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SABBATH SCHOOL
BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

JULY AUG SEPT 2003

Sanctuary Themes

The Book of Hebrews



SEVENTH-DAY
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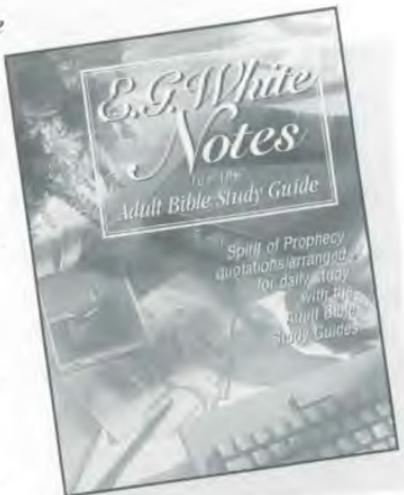
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The Rest of the Story

The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1). And they do, at least to a point. What Christian hasn't looked up into the sky on a night in which the stars shimmered in a panoply of outrageous incandescence and not come away awed by the power and the greatness of God?

The heavens do have a story to tell. Or, perhaps, more precisely, they reveal that a story has already been told. By looking at the heavens, we can catch parts of the plot but not the whole narrative itself. No matter how far our telescopes peer into the cosmos, they can reveal only so much, because only so much is revealed there. The rest of the story, the story of the Incarnation, the story of Redemption, the story of Jesus and the eternal life He offers—these are not found in the heavens, no matter how much of God's glory is, otherwise, declared there.

Yet, what the heavens do not tell us, the Holy Scriptures do. The details not written in the stars are written, instead, in God's Word. Scripture takes us places where rocket ships and telescopes can never go. The Bible reveals things that Hubble, no matter how focused and finely tuned its lenses, will never detect.

For instance, the book of Hebrews, the topic of this quarter's lesson, gives us a window into the universe, a view of the heavens that would otherwise remain hidden, despite the efforts of the world's greatest astrophysicists and astronomers.

"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" (Heb. 7:25).

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an 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" (Heb. 8:1, 2).

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11, 12).

These are truths about the heavens that the heavens themselves—no matter how deeply and intently we peer into them—could never reveal.

Though shrouded in some mysteries itself (Who wrote it? When was it written? To whom was it addressed? What specific problems was it confronting?), the book of Hebrews radiates with light, truth, and details regarding salvation history, regarding what Jesus has done for us, what He is doing for us now, and what He will do for us throughout eternity. It reveals not only what Christ accomplished by His life and death (Heb. 1:3; 2:9; 7:27; 9:12, 28) but it presents the most explicit explanation of Christ as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:15, 16; 7:25; 9:24) found anywhere else in Scripture.

Though the Scriptures do give us scattered glimpses into heaven, no other book takes us so deeply, and intimately, into heavenly places while simultaneously giving us such a clear explanation of what we see when we're there.

Before starting this quarter's lesson, read through the entire book of Hebrews. Tremble at its fierce warnings against apostasy and backsliding, heed its emotional exhortations to faithfulness and obedience, but, most of all—rejoice in the hope, in the promises, in the assurance that exudes from every page of this faith-affirming book, which boldly declares to us that “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:24). And if Christ is now standing in the presence of God “for us”—what have we to fear?

As you read, notice two outstanding and undeniable truths within these sacred pages: the reality of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and the importance of that ministry to His people on earth, truths that we as Adventists have been unabashedly proclaiming to the world. In Hebrews, we find key elements of our sanctuary message, and that message is nothing if not the Cross revealed in the only context that can fully reveal it: that of the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ now ministers His blood in our behalf, “having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:12) through His life and death here on the earth.

Hebrews is all about Jesus, a fuller and clear revelation of Jesus. That is the direction this study takes: We will focus on Jesus as He appears in Hebrews. “Jesus, Our King”; “Jesus, Our High Priest”; “Jesus, Our Assurance”; “Jesus, Our Sacrifice and Salvation”—these are some of the weekly topics we will study in the powerful exhortation to faithfulness and obedience that is at the heart of Hebrews.

This quarter's author is Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller, a native of Germany and now an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference, in Silver Spring, Maryland. A New Testament scholar, Dr. Mueller takes us on an incredible voyage into the heavens themselves, where Jesus, our High Priest, “ever liveth to make intercession” for us, a truth about the heavens that the heavens themselves can never reveal.

That is why it has to be told to us, which is exactly what Hebrews does. This quarter, let's listen carefully to what it says.



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just
some
cool,
clean,
water.



Water is life. Just as our souls require Christ, the Living Water, so our bodies require pure water. Help provide that water. Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help build a water system at the University of Eastern Africa in Baraton, Kenya.

MISSION

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering on September 27 supports projects in the East-Central Africa Division.

Jesus and the Book of Hebrews



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Heb. 1:1, 2; 2:3; 4:15; 10:22, 23.

MEMORY TEXT: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT: The book of Hebrews was written in order to help keep faithful those who were tempted to fall away from the faith. What Christian, in what era, hasn't faced the same temptation? Hence, the relevance of Hebrews for us even today.

WRITTEN MORE LIKE A SERMON THAN A LETTER, Hebrews points weary New Testament believers to Jesus, to His work on earth below and to His work in heaven above. The book reveals Jesus in various roles, each one helping us understand the great salvation that has been offered to the world through Him. Together they create the simple, yet crucial, message from the Lord to His people, in all ages: Don't give up!

This week we will take our first look at this fascinating fount of revealed truth.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: Who wrote the book of Hebrews? To whom was the book addressed? What problems was it dealing with? What issues were at stake, and what parallels do they have to our situation today? What roles are given to Jesus in the book, and what do they teach us about the plan of salvation?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 5.

FROM WHOM AND TO WHOM?

If one compares the first few verses of Hebrews with the first few verses of Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Galatians (or, for that matter, James and 1 Peter), one will notice a curious phenomenon: Unlike those books, the author doesn't mention his name, not in the beginning of his letter nor, in fact, anywhere in it. Though some evidence does (and some does not) point to Paul as the author of Hebrews, Ellen White names him as such. This quarter's Bible Study Guide will follow her lead here.

The other natural question is: To whom was the author writing? Finding out to whom Hebrews was sent is not just a matter of historical curiosity. That knowledge helps us to understand the main thrust of the letter. There's a very heavy emphasis on the Old Testament, on its history and on its sanctuary, and the book is written in a manner implying that the author believed the readers knew something about that history and sanctuary.

What aspects of Old Testament history and theology and scriptures are touched upon in each of the texts?

1. Heb. 1:1 _____

2. Heb. 1:5 _____

3. Heb. 5:6 _____

4. Heb. 7:1 _____

5. Heb. 9:1 _____

6. Heb. 10:1-4 _____

The heavy concentration on the sanctuary system, the priesthood, Hebrew history, and, of course, on the Hebrew Bible (which required a good knowledge of the Old Testament to be understandable) make plausible the assumption that the recipients were Jewish Christians, a view commonly held by scholars. The author writes to them as though they knew the Old Testament quite well, not only its history but the sanctuary service revealed in its pages.

The fact that Paul writes Hebrews as a letter of admonition to people who apparently "knew their Bibles" should send a message to those who think that Bible knowledge alone is enough for salvation. What message is that?

THE CONTENT OF THE EPISTLE.

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Heb. 2:3).

Yesterday, we saw that Paul was writing (probably) to Jewish believers in Jesus. The question then arises, What was he saying to them? Why did he write this epistle?

The answer seems to be that these people were in danger of falling away from Christianity and returning to Judaism. They were losing faith in the Second Coming (they thought Christ should have been back already); and, as time progressed, they were in danger of drifting away from the great truths of the gospel. Sound familiar?

The author's words contain large blocks of warning and admonition. Summarize on each line the essence of each warning and admonition. What things do they share in common?

Heb. 2:1-4 _____

Heb. 3:7-4:13 _____

Heb. 5:11-6:8 _____

Heb. 10:26-39 _____

Heb. 12:1-29 _____

Heb. 13:1-17 _____

These warnings and admonitions reveal what was at stake when the book to the Hebrews was written. To reject or lose salvation, to drift away from sound proclamation and New Testament teaching, to miss the divine rest by unbelief or disobedience, to become weary and sin willfully, and to live an unethical life—these were some of the dangers the Hebrews faced. No wonder Paul wrote them a long, deep letter pointing them to Jesus for whom He was, for what He had done, and for what He was doing for them now. Their spiritual malaise threatened their eternal destiny.

Here we are, Seventh-day Adventists, "spiritual Hebrews," long awaiting the second coming of Jesus. Look at what Paul warned these early "Adventists" about; in what ways do we face the same dangers today?

THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY.

"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" (Heb. 1:1, 2).

According to the author, with Jesus a new era has come (actually "the last days"). Right in the beginning of this letter Jesus is presented in His various roles.

Study Hebrews 1:1-4. What roles does Paul put Jesus in? What are the various roles and descriptions used for Jesus here?

Notice the shift of emphasis in these verses. God the Father is the center of attention in verses 1 and 2, though in the midst of verse 2 the focus shifts upon Jesus and upon whom He is and what He has done. Notice, too, the sequence: Jesus is Creator and Sustainer (vss. 2, 3), and then suddenly He becomes the Savior.

Which words specifically talk about the Cross in these four texts? What do they say? What hope and promise are found in those words?

Thus, not only does Hebrews begin with Jesus as Creator, it quickly moves to His role as our Savior. Yet, instantly linked with His role as our Savior is His role as our High Priest in heaven, a key element of the book of Hebrews. This is seen in the final clause of verse 3, where, after talking about His purging our sins, it says that He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," a clear reference to Christ's ascension to heaven after His work on earth was complete. Thus, almost within one breath (verses 1-4 are one sentence in the Greek), we are given the essence of the book of Hebrews: the work and ministry of Jesus Christ in our behalf.

The first four verses of Hebrews are deep and complex. After praying and meditating over them, paraphrase them in your own words. Share with the class what you have done.

THE MULTIPURPOSED GOD.

Jesus, of course, does not appear in the first four verses of chapter 1 and then disappear. On the contrary, who He is, what He has done, and what He now is doing are themes that recur all through the book. After each of these texts, write down the names and/or role He is given.

Heb. 1:5-10 _____

Heb. 2:10, 17 _____

Heb. 3:1 _____

Heb. 4:14; 5:6, 9, 10 _____

Heb. 6:20; 7:22 _____

Heb. 9:15; 10:10 _____

Heb. 12:2; 13:20 _____

Jesus is described in a number of ways: the Son, Christ, the Captain of our salvation, our Surety, our Mediator, our Shepherd, our High Priest, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, and so forth.

An extremely positive picture emerges. Although Jesus is God, He has turned toward us. He has secured our salvation. He serves as our Mediator. He is the One who will bring us to the final goal.

With all that we have through Jesus, no wonder Paul early on says to the Hebrews (and says to us now), "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3).

"No greater gift can be bestowed upon man than that which is comprehended in Christ. . . . The peril of indifference to God and neglect of His gift is measured by the greatness of salvation. God has done to the uttermost of His almighty power. The resources of infinite love have been exhausted in devising and executing the plan of redemption for man. God has revealed His character in the goodness, the mercy, compassion, and love manifested to save a race of guilty rebels. What could be done that has not been done in the provisions of the plan of salvation?"—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 37.

Look at the various titles and names of Christ. Which ones appeal the most to you, personally? Placed together, what do they tell us about Jesus and His desire to save us?

"SO GREAT A HIGH PRIEST."

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

Hebrews 4:14-16 and 10:19-23 use almost the same wording. What is the significance of the respective statements? What are both sets of texts admonishing us to do, and what reasons do they give for us to obey their admonitions?

In Hebrews 4:14, 16 we read (1) "Let us hold fast our confession" (RSV) and then (2) "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace" (RSV). In 10:22, 23 we find the same imperatives reversed: (1) "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith" (NIV) and (2) "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering" (RSV). In both cases, the message is the same: Hang on to your faith in Christ.

These words, of course, are so important for us today, as well. Jesus died for us. The Cross is the turning point of history and of our fate. Jesus serves as our High Priest; He is intervening in heaven in our behalf. He is our great High Priest. Therefore, we have confidence and assurance, because Someone now stands in heaven in our stead, Someone who, in fact, knows what it is to be tempted by sin (see Heb. 4:15). He knows how it feels to be human, to be tempted, to be hungry, to be tired, to be assaulted, abandoned, and to face death, because, as a human, He went through it all.

Therefore, we are called to draw close to God and receive mercy, grace, and help from Someone who can relate to us. The way to the heavenly sanctuary, the way to the throne of God, is now open! God is our Father, we are His children, and He treats us as such (Heb. 12:7-9). Jesus' sacrifice is once-for-all and is sufficient for all. We just have to accept it.

Hebrews 10:22, 23 may be the summary of the book, and together with 4:14-16, it may present the aim of the epistle: Do not give up on Jesus! The best has come. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament types and the guarantee of salvation.

Dwell on Hebrews 4:15. What does it mean to you to know that our heavenly High Priest has been "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"? What hope does this truth give you?

FURTHER STUDY: See Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, pp. 614, 615.

A void 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."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1128, 1129.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Without getting into needless, divisive, and usually futile discussions over the exact nature of Christ, why is His humanity so important to us as followers of Jesus? What has His humanity offered to us?
2. Some Christians present Jesus as a rather rigid and strict Lord; others portray Jesus as very tolerant, loving, lenient, and merciful, who condones every lifestyle whatsoever. Both positions distort the picture of the biblical Christ. How can we make sure to present and to understand Jesus as correctly as possible; that is, in a clear biblical way?
3. Hebrews 1:1, 2 talks about God speaking to us. What are the various ways He does that? The statement is made in the context of Jesus. How did God speak to us through Jesus?

SUMMARY: Concerned about the backsliding of some Jewish believers in Jesus, Paul points them to the ministry of Jesus Christ, to His death in their behalf, and now to His high-priestly ministry, all of which should give them the faith, the courage, and the confidence to press on and not turn back.



A Different Spirit

Denis Rodrigues

She was alone in her home when she sensed a presence, a spirit. She knew the spirits who normally came, and this one was different.

Since childhood, Yolanda had been immersed in witchcraft. She smelled the burning incense used to call the spirits. She watched her parents hold midnight séances, tell the future, or burn candles to make one person love another or to make someone sick and die. As she grew older, her parents urged her to practice witchcraft.

When she was 18, she moved in with a man. But after five years of abuse, she left him and threw herself into her witchcraft and communicating with the devil. Several years later, after more failed relationships, she had an encounter that changed her life, an encounter with Jesus.

She was alone when she sensed a presence in the room. It was none of the spirits who normally came to her. This spirit was different—peaceful, powerful, and full of love. She sensed that it was Jesus, and she cried out to Him. With all her heart she wanted to surrender to Him.

Then the Spirit spoke to her. “Give up your witchcraft; give up your drinking and your adultery. Destroy your witchcraft books, dolls, and potions, and follow Me. Be a light to the people that you meet.” Suddenly she knew: she was no more Yolanda the witch; she was Yolanda, the child of God.

Yolanda obeyed God’s voice. But God had not told her which church to attend. She visited several churches, but none of them satisfied her.

One day a man knocked on her door and told her, “God sent me to give you a Bible study.” The night before she had asked God to show her which church to attend. She invited the man in, and they started studying the Bible. As God’s truths unfolded before her, she drank them in. When she entered the Adventist church the first time and experienced the love of the members, she knew she was home.

Yolanda’s life has changed completely. Today she is a Bible worker; she has led 66 people to the feet of Jesus, some are her former witchcraft clients. Her neighbors know that a different Spirit guides her life now. That Spirit is the Spirit of God.



Yolanda Zúñiga (left). Denis Rodrigues is a district pastor in Tegulcigalpa, Honduras.

Jesus, Our King



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 1.

MEMORY TEXT: “He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Though Hebrews repeatedly presents Jesus as our High Priest, Jesus also is pictured as King.

KINGS HAVE A LONG AND CHECKERED ROLE IN WORLD HISTORY. Because they often wielded power, their characters could determine the fate of nations. Israel, dissatisfied with the judges as their leaders, wanted a king, instead. They got one; in fact, they got many kings.

The Bible presents Jesus as a King. Jesus is even the King of kings (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). In Hebrews, Jesus the Priest-King is even more than a benevolent Ruler. He is able to do so much for us because of the nature of His rule, the nature of His reign, and the nature of the ministry involved in that rule and reign. This week we will take a look at His role as King.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: How is Christ’s kingship depicted in Hebrews? In what ways was His role as King prefigured in the Old Testament? Why is the character of a king so important? What does Jesus do for us in His role as King?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 12.

JESUS, THE KING (Hebrews 1).

Hebrews 1 contains a “hymn” describing our Lord Jesus Christ. God has spoken to us in Him (vs. 1). He is the perfect representation of God the Father (vs. 4). In verses 2, 3, Christ’s existence is summarized: It starts with His preexistence, covers His earthly sojourn, and reaches up to His exaltation. He partakes in God’s government and kingship and far surpasses the angels in superiority (vs. 4).

The rest of Hebrews 1, verses 4-14, praises Jesus in higher and higher terms: (1) Jesus is the Son (vs. 5); (2) Jesus is to be worshiped (vs. 6); (3) Jesus is King and God from eternity to eternity (vss. 8, 9); (4) Jesus is Creator (vss. 10-12); (5) Jesus participates in God’s rule, and all will be subject to Him (vs. 13).

Although the kingship idea occurs throughout Hebrews, the clearest portrayal is obtained in Hebrews 1. “In this language is represented the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 921.

In various places in the book of Hebrews (Heb. 1:3, 4, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), the author mentions Jesus’ being at the “right hand” of God (expressed in various ways). After looking up the texts, ask this question: Is this emphasis in these texts on the exact *geographical or spatial position* of Jesus, or is the emphasis, instead, on Christ’s heavenly authority? Give reasons for whichever position you take.

Interestingly enough, Jesus is never specifically called “King” in Hebrews. Nevertheless, His kingship is made apparent by the various terms and references in the book in regard to Him. What specific references are found in the first chapter that point to His kingship? Look up these other texts, as well (Heb. 2:7, 8; 7:1-3, 17; 10:13). What do they say that prove that, according to Hebrews, Jesus is our King?

The allusions to Jesus’ kingship are quite strong in Hebrews. Jesus has an everlasting throne. In His hand He holds the scepter of uprightness and justice. He is crowned, and everyone is and everything is subject to Him. King Melchizedek is a type of Jesus. Clearly, Jesus is, according to Hebrews, the King of the universe.

The character of a king, someone who in ancient times often wielded unchallenged authority, is crucial. A cruel, depraved king can wreak moral and physical devastation over his kingdom. Knowing what we know about Christ’s character, why is the thought of His being King of the universe so comforting?

JESUS, THE PROMISED PRIEST-KING (Psalm 110).

The kingship motif in Hebrews is based on a number of Old Testament passages, which include Psalms 2, 45, and 110. In fact, not only is Psalm 110 used throughout the book of Hebrews, but it also provides the backbone of Hebrews 1. An allusion to Psalm 110:1 is found in Hebrews 1:3, and the next-to-the-last verse of the chapter (vs. 13) comes from Psalm 110:1. Between these two references to Psalm 110:1, six other Old Testament quotations dwell on the kingship of Jesus.

Read Psalm 110. What are the major lines of thought developed here? What is the psalmist saying? Paraphrase it in your own words.

Psalm 110 (written by David) is quoted extensively in the New Testament. Verse 1 mentions the enthronement of the King and verse 4 the bestowal of the priesthood on Him; other verses talk about the world dominion of this King. God will subdue His enemies. The King will partake in Yahweh's reign. This King will also be a Priest forever, a Priest-King—a remarkable concept, because a Davidic king legitimately serving as a priest cannot be found in Israelite history. There was none.

Thus, we find here a direct Messianic prophecy. The promise refers to the Messiah only.

Read Matthew 22:41-45. Why does Jesus quote Psalm 110? What was Jesus telling the leaders about Himself?

In ancient Jewish thinking, there were to be two messiahs: one royal messiah (from the tribe of Judah) and a priestly messiah (from the tribe of Levi). In Hebrews they are united into one Messiah, the Priest-King, Jesus, a theme that is developed all through Hebrews.

Read Psalm 110 in the context of Hebrews 1. In both sections, the superiority, the victory, of "my Lord" (Ps. 110:1) and of "the Son" is assured. How can we, amid the seemingly intractable trials of life, draw comfort and hope from these promises? What do these promises of His victory mean for us?

JESUS' KINGSHIP.

As Christians, we believe in the eternal preexistence of Christ. He is not a created being. From eternity, He lived with the Father in some capacity as Ruler. However, the author of Hebrews is not interested in discussing the nature and extent of the Son's rule *before* His incarnation.

For him, instead, what is important is that the final realization of Christ's reign has begun after His death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, when Jesus sat down at the right hand of God after "he had made purification for sins" (Heb. 1:3, NRSV). Christ's humiliation through Incarnation and death was followed by Resurrection and exaltation (2:6-9); first the Cross, then the crown (Heb. 12:2).

Study these three verses carefully (in context): "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool" (Acts 2:33-35). What is Peter saying here about the enthronement of Christ? What have we received because of that heavenly enthronement? Why, then, is this event so important to us?

