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CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent.

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The hour of the evening sacrifice arrives. The priest stands in the court of the Temple in Jerusalem ready to offer a lamb as sacrifice. As he raises the knife to kill the victim, the earth convulses. Terrified, he drops the knife and the lamb escapes. Over the din of the earthquake he hears a loud ripping noise as an unseen hand rends the veil of the Temple from top to bottom.

Across town, black clouds enshroud a cross. When Jesus, the Passover Lamb of God, calls out, "It is finished!" He dies for the sins of the world.

Type has met antitype. The very event the Temple services have pointed to through the centuries has taken place. The Saviour has completed His atoning sacrifice, and because symbol has met reality, the rituals foreshadowing this sacrifice have been superseded. Thus the rent veil, the dropped knife, the escaped lamb.

But there is more to salvation history. It reaches beyond the cross. Jesus' resurrection and ascension direct our attention to the heavenly sanctuary, where, no longer the Lamb, He ministers as priest. The once-for-all sacrifice has been offered (Heb. 9:28); now He makes available to all the benefits of this atoning sacrifice.

The Sanctuary in Heaven

God instructed Moses to build as His earthly dwelling place (Ex. 25:8) the first sanctuary that functioned under the first (old) covenant (Heb. 9:1). This was a place where people

were taught the way of salvation. About 400 years later the permanent Temple in Jerusalem built by King Solomon replaced Moses' portable tabernacle. After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed that Temple, the exiles who returned from Babylonian captivity built the second Temple, which Herod the Great beautified and which the Romans destroyed in A.D. 70.

The New Testament reveals that the new covenant also has a sanctuary, one that is in heaven. In it Christ functions as high priest "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty." This sanctuary is the "true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Heb. 8:1,2).(*1) At Mount Sinai Moses was shown "the pattern," copy, or miniature model of the heavenly sanctuary (see Ex. 25:9, 40). Scripture calls the sanctuary he built "the copies of the things in the heavens," and its "holy places...copies of the true" (Heb. 9:23,24). The earthly sanctuary and its services, then, give us special insight into the role of the heavenly sanctuary.

Throughout, Scripture presumes the existence of a heavenly sanctuary or temple (e.g., Ps. 11:4; 102:19; Micah 1:2,3). In vision, John the revelator saw the heavenly sanctuary. He described it as "the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven" (Rev. 15:5) and "the temple of God...in heaven" (Rev. 11:19). There he saw the items that the furnishings of the holy place of the earthly sanctuary were modeled after, such as seven lampstands (Rev. 1:12) and an altar of incense (Rev. 8:3). And he saw there also the ark of the covenant which was like the one in the earthly Holy of Holies (Rev. 11:19).

The heavenly altar of incense is located before God's throne (Rev. 8:3; 9:13), which is in the heavenly temple of God (Rev. 4:2; 7:15; 16:17). Thus the heavenly throne room scene (Dan. 7:9, 10) is in the heavenly temple or sanctuary. This is why the final judgments issue from God's temple (Rev. 15:5-8).

It is clear, therefore, that the Scriptures present the heavenly sanctuary as a real place (Heb. 8:2, NEB), not a metaphor or abstraction. The heavenly sanctuary is the primary dwelling place of God.

The Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary

The message of the sanctuary was a message of salvation. God used its services to proclaim the gospel (Heb. 4:2). The earthly sanctuary services were "a symbol [parabole in Greek—a parable] for the present time then present"—until Christ's first advent (Heb. 9:9,10, NASB). "Through symbol and ritual God purposed by means of this gospel-parable to focus the faith of Israel upon the sacrifice and priestly ministry of the world's Redeemer, the 'Lamb of God,' who would take away the sin of the world (Gal. 3:23; John 1:29)."

The sanctuary illustrated three phases of Christ's ministry: (1) the substitutionary sacrifice, (2) the priestly mediation, and (3) the final judgment.

The Substitutionary Sacrifice

Every sanctuary sacrifice symbolized Jesus' death for the forgiveness of sin, revealing the truth that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). Those sacrifices illustrated the following truths:

1. God's judgment on sin.

Because sin is a deep-seated rebellion against all that is good, pure, and true, it cannot be ignored. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

2. Christ's substitutionary death.

"All we like sheep have gone astray;...and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"(1 Cor.15:3).

