

10. Jesus Opens the Way Through the Veil (1Q 2022— In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews)

Biblical Material: Heb. 9:24; Exod. 19:3, 4; Heb. 12:18–21; Lev. 16:1, 2; Heb. 10:19–22; Col. 3:1.

Quotes

- They [the Israelites] had drifted so far away that they could not comprehend how God could live with them, being-invisible, so God said, “Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.” (Ex. 25:8) The pillar of cloud above the tabernacle and God’s visible presence manifested within, helped the Israelites more easily to comprehend the real abiding presence of the Lord with them. *Stephen Haskell*
- The Sanctuary was the heart of the typical system. There the Lord placed his name, manifested his glory, and held converse with the High Priest, relative to the welfare of Israel. *O.R.L. Crozier*
- *Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe* concerning the sanctuary here on earth: 1) It was on earth. 2) It was but a shadow of things to come. 3) It was inaccessible to the people. 4) It was temporary. 5) It was ineffective to change the hearts of the people.

Questions

What is important to define “which sanctuary”? What is the main emphasis in these chapters? Are there dangers in becoming too detailed in our analysis of the sanctuary? What is the role of Jesus in the sanctuary, and how does the book of Hebrews enlighten this? What is the essential meaning of “the sanctuary message”? How is it relevant today?

Bible summary

“For Christ hasn’t entered a Most Holy Place constructed by human beings that is only a pattern of the original. He has entered heaven itself, and now appears on our behalf, speaking for us in God’s presence.” Heb. 9:24 FBV. God reminds the people through Moses what he did for them in freeing them from slavery in Egypt (Exod. 19:3, 4). Paul reminds his audience that they weren’t frightened as the Israelites were at Mount Sinai (Heb. 12:18–21). God warned Moses that Aaron could not to come into the Most Holy Place when he chose, or he would die (Lev. 16:1, 2). But because of what Jesus has accomplished, we are able to enter the Most Holy Place (Heb. 10:19–22). We are to look above for what comes from heaven (Col. 3:1).

Comment

People wonder why God instituted the sacrificial system when it didn’t “work” as is clear from the discussion in Hebrews. Isn’t it because at least there was some way in which believers might catch a glimpse of what God could do? And is it not the same for us today? We too can become preoccupied with the system and all the procedures and fail to see the God who wants us to come to him for healing salvation? Even Paul refuses to get into sanctuary-ology—see Hebrews 9:5.

The danger in looking too much at the sanctuary is that we spend our time on the symbols and the practices, and don’t see God. For as is so often mentioned yet so little practiced, the sanctuary was a picture book, a teaching device, an illustration to help an illiterate band of wanderers the fundamental truths about God and salvation.

So instead of asking the interpretation of every piece of furniture, let us ask what insights into the nature and character of God are provided by the sanctuary. This is exactly what Paul is doing in Hebrews, so it is hardly off-topic! He says that the Holy Spirit was showing us (9:8), and then concludes: “They’re just religious regulations—about food and drink, and various ceremonies involving washing—which were put in place until the time of God’s new way of relating to him.” (Hebrews 9:10 FBV). In other words, they were teaching tools on the way to truth, but they were not the truth. Jesus is the truth—and what is the truth he came to reveal? The full truth about God, and the solution of the issues in the Great Controversy, and how he could save us from ourselves. It is only from that perspective that the sanctuary makes sense. Jesus’ ministry in the sanctuary should not be seen as contradicting his clearest statement where he says, “I’ve been talking to you using picture language. But shortly I won’t use such picture language any more when I speak to you. Instead I’ll explain the Father to you very plainly. At that time you will ask in my name. I’m not saying to you that I will plead with the Father on your behalf, for the Father himself loves you.” John 16:25-27 FBV. His disciples are delighted to hear such truths, and cry out, “Now you’re talking very plainly and not using picture language.” (v.29).

If the plainest, clearest truth is that Jesus is not pleading for us, what do we do with such ideas that Jesus is pleading with the Father for us? Actually, Hebrews does not say that. It does say (9:24) that he entered heaven “to appear for us.” But we do not have the image of him begging the Father to be nice to us, trying to persuade God to do anything other than he already intended. To say otherwise would be to split the trinity, to set the Godhead against each other.

The danger of the sanctuary message, misunderstood, is to suggest that Jesus (the good God) has to battle with the Father (the angry and hostile God) in order to achieve our salvation. In this way we reflect the charges of Satan who condemned God for being hostile and unforgiving, an unloving and vengeful Being who took pleasure in vindictive punishment of erring creatures. We would do well to totally reject such a picture. It was not to induce love in the Father’s heart that Jesus came and died, but because of the Father’s love!

Ellen White comments

While Jesus ministers in the true sanctuary above, He is through His Holy Spirit working through His earthly messengers. {CH 545.1}

In the balances of the sanctuary, the gifts of the poor, made from love to Christ, are not estimated according to the amount given, but according to the love which prompts the sacrifice. The promises of Jesus will as surely be realized by the liberal poor man, who has but little to offer, but who gives that little freely, as by the wealthy man who gives of his abundance. 3T 398, 399. {CS 180.1}

“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. Though the ministration was to be removed from the earthly to the heavenly temple; though the sanctuary and our great high priest would be invisible to human sight, yet the disciples were to suffer no loss thereby. They would realize no break in their communion, and no diminution of power because of the Saviour’s absence. While Jesus ministers in the sanctuary above, He is still by His Spirit the minister of the church on earth. He is withdrawn from the eye of sense, but His parting promise is fulfilled, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Matt. 28:20. While He delegates His power to inferior ministers, His energizing presence is still with His church. {DA 166.2}