Notice, too, that Peter quotes Psalm 110:1, which is interpreted as Jesus' exaltation as King after His resurrection and ascension. The visible sign of that event on earth was the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. In Acts 5:30-32, Peter returns to the same topic.

Thus, Jesus became King after He brought about salvation for humankind. Salvation and kingship are, therefore, linked. As the results of salvation are never ending, so is Christ's kingship. His throne is forever and ever.

Yet, although Jesus reigns over His angels, His saints, and the heavenly world right now, enemies exist, which will eventually be made subject to Him. The cosmic realization of His reign is still future. This will come at the end, when sin and sinners are no more, when all the questions of the great controversy have been resolved, and when God and His government will stand vindicated forever.

What does the linkage between kingship and salvation mean for us? In what ways does Christ's being King help give us assurance of salvation? Or does it? For example, What should give us more hope: to believe that the angels want us saved or that the King of the universe does? Explain your answer.

THE CHARACTER OF JESUS, THE KING (Heb. 7:1-3).

What are some of the attributes of King Jesus as presented in Hebrews? Heb. 1:8, 9, 12; 2:9, 10, 11; 7:1-3; 12:2, 3.

Because the title of king can arouse different feelings (sometimes good, sometimes bad), we must understand what kind of king Jesus is.

Five basic characteristics are mentioned below:

The King of peace (Heb. 7:1, 2). Like Melchizedek, Jesus is the King of peace. The name *Salem* is connected to the Hebrew concept of *shalom*, “peace.” It describes peace, completeness, and welfare. It includes good health, prosperous relations to others, friendship, and even the idea of salvation. Jesus is the Peacemaker par excellence. Peace is His character.

The King of righteousness and justice (Heb. 1:8; 7:2). Jesus is just and absolutely fair. He shows no partiality. He is righteous, and His righteousness puts us in the right relationship with the Deity. Furthermore, Jesus loves righteousness and hates sin (Heb. 1:9). “To love righteousness is a higher virtue than merely to do righteousness. . . . Work, with duty as a motive, is commendable. Work, with love as a motive, is a still higher experience. . . . Love is what prompted God to action.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 400.

Self-sacrificial love and kindness (Heb. 1:3; 2:9, 10; 12:2-6). In Jesus there is no selfishness and egocentrism. He lives for others. He does not avoid suffering and death, not when that suffering and death will lead to the salvation of untold numbers.

Humility and servant leadership (Heb. 2:11). Jesus is Sovereign Lord of the universe. Nevertheless, He calls us brothers and sisters. Although being the King of kings, He is called a Servant on our behalf. He is the Supreme Example of servant-leadership.

Immutability (Heb. 1:12; 13:8). This concept does not mean that Jesus is unaffected by our joys, sorrows, and decisions. It means that His love, kindness, and justice never fail or change. We can rely upon Him—always.

Take the qualities listed above and write a paragraph (or however much you can) about what hope exists for us in these qualities. How do they help us fulfill the first and most important of all commandments? (Matt. 22:37, 38).

JESUS, KING FOR US.

Yesterday, we studied the qualities of Jesus the King. Today, we are interested in His work in our behalf. Actions grow out of the character; they are, then, naturally related to each other. We saw the wonderful characteristics that are ascribed to Jesus. The question then arises: What does that mean for us?

Write down what the verses are saying concerning each listed topic:

Salvation. See Heb. 2:3; 5:9; and 7:25.

Faith. Heb. 12:2.

Peace. Heb. 7:2.

Sanctification. Heb. 2:11; 10:14.

An example. Heb. 12:2, 3.

Closeness. Heb. 2:14, 17; 4:15; 7:25.

Help. Heb. 2:16; 4:16.

Providing a better future. Heb. 11:16; 13:14.

Look at all this. Though Hebrews is about Jesus, it is not about Jesus in a vacuum. It is about Jesus in His roles and work of saving us from the horrible consequences of sin. It is not only about Jesus redeeming us from eternal death but about what He is doing for us now; to help us cope in this world; to give us peace, power, and assurance as we fight the fight of faith and seek to hold fast to the end, where a crown of glory is awaiting us.

This is, in so many ways, the message of the book of Hebrews. It was what Paul wrote to the believers back then, and it is what he has written for us today.

Think about your own spiritual needs at this very moment. Is there any particular area where you are struggling? Look at the list for today. More than likely, you will find something there from which you can draw comfort. If so, write down what it is and how it has helped you. Perhaps you could share it with your class.

FURTHER STUDY:

And I saw another field full of all kinds of flowers, and as I plucked them, I cried out: ‘They will never fade.’ Next I saw a field of tall grass, most glorious to behold; it was living green, and had a reflection of silver and gold, as it waved proudly to the glory of King Jesus. Then we entered a field full of all kinds of beasts—the lion, the lamb, the leopard, and the wolf, all together in perfect union. We passed through the midst of them, and they followed on peaceably after. Then we entered a wood, not like the dark woods we have here; no, no; but light, and all over glorious; the branches of the trees waved to and fro, and we all cried out: ‘We will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.’ We passed through the woods, for we were on our way to Mount Zion.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 68.

“The way to heaven is rugged. Briers and thorns are in the way; but we can with cheerfulness tread the rough pathway, knowing that Jesus, the King of glory, once trod it before us.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, June 10, 1852.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is Jesus described as a King in Hebrews? Some Christians do not like this title and want to replace it by other terms. What do you think about this issue? What basic ideas does the concept of Jesus’ kingship communicate?
2. Kingship includes authority on the part of the king and subordination on the part of his subjects. Authority is challenged in many societies today. Some prefer to relate to God as a friend, even a buddy, rather than as the Sovereign Ruler of the universe. How would you want to relate to God? What does it mean in practical terms to accept God as Lord? How is our everyday life influenced if we do that?
3. This week we were given a taste of all that Christ has done in order to save us. And yet people, even with the knowledge of these things, will be lost. With so much done for us, why will people still be lost?

SUMMARY: Jesus is not simply a King or even the most powerful King. Christ is Priest-King, and His kingship, as well as His priesthood, are related to all human beings. With His ministry as Priest-King for our sake, Christ enters another stage of the plan of redemption. The readers of Hebrews can rely on Him in every respect.



Friendship Plants a New Company

J. H. Zachary

When Melvin Steinke needed to live closer to his work in the logging industry he and his wife, Eileen, purchased a home in Rock Creek, British Columbia, Canada. There was no church or fellow believers in the area, so Melvin and Eileen set out to make friends.

Eileen did not look for employment outside the home, so she had time to get acquainted with neighborhood women. "As we reached out to people they soon began inviting us to their clubs." In a short time Eileen was attending two women's Bible study groups with different Protestant sponsors. She also met with a Women's Institute. She joined in quilting and sewing activities.

The Steinkees planned a Vacation Bible School program, but the first two days no one came. Eileen became discouraged. But on the third day one person attended. "Who is sponsoring this program?" she asked Eileen. Eileen told her that she was Seventh-day Adventist.

"Oh," the visitor said, "had I known who you are I could have filled this room!" With this woman's help, the attendance at the Vacation Bible School grew.

Melvin and Eileen kept the VBS program going all winter. They invited their group to come to their home each Sabbath evening for Bible stories. Parents began to come with their children. As the group grew, the Steinkees opened their home for Sabbath morning services.

One interested family accepted an invitation to attend a seminar being held in a town one hour away. During the long drive to and from the seminars, which continued for several days, the two families became close friends. That family shared with their friends what they had learned at the seminar.

By the time the Steinkees had lived in Rock Creek a year, 20 persons were attending worship services in their home. Many worship with Steinkees on Sabbath and attend their own church on Sunday. The Steinkees plan to hold a Revelation Seminar soon. One family is already preparing for baptism.

Melvin and Eileen Steinke are hoping to purchase a church in the near future. During their visits with their new neighbors, they were delighted to find a couple of former Adventists who are now renewing their commitment to the Lord Jesus.

The Steinkees are demonstrating the method of evangelism that Jesus taught and modeled. Strong evangelism is built upon developing bonding friendships with others.

J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour.

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Jesus, One of Us



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 2.

MEMORY TEXT: "Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Jesus came in human flesh, was tempted in human flesh, suffered in human flesh, and died in human flesh; yet never once did He sin in that flesh. Now He is our High Priest in heaven.

CONDUCTOR AND COMPOSER LEONARD BERNSTEIN once was asked: "Mister Bernstein, which is the most difficult instrument?" Bernstein replied: "The second violin. I can get many first violinists, but to find one who with the same enthusiasm plays second violin or second French horn or second flute, is a real problem. Yet, if nobody would play second violin, we would not have harmony." It is not always easy to be second, especially if one deserves to be first. It is even more difficult to step down after having been first; and it's more difficult still to be ridiculed and humiliated after having stepped down from being first. This, however, is exactly what Jesus did, and our lesson this week takes a look at what His condescension means for us.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: Why the emphasis on Christ's humanity? Why does Scripture present such a cruel picture of Christ's sufferings? What does His humanity have to do with His high-priestly ministry?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 19.

JESUS' HUMILIATION.

"But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one" (Heb. 2:9, RSV).

Hebrews 1 shows the superiority of Jesus over the angels (vss. 5-14). Then, the next chapter, in the context of His earthly ministry, says that Jesus "for a little while was made lower than the angels." What a contrast!

Read Hebrews 2:5-18. Summarize in a few lines the essence of the verses:

Whatever you wrote, one thing is certain: This section is adamant about the humanity of Jesus, that though He was King and greater than the angels, He took upon Himself "the seed of Abraham" (vs. 16), human flesh, and He not only tasted death for every man (vs. 9), but He also became a "merciful and faithful high priest" in our behalf (vs. 17).

Notice, too, that Hebrews 1 refers to Jesus' exaltation, while Hebrews 2 focuses on His humiliation. Chronologically, at least in the context of His work of Redemption in our behalf, the humiliation came first and then the exaltation. Perhaps the author of Hebrews wanted to depict Jesus in His majestic role so the readers would immediately notice in whom they believe and would be reconfirmed in their faith.

The role of Jesus as the Creator points to His preexistence (that is, before He stepped into humanity); the role of Jesus as King points to His ascension (that is, after His earthly ministry). Although His incarnation, including the substitutionary death, are of extreme importance, they must be seen against the background of Jesus' eternal existence as God. Only then can the depth of His humiliation be truly appreciated.

Jesus, the Creator, God Himself, the King of the universe, had taken upon Himself a humanity in which He suffered more than any of us ever could. Dwell upon what this means. Pray over it. Ask the Lord to help you grasp the hope, the promise, and the good news in this amazing truth.

JESUS, THE HUMAN PAR EXCELLENCE.

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Ps. 8:5).

Compare Hebrews 2:6-8 and Psalm 8:5-7. How does the author of Hebrews use that psalm? What application does he give it? What point does he make by interpreting it as he does?

The use of Psalm 8 is . . . interesting, for this passage was never considered to be Messianic. The original context is man, yet not in his ordinary state but in his ideal state. . . . At creation man was given dominion over the earth, but ever since the fall that authority to subject has been lacking. The psalm is only perfectly fulfilled, therefore, in the ideal Man, Jesus Christ, who alone has that authority. The writer sees a fulfillment of this psalm in a way that the Jews never foresaw. The same psalm is cited by Jesus (Mt. 21:16) and Paul (1 Cor. 15:27), both in a way which points to its fulfillment in Jesus himself."—Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), pp. 84, 85.

Jesus is the true Representative of humanity, and in Him the psalm found true fulfillment. As humanity's Representative, He must share in the same conditions as humanity. To truly represent us, He had to be One of us. That makes sense. Only then could He blaze the trail of salvation for us and be an effective High Priest in the presence of God in behalf of humanity.

Though the basic meaning of Psalm 8 was to deal with humanity in general, Hebrews applies it in particular to Jesus, who was the "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45), the new Representative of the race depicted in Psalm 8. By applying the psalm in this manner, the author helps establish clearly not only the humanity of Jesus but the efficacy of His role in redeeming us from sin.

What we see in Hebrews 1 and 2 is the idea that Jesus is both fully God and fully man. However difficult it is to understand this from a purely naturalistic perspective, what does the humanity and divinity of Christ tell us about the link between heaven and earth? How does this reality (the humanity-deity) of Christ help us trust in the salvation we have been offered?

JESUS' SUFFERING.

Hebrews 2 contains strong language in regard to Christ's suffering. The author talks about "the suffering of death" and states that Jesus by the grace of God might taste death for everyone (vs. 9). Death and suffering are again mentioned in Hebrews 2:14, 18; 5:8; 9:26; 12:2; and 13:12.

It is, in many ways, a cruel picture: the innocent Son of God suffering for the sins of the world. Jesus took upon Himself the wrath of God for sins He never committed, tasting death for every man, woman, and child, even those who, in the end through disobedience and rebellion, have to taste it themselves anyway.

Sure, it's cruel, but that's what it was meant to be, to help show us not only the cost of sin but what it cost to redeem us from that sin.

What are the results of Christ's suffering?

Heb. 2:9-11 _____

Heb. 2:14-16 _____

Heb. 2:17, 18 _____

However great that suffering, look at what it wrought for us. Though much about Christ's suffering and death eludes our experiences and is beyond our comprehension, we can only marvel at the results of that death, which include (1) the exaltation of Jesus, (2) the defeat of Satan, (3) the surety of salvation for us, (4) the closeness of Jesus to humanity, (5) His efficacy as our High Priest, and (6) His aid for us now when we ourselves face temptation. What else do we need?

Look at verse 14. It says that Jesus came so that by His death He might destroy the one who has the power over death. How do you understand this verse, given that we still die?

Some psychologists believe that the fear of death is the dominating force in our lives and that much of what we do, consciously or unconsciously, stems from this fear. Look at verse 15. According to this text, what has Jesus done that should give us the answer and the solution to this fear?

JESUS, OUR BROTHER.

Read again all of Hebrews 2, focusing particularly on verse 11. In the context of the whole chapter, what does the word *brother* indicate? What point was the author trying to make?

It is amazing that Jesus indirectly calls Himself our Brother. As the Creator and the King of the universe, He is, nevertheless, still willing to be the Brother of His creatures; that is, His fallen, sinful, and, oftentimes, pernicious creatures. Amazing!

The term *brother* in this context points to an intimate closeness and relationship. Jesus and His followers are one family. Because of what He went through and suffered, Jesus is one of us, and He will stay one of us in spite of His royal dignity. Verse 14 emphasizes that He became a partaker of our flesh and blood, of our nature and of our experience. There's no question: By having become one of us, He can relate to us and we to Him, in a manner differently than were He to have never lived as a human being. What better way could there have been for God to become close to us other than by what Jesus did?

Closeness may contain certain dangers. We can, for instance, turn Jesus into nothing but our buddy. Though there is the friendship element (John 15:15) in our relationship with Christ, it isn't the only term used to depict that relationship. What other images and terms does the Bible use to define that relationship? Matt. 22:36; John 10:11; 20:28; 1 Tim. 1:1.

When it comes to the Bible and to God Himself, we often talk in paradoxes or contrasting pairs. There are three divine Personalities and yet one Godhead. God is far away, unreachable yet present and close to us. Though not limited to time, He reveals Himself in time. We are already saved, and we still will be saved.

It is not either/or but one and the other. We must keep these different truths together, balanced with each other the best we can. Let us neither exclusively view Jesus as the distant Ruler of the universe nor treat Him just as a pal. Let us approach Him as our Brother in all due respect and love, because, no matter our intimacy, He's still the Creator, and we are still the creature—and a great distance exists between the two.

Caroline grew up abused by her brothers. Thus, the image of Christ as her "Brother" hardly evokes a positive response. How do you present Christ to someone like her?

JESUS, OUR HIGH PRIEST.

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17).

Hebrews 2 culminates in the high-priestly office of Jesus, our Brother. It lists qualifications for that office. It describes Jesus in this function and briefly points to the ministry He performs. And one of the qualifications of Jesus was that He had to face temptation to sin, just as humans have, as well.

That Jesus was tempted is mentioned only two times in Hebrews (2:18 and 4:15). Look up the texts. How do they complement each other? What does the second one say that helps us understand what the first one says? Also, how can we understand the statement that Jesus "has been tempted in every way just as we are—yet was without sin"? (Heb. 4:15, NIV).

British author Oscar Wilde once said that the only way to deal with sin is to succumb to it. In contrast, it has been said that the one who falls never knows the full force of temptation, because he or she fails before the test ends. If true, then Jesus is the only One who has known the extremity of temptation, because He alone remained "without sin." He never gave in to it; therefore, He felt its tug worse than any of us have.

Even more so, He faced all that we face and so much more. When was the last time any of us were tempted to turn stones into bread or to command a legion of angels to bear us? And, considering the issues at stake in the great controversy, Satan must have been much more interested in causing Jesus to commit a sin than he is interested in getting us to. And yet, in the midst of all this temptation, Jesus never fell, never sinned, and this experience was one of the things that qualified Him to be our High Priest.

Read Hebrews 2:16-18. As we saw earlier in the week, Christ's humanity is likened to His high-priestly ministry. Look at the two words in verse 17 that describe the kind of High Priest He is. What did His humanity have to do with these two characteristics becoming descriptive of His ministry?

FURTHER STUDY: Read the chapter on "Gethsemane" in Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 685–697. It highlights Jesus' temptation and suffering.

In Christ were united the divine and the human—the Creator and the creature. The nature of God, whose law had been transgressed, and the nature of Adam, the transgressor, meet in Jesus—the Son of God, and the Son of man. And having with His own blood paid the price of redemption, having passed through man's experience, having in man's behalf met and conquered temptation, having, though Himself sinless, borne the shame and guilt and burden of sin, He becomes man's Advocate and Intercessor. What an assurance here to the tempted and struggling soul, what an assurance to the witnessing universe, that Christ will be 'a merciful and faithful high priest' (MS 141, 1901)!—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 926.

"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 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' (Ex. 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."

—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 244.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Dwell on the thought that Jesus Christ as a human being—that is, in human flesh—never sinned. Imagine a whole life in which He never, even once, succumbed to temptation. What does this truth do to all our excuses for sin?
2. How do you understand Ellen White's statement that the humanity of Christ is the "golden chain" that binds our souls to Him? What does that mean?

SUMMARY: Hebrews 2 portrays Jesus in His humanity and describes His accomplishments. He tasted death for us, became the pioneer of our salvation, conquered Satan and death, freed us from existential fear, makes atonement for our sins, and aids us when tempted. A heavy emphasis is on our salvation and the closeness of Jesus with us. We can be confident, because He is our Brother.



Hope Out of Hopelessness

Charlotte Ishkanian

Hartlah lives in Mongolia, where life is seldom easy. When she lost her job as a tractor driver, life became even more difficult. With three children still at home, suddenly she had no income and not enough food. Her friends avoided her, for they feared that she would beg them for food or money, and they did not have any to spare either.

One day some foreigners came to town with food, clothes, and Bibles. They gave Hartlah some food and a Bible. She began to read it and began to understand that there is a God named Jesus.

She wanted to know more about God, but the foreigners left, and she knew of no one in town who believed in God, no one who would tell her more. Then Hartlah heard of Sarool, a girl in town who believed in Jesus. She visited Sarool and began asking her about Jesus.

The woman and the young girl started studying the Bible together. Hartlah was the first person in Sant to study the Bible. Sarool started a small group meeting in her parents' house. More people came. In a year about 10 people were studying the Bible together.

Hartlah's life began to change as she started to understand and accept God's love in her life. Her life took on new meaning and happiness. She realized that she was a sinful person, and she wanted to give her life to Christ. Soon she traveled to another city to be baptized, for there was no pastor anywhere near her little village.

Before Christ took over her life, she was often unhappy and argued a lot. Now she loves to help others. People teased her when she started worshiping God, but as her life changed her friends noticed the difference. She is now studying the Bible with one of her neighbors.

A volunteer missionary moved to Sant to help support the small group of believers. Hartlah attends church in the missionary's home. Until recently she was, at 45, the oldest believer in her small town.

Evangelistic meetings were held in her small village. Every night the village's culture center was full, and many people accepted God's love for the first time. Hartlah was glad for the day when others her age took their stand for Christ.



Hartlah (left), lives in Sant, in north central Mongolia. Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*.

Jesus, Higher and Better



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Heb. 7:7-26; 11:1-26.

MEMORY TEXT: "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Christ's superiority paves the way for the foundation of His entire ministry and the blessings that we receive from it.

F EW PEOPLE LIKE SNOBS. Snobbishness is difficult to stomach. Do we like being around those who look down their noses at us? Self-superiority, besides being the original sin, is just plain hard to deal with. Yet, the thrust of Hebrews is all about superiority; that is, the superiority of Jesus Christ. In His case, there's nothing offensive, nothing snobbish, nothing that would turn us away.

On the contrary, as we'll see this week, Christ's superiority is manifested in a way that should draw us to Him in faith and obedience, for in that superiority comes the great hope of salvation.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: In what ways does Hebrews depict Jesus as superior? Why is Jesus superior? What are the results of Christ's superiority, in terms of His life, death, and ministry in our behalf? How do we respond to what Christ has accomplished for us?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 26.

JESUS' SUPERIORITY.

What does Hebrews tell us about Jesus' superiority?