3. God provides the atoning sacrifice.

That sacrifice is "Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith" (Rom. 3:24,25). "For He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ the Redeemer took the judgment of sin upon Himself. Therefore, "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. 'With his stripes we are healed' [Isa. 53:5]."

The sacrifices of the earthly sanctuary were repetitive. Like a story, this ritual parable of redemption was told and retold year after year. By contrast, the Antitype—the actual atoning death of our Lord—took place at Calvary once for all time (Heb. 9:26-28; 10:10-14).

On the cross the penalty for human sin was fully paid. Divine justice was satisfied. From a legal perspective the world was restored to favor with God (Rom. 5:18). The atonement, or reconciliation, was completed on the cross as foreshadowed by the sacrifices, and the penitent believer can trust in this finished work of our Lord.

The Priestly Mediator

If the sacrifice atoned for sin, why was a priest necessary?

The priest's role drew attention to the need for mediation between sinners and a holy God. Priestly mediation reveals the seriousness of sin and the estrangement it brought between a sinless God and a sinful creature. "Just as every sacrifice foreshadowed Christ's death, so every priest foreshadowed Christ's mediatorial ministry as high priest in the heavenly sanctuary. 'For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2:5)."

1. Mediator and atonement.

The application of the atoning blood during the mediatorial ministry of the priest was also seen as a form of atonement (Lev. 4:35). The English term atonement implies a reconciliation between two estranged parties. As the atoning death of Christ reconciled the world to God, so His mediation, or the application of the merits of His sinless life and substitutionary death, makes reconciliation or atonement with God a personal reality for the believer.

The Levitical priesthood illustrates the saving ministry Christ has carried on since His death. Our High Priest, serving "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," functions as a "Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Heb. 8:1,2).

The heavenly sanctuary is the great command center where Christ conducts His priestly ministry for our salvation. He is able "to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). Therefore, we are encouraged to come "boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

In the earthly sanctuary the priests carried out two distinct ministries—a daily ministry in the holy place, or first apartment (see chapter 4 of this book) and a yearly ministry in the Most Holy Place, or Second Apartment. Those services illustrated Christ's priestly ministry.

2. The ministry in the holy place.

The priestly ministry in the holy place of the sanctuary could be characterized as a ministry of intercession, forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. A continual ministry, it provided constant access to God through the priest. It symbolized the truth that the repentant sinner has immediate and constant access to God through Christ's priestly ministry as intercessor and mediator (Eph. 2:18; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25; 9:24; 10:19-22).

When the penitent sinner came to the sanctuary with a sacrifice, he laid his hands on the head of the innocent animal and confessed his sins. This act symbolically transferred his sin and its penalty to the victim. As a result, he obtained forgiveness of sins. As The Jewish Encyclopedia states: "The laying of hands upon the victim's head is an ordinary rite by which the substitution and transfer of sins are effected." "In every sacrifice there is the idea of substitution; the victim takes the place of the human sinner."

The blood of the sin offering was applied in one of two ways: a. If it was taken into the holy place, it was sprinkled before the inner veil and placed on the horns of the altar of incense (Lev. 4:6,7,17,18). b. If it was not taken into the sanctuary, it was placed on the horns of the altar of burnt offering in the court (Lev. 4:25,30). In that case the priest ate part of the flesh of the sacrifice (Lev. 6:25,26,30). In either case, the participants understood that their sins and accountability were transferred to the sanctuary and its priesthood.

"In this ritual parable the sanctuary assumed the penitent's guilt and accountability—for the time being at least—when the penitent offered a sin offering, confessing his errors. He went away forgiven, assured of God's acceptance. So in the antitypical experience, when a sinner is drawn in penitence by the Holy Spirit to accept Christ as his Saviour and Lord, Christ assumes his sins and accountability. He is freely forgiven. Christ is the believer's Surety as well as his Substitute."

In type and antitype the holy place ministry primarily centers on the individual. Christ's priestly ministry provides for the sinner's forgiveness and reconciliation to God (Heb. 7:25). "For Christ's sake God forgives the repentant sinner, imputes to him the righteous character and obedience of His Son, pardons his sins, and records his name in the book of life as one of His children (Eph. 4:32; 1 John 1:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:24; Luke 10:20). And as the believer abides in Christ, spiritual grace is mediated to him by our Lord through the Holy Spirit so that he matures spiritually and develops the virtues and graces that reflect the divine character (2 Peter 3:18; Gal. 5:22,23)."

