



the
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UNDERSTANDING THE
Sanctuary

Week of Prayer, December 2–11, 2011



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of Prayer
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Understanding the Sanctuary

It's more than a theory, more than a study. To follow Christ into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary is an experience. It involves a daily walk with Him.

Yes, many have faced difficult trials during the past year. Many have suffered heartache and sorrow. But by God's grace, and through His great mercy—here we are, still in the land of the living. There is so much for which to be thankful, so much for which to petition the throne of grace. There is quite a work ahead of each one of us in 2012, so let us fortify ourselves spiritually.

"We must gather about the cross. Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion. We should keep in our thoughts every blessing we receive from God, and when we realize His great love we should be willing to trust everything to the hand that was nailed to the cross for us."¹

Please share these readings with isolated believers and shut-ins, remembering:

- SABBATH, DECEMBER 10, 2011: PRAYER WITH FASTING
- SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2011: SPECIAL OFFERING FOR NEW MISSIONS.

May the Lord pour out His great blessing upon all who are seeking Him during this special time of dedication.

¹ *Steps to Christ*, pp. 103, 104.

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"The age in which we live calls for reformatory action."

—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

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The Ledger of Heaven



In the study of accounting, a basic principle is taught about the significant duties involved in recording and maintaining financial information of the valuables entrusted to a certain entity—whether it be a business, organization, church, family, or whatever. The accountant must maintain precise, meticulous records of all matters pertaining to the entity, listing the largest sum down to the minutest cent as a debit or credit, recorded to the very penny. This information is kept in a ledger.

Likewise, the Creator and Master of the universe also maintains this same type of vital records. In this case, the most valuable resources in His fold are human souls made in His own image. He keeps a ledger of their names and keeps a careful account of all their deeds—both good and bad. It is His earnest desire to make them 100% fireproof for eternity, but He will not do this without their full, consistent consent and abiding trust in Him.

In 1879, the Lord provided in vision an awesome scene of the great day of the execution of His judgment. Before the thousands of angels surrounding His throne, a book was opened bearing the title, “Ledger of Heaven”, written in gold letters that seemed like a burning flame of fire. Names and good deeds were registered there.

Then another book was opened. This one contained the sins of those professing to believe the truth:

“Under the general heading of selfishness came every other sin. There were also headings over every column, and underneath these, opposite each

name, were recorded, in their respective columns, the lesser sins.

“Under covetousness came falsehood, theft, robbery, fraud, and avarice; under ambition came pride and extravagance; jealousy stood at the head of malice, envy, and hatred; and intemperance headed a long list of fearful crimes, such as lasciviousness, adultery, indulgence of animal passions, etc. As [the servant of the Lord] beheld [she] was filled with inexpressible anguish and exclaimed: ‘Who can be saved? who will stand justified before God? whose robes are spotless? who are faultless in the sight of a pure and holy God?’”¹

A solemn, sobering matter

“As the Holy One upon the throne slowly turned the leaves of the ledger, and His eyes rested for a moment upon individuals, His glance seemed to burn into their very souls, and at the same moment every word and action of their lives passed before their minds as clearly as though traced before their vision in letters of fire. Trembling seized them, and their faces turned pale. Their first appearance when around the throne was that of careless indifference. But how changed their appearance now! . . .

“One class were registered as cumberers of the ground. As the piercing eye of the Judge rested upon these, their sins of neglect were distinctly revealed. . . .

“This class had made *self* supreme, laboring only for selfish interests. They were not rich toward God, not having responded to His claims upon them. Although professing to be servants of Christ, they brought no souls to Him. . . .

“The names of all who profess the truth were mentioned. Some were

reproved for their unbelief, others for having been slothful servants. They had allowed others to do the work in the Master’s vineyard . . . while they were selfishly serving their own temporal interests.”²

What was the response of the Lord’s servant?

“The scene then passed away, and I found myself still upon the earth, inexpressibly grateful that the day of God had not yet come, and that precious probationary time is still granted us in which to prepare for eternity.”³

What about us?

Dear brethren, sisters, friends: How relevant is it that we keep our eyes fixed on the heavenly sanctuary while the individual case of every professed believer is pending in court? It is certainly a matter of vital importance! The enemy of souls is constantly busy to distract our thoughts away from this reality. So let us be wise and determine to focus our minds with full attention on the final ministration of our Advocate and Judge. During this Week of Prayer, may we each search our hearts, confess and forsake our sins, and beseech the Lord in deep earnestness that we may not be weighed in the balances and found wanting! ☞

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- ¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 384, 385.
- ² *Ibid.*, pp. 385, 386.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

JESUS, *the Son of God:*

The Divinity of Christ

Who is Jesus—and what has He done for us?

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1, 2). Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). . . .

The Father wrought by His Son in the creation of all heavenly beings. "By Him were all things created, . . . whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him" (Colossians 1:16). Angels are God's ministers, radiant with the light ever flowing from His presence and speeding on rapid wing to execute His will. But the Son, the anointed of God, the "express image of His person," "the

brightness of His glory," "upholding all things by the word of His power," holds supremacy over them all (Hebrews 1:3). "A glorious high throne from the beginning," was the place of His sanctuary (Jeremiah 17:12); "a scepter of righteousness," the scepter of His kingdom (Hebrews 1:8).¹

In Hebrews we read: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:1–3).

To save the fallen race, Christ laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown, clothed His divinity with humanity, and came to this earth. Without leaving heaven and taking the nature of man, He could not pay the ransom for our salvation; therefore He left His high command in the heavenly courts and assumed the weaknesses of humanity, sacrificing all in our behalf. He came to this earth and stood at the head of humanity, to work out for you and for

*Compiled from the writings of
E. G. White*

me a faultless character by obedience to God's law. He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

While Christ was on earth, how severe were the temptations He faced?

The second Adam was a free moral agent, held responsible for His conduct. Surrounded by intensely subtle and misleading influences, He was much less favorably situated than was the first Adam to lead a sinless life. Yet in the midst of sinners He resisted every temptation to sin, and maintained His innocence. He was ever sinless.

Not only did Satan seek to tempt Christ to yield to appetite, but he appealed to His ambition. Notwithstanding the enemy's determined efforts, Christ did not manifest a grasping spirit to gain possession of the kingdoms of this world. He did not worship Satan in order to gain worldly wealth. By this He taught a lesson of steadfastness to principle. Integrity should never be yielded for any earthly advantage. Power and riches obtained at the expense of principle will prove a terrible curse.

The temptations that Christ withstood were as much stronger than ours as His nobility and majesty are greater than ours. Having been tempted so strongly on every point, He is able to succor everyone whom Satan is now tempting. And today it is the privilege of men and women to gain the victory over temptation through the merits of the crucified and risen Saviour, who is familiar with every trial of humanity.²

Consider His credentials!

Christ was the Father's "appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." He was the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." And He upheld "all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:2, 3). He possessed divine excellence and greatness; and it pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell. Christ exchanged the throne of light and glory which He had with the Father, counting it not a thing to be desired to be equal with God

while man was lost in sin and misery. He came from heaven to earth, clothed His divinity with humanity and bore the curse as surety for the fallen race. He was not compelled to do this; but He chose to bear the results of man's transgression, that man might escape eternal death.³

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). It is not physical life that is here specified but eternal life, the life which is exclusively the property of God. The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual received. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Lifegiver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. "I lay it down of myself," He said (John 10:18). In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived. This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as his personal Saviour. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). This is the open fountain of life for the world.⁴

How can this benefit us in a practical sense?

Christ took human nature that humanity might uplift humanity by laying hold of divine power. Immeasurably inferior is the part the human agent sustains in this work; but, linked up with the divinity of Christ, he can accomplish all things.⁵

There is a possibility of the believer in Christ obtaining an experience that will be wholly sufficient to place him in right relation to God. Every promise that is in God's Book holds out to us the encouragement that we may be partakers of the divine nature. This is the possibility—to rely upon God, to believe His Word, to work His works; and this we can do when we lay hold of the divinity of Christ. This possibility is worth more to us than all the riches in the world. There is nothing on earth that can compare with it. As

we lay hold of the power thus placed within our reach, we receive a hope so strong that we can rely wholly upon God's promises; and laying hold of the possibilities there are in Christ, we become the sons and daughters of God.

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you," the apostle says, "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:2, 3).⁶

In His divine nature Jesus was declared to be the Son of God, but the divinity of Christ was the fact that was constantly opposed by the Pharisees. The great argument that substantiated the divinity of Christ was His resurrection from the dead. Overwhelming testimony came to those that believed on Him, for He had been seen among them, and those who would not receive the great array of evidence that could be presented, would not have been convinced by any amount of proof. . . .

The law condemns, but it cannot pardon the transgressor. The penitent, believing soul does not look to the law for justification but to Christ, the atoning sacrifice, who is able to impart His righteousness to the sinner and make his efforts acceptable before God. When we take Christ for our Saviour, we are enabled to become obedient children, keeping all the commandments of God.⁷

[Christ] desires that we shall abide in Him, that He may work through us in keeping before the world such a representation of the infinite love of God as He Himself gave. Through our lives the despondent may receive an assurance that it is possible to be partakers of the divine nature, and by taking hold of this divinity win the victory that all must win who shall enter in through the gates into the city.

Divine strength for victory

It seems impossible for us to comprehend Christ's great love for us. We can only behold the wonderful sacrifice that He made in manifesting that love. He who was one with the Father

laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown, and in coming to this world clothed His divinity with humanity. Had He come in all His glory, escorted by myriads of angels, no man could have endured the sight. But He took upon Himself humanity, that He might perfect in His own life a humanity that we can lay hold of and be united with divinity. The divine nature is to be imparted to every true seeker after Jesus Christ. Divinity must be united with humanity. Thus humanity may be partakers of the divine nature, that men may be able to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Without perfection of character no one can enter the pearly gates of the city of God, for if, with all our imperfections, we were permitted to enter that city, there would soon be in heaven a second rebellion. We must first be tried and chosen, and found faithful and true. Upon the purification of our character rests our only hope of eternal life.

Insofar as we lack perfection of character, thus far do we fail of attaining that which God has provided for us through Jesus Christ. If we do not lay hold upon the provision of His grace, we shall have a cheap experience governed by our own impetuous, changeable disposition. We cannot glorify God by our own efforts. We must become partakers of the divine nature, abiding in Him as the branches abide in the vine.

God helping me, I am determined to be an overcomer. Through Christ I shall obtain the victory. Then His joy will remain in me, and my joy be full. I will talk of His goodness; I will tell of His power. Through a dependence upon the divinity of Christ, I may overcome as He overcame.⁸

How does divinity operate in human flesh?

