
What Is the Sanctuary?

God had a problem. How could He save man, show mercy, and still be a just God? The answer is in the sanctuary service. “The wages of sin is death” and “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Without God’s plan of salvation, as brought to view in the sanctuary service, our sins would have doomed us. The sanctuary service teaches us a part of the plan of salvation Satan does not want us to understand. Romans 3:23 and 6:23.

Christ’s death on the cross is one part of the sanctuary service. In the sanctuary service Christ is both the lamb and the priest: the *lamb* that died and the *priest* who ministered the blood of the innocent lamb. Christ is both (a) the sacrifice and (b) our Priest. Others often teach us about Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, but they seldom teach us of His work today as our High Priest. Both are essential to salvation. When your clothes get dirty, you take them to the laundry. Sin makes us “dirty.” The sanctuary is God’s laundry for sin.

First, we learn of the earthly sanctuary built by Moses. Second, we learn of the “true tabernacle.” The Lord built the sanctuary of the new covenant. “The Lord built it, and not man.” Hebrews 8:1, 2. “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” In other words,

“After two thousand and three hundred days God will cleanse the sanctuary.” Daniel 8:14. God would cleanse His sanctuary in 2300 prophetic days, or 2300 actual years. (*The year-day prophetic principle; see the Appendix.*)

Paul teaches us that the new-covenant sanctuary in heaven needed to be “purified” or cleansed. It is God who purifies His sanctuary. It is God who cleanses it.

“The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. It was necessary then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” Hebrews 9:22, 23.

What Is Happening in Heaven?

How can we understand what is happening in the sanctuary in heaven? We cannot see what is happening there. However, we can read about the sanctuary on earth from the biblical records. The sanctuary on earth was an “example and shadow of heavenly things.” Hebrews 8:5, KJV. The sanctuary on earth had two separate rooms, representing the two parts, the two divisions, of the plan of salvation.

There were two divisions. One division was represented in what occurred daily in the earthly sanctuary. The second was represented in what occurred once a year. Day by day, the sinner transferred his sins from himself to an innocent sacrifice, by confessing his sins over the head of an innocent lamb, symbolic of Christ. He then killed the innocent lamb. The priest took some of the lamb’s blood and sprinkled it in the first room of the sanctuary. This represented the symbolic transfer of the sinner’s sins to the first room of the sanctuary. Leviticus 3 and 4.

The Sanctuary (Symbolically) Is God’s Laundry

Just as we send dirty clothes to the laundry, we send our dirty sins to the sanctuary every time we confess our sins. We must send our dirty sins to the sanctuary each day. God eventually removes sin from the sanctuary. This is like removing dirty water from the laundry.

“He will make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so will he do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.” He will “cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.” Leviticus 16: 16, 19, NKJV.

Once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, two goats were chosen. One goat represented Christ, and the other represented Satan. “One lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat.” Leviticus 16: 8.

The priest killed the goat, representing Jesus, as a sin offering. He sprinkled the blood of this sin offering over the ark, the container for the Ten Commandments. The priest, representing Christ, carried all the sins that had accumulated in the sanctuary, out of the sanctuary. “He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all . . . their sins and put them on the goat’s head.” Leviticus 16:21.

This put the sins on the goat, “and he shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it into the desert.” Leviticus 16:21, 22. The goat carries the sins into the wilderness and wanders until he dies. These sins of God’s people were then considered forever separated from them.

When we confess our sin to Jesus, we send our sin to Jesus, and Jesus sends it to the new-covenant sanctuary in heaven. Before Christ’s death on the cross, the earthly sanctuary daily explained the plan of salvation in the death of the lamb. Every time they killed a lamb, they were saying, “I believe God will send His Son to die for me. I believe my sin is so great that there is no other way to find forgiveness. Sinless God will become a man, live a sinless life, and die the death I deserve. My faith in God’s plan will permit God to give me the life He deserves. What a trade! He will take my punishment and give me His life!”