The ministry in the holy place brings about the believer's justification and sanctification.

The Final Judgment

The events on the Day of Atonement illustrate the three phases of God's final judgment. They are (1) the "premillennial judgment" (or "the investigative judgment") which is also called the "pre-Advent judgment"; (2) the "millennial judgment"; and (3) the "executive judgment" which takes place at the end of the millennium.

1. The ministry in the Most Holy Place.

The second division of the priestly ministry is primarily sanctuary-centered, revolving around the cleansing of the sanctuary and of God's people. This form of ministry, which focused on the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary and which only the high priest could perform, was limited to one day of the religious year.

The cleansing of the sanctuary required two goats—the Lord's goat and the scapegoat (Azazel in Hebrew). Sacrificing the Lord's goat, the high priest made atonement for "the Holy Place [actually the Most Holy Place in this chapter], the tabernacle of meeting [the holy place], and the altar [of the court]" (Lev. 16:20; cf. 16:16-18).

Taking the blood of the Lord's goat, which represented the blood of Christ, into the Most Holy Place, the high priest applied it directly, in the very presence of God, to the mercy seat—the cover of the ark containing the Ten Commandments—to satisfy the claims of God's holy law. His action symbolized the immeasurable price Christ had to pay for our sins, revealing how eager God is to reconcile His people to Himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19). Then he applied this blood to the altar of incense and to the altar of burnt offering which on every day of the year had been sprinkled with the blood representing confessed sins. The high priest thereby made an atonement for the sanctuary, as well as the people, and brought about cleansing of both (Lev. 16:16-20, 30-33).

Next, representing Christ as mediator, the high priest took upon himself the sins that had polluted the sanctuary and transferred them to the live goat, Azazel, which was then led away from the camp of God's people. This action removed the sins of the people that had been symbolically transferred from the repentant believers to the sanctuary through the blood or flesh of the sacrifices of the daily ministry of forgiveness. In this way the sanctuary was cleansed and prepared for another year's work of ministry (Lev. 16:16-20, 30-33). And thus all things were set right between God and His people.

The Day of Atonement, then, illustrates the judgment process that deals with the eradication of sin. The atonement performed on this day "foreshadowed the final application of the merits of Christ to banish the presence of sin for all eternity and to accomplish the full reconciliation of the universe into one harmonious government under God."

2. Azazel, the scapegoat.

"The translation 'scapegoat' (escape goat) of the Hebrew azazel comes from the Vulgate caper emissarius, "goat sent away" (Lev. 16:8, RSV, KJV, margin). A careful examination of Leviticus 16 reveals that Azazel represents Satan, not Christ, as some have thought. The arguments supporting this interpretation are: "(1) the scapegoat was not slain as a sacrifice and thus could not be used as a means of bringing forgiveness. For 'without shedding of blood is no remission' (Heb. 9:22); (2) the sanctuary was entirely cleansed by the blood of the Lord's goat before the scapegoat was introduced

into the ritual (Lev. 16:20); (3) the passage treats the scapegoat as a personal being who is the opposite of, and opposed to, God (Leviticus 16:8 reads literally, 'One to Yahweh and the other to Azazel'). Therefore, in the setting of the sanctuary parable, it is more consistent to see the Lord's goat as a symbol of Christ and the scapegoat—Azazel—as a symbol of Satan."

3. The different phases of the judgment.

The scapegoat ritual on the Day of Atonement pointed beyond Calvary to the final end of the sin problem—the banishment of sin and Satan. The "full accountability for sin will be rolled back upon Satan, its originator and instigator. Satan, and his followers, and all the effects of sin, will be banished from the universe by destruction. Atonement by judgment will, therefore, bring about a fully reconciled and harmonious universe (Eph. 1:10). This is the objective that the second and final phase of Christ's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary will accomplish." This judgment will see God's final vindication before the universe.

The Day of Atonement portrayed the three phases of the final judgment:

The removal of sins from the sanctuary relates to the first, or pre-Advent, investigative phase of the judgment. It "focuses on the names recorded in the Book of Life just as the Day of Atonement focused on the removal of the confessed sins of the penitent from the sanctuary. False believers will be sifted out; the faith of true believers and their union with Christ will be reaffirmed before the loyal universe, and the records of their sins will be blotted out."