Heb. 1:4

Heb. 3:3

Heb. 7:26

Heb. 12:24

Although Jesus is superior to the angels, to Moses, and to the high priests; although His blood is better than Abel's blood; and although He is higher than the heavens; Jesus never strived for superiority while on earth.

On the contrary. Consider what Hebrews writes about Jesus in contrast to the Jesus depicted in all four Gospels. It's hard to imagine they are talking about the same Person. And yet they are.

According to the Gospels, He lived His life in simplicity and humility, serving others before Himself. There was no self-promotion in Christ, even though He certainly had reasons to boast, as Hebrews clearly shows, had He wanted to.

Look at Jesus' attitude in comparison to so much of what's in the world today, where self-promotion is the key motive behind so many of our actions. How unfortunate, too, that Christians are not immune to these influences, even in the context of our faith. Like the disciples, we may discuss the question of who is the greatest among us (Luke 22:24). Like the Pharisees, we may look down on the tax collector (Luke 18:9-12). We compare ourselves to others, preferably to those who are worse off or "lower" than we are. Then we end up "superior" (at least in our own minds) to them and believe we have the right to climb the ecclesiastical ladder.

In contrast, the texts in Hebrews that we looked at today clearly establish the superiority of Christ to angels, to Moses, and so forth. And yet, when we look at His life on earth and how He expressed His character, we see only humility, self-denial, self-renunciation, all for the good of those who were, without a doubt, inferior to Him. The same One who was superior to Moses was the same One who stooped to wash the feet of His disciples.

Superior to all yet servant of all. This was Jesus. How do we feel when confronted with His example? How should we feel? Dwell more on the contrast between the Jesus depicted in Hebrews and the Jesus of the Gospels. What message does that send to us?

THE REASON FOR JESUS' SUPERIORITY.

One reason for Jesus' superiority is, of course, that He is God and Creator (one isn't more superior than that). And, no question, Hebrews clearly refers to Him in this capacity. However, His superiority seems not to be derived primarily from His preexistence and deity. Instead, the apostle links His superiority to, interestingly enough, His "inferiority."

Look at Hebrews 2:9. What does it teach us about the link between "inferiority" and "superiority"? See also Phil. 2:4-9.

In Acts 10:36, Peter presents Jesus as Lord of all. But two verses later, He tells us about how the Lord of all acted while in the flesh: He "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (vs. 38, NRSV). This is real greatness, greatness in "inferiority," and this internal greatness becomes manifest in superiority.

What biblical examples show that true lowliness and humble service are rewarded with exaltation?

Joseph in Egypt performed his tasks faithfully, whether as a slave or a prisoner. Eventually, he was exalted to leadership. Even after Moses tended the sheep of his father-in-law in Midian, he still did not have any ambitions to become the leader of Israel. "Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3, NRSV). David was a shepherd who later became king. Peter quotes the Old Testament and declares: "'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble'" (1 Pet. 5:5, NRSV). Jesus tells us in Luke 22:26 that "'the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves'" (NRSV).

Jesus' unparalleled service on earth led to His superiority in status, which led to superiority in His present ministry. In Jesus, both aspects—superiority in status and superiority in ministry—unite. The readers of the letter are encouraged to remain faithful to this Jesus who, although being the King, serves us in a way nobody else can.

When was the last time you took the role of servant? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

THE RESULTS OF JESUS' SUPERIOR MINISTRY.

What are the results of Christ's superior status and ministry for us as described in Hebrews?

Heb. 7:19, 22 _____

Heb. 8:6 _____

Heb. 10:34 _____

Heb. 11:16, 35 _____

Most results of Jesus' superiority—a better hope, better promises, a better covenant, a better and lasting possession, a better country, and a better resurrection—are oriented toward the future. Jesus provides a bright future for His followers. Included in that future is a better resurrection, the final resurrection. This is different from previous resurrections in both testaments, because in these, the people returned to temporary mortal life. In contrast, the final resurrection is to endless life in a world made new.

However future oriented the promises, they still have force for us today. Even as a prelude to eternity, this life is still important, because it provides the opportunity to gain eternity with Jesus. Thus, the better promises and the better covenant affect us here and now, as well. It is here and now that the Lord puts His law into our minds and gives us the desire to keep it; it is here and now that we receive the power to obey, to love Him, and to reflect His character.

Read Hebrews 11:13-16. What is the specific point the author is making here? How does it fit in with the gist of his whole letter to the Hebrews? In what ways does it speak even to us now?

God, through Christ, has revealed wonderful truths to His people. However, do they grasp these truths in faith, trusting in the better promises, the better hope, the better country, or do they take their eyes off these things and return to where they once were? This is the challenge to the Hebrews; it's the challenge to us, as well.

OUR REACTION TO CHRIST'S SUPERIORITY: PART 1.

However superior Jesus is in all things, however broad, complete, and efficacious the plan of salvation is that centered on Him and His superiority, one thing God does not do: force anyone to obey, force anyone to partake of what Christ offers. The issue, as always, remains our response. “‘Choose this day whom you will serve’” (Josh. 24:15, NRSV). Even after thousands of years, Joshua’s imperative to the Hebrews back then is the same as to the Hebrews in Paul’s day and to the “Hebrews” today: Choose whom you will serve.

Though Hebrews has been talking about the superiority of Jesus, it also uses comparisons in regard to people, as well. Read Hebrews 11:4. What is it saying here about Abel? What was his “better” sacrifice? See Genesis 4:1-8.

Abel is found twice in Hebrews. Abel honored God in bringing a better sacrifice than what Cain offered (11:4). In Hebrews 12:24, Jesus’ blood is compared to that of Abel, who had a faith relationship to God and is called righteous. And although (in spite of his death) Abel still “speaks,” the blood of Jesus speaks of better things, better than even Abel’s did. Abel is the first hero of faith in Hebrews 11 and the first martyr. Jesus, nevertheless, far surpasses him.

Read Hebrews 11:25. Here, too, the issue of comparisons arose. What was it? What choice did Moses make between these two options?

Similar to Abel, Moses made a decision for Jesus. He rather (lit., “much more”) chose to suffer with God’s people than to enjoy sin. Moses had a clear vision and had his priorities straight. For him the reproach of Christ was greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

However different our individual situations are from Abel or Moses, we still face the same choices they did. In what ways, large and small, do we make our choices every day?

OUR REACTION TO CHRIST'S SUPERIORITY: PART 2.

Yesterday's study looked at two examples of those who, having to choose between something good and something bad, chose the better of the two. Unfortunately, that's not always the case.

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (Heb. 12:25). Notice, again, the comparison between something better and something not so good. How much more impressive is it to be spoken to from heaven than from earth?

Read Hebrews 12:25. What's the point the author is making here? How does it fit in with the whole tenor of the letter to the Hebrews?

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28, 29).

Read these two verses. What point is being made? What lessons are in them for us, particularly as Seventh-day Adventists, who have been given so "much more" than many others?

The human reaction to Jesus' superiority always will be two-fold. Some gladly will accept Him as their Lord. Some will refuse Him, and not always out of ignorance, either. Some know who the Lord is and what He has done in their lives but decide against Him anyway. The book of Hebrews is a call specifically to the latter: to those who know about Jesus to not reject what He has done. All through the book this same pleading occurs: Look at who Jesus is and look at what He has done for us. How, then, can you turn away?

If they needed to hear this back then, how much more so do we today?

FURTHER STUDY:

Christ was not insensible to ignominy and disgrace. He felt it all most bitterly. He felt it as much more deeply and acutely than we can feel suffering, as His nature was more exalted and pure and holy than that of the sinful race for whom He suffered. He was the Majesty of heaven, He was equal with the Father, He was the Commander of the hosts of angels, yet He died for man the death that was, above all others, clothed with ignominy and reproach. O that the haughty hearts of men might realize this! O that they might enter into the meaning of redemption and seek to learn the meekness and lowliness of Jesus!"—Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 339.

"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. It speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, for Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us. We need to keep ever before us the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. That life-cleansing, life-sustaining blood, appropriated by living faith, is our hope. We need to grow in appreciation of its inestimable value, for it speaks for us only as we by faith claim its virtue, keeping the conscience clean and at peace with God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 947.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Tuesday's study mentioned that the results from Christ's superiority are future oriented. How do we react when people accuse us of thinking only in terms of the future and forgetting social and political involvement here and now?
2. In the context of Jesus' superiority being linked to His "inferiority"; that is, in His role of being "lower than the angels," what can we learn about the servant-leader concept? What does Mark 10:44 add to this idea?
3. In what subtle ways can even faithful Christians be caught up in the trap of self-superiority? What's the only answer to protect ourselves against this deception?

SUMMARY: Christ's superior ministry is divided into His better sacrifice on earth and His superior ministry in heaven as our High Priest. The results for us are a better covenant, a better hope, a better country, and a better resurrection. We commit ourselves to Him who has brought about so great a salvation.



The Sweet Old Lady

Ljiljana Gunjevic

As a child I never knew that God existed, for no one in my home ever talked about God. Then I lost my father in war. When I heard about God, I blamed Him for my father's death. I didn't want anything to do with a God who kills fathers.

Even in grade school, partying, drinking, and smoking were a big thing. I joined my friends in these activities when I could. We did not care about God or the future, our health, or our education. The only thing important to us was partying and making jokes to impress others.

However, something happened that changed my life. An old woman came to our door selling books. My mother did not have the heart to refuse her, so she bought a book, *Steps to Christ*. A few days later the woman came to talk about God. Mom was polite and listened, but I was bored, so I left. The woman came often to our house, and sometimes I stayed to listen. In time I grew fond of the old woman.

Time passed, and I started high school. I met a really nice girl named Suzana. I learned that Suzana belonged to a church I had never heard of, the Seventh-day Adventist church. I was sure that was the same church the old woman attended.

Then one day the old woman did not come to our house. I asked Suzana where the woman was, and Suzana said the woman died. I was shaken by this news. Suddenly I wanted to visit the church that this dear old woman had attended. Suzana was happy to invite me.

From then on, I have attended the Adventist church. Even when people tried to convince me not to go, I went. I learned that God loves all of His children, that it is Satan who wants people to suffer. This helped me understand my father's death.

By studying Christ's life, my own life changed. I stopped drinking and attending parties that I knew were not pleasing to God. Friends noticed the changes in my life and wondered what had happened to me. At the time I isolated myself from all my friends outside the church, but by doing so I lost a chance to share God's love with them. Today I realize that was a mistake. I feel sad that I never accepted the nice old woman's invitation to attend church while she was alive. But I believe that we will meet one day in heaven, and she will see the results of her efforts. Her sweet life and persistent love helped bring me to Jesus.

Ljiljana Gunjevic is a teenager living in Lipik, Croatia.

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Jesus, Our High Priest



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 5 and 7.

MEMORY TEXT: “For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15, 16, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Of all the books of the Bible, not one gives such a clear and definite explanation of the heavenly priesthood of Jesus as does the book of Hebrews.

AFTER WORLD WAR I, innkeeper Max Fladt went to the Rhine to swim. On the other side, French soldiers were practicing with pontoons. When one turned over, four soldiers fell in the torrent and fought for their lives. Only a couple days earlier the French had sentenced to death seven Germans. Should Fladt help? He cast himself in the waves and saved two Frenchmen. The next day, a French captain asked how he could reward him. Fladt responded: “Reward life with life. I am asking you to pardon the seven German men.” This is what mediation is all about.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: What role of Christ in heaven does Hebrews emphasize? In what ways does Christ's heavenly ministry parallel the work of Aaron as high priest? Why is Jesus compared to the priest-king Melchizedek?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 2.

JESUS' PRIESTHOOD, THE UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE OF HEBREWS.

"Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb. 8:1, NRSV).

Three words are used in Hebrews to describe Christ's ministry in heaven: *Priest*, *High Priest*, and *priesthood*. None of these specific terms is used for Christ in the rest of the New Testament. Thus, Hebrews has an emphasis found nowhere else in Scripture.

The concept of priest, or priesthood, appears numerous times in Hebrews. Although it also describes the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek, the context in Hebrews is, always, the priesthood of Jesus.

Look up these texts. What are they all saying in common? What's the basic point they are making, and why is it important for us? Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 5:6; 7:15; 7:17; 7:21; 8:1.

Hebrews talks about *both* the Messiahship and the priesthood of Jesus. In the New Testament, Psalm 110 is quoted frequently but always just the first verse. The exception is in Hebrews, which quotes Psalm 110:4 as well as verse 1. The Messiah—the One referred to in Psalm 110:1—is also appointed by God “a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” in Psalm 110:4. Thus, both the Messiahship and priesthood of Jesus appear in Psalm 110 and in Hebrews.

The heavenly priesthood of Jesus is a key element in Hebrews: “The main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb. 8:1, NRSV). Jesus the Messiah is Jesus the High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Though the *concept* of Christ as Priest appears in other parts of the Bible (1 John 2:1, 2; 1 Tim. 2:5), nowhere are we given such a clear and distinct expression of His priesthood as in Hebrews.

What is the common understanding of the word *priest* today? Protestants emphasize the priesthood of all believers as, for instance, found in 1 Peter 2:5, 9. What does that mean, and how can we be careful not to confuse our priesthood with that of Christ?

JESUS AND THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD (Heb. 5:1-10).

Although Jesus' priesthood is different from the Levitical priesthood, Aaron, the Levitical high priest, is compared with Jesus. Despite the clear differences between them, the similarities warrant study.

In Hebrews 5, Aaron is shown in parallel to Christ. Both are human, both are chosen by God, and both work in behalf of humankind. They offer sacrifices, and their ministry and service is "for the sins" of humanity.

What is different between the Aaronic priesthood and that of Jesus? Heb. 5:1-10; 9:6-12.

Jesus is human, but He is also the Son of God. Aaron was not, a crucial point stressed in Hebrews 5:5, 6, where a quote from Psalm 2 is followed by one from Psalm 110, which links the Sonship with the priesthood. Because Jesus is the Son, God bestowed the Melchizedek priesthood on Him. Thus, another kind of priesthood (elaborated in Hebrews 7) is introduced here (see tomorrow's study).

There is also a difference with regard to sacrifices. Although both Jesus and Aaron offer sacrifices, the sacrifice of Jesus is a single sacrifice sufficient for all humankind and—because it is forever valid and effective—it cannot be replaced by any other.

Furthermore, Jesus is both Sacrifice and Priest and thus far surpasses Aaron, who was a priest alone. He never could be a sacrifice. Only Jesus could. Also, unlike Aaron and all other priests, Jesus was never tainted by sin.

The Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Jesus are both said to deal sympathetically with the sinner. However, this is true only for the ideal Levitical priest. Biblical examples show that Levitical priests could be quite rude, uncaring, and unfaithful. Hebrews, in contrast, stresses especially this aspect of Jesus' ministry: that although being sinless Himself, He sympathizes with sinners and is merciful and faithful in dealing with them.

Further distinctions are that Aaron served on earth, whereas Jesus serves in heaven. Although the sanctuaries, namely the earthly and the heavenly, are linked to each other, Jesus serves at the heavenly temple.

Look up these texts: Leviticus 10:1; Jeremiah 20:1-6; Matthew 26:3, 4. All deal with various priests in the Levitical system. What do these texts tell us, from a purely human standpoint, about the superiority of Christ's ministry?

JESUS AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK (Heb. 7:11).

Humanly speaking, Jesus does not have the right to function as priest. He came from the tribe of Judah, not from Levi as did Aaron, and according to the Old Testament, all the priests were to come from the family of Aaron (Exod. 28:1, 40, 41).

However, because Jesus is the Son, the only One to share divinity and humanity at one time, and because He has lived among us and died in our place on the cross, He is the only perfect Mediator, the only One who—in the final sense—can be our true High Priest.

How can this truth be shown? The apostle has to prove from Scripture that Jesus has the right to be not only King but Priest. He points out in Psalm 110:4 that “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (NRSV); this has been fulfilled in Jesus, and in Him alone.

What do we know about Melchizedek? Some claim that he was Jesus Himself, appearing in the Old Testament. Only three passages in Scripture deal with Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20; Ps. 110:4; and Hebrews 5-7). What do they teach us about this mysterious figure from Old Testament history?

Hebrews 7 furnishes a brief description of Melchizedek (vss. 1-4). He is greater than Levi, because Abraham, the ancestor of Levi, paid tithe to him and blessed him (vss. 4-10). Then, after the mention of Melchizedek, the new and superior priesthood of Christ is presented. The argument is built on Psalm 110, not on Genesis 14, showing that the prediction of a Messianic priest is fulfilled in Jesus. Melchizedek's ancestry, birth, and death are unknown, and the apostle is not interested in it. Melchizedek is a type of Christ, not vice versa. The emphasis is on Jesus, not on Melchizedek.

How are Christ's priesthood and sonship related to each other in Hebrews? Heb. 3:1-6; 5:5-8; 7:28.

The topic of Sonship is crucial in Hebrews. Because Jesus is Son, He is superior to Moses (Hebrews 3) and Aaron (Hebrews 5). But He is also a Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, whom He also surpasses, also by virtue of His sonship.

Melchizedek was both a king and a priest. Jesus is also a High Priest and a King. What hope does His kingship offer to us, we who are totally dependent upon divine mercy for salvation?

JESUS AS HIGH PRIEST.

What are some of the characteristics of Jesus the Priest and High Priest?

Heb. 2:17 _____

Heb. 4:14, 15 _____

Heb. 5:5, 6 _____

Heb. 7:24-26 _____

Heb. 8:1-3 _____

In Hebrews 2:17 Jesus is called merciful and faithful. These two characteristics are developed more in the book, but in reverse order. First, Jesus is shown to be faithful, as Moses was, though He surpasses Moses. Then the theme of Jesus' mercy is developed. See Hebrews 4:14-5:10.

Besides faithfulness and mercifulness, Christ's sinlessness is described in Hebrews 4:14-5:10, as well. Although emphasizing Jesus' closeness to us, His humanity and brotherhood, the author is careful to leave no doubt that Jesus was "without sin" (Heb. 4:15), "harmless," "undefiled," and in this way, "separated from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). His sinlessness was crucial not only to His earthly ministry but also to His heavenly one. Had He sinned on earth, He would be of no use to us in heaven.

What does Hebrews reveal about the time and place of Jesus' high-priestly ministry? Heb. 5:5, 6; 9:11.

In Hebrews, Christ's priesthood is dependent on His incarnation and passion. "Strictly speaking, we may not speak of Him as priest until after the Resurrection. Not uncommonly we term the petition in the Garden (John 17) as the high-priestly prayer of Christ. But that goes against the theology of Hebrews."—William G. Johnsson, *Absolute Confidence* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1979), p. 93.

Why is the sinlessness of Christ so important for the theology of Hebrews, and what does it mean to us? What hope does it give us (1) that we can be justified by God despite our sinfulness? (2) that we can through Him live a life of obedience?

JESUS' WORK AND FUNCTION AS HIGH PRIEST.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

Jesus' priesthood is unique. He is a Sacrifice and Mediator at the same time, attributes that do not apply to anyone else in history. Only Jesus died as our Substitute, and only Jesus is our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Furthermore, Jesus is a unique Mediator, because no other being in the universe was both human and divine, attributes that enable Him to be the perfect bridge between heaven and earth.

The outcome of this ministry is also unique. No one can save forever besides Jesus. Only through Him is there eternal life.

Jesus' ministry as High Priest is also objective. This means that it is not dependent on how we feel or think. It exists whether we understand it, know about it, or even believe in it. Although there are subjective elements in the Christian life, the foundation of Christianity exists only in the work of Jesus.

How should we react, knowing that we have such a great High Priest ministering for us in heaven?

Heb. 4:14-16 _____

Heb. 10:22, 23 _____

Heb. 12:1, 2 _____

Summarize the above texts. What are they all saying to us?

Christians know that their High Priest is with them, even to the end of the age. Day by day, He serves them and is about to bring to a close human history in order to establish His kingdom of glory. This extremely positive outlook, this experience of the presence of the Lord, helps give meaning to our lives: We are children of God, brothers of Christ, and we live in order to serve others just as He did. Hebrews was written to encourage those who first read it. It should do the same for us, as well.

FURTHER STUDY:

Let faith pierce through the hellish shadow of Satan and center in Jesus, our high priest, who hath entered for us within the veil. Whatever clouds overcast the sky, whatever storms surge around the soul, this anchor holds firm, and we may be sure of victory.”—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 127.

“Behold the apostle preaching in the synagogue at Corinth, reasoning from the writings of Moses and the prophets, and bringing his hearers down to the advent of the promised Messiah. Listen as he makes plain the work of the Redeemer as the great high priest of mankind—the One who through the sacrifice of His own life was to make atonement for sin once for all, and was then to take up His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Paul’s hearers were made to understand that the Messiah for whose advent they had been longing, had already come; that His death was the antitype of all the sacrificial offerings, and that His ministry in the sanctuary in heaven was the great object that cast its shadow backward and made clear the ministry of the Jewish priesthood.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 246.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Hebrews, for all its richness, is essentially a book about Christ’s high-priestly ministry. A whole book of the Bible dedicated to this topic should tell us that this ministry is of great importance. Discuss the implications of His ministry, especially as it relates to our doctrine of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.
2. Paul, in an attempt to encourage the Hebrews, wrote this letter emphasizing Christ’s heavenly priesthood in behalf of fallen humanity. Why would knowing about this ministry encourage people to remain faithful amid times of discouragement?
3. From what you’ve read and studied so far regarding the book of Hebrews, in what ways can you see the link between Christ’s death and Christ’s high-priestly ministry? Why are they essential to each other?