When Christ was crucified, it was His human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible. Christ, the sinless One, will save every son and daughter of Adam who accepts the salvation proffered them, consenting to become the children of God. The Saviour has

Will we put on the armor of righteousness? Will we lay hold of the divinity of Jesus Christ, that we may receive strength to overcome?

purchased the fallen race with His own blood.⁹

In giving Christ, God gave all the facilities of heaven. His pledges of help are made to every troubled soul. None need fear defeat if they walk obediently and gratefully before Him with all humility. Christ has gained the victory over the enemy; and in every conflict with the powers of darkness we have His assurance, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). The Lord God of heaven "hath put all things under" Christ's "feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22, 23).¹⁰

In order to obtain the immortal inheritance and the eternal substance, you must be overcomers in this probationary life. Everything that blots and stains the soul must be removed, must be cleansed from the heart. We must know what it means to be a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruptions that are in the world through lust. Are you willing to wage war against the lusts of the flesh? Are you ready to battle against the enemy of God and man? Satan is determined to enslave every soul if he can; for he is playing a desperate game to win the souls of men from Christ and eternal life. Will you permit him to steal from you the graces of the Spirit of God, and plant in you his own corrupt nature? or will you accept the great provision of salvation, and through the merits of the Infinite Sacrifice made in your behalf, become a partaker of the divine nature? God has given His only-begotten Son, that through His shame, suffering, and death, you might have glory, honor, and immortality.¹¹

Power in His purification

Christ dwells in him who receives Him by faith. Though trials may come upon the soul, yet the Lord's presence

will be with us. The burning bush in which was the Lord's presence did not consume away. The fire did not extinguish a fiber of the branches. Thus will it be with the feeble human agent who puts his trust in Christ. The furnace fire of temptation may burn, persecution and trial may come, but only the dross will be consumed. The gold will shine brighter because of the process of purification. Greater is He that is in the heart of the faithful, than he that controls the hearts of unbelievers. Complain not bitterly of the trial which comes upon you, but let your eyes be directed to Christ, who has clothed His divinity with humanity, in order that we may understand how great His interest in us since He has identified Himself with suffering humanity. He tasted the cup of human sorrow, He was afflicted in all our afflictions, He was made perfect through suffering, tempted in all points like as humanity is tempted, in order that He might succor those who are in temptation. . . .

For centuries before the manifestation of Christ to the world, God exercised forbearance toward a rebellious world. He saw His holy law trampled in the dust, and He let His judgments fall upon the world in a flood; but man did not learn the lesson from this experience and turned to his rebellious ways. . . .

He who was equal with God, who was great in counsel, mighty in working, was equal to the emergency that had arrived in the government of God. God sent His Son into the world, not to pass sentence of condemnation upon a rebellious race, but to make manifest His love, and to hold out the hope of eternal life to those who should believe in His Son.

Here was love and amazing grace that triumphed over justice. Retribution fell upon no less a personage than the Son of the Infinite God, and the

universe of heaven rejoiced in the glory of God's benevolence and self-denial in giving the Prince of heaven to our world. Such love was beyond the comprehension of heavenly angels. Christ came to the world to seek His lost pearl, and He had to go through the gates of death to recover His lost jewel. For "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15). All who look to Him in faith will be healed of their spiritual maladies. He is the Balm in Gilead, He is the great Physician. Christ was the one who consented to meet the conditions necessary for man's salvation. No angel, no man, was sufficient for the great work to be wrought. The Son of man alone must be lifted up; for only an infinite nature could undertake the redemptive process. Christ consented to connect Himself with the disloyal and sinful, to partake of the nature of man, to give His own blood, and to make His soul an offering for sin. In the counsels of heaven, the guilt of man was measured, the wrath for sin was estimated, and yet Christ announced His decision that He would take upon Himself the responsibility of meeting the conditions whereby hope should be extended to a fallen race. He understood the possibility of the human soul, and united humanity to Himself, even as the vine knits the grafted branches and twigs into its being, until, vein by vein, and fiber by fiber, the branches are united to the living Vine.

The merchant man sold all to buy the pearl of lost humanity. The sinner also is to lay down his all in order to become a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. . . .

Jesus takes man into copartnership with Himself, and the unity and love between Christ and His Father bear the credentials to the world of Christ's divinity. Transformed in character, the believer presents the fact that Christ alone can reshape, purify, and ennoble the soul. The love that God has manifested toward men has no parallel. Jesus says, "Therefore doth

my Father love me, because I lay down my life" for the sheep (John 10:17). In this expression He would prove to man that the Father's love is so large, so unbounded towards man, that He even loves the Son for the sacrifice which He made for the recovering of humanity. God Himself suffered in the suffering of His Son. While Jesus walked the earth in the habiliments of humanity, He could say, "I and my Father are one" (verse 30). Having undertaken the work of redemption, the Lord spares nothing, however costly, which is essential to the completion of His design. He withholds not heaven itself, but continues to surround men with its favors, heaping gift upon gift, until the world itself is flooded with its boundless mercy and love. Jesus says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).¹²

Our privilege and responsibility

[The Son of God] came to earth to unite His divine power with our human efforts, that through the strength and moral power which He imparts, we might overcome in our own behalf.¹³

There was in [Jesus] nothing that responded to Satan's sophistry. He did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us. Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character.¹⁴

Christ's divinity is to be steadfastly maintained. When the Saviour asked His disciples the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Said Christ, "Upon this rock," not on Peter, but on the Son of God, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:15, 16, 18). . . .

Christ is to be preached, not

controversially, but affirmatively. Take your stand without controversy. Let not your words at any time be uncertain. The Word of the living God is to be the foundation of our faith. Gather up the strongest affirmative statements regarding the atonement made by Christ for the sins of the world. Show the necessity for this atonement and tell men and women that they may be saved if they will repent and return to their loyalty to God's law. Gather all the affirmatives and proofs that make the gospel the glad tidings of salvation to all who receive and believe on Christ as a personal Saviour.¹⁵

The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life.¹⁶

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:13-15).

Here is brought to view our work. There is something that we are to make known to the world. If Jesus Christ is revealed in us, the world will see that humanity may lay hold of divinity. There will be no excuse for us if we fail in overcoming as God requires of us. The question we must now decide is, Will we put on the armor of righteousness? Will we lay hold of the divinity of Jesus Christ, that we may receive strength to overcome?¹⁷ ✠

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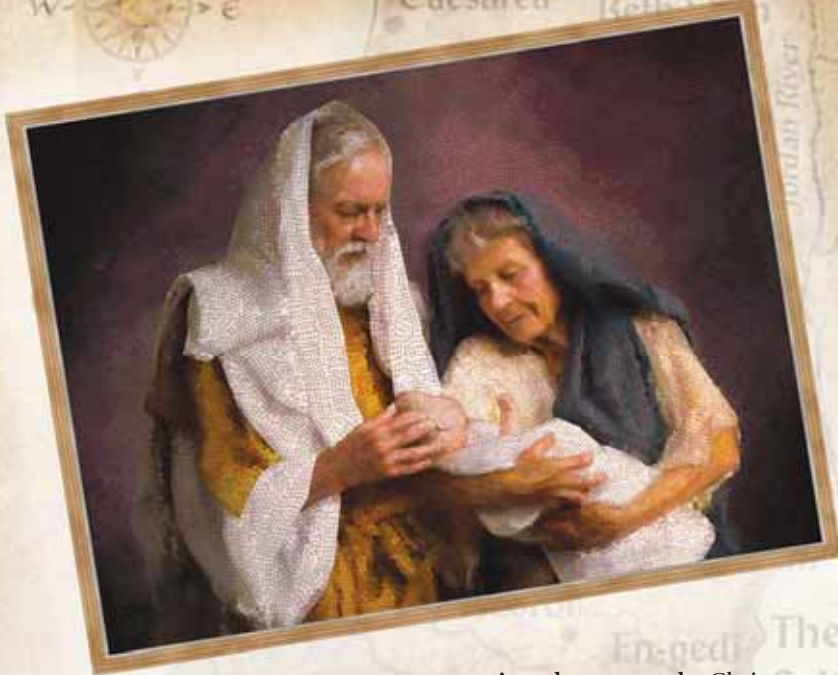
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- ¹² *The Signs of the Times*, March 5, 1896.
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JESUS, *the Son of Man*

The Humanity of Christ

*A compilation from the Bible and
the Spirit of Prophecy with comments*

by M. Stroia



The only way in which we can understand the reason of our existence is to look back to its origin where we find Christ—the everlasting Word of God:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:1–3, 14, emphasis supplied).

The ultimate Creator and His pre-existence as the Prince of heaven

In these verses the Bible report sends us to Jesus Christ as the ultimate Creator of all things, the One who stands at the origin of the entire creation that He called into existence and to which He also assigned a purpose. He is not only the beginning of everything but comprises the creation throughout its

is to be our study. Christ was a real man; He gave proof of His humility in becoming a man. Yet He was God in the flesh. When we approach this subject, we would do well to heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, ‘Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground’ (Exodus 3:5). **We should come to this study with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth.”¹**

The Spirit of Prophecy emphasizes the overwhelming importance of Christ’s incarnation in behalf of humanity—as well as the reverent spirit in which we as mortals are to approach this holy subject that we are encouraged to study:

“The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This

history, and for this reason the apostle John quotes Him as “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Revelation 22:13).

“It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. ‘His strength setteth fast the mountains’ (Psalm 65:6).”²

When pondering the infinity of the Universe with its countless systems, galaxies, and worlds in the midst of which our blue planet is a mere tiny spot, we may get a very faint idea of the greatness and magnificence of the One who created all these things.

“The world was made by Him, and without him was not any thing made that was made’ (John 1:3). If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore.

“The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by Him as His right.”³

“The existence of Christ before His incarnation is not measured by figures. . . . He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent.”⁴

“In itself the act of consenting to be a man would be no act of humiliation were it not for the fact of Christ’s exalted preexistence, and the fallen condition of man. But when we open our understanding to realize that in taking humanity upon Him, Christ laid aside His royal robe, His kingly crown, His high command, and clothed His divinity with humanity, that He might meet man where he was, and bring to the human family moral power to become the sons and daughters of God, [we begin to understand the magnitude of the Incarnation].”⁵

Still this wonderful heavenly Being of amazing greatness and glory “was

“Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption.”

made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

To speculate on the technical details of how this process occurred would be presumption on our part, since the full nature of God is above our human understanding, and the incarnation of Christ is a mystery which no human mind will ever be able to fully understand.

The incarnation: a mystery with a definite goal and purpose

“Avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood. Truth lies close to the track of presumption. In treating upon the humanity of Christ, you need to guard strenuously every assertion, lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity. His birth was a miracle of God. . . . **Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption.** He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted, yet He is called ‘that holy thing.’ It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain, a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, but **let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be.**”⁶

“The incarnation of Christ is the mystery of all mysteries.”⁷

“There is no one who can explain the mystery of the incarnation of Christ.”⁸

Nonetheless, we are free to consider the reason why the Prince of Heaven

chose to become a man, thus accepting the infinite humiliation of taking human nature upon Himself.

When stating the purpose of His coming, the Lord made it clear that this was nothing less than for the salvation of humankind, for, as He declared: “I came not to judge the world, but to **save the world,**” which had been lost from the fold of God through sin: “**For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost**” (John 12:47; Matthew 18:11, emphasis added).

