

The Heavenly Sanctuary: Real Or Symbolic?

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

Wow! Another newsletter within less than a week! What is happening? Let me reassure you that it is not my intent to put pressure on those who have not yet finished reading the previous study on "Biblical Errancy and Inerrancy." Frankly, I do not expect you to read my lengthy studies right away. Save them and read them when you have a breathing space.

Two events have persuaded me to post immediately this Bible study on the heavenly sanctuary. The first, is the numerous messages I received during the past few days from subscribers in different parts of the world urging me to comment on the current set of Sabbath School lessons on *Sanctuary Themes in the Book of Hebrews*. Some Adventists are questioning the traditional Adventist understanding of a bipartite heavenly sanctuary, with a Holy and Most Holy places. They find it especially difficult to accept the notion of Christ's entering in the Most Holy Place in 1844 to engage in the final phase of His ministry of judgment and cleansing.

Controversy over this issue has troubled our Adventist Church during much of its history. In 1905 Albion Foss Ballenger, an influential minister, left the church over this question and published a book *Cast Out for the Cross of Christ*. In it Ballenger argues that Christ fulfilled the cleansing of the sanctuary typified by the Day of Atonement, at the ascension when He began His ministry "within the veil" (Heb 6:19), that is, within the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary.

Recently, Desmond Ford, an Australian Bible teacher, produced a lengthy manuscript (about 1000 pages) arguing along the same lines of Ballenger that the cleansing of the sanctuary, accomplished in the earthly sanctuary on the Day of Atonement, began in heaven at Christ's ascension. Consequently there is no final "cleansing" phase of Christ's ministry began in 1844.

The impact of Ford's teaching is still felt today, not only in his native Australia where a good number of Adventist pastors have left the church, but also in other countries like America. Recently a medical doctor asked me during the fellowship dinner at a large church: "Dr. Sam, when do you think our Adventist church will give up the belief in the investigative judgment? My two sons, who are also medical doctors, no longer attend church, because they find this teaching unbiblical and unacceptable." I replied that I see no reason for giving up such a beautiful truth that enshrines the Good News of a final cleansing and restoration of our lives and of this world.

The second factor that persuaded me to post this study immediately, is the study of the Sabbath School Lesson for August 16-22, entitled "Jesus and the Sanctuary." I spent several hours studying this and the following lessons in preparation for teaching the lesson last Sabbath, August 23, in the balcony class of the Pioneer Memorial Church, on the campus of Andrews University.

Overall the lessons are well-written, but due to the limitation of space and scope, they hardly provide an adequate discussion of the issues we are facing today. Thus I decided to post an excerpt from my book on *THE FALL FESTIVALS*, where I examine at length the following important questions: Is there a *real* heavenly sanctuary that needs to be cleansed like the earthly one? What is the nature of the heavenly sanctuary? What causes the defilement of the heavenly sanctuary? Does the New Testament teach that

the typological cleansing of the Day of Atonement was fulfilled at the Cross or is yet to be fulfilled prior to the Second Advent? What is the meaning and relevance of the Day of Atonement for today?

These questions address the defining identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. After all our Adventist church came into existence as a result of the study of the heavenly sanctuary. It was Hiram Edson's cornfield vision on the morning after the October 22, 1844 disappointment, that provided the key to explain the disappointment. Edson wrote of this occasion: "I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our High Priest coming out of the most holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of the sanctuary; and that He had a work to perform in the most holy before coming to this earth" (quoted in F. D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, p. 458).

This belief that Christ began in 1844 a final phase of His ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary, is unique to Seventh-day Adventists. No other Christian denomination include the doctrine of the sanctuary in their statement of beliefs. Simply stated, if our Seventh-day Adventist Church is wrong in her belief about the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary, then it could well be wrong on many other things.

It is my firm belief that the doctrine of the sanctuary is a unique contribution of our Adventist church to the Christian community. Christians often wonder, What on earth is Jesus doing in Heaven? Almost two millennia have passed since He resurrected and ascended to heaven, and yet He has not returned. Has Christ, who loved us so much to give His life for us, forgotten us? Is Christ on vacation recovering from His exhaustive earthly redemptive mission? By no means! The doctrine of the sanctuary reassures us that our Savior is not on vacation, but He is working hard to bring to completion His redemptive mission (Heb 7:25).

The intent of this study is to help especially Sabbath School Teachers who often seek to understand more fully the lesson in order to make it meaningful to the class members. In many ways this Bible study covers the ground of the next few Sabbath school lessons dealing with the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. It is my fervent hope and prayer that this expanded study of this vital biblical truth, will prove to be helpful, not only to Sabbath School Teachers, but to all those Adventists and Christians in general, who are eager to understand more fully the Christ's redemptive ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

Interested readers who wish to receive my more comprehensive study on the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment, are welcomed to call me at (269) 471-2915 or email me your request at <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net> I will be glad to mail you the two books, *The Fall Festivals* and *The Advent Hope*, where I examine this subject in two chapters.

THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY: REAL OR SYMBOLIC?

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Our Bible study is divided into four parts. The first part endeavors to establish whether the New Testament's references to the heavenly sanctuary should be taken metaphorically as symbolic of the spiritual presence of God, or literally as allusions to a real place where Christ ministers on our behalf. The second part considers the nature of the heavenly sanctuary by examining the vertical and horizontal correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. The third part analyzes the allusions to the Day of Atonement in both Hebrews and Revelation. The aim is to ascertain the meaning and function of the Day of Atonement in the New Testament. The fourth part considers the relevance of the meaning and message of the Day of Atonement for the Christian life today.

THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY: REAL OR SYMBOLIC?

The existence and reality of the heavenly sanctuary is clearly affirmed in both the Old and New Testaments. In fact, the New Testament understanding of the heavenly sanctuary is dependent upon the Old Testament view of the same. The books of Hebrews and Revelation provide us with the clearest affirmation of the reality of the heavenly sanctuary.

In the book of Hebrews, Jesus is presented as “a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set not by man but by the Lord” (Heb 8:2). The reality of the heavenly sanctuary is established in Hebrews by means of the typological correspondence that exists between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary. The author affirms that the earthly sanctuary was “a copy (*hupodeigma*) and shadow (*skia*) of the heavenly sanctuary” (Heb 8:5). He supports this assertion by quoting Exodus 25:40: “For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern (*tupos*) which was shown you on the mountain’” (Heb 8:5).

