

**What's Going On in the Most Holy Place?  
What Is Jesus Doing Different Than  
What He Did Before 1844?  
Does the Sanctuary Message Make Sense?**

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These questions keep popping up whenever anyone considers the Sanctuary message: “What’s the difference between Christ’s work as High Priest in the Second Apartment (the Most Holy Place) and His ministry in the *First* Apartment before 1844?”

In other words, What does 1844 mean other than a mathematical puzzle?

Unless we find an answer, the “Sanctuary message” dries up. We seldom hear of the Sanctuary message.

The challenge is constantly hurled at us: can you prove the SDA Sanctuary message (including the “Investigative Judgment”) from the Bible alone, without calling in Ellen White to rescue you? The sanctuary is the unique teaching of Seventh-day Adventists that make us different from the Roman Catholic or Evangelical Protestant churches, or even the Seventh Day Baptists. In other words, how does the Sanctuary truth relate to the gospel of justification by faith?

With no internal misgivings, I have often used the Bible to present the Sanctuary message to non-Adventists as I have prepared people for baptism. I see it taught in the Bible as clearly as I see the Sabbath truth there. (In fact, the Sanctuary

message came to us as a people before the Sabbath truth did!).

Some may say, “You’re naive, brainwashed.” I don’t think I am; at least I’m glad to see people remain lifelong committed, happy Seventh-day Adventists who were won by the Sanctuary message. It made us a people distinct from the Sunday-keeping Evangelicals.

Why Are So Many SDA’s Today Giving Up the Sanctuary Message?

Why, for example, do some say it’s a “liability”? Why claim do some inwardly doubt or repudiate it?

I must be true to my own conscience as I seek to answer this perplexing question: What those who have left us understood was only a dry, stale doctrine, never a heart-gripping, heart-melting truth. They never learned to *love* the Sanctuary message. It left them cold, and probably worse—it left them dominated by fear.

They saw Christ’s ministry in the Most Holy Apartment as a stern tribunal where “we” are on trial for our very existence. A rejection slip in the Investigative Judgment was a consignment to hell. So the doctrine was not mere theological trivia; it was happiness-destroying anxiety. But the issue could not be more important for us to understand.

The most shocking statement [Ellen White ever made is in her *Early Writings*, pp. 55, 56]: if we reject the knowledge of a change in our heavenly High Priest’s sanctuary ministry in 1844, we lay ourselves open to a deception of the false christ posing in place of the True Christ. By now, the counterfeit has become so clever that it even

spawns “Christian” Spiritualism. That’s horrifying! (The *EW* statement is developed at length in pages 260, 261).

Yet we face former prominent Seventh-day Adventist thought leaders who repudiate the insights therein. Conscience forces me to say that it may not be their fault that they are confused. *People in our past have taught the Sanctuary message minus the special enlightenment of the “most precious message.”* No wonder; “in a great degree” it was “kept away” from both the church and “the world” (1 SM 234, 235). There’s been a famine.

The dynamic message God has revealed from the Bible lifts the unique SDA Sanctuary message out of confusion and clothes it in the bright garments of Christ’s righteousness—the gospel seen as *very Good News*.

The Bible reveals the Gospel of justification by faith as Good News far beyond the understanding of pastors and leaders who see neither the Sabbath truth nor the Sanctuary doctrine, nor the truth about sleeping saints awaiting the resurrection “in Christ.”

God has many honest hearted people in the Sunday-keeping churches who are living up to all the light they have; but they just can’t see the idea of justification by faith—because they don’t follow Christ in His closing work of atonement in the Most Holy Apartment. It’s down to earth, practical day by day living—*the cleansing of the sanctuary is ministered by a more sunlit grasp of justification by faith*.

I’ve learned to love the Sanctuary truth so that accusations against it from some intellectuals haven’t overthrown me. I have learned to love the Author of the Sanctuary truth, and I rest my faith on clear evidence that is solid rock, and I trust Him to keep His promise to “guide [us] into all truth” (Jn 16:13).