In full agreement with God the Father, our Saviour left the heavenly realms of bliss and glory where was worshipped by the angelic hosts and descended to this gloomy and sinful world. Here He accepted to be despised, mocked, spit upon, fiercely tortured, and finally killed for this one purpose: to give everyone the chance of salvation and to save what could be saved out of this world: “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17).

The significance of this wonderful plan for every human being who has ever lived in this world—including us—is very properly worded by the apostle Paul: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15).

The great reason behind this purpose can be comprised into a word small enough to be uttered in a single syllable, but at the same time broad enough to define the infinite God—LOVE: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“That [Christ] might accomplish His purpose of love for the fallen race, He

became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh."⁹

The greatness and strength of this unmatched love has been revealed by the sacrifice which Christ accepted to make in order to redeem humanity. His atoning death on Calvary was not the only sacrifice He made, but just the coronation of an entire life of love motivated by sacrifice and self-denial.

"Christ, 'being in the form of God, counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men' (Philippians 2:6, 7, RV, margin). **This was a voluntary sacrifice.** Jesus might have remained at the Father's side. He might have retained the glory of heaven, and the homage of the angels. But He chose to give back the scepter into the Father's hands, and to step down from the throne of the universe, that He might bring light to the benighted, and life to the perishing."¹⁰

The amazing condescension of Christ

The very condescension of Christ in leaving behind His position in the heavenly courts and coming down to this bleak and gloomy planet of sin goes far beyond our power of understanding and leaves us amazed and unable to utter anything else than "What love!"

"The more we think about Christ's becoming a babe here on earth, the more wonderful it appears. How can it be that the helpless babe in Bethlehem's manger is still the divine Son of God? **Though we cannot understand it, we can believe that He who made the worlds, for our sakes became a helpless babe. Though higher than any of the angels, though as great as the Father on the throne of heaven, He became one with us. In Him God and man became one, and it is in this fact that we find the hope of our fallen race.** Looking upon Christ in the flesh, we look upon God in humanity, and see in Him the brightness of divine glory, the express image of God the Father."¹¹

"In contemplating the incarnation of Christ in humanity, we stand baffled

before an unfathomable mystery, that the human mind cannot comprehend. The more we reflect upon it, the more amazing does it appear. How wide is the contrast between the divinity of Christ and the helpless infant in Bethlehem's manger! How can we span the distance between the mighty God and a helpless child? And yet the Creator of worlds, He in whom was the fullness of the Godhead bodily, was manifest in the helpless babe in the manger. Far higher than any of the angels, equal with the Father in dignity and glory, and yet wearing the garb of humanity! **Divinity and humanity were mysteriously combined, and man and God became one. It is in this union that we find the hope of our fallen race.**"¹²

"It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. **But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin.** Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life. . . . Our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities."¹³

By taking upon Himself humanity, the Prince of Heaven got a much lower nature than that of an angel. Created out of dust, man was made of an inferior, and, as if this were not enough, Jesus did not take Adam's nature before the fall, but the one which had been exposed for many centuries to the weakening effects of heredity.

"What a sight was this for heaven to look upon. Christ, who knew not the least moral taint or defilement of sin, took our nature in its deteriorated condition."¹⁴

Furthermore, even as a man, Jesus was not born in the palace of the rich, but in the family of a humble carpenter, without richness or fame: "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there

is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2).

He chose to do this because He did not want to attract men and women through His outward appearance, power, or richness, but rather through the beauty of His character and the purity of the principles to which He was adhering:

"Christ was to come in 'the body of our humiliation' (Philippians 3:21, RV), 'in the likeness of men' (verse 7). In the eyes of the world He possessed no beauty that they should desire Him; yet He was the incarnate God, the light of heaven and earth."¹⁵

"The Pattern Man, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon Himself our nature, and lived nearly thirty years in an obscure Galilean town, hidden away among the hills. All the angel host was at His command, yet He did not claim to be anything great or exalted. He did not attach 'Professor' to His name to please Himself. He was a carpenter, working for wages, a servant to those for whom He labored, showing that heaven may be very near us in the common walks of life, and that angels from the heavenly courts will take charge of the steps of those who come and go at God's command."¹⁶

"We cannot understand how Christ became a little, helpless babe. He could have come to earth in such beauty that He would have been unlike the sons of men. His face could have been bright with light, and His form could have been tall and beautiful. He could have come in such a way as to charm those who looked upon Him; but this was not the way that God planned He should come among the sons of men.

"He was to be like those who belonged to the human family and to the Jewish race. His features were to be like those of other human beings, and He was not to have such beauty of person as to make people point Him out as different from others. He was to come as one of the human family, and to stand as a man before heaven and earth."¹⁷

"Jesus chose to take the position of the lowly and not the state of those who had power and wealth and influence. He did not design that outward

“Jesus did not take Adam’s nature before the fall, but the one which had been exposed for many centuries to the weakening effects of heredity.”

display should attract men to Him; the power of celestial truth was to be the drawing power. Sinless and exalted by nature, He consented to take the habiliments of humanity to become one with the fallen race.”¹⁸

The Son of man: The connecting bridge between heaven and earth

During His life on earth, Jesus referred to Himself as the “Son of Man,” thus reiterating His unfaltering allegiance with the human race and His mission to reconnect humanity with God. Yet, this allegiance was not only declarative, but was a positive reality in His life and experience on earth:

“Christ did not make believe take human nature; He did verily take it. He did in reality possess human nature.”¹⁹

“Christ became one with the human family. He spoke in the language of men. He bore with them their trials and their poverty. He ate with them at their tables, and shared their toils. Thus He assured them of His complete identification with humanity.”²⁰

It was only by this means that the plan of salvation could be accomplished and humanity uplifted from their hopeless state: “[God] could not make man a partaker of the divine nature until His only begotten Son, One equal with Himself, should stoop to human nature, and reach man where he was.”²¹

“The Lord Jesus has bridged the gulf that sin has made. He has connected earth with heaven, and finite man with the infinite God.”²²

As a man, Christ accepted by His own will to give His life as a ransom for the sin of humanity. He was not a victim of circumstances, nor of the plots of wicked men. It was not the nails in His hands and feet that kept Him hanging on the cross, but His love

for the fallen race He came to redeem made Him endure up to the very end that painful death on the cross of shame.

“[Christ] might have cut Himself loose from fallen beings. He might have treated them as sinners deserve to be treated. But instead, He came still nearer to them.”²³

“In Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. . . .

“God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. . . . Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love.”²⁴

The significance of Christ becoming the Son of Man for us

Although we have lost our God-given value and have become subjects of death through sin, Christ came to restore us to the dignity of sons and daughters of God and to restore the character of our heavenly Father in us. This is the purpose of human life, and it couldn’t have been achieved without our Saviour becoming the Son of Man.

The humanity of the Son of God should be everything to us, and the fact that God gave His only begotten Son—the Prince of Heaven—to be born as an infant in this world, to live and die for us, to resurrect and remain forever the “Son of Man” is the vivid proof of His unfaltering love for us.

There cannot be greater reason for relief, joy, thankfulness, and love for us than the assurance that God has not withheld anything which could have contributed to our salvation:

“When God gave His Son, He gave all heaven. He could give no more.”²⁵

What an encouraging thought! God has already made the supreme sacrifice! Jesus Christ is ours forever! God is already on our side, ready to give us together with Him all things necessary for our everlasting happiness. What else do we need to be happy and full of gratitude and trust for the rest of our life?

“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (Romans 5:8–11).

May He always be praised for that! ☞

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- ² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 20.
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- ⁴ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 46.
- ⁵ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, p. 25.
- ⁶ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, pp. 1128, 1129. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁷ *In Heavenly Places*, p. 41.
- ⁸ *Lift Him Up*, p. 235.
- ⁹ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 48.
- ¹⁰ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 22, 23. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹¹ *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 128. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹² *The Signs of the Times*, July 30, 1896. [Emphasis supplied.]
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- ¹⁴ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, p. 25.
- ¹⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 23.
- ¹⁶ *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 164.
- ¹⁷ *Lift Him Up*, p. 75.
- ¹⁸ *The Signs of the Times*, April 25, 1892.
- ¹⁹ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 247. [Emphasis added.]
- ²⁰ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, p. 27. [Emphasis added.]
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² *Our High Calling*, p. 48. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ²³ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, p. 27. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ²⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 25, 26. [Emphasis supplied.]
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JESUS, *Our High Priest*

By Viktor Pisanyuk

Introduction

It was the autumn of 1844. A small group of people sincerely desired to receive the assurance that the Lord had not forsaken them. They read the inspired Word time and again; their attention was directed to the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed," and to the prophecy of Habakkuk 2:3, "Though [the vision] tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." The message that had filled the whole world was now being caustically derided by the multitude. From the more than 50,000 who had looked forward to the glorious event, almost no one remained. All had been waiting for the Saviour to come in the clouds of heaven—Christ the Messiah, who was to execute the judgment. But Christ did not come. Thus was fulfilled a prophecy which foresaw that the waiting ones would taste the **bitterness** of disappointment (see Revelation 10:9). What next? The Lord directed His children's attention to the epistle to the Hebrews, and through

the earnest prayers and deliberation of God's children, the truth of the heavenly sanctuary and the service performed there were all revealed to them. This precious truth became the foundation of the Advent faith.

The message of life

Ever since the entrance of sin into our planet, though passing a sentence on humanity, God still granted the hope of redemption. (See Genesis 3:15.) In all ages, God's faithful children were to await the culmination of the glorious plan of salvation. By faith, blood was shed as the first sacrifice. The life of the innocent animal pointing to redemption through the Lamb of God was offered for the first time. Throughout the centuries of the patriarchs, all of God's children were looking to Calvary as their only hope—the death of the Son of God that was a guarantee of salvation for those who would receive Him.

The priest

A special atoning service was to be performed in every family. The mis-

sion was entrusted to the head of the family:

"In early times the father was the ruler and priest of his own family, and he exercised authority over his children, even after they had families of their own. His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head, in both religious and secular matters."¹ Later on, when God wanted to present the gospel through the ministry in the earthly tabernacle, He gave to Moses, the visible leader of His people, an instruction that the only tribe that had remained faithful at a crucial moment of spiritual crisis—the Levites—should become priests in the earthly tabernacle. There was the revelation of the gospel in symbols and types. "The whole system of types and symbols was a compacted prophecy of the gospel, a presentation in which were bound up the promises of redemption."²

The service in the tabernacle

Every day the service was officiated. There were morning and evening offerings, peace offerings, and so forth. But there was a special provision for the sinner's repentance by the bringing of the sin offering. Acknowledging his guilt, the sinner had to bring the animal, confess his sin, place his hand upon the victim's head, and slay the animal with his own hand. Thus was the animal deprived of its life. Then the priest transferred the blood of the

victim to the tabernacle and sprinkled it before the veil, behind which was the law. Thereby offering to the law the sacrifice that was equal to the law, the sinner could expect life. To atone for the sin was sacrificed a life that satisfied God's broken law. (See Leviticus 4:1-7.)