It is evident that the author of Hebrews derives the correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary from the original account of the construction of the tabernacle, where God instructs Moses, saying: “Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you concerning the *pattern* [*tabnit*] of the tabernacle, and all its furniture, so you shall make it. . . . And see that you make them after the *pattern* [*tabnit*] for them, which is being shown you on the mountain” (Ex 25:8-9, 40).¹

The Hebrews word *tabnit* (“pattern”) which is used three times in Exodus 25:9, 40, is derived from the verb *banah*, “to build.” The word occurs 23 times in the Hebrew Bible and conveys “the general meanings of ‘likeness’ (as in an image),² ‘form’ (as in an appearance),³ ‘model’ (as used to make a copy),⁴ and ‘plan’ (as in design or sketch).”⁵ From the usages of *tabnit* we may reasonably infer that Moses received not only verbal instructions, but also some kind of a model of the structure he was to build.

“The significance of the term *tabnit* (pattern),” as Frank Holbrook points out, “is not dependent on whether Moses was shown a model or simply architectural specifications, or both. The question rather is whether the term signifies only an idea in the mind of God or points to a higher reality with objective existence—namely, a heavenly sanctuary, a heavenly dwelling place of the Deity.”⁶

The Correspondence Between Earthly and Heavenly Sanctuaries

Two major facts indicate that the “pattern” (*tabnit*) shown to Moses reflected in some ways an objective heavenly sanctuary. First, is the Biblical understanding of a vertical correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. In the Old Testament, this correspondence is expressed in a variety of ways.

At the establishment of the first temple, God promised Solomon: “Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in my statutes . . . I will dwell among the children of Israel” (1 King 6:12-13). However, in his dedicatory prayer Solomon acknowledges that the real dwelling place of God is in heaven. “Hearken thou to the supplication . . . of thy people Israel, when they pray toward this place; yea, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place” (1 King 8:30). These texts suggest that there is a correspondence between the dwelling place of God in the heavenly temple, and His dwelling place in the earthly temple.

In the Psalms are numerous references where the heavenly sanctuary is placed in close parallelism with the earthly sanctuary. “The Lord is in his holy *temple*, the Lord’s throne is in *heaven*” (Ps 11:4).⁷ God’s sanctuary is located in Zion: “May he send you help from the sanctuary, and give you support from Zion” (Ps 20:2). Yet it is also located in heaven: “Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, and his power is in the skies [heaven]. Terrible is God in his sanctuary” (Ps 68:34-35).

On the basis of an extensive analysis of these and similar texts, Niels-Erik Andreasen concludes: “The relationship between the two sanctuaries is expressed through the idea of a pattern, according to which the earthly sanctuary is modeled upon the heavenly. The resultant correspondence between the two sanctuaries is not a strictly material and spatial one in the sense that the earthly could take the ‘place’ of the heavenly. The relationship between them is functional rather than spatial and material. The heavenly sanctuary extends into the earthly, assuring it of efficacy or standing before it in judgment upon any empty formalities or idolatrous practices. The earthly sanctuary merges into the heavenly, providing a ladder connecting man with God and binding earth to heaven.”⁸

The Heavenly Sanctuary in Hebrews

The book of Hebrews confirms the reality of the heavenly sanctuary which is affirmed in the Old Testament. William G. Johnsson, current editor of *Adventist Review*, wrote his dissertation on the book of Hebrews. He highlights the reality of the heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews, saying: “While he [the author] does not enter upon a description of the heavenly sanctuary and liturgy, his language suggests several important conclusions. First, he holds to their *reality*. His concern throughout the sermon is to ground Christian confidence in objective *facts*, as we have seen. *Real* deity, *real* humanity, *real* priesthood—and we may add, a *real* ministry in a *real* sanctuary.”¹²

The reality of the heavenly sanctuary is affirmed in Hebrews in three statements (Heb 8:2-5; 9:11-12, 2-24) which compare and contrast the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. The *earthly sanctuary* was a human construction under the direction of Moses (Heb 8:5), while *the heavenly sanctuary*, is *not* set up “by man” (Heb 8:2), or “made with [human] hands” (Heb 9:11, 24).

The correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries is established in Hebrews by means of the relationship between *copy* and *original*, *shadow* and *substance*. The earthly sanctuary was a “*copy* [*hupodeigma*] and *shadow* [*skia*] of *the heavenly sanctuary*” (Heb 8:2-5). “Thus it was necessary for the *copies* [*hupodeigma*] of *the heavenly things* to be purified with these rites [animal sacrifices], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not in a sanctuary made with hands, a *copy* [*antitupos*] of the *true one* [*alethinos*], but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God in our behalf” (Heb 9:23-24). Because of this “we have confidence to enter the [heavenly] sanctuary by the blood of Jesus” (Heb 10:19).

Being “a copy” and “a shadow” of the original heavenly sanctuary, the earthly sanctuary plays an important role in explaining to both ancient and modern believers the outworking of the plan of salvation. Furthermore, by defining the earthly sanctuary and its services as a “shadow,” it implies that these *foreshadowed* better things to come. In fact, the author speaks of the law with its ritual services as being “but a *shadow* [*skia*] of the *good things to come* instead of the true form of these realities” (Heb 10:1; cf. Col 2:17).

These statements concerning the reality of the heavenly sanctuary were intended to give assurance to the recipients of Hebrews. “Because of national and family opposition, the Jewish-Christian readers of Hebrews had suffered separation from the religious life of Judaism. And if, as seems likely, the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was near, all the more would they need such assurances. These verses told them that they had access to a superior “temple”—an heavenly sanctuary where Jesus Christ ministered.”¹³

This message of reassurance is still relevant today. In an age of uncertainty and fear, when moral and religious values are largely rejected, we need the reassurance that “we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens” (Heb 4:14) and who “is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

The Heavenly Sanctuary in Revelation

The existence of the heavenly sanctuary is confirmed in the book of Revelation where the word *naos*, generally translated “temple,” occurs 15 times. With the exception of two instances where the word *naos* (temple) may be used metaphorically to refer to the Christian community (Rev 3:12; 21:22), in all the other instances the term refers to the heavenly sanctuary.

In Revelation 7:15, the heavenly temple is equated with the throne of God. Concerning the great multitude in white robes (Rev 7:9), John says: “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple” (Rev 7:15). This text clearly indicates that the throne of God is located in the heavenly temple, which is the dwelling place of God.

In Revelation 11:19, the opening of the temple reveals the ark of the covenant. “Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant was seen *within the temple*.”¹⁴ Since the ark of the covenant was located in the Most Holy Place (Heb 9:3-4), it is evident that John saw the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. This does not necessarily mean that the heavenly sanctuary consists of a bipartite structure with a Holy and Most Holy Place like the earthly sanctuary. After all, we have seen that the ark of the covenant typifies the throne of God which is established on mercy (mercy seat) and justice (Decalogue inside the ark). Presumably, what John saw was a representation of the heavenly sanctuary through the typology of the earthly sanctuary.

