

## Sanctuary

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

This week, as I was doing my proofreading, a particular word that I read seemed to be emphasized in my mind, and I felt compelled to read a bit more about it, and then to write a bit more about it.

That word is “Sanctuary.”

The concept of the Sanctuary has been central to Adventist theology from the beginning, even before we began to call ourselves “Adventists,” and yet I have not really heard a lot of studies that talk about it. Of course, there is discussion about the “cleansing of the Sanctuary,” and the Great Disappointment that resulted from misunderstanding what this meant. But at the same time, we must recall that the Controversy is about our Father, not about ourselves. Yes, it is important to be able to trace Daniel’s prophecies, and to understand the Book of Revelation as pointing to Seventh-day Adventists as the Remnant Church in the last days. That is critical for “deprogramming” our fellow men from the confusion and counterfeit religions of the world.

Yet we need to be aware that we are handling sacred things, holy concepts, and that each has a meaning and purpose unto itself beyond existing in convenient proof-texts for our beliefs.

What IS the Sanctuary? I doubt many modern-day Adventists could give an answer to that beyond, “The place in Heaven where Jesus ministers to us.” Yet when Moses constructed a Tabernacle on earth for the purpose of demonstrating the Plan of Salvation to the Israelites, he was merely following a blueprint that had been revealed to him of an already-existing structure.

In Exodus 25, we see that the terms “Sanctuary” and “Tabernacle” refer to the same structure, (Exo 25:8, 9) and in this first appearance it is established that it is the place in which Yah would “dwell among them.” Other verses that reveal to us the nature and purpose of this spiritual building include the following:

“Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my Sanctuary; I am Yahweh.” (Lev 19:30, 26:2)

“Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto Yahweh, and enter into His Sanctuary, which He hath sanctified forever, and serve Yahweh your Almighty One, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you.” (2Chronicles 30:8)

“[May] Yahweh hear thee in the day of trouble. [May] the name of the God of Jacob defend thee, send thee help from the Sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion.” (Psalm 20:1, 2)

“My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the Sanctuary.” (Psalm 63:1, 2)

“For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning [...] until I went into the Sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” (Psa 73:14)

“Honour and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.” (Psalm 96:6)

“Judah was His sanctuary, and Israel His dominion.” (Psa 114:2)

“Thus saith the Lord Yahweh, ‘Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.’” (Ezek 11:16)

“And the heathen shall know that I, Yahweh, do sanctify Israel, when my Sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.” (Ezek 37:28)

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an High Priest, Who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the Sanctuary, and of the true Tabernacle, which Yahweh pitched, and not man.” (Heb 8:1, 2)

These are quite a few verses, and I have left a great many out. But from these we see that the Sanctuary is the dwelling-place of Yah, that respect for His Sanctuary is set together with keeping the Sabbath in several verses, and that the Sanctuary represents our Father’s authority to send help to mankind, and to observe their progress.

There is also that interesting verse from Psalm 114, which describes Judah as His Sanctuary, the Tribe from which King David arose, and later the Savior Himself. We know that when Yah’s chosen people committed sins the Sanctuary was said to be “polluted,” or “defiled.” This meant that Yah could no longer dwell among, and bless, His people, because He could not reside in a place that was not holy, and so we see that the Sanctuary is a link in the chain of cause-and-effect. Before the covenant between Yah and His people could be restored, there needed to be an annual cleansing as described in Leviticus 16, and upon which the SDA understanding of Salvation is largely dependent.

On an individual as well as a corporate level, sin drives off the Spirit of Yahweh, because the concept of the “Sanctuary” represents His presence among us. And in the New Testament, where we are called the “Temple” of the Holy Spirit, the same holds true here as well. Those who are born of Yah are filled with the Spirit, because they are freed from sin, because they have made of themselves a clean Habitation for His presence on the earth.

I believe that a detailed study of the Sanctuary can teach us about all the foundational principles of our faith. We see there obedience and reverence for the Law. We see victory over sin, and the sanctified life that results from accepting it. We see the covenant between ourselves and the Father, for Judah was the Sanctuary of Yah, and in this generation the Church (and the people of the Church) have become the “place” in which the Spirit of Yah dwells. (1Cor 3:16)

By way of definition, the word “Sanctuary” comes from the term for a “holy place,” however there is also a connotation in the Bible, as in English, of “a safe place.” According to the verses above, not only does “help” from Yah come from His Sanctuary, but we must also “enter in” to the Sanctuary in order to avoid His wrath. Entering into the Sanctuary gives us understanding, as it is written, and Yah Himself is our “Sanctuary,” or our safety, as we sojourn on this earth.

