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THE SANCTUARY PARABLE

1. INTRODUCTION

- A. My own experience
 - i. The very first “impactful” seminar I attended at my very first camp meeting was on the subject of the sanctuary.
 - ii. This began a personal study that has spanned my ministry.
 - iii. I taught 16 class hours on the subject for ARISE for several years, that multiplied into other teaching opportunities.
 - iv. Most recently, a former church member of mine asked if I would help lead out a young men’s Bible study on the subject of the Sanctuary and the 2300 Days.
- B. The sanctuary is a subject of vital importance –

The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill.... The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin. It is of the utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects and be able to give an answer to everyone that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them. The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, 'whither the forerunner is for us entered' (Heb. 6:20). There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected. There we may gain a clearer insight into the mysteries of redemption.” GC 488

- C. The seminar is entitled “The Sanctuary, 1844, and Why It Matters.” Here’s an overview of the coming week –
 - i. **Monday:** The Sanctuary Parable
 - ii. **Tuesday:** Doing the Math
 - iii. **Wednesday:** Type and Antitype
 - iv. **Thursday:** Without an Intercessor
 - v. **Friday:** Confidence in the Judgment

2. THE SANCTUARY AND THE ATONEMENT

- i. The sanctuary is a parable of the plan of salvation. In Hebrews 9:9, the apostle tells us that the earthly sanctuary was “symbolic” (Heb. 9:9, NKJV); “a figure” (KJV); “an illustration” (NIV).
- ii. The original Greek word is *parabolē*, which is translated throughout the NT as “parable.” Dr. Barnes, in his comments on Hebrews 9:9, says
 - a. The word rendered “figure” (*parabolē*) is not the same as *type* (*tupos*)... – but is the word commonly rendered “parable;”... and means properly “a placing side by side;” then a “comparison, or similitude.” Here it is used in the sense of “image, or symbol” - something to “represent” other things. The idea is, that the arrangements and services of the tabernacle were a representation of important realities, and of things which were more fully to be revealed at a future period. Dr. Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament: Hebrews 9:9

B. This was the framework in which the Bible writers understood the atonement.

- i. Man’s transgression caused a separation between himself and God (see Is. 59:1-2; Gen. 3:8f; Rom. 8:7). The result was that man could no longer look upon God and live (see Heb. 12:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 13:12; 1 Jn. 3:1-3).
- ii. Satan was certain that man’s fall would forever cut off all communication with God.

The Father’s person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, “If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist.” EW 54.2

Satan had peculiar interest in watching the development of events immediately after the fall of Adam, to learn how his work had affected the kingdom of God, and what the Lord would do with Adam because of his disobedience... The wrath of God still hung over Adam, but the execution of the sentence of death was delayed, and the indignation of God was restrained, because Christ had entered upon the work of becoming man’s Redeemer... The holy and infinite God, who dwelleth in light unapproachable, could no longer talk with man. No communication could now exist directly between man and his Maker... Satan flattered himself that he had forever broken the link between heaven and earth. But in this he was greatly mistaken and disappointed. Con 19-20

C. God’s plan for man was diverted, but not destroyed. He would open a new way by which full communion with the fallen race could be restored.

- i. The incarnation of Christ was for the purpose of restoring this broken communion.

The Father had given the world into the hands of His Son for Him to redeem from the curse and the disgrace of Adam’s failure and fall. Through Christ alone can man now find access to God. And through Christ alone will the Lord hold communication with man. Con 20

As Satan had led man to sin, he had hoped that God’s abhorrence of sin would forever separate Him from man, and break the connecting link between heaven and earth... He feared that God was now to unite man more fully to Himself, and give power to overcome his devices. And for this purpose Christ had come from the royal courts to the earth. Con 29

3. THE WAY BACK HOME

A. The sacrificial system was initiated as soon as Adam and Eve fell. The Bible tells us that God clothed the nakedness of Adam and Eve with “tunics of skin” (Gen. 3:21). Where did these “tunics of skin” come from? It is very likely they came from an animal sacrifice (see Rev. 13:8), and “the Lord God... clothed them.”

i. So from the very beginning, God reveals Himself as the initiator in salvation.

Adam listened to the words of the tempter, and yielding to his insinuations, fell into sin. Why was not the death penalty at once enforced in his case? — Because a ransom was found. God's only begotten Son volunteered to take the sin of man upon Himself, and to make an atonement for the fallen race. 7ABC 464.4

B. We find a further development of this sacrificial system, and of God’s purpose to restore fallen man, in the two angels guarding the gate of Eden (see Gen. 3:22-24).

i. The “flaming sword” was not a sword at all, but a description of the divine presence (as the same presence was manifested on the mercy seat between the two cherubim in the earthly tabernacle – see Ex. 25:18; Num. 7:89).

Angels were immediately commissioned to guard the way of the tree of life... Each of these mighty angels had in his right hand something which had the appearance of a glittering sword. EW 148.2

a. The phrase “a flaming sword” is a rather inexact translation of the Hebrew, which reads literally “a glittering of the sword.” There was no literal sword guarding the gate of Paradise. There was, rather, what appeared to be the scintillating reflection of light from a sword “turned every way” with great rapidity—flashing shafts of light radiating from an intensely brilliant center.... This radiant, living light was none other than the Shekinah glory, the manifestation of the divine presence. Before it, for centuries, those loyal to God gathered to worship Him. SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 1, p. 264

ii. It was here at the gate of Eden, where the divine presence was manifested between the two cherubim, that man came to offer their sacrifices.

The Garden of Eden remained upon the earth long after man had become an outcast from its pleasant paths. The fallen race were long permitted to gaze upon the home of innocence, their entrance barred only by the watching angels. At the cherubim-guarded gate of Paradise the divine glory was revealed. Hither came Adam and his sons to worship God. PP 62

At the cherubim-guarded gate of Paradise the glory of God was revealed, and hither came the first worshipers. Here their altars were reared, and their offerings presented. It was here that Cain and Abel had brought their sacrifices, and God had condescended to communicate with them. PP 83

4. “THAT I MAY DWELL AMONG THEM” (EX. 25:8)

A. God states the purpose for the design of the first tabernacle in Exodus 25:8 – “that I may dwell among them.” It was His intention that through the plan of salvation, open face communion with man would be restored, and He would once again be able to “dwell among them.”

- B. Christ was the temple and plan personified; He would “tabernacle among” fallen humanity (Jn. 1:14, margin), so that we could behold the glory of God and not perish; and by beholding, be restored in the image of God (see 2 Cor. 3:18). Thus, the sanctuary also revealed God’s ideal for every created being.

In the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple. God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul. DA 161

To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life. Ed 15.2