

The Sanctuary Message



Week Two

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
Hebrews 9:1–15



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THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY DISCOVERED!

Early Millerite Adventists adopted the popular view that the sanctuary is the earth. When Millerites applied this misinterpretation to Daniel 8:14 (and several other key verses), they wrongly concluded that the earth would be cleansed by fire at Christ's Second Coming in either 1843 or 1844. Unfortunately, many believers adopted false explanations when Christ didn't return. Some thought the date was wrong and therefore set new dates, but that idea eventually fizzled out. Others believed Jesus had already returned in a spiritual sense rather than physically or that the judgment had taken place in one day. Today, we believe it's an ongoing judgment that began in 1844 and will continue until shortly before Christ's return.

As the believers grappled with their bitter disappointment, a few could not shake the conviction that the problem lay in their interpretation of the sanctuary, not in their calculation of the date. On February 7th, 1846, 25-year-old O.R.L. Crosier published an article in *The Day-Star Extra* that described the connection between the end of the 2,300-day prophecy, the heavenly sanctuary, and Jesus' end-time ministry. He explained how the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 was not on earth but in heaven and described how Jesus moved from one compartment of the heavenly sanctuary to another, beginning a new phase of ministry with the work of judgment. He also showed how the Day of Atonement would be fulfilled by Jesus' ministry in heaven. The article had a few doctrinal errors, but God was slowly leading His people to a fuller and broader understanding of His Word.



inScribe

Write out Hebrews 9:1–15 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out a portion of the primary passage. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.

inGest



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

How do both Hebrews 8 and 9 demonstrate that Jesus is ministering in a heavenly sanctuary?

What do we learn about God from seeing His mercy toward people who learn biblical teachings slowly?



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FOLLOW THE PATTERN

The belief prior to 1844 was that the sanctuary was on the earth. William Miller had identified seven possible sanctuaries in the Bible: Jesus, Judah, Heaven, the Jerusalem Temple as a whole, the Most Holy Place within the Jerusalem Temple, the earth, and the saints. He concluded that the only one that would ostensibly need cleansing is the earth. Despite his deep disappointment in 1844, Miller never lost hope in Jesus' soon return. He passed away in 1849, still a fervent believer. In his last years, he lost his eyesight and was no longer at the forefront of the continued doctrinal advancements, but he had faithfully served his role in the Advent movement. Though William Miller never fully accepted the teachings of the heavenly sanctuary and the Sabbath, Ellen White wrote that God will raise him up at the Second Coming (*Early Writings* [1882], 258). This is a good reminder that God is patient and merciful with each of us and only holds us responsible for the truths we know.

As the movement developed, Hebrews 8 and 9 became fundamental to their understanding of both the sanctuary and Daniel 8:14. Hebrews 9 reveals that there are two sanctuaries: one on earth (vv. 1, 2) and one in heaven (v. 11), and Hebrews 8:2 shows that Jesus is a minister in the true tabernacle, which was constructed by the Lord, not man. Hebrews 8:4, 5 reveals that the priests' ministry in the earthly sanctuary mirrors the ministry of our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

The link between the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries is fascinating; the earthly sanctuary is a mirror of its heavenly counterpart and sheds light on what takes place there. The earthly sanctuary had two types of services: the daily and the yearly (Heb. 9:6, 7). Priests went into the Holy Place every day with the blood of various sacrifices, but the high priest only entered the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement, which was a day of cleansing for the temple and atonement for the sins of the entire nation (v. 7). As our High Priest, Jesus entered the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood to cover the sins of the world once and for all (v. 12). The references to the heavenly sanctuary in the New Testament point back to the services of the earthly sanctuary, giving us deeper insights into Jesus' ministry as High Priest in heaven.

It would have been an exciting privilege to be one of the pioneers who figured out what really took place on October 22, 1844. As the believers were earnestly trying to understand their mistakes and grapple with their disappointment, God led them into a broader, deeper, and fuller understanding of the gospel and the Bible, as He will do for us if we turn to His Word with the same attitude of dependence and diligence.

THE SANCTUARY CLEANSED

Seeing that Jesus is faithfully ministering in a sanctuary in heaven is a beautiful discovery that prompts certain questions: If the high priest on earth was responsible for cleansing the earthly sanctuary once a year and the sanctuary on earth was a copy of the sanctuary in heaven, did the sanctuary in heaven need to be cleansed, too? From what?