Now, as Adventists more than any others know, judgment begins with the House of Yah. It takes place IN the Sanctuary, for that is what must be cleansed before Yah can once again dwell among mankind. Yahshua conducts an “Investigative Judgment” in the Most Holy Place of the Sanctuary in Heaven, and yet it is not only called the Temple, and the Tabernacle, but it is also called “The Safe Place.”

How must we understand this? It is quite simple. Human kind is only safe in Yah’s judgment. We spoke about judgment last week... in fact, the title was “Boldness in The Day,” indicating the Day of Judgment. I did not even recall this when I began to prepare this week’s notes, so it is clear to me that our Father is speaking to us a second time about this idea – we are to have boldness in judgment, and in Yah’s judgment in particular, because the Judgment of Yah is our place of safety. It is a holy place, to be sure, and allows the entrance of no sin, of no avoidable defect, but once entered, it is a place of safety.

We who have knowledge (because understanding comes from the Sanctuary of Yah) understand the way that our Father’s judgment works. We know that all sin must be destroyed in order for the universe to endure for all eternity, and we have been given the opportunity, through our covenant with the Savior, to send our sins ahead to judgment, so that we shall be clean before the Throne.

The nominal Christian has no true conception of the Plan of Salvation. For them, Jesus “hides” their sins, and forgives their sins, but they are not taken away. The sin remains in their souls, and they expect that, in the Day of Judgment, the Father will look upon them and see (instead) His Son, granting them admission to Heaven on this basis. But if the soul itself is not cleansed, does this mean that sin will enter into everlasting Life? This is actually Satan’s plan, but when this is even addressed at all, it is explained that when we are “changed” by death or translation, we are no longer capable of sin.

Essentially, then, the “salvation” of mainstream Christianity is that sin is covered up until the judgment, and then suppressed for all eternity. But this is not a true “cleansing.” If we do not understand the Sanctuary, we cannot understand conversion, or sanctification. We cannot understand that Christ’s ministry in the Sanctuary takes our sins away from us, (1John 1:9) so that they are no longer IN us to be committed, (1John 3:9, 10) and that they are placed upon the One who died for our sakes (Christ Himself – Isa 6:7, 53:6) and ultimately their penalty is visited upon the one in whom sin originated when the final and everlasting death is pronounced upon transgressors. (Lev 16:10; Isa 14:15; Ezek 28:18, 19)

Those who resist the judgment of the living, who refuse to undergo this sanctifying process and to enter into the safety of Yah's Sanctuary, where will they stand in the end? We must all be judged, every one, but those who know the Father and Son, and share in Their Spirit, will be judged in these days, in a context of mercy, rather than in that Day, in the context of justice. This is why "today" and not "tomorrow" is the Day of Salvation. (2Cor 6:2)

We know that holy angels hold back the winds of strife. The final judgment of the earth is held back as long as judgment of living continues, and then sealing comes at that time. But those who are in the Sanctuary are sealed in, while those who have never been brought into the Sanctuary on Yahshua's shoulders are sealed out.

It is not arbitrary or by coincidence that there is a covenant among the Brethren of the Church upon earth. It is a pattern of the relationship enjoyed by the Father and Son, just as Moses' Sanctuary was made from the pattern of the Heavenly Tabernacle. Like the Sabbath, this was designed to teach us life-saving principles of the Plan of Salvation, and to prepare us to experience life everlasting.

Blessings are appointed for those who draw near to the Sanctuary of Yahweh. For non-members, the implications of this teaching are obvious... the Bible tells us what the Sanctuary reveals: an invitation to enter into the Judgment of Yah, which is the universe's only place of true safety. For members, the blessings come from an understanding of the sanctified life, in which sins are put away, sent ahead to judgment, so that as we perfect the character of Yahshua, we can stand before the Throne unashamed. It is true, ultimately, that when the Father looks upon His people on the Day of Judgment He will see His Son... but it is NOT because the Savior is covering their sins, hiding them (as if such a thing were possible) from divine view. It is because He is standing beside the Redeemed, and saying to His Father with joy, "They are clean." He will say in that day, "Those that thou gavest me, I have kept [...] And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they [are now] one, even as we are one." (John 17:12, 22)

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