"In the sin offerings presented during the year, a substitute had been accepted in the sinner's stead; but the blood of the victim had not made full atonement for the sin. It had only provided a means by which the sin was transferred to the sanctuary."³

The priests in the presence of God

Though the priests were separated from the congregation by anointing and were placed in sacred office, this did not make them sinless, so they had to bring offerings for themselves too. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins" (Hebrews 5:1-3). But still not every Levite could become a priest. There were special requirements for the priests, as they had to be worthy representatives of the work of the future Priest, that True and Faithful Priest after the order of Melchisedec. The scriptural record reads: "(The Lord swear and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his

The Lamb had taken away the sin of the world. But this blood had to be brought into the heavenly sanctuary to be presented before the moral law of Ten Commandments.

own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself" (Hebrews 7:21-27).

"Aaron and his sons alone were permitted to minister before the Lord; the rest of the tribe were entrusted with the charge of the tabernacle and its furniture, and they were to attend upon the priests in their ministration, but they were not to sacrifice, to burn incense, or to see the holy things till they were covered."⁴

Every time the priest came to take up the duties in the sanctuary, he had to wash his hands and feet. This revealed the solemn importance of every service:

"The laver was placed between the altar and the congregation, that before [the priests] came into the presence of God, in the sight of the congregation, they might wash their hands and their feet. What impression was this to make upon the people? It was to show them that every particle of dust must be put away before they could go into the presence of God; for He was so high and holy that unless they did comply with these conditions, death would follow."⁵

The high priest

The daily service was performed in the court and in the first apartment of the sanctuary, but once a year a service was performed in the holy of holies. This was a special day before which a solemn preparation was made and only the high priest had the right to come into the presence of the Invisible to perform a unique service. He had to cleanse the sanctuary from the confessed sins that were symbolically being transferred with the blood of sprinkling to the veil that separated the ark. Then these sins were taken away by the scapegoat into a land not inhabited. The priest pronounced

a blessing for the next year over the people of Israel. The joyful feast of tabernacles followed, and all the people were rejoicing as they received redemption and blessing for their future life.

The garments of the high priest

"The garments of the high priest were of costly material and beautiful workmanship, befitting his exalted station. In addition to the linen dress of the common priest, he wore a robe of blue, also woven in one piece. Around the skirt it was ornamented with golden bells, and pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet. Outside of this was the ephod, a shorter garment of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and white. It was confined by a girdle of the same colors, beautifully wrought. The ephod was sleeveless, and on its gold-embroidered shoulder pieces were set two onyx stones, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

"Over the ephod was the breastplate, the most sacred of the priestly vestments. This was of the same material as the ephod. It was in the form of a square, measuring a span, and was suspended from the shoulders by a cord of blue from golden rings. The border was formed of a variety of precious stones, the same that form the twelve foundations of the City of God. Within the border were twelve stones set in gold, arranged in rows of four, and, like those in the shoulder pieces, engraved with the names of the tribes. The Lord's direction was, 'Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually' (Exodus 28:29). So Christ, the great High Priest, pleading His blood before the Father in the

sinner's behalf, bears upon His heart the name of every repentant, believing soul. Says the psalmist, 'I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me' (Psalm 40:17).

"At the right and left of the breast-plate were two large stones of great brilliancy. These were known as the Urim and Thummim. By them the will of God was made known through the high priest. When questions were brought for decision before the Lord, a halo of light encircling the precious stone at the right was a token of the divine consent or approval, while a cloud shadowing the stone at the left was an evidence of denial or disapprobation.

"The miter of the high priest consisted of the white linen turban, having attached to it by a lace of blue, a gold plate bearing the inscription, 'Holiness to Jehovah.' Everything connected with the apparel and deportment of the priests was to be such as to impress the beholder with a sense of the holiness of God, the sacredness of His worship, and the purity required of those who came into His presence.

"Not only the sanctuary itself, but the ministration of the priests, was to 'serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things' (Hebrews 8:5)."⁶ All this pointed to the fact that through the High Priest every member of God's family had a representative before the Almighty.

The truth that strengthened the faith of the waiting people

The apostle Paul, trying to direct the attention of his people to the Old Testament Gospel that was presented in the sanctuary service, said: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1, 2). "By virtue of [the Saviour's] death and resurrection He became the minister of the 'true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man' (Hebrews 8:2). Men reared the Jewish tabernacle; men builded the Jewish temple; but the sanctuary above, of which the earthly was a type, was built by no human architect. 'Behold the Man whose name is The Branch; . . . He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne' (Zechariah 6:12, 13)."⁷

The small group of faithful children of God had experienced the disappointment of 1844; to them was opened the truth about the heavenly sanctuary where the atoning service was being performed. Thus they finally understood that the Old Testament service was only the reflection of the

things that were really happening in the New Testament. It's a pity that many people reading the Bible think that the work of atonement has been finished on Calvary. The crucifixion was only part of the plan of salvation. The Lamb had taken away the sin of the world. But this blood had to be brought into the heavenly sanctuary to be presented before the moral law of Ten Commandments.

"Now in the holy of holies [those who had looked in faith for His second coming] again beheld Him, their compassionate High Priest, soon to appear as their king and deliverer. Light from the sanctuary illumined the past, the present, and the future. They knew that God had led them by His unerring providence."⁸

Our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary

It was shown to John that after Christ's resurrection, the Lord ascended to heaven and began the ministration in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary: "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire" (Revelation 1:12-14). But in the earthly tabernacle there was a time when the regular ministration was finished in the first apartment and there came a special day of atonement in which the work was performed in the second apartment. When did the Day of Atonement begin in the heavenly sanctuary? Daniel reveals: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of



How did the people behave on the Day of Atonement? What did they do?—It was a time of deep humiliation and fasting. It was not a mere question of one year of life that was being decided, but a question of life eternal.

days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. 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" (Daniel 7:9, 10). Later the apostle John again describes the heavenly sanctuary and its service, but just as in the first vision he sees the work of atonement, intercession, and care for the seven periods of the New Testament church, this time the message of the judgment is added: "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail" (Revelation 11:18, 19).

Thus the message of Revelation 14 about the judgment that had to begin in 1844 was true, and it harmonized with the chain of prophecies. But this judgment had to be in Heaven. Consequently, in 1844 our High Priest passed into the holy of holies to perform there the last part of His ministry, and He will be there till the end of probation.

"Jesus is our great High Priest in heaven. And what is He doing? He is making intercession and atonement for His people who believe in Him. Through His imputed righteousness, they are accepted of God as those who

are manifesting to the world that they acknowledge allegiance to God, keeping all His commandments."⁹

Understanding the important work of our High Priest

Today the attention of spiritual Israel is focused on the place where our High Priest is officiating. And how did the people behave on the Day of Atonement? What did they do?—It was a time of deep humiliation and fasting. It was not a mere question of one year of life that was being decided, but a question of life eternal. So likewise there arises a number of questions for us today: How should we behave in the period when our destiny is being decided? Do we really show that we are living in the time of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary when we demonstrate pride and arrogance? Maybe we are too often forgetting about the cleansing of the "old sins" (see 2 Peter 1:9). The time will come when the High Priest will leave the heavenly sanctuary. Dear brother, sister, friend: What will He bring for you and me? Will He bring a blessing? Have faith that the blood of this High Priest can wash away your sins. Without His intercession we cannot remove even one sin that prevents you and me from entering the bliss of eternity. Through the atoning sacrifice, this sin is transferred to the heavenly sanctuary, and then it can be blotted out. The concept is so comprehensive that we may not be able to grasp it fully—but as we nonetheless exercise faith in our all-powerful Saviour, trusting in His grace, He accomplishes this wondrous redemption in our life.

"Not as a mere petitioner does the Captain of our salvation intercede for us, but as a Conqueror claiming His

victory. . . . Christ has pledged Himself to be our substitute and surety, and He neglects no one. He who could not see human beings exposed to eternal ruin without pouring out His soul unto death in their behalf, will look with pity and compassion upon every soul who realizes that he cannot save himself."¹⁰

Conclusion

When probation closes, many people will recognize the reality of perdition, the inevitableness of the eternal punishment, and the loss of life. At that time they would be ready to give up everything in order to receive the opportunity to confess their sins to the High Priest. How many people presume to claim Christ as their own today, but when He appears He will declare: "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23). Let us be vigilant and pray, lest we substitute the true faith based on the indisputable Bible prophecies with the folly of presumption. Your name can be presented on the heart of Christ as there were once twelve stones on the breastplate of judgment of the earthly high priest. By faith you can keep your eyes fixed upon Him in the heavenly sanctuary until that glorious moment when you will be able to cry unto Him: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). If a person has ever been on the verge of ruin or looked death in the face—profoundly understanding that he or she owes to the Saviour his or her life—it's impossible to forget it. The sacrifice and service of Christ will never be forgotten in eternity. Let us likewise never forget it during our brief time remaining on earth. Amen. ✠

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- ⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 350–352.
- ⁷ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 165, 166.
- ⁸ *The Great Controversy*, p. 423.
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THE NEW COVENANT

*A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy compilation, with comments
by B. Monteiro*

Ropes of sand?

Promises like ropes of sand. What good are they? Who needs that kind of promise? Nobody. You try to grab hold of it, only to see it crumble and wisp away in a second—leaving you terribly dissatisfied and disappointed. . . . Yes, we can only imagine the disappointment Jehovah must have felt to be thus betrayed! Remember the scene:

“Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, **All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.** And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered

burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, **All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words**” (Exodus 24:3–8, emphasis supplied).

Is it a trustworthy promise?

What is a covenant? It should be a reliable, highly dependable agreement that you can count on, should it not? In Exodus 24 it was even sealed with blood! What a wonderful promise the

people had made! Was it not noble of them to make such a great declaration?

Tragically, however, the shameful outcome said differently. Just a few chapters later, we see the following history that occurred (as God was communing with Moses in the mount for the benefit of the people):

“When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the

people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (Exodus 32:1-6).

What was Moses' response to the people's gross violation of their vow?

"It came to pass, as soon as [Moses] came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it" (verses 19-21).

In utter dismay, Israel's faithful undershepherd shattered the tables of stone as a powerful object lesson to demonstrate to the people the shattered law they had shamelessly broken. What kind of pitiful covenant had they made with their Deliverer and Friend? Clearly, it was one that could not be trusted. Why not? It was because on their part, it had rested solely on the frailty of human strength. Self-sufficiency always manages to collapse under pressure—history has revealed this from the days of Cain to the hour of zealous Jehu, and even to the moment of ardent, boastful Peter's denial of his

Lord. Any covenant resting on the frail merits of mere mortals is doomed to failure.