SUMMARY: Hebrews informs us about Jesus’ priesthood and defines it. This superior ministry follows the order of Melchizedek and yet is not unrelated to the Levitical priesthood. Whatever the links to each priesthood, Christ’s ministry exceeds them both, infinitely so.



Answered Prayer

J. H. Zachary

Abdul is a journalist and well-known member of his community. His news stories have made his name well known to people. He is also known as a deeply spiritual man who faithfully attends prayers in the village mosque. The great burden of his life is for himself and his family to be ready for the great judgment day and the return of Jesus.

In his search for a closer walk with Allah, Abdul discovered the counsel in the Qur'an that he should study the messages of the prophets. He secured a copy of the Bible and began to study. He was amazed to find many of the same stories of the spiritual leaders he knew from the Qur'an.

His heart was touched as he read the Gospels. Jesus spent His entire life in service to His fellow men. He was deeply impressed by the way Jesus helped the sick people. The teachings he discovered in the parables also touched his heart. As the Holy Spirit spoke to his heart Abdul was drawn to Jesus.

Then tragedy struck his family. His brother's wife became seriously ill. She grew weaker until she lost consciousness. Abdul spent hours with his brother during this time. When all hope seemed lost for his sister-in-law the family gathered around her bed and a sheet was placed over her body.

Abdul shared what he had experienced, "With tears running down my face I fell on my knees beside the bed. I prayed to God. 'O Lord Jesus, when You were on earth in Your mighty power You healed the sick. You are the Creator. You even raised the dead. O God, hear my prayer. Save my sister-in-law from death.' "

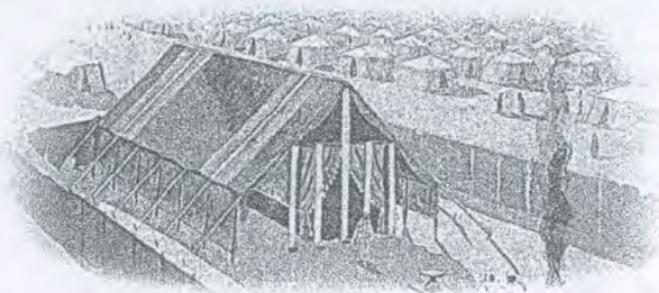
Abdul and the family members remained on their knees pleading for Jesus to help them. Abdul testified, "When I pulled back the sheet, my dear sister-in-law opened her eyes and smiled at me. Jesus answered my prayer."

The story of how Jesus saved this woman spread through the village. Many wanted to know more about Jesus. Abdul reports that 150 of his neighbors have accepted Jesus. He is sharing his new faith with scores of people.

"I have learned from the Holy Books that Jesus is the Savior of all mankind. I know that I will be ready for the judgment because Jesus has forgiven my sins and given me His righteousness."

J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour.

Sanctuary Language in Hebrews



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 9.

MEMORY TEXT: "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building" (Hebrews 9:11).

KEY THOUGHT: Hebrews is full of sanctuary language that helps us understand what the Lord is doing for us in heaven now.

IN DECEMBER 1989, *Moody Monthly* reported: "Two Talmudic schools near the Western (Wailing) Wall are teaching students details of temple service. Other scholars are researching genealogies to identify members of the priestly line. Plans call for an organizing convention of priestly descendants next year. One group of Jewish activists, the Temple Mount Faithful, dedicated a three-ton 'cornerstone' two kilometers from the temple site. Police prevented them from staging the ceremony in the Western Wall Plaza."—Page 74. Long after its destruction, there is still interest in the sanctuary. This week we'll take a deeper look "within the veil"; that is, the veil of the sanctuary in heaven.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: In Hebrews, what role does the earthly sanctuary and ministry play? What can they teach us about what happens in the heavenly sanctuary? What's the purpose of Christ's ministry there?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 9.

THE SANCTUARY ON EARTH (Hebrews 9).

The book of Hebrews is clear: Jesus is our High Priest in heaven. This concept of priesthood, of course, wasn't something that Paul's readers were unfamiliar with. Paul constructs his reasoning around the Old Testament sanctuary and the priesthood that officiated in this sanctuary. Apart from that background, much of what he says about Christ and His ministry in heaven doesn't make sense.

Read Hebrews 9:1-3. What is the author talking about? Why does he bring this topic into the discussion of Christ's high-priestly ministry? See also Exodus 25:8. Read Hebrews 9:4, 5. What else was Paul talking about? Now read verses 6, 7. What is the author describing here?

Paul gives a quick review of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary service, describing both apartments, as well as the daily and yearly rituals that took place in them. Then, in verses 8-14, he talks about Christ's entry into the heavenly sanctuary and His high-priestly ministry there.

Though Paul's point is the superiority of what Christ is doing in heaven as opposed to what happened on earth (see Heb. 9:11), it is clear that the ministry in the sanctuary below (the earthly) is linked with the ministry in the sanctuary above (the heavenly). That's why Paul talks about them together. The understanding of what happened on earth helps us understand what's happening in heaven.

Hebrews uses two words for the sanctuary, *hagion/hagia* and *skene*. The first word is originally an adjective and means "holy." In Hebrews it is used as a noun and is translated "sanctuary," "Holy Place," and "Most Holy Place," depending on the context. The second word is "tent" or "tabernacle" and reminds us of the Old Testament tabernacle in the wilderness.

How well do you understand the earthly-sanctuary service? Though we don't need to know all the details, considering that the book of Hebrews places such an emphasis on it, is it not worthy of study? Read the sections in Exodus and Leviticus that detail the building, the structure, and the services performed there, remembering that this whole system symbolized Christ's death and heavenly ministry in our behalf.

THE SANCTUARY IN HEAVEN.

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an 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” (Heb. 8:1, 2).

The apostle, as well as his audience, must have been well-versed in the Old Testament and its ritual services. The sanctuary that he refers to is the original earthly sanctuary as introduced by God and built under the supervision of Moses (Exodus 25–31 and 35–40), as opposed to the later temple erected by Solomon, which was more elaborate than the wilderness model and contained more items of the same kind, such as ten golden lamp stands and ten tables as opposed to one each in the wilderness tabernacle. (See 2 Chronicles 3–7.)

Besides the elements we studied yesterday, what other aspects of the earthly-sanctuary service are depicted in Hebrews 9?

Heb. 9:9 _____

Heb. 9:10 _____

Heb. 9:21 _____

Besides pointing to all the basic furnishings of the sanctuary, it also talks about some of the rituals that were performed there, including various sacrifices and offerings. Though he doesn't go into detail about the contents of the heavenly sanctuary, one point does seem clear: The author is convinced that a real sanctuary exists in heaven, in which Jesus is ministering in our behalf.

Read Hebrews 8:1, 2. What does the author say that indicates the reality of the heavenly sanctuary?

Paul's discussion about the earthly sanctuary and its “gifts and sacrifices” (Heb. 9:9) and “meat and drinks, and diverse washings” (vs. 10) was never an end in itself but always a prelude to a discussion about the heavenly. That's the whole point of Hebrews: to show the readers that there's something even better than the earthly system that God Himself ordained, and that's the heavenly sanctuary, where Jesus ministers as High Priest.

SACRIFICES.

Though Hebrews is clear about the reality of Jesus as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, the topic isn't limited to just that. He talks also about sacrifices. And no wonder. If sacrifice was central to the earthly system, how much more so to the heavenly?

Which animals are mentioned in Hebrews that were used as sacrifices? Heb. 9:12, 13, 19; 10:4.

Which types of sacrifices do they point to? Lev. 1:5; 4:3; 16:3; Num. 7:17.

Four different kinds of animals are enumerated in the four verses of Hebrews. With the exception of the heifer, they come in pairs: "goats and calves" and "goats and bulls." Goats are found most often. Interestingly enough, the lamb, which is so prominent in Revelation (see also John 1:29, 36; 1 Pet. 1:19), is not found in Hebrews.

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, mentions goats in Numbers 7:17 in the context of "peace offerings." A synonym for the word *bull* used by Hebrews is found in Leviticus 1:6 as a "burnt offering" and in Leviticus 4:3 as a "sin offering." The heifer, mentioned in Hebrews 9:13, occurs in Numbers 19, in connection with the peace offering. There the ashes of the red heifer are used for purification. Bulls and goats were also used on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16).

Thus, the different animals used as sacrifices remind us of the basic types of Old Testament sacrifices, including (but certainly not limited to) the Day of Atonement.

Yet, all these animal sacrifices were only preliminary, unsatisfactory, unable to save from sin (Heb. 10:4). The shedding of blood was, nevertheless, important, because it pointed to Jesus, who alone brings about forgiveness and reconciliation.

Rivers of animal blood were spilled over the centuries in the Old Testament—sacrificial system. However gruesome, it was to teach an object lesson about the cost of sin. And yet, those were only animals, which, in the end, could never bring salvation. In contrast, what does the death of Christ, the only means of solving the sin problem, tell us about the true cost of sin?

THE SANCTUARY SERVICE (Heb. 8:1-3; 9:5-7).

In the above texts, notice those involved in the sanctuary service. The apostle mentions cherubim, priests, high priests, the minister in the sanctuary, and the mediator. The titles "priest" and "high priest" refer to descendants of Aaron, as well as to Jesus, who is the ultimate Priest and High Priest and whose ministry alone can solve the sin problem. This, again, leads to a key theme of Hebrews: the superiority of Christ and His ministry over all that came before.

The word *minister* (*leitourgos*) is used for the angels in Hebrews 1:7 and for Jesus, the Minister in the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus' ministry (*leitourgia*; Heb. 8:6) is the real "liturgy." *Mediator* is found three times in Hebrews (8:6; 9:15; 12:24) and is applied to Jesus only.

The cherubim mentioned in Hebrews 9:5 are the two golden figures placed on the mercy seat in the earthly sanctuary. What do they symbolize? See also Ezek. 1:5-14, 22-26; 10:1, 4, 18-22; Rev. 4:6-8.

Cherubim are not just mythological figures but real beings (Gen. 3:24) living in the presence of God. They form the entourage of the majesty of the universe in His sanctuary.

"There can be no doubt that the Biblical cherubim designate a class of angels. Nowhere are they represented as objects of worship, and therefore cannot have been divine beings."—*SDA Bible Dictionary* (revised edition), pp. 189, 190.

Hebrews is strongly opposed to angel worship (see Heb. 1:5-14). This may be a reason for not mentioning the heavenly counterpart of the cherubim in the Most Holy Place of the earthly sanctuary.

There's no question, though, that angelic beings are mentioned in the context of the sanctuary. What exactly they do, we don't know. However, when we understand the role of the sanctuary service and what God is accomplishing there, then perhaps we can better understand the function of angels. *Angel* comes from a word that also means "messenger." Perhaps, because they are so closely involved, they themselves can witness the work of Christ in the sanctuary, which is a work He does in behalf of saving humanity, a work that has implications for the entire universe.

Think of the heavenly sanctuary and Christ's work there for us, all in the context of the great controversy, in which great issues regarding the character of God are at stake before all creation. In this context, what role can you see for the angels in the heavenly sanctuary?

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION.

Read these verses from Hebrews. All have a similar theme. What is it? Heb. 1:3; 2:17; 8:12; 9:26; 9:28; 10:12; 10:17; 13:11, 12.

The fall of Adam and Eve changed the relationship of humans to God. And though it dramatically altered life on earth, bringing disease, death, and suffering, the real tragedy of sin exists in the rupture between heaven and earth, in the chasm between the creature and Creator. All that sin causes us to do to ourselves and to one another is because of what sin has done to us and to our relationship with God. Sin ruptured that relationship, caused an estrangement, and created a division between the Creator and the created so that the created became separated from the only Source of his or her existence, life, and purpose. This separation comes with consequences more dire than if the umbilical cord were severed in the womb, because what the created lost because of sin wasn't just physical, but spiritual, even eternal.

First and foremost, then, it was to heal this infinite and eternal rift that Jesus Christ came, died, and now ministers in heaven in our behalf.

And this is what Hebrews is about: God healing the rift between heaven and earth. It's an overview of the whole plan of salvation, beginning with Christ's death on the cross (symbolized by the sacrifice) and continuing with Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary.

Indeed, in Scripture the emphasis is not so much on this problem but on the solution: forgiveness of sin, liberation from sin, and the power to overcome sin. A key theme in Hebrews is purification. God wants not only to forgive us but to purify us, cleanse us, and make us holy. All this is now possible but only because of the superior sacrifice of Jesus, His superior blood, and His superior ministry in our behalf.

What we have in Hebrews, then, is God showing us what the problem is and how He is solving it. Read again the texts for today. Though all talk about sin, they talk about the remedy too. Focus on what those texts say Jesus has done for us in regard to the question of sin. Write a paragraph expressing the wonderful hope found in them for us, focusing particularly on the results of what Christ has done.

FURTHER STUDY:

Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. To many it has been a mystery why so many sacrificial offerings were required in the old dispensation, why so many bleeding victims were led to the altar. But the great truth that was to be kept before men, and imprinted upon mind and heart, was this, ‘Without shedding of blood is no remission.’ In every bleeding sacrifice was typified ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ Christ Himself was the originator of the Jewish system of worship, in which, by types and symbols, were shadowed forth spiritual and heavenly things. Many forgot the true significance of these offerings; and the great truth that through Christ alone there is forgiveness of sin, was lost to them. The multiplying of sacrificial offerings, the blood of bulls and goats, could not take away sin (*Signs of the Times*, Jan. 2, 1893).”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 932, 933.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Revelation 7:15 and 16:17 are quite clear: The throne of God is in the heavenly temple. In Hebrews, the throne is found four times (1:8; 4:16; 8:1; 12:2). When we read the context of Hebrews 4:16 and Hebrews 8:2, we get the same impression: The throne is found in the sanctuary. This is supported by Old Testament evidence such as Psalm 11:4 and Isaiah 6:1, which state, “I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.” The sanctuary is the center of God’s government. Salvation, assistance, and judgment proceed from God’s dwelling place, His palace, which is the sanctuary. In fact, the Old Testament term for temple (*hkl*) is also translated “palace.” In what ways is this idea, that of the sanctuary being where God’s throne resides, important to our understanding of Christ’s ministry in heaven?
2. From what you’ve studied so far, if someone were to ask you, Why is Christ’s ministry in heaven important? what would you respond?

SUMMARY: Hebrews is very rich when it comes to words related to the sanctuary. Indeed, the sanctuary concept forms the foundation for understanding the entire book. And what this concept teaches us is that God wants to be close to us and dwell among us. Through Jesus we now have access to the Majesty of heaven and can rejoice in the assurance of salvation.



A Song for Jesus

Charlotte Ishkanian

Nearly all her life Alla dreamed of becoming a professional musician. She sang for weddings and other special occasions and put on concerts to benefit orphanages.

When Alla was 17, her fiancé died. Heartbroken, she grieved for months. Alla refused to sing anymore. "How can I?" she said. "My heart has been torn from me." Friends convinced her to study music at a well-known school of art and culture. Although her heart was not in it, she took the entrance exam and passed with top grades. Her high scores convinced her that God wanted her to be a musician.

At the music school, Alla met an Adventist girl. Soon the two were studying the Bible together. Alla began to attend church with her friend and met many special friends in the church. But one day she realized that her life was being pulled two ways. One part of her had a promising career in secular music and dance; the other part wanted to praise God. But before she could choose which path to follow, a philharmonic group asked her to join their organization as a singer.

Maybe I could sing professionally and still honor God, she rationalized. She joined the philharmonic group. For eight months Alla sang with the philharmonic. During this time she did not attend the Adventist church. Then one Sabbath she returned to church and told her friends that she wanted to follow God, even if it meant economic suicide. She preferred to lose her income and her scholarship than to lose God. She felt that God would not leave her penniless.

Her boss convinced her to stay on with the group. He offered her a promotion and promised to let her have Sabbaths off. She agreed to try again, but after two months she realized that it would not work.

She explained to her colleagues why she was leaving. They predicted her economic disaster, but within three weeks she had another job with Sabbaths off.

Then a friend urged Alla to consider studying at Zaoksky Theological Seminary, an Adventist school. She was not sure she was worthy, but she asked God to lead. She was accepted into the school, where she is studying English and theology and wants to serve God any way He sees fit.



Alla Simonchuk (left). Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*.

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Jesus and the Covenant



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 8 and 9.

MEMORY TEXT: “ ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds,’ he also adds, ‘I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more’ ” (Hebrews 10:16, 17, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT: One of the important topics in Hebrews is that of the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus Christ.

IN MODERN TIMES WE DEFINE A HOST of relations by contracts. These are usually for goods or services in which equal sides gain from each other. Hans signs a contract with the plumber to fix the faucet; the plumber receives his money, and Hans gets a fixed faucet. The new covenant, however, doesn't work quite like that. In this covenant, God doesn't need us; we need Him. He extends to us grace, mercy, forgiveness of sins; we offer nothing back because we have nothing to give that merits the gifts we get from Him. All we can do is accept it by faith, a faith that's motivated by a love that leads to heartfelt obedience. This week we'll look at how the new covenant relates to Christ and His ministry in heaven.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: What is the biblical covenant? Why the need of a new one? How does it relate to Christ's heavenly ministry? What are we offered in this new covenant?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 16.

COVENANTS.

In the ancient Near East, covenants describe the relationship between a superior power and a subordinate people (though a covenant also can be made among equals, as well).

Among the pagan nations, these covenants often contained the following elements: (1) preamble introducing the sovereign; (2) the historical prologue describing previous relations between the contracting parties; (3) the stipulations that outline the nature of the community formed by the covenant; (4) the document clause providing the preservation and regular rereading of the treaty; (5) the lists of gods who witnessed the treaty; and (6) the curses and blessings that attended it.

The covenants found in the Bible share some similarities to this typical covenant form.

Look up the following texts, which deal with various Old Testament covenants. Gen. 6:18; 9:11-13; 15:18; Exod. 19:5; 24:7, 8; Ps. 89:3, 4; Jer. 31:31-34. What elements do they have in common? After reading these texts, write out the essence of what you believe these covenants meant. What do they teach us about the kind of relationship God wants with His people?

The covenant promises are crucial. In Abraham's case, they included the promise of God's constant presence; the Messianic promise that he would be a blessing for all peoples; and the promise of land and of a great nation.

The Mosaic covenant (Sinaitic covenant) was an enlargement of the earlier covenants; it was addressed to the entire people of Israel. Only after having saved the Israelites from Egypt did God graciously offer them His covenant and promise to make Israel His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.

Why is the concept of a covenant so important in biblical theology? Think of it this way: None of us are forced to serve the Lord. The concept of a covenant comes in usually (but not always) when we choose to serve the Lord, to enter into a relationship with Him. In such a case, why is a covenant so important?

THE OLD COVENANT AND THE NEW COVENANT.

What reason does the author give in Hebrews 8:6-13 for the need of the new covenant?

The introduction of the covenant in Hebrews didn't come in a vacuum. The first seven chapters dealt with the priesthood of Jesus. Chapters 8–10 tell us about the accomplishments of Jesus. However, the author had to show that Jesus is the legitimate Priest, even though He was not a Levite. Therefore, in Hebrews 7, the author pointed to the priesthood of Melchizedek, which foreshadowed Christ's priesthood, and to Psalm 110, which predicted Christ's priesthood. He did this in order to show that although Jesus was not a Levite, still a new priest, from the order of Melchizedek, was to come. In chapter 8, he then related the promise of a covenant that required *a new and better priesthood* and a new and better sanctuary. This, of course, refers to Jesus and His ministry in heaven.

Read Hebrews 13:20 and 8:6. What adjectives are used to describe the new covenant? Why were these terms used?

Though a sharp contrast is portrayed between the old and new covenant, some elements of continuity exist between both. The partners in both covenants are the same: God and His respective people. In both cases, God takes the initiative; He alone saves. In both there are promises, and there are duties. And, certainly, in both, the presence of God amid His people is paramount.

The main, and crucial difference, between the old and new covenant is that there is now total forgiveness and assurance. What the old covenant pointed to in type and shadows and symbols has been fulfilled, in reality, in Jesus. In the new covenant, the law is now internalized, and through faith in Christ, the believer lives in obedience to the law, now written in the heart. The new covenant is permanent; it has been ratified, not with the blood of an animal but with the blood of Jesus. And, finally, if in the old covenant people found hope in the blood of a goat or a lamb or a bull, how much more hope do we have in the blood of Jesus Christ? See Heb. 9:13, 14.

Read carefully and prayerfully the quote from Jeremiah in Hebrews 8:8-12. Dwell on what God promises to do for us in the new covenant. Then ask yourself, Have I experienced these promises in my own life? If not, why not, and what can be done to change this?

THE COVENANT AND RELATED CONCEPTS.

How does the covenant relate to the sacrifices, the priesthood, and the sanctuary? Heb. 9:11-15.