The banishment of the scapegoat to the wilderness symbolizes Satan's millennial imprisonment on this desolated earth, which begins at the Second Advent and coincides with the second phase of the final judgment, which takes place in heaven (Rev. 20:4; 1 Cor. 6:1-3). This millennial judgment involves a review of the judgment on the wicked and will benefit the redeemed by giving them insight into God's dealings with sin and those sinners who were not saved. It will answer all the questions the redeemed may have about God's mercy and justice.

The clean camp symbolizes the results of the third, or executive, phase of the judgment, when fire destroys the wicked and cleanses the earth (Rev. 20:11-15; Matt. 25:31-46 2 Peter 3:7-13;).

The Heavenly Sanctuary in Prophecy

In the above discussion we focused on the sanctuary from the type-antitype perspective. Now we will look at it in prophecy.

The Anointing of the Heavenly Sanctuary

The 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9 pointed to the inauguration of Christ's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. One of the last events to take place during the 490 years was the anointing of the "Most Holy" (Dan. 9:24;). The Hebrew *qodesh qodeshim* that has been translated as "Most Holy" literally means Holy of Holies. It would therefore be better to translate the phrase "to anoint a Holy of Holies" or "to anoint the most holy place" (NASB).

As during the inauguration of the earthly sanctuary it was anointed with holy oil to consecrate it for its services, so in its inauguration the heavenly sanctuary was to be anointed to consecrate it for Christ's intercessory ministry. With His ascension soon after His death (Dan. 9:27) Christ began His ministry as our high priest and intercessor.

The Cleansing of the Heavenly Sanctuary

Speaking of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, the book of Hebrews says, "Almost all things are purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens [the earthly sanctuary] should be purified with these [the blood of animals], but the heavenly things themselves [the heavenly sanctuary] with better sacrifices than these"—the precious blood of Christ (Heb. 9:22,23).

Various commentators have noted this Biblical teaching. Henry Alford remarked that "the heaven itself needed, and obtained, purification by the atoning blood of Christ." B.F. Westcott commented, "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." It was Christ's blood, he said, that was available "for the cleansing of the heavenly archetype of the earthly sanctuary."

As the sins of God's people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and then symbolically transferred to the earthly sanctuary, so under the new covenant the confessed sins of the penitent are by faith placed on Christ.

And as during the typical Day of Atonement the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary removed the sins accumulated there, so the heavenly sanctuary is cleansed by the final removal of the record of sins in the heavenly books. But before the records are finally cleared, they will be examined to determine who through repentance and faith in Christ is entitled to enter His eternal kingdom. The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, therefore, involves a work of investigation or judgment that fully reflects the nature of the Day of Atonement as a day of judgment. This judgment, which ratifies the decision as to who will be saved and who will be lost, must take place before the Second Advent, for at that time Christ returns with His reward "to give to every one according to his work" (Rev. 22:12). Then, also, Satan's accusations will be answered (cf. Rev. 12:10).

All who have truly repented and by faith claimed the blood of Christ's atoning sacrifice have received pardon. When their names come up in this judgment and they are found clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness, their sins are blotted out and they are accounted worthy of eternal life (Luke 20:35). "He who overcomes," Jesus said, "shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (Rev. 3:5).

The prophet Daniel reveals the nature of this investigative judgment. While the apostate power symbolized by the little horn carries on its blasphemous and persecuting work against God and His people on earth (Dan. 7:8,20,21,25), thrones are set in place and God presides over the final judgment. This judgment takes place in the throne room of the heavenly sanctuary and is attended by multitudes of heavenly witnesses. When the court is seated, the books are opened, signaling the beginning of an investigative procedure (Dan. 7:9,10). It is not until after this judgment that the apostate power is destroyed (Dan. 7:11).

The Time of the Judgment

Both Christ and the Father are involved in the investigative judgment. Before He returns to the earth on the "clouds of heaven," Christ as the "Son of Man" comes "with the clouds of heaven" to the "Ancient of Days," God the Father, and stands before Him (Dan. 7:13). Ever since His ascension Christ has functioned as high priest, our intercessor before God (Heb. 7:25). But at this time He comes to receive the kingdom (Dan. 7:14).

1. The eclipse of Christ's priestly ministry.

Daniel 8 tells us about the controversy between good and evil and God's final triumph. This chapter reveals that between the inauguration of Christ's high-priestly ministry and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary an earthly power would obscure Christ's ministry.