Israel and the "old covenant"

"God brought [His people Israel] to Sinai; He manifested His glory; He gave them His law, with the promise of great blessings on condition of obedience: 'If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then . . . ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation' (Exodus 19:5, 6). **The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God's law; and they readily entered into covenant with God. Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, 'All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient' (Exodus 24:7).** They had witnessed the proclamation of the law in awful majesty, and had trembled with terror before the mount; and yet only a few weeks passed before they broke their covenant with God, and bowed down to worship a graven image. **They could not hope for the favor of God through a covenant which they had broken. . . .**

"The terms of the 'old covenant' were, Obey and live: 'If a man do, he shall even live in them' (Ezekiel 20:11; Leviticus 18:5); but 'cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them' (Deuteronomy 27:26)."¹

Yes, God had been faithful as always, but unfortunately His people had broken their half of the agreement. So that rendered the covenant null and void. Did God then turn His back on them in disgust? Does He turn His back on

us in disgust when we do wrong? No—rather, He mercifully instructs all who are willing to be taught. Let us see what we can learn about God's abundant grace:

"Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, [the children of Israel] had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God's law, and their need of a Saviour. All this they must be taught. . . .

"Now, seeing their sinfulness and their need of pardon, **they were brought to feel their need of the Saviour** revealed in the Abrahamic covenant and shadowed forth in the sacrificial offerings. Now by faith and love they were bound to God as their deliverer from the bondage of sin. Now they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant. . . .

"The 'new covenant' was established upon 'better promises'—the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God's law. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. . . . I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more'* (Jeremiah 31:33, 34).

"The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth 'the fruits of the Spirit.' **Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts.** Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked."²

What was Jesus honestly able to declare of Himself while living as the Son of Man on earth? "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). He was fully able to testify, "The Father

"The 'new covenant' was established upon 'better promises'—the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God's law."

hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). Even when plagued under the sorest temptation, Jesus could truthfully say, the "prince of this world"—the archdeceiver and enemy of our souls—"hath nothing in me" (John 14:30).

"Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation."³ The lawless, deceptive wiles of the devil could touch no answering chord in Jesus' heart. This is the spiritual condition to which we, too, must attain. "It is in this life that we are to separate sin from us, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ. Our precious Saviour invites us to join ourselves to Him, to unite our weakness to His strength, our ignorance to His wisdom, our unworthiness to His merits."⁴

The Abrahamic covenant

"As the Bible presents two laws, one changeless and eternal, the other provisional and temporary, so there are two covenants. The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the Fall there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. To all men this covenant offered pardon and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. It also promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God's law. Thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation.

"This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed' (Genesis 22:18). This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it (see Galatians 3:8, 16), and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God's law. . . . [See Genesis 17:1, 7; 26:5.]

"Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been

"Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation."

accepted by faith; yet **when ratified by Christ, it is called a new covenant.**

The law of God was the basis of this covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God's law. . . .

"The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the 'second,' or 'new,' covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant. That the new covenant was valid in the days of Abraham is evident from the fact that it was then confirmed both by the promise and by the oath of God—the 'two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie' (Hebrews 6:18)."⁵

Dispelling a common myth

Many false teachers today try to deceive honest souls into actually thinking that the "old covenant" is the law of Ten Commandments, and that the "new covenant" is simply belief in Christ (faith with no law). It is a dangerous ploy to divorce Christ from the sacred moral law that is the eternal transcript of His perfect character of love. Jesus never gives such a distorted view of faith. Yet the sincere question may arise: "If the Abrahamic covenant contained the promise of redemption, why was another covenant formed at Sinai?"⁶

The answer is given:

"In their bondage the people [of Israel] had to a great extent lost the knowledge of God and of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant. In delivering them from Egypt, **God sought to reveal to them His power and His mercy, that they might be led to love and trust Him.** He brought them down to the Red Sea—where, pursued by the Egyptians, escape seemed impossible—that **they might realize their utter helplessness, their need of divine aid;** and then He wrought

deliverance for them. **Thus they were filled with love and gratitude to God and with confidence in His power to help them.**"⁷

How does this apply to us today? The apostle Paul explains: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 5:1; 3:31; 8:3, 4).

Is it really possible to keep the whole moral law?

"If it were not possible for human beings under the Abrahamic covenant to keep the commandments of God, every soul of us is lost. The Abrahamic covenant is the covenant of grace. 'By grace ye are saved.' [John 1:11, 12 quoted.] Disobedient children? No, obedient to all His commandments. If it were not possible for us to be commandment-keepers, then why does He make the obedience to His commandments the proof that we love Him?"⁸

Abiding in the new covenant, we receive God's abundant grace—His mercy and power—for obedience. As we partake of His word—eating and assimilating the Bread of life—our earthly nature is destroyed, and we are energized with life from above. In the new covenant, we are no longer under the penalty of the law because the law is in our hearts. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:3, 4).

Strength for the sin-sick soul: Repairing those ropes of sand

Dearly beloved, do you feel helpless at times—enslaved by the chains of wrong habits, faulty morals, gross imperfection? If so, you are not alone:

“Feeling the terrible power of temptation, . . . many a man cries in despair, ‘I cannot resist evil.’ Tell him that he can, that he must resist. He may have been overcome again and again, but it need not be always thus. . . .

“Those who put their trust in Christ are not to be enslaved by any hereditary or cultivated habit or tendency. Instead of being held in bondage to the lower nature, they are to rule every appetite and passion. God has not left us to battle with evil in our own finite strength. Whatever may be our inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong, we can overcome through the power that He is ready to impart. . . .

“By yielding up the will to Christ, we ally ourselves with divine power. We receive strength from above to hold us steadfast. A pure and noble life, a life of victory over appetite and lust, is possible to everyone who will unite his weak, wavering human will to the omnipotent, unwavering will of God.”⁹

“Many are inquiring, ‘How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?’ You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him

your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.

“Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now *choose* to be Christians.

“Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith.”¹⁰

With such promises as these—graciously provided to every contrite soul by the Omnipotent Creator Himself, we need not expect failure. The battle has already been won; the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary guarantees the victory.

From old to new

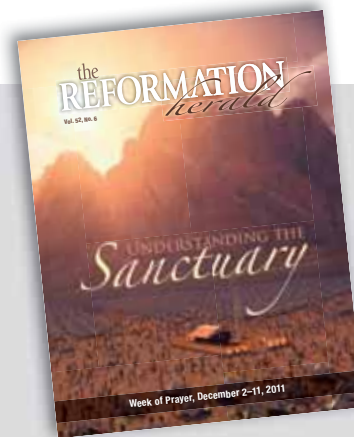
“If that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Hebrews 8:7–10).

Let us then heartily take hold of the new covenant through Christ. Such an experience does not crumble like ropes

of sand. Rather, it embraces us with fortified cords of love that can endure even unto eternity. *R*

References

- ¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 371, 372. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ² *Ibid.* [Emphasis supplied. Author’s Italics.]
- ³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 623.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370, 371. [Emphasis added. Author’s Italics.]
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 371.
- ⁷ *Ibid.* [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁸ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1092.
- ⁹ *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 174–176.
- ¹⁰ *Steps to Christ*, pp. 47, 48. [Author’s Italics.]



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BLOOD IN THE

MOST HOLY PLACE

by D. Jeyasingh

Blood! The crimson, slightly acrid substance with which we all are familiar is weighty with solemn symbolism. It is symbolic of life and of death (Genesis 9:4–6). It is the common, essential bond shared by all humanity, as God has “made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26).

In an age of violence, humanity tends to take blood for granted. Every day it is deliberately spilled somewhere on our planet. Yet it is not the desire of the Prince of Peace for His people even to engage in the pursuit of such news, for we are bidden to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light” (Ephesians 5:11–13).

God knows that frail humans are in serious danger of becoming callous and unfeeling about the notion of shed blood, especially in these last days: “Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matthew 24:12).

For many of those who have grown up in the era of television, movies, video, and DVD’s, violent acts of bloodshed have been vicariously witnessed so many times that the mind is almost utterly numb to such tragedy. Is it any wonder that such a generation can be challenging to touch with the gospel

of the meek and lowly Jesus? Worse yet, for those who have been exposed to actual war or have been unfortunate victims of violence in real life, the painful impressions imbedded from the horrifying scenes are even more difficult to efface. Only with the merciful help of God can such experiences be forgotten and obliterated from the memory. In view of the existing peril, the Lord tells us:

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth

his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil" (Isaiah 33:14, 15). Yes, we cannot escape the reality of this fallen planet, but we do have power to make wise choices about what we allow ourselves and our children to be exposed to. If we seriously care about preparing our souls for eternity, we will choose to shut our eyes from seeing evil and stop our ears from hearing of blood. Then the beautiful and comforting assurance of Isaiah can be our own: "He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off" (verses 16, 17).

The exception

Despite our duty to shield ourselves as far as possible from "hearing of blood," there is one story of bloodshed that is actually to be the focus of our attention—and with good reason:

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Peter 1:18–21).

The precious blood of Christ is the sacred theme around which our hope of eternity centers. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). While on earth, Jesus declared: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die" (John 12:31–33).

Symbolism in the Hebrew economy

In ancient times, those who feared God were taught a basic principle very

The words atone, cleanse, reconcile, purify, purge, pardon, sanctify, hallow, forgive, justify, redeem, blotting out, are all used to signify the same work of bringing into favor with God; and in all cases blood is the means.

early on: "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and **without shedding of blood is no remission**" (Hebrews 9:22, emphasis added). Thus, the system of sacrifices was designed to point to the shed blood of the Lamb of God, which was to take away the sin of the world.

God led His people through the desert for a period of forty years before they entered the Promised Land. The day they left, God declared that to be the beginning of the year for them. Three months later, the Lord appeared to Moses at Mount Sinai and wrote the Ten Commandments and gave Moses other civil laws as well. He showed him a pattern of the sanctuary in heaven and commanded him to make one (Exodus 25:8) according to the model. This portable sanctuary was called the *miqdash*, with Aaron as the first high priest. It was from here that the elaborate services were first carried out. God uses the experience of slavery in Egypt and the miraculous deliverance as a parallel to our experience of slavery to sin and the marvelous freedom from it.

The sanctuary of the first covenant

The sanctuary was the heart of the typical system. There the Lord placed His name, manifested His glory, and held converse with the high priest (Exodus 25:8). The sanctuary included not only the tabernacle with its two apartments, but also the court and all the vessels of the ministry, enclosed by the court in which the tabernacle stood (Numbers 3:29–31; 10:17, 21). The priests entered the figures or patterns of the true tabernacle. Paul calls this the sanctuary of the first covenant (Hebrews 9:1), in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices (verse 9). The

priesthood of the earthly sanctuary of the first covenant belonged to the sons of Levi.

The sanctuary of the new covenant

The sanctuary of the new covenant is not on earth but in heaven. The true tabernacle which forms a part of the new covenant sanctuary was made and pitched by the Lord. "Christ being come as high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands" (verse 11). When He ascended to the right hand of the Father in the heavens He became "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:2). **That is the sanctuary of the new covenant** (verse 6). The priesthood of the heavenly sanctuary of the better covenant belongs to the Son of God. He fulfills both the priesthood of Melchisedec and of Aaron.