In the context of the Abrahamic covenant, a sacrifice is mentioned (Genesis 15). After God had saved Israel from Egypt, he offered them His covenant, and they responded: “ ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do’ ” (Exod. 19:8; 24:7, RSV). He explained the promises and gave His law, which they were obliged to keep. Sacrifices were then offered, and the covenant was ratified by blood (Exod. 24:8). The covenant laws also included the establishment of the sanctuary, the installation of the priesthood, and the formal institution of the sacrificial system (Exodus 25–31). Thus, covenant, sacrifice, priesthood, and sanctuary belong together; hence, a new, better covenant requires a new and better sacrifice, a new and better priesthood, and a new and better sanctuary.

How does the law relate to the new covenant? Heb. 8:10.

On the one hand, Hebrews stresses the necessity of a change of the law (Heb. 7:12)—the Mosaic law being the issue here, because the context is clearly that of the earthly-sanctuary service and its priesthood, all shadows of what Christ was to do: “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect” (Heb. 10:1). That specific system of law was abolished after the death, resurrection, and high-priestly ministry of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, the Ten Commandments are as valid in the new covenant as in the old. Under the new covenant, the law is now written on the hearts (Heb. 8:10), a far cry from being abolished (1 John 5:3). If anything, the life and example of Jesus, and His perfect keeping of the law, have exalted the law in the new covenant, elevating it to a higher, spiritual plane than a mere cold, dead code, which it had become for those who kept it for the wrong reasons. In the book of Hebrews, God does not speak of a new law but of a new covenant, with the law and gospel at the center.

Why is the law important in the new covenant, which emphasizes the substitutionary death of Christ in our behalf? If obedience to the law can never save us, and if Christ fulfilled the demands of the law for us, what role does keeping the law have in the life of a Christian?

BENEFITS OF THE COVENANT.

A number of positive results of the new covenant are stressed in Hebrews. What are they?

Heb. 8:12; 9:26, 28; 10:17, 18 _____

Heb. 8:10; 10:16 _____

Heb. 9:9, 14; 10:2 _____

Heb. 9:12, 15, 28 _____

Heb. 10:10, 14 _____

Heb. 10:19 _____

The new covenant has “better promises” (Heb. 8:6). In the New Testament, the word *promise* is found more frequently in Hebrews than in any other book. What are we promised so profusely in Hebrews?

The promises of the new covenant include, among other things, access to God, a clear conscience, redemption, and forgiveness of sins. Here, indeed, are some of the “better promises” the author talked about, no doubt one of the best being the final promise of Jeremiah 31:34—“I will remember their sin no more.”

How do you understand that phrase, “I will remember their sin no more”? What promise do you see the Lord giving to His people there?

“The blessings of the new covenant are grounded purely on mercy in forgiving unrighteousness and sins. . . . All who humble their hearts, confessing their sins, will find mercy and grace and assurance. Has God, in showing mercy to the sinner, ceased to be just? Has He dishonored His holy law, and will He henceforth pass over the violation of it? God is true. He changes not. . . . In the better covenant we are cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ (Letter 276, 1904).”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 931.

Read over what you wrote on the lines above about the benefits of the new covenant that were stressed in Hebrews. Which ones mean the most to you, and why? Be prepared to discuss your answers in class.

JESUS AND THE COVENANT (Heb. 7:22; 9:15).

Jesus is the “surety” of the new covenant. Hebrews 7:22 and its context associate priesthood and covenant. Three times in Hebrews Jesus is called “mediator,” the Mediator of a better or new covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). While Hebrews 7 presents Jesus as Priest, Hebrews 8–10 prefer to depict Jesus as Sacrifice. Hence, we can see the link between Sacrifice, covenant, and Mediator.

“By so much was Jesus made a surety [or guarantee] of a better testament” (Heb. 7:22). What does “surety” in this context mean?

“Surety” or “guarantee” occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. “It is common in the papyri in legal documents in the sense of a pledge or as a reference to bail. . . . Since the covenant in the biblical sense is an agreement initiated by God, the surety (i.e. Jesus) guarantees that that covenant will be honoured. . . . The mediator is a go-between whose task is to keep the parties in fellowship with one another. In a case where God is one of the parties and man is the other, the covenant idea is inevitably one-sided. Defection is always on man’s side and hence the mediator’s task is mainly to act on man’s behalf before God, although he has also to act for God before men.”—Guthrie, pp. 165, 166, 174.

The crucial point, then, is that we can be certain that God will uphold His end of the covenant promises. We fall, we renege, we waver, we become Laodicean. In contrast, Jesus is the Surety, the Guarantee, that He will keep His part of the bargain. What we should do is another matter entirely.

Hebrews also wants to help readers who are troubled by a bad conscience and are not sure of forgiveness and salvation. These people don’t primarily need a list of what is required of them, but they must, instead, for now, understand the gracious provisions God has made and executed in Jesus Christ.

The second part of Hebrews 10 warns against sinning willfully or persisting in sin. To do this is a form of disobedience and a breaking of the covenant *from our end*. The aim of the letter is to turn people away from such a reckless course.

How many do you know who have, in a sense, personally “broken” the covenant, those who once knew and loved the Lord but now have fallen away? Track their course. What mistakes did they make that you can learn from, so you don’t make them yourself?

FURTHER STUDY: Study the concept of the covenant in these texts: Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 1:72; 22:20; Acts 3:25; 7:8. The book of John does not talk about the covenant, and Revelation mentions the ark of the covenant only (Rev. 11:19).

God's people are justified through the administration of the 'better covenant,' through Christ's righteousness. A covenant is an agreement by which parties bind themselves and each other to the fulfillment of certain conditions. Thus, the human agent enters into agreement with God to comply with the conditions specified in His Word. His conduct shows whether or not he respects these conditions. Man gains everything by obeying the covenant-keeping God. God's attributes are imparted to man, enabling him to exercise mercy and compassion. God's covenant assures us of His unchangeable character."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 932.

"The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 329.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of worldly covenants do we engage in all the time? What can we learn from them that could help us understand the divine covenant?
2. There's a great deal of emphasis on forgiveness in the book of Hebrews. Why is that so? How do you understand the sanctuary, the blood of Christ, and mediation in heaven—all in relationship to the forgiveness of sin? What good would any of these do for us without forgiveness?
3. What is a mediator? How are priesthood and the functions of a mediator related to each other? In what situations have you enjoyed the benefit of a mediator?

SUMMARY: After having pointed out Christ's superiority to angels, Moses, and Aaron in Hebrews 1–7, the apostle summarizes his discussion with Hebrews 8:1, 2 before specifically turning to the covenant, the sanctuary, and the sacrifice. From Hebrews 8 onward, he focuses on the accomplishments of Jesus. The covenant allows for a special relationship to God and offers a solution to our deepest needs and problems. Here, the great theme of "something better" appears. A new and better covenant requires a new and better priesthood, sanctuary, and mediator. We have been given them all.



The Angel Brother

Andréa Schá

When I was a teenager, my parents moved to a city in Brazil where my brothers and sisters and I could attend an Adventist academy.

One Tuesday evening after choir practice, I started toward home, which was just a few blocks from the school. My brother had come to meet me and walk home with me, but he was chatting with friends, so I started toward home alone.

The road was dark and deserted. As I approached a mini-market near my house, a strange car stopped beside me and a man opened the car door and told me to get in. I pretended I did not hear him and continued walking. But the man pulled a gun and said, "Get in the car, or I will kill you."

Shaking with fear, I cried out to God. I thought I would never see my family again. I looked around; the street was deserted; no one could help me.

Just then a tall young man in a white shirt appeared beside me. In a firm voice he asked the sinister man in the car, "What do you want with my sister?"

"Keep out of this, boy," the would-be assailant growled, "or I'll kill you both."

The young stranger raised his hand and said, "You can kill us, but you will have to face them," and he pointed to his side. The man jumped back into his car as though he had seen a ghost, and took off, tires squealing on the pavement. I looked around, but I could not see anyone except the young man beside me.

My rescuer placed his hand on my shoulder and said, "The danger is past. Now hurry home." I raced across the street, still trembling with fear. Suddenly I realized that I had not thanked the

young man for saving my life. I turned to thank him, but he was not there. The street was once again deserted. After a moment of wonder, I regained my composure and hurried on home.

Some day I want to shake the hand of my angel brother who saved my life.

Andréa Schá (left) is a student of business administration living in southern Brazil.



Jesus and the Sanctuary



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Heb. 8:2; 9:1-3, 8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11.

MEMORY TEXT: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12).

KEY THOUGHT: In the book of Hebrews, the author puts Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary.

THE SUBJECT OF THE SANCTUARY was the key that unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great advent movement and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of his people." —Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 423. The sanctuary in heaven plays a vital role in Adventist self-understanding. Various questions have arisen regarding our interpretation of Hebrews. This week we'll take a look at the heavenly sanctuary, focusing also on some issues that have confronted the church.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: What is typology? How do the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries correspond? Does the book of Hebrews teach that Christ entered "the Most Holy Place" after His ascension? Is the emphasis in Hebrews on which apartment Jesus entered or upon the fact that He is in the heavenly sanctuary ministering in our behalf?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 23.

SANCTUARY ON EARTH, SANCTUARY IN HEAVEN.

As do other books of the Bible, Hebrews uses typology. In typology a so-called “type” is a real person, event, or institution, designed and preordained by God, to prefigure and predict a greater reality, the “antitype.” In other words, types are like symbols of things greater than the symbol itself (as a national flag is only a symbol for something greater than itself). The Hebrew Bible is filled with types, many finding their fulfillment in Jesus Himself, who is greater than all that prefigured Him.

Which words are used in Hebrews 8:5 (last clause) and 9:24 to describe the correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries? How are the sanctuaries related to each other?

The translated words in these two verses *pattern* and *copy* come from the Greek words *typos* and *antitypos*. The earthly sanctuary is compared to the heavenly one. It is a copy of the heavenly. Unlike other biblical books, in Hebrews the original is called *typos* (the type, in this case, is the heavenly sanctuary) and the counterpart, *antitypos* (antitype, in this case, is the earthly). This reversal does not change the meaning of typology; one is a symbol of something greater—in this case, the earthly sanctuary is a shadow, a mere copy, of the real one in heaven.

Hebrews 8:5 quotes Exodus 25:40. What pattern was Moses to follow in building the earthly sanctuary?

In Hebrews 8:5, the earthly sanctuary is deemed a “shadow” (*skia* in the Greek) of the heavenly sanctuary. In Hebrews 9:9, the earthly sanctuary and its services were called a “figure” or a “symbol” (from the Greek word that also means “parable”) of the heavenly. In Hebrews 9:23, the earthly services were called a *hypodeigma* (pattern, copy) of the heavenly sanctuary. In each case, the point is the same: The earthly sanctuary is merely a symbol of something greater; that is, the heavenly sanctuary.

Why do you think the author of Hebrews stressed the reality of the heavenly sanctuary? Why is the issue of the reality of the heavenly sanctuary important to us as Seventh-day Adventists?

"THE HOLIES" IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH: PART 1.

Even the most cursory reading of Hebrews shows two points: the reality of the heavenly sanctuary and the importance of the heavenly sanctuary and the ministry there. Paul summed up the first seven chapters with these words: "Now of the things which we have spoken *this is the sum:* We have such an 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" (Heb. 8:1, 2, emphasis supplied).

This is the sum: Jesus is our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

The most common phrase used in Hebrews for the sanctuary both in heaven and on earth comes from the Greek term, *ta hagia*, meaning "the holies," "the holy places," "the holy things." Another form of the phrase is *hagia hagion* ("the holy of holies"), used exclusively for "the Most Holy Place" alone (Heb. 9:3).

Ta hagia (a plural sometimes appearing in the singular) appears in Hebrews 8:2; 9:1, 2, 3, 8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; and 13:11; where it's translated as "sanctuary," "holy place," "most holy place," "holy places," and "holiest." Because some different translations translate the same word in the same text differently (and sometimes in contradiction to one another), ask yourself this question as you read each verse: Judging from the context, is the verse talking about "the Holy Place," "the Most Holy Place," or the entire sanctuary?

In some places, the meaning is very obvious. In Hebrews 8:2 and 9:1, for instance, the word *sanctuary* in both texts refers to the entire sanctuary.

In Hebrews 9:2, the author describes the contents of the first apartment, which he calls "the sanctuary." The context shows that he is talking about the first apartment of the earthly sanctuary, what is known as "the Holy Place."

In Hebrews 9:3, the phrase translated "Holiest of all" in the KJV (*hagia hagion*) means the second apartment, "the Most Holy Place" alone. Interestingly enough, this phrase, which clearly means "the Most Holy Place," is never used again in Hebrews in any reference to Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Thus, one logical question arises: If Hebrews meant to teach that Christ at His ascension entered into "the Most Holy Place," why does the book never again employ the phrase that without ambiguity refers exclusively to "the Most Holy Place"?

"THE HOLIES" IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH: PART 2.

Yesterday we looked at a few verses (Heb. 8:2; 9:1, 2, 3) in Hebrews, regarding the sanctuary. Today we'll look at a few more, remembering this question: Does the context teach that the verse is talking about "the Holy Place," "the Most Holy Place," or, simply, the sanctuary as a whole?

In Hebrews 9:1-7, the author describes the earthly sanctuary and its services, both the daily and the yearly, which were only a type, a shadow, of the heavenly sanctuary and its services. Then, in verse 8, he says that the way into "the holiest" didn't happen while the earthly sanctuary was still standing. The RSV translates the verse to mean that the way into "the sanctuary" didn't happen while the earthly was still standing. When you look at what the author is contrasting—that is, the earthly service to the heavenly—he is showing us that although the earthly sanctuary had a function in a certain time frame, a way was made into the "holies"; that is, into the heavenly sanctuary, through the work of Jesus Christ. He's not contrasting compartments of the sanctuary; he's contrasting sanctuaries, the earthly to the heavenly.

Read Hebrews 9:9, 10. What things does he list as part of the earthly-sanctuary service?

After talking about the earthly-sanctuary ritual, the author in verses 11 and 12 again shifts his gaze heavenward to a "greater and more perfect tabernacle" (*skene*, "tent" in the Greek), which is the entire heavenly sanctuary. Then, in verse 12, he says that "neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." It's clear that "tabernacle" (*skene*) in verse 11 and "holies" or "holy place" in verse 12 are talking about the same thing; that is, the entire sanctuary (in Heb. 8:1, 2 these Greek words are used in the same parallel fashion). Again, the context shows that the issue here isn't which room Jesus entered into but that He is our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Read Hebrews 9:24 and 10:19 in their respective contexts. What is the author telling us there? What hope does he give us regarding Jesus in heaven?

"THE HOLIES" IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH: CONCLUSION.

Read Hebrews 9:24-28. Keeping in mind the context of Hebrews, what is the author saying here? What is the main point? Is it the sanctuary itself, or the nature of Christ's sacrificial death?

There's no question that verse 25 deals with the Day of Atonement, and there's no question that the High Priest went into the "Most Holy Place" on that day (see Lev. 16:15). Some try to insist, however, that the use of *ta hagia* here (translated "holy place" in the KJV) proves that it means "the Most Holy Place."

However, "sanctuary" is a better translation here, because, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest ministered in *both* apartments. His work was not restricted to the second apartment. "Because the whole sanctuary is involved in these services, 'sanctuary' is to be preferred as the translation."—Alwyn P. Salom, *Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), p. 227.

Read Exodus 30:10, where "once in a year" (a clear reference to the Day of Atonement; see also Lev. 16:30) Aaron, the high priest, sprinkled blood on the horns of the altar in the Most Holy Place. Some scholars see Leviticus 16:16-19 as a reference to the priest's work in the first apartment, as depicted in Exodus 30:10. (See the Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary, *Exodus* [Philadelphia, 1991], p. 195; see also *Leviticus*, p. 105. See also Word Biblical Commentary, *Exodus* [Waco, Tex., 1987], p. 399.) Study the texts until you can see, clearly, that even on the Day of Atonement, the high priest ministered blood in the entire sanctuary.

The texts we looked at are important, because some people have challenged our interpretation of Christ's two-apartment, two-phased ministry in heaven. By dogmatically asserting that some of the verses we looked at put Christ, after His ascension to heaven, in "the Most Holy Place" of the heavenly sanctuary, critics claim that these verses (among others) nullify our sanctuary doctrine, particularly 1844, the time when we believe Christ entered "the Most Holy Place" of the heavenly sanctuary. Hebrews, though, is simply not addressing the question of which apartment. Instead, the point is that He is there in heaven in our behalf.

THE CHARACTER OF THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARIES.

As we've seen, the great issue in the book of Hebrews is the superiority of Christ's heavenly ministry as compared to the earthly-sanctuary service. With this context in mind, how is the character of the earthly sanctuary, even sometimes indirectly, described in the following texts?

Heb. 8:2; 9:24 _____

Heb. 9:1 _____

Heb. 9:11, 12 _____

The heavenly sanctuary is the true sanctuary. That does not mean the earthly was a false one; on the contrary, it had been instituted by God. Nevertheless, three times it is stressed that the earthly sanctuary was made with hands. Although its establishment was ordered by God, it was made by humans, sinners. The heavenly surpasses the earthly by far, because it was built by the Lord.

The function of the earthly was limited in efficiency, as well as in time. Its service was not able to solve the sin problem. The shedding of blood was without lasting effect. The human conscience was not really cleansed. Although real, it was just a copy of the genuine sanctuary and its service. Only the blood of Jesus and His ministry as High Priest make a real and lasting difference.

However, the apostle does not ridicule the old sanctuary, although he points out its serious limitations, even if it served its purpose at the time it was used.

What is the basic intention of the earthly sanctuary in the Old Testament? Exod. 25:22; 29:43-46.

The wilderness tabernacle was built so that God might dwell among His people. Yet, even then, sin blocked access to God. The good news of Hebrews is that Jesus has opened the way back to our Father. Through Him we have access to the very presence of God, because we are covered in His perfect righteousness. Boldly and yet reverently, we approach Him because Jesus, through His death and ministry, has paved the way.

If the Old Testament service really couldn't solve the sin problem, why was it instituted to begin with?

FURTHER STUDY:

Though a lot of debate exists regarding *ta hagia*, it seems clear that in Hebrews it means “the sanctuary” as a whole. 1. Look at Hebrews 8:2, the first time that *ta hagia* appears in Hebrews. Notice how it is used. “A minister of the sanctuary [*ta hagia*], and of the true tabernacle [*skene*], which the Lord pitched, and not man.” The text clearly and unambiguously parallels *ta hagia* with *skene*, and *skene* means the “tabernacle,” the entire sanctuary. Thus, right from the start, we are given a definition of *ta hagia*.

2. Again, Hebrews is contrasting the earthly to the heavenly sanctuary, not which apartment Christ entered in heaven. Therefore, *ta hagia*, understood as “sanctuary,” makes the most sense.

3. Recent studies on *ta hagia* in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible have shown that when *ta hagia* is used in the context of the sanctuary it consistently designates the entire sanctuary.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. William Johnsson, a Hebrews scholar, has this to say about some of the modern translations of Hebrews: “This calls for a word about the New International Version. I think it is, in general, an excellent translation, but I disagree with its approach in Hebrews. The translators . . . render *ta hagia* as ‘Most Holy Place. . . .’ In my judgment they would have been fairer with the reader by translating the uncertain references by the more neutral ‘sanctuary.’ The upshot is that all students of Hebrews, and especially Adventists, need to be discriminating and ready to challenge the New International Version wherever they find ‘Most Holy Place.’”—William Johnsson, *Hebrews* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1994), pp. 149, 150. Discuss the implications of what Dr. Johnsson has written.
2. The sanctuary is mentioned also in Hebrews 10:19 and 13:10, 11. What is the message for us in these verses, including their respective contexts?

SUMMARY: The book of Hebrews, in numerous places, contrasts the earthly-sanctuary service with its better counterpart, that of Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. The issue in Hebrews is not which apartment Jesus entered; the issue, instead, is that He is our great High Priest, through whom we have direct access to the Lord of the universe.



Wrestling With God

J. H. Zachary

One of Gabriela's earliest memories was of her grandfather sitting beside a wood stove reading his Bible. Although he was a lay leader of the national church, some things he read in the Bible led him and Grandmother to join a charismatic church.

Gabriela's grandmother urged Gabriela to join their church and avoid eternal torture in hell. Gabriela was greatly troubled by mental pictures of hell. She wondered how a loving God could permit sinners to suffer forever. Gabriela began to pray for guidance to find the true church.

In time Gabriela married, but she continued searching for truth. She read literature from many churches regarding what happens after death. One day an Adventist friend invited her to attend religious meetings. To her surprise, Gabriela learned that her mother was attending the meetings. Excitedly, she told Gabriela, "This pastor is teaching the truth about the Bible." Gabriela and her husband attended the entire series.

When the meetings ended Gabriela and her husband joined a Bible study group and soon began attending the Adventist church. Months later they joined the church.

But two years later tragedy struck when their baby died. Relatives told them, "You lost your child because God is angry with you." Confused, Gabriela and her husband stopped attending any church.

For five years the couple wandered spiritually. Then one day a new Adventist pastor visited them. Gabriela refused his invitation to return to the Lord. But her strong rejection was met by kindness, patience, and love. Gabriela still felt the emptiness and hopelessness she had endured for the last five years, but still she refused the pastor's invitations.

Then she fell seriously ill and spent many weeks in the hospital in great pain. After a difficult surgery, she returned home. Still in great pain, Gabriela poured out her heart to God. "Dear Lord, You can let me go to sleep now if You wish, but if You allow me to live, I want to serve You the rest of my life." God gave her a complete recovery.