In one place, Revelation clearly ties the heavenly temple-sanctuary to the earthly tabernacle-sanctuary: “After this I [John] looked and *in heaven* [*en to ourano*] the temple, that is, *the tabernacle of Testimony*, was opened” (Rev 15:5, NIV).¹⁵ The phrase “the Tabernacle of Testimony” is used in the Old Testament to designate the earthly sanctuary (Num 1:50), because it enshrined within its walls the tables of the Decalogue, known as “The Testimony.” Within the heavenly temple, John also observed the seven-branched lampstand (*menorah*) of the earthly sanctuary (Rev 1:12-13; 4:5) and the golden altar [of incense] before the throne” (Rev 8:3; 9:13).

Conclusion. In light of the foregoing considerations, we conclude that there is abundant Biblical evidence for the reality of a heavenly sanctuary. The tabernacle built by Moses is seen in the Bible as reflecting the heavenly sanctuary, the dwelling place of God. The book of Hebrews defines the earthly tabernacle as a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary. The apostle John testifies that he saw in vision the heavenly temple and some of its components. All of these indications point to the existence of a real

sanctuary in heaven.

THE NATURE OF THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

Having concluded that the Bible affirms the existence of a real heavenly sanctuary where Christ ministers as our High Priest, we need to clarify the nature of such sanctuary. The question is: Should the Biblical references to the heavenly sanctuary-temple be interpreted *metaphorically*, that is, as figurative allusions to the presence of God, or *literalistically*, that is, as literal descriptions of a heavenly sanctuary which is a magnified and glorified version of the earthly sanctuary? Or should we avoid both extremes and interpret the references to the heavenly sanctuary-temple *realistically*, that is, as descriptive of a real heavenly sanctuary whose details, however, are not clear to us? The latter represents my view which I expound after commenting on the first two.

The Metaphorical Interpretation

Most modern authors deny any objective existence of a heavenly sanctuary. They believe that the heavenly sanctuary is simply a metaphor for the spiritual presence of God. Their view is based on the assumption that the conceptual world of Hebrews is that of Hellenistic Judaism, in particular the writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo (about 20 B. C. to A. D. 50). In an attempt to make the Jewish faith appealing to the Hellenistic world, Philo allegorized the Old Testament by using the dualistic and antithetical conception of the universe present in Platonic thought.

Philo allegorized the heavenly sanctuary and liturgy by making them symbols of the whole universe. He wrote: "The highest, and in the truest sense the holy temple of God is, as we must believe, the whole universe, having for its sanctuary the most sacred part of all existence, even heaven, for its votive ornaments the stars, for its priests the angels who are servitors to His powers, unbodied souls, not compounds of rational and irrational nature."¹⁶

Allegedly, Hebrews shares this conceptual world because the terms it uses to describe the relation of the earthly to the heavenly sanctuary— "shadow—*skia*," "image—*eikon*," and "example—*hupodeigma*"—are used by Philo in a similar context.¹⁷ Moreover, Hebrews shares with Philo the cosmological dualism where the unseen is the real ("genuine" – Heb 8:2), while the seen the transient. To support this metaphorical interpretation, appeal is made to several texts (Heb 9:2, 3, 11,; 10:19-20) which allegedly spiritualize the heavenly sanctuary.¹⁸

Evaluation of Metaphorical Interpretation

We cannot deny the presence of some resemblance between the conceptual world of Hebrews and that of Philo. Like Plato or Philo, Hebrews sees the heavenly and unseen realm as the genuine one (Heb 9:24). However, this is part of the Biblical view of reality. As stated in 2 Corinthians 4:18, "We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."

The superficial resemblance between Hebrews and Philo must not overshadow the radical differences between the two. In his doctoral dissertation, Ronald Williamson has shown that the heavenly world of Philo or of Plato has no room for the historical Jesus who enters a real *place* of heavenly ministry.¹⁹ Similarly, the *temporal* emphasis of Hebrews on Christ's incarnation, sacrifice, followed by a heavenly ministry, runs contrary to the Philonic model of an eternal, and unchanging heavenly realm, far removed and untouched by earthly events.²⁰

Even more devastating to the Philonic interpretation is the thought that "heavenly things" need to be purified "with better sacrifices" (Heb 9:23). Such a thought is totally unacceptable to the Philonic or Platonic model, because the heavenly realm cannot be touched or contaminated by earthly beings.²¹ Furthermore, while Philo reasons allegorically, giving to the sacred text a hidden spiritual meaning that transcends its literal sense, Hebrews reasons typologically, seeing an analogical correspondence between

the earthly type and the heavenly antitype. Sidney Sowers notes that “typological exegesis is totally absent from Philo’s writings.”²²

The author of Hebrews derives his understanding of the typological correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary from the Old Testament itself, rather than from Philonic or Platonic philosophy. For the latter, heavenly things are incorporeal and eternally existent, and the earthly things are a simple shadow of the heavenly realities. But for the former (Hebrews), the earthly things are a shadow of concrete realities in heaven. The earthly sanctuary is a copy of a tangible heavenly reality, and not a “shadow of a shadow”²³ or a “symbol of a symbol.”²⁴

The Literalistic Interpretation

According to the literalistic interpretation, there is a real sanctuary in heaven which corresponds to the earthly one not only in terms of services but also in terms of structural design. In other words, there is not only a *functional*, but also a *spatial* or *structural* correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries.

In his monumental dissertation, Adventist scholar Alberto Treiyer argues that the author of Hebrews sees not only a functional, “but also a spatial correspondence between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries. Just as the earthly sanctuary had two apartments, the Holy and the Most Holy, wherein the priest performed his ministry of atonement by virtue of the sacrifice that was offered outside, so also the heavenly one corresponds with two apartments, wherein Jesus fulfils His priestly ministry by virtue of His earthly sacrifice.”²⁵

It must be granted that this view does enjoy some scholarly support even outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In his article on “*skene*—Tent or Tabernacle” in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Wilhelm Michaelis comments on Hebrews 9:11, saying: “It would seem that the heavenly sanctuary is also divided in two parts.”²⁶

In a similar vein, Richard Davidson, OT professor at Andrews University Theological Seminary, concludes his study on the “Typology in the Book of Hebrews” suggesting that “(1) a basic continuity exists between the *essential contours* of the OT sanctuary type and the NT antitype; and therefore, (2) the earthly sanctuary may be regarded as instructive for clarifying *essential features* of the heavenly sanctuary, while at the same time recognizing the eschatological intensification that occurs between type and antitype.”²⁷

Davidson speaks not of “spatial correspondence” like Treiyer, but of continuity of “essential contours” between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. His wording is more guarded, but essentially expresses the same view, because he quotes the following statement from Ellen G. White: “I was also shown a sanctuary upon the earth containing two apartments. It resembled the one in heaven, and I was told that it was a figure of the heavenly.”²⁸

No attempt can be made in this study to examine Ellen White’s views regarding the nature of the heavenly sanctuary. It would seem, however, that the functional similarity between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries may have been more important in Ellen White’s mind, because she wrote: “The abiding place of the King of Kings, where thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousands stand before Him (Dan 7:10); that temple, filled with the glory of the eternal throne, where seraphim, its shining guardians, veil their faces in adoration, could find, in the most magnificent structure ever reared by human hands, but a faint reflection of its vastness and glory. Yet important truths concerning the heavenly sanctuary and the great work there carried forward for man’s redemption were taught by the earthly sanctuary and its services.”²⁹ In this statement Ellen White minimizes the spatial correspondence and maximizes the function of the earthly sanctuary to teach “*important truths*” about Christ’s redemptive ministry.