The ram in this vision represented the Medo-Persian empire (Dan. 8:2)--the two horns, the higher coming up last, clearly depicting its two phases, the dominant Persian part of the kingdom emerging last. As Daniel predicted, this eastern kingdom did extend its power "westward, northward, and southward," becoming "great" (Dan. 8:4).

The male goat coming from the west symbolized Greece, with the great horn, its "first king," representing Alexander the Great (Dan. 8:21). Coming "from the west" Alexander swiftly defeated Persia. Then, within a few years of his death, his empire was divided into "four kingdoms" (Dan. 8:8, 22)--the kingdoms of Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy.

At "the latter time of their kingdom" (Dan. 8:23), in other words, toward the end of the divided Greek empire "a little horn" would arise (Dan. 8:9). Some consider Antiochus Epiphanes, a Syrian King who ruled over Palestine for a short period in the second century B.C., the fulfillment of this part of the prophecy. Others, including many of the Reformers, have identified this little horn as Rome in both its pagan and papal phases. This last interpretation fits exactly the specifications Daniel gave, whereas the other does not. Notice the following points:

The little horn power extends from the fall of the Greek empire till the "time of the end" (Dan. 8:17). Only Rome, pagan and papal, meets these time specifications.

The prophecies of Daniel 2, 7, and 8 parallel each other (see prophetic parallel chart, page 347 of this book). The four metals of the image of Daniel 2 and the four beasts of Daniel 7 represent the same world empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Both the feet of iron and clay and the ten horns of the fourth beast represent the divisions of Rome; those divided states were to continue to exist until the Second Advent. Note that both prophecies point to Rome as the successor of Greece and as the last empire before the Second Advent and final judgment. The little horn in Daniel 8 fits in the same slot; it follows Greece and is supernaturally destroyed or "broken without human hand" (Dan. 8:25; cf. Dan. 2:34).

Medo-Persia is called "great," Greece is described as being "very great," and the little horn as "exceedingly great" (Dan. 8:4,8,9). Rome, one of the greatest world empires, fits this specification.

Only Rome expanded its empire to the south (Egypt), the east (Macedonia and Asia Minor), and "the Glorious Land" (Palestine), just as the prophecy predicted (Dan. 8:9).

Rome stood up against the "Prince of the host," the "Prince of princes" (Dan. 8:11, 25), who is none other than Jesus Christ. "Against Him and His people, as well as His sanctuary, the power of Rome fought a most amazing warfare. This description covers both the pagan and papal phases of Rome. While pagan Rome withstood Christ and did indeed destroy the Temple in Jerusalem, papal Rome effectively obscured the priestly, mediatorial ministry of Christ in behalf of sinners in the heavenly sanctuary (see Heb. 8:1,2) by substituting a priesthood that purports to offer forgiveness through the mediation of men." This apostate power would be quite successful, for "he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered" (Dan. 8:12).

2. The time of restoration, cleansing, and judgment.

God would not permit the eclipse of the truth of Christ's high-priestly ministry to go on indefinitely. Through faithful, God-fearing men and women He revived His cause. The Reformation's partial rediscovery of Christ's role as our Mediator caused a great revival within the Christian world. Yet there was still more truth to be revealed about Christ's heavenly ministry.

Daniel's vision indicated that Christ's role as our high priest would be made especially prominent toward "the time of the end" (Dan. 8:17), when He would begin His special work of cleansing and judgment in addition to His continual intercessory ministry (Heb. 7:25). The vision specifies when Christ was to begin this antitypical day of atonement ministry—the work of the investigative judgment (Dan. 7) and cleansing of the sanctuary—"Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan. 8:14, KJV). Because the vision refers to the time of the end, the sanctuary it speaks of cannot be the earthly sanctuary—for it was destroyed in A.D. 70. The prophecy must therefore refer to the new covenant sanctuary in heaven—the place where Christ ministers for our salvation.

What are the 2300 days or "2,300 evenings-mornings," as the original Hebrew reads? According to Genesis 1, an "evening and morning" is a day. As we have seen in chapters 4 and 12 of this book, a time period in symbolic prophecy is also symbolic: a prophetic day represents a year. So, as many Christians throughout the centuries have believed, the 2300 days of Daniel 8 signify 2300 literal years.

a. Daniel 9 the key to unlocking Daniel 8.