Today Gabriela thanks God for the sorrow that has come into her life. She is determined that nothing will come between herself and God again. Recently Gabriela, her husband, and her mother were rebaptized. "As long as we live we will be faithful to God and help others to come to know God," she said. Gabriela and her husband are busy giving Bible studies to people in preparation for evangelistic meetings in their Romanian town.

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Jesus' Ministry and the Sanctuary



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 9 and 10.

MEMORY TEXT: "Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself" (Hebrews 7:27, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Hebrews uses images from both the daily and yearly services to show we have complete access to the Father.

WE HAVE ALREADY STUDIED THE SANCTUARY LANGUAGE of the Epistle to the Hebrews. We have also noticed that the author knows the old system very well. For him the earthly sanctuary is a shadow of the real heavenly sanctuary. In addition to the real tabernacle, there is a real sacrifice, which surpasses all animal sacrifices atoning for the sins of humanity. There is also a real priesthood.

Hebrews has some strong allusions to the Day of Atonement. What conclusions can we draw from those allusions? What conclusions are not warranted? This week we'll take a look at some texts and issues that are of special significance to Seventh-day Adventists.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: Why does Hebrews talk about both the daily and yearly services? What is the meaning of "within the veil"? We say that Jesus is our High Priest in heaven, but what does that mean? What does He do for us as High Priest, as Intercessor and Mediator?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 30.

THE DAILY SERVICE IN HEBREWS.

"Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people" (Heb. 9:6, 7).

No question, the author of Hebrews used the Old Testament wilderness sanctuary and its sacrificial services as the model, the type, to help provide insights into Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Separated from that context, the verses about blood of goats and bulls, the tent, the veil, the high priest, and so forth make little sense. Paul used the earthly realities to explain heavenly ones; we should, as well.

Thus, it's not surprising that, in agreement with the Old Testament type, he distinguished between a ministry in the first compartment of the tabernacle, the Holy Place, and a ministry in the second apartment, the Most Holy Place. In the former, the priests and the high priest, serving on a daily basis, offered sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people. In the Most Holy Place, the high priest made final atonement for—and cleansed the sanctuary from—sin (Leviticus 16). The daily seemed to deal with sin on an individual basis; in the yearly, the whole service took on a corporate component, dealing with the nation as a whole.

In Hebrews 9:7, the word translated "errors" comes from a Greek word that means sins committed through ignorance or thoughtlessness. What does the fact that even these kinds of sins needed to be atoned for tell us about just how serious they are?

In addition to Hebrews 9:6, the daily ministry in the earthly sanctuary is specifically mentioned in Hebrews 7:26, 27 and 10:11, 12. What's the one point that both are making as they compare the daily sacrifices to Christ's sacrifice? (See also Heb. 9:28.)

Of all the good news found in Hebrews, these texts contain some of the best, which is that Jesus' sacrifice was all-sufficient and complete. No more blood needs to be shed, no more animals need to be sacrificed, and no more deaths need to atone for sin. Christ's death was enough.

Read Hebrews 2:9. How does that text help us understand why Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice was sufficient?

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT IN HEBREWS.

Besides using images from the daily (or first-apartment) ministry, Hebrews uses images from the yearly ministry, the Day of Atonement, the climactic sanctuary ritual of the year. This shouldn't be surprising, because a book finding its basic types from the earthly-sanctuary service hardly would be expected to ignore one of the most solemn sanctuary rituals.

Besides Hebrews 9:7, references to the Day of Atonement may be found very clearly in Hebrews 9:25, 26 and 10:1-4. As with the references to the daily (see yesterday's study), what's the main point the texts are making, and how does that point fit in with the entire theme of Hebrews that we have looked at so far?

Another fascinating text with Day of Atonement overtones is Hebrews 9:23. "Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (NASB). After reading the text in context, ask yourself this question: Given the overall contrasts being made in the book of Hebrews, particularly in chapter 9, what are the "heavenly things" that need cleansing?

Following a passage on the dedication of the sanctuary, this text argues that just as the earthly things (i.e., the earthly sanctuary and all that was in it) require purification, the "heavenly things" (the sanctuary in heaven) do, as well. Except that, in this case, the heavenly cleansing demanded "better sacrifices." It's no coincidence that the word translated "cleansed" is used in Leviticus 16 to describe the purification of the sanctuary at the Day of Atonement. The author sees the earthly ritual as a symbol of something better in heaven.

Though Hebrews does not elaborate more on this theme and does not say *when* these "heavenly things" are or would be cleansed (for example, either at the Cross or beginning in 1844), what it does do is affirm the Adventist teaching that not only is there a sanctuary in heaven but that it needs to be "purified" or "cleansed." How do you understand this verse in the context of our 1844 sanctuary message?

WITHIN THE VEIL.

Read Hebrews 6:13-20. What hope is the author giving to his readers? What seems to be the point of this discourse?

There's been much discussion over the years regarding the phrase "within the veil." Because this phrase is used almost exclusively (though not always; see Num. 18:7) as a reference for the Most Holy Place in the Hebrew Bible, some have tried to argue on the merit of this verse that Hebrews has put Jesus in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, thus voiding the 1844 message.

In Hebrews 9:3, the phrase "second veil" refers to the veil between the Holy Place and Most Holy Place of the earthly sanctuary. The question arises, Why didn't he use that same phrase in Hebrews 6:19 if he meant, specifically, the second apartment?

It is rather suspect that the author of Hebrews didn't use the phrase "second veil" here; the obvious phrase he meant the text to mean was the second veil; that is, the inner veil that stood before the Most Holy Place. In fact, there is nothing in the immediate context of Hebrews 6:19, 20 that alludes to the Day of Atonement. More than likely, considering the whole context of the book, the phrase alludes to our complete access to God in the heavenly sanctuary.

Again, the author is using Old Testament imagery to teach New Testament truths regarding the greater efficacy of Christ's death and high-priestly ministry, one that gives us "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," in contrast to the old, inefficient Levitical system.

There's no question that all the sacrifices, including those of the Day of Atonement, had their fulfillment in Jesus at the Cross. Yet, to focus exclusively on this phrase is to miss the whole point of Hebrews, which is that through Jesus all barriers between God and humanity have been broken and that through Christ's death and mediation we now have full access to the Father. That verse, along with other Day of Atonement images (interestingly enough, no mention is made in Hebrews of the scapegoat, a key element in the yearly service), doesn't prove that the Day of Atonement ritual itself was fulfilled at the Cross. Hebrews doesn't address that issue.

Dwell on Hebrews 6:18, 19, focusing on such words as "immutable," "refuge," "anchor," "steadfast," and "sure." Rephrase the two verses in your own words in a way that helps you understand the hope the author is trying to give us.

OUR HEAVENLY INTERCESSOR.

"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" (Heb. 7:25).

Perhaps, in many ways, the key theme of Hebrews can be found in the simple phrase within this text: that He can save to the uttermost those who "come unto God by him." The Greek word translated "by" here means "through" or "by the means of."

We must, again, remember the purpose of the epistle: Paul is telling these people, Don't go back to your old ways. The new way offers something much better, something that can accomplish what the old never could. The new way offers you the opportunity to come to God as you never could before. And that's because you now can come to God through, or by the means of, Jesus.

What does it mean to come to God "by him," that is, through Jesus? Write down your understanding of what Jesus has done so that we can, through Him, come to God. What texts can you find to back up your answer? Also, what does it mean to come to God?

No question, it's through Christ as your great High Priest that we can have access to God. But how? How can we, as sinners, have access to a holy God?

Of course, we don't (at least not now) stand in the physical presence of God. But we don't have to. Someone else does it for us, and that's Jesus, who by virtue of His perfect life stands before the Father—for us. He stands *in our place*, representing us, not because of our own worth but because of His. He alone has the perfect righteousness to stand in the presence of the Father.

Just as in the daily and the yearly service in the old covenant the priests entered into the presence of God in the sanctuary, Jesus does so for us in the heavenly sanctuary. He is our Representative there, doing for us what we can never do for ourselves.

Read Romans 8:34; Hebrews 6:20; 9:24; 10:20. What is the one similar point they are all making? What hope, what promises, are found there for us?

OUR HEAVENLY MEDIATOR.

Look up the texts below. What are they all saying to us? What do they mean for us? What is your understanding of a mediator? Why do we need one?

1 Tim. 2:5 _____

Heb. 8:6 _____

Heb. 9:15 _____

Heb. 12:24 _____

Jesus as Mediator cannot be separated from Jesus as Sacrifice and Jesus as our High Priest. All are part of the same plan of salvation. By virtue of His perfect life and complete sacrifice, Jesus now stands as our High Priest in heaven, where He stands in the presence of God for us as our Mediator.

In the old covenant-sanctuary service, the priest would take the blood of animals and bring it into the earthly sanctuary. He would, as a representative of others, go where others could not go. The priests would have to do this day after day in the daily service, year after year in the heavenly service.

Under the new covenant, instead of earthly and sinful priests, we have Jesus, the Mediator of "a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." Sinners today don't have to find an animal, don't have to bring it to an earthly sanctuary, and don't need another sinner to mediate that blood for them. Mediation is being done for us through Jesus, through whom we can have access to God at any time, at any place.

When we sin, we confess our sins, and Jesus, because of His merits, His perfect righteousness, stands "in the presence of God for us," representing us, not with our righteousness but with His own, the merits that He Himself wrought out for us while here in the flesh, the merits that become ours by faith. In short, He's applying in our behalf the benefits of His perfect life and death, the only means by which we, as sinners, can be accepted by God.

Read 1 John 2:1 in light of today's study. How does this text fit in with the whole theme of Hebrews? You need to be able to see the great hope and promises we have, knowing that "Jesus Christ the Righteous" intercedes for us, that He stands in God's presence for us, and that He is our Mediator. Dwell on these themes until you grasp their importance for you personally.

FURTHER STUDY: Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, pp. 188–212.

“All is terror and confusion. The priest is about to slay the victim; but the knife drops from his nerveless hand, and the lamb escapes. Type has met antitype in the death of God’s Son. The great sacrifice has been made. The way into the holiest is laid open. A new and living way is prepared for all. No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest. Henceforth the Saviour was to officiate as priest and advocate in the heaven of heavens.”

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 757.

“By the rending of the veil of the temple, God said, I can no longer reveal My presence in the most holy place. A new and living Way, before which there hangs no veil, is offered to all. No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest.”

—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1109.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at these Ellen White quotes in light of this week’s lesson. How do they harmonize with our understanding of Christ’s two-phased ministry in heaven?
2. After much study by some of our best scholars, a report was given on Hebrews. Two questions were asked. Does Hebrews teach Christ’s two-phased priestly ministry? Does Hebrews deny Christ’s two-phased priestly ministry? The committee answered No to both questions. Discuss the implications of their answer.
3. Hebrews is very clear that the earthly and heavenly sanctuary are closely tied together. Though we don’t want to make an exact comparison, demanding that every stick of furniture in the earthly must have a corresponding counterpart in heaven, why does the reality of a two-phased earthly ministry—which was so crucial to the function of that sanctuary—provide powerful biblical evidence for a two-phased heavenly ministry, as well?

SUMMARY: The book of Hebrews, using the old covenant-sanctuary service as its model, employs images from the daily and yearly services. All these point to the greater, better hope we have in Jesus, our Intercessor, Mediator, and High Priest in heaven.



It Started With a Song

Charlotte Ishkanian

René and José and two other members of their church in Chile, South America, accepted the challenge to start a small group in a difficult and isolated area. The four lay workers had no car, so they took a bus as far as they could, then walked an hour to the first home. They found the people eager for spiritual guidance.

One day as they walked along the road, the men stopped to rest and wait for the women, who were a little behind them. While they waited, René pulled out his guitar, and they started singing.

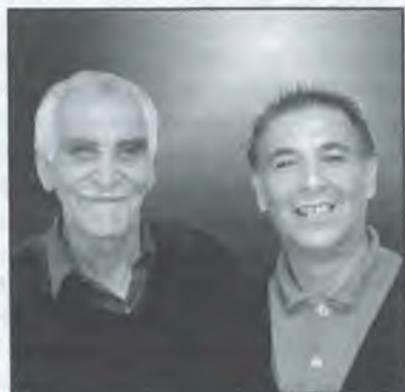
They noticed a movement in the bushes. A woman stepped out of the bushes and walked toward them. The men stood to greet her. "You are an answer to my prayer!" she said, her voice filled with emotion. "This morning I prayed that God would send someone to tell me about Him, and He has sent you! I have felt so alone, and I need God." Tears streaked the woman's face. By this time the two women had caught up with René and José. The four offered to visit and pray with Margarita.

A few minutes later another woman approached and joined the group. "Please pray for me, too," the second woman, Carmen, said. Then she invited the four Adventist layworkers to visit her in her home, to teach her and pray with her.

The Adventists made many friends in the area. They needed a central place to worship, and chose to meet under some fruit trees.

More people heard about the spiritual meetings and joined the group for worship. Soon the three benches were not enough to hold everyone. Winter was coming, and the group needed to find a place to meet out of the winter rain. They began praying for a place, and in a few days a woman volunteered her little house during the winter. Soon they will begin raising funds to build a small chapel.

At present some 25 people come to their meetings. Of these, 12 have been baptized. And it all started with a song.



René Astudillo and José Gonzalez (left). Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*.

Jesus, Our Sacrifice and Salvation



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 9 and 10.

MEMORY TEXT: “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Voluntarily, Jesus laid down His life and became the Supreme Sacrifice in order to save us. His sacrifice made superfluous all other sacrifices.

HE [JESUS] BEGAN HIS MINISTRY by being hungry, yet He is the Bread of Life. Jesus ended His earthly ministry by being thirsty, yet He is the Living Water. Jesus was weary, yet He is our rest. Jesus paid tribute, yet He is the King. Jesus was accused of having a demon, yet He cast out demons. Jesus wept, yet He wipes away our tears. Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver, yet He redeemed the world. Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, yet He is the Good Shepherd. Jesus died, yet by His death He destroyed the power of death.” —Gregory of Nazianzus, A.D. 381 (article, “Jesus” [cited 28 January 2000], from www.sermonillustrations.com). Let us look closely at some concepts found in Hebrews regarding His sacrifice.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: What role does blood play in Hebrews? What did Christ accomplish with His death? Why does Hebrews stress the once-and-for-all nature of Christ’s death? How are we cleansed and purified of sin?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 6.

THE CENTRALITY OF BLOOD.

"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4).

Why do you think that the blood of animals, even those used in the earthly sacrificial system (instituted by God Himself), was unable to "take away" sins?

The Greek term for "blood" appears twenty-one times in Hebrews, the highest concentration occurring in Hebrews 9. The theme of blood, introduced in Hebrews 9:7, becomes central in these verses and recurs constantly from verse 18 to the end of the chapter. In addition, a unique phrase is used in Hebrews 9:22, the "shedding of blood."

Read the following texts: Hebrews 9:7, 18-22; 10:29; 12:24; 13:20. What's the point they are making in regard to the blood? Why is blood deemed so important?

The old covenant and the new covenant were ratified by blood. Whereas "the blood of the covenant" in Hebrews 9 refers to the old covenant, in Hebrews 10-13 the focus is on the blood of Jesus and the new covenant.

Hebrews 9:7, 18, and 22 contain the word *without*. The high priest of the old system entered the Most Holy Place not *without* blood. The old covenant was not inaugurated *without* blood. There is no forgiveness *without* the shedding of blood. Blood is essential.

Hebrews 9:7-14, 25 contrasts the application of animal blood with the application of the blood of Jesus, thus showing the limits of the old system. Hebrews 9:18-21 emphasizes the importance of blood with regard to the covenant and the inauguration of the Old Testament sanctuary. Finally, Hebrews 9:22 contains the basic principle and forms a climax: Forgiveness of sin is possible only by shedding of blood; that is, the blood of Jesus, which alone has the ultimate power to purify and cleanse from sin.

Read Hebrews 9:22. Why can there be no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood? Whose blood? Hint: See Leviticus 17:11.

THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S SHED BLOOD.

We often tend to think of blood in very negative terms: It reminds us of violence, death, and war. In the book of Hebrews, however, blood means something quite positive.

What did Jesus accomplish by His blood being shed?

Heb. 9:12 _____

Heb. 9:14 _____

Heb. 9:22 _____

Heb. 10:19 _____

Heb. 13:12 _____

Take what you've written on these verses and summarize the gist of what they say Christ's blood has accomplished. What do these accomplishments mean for us personally?

"The blood of Christ is life-giving and hope-giving, accomplishing fully the eternal purpose of God to rescue man from the predicament of sin. . . . No book of the New Testament so exalts the place of Calvary as does Hebrews. It sets out its message of the finality and all-sufficiency of the blood of Christ in such striking and contrasting terms with the Old Testament that every believer may indeed find absolute confidence."—Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, pp. 112, 114.

Read Hebrews 10:29. How would you explain this text in the context of all the hopes presented in Hebrews?

The blood of Jesus purifies. It cleanses the sinner and the sanctuary (Heb. 9:14, 23); it also brings salvation. But if it can do all those things for those who accept it, then those who reject it must face the consequence, and that is—condemnation. Jesus does not want us to fall away from Him, the Source of eternal life. Hebrews is nothing, if not an exhortation to stay faithful.

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST (Heb. 10:12).

While the concept of blood dominates Hebrews 9, the terms *sacrifice*, *offering*, and *to offer* find their highest concentration in Hebrews 10. The first part of Hebrews 10 discusses the inadequacy of the sacrifices of the old covenant. Starting with verse 10, the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus is contrasted with the services in the old tabernacle (see Heb. 10:10-18).

As mentioned earlier, but worth repeating (since the apostle does the same): Christ's sacrifice was once and for all. That sacrifice did not need to be repeated, over and over, as in the Old Testament system.

Why do you think Hebrews emphasizes the fact that Christ had to die only once? Why is it not repeatable? What is it about its once-and-for-all nature that makes it better than the Old Testament system? What point is the author trying to make by stressing the uniqueness of this sacrifice? Keep in mind the general theme of Hebrews as you dwell on your answer. See also Hebrews 10:18.

Jesus offered up Himself, once and for all, as a sacrifice; this means that He took upon Himself the punishment that we deserved for our sins. He was sacrificed in our behalf. Sin brings death; but, out of His love for us, He faced that death in our stead. He bore the punishment that we deserve. This is the essence of His sacrifice.

Although it is said that He had been offered (Heb. 9:28), other texts perceive the initiative originating with Him. Hebrews 9:14: Jesus "through the eternal Spirit offered himself" (see 10:12). These texts seem to express that Jesus voluntarily accepted suffering and death, including humiliation.

The point is that His sacrifice is all sufficient. It is one sacrifice offered once for all. Its results are that people *are* sanctified and perfected and experience forgiveness (Heb. 10:10, 14, 18).

Is it fair that Jesus, being innocent, should suffer and die for the guilty? But do we want fairness? If we got fairness—in other words, if we got what we deserved—what would we get?

THE CONCEPT OF PURIFICATION (Heb. 10:22).

There are different ways to describe God's saving activity. The Bible uses a variety of images and terms such as "justification," "redemption," "atonement," "ransom," and being "in Christ" to describe the same outcome. Another one of these words is "purification," a concept heavily emphasized in Hebrews.

Look up Hebrews 1:3; 9:13, 14, 22, 23; 10:2, 22. In what ways do they show not only the idea of defilement but also of purification? What things are defiled? What things need to be purified, or cleansed? How do you understand what this cleansing means?

Justification pictures a legal process in which someone is declared just. Redemption is a picture explaining how something is being "bought back." Forgiveness implies the cancellation of a debt. But purification alludes to the removal of uncleanness and defilement. And Hebrews teaches that humanity needs purification.

The first use of the concept of "cleanse, purify" occurs in the prologue of Hebrews. After Jesus has been introduced as the Creator, His achievements are mentioned, the first being that He "purged our sins" (Heb. 1:3). Thus, the tone is set for the rest of the epistle. Jesus has made purification of sins.

"By His atonement Christ accomplished both the cleansing of sin in general—which work was made possible by the sacrifice on the cross and will at last issue in the purification of the universe from sin—and the cleansing of the individual from sin. This latter work, also made possible by the cross, is still in progress and will not be finished till the last soul is saved."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 397.

"One is not redeemed from defilement, just as one is not forgiven it, reconciled to it, or justified in spite of it. If one is defiled, he must be made clean—the stain, the corruption must be taken away. And, argues the author of Hebrews, the means of that purifying and purification is blood, the blood of Christ Himself, the purifying agent par excellence."—William Johnsson, *Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1989), p. 89.

Hebrews 9:13, 14 tells us that through Christ's blood even our conscience can be purified. What do you think that means? How can our knowledge that Christ paid, in full, the penalty for all our sins and that we can stand faultless before God help "purge" or "cleanse" us from "dead works"?

JESUS, OUR AUTHOR AND FINISHER.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

Read for today Hebrews 12:1-4. Notice that it comes right after the famous Hebrews 11, which gives a litany of loyal followers of the Lord who lived by faith. Chapter 12 begins by referring back to those people as examples for the Hebrews to follow.

In Hebrews 12:1, he talks about the Christian life as a "race." How do you understand the meaning of that term in the context of living by faith?