Evaluation of the Literalistic Interpretation

The literalistic interpretation rightly affirms the existence of a real heavenly sanctuary where Christ ministers on our behalf. However, its attempt to establish a spatial or structural correspondence, even if only of “essential contours,” between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries, raises some concerns.

“Although,” as William Johnsson perceptively observes, “the argument [in Hebrews] does not necessarily exclude the possibility that the heavenly sanctuary is a glorified version of the earthly, we should note: (1) The *heavenly* is the genuine, the true, so we should see the earthly in the light of the heavenly, rather than vice versa. (2) In Hebrews 9:24 we read merely of ‘heaven,’ surely a very general sort of description [of the heavenly sanctuary]. (3) The lack of interest in drawing lines of comparison from the earthly to the heavenly is shown by the terse words in Hebrew 9:5. And (4) the emphasis in Hebrews 9:1–10:18 falls on the *work* Christ accomplishes; there seems to be no interest in giving details as to surroundings. It is therefore apparent that, while we may affirm the *reality* of the heavenly sanctuary in the book of Hebrews, we have comparatively little hard data about its appearance.”³⁰

Hebrews affirms the reality of the heavenly sanctuary, but it also suggests that there are crucial differences between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries. For example, the heavenly sanctuary was “set up not by man but by the Lord” (Heb 8:2). This suggests that the heavenly sanctuary does not have the limitations of an earthly structure.

“The words ‘copy’ (*hupodeigma*), ‘shadow’ (*skia*), and “pattern’ (*tupos*) in Hebrews 8:5 likewise indicate that the earthly sanctuary should not form the basis for attempting a detailed reconstruction of the heavenly sanctuary. The earthly sanctuary is but a shadowy representation of the heavenly reality. While some general conclusions about the heavenly sanctuary may be reached by studying the earthly, care should be taken not to press these points too far.”³¹

In Hebrews 9:24, we are told that “Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into *heaven* itself.” The contrast between “a handmade sanctuary” and “heaven” suggests that the heavenly sanctuary does not have the spatial limitations of the earthly sanctuary. This is supported by John’s vision of the countless multitude that stands “before the throne of God and serve him day and night within his temple” (Rev 7:15). Such a description of countless multitudes serving God *within the temple* hardly allows for a two-apartment division of the heavenly sanctuary. We should not forget that only the priest could officiate *within* the earthly temple.

Based on his study of the sanctuary in the Old Testament, Niels-Erik Andreasen, President of Andrews University, rightly warns us that the “correspondence between heavenly and earthly sanctuaries should not be taken as a brick for cubic, beam for beam correspondence. The Old Testament warns us against such a strict material, spatial parallel when it cautions on theological grounds that the God of heaven cannot ever be contained in an earthly structure (2 Sam 7:4-11; 1 King 8:27). What then is the function of the earthly sanctuary? One answer represented particularly by Deuteronomy and the historical books (Joshua–2 Kings) is that the earthly sanctuary/temple is the place where Yahweh makes his *name* to dwell (cf. Deut 12:5, 11; 1 King 8:29). An even stronger statement is made in Isaiah 66:1, ‘Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house [temple] which you would build for me?’ A correspondence, involving a reality but not an identity of material and space, exists between the two sanctuaries.”³²

The Realistic Interpretation

According to the realistic interpretation, there is a *real* sanctuary in heaven, but its correspondence to the earthly sanctuary is more *functional* than *spatial* or *structural*. The earthly sanctuary with its daily and yearly services typifies important aspects of Christ’s

heavenly ministry.

It is important for us to remember, as Frank Holbrook points out, that “When we speak about heaven and the heavenly sanctuary, we are talking about celestial things that are far beyond human comprehension. Hence, in order for God to communicate to us, He must do so by representing those heavenly realities in human terms and symbols familiar to us. The heavenly sanctuary-temple and its activities are, therefore, represented to the prophets (and thereby to us) in the forms of the earthly sanctuary and symbols.”³³

For example, Jesus is portrayed in Revelation as “a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (Rev 5:6). The ministry of the Holy Spirit is represented by “seven torches of fire” burning before the throne (Rev 4:5). Christ’s intercession is depicted by an angel mingling incense with the prayers of God’s people at the golden altar of incense (Rev 8:3-4). The temple of God in heaven is shown through the symbol of the “tabernacle of the Testimony” (Rev 15:5, NIV). All of these symbols are effectively used to portray a reality that transcend the symbols themselves, namely, the existence in heaven of a *real* temple, with a *real* Savior who is engaged in a *real* intercessory ministry.

In a sense, the plan of salvation is an abstract truth. To help us conceptualize some of its vital aspects, God has provided us in the sanctuary a *pictorial representation* of the redemptive ministry of Christ. For example, the altar of burnt offering portrayed the great atoning, substitutionary death of our Lord. The two-phase priestly ministrations in the earthly sanctuary foreshadowed Christ’s ministry of intercession and final cleansing of sin in the heavenly sanctuary.

“It is not the physical nature of either sanctuaries that is important,” observes Frank Holdbrook. “Both are real in their respective spheres (earth or heaven). As far as the Biblical doctrine of the sanctuary is concerned, it is what the structures represent or teach about the great controversy between Christ and Satan and about the plan of salvation that matters. The dwelling places of the Deity propose to teach us spiritual truths, and we must not miss those truths by undue attention to the medium, either earthly or heavenly.”³⁴

Some of the spiritual truths of the heavenly sanctuary are taught in the book of Hebrews by means of *vertical* and *horizontal* correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. Vertically, the *heavenly* sanctuary is presented as the “true tent” (Heb 8:2), the “perfect tent” (Heb 9:11; cf. 9:24), of which the *earthly* one was a “symbolic” pattern (Heb 9:9; cf. 8:5; Act 7:44; Ex 25:40). Similarly, the priestly services and sacrifices of the earthly tabernacle are seen as a “copy and shadow” (Heb 8:5) of the “more excellent” (8:6) High Priestly ministry conducted by Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 7:24-25; 8:4, 11-13; 10:11-21).