Christ: the Lamb and the Priest

Of all the titles of our Saviour, "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36) and "high priest" (Hebrews 4:14) are very dear to humanity. By virtue of these two offices the Lord lifts up the poor fallen humanity to share His kingdom of grace and glory. Christ was made a High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec" (Hebrews 7:17). He never had a predecessor nor will have a successor.

The Messiah was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In the typical service, the sinner must bring a lamb for a sin offering. The priest could not officiate the service without this offering (Leviticus 4:27–29), but Christ could, because He has an unchangeable priesthood (Hebrews 7:21, 24) superior to that of the

If we are truly sorry for our sins, we would exercise that repentance that need not be repented of, and the blood of Jesus has power to cleanse us, to make us whole, and to fit us for heaven.

sons of Levi and the order of Aaron. Being Himself perfect and His priesthood unending, He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Daily services in the earthly sanctuary

"The daily service consisted of the morning and evening burnt offering, the offering of sweet incense on the golden altar, and the special offerings for individual sins."¹

For the nation

"Every morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ."²

For the individuals

"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. In some cases the blood was not taken into the holy place; but the flesh was then to be eaten by the priest, as Moses directed the sons of Aaron, saying, 'God hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation' (Leviticus 10:17). Both ceremonies alike symbolized the transfer of the sin from the penitent to the sanctuary. . . .

"In the sin offerings presented during the year, a substitute had been accepted in the sinner's stead; but the blood of the victim had not made full atonement for the sin. It had only provided a means by which the sin was transferred to the sanctuary. By the offering of blood, the sinner acknowledged the authority of the law, confessed the guilt of his transgression, and expressed his faith in Him who was to take away the sin of the world; but he was not entirely released from the condemnation of the law."³

The annual service in the earthly sanctuary

The atonement which the high priest made on the tenth day of the



seventh month was different from that that the priests made for the people in their daily ministration. The high priest could enter into the Most Holy Place to make an atonement for all Israel, for all their sins, once a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 16:34, 29). This was called the Day of Atonement or the yearly service. This service was for the people of Israel col-

lectively, for the blotting out of sin—a national atonement.

This was the most important day of the year. The whole nation having had their sins previously forgiven by the atonement made in the Holy, now assemble about the sanctuary while the high priest (Exodus 28) entered the Holy of Holies to make an atonement for the tabernacle (Leviticus 16:18–20, 33) and for the people, "that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord" (Leviticus 16:30). This was not only commemorative but typical. It pointed back not only to the wilderness sojourn but also pointed forward to the great day of final deliverance.

"And when [Aaron] hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess 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, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited" (Leviticus 16:20–22).

"Since Satan is the originator of sin, the direct instigator of all the sins that caused the death of the Son of God, justice demands that Satan shall suffer the final punishment."⁴

In the heavenly sanctuary

In the heavenly sanctuary our High Priest with His own blood makes atonement for us, and we are forgiven (1 Peter 2:24). He bore our sins in His own body on the cross (Matthew 8:17; Isaiah 53:4–12), and in the presence of the Father He makes intercession for us (1 John 2:1, 2).

"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."⁵

In the antitype, our sins—although confessed and repented of—will remain in the heavenly records (Isaiah 65:6, 7; 1 Timothy 5:24) until they are blotted out in the judgment (Acts 3:19).

"Our true position, and the only one in which there is any safety, is that of repentance and confession of sins before God. Feeling that we are sinners, we shall have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is able to pardon transgression and impute unto us righteousness. When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, then the sins of the repentant soul, who received the grace of Christ and has overcome through the blood of the Lamb, will be removed from the records of heaven and will be placed upon Satan, the scapegoat, the originator of sin and be remembered no more against him forever. The sins of the overcomers will be blotted out of the books of record, but their names will be retained on the book of life."⁶

In the type, or symbol, the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement. In a similar way, the blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin immediately; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement.

"In the great day of final award, the dead are to be 'judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works' (Revelation 20:12). Then by virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the sins of all the truly penitent will be blotted from the books of heaven. Thus the sanctuary will be freed, or cleansed, from the record of sin. In the type, this great work of atonement, or blotting out of sins, was represented by the services of the Day of Atonement—the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary, which was accomplished by the removal, by virtue of the blood of the sin offering, of the sins by which it had been polluted.

"As in the final atonement the sins of the truly penitent are to be blotted from the records of heaven, no more to be remembered or come into mind, so in the type they were borne away into the wilderness, forever separated from the congregation."⁷

"When the high priest entered the Most Holy Place, representing the place where our High Priest is now pleading, and sprinkled the atoning blood upon the mercy seat, no propitiatory sacrifices were offered without. While the priest was interceding with God, every heart was to be bowed in contrition, pleading for the pardon of transgression.

"Type met antitype in the death of Christ, the Lamb slain for the sins of the world. Our great High Priest has made the only sacrifice that is of any value in our salvation. When He offered Himself on the cross, a perfect atonement was made for the sins of the people."⁸

Cherishing the blood of sprinkling

We are living in the great Day of Atonement, a time when we must be afflicting our souls, confessing our sins, humbling our hearts before God, and getting ready for the great final conflict. If we are truly sorry for our sins, we have reached that repentance that need not to be repented of. The apostle Paul describes this genuine repentance in his second epistle to the Corinthians: "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Corinthians 7:9–11).

This type of repentance is a good, healthy thing. It is evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life, as

Jesus explained: "When [the Comforter] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). A strong desire for a sincere, earnest repentance is a strong evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit's working in our life. Confession to God for specific sins that we perhaps overlooked before or we might have taken casually; apologies to one another for thoughtless behavior and wrongdoing that we didn't notice before; new, unselfish aspirations and desires that replace our previous self-centered aims—all these are evidence that the blood of the atonement is being sprinkled upon our hearts.

Yes, the precious blood of Jesus has power to cleanse us and make us whole, sanctifying us from the inside out until we are fitted for heaven. Let us not take this blood for granted! Let us rather cherish the sacrifice made by Christ and follow Him into the most holy place, entering by faith into the experience He desires for each one of us.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:19–25). Amen! *R*

References

¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 352.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 354–356.

⁴ *The Great Controversy*, p. 418.

⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 358.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

⁷ *The Signs of the Times*, May 16, 1895.

⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 357, 358.

⁹ *The Signs of the Times*, June 28, 1899.



The Great Day of *Atonement*

By Adrian Finaru

Introduction

Ever since the beginning of my Christian experience (after becoming acquainted with the message of the present truth), I've been impressed with the fact that, at the end of every year, believers have come together for a special week of prayer. I was even more impressed that every year, apparently everyone believed that there might not be another week of prayer before the Lord's return. Surprisingly, since my first week of prayer, I have witnessed seventeen others and still hear the same hopeful expressions on these special occasions. Here I am at the week of prayer for the nineteenth time, asking myself whether there will be another week of prayer before my Lord's return. And if there won't be one, where will I be at the end of next year?

While the work in the courtyard and the holy place was performed every day, the work in the most holy place was performed only once a year. Day by day the repentant sinners brought their offering to the door of the sanctuary; placing their hand upon the victim's head, they confessed their sins and thus in symbol all their sins were transferred to the innocent sacrifice. Such was the work that went on each day throughout the year. The sins of Israel were thus transferred to the sanctuary, and a special work became necessary for their removal. Once a

year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the most holy place for the cleansing of the sanctuary.

The daily sanctuary service with its sacrificial system pointing to the sacrifice of the cross was designed by God to exemplify the plan of salvation through the forgiveness of sin. The yearly service on the Day of Atonement exemplifies the culmination of the plan of salvation as it points to the final day of judgment, when all that the sanctuary and its services pointed to would be fulfilled. Then, sin will be totally eradicated from the universe, everlasting righteousness will be established,

and the great controversy between Christ and Satan will finally be brought to an end.

Therefore, it is imperiously necessary for us, who live in the end time, to consider the rituals of the typical Day of Atonement and their antitypical application.

“All need to become more intelligent in regard to the work of the atonement, which is going on in the sanctuary above. When this grand truth is seen and understood, those who hold it will work in harmony with Christ to prepare a people to stand in the great day of God, and their efforts will be successful.”¹

The typical day of atonement

In order for us to properly understand the implications of this yearly service, we will summarize the rituals as recorded in Leviticus 16:4–28. In preparation for the most important work of the year, Aaron was to take off his everyday priestly garments, wash himself, and then put on the special garments, which he had been instructed to wear for the service in the holy of holies. Then, he secured the necessary sacrificial animals: a bull for his own sin offering, and two male goats for the Lord and for the scapegoat; two rams, one for Aaron’s and the other for the people’s burnt offering.

Then, he sacrificed the bull for his own sin offering. Before entering into the most holy with the blood of the bull, he had to burn incense, whose smoke covered the mercy seat and prevented his death by the glory of God.

Aaron then took some of the blood of the bull and sprinkled it seven times on the mercy seat. Then, lots were cast for the two goats to determine which one would be for the Lord or for the scapegoat.

The goat for the Lord was sacrificed, and its blood was taken into the most holy place and applied to the mercy seat, just as the bull’s blood had been sprinkled. Cleansing was then made for the holy place where no one else was allowed to be present.

Outside the tent, Aaron was to make atonement for the altar of burnt offering, using the blood of both the bull

and the goat. Then the second goat had the sins of the nation symbolically laid on its head and was driven from the camp to a desolate place.

Aaron then entered the tent of meeting, removed his linen garments, washed, put on his normal priestly garments, and burnt offerings of rams: one for Aaron and his family and the other for the people.

The fat of the sin offering was burnt on the altar, and the remains of the bull and the goat were taken outside the camp, where they were burnt. Those who had been rendered unclean, by handling the animals on which the sins of Aaron or of the people were laid, were to wash themselves before returning to the camp.

By sunset on the Day of Atonement, the sins were all gone into the “land of separations,” and nothing but ashes remained as a reminder of them. Thus was carried on the type of that heavenly work which is to decide the eternal destiny of every soul that has ever lived upon the earth.

The antitypical day of atonement

“[The angel Gabriel] said unto [the prophet Daniel], unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Daniel 8:14).

This is the prophetic reference to the work of the antitypical Day of Atonement, the cleansing of the sanctuary, which began at the end of the 2300 prophetic days, in the year 1844, when Christ entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, to perform the closing work of the atonement, preparatory for His coming.

The sanctuary message in unique and has been revealed by vision and by inspiration to the advent people. Throughout the period of the church of Laodicea, this message has been challenged by religious leaders and even by those who were supposedly its supporters. There is a danger to either attack the message, or make it of no effect by neglecting to consider it often and to teach it to our congregations and families. Our children, however young they may be, need to get acquainted with the work of Christ, since

they may soon be the ones proclaiming it “with a loud voice.”