Though pointing them first to various biblical figures, the author of Hebrews then points them to Jesus, whom he calls the "author and finisher of our faith." The word for "author" there also can mean "originator," "founder," "pioneer," "finisher," and "perfector." What this tells us is that everything we need for salvation, for faith, for assurance, and for personal holiness comes from Jesus. He began the process of our salvation, and He will end it. It all rests in Him; and the work that He has accomplished for us, He will finish *in us*. Jesus is our salvation. In Him our redemption was completed. Our part is to cling to Him in faith, to live by faith, and to endure in His strength.

Yet, at the same time, it's clear by the whole context of the passage, and in the message of the whole book of Hebrews, that He can work in us only as long as we allow Him to. It takes our cooperation, our surrender, our willingness to live by faith, to remain steadfast and unwavering, even amid great trial and tribulation.

Read carefully Hebrews 12:2-4. What is the author saying to the readers here? Not only is he pointing us to Jesus; he's telling us to focus on a specific aspect of Christ's life and ministry. What aspect is that, and what's the specific point he's trying to make in these passages?

FURTHER STUDY: Take a concordance and look up the terms *to save, salvation, and savior* or investigate the topic on salvation in the book of Romans: chapters 5:9, 10; 8:24; 9:27; 10:9, 13; 11:14, 26.

Note: "Our Saviour is in the sanctuary. . . . He is our interceding High Priest, making an atoning sacrifice for us, pleading in our behalf the efficacy of His blood. Parents should seek to represent this Saviour to their children to establish in their minds the plan of salvation. . . . The fact that the only-begotten Son of God gave His life because of man's transgression, to satisfy justice and to vindicate the honor of God's law, should be constantly kept before the minds of children and youth. . . . Christ suffered in order that through faith in Him our sins might be pardoned. He became man's substitute and surety, Himself taking the punishment, though all undeserving, that we who deserved it might be free, and return to our allegiance to God. . . . He is our only hope of salvation. . . . Man repents, becomes contrite in heart, believes in Christ as His atoning sacrifice, and realizes that God is reconciled to him."—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 369.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Read Hebrews 2:10; 5:7, 9; and 9:28. How do they show the work of both the Father and Son in the plan of salvation?
2. Hebrews talks about us being purified or cleansed from sin. How do we experience this purification and cleansing in our lives? God doesn't do this without our cooperation. What must we do, as Christians, to allow this process to take place?
3. Read Hebrews 12:4. What is the apostle saying here to us about the battle against sin? What do his words imply about the struggle involved in that battle?

SUMMARY: Someone has written: "If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior."—Author unknown ([cited 28 January 2000] from www.sermonillustrations.com). And the book of Hebrews, by stressing the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ, gives us a wonderful view of just what our Savior has done for us.



A New Twist on Evangelism

An Adventist teenager in The Netherlands found an innovative use for her mobile phone—she sent Bible-verse messages to a friend as a way to encourage her and share her faith. As a result of this, 19-year-old Esther Breure won her friend to Christ.

Esther shared her faith with several of her friends, but most were not really interested. However, one of her classmates was interested in the Bible, and the girls started studying together. But the girl's parents objected to her interest in the Adventist faith. To encourage and support her friend, Esther began sending her short messages on her personal mobile phone each night just before going to bed. She always included a Bible verse.

One day Esther mentioned a devotional book she had. Her friend wanted one too, but Esther had only one. So she began to write short devotional letters in which she quoted a Bible verse and talked about what it meant to her. The next day she would give these letters to her friend at school. Esther's friend appreciated the notes and responded with her own letters, in which she included questions and sometimes Bible verses and her own thoughts on the texts.

The two girls started writing devotional letters to each other every evening, giving them to the other the next day at school. When another girl noticed the exchange of letters, she too wanted to join. This girl now has started reading the Bible and writing notes to Esther and her friend every day. One day she commented that her Bible usually lay in a drawer, unused, but “now I *have* to read it!” She has attended a few Bible studies with the pastor and joined Esther at a youth congress.



Esther's high-tech messages have proven to be an effective way to share her faith. Recently her friend took her stand for Christ and was baptized. Esther and her friend are part of a group of young Adventists who are planting a unique youth church in the city of Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Esther Breure (left) plans to serve a year in Thailand as a student missionary before starting her university studies in The Netherlands.

Jesus, Our Assurance



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Heb. 6:11, 18-20; 10:19-23, 35; 11:1-6.

MEMORY TEXT: "Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:22, 23, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT: The recipients of the epistle needed assurance, and Hebrews shows them where this assurance can be found.

MOST HUMANS HAVE A DESIRE for some level of certainty and assurance in their lives. Who would get on an airplane without some certainty, some assurance, that it was well-maintained and mechanically sound or that the pilots knew how to fly? Who would go to the doctor without some certainty regarding the physician's competency in medicine? Who would seek employment without some assurance that the company would be around for a while? All of us, in one way or another, look for and need a certain level of assurance in the most everyday things of life.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: In what ways does Hebrews present the topic of assurance? How is faith linked to assurance? What conditions are placed on assurance? How do we strike a balance between assurance and presumption?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 13.

OUR STATUS AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST.

The book of Hebrews, along with other New Testament writings, offers us certainty in regard to our relationship with God. Assurance is an important theme in this epistle, and in others. How could it not be? After all, we are sinners who daily confront our own weaknesses, faults, and shortcomings. If we didn't have some sort of assurance of salvation and acceptance, who wouldn't eventually give up the faith completely?

How do each of the following texts give us assurance of salvation in Christ?

Heb. 2:17 _____

Heb. 3:14 _____

Heb. 6:18 _____

Heb. 9:15 _____

Heb. 9:28 _____

Heb. 10:14 _____

Dwell specifically on the notion that we are made “partakers of Christ” (Heb. 3:14). What does that mean? How should this experience change our lives? What condition does the author place on this good news?

Because Jesus has “made purification for sins” (Heb. 1:3, NRSV) and because He has “obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12) for us, we can be accepted by God, even as sinners. Thus, we have assurance of salvation, not from anything in ourselves but because of what God did in Christ, the Son of God, our King, our Brother, our Sacrifice, and our High Priest. Our assurance rests in Him, not in ourselves.

“Christians are holy, sanctified, perfected, cleansed, purified—all terms associated with the sanctuary and its services. They are God’s people, even now. Now they are ‘clean,’ now have access to God, now have consciences purged, now have Jesus as Heavenly High Priest.” —William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, p. 155.

Why is assurance of salvation so important in the Christian life? At the same time, how do we protect ourselves against turning assurance into presumption?

OUR ASSURANCE FOR TODAY.

Yesterday, we studied some promises made to those who belong to Christ. Most of these promises used verb forms that relate to the past. What about verses that spell out Christ's ministry in our behalf and how it impacts us now?

What is Jesus doing for His children today?

Heb. 2:18 _____

Heb. 4:15 _____

Heb. 7:19 _____

Heb. 7:25 _____

The passages that describe what has been done *in the past* deal with different aspects of our salvation. The passages for today, in contrast, contain some practical aspects of present-day life that, nevertheless, depend on Jesus' high-priestly ministry.

Jesus makes intercession in our behalf. He sympathizes and deals gently with us. He has suffered in the flesh, as we have suffered in the flesh; thus, He can relate to us as a human to a human in our fleshly sufferings. Yet He never succumbed to sin; and thus He offers us power to overcome sin, as well. As Christians, we never have a good excuse to sin.

We know that God loves us, and we know that Christ is working in our behalf, even now. Yet, we have to be careful how we understand what that means. What it *doesn't* mean is that life will always be sweet and nice, because we have Jesus as our High Priest ministering in our behalf in heaven.

We can have assurance, we can have hope, we can have peace from the knowledge that not only has Jesus died for our sins, having paid the penalty for them, but that He now ministers in heaven in our behalf, representing us before the Father, not with our own merits but with His own perfect record. Talk about assurance.

But that doesn't mean that we will never have suffering in this life. On the contrary.

Read carefully Hebrews 12:6-11. What is the author telling his readers? What reason does he give for what they might be going through? How are they to respond? How have you, in your own life, experienced what the author is talking about?

OTHER PROMISES.

Hebrews contains texts filled with hope and promise. After each text, write down what that promise means to you and how the hope it expresses has impacted your faith. (For example, for the first one: How have you experienced that promised rest?)

Heb. 4:3 _____

Heb. 4:16 _____

Heb. 8:10-12 _____

Heb. 10:22 _____

Heb. 12:28 _____

Heb. 13:5, 6 _____

Look carefully at Hebrews 10:22. It talks about the “full assurance of faith.” The Greek word translated “full assurance” means also “to be absolutely certain,” “to be completely sure.” The apostle says that we should draw near to God in full assurance of faith that the promises He has made to us will be fulfilled (vs. 23 says that He “is faithful that promised”). Why do we have this “full assurance”? The three verses before help answer that: Jesus, by His death, is now our High Priest, who has consecrated a new and living way for us to have access to God.

Notice, however, how the author, though stressing the “full assurance” we can have, also balances it with something that can save us from presumption. What is it? See verse 23. How does this help put all the promises in the right perspective?

TERMS DESCRIBING ASSURANCE AND SURETY.

The topic of surety and assurance is expressed by a number of Greek words used in Hebrews with different shades of meaning: *plrophoria*—full assurance, conviction, certainty; *parrsia*—boldness, confidence, assurance; *hypostasis*—confidence, assurance, conviction; *tharre* —to be full of courage, to act boldly, to be confident; and *aspals*—safe, sure.

What is the message of those texts that contain the noun “assurance” or “confidence” (some different translations might use different words with the same meaning)?

Heb. 3:6, 14; 10:35 _____

Heb. 4:16; 10:19 _____

Heb. 6:11 _____

Heb. 10:22; 11:1 _____

These texts can be grouped into four categories. The first group stresses the fact that we with confidence may draw close to God. We have access to the throne of grace in the heavenly sanctuary. We are cleansed and washed. The barriers are removed. Instead of fear, confidence fills our life. The second pair connects assurance and hope and seems to be a call to stay faithful and endure unto the promised end. The third connects assurance and faith. It is by faith that we have the assurances of what Christ has done for us and what He will do, even in those things that are yet unseen. Faith is an indispensable element of our hope, confidence, and assurance. The last category consists of calls to hold fast confidence, not to throw away assurance.

According to Hebrews, we should have hope, confidence, and assurance. What are things that we confront as believers that daily work against these things? How do we confront those challenges?

FAITH AND ASSURANCE.

The word *faith* (in various forms) appears dozens of times in Hebrews. It comes in clusters. The first use is found in Hebrews 2:17, where Jesus is called a “faithful” High Priest. The next two chapters focus on faith. Another cluster appears in Hebrews 6 and the most extensive one appears at the end of Hebrews 10, running through chapter 11, which discusses the famous heroes of faith.

Perhaps the most explicit and systematic explication of faith appears in Hebrews 11.

Read the first ten verses of Hebrews 11. Compare them with Hebrews 10:19-23, 35, 38, 39. What’s the main point these texts make? How does it fit in with the overall theme of Hebrews?

In Hebrews, the concepts of faith and of assurance are linked. We’re saved by faith, not works; thus, as long as we cling to the Lord in faith, we have the assurance of the salvation that comes to us by faith.

It’s interesting that Hebrews 4 contains a call to make a decision and believe. However, the book is addressed not to non-Christians but to Christians. Thus, in Hebrews, faith does not simply refer to a decision to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Faith is practical. On one hand, it leads to assurance and provides hope; on the other hand, it has to do with the conduct of life.

Meanwhile, in Hebrews 10:35, the author calls his readers not to throw away their confidence, their assurance. How do they not cast it away? The answer is that they persevere *in faith*. Those who persevere will receive the promise (vs. 36)—the second coming of Jesus (vs. 37) and final salvation (vss. 38, 39).

Read Hebrews 3:15-19. It seems as if disobedience and unbelief are almost used interchangeably. Why is that so? In what ways are disobedience and unbelief so linked? Notice, too, whom he charged with “unbelief.” What message does that hold for us, as professed followers of Christ?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Ellen G. White's statements on faith and assurance in *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 531, and *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 287. Study Hebrews 11.

Note: "The Sacrifice of Christ assures Christians of two great facts: First, the Act *has been done* that solves the sin problem. They don't have to strive and stretch, to hunger and thirst, to press and prevail, in the frantic, frenzied—and futile—effort to find cleansing from their sins. By one sacrifice for all time God has utterly dealt with sin. Nothing we might do can add to that or diminish from it. Calvary gives us absolute confidence of the putting away of sins.

"Second, Calvary assures us of our full access to the presence of God. No matter who we might be, we *belong* in Jesus Christ. The gates of the temple stand flung open. All who believe may enter—not cringing, but boldly."—Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, p. 118.

"We have the assurance of a Saviour who has come—a Saviour who has been crucified, has risen, and has proclaimed over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, 'I am the resurrection, and the life.' In our knowledge of Jesus and his love, the kingdom of God has been placed in the midst of us. . . . We have had presented to us by the messengers of God the richest feast,—the righteousness of Christ, justification by faith, the exceeding great and precious promises of God in his word, free access to the Father by Jesus Christ, the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and the well-grounded assurance of eternal life in the kingdom of God. We ask, What could God do for us that he has not done in preparing the great supper, the heavenly banquet?"—Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, January 17, 1899.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do some people have problems with assurance of salvation? Why is trust in what Christ has accomplished for us the only place where we can rest our hope of salvation?
2. Though filled with promises of assurance, of hope, Hebrews always balances it with the call to remain steadfast in the faith. Skim over the book and mark out the places (for example, 2:14; 3:6-12) where the apostle exhorts the faithful to persevere. Write down the specific things he says that we need to do in order to maintain this assurance. Do any patterns emerge? If so, what are they?

SUMMARY: Assurance and faith are related to each other. By faith we take hold of Christ's achievements for us and the promises found in them. This assurance allows us to have a better quality of life, to live in hope, and to have a goal that transcends our present life.



Up From the Ashes

J. H. Zachary

The soldier lined the students up and commanded them to show their identity cards. Then he ordered the Tutsis to move to one side. Rachel stepped from the line and joined the second group. A man carrying a weapon walked down the line telling the students, "You'd better pray; in ten minutes you will be dead."

As the killer reached the far end of the line, someone pulled Rachel from the line and pushed her toward some bushes to hide. She was spared. Several more times in the days ahead Rachel escaped death when those around her were killed. *Why me?* she wondered.

Some students fled to another city where they thought they would be safe. But they soon learned that there was no safe place. However, again and again the handful of students were spared certain death.

A family took her into their home and hid her. While she was there, Rachel learned that most of her family had been killed. She wanted to turn herself in and die, too, but the family who had protected her begged her to stay. "If the soldiers learn we have hidden you, we will die, too." Rachel remained with this family for several months.

When travel became safer, Rachel returned to her home village. She stepped off the bus to find that every home in her village had been destroyed. She learned that her father was reading his Bible when an enemy with a large knife struck him down. His last word was "Amen" as he fell on top of his Bible. Her mother and a sister, who were not in the village at the time, were saved. But one of her brothers, who lived in a distant village, was singing Sabbath choruses with his two young sons when they died.

During the terrible days of civil war in Rwanda more than 1 million people were killed, including some 20,000 on the Adventist university campus where they had sought refuge. During those discouraging days Rachel sometimes became overwhelmed with sorrow. How could she serve a God who allowed so many to die? Then she recalled her promise to her father that she would always be faithful to Jesus. "I know that I will meet them again," she said. "I have forgiven the men who killed my family. I do not want hatred to keep me out of heaven."

Rachel returned to school and completed her theology training. She is serving as an associate pastor in a church in Rwanda.

J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour.

Jesus and the Christian Walk



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Heb. 12:1–13:19.

MEMORY TEXT: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT: While the book of Hebrews deals with heavenly issues, it touches on some very earthly matters, as well.

WHEN QUEEN VICTORIA WAS A CHILD, she didn't know that she was in line for England's throne. Her teachers tried to prepare her for that role but failed to inspire her to take her studies seriously. Finally, they told her that one day she would become queen. Victoria quietly said, “Then I will be good.” The realization that she had inherited this high calling gave her a sense of responsibility that profoundly affected her conduct.

Jesus has paid the supreme sacrifice for us; He serves as our High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary; and the promise of heaven is ours. If this fails to motivate us to live worthy of our high calling, what will?

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: In what ways are we “strangers and pilgrims” on the earth? What does Hebrews say about the danger of backsliding? How are Christians to relate to society? How can we be protected against some of the more common sins and temptations?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 20.

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13).

Read carefully the above verse, in the context (of course) in which it was written. Focus especially on the two nouns that describe these faithful people, *strangers* and *pilgrims* (or *exiles*). What do these two words automatically bring to mind? In what ways are Christians to be "strangers and pilgrims" on the earth? See also Job 8:9; Eccles. 1:14; James 4:14. At the same time, how far do you want to take these images? In other words, in what ways should we *not* be strangers and pilgrims?

Pilgrims are people who have left their homes, sometimes even their countries, to go on a journey. At least temporarily, and maybe even permanently, they have broken away from their normal activities, from families and friends. They have a clear purpose, oftentimes purification from sins, and are willing to endure hardship to attain their goal.

Unfortunately, the concept of a pilgrimage often involves the most choking aspects of salvation by works. This is hardly the message of Hebrews, which is talking about a different kind of pilgrim and a different kind of pilgrimage. These pilgrims aren't seeking salvation; salvation has found them, in the person of Jesus, who "was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb. 9:28), who "obtained eternal redemption" for them (Heb. 9:12), and who now appears "in the presence of God" (Heb. 9:24) for them. Thus, their journey isn't to find salvation; they already have it. Instead, because they have that great salvation, they follow the One who saved them wherever He bids them go.

Look at Hebrews 9:12, 24-26, and 28 in this specific order. What sequence do you see that gives us the essence of what Christ has done and is doing for us now? Why does salvation by works have no role here?

CHRISTIANS AND THEIR LORD (Heb. 12:25).

Why does Hebrews deal so strongly with apostasy? Heb. 6:4-9; 10:26-29; 12:25. What's the common thread among them?

In three major blocks (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 12:15-17, 25-29), the apostle deals more or less with the same subject. He is concerned that church members may fall away and not be renewed to repentance. In strong words he directly or indirectly challenges them to follow Christ and warns them most distinctly about the danger of apostasy.

William Johnsson points out that all three blocks contain five common elements: (1) privileges, (2) offense, (3) result, (4) prospect of judgment, and (5) reasons for the divine rejection. The author of Hebrews "seems to speak of a deliberate rejection of the gospel, not just a gradual falling away or neglect. And in all three he issues severe warnings—the sternest in the entire New Testament. . . . The apostle describes acts of wanton rejection, of overt defiance of Jesus as Lord. No suggestion of a sin of omission or weakness here. . . . Because Hebrews exalts the cross in such glowing terms, because it shows so emphatically its superlative worth, it must point out the horror of a deliberate rejection."—Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, pp. 143, 145-148.

Hebrews 6:4-6 presents some great challenges, because on face value it seems to teach that someone who had once known the power and majesty of God's salvation and then turned away could never again be saved. How, though, is this to be interpreted in contrast, for instance, with Luke 15:11-32, the story of the prodigal, or with all the other places in the Bible where the Lord calls backsliders to repentance?

Perhaps it needs to be understood in the sense that it is impossible to turn them back to repentance *as long as they continue in their blatant and open rejection of Christ*. This idea is congruent with the rest of Scripture, which time and again deals with the Lord pleading with those who have fallen into apostasy to return to Him, for He will pardon and cleanse *but only if they turn away from their rejection of Him*. As long as someone remains in rebellion, refusing to change, even God can't bring him or her back. (See Matt. 24:37-39.) The sanctity of free will carries some powerful and fearful consequences.

What hope can you give to someone who is struggling because a loved one has walked away from the Lord? What other texts can you find that help put those here in Hebrews in their proper perspective with the overall tenor of Scripture?

CHRISTIANS AND SOCIETY.

However much Hebrews focuses on Christ and His work in the heavenly sanctuary, this focus has a human element, as well. It has to. After all, if Christ's death and high-priestly ministry were for us, then how can they not impact us, even now?

Thus, the assurance, the hope, the promises that we have been given through Christ's death and high-priestly ministry *of necessity* impact how we live, how we treat others, how we deal with those with whom we daily come in contact. Though deeply theological and dealing with, literally, heavenly things, Hebrews also touches on the personal, the individual, the character, and the lives of those who are living the life of faith as expressed in Hebrews 11. Indeed, the litany of people in Hebrews 11 shows how greatly faith impacts personal behavior.

Look up Hebrews 12:14; 13:1-5, 16, 17. What is the apostle telling them to do? What kind of personal relationships is he talking about here?

Notice the parallel between Hebrews 12:14 and some of Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount. According to Matthew 5:9, Christians not only avoid frictions, rivalry, and war; they actively get involved trying to make peace. Thus, they serve their society and work toward its improvement. In other words, we need to be involved. Though strangers, though pilgrims, we still are strangers and pilgrims *here*, and while here, while passing through, we need to leave our mark, to let our light shine.

In addition, the apostle mentions hospitality, which is not restricted to church members only. Christians take care of those at the margins of society—the outcasts, the prisoners, and those ill-treated. To care for those groups means to identify to a certain degree with them, exactly as Jesus did when He was in the flesh.