Horizontally, the *past* (before Calvary) typological services of the earthly sanctuary (Heb 9:6-9) are viewed as fulfilled and superseded by the *present* heavenly intercession and mediation of Christ (Heb 9:9, 11-14). These provide to believers what the blood of animals could not do—a permanent and total purification from sin (Heb 10:1-4; 9:11-14).

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The meaning of the Day of Atonement in the New Testament can best be understood in the light of the typological correspondence that exists between the priestly ministry in the earthly sanctuary and Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. In the earthly sanctuary, the priestly ministry consisted of two phases: (1) a daily service of *intercession* in the Holy Place, and (2) an annual service of *cleansing* in the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement. These two phases of *intercession* and *cleansing* find their correspondence in Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

Intercession

The first phase of Christ's ministry of *intercession* began at the time of His ascension to heaven and installation at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33-34; 7:56; Heb 8:1-2). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is seen as the evidence of the official enthronement of Christ to His heavenly ministry (Acts 2:33). The installation of Christ to His heavenly ministry is reflected in those passages which speak of His sitting at the right hand of God (Acts 2:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

The meaning of "sitting" as intercessory ministry is explained especially in Hebrews 8:1-2, where Christ is presented as the "high priest, . . . seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent." Through His intercessory ministry, Christ sustains the Church (Rev 1:13, 20), mediates repentance and forgiveness to believers (Acts 5:31; 1 John 2:1-2; 1:9), makes prayers acceptable to God (John 16:23-24; Rev 8:3), and provides us with the invisible and yet real assistance of His angels (Heb 1:14; Rev 5:6; 1:16, 20).

Many Christians fail to appreciate the importance of the intercessory ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary because they assume that Christ did it all on the Cross. Not surprisingly, they cannot figure out what on earth Christ is doing in heaven. Their problem is their failure to understand how sin was atoned in the earthly sanctuary. In the Levitical system atonement for sin was accomplished during the daily service, not only through the sacrifice of an animal, but also through the blood ritual in the Holy Place. It is only when all the ritual of sacrifice in the court (the Cross) and blood manipulation in the Holy Place (mediation in the heavenly sanctuary) was concluded that the Bible says: "In this way the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven" (Lev 4:20, NIV).

Most Christians limit the expiatory ministry of Christ to His death on the Cross. This ignores the typological correspondence between the earthly priestly ministry performed by means of the blood ritual in the Holy Place, and the heavenly ministry carried out through "the better blood" of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Alberto Treiyer warns us that unless we read Hebrews "with authentic Biblical eyes, all of these details will continue to be ignored, and the correspondence that is made there between the systems will be limited arbitrarily to the Cross."³⁵

Christ's work of intercession at "the right hand of God" does not exclude the possibility of a two-phased heavenly ministry for Christ. The fact that Christ at the ascension entered within the immediate presence of God ("within the veil" – Heb 6:19), does not mean that He began the final phase of His redemptive ministry typified by the cleansing of Day of Atonement. Those who reason in this way fail to understand the typological function of the Day of Atonement. This includes the final disposition of sin represented by the sending of the scapegoat into the wilderness and the final separation between the saved and unsaved. It is evident that these events did not occur at the Cross, but they will be realized at the Second Advent.

Cleansing

The second and final phase of Christ's heavenly ministry involves, as in the earthly Day of Atonement, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary by means of the removal and disposition of the sins of God's people. This final phase of Christ's heavenly ministry represents not a replacement of but an addition to the work of intercession. The special sacrifices of the Day of Atonement were offered in addition to the "continual [daily] burnt offering" (Num 29:11).

Intercession is intrinsically related to the final cleansing of sin typified by the Day of Atonement because the positive or negative response to the gift of salvation offered through Christ's intercession presupposes a final cleansing or retribution that reveals what each response has been. Both present intercession and future final cleansing are the work of the same High Priest. Intercession is Christ's work in actualizing His

redemptive love manifested at the Cross. The final cleansing of sin is Christ's work in realizing and consummating His redemption in a final and conclusive way at His Second Advent which is the antitypical Day of Atonement. Thus the difference between the two is one of perspective: intercession is the work of Christ viewed from the perspective of His First Advent. The final cleansing of sin is the work of Christ viewed from the perspective of His Second Advent.

The Cleansing of the Heavenly Sanctuary

The final phase of Christ's heavenly ministry typified by the Day of Atonement, is mentioned in a unique way in Hebrews 9:23: "Thus it was necessary for *the copies* of the heavenly things [the earthly tabernacle and its vessels— Heb 9:21-22] to be purified with these rites ["bulls and goats" – Heb 10:4], but *the heavenly things* themselves with better sacrifices than these" (9:23).³⁶ There is an unmistakable allusion to the Day of Atonement because the passage continues comparing Christ's entrance into "heaven itself" with "the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own" (Heb 9:24-25. NIV).

This passage boggles the mind of commentators on Hebrews. The notion of impurity in connection with the heavenly sanctuary is considered by many scholars as something "without sense,"³⁷ "fantastic,"³⁸ "an 'unhappy comparison.'"³⁹ How is it possible, they argue, for things in heaven to require purification when heaven is a place of perfection? Some try to make sense of the passage by reasoning that "the author is speaking poetically or metaphorically."⁴⁰

The meaning of the cleansing of "the heavenly things" must be understood in the light of its typological correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. The cleansing of "the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices" is placed in a typological correspondence to the annual cleansing of the earthly sanctuary ("copies of the heavenly things") with animal sacrifices (Heb 9:23). Just as the earthly sanctuary needed to be cleansed through the ritual of the blood on the Day of Atonement from the accumulated sins of God's people that had been symbolically transferred into the sanctuary, so the heavenly sanctuary needs to be cleansed through the better blood of Christ from the sins that have been symbolically transferred there.

Commentators have generally backed away from this typological correspondence. Anglican Bishop Brooke Westcott, however, alludes to it in his classic commentary on Hebrews. "The whole structure of the sentence [Heb 9:23] requires that 'cleansed' should be supplied in the second clause from the first, and not any more general term as 'inaugurated.' In what sense, then, can it be said that heavenly things' needed cleansing? The necessity for the purification of the earthly sanctuary and its vessels came from the fact that they were to be used by man and shared in his impurity (cf. Lev 16:16). Agreeably with this view it may be said that even 'heavenly things,' so far as they embody the conditions of man's future life, contracted by the Fall something which required cleansing."⁴¹

This statement needs clarification because what defiles the heavenly sanctuary is not the sinful human condition per se, but sinful acts which are symbolically transferred to the sanctuary by means of the ritual of the blood. We noted in chapter 4 that the blood of the substitutionary victim had an ambivalent function. On the one hand, it cleansed the sinner, while on the other hand, it defiled the sanctuary by transferring the atoned sin into the sanctuary where it was deposited until its removal on the Day of Atonement. We found that the reason for maintaining the records of forgiven sins in the sanctuary was to allow for their review by the heavenly court during the 10 days that preceded the Day of Atonement.