On the typical Day of Atonement, the destiny of the people of Israel depended on the work of the high priest. The daily sacrifices were being brought for forgiveness of their sins with confidence that, on the tenth day of the seventh month, through the work of their representative, their sins would be blotted out.

The work of the Day of Atonement in the heavenly most holy place symbolizes the final phase of the ministry of Jesus on behalf of the repented sinner. With hope and faith in our only High Priest, we confess our daily sins and wait for the day when He will have finished the cleansing work in us and will declare us worthy of His salvation.

In the light of His promises and perfect example, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

The atonement was not completed on the cross

When Jesus died on the cross, He offered forgiveness to all that would believe in Him, but the forgiven sins were not cancelled or blotted out. They still remained in the book of records, awaiting the final judgment. The blood of Jesus was represented by the daily sacrificial offerings, through which a means was provided to transfer the sins to the heavenly sanctuary, where they will remain until the final Atonement.

“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.”²

The scapegoat

On the Day of Atonement, the complete removal of the sins from the sanctuary was symbolized by the confession made over the head of the scapegoat and by sending it away into the wilderness, never to return to the camp.

In the type, after the high priest had finished the work within the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement, he came forth bearing the sins of all Israel and placed them upon the head of the scapegoat. When our High Priest has finished His work in the heavenly sanctuary, He will place all the sins of the righteous upon the head of Satan, the instigator of sin. Satan will then be left upon the desolate earth for one thousand years. At the end of this time he will be loosed for a season and then burnt forever in the fires of the last day.

In the type, after the high priest had placed the sins of Israel upon the head of the scapegoat, he left the robes worn while officiating as high priest in the sanctuary and put on other garments; he then began a work in the court. When Christ will have ended His work in the heavenly sanctuary, He will not wear the priestly robe but the kingly one. He will come not to save anymore but to reward everyone according to the choices he or she had made while there was still grace.

The duty of the congregation on the Day of Atonement

“Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: **it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord. And ye shall do no work in that same day:** for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God” (Leviticus 23:27, 28, emphasis added).

In the typical service, when the high priest entered the most holy place, all Israel were required to gather about the sanctuary and in the most solemn manner humble their souls before God, that they might receive the pardon of their sins and not be cut off from the congregation. Furthermore, they were required to bring an offering, set this day apart for religious purposes, and not get engaged in secular activities that would distract them from the solemnity of this day.

How much more solemn should we consider this antitypical Day of Atonement,

and how much more importance should we give to understanding the work of our High Priest, and what duties are required of us to perform so that we can benefit from the atonement rather than be cut off from the congregation of the redeemed!

1. It shall be a holy convocation

The church of God with the believers of like faith is one of the most efficient means of God’s grace by which our characters are being perfected. The importance of assembling with the saints cannot be emphasized enough. When we gather together as a body, we have opportunity to give praise and glory to God, to encourage one another, and to receive instruction and admonition to help us remain on the straight and narrow path.

The apostle Paul compares the church to a body with many members, and he emphasizes the fact that when one member is missing or suffering, the whole body suffers. Many believe that the more time advances the more independent we become, and that the organization will be less necessary. The Bible, however, teaches that we ought not forsake the assembly “of ourselves together, . . . and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25).

The assembly of God’s people is as sweet incense to our heavenly Father. Through the prophet Malachi He says that when those that fear the Lord speak often one to another, a book of remembrance is written (Malachi 3:16). Even the Lord Himself promises to be present whenever His beloved children gather in His name, no matter how few they are (Matthew 18:20).

“We sustain a loss when we neglect the privilege of associating together to strengthen and encourage one another in the service of God.”³

2. You shall afflict your soul

We are living in a time of judgment, when either our sins will be blotted out of the sanctuary or our names will be blotted out of the book of life. How solemn then should our state of mind be? It is a time of affliction when humility should characterize

our life rather than pride and love of frivolity.

“We are in the great day of atonement, and the sacred work of Christ for the people of God that is going on at the present time in the heavenly sanctuary should be our constant study. We should teach our children what the typical Day of Atonement signified and that it was a special season of great humiliation and confession of sins before God. The antitypical day of atonement is to be of the same character.”⁴

If an individual failed to keep the day of atonement as God directed, his sins were not confessed over the scapegoat by the high priest, and he was cut off from among the people of God. Likewise, the individual who, during the antitypical Day of Atonement, thinks that Christ will plead his or her case, while he or she ignores his or her duty, will find out that his or her name is blotted out from the book of life.

As individuals and as a church we are to humbly accept Christ’s work of purification and spend time in deep heart searching, for we are living in the antitypical day of atonement which will conclude with irrevocable results.

The work of affliction on the Day of Atonement was associated with fasting. God calls our generation to afflict our soul, to control our appetite, to partake of food that will give us a clear mind so that God can communicate with us, and we may be able to discern spiritual truths.

The Saviour gave special warning against the evil of giving free rein to the appetite during the time when the records of human lives are being examined and individuals are being accounted worthy or unworthy of eternal life: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares” (Luke 21:34).

3. Offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord

The apostle Paul invites us to bring a different kind of sacrifice than the one offered in the typical Day of Atonement: “I beseech you therefore,

God expects the antitypical congregation on earth to fulfill their part just as faithfully as Christ, our High Priest, fulfills His part in the heavens.

brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1).

The apostle Peter goes even farther by saying that our offering may sometimes be made by fire, with joy. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12, 13)

In His beloved Son, God gave us everything. He made provision for our salvation no matter how much it cost Him. His only begotten Son became poor so that we can be rich and died so that we can live. He was made sin so that we may become holy. Why wouldn't we consider it a privilege to present our imperfect, sinful bodies as a living sacrifice?

4. You shall do no work

On the Day of Atonement, every Israelite was required to lay all work aside, and dedicate all thoughts to seek God and serve Him. God's work was given the priority during the entire day.

In the present time, Satan will not usually launch an aggressive attack against us lest we become alert and reject his devices. Instead, his most commonly used tactic is simply to distract our attention from the important things that would secure us atonement. While we are supposed to provide for the necessities of our families and of our own, these should not gain control over our life and take away the precious moments we are meant to spend in preparation for the life to come. This was our Lord's concern in regards to His disciples, when He told them: "Therefore take no thought, saying,

What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ... But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:31-33).

May we remember that the blotting out of the sins from the earthly sanctuary depended on the attitude of the congregation waiting outside of the most holy place and that, today, God expects the antitypical congregation on earth to fulfill their part just as faithfully as Christ, our High Priest, fulfills His part in the heavens.

God's character vindicated

While most of the contemporary commentaries about the antitypical Day of Atonement insist mostly upon the cleansing work that Christ does on behalf of the repented sinner, we ought to remind the readers of this article that the vindication of God's character before the universe is of equal importance.

"The plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe."⁵

In the culminating work of the plan of salvation, through the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and of those that through faith worship in it, God's name will finally be vindicated from all accusations that Satan has brought against Him.

Harmony will once again reign in the universe when all will declare: "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Revelation 15:3).

Conclusion

The Spirit of Prophecy makes reference to the interesting fact that in the English language, the word "atonement" is a combination of three separate words joined together, AT-ONE-MENT. Its meaning is synonymous with the word "reconcile."

Ever since sin first brought separation between humanity and the Creator, it was God's desire and plan to reconcile the world to Himself, to recreate in the human race His own image. It is through the work of the final day of atonement that humanity will once again be AT-ONE-MENT with God.

While Jesus pleads as our High Priest, there is hope for every repentant sinner; but when He at last comes forth from the sanctuary, the door of mercy will be forever closed. There will be no intercessor then. In the type, when the high priest came out of the sanctuary, he had "made an end of reconciling." When our High Priest comes forth from the sanctuary, He will proclaim, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11). Every case is decided for eternity. Probation is forever ended.

Beloved, you and I are part of the congregation waiting still in the outer court, with trembling hearts, for the final events to unroll and for the Day of Atonement to end so that Christ may return soon and take us home. While mercy lingers still, let us rigorously examine our life in the light of the sanctuary service, confess our most intimate sins, and entrust the cleansing of our life into the hands of our High Priest, for "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). *R*

References

- ¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 575.
- ² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357.
- ³ *Steps to Christ*, p. 101.
- ⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 520.
- ⁵ *Reflecting Christ*, p. 50.

Looking Unto Jesus

By Paul Chapman

*If we did not have
any trials and suffering,
then we would have to
question whether or not
we were in the right race.*

Once spoke to a dear old lady who blamed God for all her troubles. "If He loves me," she questioned, "then why do I have all these troubles?" She had been living alone for some time and had faced a number of personal trials. These had taken their toll. She had reached a point where she began to doubt whether God had even heard her prayers. It seemed she was almost on the brink of throwing it all away. After some discussion, she reassuringly pulled herself together and said, "Don't worry. I know. You can't give up. You've just got to keep on going, and leave everything with the Lord."

This conversation reminded me of the Bible passage found in Hebrews 10:35–39: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Sometimes the troubles we encounter in our Christian life throw a heavy cloud over us. The promises of what God has in store for us are blocked from view. The confidence we had in God at the beginning of our walk becomes a challenge to maintain. Cast not away your confidence, the apostle writes. But "remain stedfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14). If we do, we will be repaid beyond our imagination. For at the end of the pathway to heaven is a wonderful reward—honor, immortality, and eternal life. But the apostle reminds us that to realize these promises we need patience. Patience is not something easy to come by. In fact, that is the very reason why we have so many trials. James declares the reality that patience is developed through "the trying of [our] faith" (James 1:3). If we did not have trials, then we would not develop the patience we need to maintain our confidence in God to the end.

Only by a life of faith will we be able to endure the trials of life. Troubles will come, but we cannot allow them to cause us to draw back. We are to press forward with a belief that results in the saving of our soul.

To help us on our way, the following chapter in Hebrews defines the type of faith we need. Here, in Hebrews 11, the apostle recounts the marvellous heroes of faith. Here he paints an enthralling picture of what it means to live by faith through tribulation. He calls these heroes a great cloud of witnesses—witnesses that should inspire all of us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us," and to "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Running the race

The Christian life is a race. But what does that mean for us? The Greek word used here for "race" is *agone* and is the root of the word "agony." This should bring to mind some idea as to what is involved in running a "race." It involves effort, self-denial, and at times significant suffering. Elsewhere the word is translated as "contest," "contention," and "fight." Originally, it meant the place of assembly where contests were staged. Over time it came to mean the competition itself. The term alludes to the ancient Greek and Roman contests that involved great effort, pain, and suffering to win. This helps us see that our race is not an easy affair. It is a contest or fight that will mean effort, pain, and suffering. But ours is not a fight with a physical foe. Ours is a battle against self and sin. "This warfare . . . is the greatest battle that was ever fought."¹ The apostle Paul calls it "the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12).