Twice every day, the priest entered the earthly sanctuary to make atonement for the people (Heb. 9:6), a process that required blood and death (v. 22). Every repentant sinner prayed over their sacrifice before it was killed, transferring their sins to the innocent animal and condemning it to death. For sins committed by a priest or by the whole congregation, the priest then took some of the blood into the Holy Place and sprinkled it before the veil, transferring the sin into the sanctuary (Lev. 4:17, 18). (For sins that were committed by rulers or individuals sins were not symbolically carried into the sanctuary by the sprinkling of blood, but by the priest eating the sacrifice in the Holy Place. See Leviticus 4:22–35 and 10:17, 18.) The sins began to pile up as they were transferred in every day for an entire year, making the sanctuary a place that was defiled by sin (Lev. 20:3). The Day of Atonement was the day when the sins were removed and the sanctuary cleansed (Lev. 16:19).

This yearly cleansing of the earthly sanctuary was a copy of a greater cleansing that would take place in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:23). It is strange to think of heaven as anything other than pure and undefiled, but because heaven is involved in dealing with the sin problem, heaven has had to behold sin—there’s a certain pollution that has affected heaven, too. In the earthly sanctuary, when the priest sprinkled blood on the horns of the altar, the blood was a visible (and smelly) testimony that sin had taken place and the penalty of sin, death, had been served. That blood polluted the sanctuary and was a reminder that the camp had been defiled with sin. The prophet Jeremiah interprets the blood on the horns of the altar to mean that the sin of Judah was recorded on those horns (Jer. 17:1). Just as sin was recorded with blood in the earthly sanctuary, so sin is recorded in the heavenly sanctuary. Just as the earthly sanctuary needed to be cleansed from these reminders of sin, so the sanctuary in heaven needs cleansing from its own record of sins. The Day of Atonement provides this cleansing, erasing the written record.

On the Day of Atonement, two goats were brought to the sanctuary and lots were cast (Lev. 16:7–10). One was offered as a sin offering, its blood sprinkled on the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place, and the other was the scape goat. All the sins of the previous year were laid on the scape goat and it was taken into the wilderness, never to return (vv. 20–22). God desired to impress upon Israel the seriousness of sin and the importance of spiritual cleansing. These actions, of course, symbolized how sin would ultimately be dealt with, but there were other spiritual meanings within the process as well.

(Cont. on p. 21.)



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this lesson? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Without having a physical structure on earth, how can we keep the vividness of this service, the seriousness of sin, and the need for cleansing fresh in our minds?



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inSpect



What relationship do the following verses have with Hebrews 9:1–15?

Revelation 11:19

Hebrews 8:1–5

Leviticus 16:16–19

Hebrews 9:23–27

Hebrews 6:19, 20

Leviticus 16:30

Jeremiah 17:1

2 Corinthians 5:10

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with the primary passage?

(Cont. from inTerpret, p. 20):

God never intended that any of us should forget the importance of the service and become caught up in the works of religion (see Heb. 9:14). The cleansing of the earthly sanctuary was a type of how the one in heaven will be cleansed, but let's not miss that God ultimately wants to cleanse our lives of sin. The new covenant highlighted in Hebrews 8 and 9 is about not only the physical location of the true sanctuary but also, more importantly, the promise that God will remember our sins no more (Heb. 8:12). The New Covenant is a promise that we have a High Priest who is interceding for us so we might be ready to receive the eternal inheritance God has prepared for us (Heb. 9:15).

Review your memorized verse from Hebrews 9:1–15.

THE GOSPEL SEEN AND EXPERIENCED

It's often said a picture is worth a thousand words. Indeed, there are many iconic images that require no verbal explanation. Rather than merely writing about the concepts and nuances of salvation, Jesus created the sanctuary, a tangible model of how to be saved that His people could experience firsthand.

Complex terminology such as justification and sanctification and words with profound meanings like mercy, pardon, forgiveness, and love are beautifully illustrated in the various furniture and services of the sanctuary. We see Jesus' sacrifice in the way an innocent lamb had to suffer death because the sins of the bearer were symbolically transferred to it. The sinner's freedom at the expense of the innocent lamb's life presented a vivid, tactile example of God's grace and pointed the sinner to Jesus, the ultimate substitute and sacrifice.