In the same way, through the better blood of Christ, sinners are purified from sin (Heb 9:13-14); but their forgiven sins are remitted to the heavenly sanctuary where they are kept until they are first judged by the heavenly court and then removed by Christ at His coming. This is why "the heavenly things themselves [need to be purified] with

better sacrifices" (Heb 9:23), because the record of forgiven sins is kept there until the antitypical Day of Atonement, the Day of Judgment followed by Christ's Coming. George W. Buchanan notes this point when he observes that there is provision "to cleanse the heavenly things' . . . since the heavenly archetype functions just as its earthly imitation."⁴²

It should be pointed out, however, that the concern of the author of Hebrews is not to define the time and manner of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, but rather to emphasize the superiority of the cleansing power of Christ's blood. William Johnsson rightly points out that the real issue in Hebrews 9:23-25 is not the Day of Atonement as such, but the superiority of Christ's blood. "The argument is that the Old Testament services, *even at their high point* [the Day of Atonement], were inadequate. They provided woefully limited access to God (one man alone) and their very repetition showed their failure: 'Otherwise, would they have not ceased to be offered?' So even the annual Day of Atonement hammered home Israel's need: limited access, no finality in purging sins."⁴³

The fundamental problem with the Day of Atonement of the earthly sanctuary was that it did not eradicate the presence and consciousness of sin, simply because "it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Heb 10:4). Though the worshippers were symbolically "cleansed," there still remained the "consciousness of sin" (Heb 10:3). By contrast, Jesus "by a single sacrifice has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Heb 10:14).

The Day of Atonement and the Cross. The importance that Hebrews places on the superiority of Christ's blood and ministry has led many to conclude that Jesus fulfilled the antitypical work of the Day of Atonement when He ascended to the heavenly sanctuary. According to this view, Hebrews teaches that the ministry typified by the Day of Atonement has been fulfilled by Christ in heaven at or since His ascension. Consequently, contrary to the Old Testament system which placed the Day of Atonement at the conclusion of the religious year, in the New Testament the typological function of the Day of Atonement has been fulfilled at the inauguration of Christ's heavenly ministry.

The implication is that for Christians the cleansing of the sanctuary accomplished on the Day of Atonement is a past event already fulfilled by Christ at His First Advent, and not a future event to be fulfilled by Christ prior to His Second Advent. If this were true, the typological meaning of the Day of Atonement would be essentially the same as that of Passover, because the latter also was fulfilled at the first Advent when Christ was sacrificed as our Paschal Lamb (1 Cor 5:7). Such a duplication of the antitypical fulfillment of Passover (Spring Feast) and Day of Atonement (Fall Feast) would destroy the progressive unfolding of the plan of redemption typified by the annual feasts.

Not surprisingly, the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is strewn with controversy over this issue. Early in this century Albion Foss Ballenger (1861-1921), a minister who left the church in 1905, published a book *Cast Out for the Cross of Christ*. In it he argues that the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement took place upon Christ's ascension, when He began His ministry "within the veil" (Heb 6:19), that is, within the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. To prove his thesis Ballenger made an extensive survey of the use of the term "veil" both in its Hebrew (*paroket*) and Greek (*katapetasma*) forms, concluding that the phrase "within the veil" can only refer to the Most Holy Place.⁴⁴

Recently, Desmond Ford, an Australian Bible teacher, produced a lengthy manuscript (about 1000 pages) arguing along the same lines of Ballenger that the typological function of the Day of the Atonement began at the ascension.⁴⁵ Outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church, this view is held by numerous scholars.⁴⁶ Support for this view is generally based on three main phrases found in Hebrews: "within the veil" (Heb 6:19; cf. 10:20), "throne of grace" (Heb 4:16), and "the right hand of God" (Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). These phrases, they argue, indicate that Christ has been officiating in the Most Holy Place since the ascension and, consequently, He has accomplished through His death and heavenly mediation the purification of sin typified by the Day of

Atonement. The implication is clear. There is no reason to look for an End-time cleansing of the Day of Atonement because it was already accomplished at Calvary or at least since then.

Evaluation of Interpretation

Two major problems exist with the above interpretation of the Day of Atonement. The first concerns the nature of Christ's ministry in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. Ballenger saw in Christ's entrance "within the veil" of the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement. His reasoning was based on the then prevailing Adventist view that in heaven there is a bipartite sanctuary and that Christ did not enter the Most Holy section until 1844. By arguing that Christ entered "within the veil," that is, in the Most Holy Place, at His ascension, Ballenger concluded that Christ fulfilled the antitypical Day of Atonement already at His ascension.

Unfortunately, Ballenger was right in his argument but wrong in his conclusion. His all-consuming concern to prove that Christ entered "within the veil" of the Most Holy Place prevented him from seeing the broader scope of Christ's heavenly ministry which includes, as we have seen, both intercession and final cleansing. Part of the problem with Ballenger is that he was reacting to a bipartite understanding of the heavenly sanctuary with Holy and Most Holy sections, a view that largely has been abandoned by Adventists today. We have seen earlier that most Adventist authors see a *functional* rather than *structural* correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries.

The second problem relates to a misunderstanding of the typology of the Day of Atonement. Those who see the Day of Atonement fulfilled at Calvary fail to realize what the day stands for. The Day of Atonement typifies the consummation of Christ's redemptive ministry at His Second Advent, when He will dispose of sin by saving believers, punishing the unbelievers, and placing upon Satan (Azazel) the responsibility for all the sins he has instigated. The question is: Did Christ accomplish these closing acts of His redemptive ministry at the Cross or at His ascension when He entered "within the veil" to inaugurate His redemptive ministry? Or will Christ realize them at His Second Advent? The answer is self-evident. It is unfortunate that the failure to understand the typology of the Holy Days, such as the Day of Atonement, has resulted in needless controversy and gross misunderstanding of the unfolding of the Plan of Salvation.

An "Already" and a "Not-Yet" Fulfillment

In a sense, the Cross does represent an "*already*" fulfillment of the Levitical Day of Atonement, since through it Christ "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:26). Moreover, with Christ's entrance into the presence of God "a new and living way" (Heb 10:20) of access to God has been created. By virtue of Christ's access into the presence of God, believers now can "enter into the inner shrine behind the curtain" (Heb 6:19). What this means is that the unique experience of coming into direct contact with the presence of God on the Day of Atonement can now be shared by all believers.

