

Sabbath School Lesson #11 – New Covenant Sanctuary – 5-11 June 2021

Christ would have us know that He is the mediator of the new covenant and He has never been the mediator of the old covenant. Without the mediator, the old covenant was void of forgiveness. It is true that during the time of the ministration of the old covenant, sins were forgiven (Leviticus 4:26, 31, 35), and this forgiveness was real, but it was obtained solely by virtue of faith in the promised sacrifice of Christ, and not because of anything in the old covenant. Paul says of Christ: "And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, *for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament*, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15). Thus here we see that when sins committed under the first covenants were forgiven, they were forgiven by virtue of the second covenant. That first covenant was the promise of the people to keep God's law. If it had only had a mediator – someone to put the law into them – it would have lacked nothing, and they would have been perfect. But it had no mediator, and so they would have been in a hopeless condition if it had not been for the covenant made with Abraham, and confirmed in Christ by an oath of God.

Sunday: Relationships – "And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Leviticus 26:11-12). How are we to understand this text as to what God really desired here, was He desiring only to be around them or was He also to be in them in their hearts? Paul quote this very text and says in 2 Corinthians 6:16 "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Notice Paul quote what God had said in Leviticus and says God will "dwell in them" yet the text says God will "walk among" them. Paul understood that God desired not to be "among" but "in" them. The Lesson writer poses a question for our discussion: what was the reason the Lord wanted them to build a sanctuary? It is in Exodus 25:8 that we find the reason why the tabernacle was built. God told Moses to have the people bring offerings of gold, silver, and brass, fine linen, etc, and said, "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." In one sense this was a great honour; for, as Moses said, "What nation is there so great, that hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?" (Deuteronomy 4:7). Yet when we consider this further, the command to build the sanctuary, together with the statement of the reason why it was to be built, is one of the most sorrowful things to be found in the Scriptures. "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them!" What a sad thing! that God's people, whom He had delivered from bondage for the express purpose of dwelling not simply among them, but in them, had to have a house made with hands in order that His glory might be seen among them. Thus the tabernacle was at once a witness of God's presence and of the unfaithfulness of the children of Israel. "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:48). "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? for all these things hath my hand made" (Isaiah 66:1-2). It is evident that the tabernacle built by Moses could not be the real dwelling-place of God, and every Jew ought to have been impressed by that truth every time he looked at it. Solomon knew it well, for at the dedication of the temple that he built, which was far larger and grander than the first tabernacle, he said, "Will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded" (1 Kings 8:27). What then is God's dwelling place? He Himself indicated it when, after asking, "Where is the place that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest?" He said, "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word" (Isaiah 66:1-2). "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). The human body is the temple of God's Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). This is the true dwelling place of God.

Monday: Sin, Sacrifice, and Acceptance – "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). This blood here

is the blood of Christ, not of animals. Hebrews 9:1 is a text that hinders many from seeing that all of God's blessings to man are gained by virtue of the second covenant, and not by the first. That text reads: "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." This, together with the fact that when men complied with these ordinances of divine service, they were forgiven (Leviticus 4), seems to some conclusive evidence that the old covenant contained the gospel and its blessings. But forgiveness of sins was not secured by virtue of those offerings; "for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). Forgiveness was obtained only by virtue of the promised sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 9:15), the Mediator of the new covenant, their faith in whom was shown by their offerings. So it was by virtue of the second or new covenant that pardon was secured to those who offered the sacrifices provided for in the ordinances of divine service connected with the old or first covenant. Moreover, those "ordinances of divine service" formed no part of the first covenant. If they had, they must have been mentioned in the making of that covenant; but they were not. They were connected with it, but not a part of it. They were simply the means by which the people acknowledged the justice of their condemnation to death for the violation of the law which they had covenanted to keep, and their faith in the Mediator of the new covenant. In brief, then, God's plan in the salvation of sinners, whether now or in the days of Moses, is: The law sent home emphatically to the individual, to produce conviction of sin, and thus to drive the sinner to seek freedom; then, the acceptance of Christ's gracious invitation, which was extended long before, but which the sinner would not listen to; and lastly, having accepted Christ, and being justified by faith, the manifestation of the faith, through the ordinances of the gospel, and the living of a life of righteousness by faith in Christ.

Tuesday: The Substitution – In Colossians 1:14 we mark two points: we have redemption through Christ's blood, and this redemption is the forgiveness of sins. But the blood is the life (see Genesis 9:4; Revelation 17:13-14). Thus Colossians 1:14 tells us that we have redemption through Christ's life. Christ "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity" (Titus 2:14). He "gave Himself for our sins" (Galatians 1:4). In giving Himself, He gives His life. In shedding His blood, He pours out His life. But in giving up His life, He gives it to us. That life is righteousness, even the perfect righteousness of God, so that when we receive it we are "made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). It is the receiving of Christ's life, as we are baptized into His death, that reconciles us to God. It is thus that we "put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," after the image of Him that created him" (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10).

Wednesday: The New Covenant High Priest – It is not a mere coincidence that the book of the Hebrews, which more than any other book contains instructions upon the office and work of Christ in Heaven, contains also the most remarkable chapter on faith. They belong together. The knowledge of the office and work of Christ is given first, as the foundation upon which faith can rest, and then is set forth the importance of faith and the works which can by means of it be accomplished. We are cited to the journeyings of ancient Israel in the wilderness towards the land of promise, to their unbelief and the fact that they failed thereby to enter into the rest which God had promised, to the shadowy nature of their service of sacrifices and offerings, to the rest that remains to the people of God and the danger of losing it through unbelief, to Christ as the Leader of the spiritual seed of Abraham and their High Priest, who performs the true work of ministry for man before God; then beginning the eighth chapter of the apostle says: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a 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 the Lord pitched, and not man." Christ is therefore, our High Priest performing in the heavenly sanctuary a work of which that performed by Aaron and his sons was typical.

Thursday: Heavenly Ministry – The faith which looks unto Jesus, therefore, looks into the sanctuary in heaven, and beholds Him engaged in His priestly work before His Father. That work is a work typified by the work of the high priest in the sanctuary built by Moses. The earthly sanctuary, with its two apartments, was a pattern of this true sanctuary above (Hebrews 9:23-24). Beloved, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.