Does that mean I am a naive fanatic? Have I let my poor little emotional heart betray my rational intellect? Am I a deluded fanatic if I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the divine Savior of the world? Well, my heart does believe it, yes, but also my intellect believes abundant objective evidence. The same with the Sanctuary truth. Faith believes when some women tell you on that Sunday morning that Jesus is risen from the dead. You don’t wait to put your fingers in the holes in His hands or in His side, as Thomas insisted. According to 1 Jn 4:16, truth requires a greater commitment than mere intellectual conviction: “We have known *and* believed.” That is how to follow the True Christ in His ministry in the Most Holy Apartment.

HOW DOES THE 1888 MESSAGE LEAD US TO FALL IN LOVE WITH THE SDA SANCTUARY TRUTH? Let’s look:

(1) Please take your hymnal and look at #191, “Love Divine.” Charles Wesley longed for a truth not yet clearly understood in his day (1747): “Finish, then, Thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be; let us see Thy great salvation perfectly restored in Thee.” The Wesleys were trying to get their fingertips on the Sanctuary truth that informed the 1888 message. It will yet lighten the earth with glory. In

that “most precious message” the Wesleys could have grasped what they were looking for.

(2) The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary impacts day to day living. The [1888] idea is dynamite: *it’s impossible for the sanctuary in heaven to be “cleansed” or “justified” or “made right”* (different meanings of the Hebrew verb translated “cleansed” in Daniel 8:14), *until the hearts of God’s people on earth first are cleansed*. Therefore the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is dependent on a special work performed on earth—and that is the ministry of justification by faith. It’s way beyond ordinary Evangelical understanding.

(3) But this is not merely a legal “assumption” on God’s part. It’s not something He knows is not reality. When Revelation 14:12 says, “Here are they that *keep* the commandments of God”—it’s true! These people in fact “overcome, even as [Christ] overcame” (Rev 3:20). They have not merely been *legally accounted so*, contrary to reality.

During the “eighteen hundred years” of Christ’s ministry in the First Apartment, at no time did He have a corporate body of believers on earth whose faith had thus matured. But now comes a change—it’s the cosmic Day of Atonement. The heavenly sanctuary is at last “cleansed” in that now He has a corporate body of people whose hearts are cleansed from every root of alienation from God. The “Atonement” is a full reconciliation with Himself. It goes down to our toes.

When John and Charles Wesley were trying to get a grip on this truth, they were bitterly opposed, even

by Augustus Toplady, author of our lovely hymn, “Rock of Ages.” The very idea of overcoming fully “even as [Christ] overcame” was fanaticism, and labelled “perfectionism.” Even today there are devout people (as Toplady) who label the [1888] idea of the cleansing of the sanctuary an impossible “perfectionism.”

(4) But the [1888] idea is not that God’s people cleanse the sanctuary! The High Priest does it; and His people cease resisting Him “in His office work”. They *let* Him do it. Never does the Bible say that the ancient Israelites had to cleanse the sanctuary on their annual day of atonement. *Their high priest always did it*. But they cooperated with him. So do we today.

Prominent in the [1888] message is this idea of ceasing to resist our Lord. Ellen White caught the idea. Not until after the 1888 Conference did she state it so clearly: “The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus . . . in repentance for his sins” (SC 27; 1892). There is the essence of this cleansing of the sanctuary idea—the Lord does it but we stop resisting Him.

It’s Good News better than most Adventists have ever thought it is. In early 1890 Ellen White was moved to write a series for the *Review* that linked the 1888 idea of justification by faith with the work of Christ in the Most Holy Apartment. And she directly related it all to the 1888 message (January 21 through April 8):

We are in the day of atonement, and we are to work in harmony with Christ’s work of cleansing the

sanctuary from the sins of the people. Let no man who desires to be found with the wedding garment on, resist our Lord in His office work (January 21).