This partial fulfillment of the Day of Atonement does not lessen the "*not-yet*" future and final antitypical realization. The principle of a double fulfillment—"an already and not-yet"—is common in the New Testament. The author of Hebrews recognizes that the Cross does not exhaust Christ's redemptive ministry, because he explains that Christ not only "appeared" in the past "to put away sin" but also appears now in the present before God's presence and "will appear" in the future to save.

Hebrews recognizes a *past*, a *present*, and a *future* aspect in Christ's removal of sin represented by the Day of Atonement. In the *past*, Christ "*has appeared* once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (9:26). In the *present* ("now"), Christ "*appears* in the presence of God on our behalf" (9:24). In the *future*, Christ "*will appear* a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (9:28).⁴⁷

The past, the present, and the future ministry of Christ are in Hebrews ideologically connected because they are all dependent upon the same “once for all” sacrifice on the Cross. It is the same atoning sacrifice that enables Christ to fulfill the two phases of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary: intercession and judgment.

The ministry of Christ “in the presence of God on our behalf” (9:24) includes both a work of intercession and a work of judgment and cleansing. Regarding the first, Hebrews says that Christ “always lives to make intercession for them” (7:25). Regarding the second, Hebrews suggests that the judgment and cleansing will occur in conjunction with Christ’s Return. This suggestion is made by means of the following comparison: “And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (9:27-28).

In this passage, the author correlates human death which is followed by the final judgment (cf. Heb 10:26-27) with Christ’s atoning death which is followed by His Second Advent. In this correlation, the judgment is placed in correspondence with the Second Advent. Why? Presumably because at His coming Christ executes the judgment typified by the cleansing of the Day of Atonement. It is a judgment that brings salvation to believers and punishment to unbelievers. This explains why Christ “will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb 9:28). The reason Christ does not deal with sin at His Second Coming is because He comes, like the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, not to atone for sin but to execute the final judgment, which is to save believers and punish unbelievers.

The Day of Atonement and The Second Advent

The appearance of the High Priest out of the sanctuary at the end of the Day of Atonement revealed to the Israelites their verdict. Those who had repented of and confessed their sins, offering the specified sacrifices, saw their sins removed and figuratively placed on the Azazel goat which was led away to perish in the wilderness. Those who had not repented of their wrongs and refused to humble themselves before the Lord were “cut off” from God’s people and executed. So it will be at Christ’s appearance at the end of the antitypical Day of Atonement. Those “who are eagerly waiting for him” (9:28) will be saved, but those who “deliberately keep on sinning” will experience “a raging fire that will consume the enemies of God” (Heb 10:25, NIV).

In view of the prospect of the Advent judgment, the author of Hebrews admonishes believers to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, . . . encouraging one another, all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb 10:23, 25). “The Day” that is drawing near could well refer to the antitypical Day of Atonement, because this was its common designation among the Jews, a designation which must have been familiar to the “Hebrew-minded” recipient of the book. Both in the Mishnah and Talmud, the treatise devoted to the Day of Atonement is simply called *Yoma*, which means “The Day.”

Several authors link the Return of Christ with the exit of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.⁴⁸ F. F. Bruce, for example, writes: “The Israelites who watched their High Priest enter the sanctuary for them waited expectantly for his reappearance; that was a welcome sign that he and the sacrifice which he presented had been accepted by God. His reappearance from the holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement was a specially welcome sight. . . . So our author [of Hebrews] thinks of Jesus as going into the heavenly holy of holies, to reappear one day in order to confirm finally to His people the salvation which his perfect offering has procured for them. Meanwhile they wait expectantly for His parousia [Second Advent]. This presentation of the return of Christ in terms of the High Priest’s emergence from the sanctuary was in Frances Ridley Havergal’s mind when she wrote:

'Coming! In the opening east
Herald brightness slowly swells;
Coming! O my glorious Priest,
Hear we not Thy golden bells?'¹⁴⁹

Conclusion. The allusions to the Day of Atonement in Hebrews presuppose that the "Hebrew-Christians" to whom the book is addressed were attracted to Jewish ceremonial observance of this important annual Holy Day. The main intent of the author is to emphasize the superiority of Christ's blood in cleansing God's people from their sins. The work of cleansing and removing sins has a *past*, a *present*, and a *future* aspect. The last of these is accomplished by Christ through the final phase of His ministry of judgment and cleansing that terminates at His Second Advent when He will appear, like the High Priest at the close of the Day of Atonement, not to atone for sins but to save the believers and punish the unbelievers.

The certainty and the nearness of "the Day" provide added reasons ("all the more"—Heb 9:25) to "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful" (Heb 10:23). The allusions in Hebrews to the Day of Atonement and its linkage to Second Advent reveal that the author saw the ultimate fulfillment of the Day of Atonement, not in the past when Christ atoned for our sins on the Cross, but in the future when Christ at His coming will remove permanently the "consciousness of sin" (Heb 10:2; 9:28). What this means is that for Christians, the Day of Atonement is a spring of hope and encouragement because it reassures us that "the Day [is] drawing near" (Heb 10:25) when Christ "will appear a second time [like the High Priest appeared at the close of the Day of Atonement], not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Heb 9:28).

THE MEANING OF THE DAY OF ATONEMENT FOR TODAY

The meaning of the Day of Atonement for today can be defined eschatologically and existentially, that is, in terms of its future fulfillment and of its present impact in our lives. Eschatologically, we have found that the Day of Atonement points to the final judgment in heaven that ushers in the glorious Day when Christ “will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb 9:28).

Just as the Israelites eagerly waited for the appearance of the High Priest out of the sanctuary at the end of the Day of Atonement to hear the good news of their final cleansing and restoration, so we must eagerly wait for Christ’s appearance at the antitypical Day of Atonement to receive final cleansing from sin and restoration to an harmonious relationship with Him.

The Day of Atonement’s message of final judgment, cleansing and restoration is particularly relevant today when moral, social, and ecological pollution prevails. At a time when this world seems to be in the hands of some mad, blind forces bent on promoting evil and destruction, it is reassuring to know that the Day will soon come when Christ will appear to cleanse this world with fire (2 Pet 3:10), and “to consume the adversaries” (Heb 10: 27).

At a more personal level, the final judgment typified by Day of Atonement reminds us that we cannot flaunt God’s moral principles with impunity because the Day is coming when impenitent sinners, as in the typical service, will be “cut off” (Lev 23:29) and “shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (2 Thess 1:9). The reality of the judgment typified by the Day of Atonement and carried out by Christ first in heaven (investigative) and then on earth (executive) at His Coming, makes all our actions and decisions significant because they have both immediate and ultimate consequences.

