

The Great Controversy Series

Sermon 35: The Cleansing of the Sanctuary

Daniel 8:14 And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

Last time, we said that Miller and his associates were wrong about their concept of the sanctuary. We said that the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 is not the earth but the heavenly sanctuary. The sanctuary mentioned in the Bible is either the tabernacle that Moses constructed or Solomon's temple or the sanctuary in heaven.

When Jesus died, the model tabernacle system that Moses made came to an end. The heavenly sanctuary, the true tabernacle, is the temple of the new covenant.

Hebrews 8:1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,² a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

In 1844, there had been no temple on earth for centuries. Thus, the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 certainly points to the tabernacle in heaven.

No what is the cleansing of the sanctuary. In the Old Testament we see a ceremony for cleansing the earthly tabernacle. But is there something that needs to be cleaned in the heavenly sanctuary? In Hebrews chapter 9 there is shown a cleansing of both the earthly and heavenly tabernacle.

Hebrews 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.²³ Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

The cleansing in both the earthly and the heavenly tabernacle is made with blood. In the model ministry the blood of animals was used, in the true service Jesus' blood is used. In verse 22 it talks about remission. Remission concerns sin. How is sin connected with either the earthly or the heavenly tabernacle? To answer this let's look at the model system. Because the earthly ministry was the copy and example of the heavenly ones.

Hebrews 8:5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

The earthly temple services were in two parts, the daily ministrations and once a year the high priest did a special atonement in the Most Holy Place for the cleansing of the sanctuary.

The tabernacle was approximately like the picture on the screen. Yeats ago a man named Ted Tessner made this model and took photographs. In the slide, the white curtains defined the area. This area was divided into two by yet another curtain. In the front half people could enter. This was the courtyard. On the other side of the middle curtain was the Tent of Meeting. Only the priests could enter this tent. In the courtyard there was the altar of burnt offering and the laver for washing.

Day by day the penitents brought their sacrifices to the courtyard and put their hands on the animal and confessed their sins. Thus their sins were transferred to the innocent animal. The penitent killed the animal with his own hands. The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. As Paul wrote, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." If the one repenting and making the sacrifice was a priest, or if the whole congregation sins through ignorance, the animal's blood was brought by the priest into the Tent of Meeting to the first apartment which was called the holy place. In the first apartment was the candlestick, the table of showbread and the golden altar. The second apartment of the Tent of Meeting was the Most Holy Place. In the Most Holy Place was the ark of the covenant. Once a year the high priest, and only the high priest, was able to go into the Most Holy Place.

There was a curtain in between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The priest would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice before the veil and put some on the horns of the altar. The rest of the blood was poured around the base of the altar of burnt offering. If the one making the sacrifice was a ruler or one of the common people then the blood was not taken into the Holy Place. The blood was placed on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and the remaining part was poured out at the base of the altar. In this case the priest ate some portion of the flesh of the sacrifice and he entered the Holy Place (Leviticus 10:17). Both ceremonies symbolized the transfer of sin from the offeror to the sanctuary.

All year long people's sins were transferred to the sanctuary. To remove these sins from the sanctuary required a special work. The Lord commanded that both apartments of the sanctuary and the altar of burnt offering should be cleansed.

Leviticus 16:16 "So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

Leviticus 16:19 "Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

Once a year on the Day of Atonement the high priest went into the Most Holy place for the cleansing of the sanctuary. This cleansing would complete the round of ceremonies for the year. For the Day of Atonement two goats were brought to the tabernacle.

Leviticus 16:8 "Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat.

The Lord's goat was killed as a sin offering for the people. The blood of the goat was sprinkled on the mercy seat, which was the top of the ark of the covenant, and before the mercy seat. The golden altar which was before the curtain was also sprinkled with blood. After atonement was made for the whole tabernacle, the high priest brought forward the other goat.

Leviticus 16:21 "Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man.

The ceremony gives important lessons regarding salvation. The wages of sin is death. In the place of the sinner a substitute was accepted but the substitute's blood did not immediately cancel sin. It transferred it to the sanctuary. By offering the sacrifice the sinner accepted the validity of the law of God, and the fact that he had sinned. It showed that the offeror believed in the Savior to come and that he wanted forgiveness. Yet the offeror was not 100% released from the condemnation of the law. Until the Day of Atonement the sinner's sin was still contaminating the temple of God. Until the high priest put the sins upon the goat the worshipper was not 100% separated from sin.

The Old Testament temple system was an example.

Hebrews 9:24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

After Jesus rose from the dead, where did He go? He went to heaven by the side of God. O.K., what is He doing? For 18 centuries He has been working as a mediator in the Holy Place. He gains acceptance for us by offering His own blood and righteousness. Yet our sins still remain in the sanctuary.

In the example services once a year the sanctuary was cleansed. In the true service, before Jesus comes to this world again the heavenly temple will be cleansed. This work began in 1844 and continues. The cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 is the work of atonement that Jesus is now doing. In 1844 Jesus began this work and continues to do it. But soon, no one knows when, Jesus will finish His work of atonement, that is the cleansing of the sanctuary, and return to this world.

But to learn who, by faith and repentance is worthy of this work of atonement requires an investigation. A judgment is required.

Matthew 7:21 " Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

This investigation, this judgment takes place before Jesus comes because when He comes His reward is with Him. Judgment will have been finished by then. For this reason the Day of Atonement is also called the judgment day.

Jesus' mediation work will soon finish and He will return to this earth. Have we really repented and believed. Or are we still trampling on God's law? In the judgment day everything will be black and white. Either we are on Jesus' side or on Satan's side. We can't be half and half. Now, the door of mercy is open. Everyone found in Jesus will be justified and their sins will be put on Satan's head. But false believers will be revealed as false on Judgment Day. The choice is yours. Don't miss the opportunity. The door of mercy will not remain open forever. Jesus is coming back!