(5) To answer our question in very simple terms: Before 1844, Christ's High Priestly ministry was preparing believers to die, so they could be "accounted worthy" for the first resurrection (Lk 20:35). That's a wonderful work for Him to do. If any of us are called to die, may we be prepared!

But Christ's ministry in the *Second* Apartment prepares a people to be translated without tasting death. While they are still in the flesh, they must see Jesus, meet Him face to face, look in His eyes, which only "the pure in heart" can ever endure. They are those who are "alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, . . . [the "remnant"] . . . caught up together with [the resurrected saints of all ages] to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess 4:15-17).

According to Matthew 24, it was Heaven's purpose that the "generation" who saw the last of the celestial "signs" of His near return should see Jesus come—that was the pioneer "blessed hope." The delay can't make sense unless it's due to "resisting our Lord in His office work." The gospel commission could have been accomplished within a few years before 1900. The delay in finishing the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is not due to computer backlogs in heaven, or to angels' inefficiency or a grandfatherly unconcern on God's part.

(6) The 1888 idea imparts a new motivation for following Christ. The "*agape* of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor 5:14). Fear of the "investigative

judgment" is "cast out" (1 Jn 4:18). This again is the cosmic Day of Atonement—an at-last-realized oneness with Christ. It delivers from fear as much as He Himself was delivered from it in His life on earth.

(7) The Sanctuary truth leads the Bride of Christ to "make herself ready." That "oneness" has never happened in all past history until "the marriage of the Lamb is come." A special blessing is pronounced on those who are invited to "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:6-9). As individuals, all (including those of the last days) are "guests at the wedding." But as a *corporate body*, the church of the great Day of "oneness" becomes the Bride of Christ.

(8) From the Most Holy Apartment is ministered the gift of repentance. In order for the dilatory Bride to "make herself ready" she must welcome that disclosure of her true need. The Bride is a corporate body; therefore, her repentance has to be a corporate repentance.

(9) Because she "overcomes even as Christ overcame," she shares fully by faith His own experience of corporate repentance. He repented in behalf of the human race; so does she. He "tasted death" for every man; she can't do that, but *she can identify with Him on His cross* as He does so. She has grown up; she too would rather die eternally than bring shame and disgrace on Him. In the Day of Atonement she learns to "grow up unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

(10) Although our great High Priest cleanses the sanctuary and we let Him do it, He cannot force the

Bride to get “ready.” No bridegroom in history could make his bride “ready” for her wedding. That’s something she alone has ever done. The new *agape* motivation, the new concern developed for the honor of Christ in the great controversy, the New Covenant experience of identifying with Christ on His cross—this prompts the world church to a new awareness of her unique duty today. It’s not a “work” performed in order to be saved; it’s not an egocentric motivation; it’s a concern for Christ like that of a bride for a loving husband who needs her. *The idea of Christ being in that need is implicit in the Sanctuary message.* Something is greater than our personal concern for ourselves.

Should you and I be afraid of the judgment? Is it like a final exam that students face, the kind where they cram the night before and come to it trembling with fear? There is a judgment that comes before Christ returns—otherwise He could not bring His reward with Him to give every man according as his work has been (Rev 22:12). And before there can be a resurrection, there must be an “accounting” which is a judgment to determine who is “accounted worthy” to come up in that most glorious of blessings—the first resurrection (Luke 20:35). But can we know anything about when that pre-Advent judgment is to take place? Does the 2300 days prophecy of Daniel 8:14 make any sense?