God commissioned the angel Gabriel to make Daniel "understand the vision" (Dan. 8:16). But its impact was so shocking that Daniel became ill and Gabriel had to discontinue his explanation. At the close of the chapter Daniel remarked: "I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it" (Dan. 8:27, RSV).

Because of this interruption, Gabriel had to delay his explanation of the time period—the only aspect of the vision he had not yet explained. Daniel 9 describes his return to complete this responsibility. Daniel 8 and 9, then, are connected, the latter being the key to unlocking the mystery of the 2300 days. When Gabriel appeared he said to Daniel: "I have come forth to give you skill to understand...therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision" (Dan. 9:23). Here he refers back to the vision of the 2300 days.

His desire to explain the time elements of the vision of Daniel 8 makes clear why he introduces his explanation with the 70-weeks prophecy.

The 70 weeks, or 490 years, were "determined," or "decreed" (RSV, NASB, NIV), for the Jews and Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24). The underlying Hebrew verb is *chatak*. Although this verb is used only once in the Scriptures, its meaning can be understood from other Hebrew sources. The well-known Hebrew-English dictionary by Gesenius states that properly it means "to cut" or "to divide."

With this background, Gabriel's comments are very revealing. He tells Daniel that 490 years were to be cut off from the longer period of 2300 years. As the starting point for the 490 years, Gabriel points to "the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:25), which took place in 457 B.C., the seventh year of Artaxerxes (see chapter 4).

The 490 years ended in A.D. 34. When we cut off 490 years from the 2300 years, we are left with 1810 years. Since the 2300 years were to extend 1810 years beyond A.D. 34, they reach to the year 1844.

b. Toward a fuller understanding of Christ's ministry.

During the early part of the nineteenth century many Christians—including Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Disciples of Christ—gave intensive study to the prophecy of Daniel 8. All these Bible students expected some very significant events to take place at the end of the 2300 years. Depending on their understanding of the little horn power and the sanctuary, they anticipated this prophetic period to terminate in the purification of the church, the liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem, the return of the Jews, the fall of the Turkish or Muslim power, the destruction of the papacy, the restoration of true worship, the beginning of the earthly millennium, the day of judgment, the cleansing of the earth by fire, or the Second Advent.

None of these predictions materialized, and all who believed them were disappointed. Yet the severity of their disappointment was in proportion to the nature of the predicted event. Obviously the disappointment of those who expected Christ to return in 1844 was more traumatic than that of those who looked for the return of the Jews to Palestine.

As a result of their disappointment, many gave up the study of prophecy or turned from the historicist method of interpreting prophecy, which had led to these conclusions. Some, however, continued to study this prophecy and the subject of the sanctuary with much prayer and intensity, continuing to look to Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary on their behalf. Rich new insights into that ministry rewarded their efforts. They discovered that the historic prophetic faith of the early church and of the Reformation was still valid. The prophetic time calculations were indeed correct. The 2300 years had ended in 1844. Their mistake—and that of all interpreters of that time—was in their understanding of what event was to take place at the end of that prophetic period. New light from Christ's sanctuary ministry turned their disappointment into hope and joy.

Their study of Biblical teachings on the sanctuary revealed that in 1844 Christ came to the Ancient of Days and began the final phase of His high-priestly ministry in the

heavenly sanctuary. This ministry was the antitype of the Day of Atonement cleansing of the sanctuary that Daniel 7 depicts as the pre-Advent investigative judgment.

This new insight into Christ's heavenly ministry "is not a departure from the historic Christian faith. It is, instead, the logical completion and inevitable consummation of that faith. It is simply the last-day appearance and fulfillment of the prophesied emphasis characterizing the everlasting gospel...in the closing segment of its witness to the world."

The Significance Within the Great Controversy

The prophecies of Daniel 7 and 8 disclose the broader perspectives of the final outcome of the great controversy between God and Satan.

The Vindication of God's Character

Through the activities of the little horn, Satan has attempted to challenge God's authority. The acts of that power have reproached and trampled upon the heavenly sanctuary, the center of God's government. Daniel's visions point to a pre-Advent judgment in which God will secure a verdict of condemnation upon the little horn, and thus upon Satan himself. In the light of Calvary all Satan's challenges will be refuted. All come to understand and agree that God is right; that He has no responsibility for the sin problem. His character will emerge unassailable, and His government of love will be reaffirmed.