Like the Jews in Old Testament times, we Christians today need to hear the trumpet call that the Day of Atonement is coming, when our destiny will be revealed. On that Day, Christ, like a shepherd, will separate “the sheep from the goats” and will say to the former “Come, . . . inherit the kingdom . . .” and to the latter “Depart from me . . . into the eternal fire” (Matt 25:32, 33, 34, 41). The consciousness that “the Day [is] drawing near” (Heb 10:25) when our destiny will be revealed gives seriousness to our living. It constantly remind us that the life we live today, with all our thoughts, words, actions and attitudes, counts for eternity.

Free Access to God

In the New Testament, Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is a generator of hope and confidence because it reassures us that Christ has opened for us a free and direct access to God when He entered into the presence of God. In the Levitical Day of Atonement, only once a year the High Priest had access to the presence of God manifested in the Most Holy Place above the ark of the covenant. Now, all Christians have direct access to God because of Christ’s entry into God’s presence.

Hebrews assures Christians that on the strength of two unchangeable things—God’s promise (Heb 6:15) and His oath (Heb 6:17)—they are guaranteed free approach to God through Jesus Christ. He calls this assurance “a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (Heb 6:19a). This anchor is “a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 6:19b-20).

What all of this means is that for believers, Christ’s heavenly ministry of cleansing typified by the Day of Atonement, has both a present and future perspective. In the present, the Christ’s cleansing ministry in the heavenly sanctuary summons us to search our hearts and forsake our sinful ways by the power of Christ’s blood which can purify our lives (Heb 9:14). The moral cleansing we experience in the present reassures us of

the future and final cleansing from the presence and consciousness of sin that will be accomplished when Christ "will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Heb 9:28).

At a time when many are experiencing the crushing isolation of sin, Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary has a message of hope. It reassures Christians that Christ will soon appear the second time, like the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, to punish unbelievers, to bind Satan, to cleanse believers and restore them to an harmonious relationship with Him. Such a hope gives us reasons to encourage "one another, and all the more as . . . [we] see the Day drawing near" (Heb 10:25).

ENDNOTES

1. Emphasis supplied.
2. Deut 4:16-18; Ps 106:20; 144:12; Is 44:13; Ez 8:10; Hos 13:2.
3. Ez 8:3; 10:8.
4. Jos 22:28; 2 King 16:10.
5. 1 Chron 28:12, 18. The quote is taken from Niels-Erik Andreasen, "The Heavenly Sanctuary in the Old Testament," *The Sanctuary and the Atonement. Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, eds., Arnold V. Wallenkamf and W. Richard Leshner (Washington, DC, 1981), p. 69.
6. Frank B. Holbrook, *The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs, MI, 1996), p. 18.
7. Emphasis supplied.
8. Niels-Erik Andreasen (note 5), pp.78-79.
9. Leonhard Goppelt, "Tupos as the Heavenly Original according to Exodus 25:40," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI, 1974), vol 8, pp. 256-257.
10. Frank M. Cross, Jr., "The Priestly tabernacle," *The Biblical Archeologist Reader* (Missoula, MT, 1975), vol. 1, p. 220. For a detailed analysis of *tabnit*, see Richard M. Davidson, "Typology in the Book of Hebrews," *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, ed., Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD, 1989), pp. 156-169.
11. An example is the exclusion of women from the priesthood, a practice that was very common in pagan religions.
12. William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence: The Book of Hebrews Speaks to Our Day* (Nashville, TN, 1979), p. 91.
13. Alwyn P. Salom, "Sanctuary Theology," *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, ed., Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD, 1989), p. 206.
14. Emphasis supplied.
15. Emphasis supplied.
16. *De specialibus legibus*, I, 12, 66, in *Loeb Classical Library, Philo*, vol.7, p. 139.
17. See W. F. Howard, *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation* (London, 1955), p. 115; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York, 1924), pp. 104-106.
18. For an exegetical analysis of these texts, see William G. Johnsson, *Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews* (Ph. D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1973), chapter 4. For a briefer discussion by the same author, see "Defilement/Purification and Hebrews 9:23," *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, ed., Frank B. Hollbrook (Silver Spring, MD, 1989), pp. 79-103.
19. Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden, Holland, 1970), pp.1-10.
20. See George W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI 1964), pp. 134-135.
21. See C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris, 1952), vol. 2, p. 267.
22. Sidney G. Sowers, *The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews: A Comparison of the Old Testament in Philo Judaeus and the Epistle to the Hebrews; Studies of Theology*, No. 1 (Basel, 1965), p. 91.
23. F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1952), vol. 2, p. 34.
24. L. D. Hurst, "Eschatology and 'Platonism' in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Seminar Papers, Society of Biblical Literature, Annual Meetings* (Scholar Press, Chico, CA, 1984), p. 49.
25. Alberto R. Treiyer, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment* (Siloam Springs, AR, 1992), p. 382.
26. Wilhelm Michaelis, "Skene," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed., Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI, 1971), vol. 7, p. 376.
27. Richard M. Davidson, "Typology in the Book of Hebrews," *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, ed., Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD, 1989), pp. 185-186. Emphasis supplied.
28. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D C, 1945), pp. 252-253.
29. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA, 1954), p. 414.

30. William G. Johnsson, "The Heavenly Sanctuary: Figurative or Real?" *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, ed., Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD, 1989), p. 51.
31. Alwyn P. Salom (note 13), p. 206.
32. Niels-Erik Andreasen (note 5), pp. 69-70.
33. Frank B. Holbrook (note 6), p. 22.
34. Ibid.
35. Alberto R. Treiyer (note 25), pp. 425-426.
36. Emphasis supplied.
37. C. Spicq (note 21), p. 160.
38. J. Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburg, 1924), p. 132.
39. H. W. Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York, 1964), p.160.
40. N. R. Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today. A Commentary on the Book of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1976), note 9, p. 175.
41. Brooke F. Wescott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, 1892), p. 270.
42. George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews* (New York, 1972), p. 162.
43. William G. Johnsson, "Day of Atonement Allusions," *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, ed., Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Springs, MD, 1989), p. 118.
44. For an insightful analysis of Ballenger's arguments, see William Johnsson (note 47), pp. 107-120.
45. For a concise report and analysis of Desmond Ford's views, see the special issue of *Ministry*, August 1980.
46. For a listing of supporters of this view and an analysis of their views, see Alberto R. Treiyer (note 25), pp. 436-444.
47. Emphasis supplied..
48. See, for example, S. J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, 1984), p. 267; Brooke F. Wescott (note 45), p. 280.
49. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI 1981), pp. 223-224.

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