(1) The Day of Atonement in the Hebrew sanctuary service was an object-lesson of that final pre-Advent judgment. (2) The Lord did not intend that its purpose should be to condemn Israel or the people, but “on that day shall the [high] priest make

an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord” (Lev 16:30). (3) That precisely is the purpose of the investigative judgment—not to condemn God’s people, but to cleanse them so they can meet Jesus in person when He returns. (4) There is sin, conscious and unconscious, that must be discovered, repented of, “overcome” (Rev 3:21), so that those who follow the great High Priest in His closing work of Atonement may not be consumed by the brightness of Jesus’ coming. That’s going to be a serious moment! (5) The High Priest doesn’t want to condemn you; He wants to vindicate you—that’s the only judgment He wants to make in your case. (6) Don’t stop Him, don’t hinder His on-going work! (7) The Septuagint translators of Daniel 8:14, 150 years B.C., clearly saw in the 2300 day prophecy a reference to the Day of Atonement; and long before there were any people known as Seventh-day Adventists, Christian scholars saw that 1844 was the terminus of that prophecy.

(11) The 1888 idea of the Sanctuary truth clarifies our prayers. It’s useless to pray, “Lord, make your Bride get ready!” He can’t do that. If we pray for the latter rain (which is good), respect for the Lord would require that we recognize that He already tried to give us its “beginning” over a century ago. To keep begging a friend to give you a gift he’s been trying to give you seems rude.

We can pray individually that He will help us to understand what was the initial gift of the latter rain—a message of objective truth. But we are told that our refusal initially to receive the gift constituted

an “insult” to the Holy Spirit. Should not our prayers now be especially reverent and respectful? Informed? And understanding?

To come back to our initial question: what is the difference between the work of the great High Priest in the First Apartment, and His work in the Second?

(12) Before our Day of Atonement, the great High Priest could cleanse human hearts only of all known sin. But there lies a deeper layer of unknown sin. For example, King Hezekiah, the “perfect” king (well, he said he had served the Lord “with a perfect heart!”) had that layer of unknown sin beneath his awareness. He was sure that “I . . . have done that which is good in Thy sight.” And he was utterly sincere when he said it (2 Kings 20:3). “Hezekiah prospered in all his works. Howbeit [as a lesson for us about the reality of unknown sin beneath the surface of our own hearts] God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart”. (2 Chron 32:30, 31).

While Hezekiah turned his face to the wall sobbing, begging God not to let him die, there was deep sin hidden in his heart that he sincerely didn’t know. It came out only at the end of his life; and it brought ruin to his kingdom after his death.

(13) The Day of Atonement message to Laodicea pinpoints for us that same “thou knowest not” problem. To disclose it to us is the High Priest’s specialty just now.

What lies beneath our awareness? *The sin of crucifying the Lord of glory* (see Zech 12:10 to 13:1), the same corporate but unrealized sin that the whole world shares. We kneel before we go to

sleep at night and “confess,” and claim according to 1 John 1:9 that the dear Lord forgives and “cleanses us from all unrighteousness.” But the point of the cleansing of the sanctuary is that He cannot “cleanse” from sin what we’re not aware of, and therefore cannot “confess” meaningfully or understandably. An objective atonement becomes a subjective one.

We are living in the time of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. Christ is conducting the cosmic Day of Atonement, performing a last solemn work of reconciliation, the awesome concluding of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. He is totally concerned with the grandest crisis heaven has ever witnessed. Every question in this long-standing great controversy must now be settled; 6000 years of human history are now to be resolved. And Jesus, as the world’s Saviour and as our great High Priest, needs the whole-hearted cooperation of all on earth who sympathize with Him in this unprecedented crisis. On the ancient day of atonement in Israel, the people on that annual day never drank a drop of alcoholic drinks, in order that they might keep their minds clear to follow their earthly high priest in his solemn ministry of reconciliation. So today, those who follow the great heavenly high priest in His ministry of reconciliation not only do not drive their cars while drunk, they just don’t drink at all—ever. Don’t you think we should be telling the world about this Day of Atonement?

The Sanctuary message that “the Lord in His great mercy sent” to us must and will yet lighten the earth with glory. The world is waiting for it.