Each piece of furniture in the Holy Place (Heb. 9:2) not only speaks about different aspects of Jesus' ministry but also has applications to our own lives. For example, of the three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place (the lampstand, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense), the altar of incense was physically located the closest to the Most Holy Place, where the presence of God dwelt and His glory was seen. With the sweet smell of incense rising from the altar, floating over the curtain, and settling on the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat, the altar of incense beautifully represented the connection to God that we can have through prayer (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3) This proximity between the altar of incense and the ark of the covenant represents how close we can get to God today through prayer, opening our hearts to Him as we would to a dear friend. The picture of the sanctuary assures us that God is on His throne of grace desiring to receive our petitions (Heb. 4:16).

The sanctuary exemplifies the perfect blend of God's justice and mercy; it illustrates these two aspects of His character. In this model, we see that justice and mercy are not mutually exclusive but coexist in perfect harmony. We see the love of Christ in the courtyard with His sacrifice, and we see God's judgment in the Most Holy Place not far away. We see His mercy when the temple is cleansed of all sin.

More than any other teaching we believe as a church, the sanctuary shows how many truths are connected as a system, each one magnifying an aspect of Christ's character. It provides us with a framework, a grid to fit things into. It shows that there is sound logic and reason within the unfathomable love of God that overwhelms sinners such as us. When presented correctly, in the framework of the sanctuary, the gospel can truly reach anyone.



inVite

Meditate on the primary passage again and look for where Jesus is.



What is He saying to you through the texts of the week?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

In what ways should the picture of the sanctuary shape the way we live our daily lives?

Prayer Response:



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Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?

After this week's study of the
chapter, what are some personal
applications you are convicted of
in your life?

What are some practical
applications you must make in
your school, family, workplace,
and church life?



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THE TEMPLE IN HEAVEN

"The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great advent movement and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people. As the disciples of Jesus after the terrible night of their anguish and disappointment were 'glad when they saw the Lord,' so did those now rejoice who had looked in faith for His second coming. They had expected Him to appear in glory to give reward to His servants. As their hopes were disappointed, they had lost sight of Jesus, and with Mary at the sepulcher they cried: 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.' Now in the holy of holies they again beheld Him, their compassionate High Priest, soon to appear as their king and deliverer. Light from the sanctuary illumined the past, the present, and the future. They knew that God had led them by His unerring providence. Though, like the first disciples, they themselves had failed to understand the message which they bore, yet it had been in every respect correct. In proclaiming it they had fulfilled the purpose of God, and their labor had not been in vain in the Lord. Begotten 'again unto a lively hope,' they rejoiced 'with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

"Both the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed,' and the first angel's message, 'Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come,' pointed to Christ's ministration in the most holy place, to the investigative judgment, and not to the coming of Christ for the redemption of His people and the destruction of the wicked. The mistake had not been in the reckoning of the prophetic periods, but in the *event* to take place at the end of the 2,300 days. Through this error the believers had suffered disappointment, yet all that was foretold by the prophecy, and all that they had any Scripture warrant to expect, had been accomplished. At the very time when they were lamenting the failure of their hopes, the event had taken place which was foretold by the message, and which must be fulfilled before the Lord could appear to give reward to His servants.

"Christ had come, not to the earth, as they expected, but, as foreshadowed in the type, to the most holy place of the temple of God in heaven. He is represented by the prophet Daniel as coming at this time to the Ancient of Days: 'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came'—not to the earth, but—'to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.' Daniel 7:13." (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* [1911], 423, 424.)



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



What can we learn from the early pioneers' experience of being bitterly disappointed after such careful study? Are there aspects of their studying process we should continue to do today?

Why didn't God give someone a vision to provide the correct view of this doctrine? Why allow the believers to struggle to figure it out?

In what ways does God allow us to struggle and grapple with the Bible today? How is this process good for us?

What does the sanctuary tell us about how God uses various learning styles to teach us? How should we adapt what we know when sharing with others?

We are told that the Sanctuary is the very center of Christ's work on behalf of man. How does better understanding the Sanctuary help us be more Christ centered?