The Vindication of God's People

While the judgment brings condemnation upon the apostate little horn power, it is "made in favor of the saints of the Most High" (Dan. 7:22). Indeed, this judgment not only vindicates God before the universe, but His people, as well. Though the saints have been despised and persecuted for their faith in Christ as they may have been throughout the centuries, this judgment puts things right. God's people will realize Christ's promise: "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32; cf. Luke 12:8,9; Rev. 3:5).

The Judgment and Salvation

Does the investigative judgment jeopardize the salvation of those who believe in Jesus Christ? Not at all. Genuine believers live in union with Christ, trusting in Him as intercessor (Rom. 8:34). Their assurance is in the promise that "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Why then a pre-Advent investigative judgment? This judgment is not for the benefit of the Godhead. It is primarily for the benefit of the universe, answering the charges of Satan and giving assurance to the unfallen creation that God will allow into His kingdom only those who truly have been converted. So God opens the books of record for impartial inspection (Dan. 7:9,10).

Human beings belong to one of three classes: (1) the wicked, who reject God's authority; (2) genuine believers, who, trusting in the merits of Christ through faith, live in obedience to God's law; and (3) those who appear to be genuine believers but are not.

The unfallen beings can readily discern the first class. But who is a genuine believer and who is not? Both groups are written in the book of life, which contains the names of all who have ever entered God's service (Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Dan. 12:1; Rev. 21:27). The church itself contains genuine and false believers, the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:28-30).

God's unfallen creatures are not omniscient; they cannot read the heart. "So a judgment is needed—before the second coming of Christ—to sift the true from the false and to demonstrate to the interested universe God's justice in saving the sincere believer. The issue is with God and the universe, not between God and the true child. This calls for the opening of the books of record, the disclosing of those who have professed faith and whose names have been entered into the book of life."

Christ depicted this judgment in His parable of the wedding guests who responded to the generous gospel invitation. Because not all who choose to be Christian are genuine disciples, the king comes to inspect the guests and see who has the wedding garment. This garment represents "the pure, spotless character which Christ's true followers will possess. To the church is given 'that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,' 'not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,' (Rev. 19:8; Eph. 5:27). The fine linen, says the Scripture, 'is the righteousness of saints' (Rev. 19:8). It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour." When the king inspects the guests, only those who have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness so generously offered in the gospel invitation are accepted as genuine believers. Those who profess to be followers of God but who are living in disobedience and are not covered by Christ's righteousness will be blotted from the book of life (see Ex. 32:33).

The concept of an investigative judgment of all who profess faith in Christ does not contradict the Biblical teaching of salvation by faith through grace. Paul knew that one day he would face the judgment. He therefore expressed the desire to "be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). All who are united with Christ are assured of salvation. In the pre-Advent phase of the last judgment genuine believers, those who have a saving relationship with Christ, are affirmed before the unfallen universe.

Christ, however, cannot assure salvation for those who only profess to be Christians on the basis of how many good deeds they have performed (see Matt. 7:21-23). The heavenly records, therefore, are more than just a tool for sifting the genuine from the false. They also are the foundation for confirming the genuine believers before the angels.

"Far from robbing the believer of his assurance with Christ, the doctrine of the sanctuary sustains it. It illustrates and clarifies to his mind the plan of salvation. His penitent heart rejoices to grasp the reality of Christ's substitutionary death for his sins as prefigured in its sacrifices. Furthermore, his faith reaches upward to find its meaning in a living Christ, his priestly Advocate in the very presence of the holy God."

A Time to Be Ready

God intends this good news of Christ's closing ministry of salvation to go to all the world before Christ's return. Central to this message is the everlasting gospel, which is to be proclaimed with a sense of urgency because "the hour of His [God's] judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7). This call warns the world that God's judgment is taking place now.

Today we are living in the great antitypical day of atonement. As the Israelites were called to afflict their souls on that day (Lev. 23:27), so God calls upon all His people to experience heartfelt repentance. All who wish to retain their names in the book of life must make things right with God and their fellowmen during this time of God's judgment (Rev. 14:7).

Christ's work as high priest is nearing its completion. The years of human probation are slipping away. No one knows just when God's voice will proclaim, "It is finished." "Take heed," Christ said, "watch and pray, for you do not know when the time is" (Mark 13:33).

Although we live in the awesome time of the antitypical day of atonement, we have no need to fear. Jesus Christ, in His twofold capacity of sacrifice and priest, ministers in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. Because "we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16).