The law of gravity causes us to fall if we get off balance. We have discovered another law that allows us to defeat the law of gravity. We have discovered the law of aerodynamics. This law allows us to overcome the law of gravity and fly like the birds in airplanes. The law of sin is that sin kills. Sin would have killed everyone eternally unless God had a plan that would overcome the law that sin kills. “All have sinned” and “the wages of sin is death.” We were all doomed. God’s plan on how He could save us from death is found in His sanctuary. Romans 3:23, 6:23.

How Were Sinners Saved Before the Cross?

Were people saved before Christ died, as some teach, by keeping God’s law? Has that changed and now we are saved by the death of Christ on the cross? No! The plan of salvation has always been the same. Salvation is now and always has been through the death of Christ. The sinner, before Christ died on the cross, was saved as a result of what Christ would do in

the future. The sinner foresaw the death of Christ in each lamb that was killed. The innocent lamb died in the sinner's place. This represented the fact that Christ would come and die in the sinner's place. Before Christ died, God's children lived by the promise that He would come and die for them. After Christ died on the cross, we look back at what He did and find salvation in what He did. Now we live by the promise that He did come and die for us. In both cases, we are all saved by the same sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ.

1. I am sinful and guilty and deserving of death. I have sinned. I have broken God's Ten Commandment law.

2. I confess my sin over the head of a lamb. This transfers my sin to the lamb. I no longer have that sin. Now the lamb has my sin. "The wages of sin is death," so the lamb must die. Day by day a substitute (innocent lamb) died in the sinner's place.

3. After killing the lamb, the sin is symbolically in the animal's blood. The Priest takes blood from the lamb. Now the Priest has my sin.

4. He enters the holy apartment of the sanctuary and sprinkles it before the veil (behind the veil are the Ten Commandments I have disobeyed). Where is my sin? I do not have the sin I confessed. It is now in the sanctuary.

5. Before Christ's death on the cross, this act would symbolically transfer my sins from me to the earthly sanctuary.

6. After Christ's death on the cross, when I confess my sins, they are in fact transferred to His great original sanctuary in heaven.

Day by day, through confession, I send my sin into the sanctuary. Confession of sin to Jesus does not cancel the sin. Confession transfers the sin from me to Christ, who transfers them to the heavenly sanctuary. God does not remove, cancel, or blot out sin until the day of atonement. In the earthly sanctuary the day of atonement came once a year. In the new-covenant sanctuary in heaven, this work began in 1844.

7. On the day of atonement, the high priest would take the blood of an offering, representing Christ's sacrifice, and sprinkle it over the mercy seat. The mercy seat was the top of the ark. Beneath the mercy seat, within the ark, were the Ten Commandments. He would, then, take the sins *from* the sanctuary.

8. The high priest would then confess them over the head of the live goat, representing Satan. The goat was led away. The goat wandered until he died, and the sins were then considered forever gone from God's children.

They did not kill the goat that represented Satan, as a sacrifice. It had nothing to do with the actual plan of salvation. God is just, and He will make Satan ultimately responsible for all the sin he has tempted people to commit. God will blot out Satan's life in the final destruction of sin and sinners.

What can we learn from the earthly sanctuary about what is happening in the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus now is? What can we learn from this example and shadow of heavenly things?

First Division: Sins to the Sanctuary **Second Division: Sins From the Sanctuary**

For eighteen centuries God took all sins, confessed through Christ, from the sinner and transferred them to the first apartment (first division of Christ's work) of the sanctuary. Nevertheless, the sins of all people remained upon the record books. Before Christ's work for the salvation of men is completed, there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary (second division of Christ's work). In 1844 our High Priest entered the most holy, to begin the last division of his solemn work—to cleanse the sanctuary.

1. When we confess our sins, Christ transfers them to the new-covenant sanctuary in heaven.

2. The actual cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is the removal, or blotting out, of the sins that God has recorded in the books of heaven. Revelation 22:12.

The prophecy “unto 2300 days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” was preached worldwide before 1844. At that time in history, people thought the earth was the sanctuary. They thought that the cleansing of the sanctuary would be the cleansing of the world by fire at the second coming of Christ. Jesus, however, did not come to earth, cleansing it with fire, in 1844. Instead, He came to the second part of His sanctuary to begin the second part of His work. He began the work of judgment in the most holy apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, in preparation for His return to Planet Earth.

