20*) and then evaluate their arguments. Ask them the following question: is the Day of Atonement, or the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary, a part of what it means to enter “within the veil”? Compelling evidence speaks in favor of the view that takes entering within the veil as referring to the inauguration.