"The Christian life is a warfare. The apostle Paul speaks of wrestling against principalities and powers as he fought the good fight of faith. Again, he declares: 'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.' Ah, no. Today sin is cherished and excused. The sharp sword of the Spirit, the word of God, does not cut to the soul. Has religion changed? Has Satan's enmity to God abated? A religious life once presented difficulties and demanded

self-denial. All is made very easy now. And why is this? The professed people of God have compromised with the power of darkness."²

In view of this, we can thank God that we do have trials and suffering. If we did not have any, then we would have to question whether or not we were in the right race. This is why the apostle Paul could say, "I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation" (2 Corinthians 7:4). Never let your trials discourage you from running the race. When tempted to give up, take some time out to look at the lives of all those who have gone before us—to the great cloud of witnesses referred to by the apostle in Hebrews 11. If these alone are not enough to inspire us to finish the race, the apostle gives us the ultimate source of inspiration: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). In this race, or fight, no one has ever experienced the degree of suffering and agony as that experienced by our Saviour. For the joy that was set before Him, Jesus endured the cross while despising its shame and is now set down at the right hand of God, ever ready to minister for us. To do this Jesus took upon Himself our fallen human nature, weakened and infirm. Encompassed with infirmities, He was enabled to experience the suffering that comes through trial and temptation.

When we next think our lot is a hard one to endure, look to Jesus. Do any of us think we have a heavy cross to bear? None were heavier than Christ's cross. Do we think we have great trials to endure? None were greater than Christ's. Do we think we have almost overpowering temptations to resist? None have been greater than those which Christ resisted. How great were they?

"The temptations to which Christ was subjected were a terrible reality. As a free agent He was placed on probation, with liberty to yield to Satan's temptations and work at cross-purposes with God. If this were not so, if it had not been possible for Him to fall, He could not have been tempted in all points as the human family is tempted. The temptations of Christ, and His sufferings under them, were propor-

tionate to His exalted, sinless character. But in every time of distress, Christ turned to His Father. He 'resisted unto blood' in that hour when the fear of moral failure was as the fear of death. As He bowed in Gethsemane, in His soul agony, drops of blood fell from His pores and moistened the sods of the earth. He prayed with strong crying and tears, and He was heard in that He feared. God strengthened Him, as He will strengthen all who will humble themselves and throw themselves, soul, body, and spirit, into the hands of a covenant-keeping God."³

Because Jesus overcame all those trials and temptations in the same fallen nature you and I possess, He knows just what help we need to overcome our trials and temptations (Hebrews 2:18). When we feel so oppressed with the weight of our own trials, look to Jesus. We have not yet, striving against sin resisted unto blood. But Christ has. As our High Priest, one who can be touched with the feelings of our own weaknesses, He stands before the throne of grace, ready to send us grace to help in time of need.

In looking unto Jesus, the apostle reminds us that Jesus is the "author and finisher of our faith." As the author, or beginner, of our faith Jesus has left us a wonderful example of patience under provocation; of humility in the face of pride and arrogance; of benevolence in return for hatred and abuse. Can we expect any less in our race? "From the manger to the cross, the life of Jesus was a call to self-surrender and to fellowship in suffering."⁴

In view of this call, let me share two short but inspiring sentences found in *The Desire of Ages*:

"From His earliest years [Jesus] was possessed of one purpose; He lived to bless others."⁵ This was the driving ambition of His life. Nothing else

mattered. His own trials and sufferings did not deter Him from that purpose. The contradiction of sinners against Himself—their taunts, their abuse, their reviling, and their reproach—He endured it all without retaliation, giving blessings for insults. Whether it was the healing of the deaf, the dumb, and the blind, the sick and the crippled; the feeding of the hungry; the raising of the dead; the prayers for His disciples and all who would believe in Him; every act of His life was for the blessing of others. And finally as He hung upon the cross, with the weight of our sin upon Him—crushing out His life, causing such agony that none of us can ever appreciate—His last thoughts were for the good of others. The words spoken for His mother standing there at His feet, and for the thief hanging on the cross beside Him; even the prayer for His own murderers—"Father forgive them for they know not what they do"—all were spoken in fulfilling His life's purpose. "He lived to bless others." Nothing would deter Him from that purpose. In His final act this purpose would achieve its ultimate fulfillment in the ratification of the New Covenant: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). In giving up His life as a ransom for sin, the blessings of the New Covenant would be available to all both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female. In this act He brought access to His Father by a New and Living Way. That way was through Himself.

He endured the cross. Not just the physical agony of the cross: "[God] hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The mental anguish brought about by the weight of our sin upon His mind was incredible. Isaiah had prophesied, "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our

iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5, ESV). From Gethsemane through to the cross, that prophecy was fulfilled. "The sense of God's wrath against sin was crushing out His life."⁶

But more than this was the suffering caused by sensing the withdrawal of His Father's presence. The eternal Son of God, for the first time in His existence, experienced separation from His Father. This was too much to bear!

"Oh, was there ever suffering and sorrow like that endured by the dying Saviour! It was the sense of His Father's displeasure which made His cup so bitter. It was not bodily suffering which so quickly ended the life of Christ upon the cross. It was the crushing weight of the sins of the world, and a sense of His Father's wrath. The Father's glory and sustaining presence had left Him, and despair pressed its crushing weight of darkness upon Him and forced from His pale and quivering lips the anguished cry: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

"Jesus had united with the Father in making the world. Amid the agonizing sufferings of the Son of God, blind and deluded men alone remain unfeeling. The chief priests and elders revile God's dear Son while in His expiring agonies. Yet inanimate nature groans in sympathy with her bleeding, dying Author. The earth trembles. The sun refuses to behold the scene. The heavens gather blackness. Angels have wit-

"Denied even bright hope and confidence in the triumph which will be His in the future, Jesus cries with a loud voice: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.'"

nessed the scene of suffering until they can look no longer, and hide their faces from the horrid sight. Christ is dying! He is in despair! His Father's approving smile is removed, and angels are not permitted to lighten the gloom of the terrible hour. They can only behold in amazement their loved Commander, the Majesty of heaven, suffering the penalty of man's transgression of the Father's law."⁷

"Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace" (Isaiah 53:5, ESV). It seems hard for us to understand how the eternal Father could treat His Son in such a way. But this was not the act of a vindictive father chastising his son unjustly. The chastisement, or discipline, brought upon Jesus was necessary for our salvation.

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). The pathway of obedience for Christ contained many tests and trials, more than we will ever be called to bear. In these trials were the means of chastisement that Jesus suffered in order to bring us peace. Nothing came His way that His Father did not allow. All this was done to bring us peace with God. For a disciple of Christ, the pathway of obedience will also call for discipline and suffering. As a loving father chastises his son, because he loves and cares for him, so our heavenly Father will chastise or discipline us. This discipline is necessary in order to develop in us the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Unfortunately, many are tempted to doubt God's care and love for them because of the trials. Jesus was no different. "Even doubts assailed the dying Son of God. He could not see through the portals of the tomb. Bright hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the tomb a conqueror and His Father's acceptance of His sacrifice. The sin of the world, with all its terribleness, was felt to the utmost by the Son of God. The displeasure of the Father for sin, and its penalty, which is death, were all that He could realize through this amazing darkness. He was tempted to fear that sin was so offensive in the sight of His Father that He could not be reconciled

to His Son. The fierce temptation that His own Father had forever left Him caused that piercing cry from the cross: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'"⁸

How many people have uttered that same cry? If you ever have, dear reader, remember you are not alone. Even our Saviour felt forsaken. His last great ordeal challenged His confidence in God to the utmost. "Faith and hope trembled in the expiring agonies of Christ because God had removed the assurance He had heretofore given His beloved Son of His approbation and acceptance."⁹

In this experience Jesus left a lesson for us. With no assurance of acceptance with God, what did He rely on during this terrible ordeal? "The Redeemer of the world then relied upon the evidences which had hitherto strengthened Him, that His Father accepted His labors and was pleased with His work."¹⁰ What were those evidences? The times in His past experience when the Father had declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). It was this and other evidences, the words of God spoken in His favor, which enabled Jesus to remain steadfast unto the end.

"In His dying agony, as He yields up His precious life, He has **by faith alone** to trust in Him whom it has ever been His joy to obey. He is not cheered with clear, bright rays of hope on the right hand nor on the left. All is enshrouded in oppressive gloom. Amid the awful darkness which is felt by sympathizing nature, the Redeemer drains the mysterious cup even to its dregs. Denied even bright hope and confidence in the triumph which will be His in the future, He cries with a loud voice: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit' (Luke 23:46). He is acquainted with the character of His Father, with His justice, His mercy, and His great love, and in submission He drops into His hands."¹¹

In this act, Jesus sealed the New Covenant. Today He offers the blessings of this Covenant to all who will believe. Because of their unbelief, ancient Israel failed to receive those

blessings. They rebelled against the discipline and chastisement to which their Father subjected them. Our danger is that, instead of accepting the trials and discipline of a loving heavenly Father as something needful for our development, we do the same. We need to remember that the life of Jesus was a call "to fellowship in suffering." Ours is the same.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:21-24).

Dear reader, if your faith and hope in God are trembling, what should you do? Look unto Jesus and do just what He did. Look back to where you last saw the light; to where you last felt the conscious assurance of God's approval and acceptance of you. That is what Jesus did. That is what enabled Him to endure unto the end, to trust in God while relying upon nothing but the promises of His word. This is living by faith. It is the faith of Jesus. As the finisher, or 'perfector' (margin) of your faith, Jesus is constantly at work to develop this same faith in you. It is this faith that we all must have if we are to endure unto the end. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). *R*

References

- ¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 106.
- ² *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 222.
- ³ *The Youth's Instructor*, October 26, 1899.
- ⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 57.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 687.
- ⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 209.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 209, 210.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 210, 211.

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MOVING? Please let us know.

Embracing the Victory

*Look on high, and picture there—
Beyond the clouds and outer space . . .
Our Author and Designer says,
“For you I now prepare a place.”*

*To make us clean He suffered much,
For all our flaws He paid the debt.
But still He sees the way we are
And mourns, “Prepared you are not yet!”*

*His eyes behold throughout the earth,
In every city, every town—
Recording clearly all our words;
Our every thought is written down.*

*The angels have their pen in hand;
With pinpoint clarity they trace
Each good or evil deed we do:
A record that we all must face.*

*While artful foe attacks us hard
And darts leap forward as a flood,
Look up—our High Priest stands for us
And pleads the merits of His blood!*

*Our only hope for life is this:
Confess, forsake each little sin.
Abide in love and thankfulness:
His Christlikeness we still can win!*

*A certain angel bears in hand
That special mark of God's own seal,
To finish up His work in us
To every heart He makes appeal:*

*“Surrender fully, while you can—
Though it may seem peculiar, odd.
The only way to heav'nly bliss
Is through the only Lamb of God.”*

*The universe is looking on
(And soon admit they surely must)
To see, indeed: The Master Judge
Is faithful, true, and pure and just.*

*And when the end is said and done,
One truth stands out from all above:
It will be known by every soul
That God in Heav'n—oh, yes—is love!*

—B. Monteiro