Read carefully Hebrews 13:16. The word translated “communicate” comes from a Greek word that has the meaning of “fellowship,” “close, personal relationship,” and “sharing.” Notice, too, how the author calls these things that he asks us to do “sacrifices.” What image does that bring up? How does that fit in with the theme of Hebrews? At the same time, why do these things require a “sacrifice” on our part?

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

"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" (Heb. 10:25).

Hebrews 10:19-25 presents a great example of how what happens in heaven should have an impact on earth. Follow the line of thought in the verses. First, in verses 19-21, the emphasis is on Jesus in heaven and what He has done that allows us "access" to the Father. Second (vss. 22, 23), as a result of what Christ has done, our inner selves, our hearts, can be changed because we have assurance and hope through Jesus if we hold fast. Finally, because of Jesus (vss. 24, 25), we live a different life, one in which we are ministering to others, sharing from what we ourselves have been given in Christ. Thus, he goes from Christ in heaven to the Christian community on earth.

How does the element of Christian community fit in with the verses below? How can the community help in each instance?

Heb. 12:15 _____

Heb. 13:1-3 _____

Heb. 13:7, 17 _____

Heb. 13:9 _____

Heb. 13:18 _____

The Christian church is like a family. Already in New Testament times Christians would call one another brothers and sisters. They formed the "household of God" (Eph. 2:19), God's family. In a family it is quite natural to take care of one another, to encourage one another, and sometimes even to confront one another in order to enhance growth and maturity.

Nobody can be a Christian in isolation unless forced by difficult situations, such as persecution and dispersion. We need one another. Jesus has instituted His church, in which we need to get involved, find friendships, develop our gifts, and corporately meet our Lord.

Why do we need one another in the church? Why does the Bible stress the idea of a Christian community? How has fellowship as a whole helped you? Or has it?

SEX AND MONEY.

"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:4, 5).

In the two verses listed above, what two points are touched on?

In verse 4 the apostle stresses the importance and sanctity of marriage and warns against a misuse of the sexual powers. "When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man's social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature."—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 25. "Whoremongers and adulterers" may describe two different groups. Adulterers are married persons who maintain a sexual relationship with someone who is not their spouse. Whoremongers, or fornicators, may in this context, refer to unmarried individuals that have sexual contact with another person.

Another area of temptation has to do with money. What is the apostle saying in verse 5 that's so important in regard to how we deal with the question of money and possessions, in general? How does the Bible text he quotes help defend against this dangerous allurement?

Money, or at least the love of money, can do strange things to people. Unless we're on guard, even Christians can get swept away by what Jesus called "the deceitfulness of riches" (Mark 4:19).

Jesus was once asked to intervene when two brothers fought for their inheritance. "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15, NRSV). We would do well to heed those words, especially when we tend to measure the worth or quality of our lives by what possessions we do or do not have.

Look at the Bible promise quoted at the end of Hebrews 13:5. How do we understand what the promise means in daily life? It's one thing to quote it and say you believe it. But how does this belief impact how we live, especially in times of adversity and temptation?

FURTHER STUDY: Study the life of Paul as presented in the letter to the Philippians and how his way of life and teaching reported there correspond with the topic for this week.

Note: A man in the army of Alexander the Great was named Alexander; he was also accused of cowardly actions. He was brought before Alexander, who asked his name. The man replied softly, "Alexander." "I can't hear you," the ruler stated. The man again said, a little louder, "Alexander." The process was repeated one more time, after which Alexander the Great commented, "Either change your name or change your conduct."

"All who are made partakers of His salvation here, and who hope to share the glories of the kingdom hereafter, must gather with Christ. Each must feel that he is responsible for his own case, and for the influence he exerts over others. If these maintain their Christian walk, Jesus will be in them the hope of glory, and they will love to speak forth His praise. . . . The cause of their Master will be near and dear to them. It will be their study to advance His cause and to honor it by holy living. Said the angel: 'Every talent God will require with usury.' Every Christian must go on from strength to strength, and employ all his powers in the cause of God."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 179.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Though the book of Hebrews deals with heavy theological issues, everything from the incarnation of Christ to His heavenly ministry in our behalf, the book clearly does have a practical side. In other words, theology does not exist in a vacuum. It should impact how we live. Discuss why this is so.
2. Study Hebrews 12:14. What does that mean? How do we understand this text in the context of righteousness by faith?
3. Though in the end we are saved only as individuals, what role and responsibility does the community have toward the spiritual well-being of its members?

SUMMARY: Though this earth isn't our final home, it's where we are now, it's where we live now, and God expects us to live according to the high calling that we have in Jesus Christ.



Struggling Toward the Light

Kereta Milo

Puataunofo (Pua) is the daughter of the village chief in a remote village on the westernmost point of Samoa. While the people in Pua's village claim to be Christians, they believe in spirits and visit the witch doctor when they are ill.

Pua completed primary school and moved to a larger town to continue her studies. She worked for a local priest to earn a little money and considered it a privilege to serve her church this way.

Pua finished school and found work in a factory. There she met Filemu. They settled down to a life of nightclubs and dancing. Filemu had grown up Adventist, and he could not shake off the beliefs he had grown up with. He tried to share his faith with Pua, but she was not interested.

One night they noticed a tent meeting nearby. Filemu wanted to go to the meetings, but Pua did not. However, during the second week, she finally agreed to go. She liked the music and found the speaker's topic compelling. She agreed to attend the meetings.

When the pastor spoke on the change of the Sabbath, she stayed late to ask him difficult and troubling questions. As Pua read the notes they received each night, she realized that what the pastor said was true.

When the pastor spoke on the importance of marriage, Pua and Filemu asked the pastor to marry them. And after the series of meetings ended, Pua and Filemu were baptized along with 77 others.

The young couple became active in the church. Filemu led the youth programs and served as an elder in the church. Pua worked in Sabbath School.

When Pua told her parents that they had become Seventh-day Adventist Christians, they became angry that she left the family's religion. At Christmas, the couple returned to her village to tell her parents that they planned to study for the ministry at Fulton College in Fiji. They expected more anger and asked God to prepare the way. The family was happy with their decision.

Pua and Filemu thank God for patiently leading them to His truth.

Pua and Filemu (left) are students at Fulton College. Kereta Milo is a pastor living in Samoa.



Jesus and Our Future



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 11–13.

MEMORY TEXT: “For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (Hebrews 13:14, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT: However much Christians are enjoying the privileges of being God’s people here and now, their ultimate hope exists in the final fulfillment of all promises: Christ’s second coming.

HOWEVER MUCH HEBREWS HAS FOCUSED ON THE PAST, such as the earthly-sanctuary service and the death of Christ—the picture would be incomplete if it stopped there. For this reason, Hebrews looks toward the future, as well, particularly to Jesus’ return, which culminates the plan of salvation. Without this dimension, the Christian hope would be in vain. Maybe that’s why the word *hope* is found five times in the book, and for Christians, that hope is eternity with God in a new world, the one that His people have been eagerly anticipating since the fall in Eden and the first promise of salvation, a promise made complete in Jesus.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: Why does the author of Hebrews imply that he’s living in the last days? Why does the Bible talk about salvation as a present reality and at the same time a future hope? How is the sanctuary tied in with the second coming of Jesus?

*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 27.

THE TIME OF THE END.

Read Hebrews 1:2 and Hebrews 9:26. What do they mean by talking about the “last days” and “the end of the world” even before the first century A.D. had ended?

How do we understand these words? Perhaps, like this: The first coming of Christ was a climactic event that brought about a change of eras. A whole new spiritual order had been inaugurated by the ministry of Jesus, who had to suffer and die before sin and suffering ever could be over. The supreme sacrifice had been offered; the penalty for sin had been paid. All that was needed to secure salvation had been taken care of with Jesus’ once-and-for-all sacrifice. These things had to happen before the reality of a new heavens and a new earth could ever be realized. In this sense, and from this perspective, the apostle could talk about his time as the “end of the world,” no matter how many more centuries would elapse before Christ returned.

Read 1 Peter 1:18-20. Notice how he ties in the death of Jesus with the “last times.” Why did Jesus have to die before these “last times” could arrive?

The author of Hebrews wanted to let readers know that the old ways are gone and that something new and better, something that will bring to fruition all their hopes, has taken place through Jesus. The author, it seems, wasn’t so much trying to place them in a time line as much as let them know that they were in a new spiritual age.

“With the first advent of Christ, the new age had broken into or overlapped the old. The two ages would continue to exist side by side until the Second Advent, when the old age would finally be destroyed. Christians, therefore, live in two worlds at once. . . .

Jesus even could combine the two concepts together in one sentence: ‘I tell you the truth, a time *is coming* and *has now come* when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God’ (John 5:25, NIV). —Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1994), pp. 77, 78, emphasis author’s.

We like to say that we are living in “the last days.” How do some of the verses we looked at today help us keep that concept in proper perspective?

THE ALREADY AND THE NOT-YET.

In the New Testament, and especially in Paul's writings, we find the concept of the "already/not-yet." What this means is that we are already saved and yet we are not finally saved. For example, John 5:24 reads, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (emphasis supplied). Thus, we are already saved; we have eternal life, even now. In contrast, Matthew 19:29 reads, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and *shall inherit* everlasting life" (emphasis supplied). In other words, final salvation is yet to come (for another example of this contrast, see Ephesians 2:6 and Romans 8:22-24).

In what ways does this already/not-yet tension appear in Hebrews? See Hebrews 12:28, 11:13-16. How can we resolve this tension? Or should we?

There are all sorts of tensions in the Bible that, if properly understood, actually harmonize with each other in helping fill in the big picture. The problem comes when we emphasize one aspect at the expense of another; instead, we should attempt to balance them out.

The Bible is full of statements that seem to be opposed to each other and yet both are true: While living on earth, Jesus was fully divine and fully human. The Bible is written by human authors; even so, it is the Word of God. God is independent of time, though He relates to us in time. There is one Godhead, but the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are called God. We are saved by faith and judged by works.

When it comes to God and His plan of salvation, we have to acknowledge that our mind can grasp only part of the reality, a few slices at best. In such a context, we must realize, too, that opposites are not necessarily contradictory but can simply be different parts of a much bigger picture. Trouble comes when we focus too much on a single part at the expense of the whole.

Look up these verses: John 3:15, 36; 1 Timothy 6:12; 1 John 5:12, 13. These, among many others, stress that we have eternal life now. Though the full realization of it wouldn't come until Christ returns, how do these promises give us comfort and assurance for the present? How differently should we live, knowing that we *have* eternal life, even now?

FUTURE EVENTS.

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:16).

The discussion on the last days and on the already and the not-yet shows that Jesus is at the center of the end. "When the New Testament is rightly understood, Jesus Christ is what the end is all about."—Paulien, p. 81.

Which events—still future and depending on Jesus' intervention—are mentioned in Hebrews?

Heb. 9:28; 10:25, 36, 37 _____

Heb. 6:2; 9:27; 10:27, 30 _____

Heb. 11:16; 13:14 _____

Heb. 11:26, 39, 40 _____

Although the apostle refers to Christ's second coming, the resurrection of the dead, and the judgment, no timetable is given, either in Hebrews or in any part of the Bible. No doubt, it is more important to live a holy life than to know precisely when final events will play out, which is probably why the emphasis on the Bible is to be ready for the return of Christ, whenever it happens.

Future judgment is mentioned quite often in Hebrews. In 10:27, the judgment seems to refer to what we call "the executive judgment," because the consuming fire is mentioned (see Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:9, 10). Whenever and however it all takes place, we haven't been told; according to Hebrews, however, a few points come through:

1. God functions as Judge (Heb. 12:23).
2. He is going to recompense evil (Heb. 10:30).
3. He will reward His people (Heb. 11:26).

Though the emphasis in Hebrews is on the death of Christ and on His high-priestly ministry in heaven, there is still a clear focus on the end: judgment, Second Coming, resurrection of the dead, and the final reward. Why do you think that is so? As you ponder your answer, ask yourself this question, What is the purpose of Christ's death and high-priestly ministry as depicted in Hebrews?

THE HEAVENLY CITY.

Three passages in Hebrews talk about the heavenly city. What are similarities and differences in these passages? Heb. 11:10-16; 12:18-24; 13:12-14.

Old Testament believers, as well as followers of Christ, are on their way to the heavenly city. Hebrews 11:10-16 describes Abraham and the patriarchs as pilgrims heading toward the real homeland, the heavenly fatherland, the city of God. Old Testament times, New Testament times, it makes no difference: All of God's people end up in the same place *if they will endure patiently unto the end*. Again, this is a key theme in Hebrews: Don't give up!

The second passage describes the new-covenant community. The author makes an interesting contrast between Mt. Sinai, with all its fire and darkness and tempest and fear and Mount Zion (a common name for the earthly Jerusalem), the heavenly Jerusalem. Here, again, in a very poetic and powerful manner, he contrasts the old way with the new, letting the people know that thanks to Jesus they have a better revelation of truth than those who lived in the old covenant. In fact, believers are portrayed as having already come to the city of God. "The new covenant people . . . [have] already arrived at the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem and . . . are only waiting for the revelation of the 'unshakable kingdom' (v 28) they are about to receive."—W. L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), pp. 470, 466.

Hebrews 13:12-14 presents a contrast between the earthly Jerusalem, which Jesus was forced to leave (He was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem), and the future city, "the one to come," the one all of God's faithful followers are promised as their home.

Focus especially on Hebrews 13:14. What does the author mean when he says that we have "no continuing" city? What's the point he's making? Why don't we have such a city? Why can't we have one here, even if we wanted one? Once you answer that, ask yourself, Do I live as though I really believe that I have no continuing city? Or am I living as though this were my permanent home? Matthew 6:19-21 will help you find the answer.

THE SANCTUARY AND THE SECOND COMING.

As we've seen, and studied this whole quarter, the book of Hebrews cannot be understood apart from the Hebrew sanctuary service. In fact, it would be hard to understand the plan of salvation, particularly the death of Christ as the substitutionary sacrifice for sin, apart from an understanding of the Jewish sacrificial system. The whole plan of salvation is built around the concepts and symbols first revealed in the Old Testament sanctuary; in Christ, they reach their fulfillment.

We've seen, too, that Hebrews, while focusing on the past (Christ's death) and on the present (Christ's ministry in heaven), also looks toward the future, to the Second Coming and all that it entails.

Thus, Hebrews links the Second Coming with the sanctuary. How could it not? If the sanctuary points to salvation, and salvation is consummated in the Second Coming, then by necessity the sanctuary must be linked to the Second Coming. It's hard to see how one logically could be separated from the other. No wonder, as Adventists with a sharp focus on the Second Coming, we have a distinct sanctuary message to present to the world.

In what ways does the author of Hebrews in the following verses link the sanctuary motif to the second coming of Christ?

Heb. 9:24-28 _____

Heb. 10:11-13 _____

Heb. 12:22-24 _____

The second advent of Christ is the consummation of what Jesus had done on the cross and of what He is doing as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Both His death and His high-priestly ministry would be of no avail without the Second Coming.

Final salvation will become a reality when Jesus returns and takes His people to Mt. Zion, to the future city, the heavenly Jerusalem, where they can live in the direct presence of God. The teaching about the sanctuary and the teaching about the last things belong together and should not be separated.

Dwell again on the emphasis and importance the book of Hebrews has placed on the sanctuary service in heaven. How does this emphasis strengthen our faith that as Adventists we are on the right track, with strong emphasis on the heavenly sanctuary, as well?

FURTHER STUDY: Study James 5:1-11 and Revelation 22:6-21 and reflect on our glorious hope, as well as on the challenges and promises listed in these passages. Read also Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, pp. 283-287, 297, 298, 304-306.

Note: "We are homeward bound. He who loved us so much as to die for us hath builded for us a city. The New Jerusalem is our place of rest. There will be no sadness in the city of God. No wail of sorrow, no dirge of crushed hopes and buried affections, will evermore be heard. Soon the garments of heaviness will be changed for the wedding garment. Soon we shall witness the coronation of our King. Those whose lives have been hidden with Christ, those who on this earth have fought the good fight of faith, will shine forth with the Redeemer's glory in the kingdom of God. It will not be long till we shall see Him in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered. And in His presence, all the trials and sufferings of this life will be as nothingness. '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.' [Hebrews 10:35-37.] Look up, look up, and let your faith continually increase. Let this faith guide you along the narrow path that leads through the gates of the city of God into the great beyond, the wide, unbounded future of glory that is for the redeemed." —Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 287, 288.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do the New Testament and also Hebrews present such a strong message about end-time events? Why are end-time events, such as the Second Coming, so important to the Christian faith?
2. Look again at the Ellen White quote above. How does her statement about those who fought "the good fight of faith" fit in perfectly with the basic message of the book of Hebrews?
3. According to some of the texts this week, those who have accepted Christ have, even now, eternal life. How would you explain what this means to a non-Christian, who sees Christians go to the grave just as nonbelievers do?

SUMMARY: As guests and strangers in this world, we are on the move toward a goal, the heavenly city. We are on the way to see God face to face.



I Don't Want to Become a Dog

J. H. Zachary

All her life Arasa had worked to build a worthy karma that would prepare her for a better life after her death. She carefully followed the instructions of her Buddhist priests. She was taught that there is no forgiveness for the evil that one does. In the next life each person will be rewarded for the good and evil in one's life. "If you do evil you could become a dog in your next life," she was taught.

While in her late teens she witnessed an accident: An automobile ran over a dog. It lay before her dead in the road. A horror filled her heart. *I don't want to be a dog in the next life. What shall I do?*

The Buddhist teaching of reincarnation filled her heart with fear. With no one to take care of the evil in her life, she would one day face the consequences. She began to wonder, *Is this teaching really true? Will I suffer in my next existence for all my evil?*

One day a friend invited her to attend a Christmas party. She had never attended a Christian meeting. She knew nothing about Jesus. During the party she heard the story of Jesus. She was impressed by His miracle birth and His life of service for others. The amazing story of the cruel death of this wonderful Person touched her heart.

She was amazed to learn that He died for the evil in the lives of others. He was a good man, perfect in every way. She left that party with some new thoughts. *The Christian God died for my sins! I will not be a dog in the next life.*

Then, when she was 20 years of age, her grandfather from Germany came for a visit. He was a Christian. He repeatedly told her that Jesus was soon to return. She must get ready to meet Him. She took Bible studies and was baptized.

Arasa felt a great burden for her family. One of her brothers filled his house with many idols. He resisted Arasa's testimony. Arasa prayed for him every day. "I have seen a miracle," she told me. "My brother is now a believer in Jesus. Thank You, Jesus, for being so kind and powerful."

Arasa (left). J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for *The Quiet Hour*.



Bible Study Guide for Fourth Quarter, 2003

The topic of study for this quarter's Bible Study Guide is the book of Jonah, written by JoAnn Davidson. The focus of Jonah is not on the "great fish" that swallowed Jonah alive but on the "great God" who prepared that fish. The book of Jonah reveals one thing that never changes: God's love for even the most unlovable among us.

Lesson 1: Biblical Prophets, Modern Critics

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: Prophetic Autobiographies.

Monday: "And the Word of the Lord . . ."

Tuesday: More Historical Pointers.

Wednesday: The Miracles in Jonah.

Thursday: The Miracles in Jonah (continued).

MEMORY TEXT: Amos 3:7, NKJV.

SABBATH GEM: God had a good reason for putting Jonah in the Bible. With the book of Jonah, He shows us He is more than willing to do the unexpected in order to fulfill His purposes for us.

Lesson 2: People and Places

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: The Personal Touch (John. 1:1, 2).

Monday: The Hair on Our Heads (Matt. 10:30).

Tuesday: "Hey, You!"

Wednesday: People and Places.

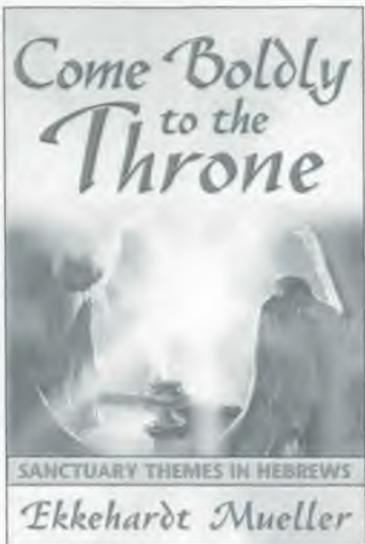
Thursday: Nineveh—That Great City.

MEMORY TEXT: Jeremiah 1:5.

SABBATH GEM: The first few verses of the book of Jonah exemplify this biblical truth: God not only knows each of us personally but He is interested in our lives.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired

The regular Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.



BOLD ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

The companion book to the Adult Bible Study Guide for third quarter, 2003

New Testament scholar Ekkehardt Mueller takes us on an incredible voyage into the heavens themselves, where Jesus, our High Priest, "ever liveth to make intercession" for us. *Come Boldly to the Throne* reveals the reality of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and the importance of that ministry to His people on earth.

In this book based on Hebrews, we see the Cross revealed in the only context that can fully explain its significance—the heavenly sanctuary. You will rejoice in the hope, promises, and assurance that exude from every page of this faith-affirming book.
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Mission Projects:

- ① Men's dormitory, Solusi University, Zimbabwe
- ② Water system, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya
- ③ Administration building and men's dormitory, Tanzania Adventist College, Tanzania



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