



The Plan of Salvation as Revealed in the Sanctuary

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." John 3:16, 17. KJV.

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4:4, 5.

With these profound and majestic words, the Bible introduces to us the glorious mystery of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the divine Son of the God of the universe, who sent His Son to our little world to redeem us from the failure of our first parents to obey God and thus retain their innocence.

When Adam and Eve came forth from the hand of their Creator, they were formed in His image and likeness, and they were given the capacity to learn and grow in wisdom and knowledge throughout eternity. But they were warned that if they should ever disobey the command of God and partake of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they would be unable to recover themselves, and their minds would henceforth be untrustworthy to guide them aright. As a result, they would not be able to return to their original innocence, and unless God implemented a divine plan of rescue, death would be the consequence of their disobedience.

To some, this may seem to be a harsh exactment to require of Adam and Eve. But God's requirement was based upon His foreknowledge of the inevitable result of the outworking of even one sin. In our enlightened age, we have advanced knowledge concerning the brain that will help us to understand why this is so. Here is a description of the complex functioning of the part of the brain which records and regulates our emotions, thus influencing our entire lives. This information helps to explain why our thought processes, once recorded in the brain, dictate our future reactions to similar stimuli:

The part of the brain that receives, stores, and regulates our emotions is called the amygdala. The thalamus acts as a dispatcher and sends on information to both the amygdala and the neocortex. Some messages received and sent to the amygdala produce little reaction. In fact we don't even notice them. Other messages received by the thalamus and sent on to the amygdala have such an intense reaction that we feel it throughout our whole body.

The amygdala acts as our emotional hard drive. It holds all the emotions we have ever experienced and the intensity of those emotions, but it doesn't include specific information about the events that triggered each emotion. The amygdala doesn't decipher fear, anger, or joy; to the amygdala, fear is fear, anger is anger, joy is joy, and these emotional experiences are all equally weighted. There is no chronology of emotions in the amygdala. The amygdala provides our initial whoosh of emotion. This unfiltered emotional response is based on the amygdala's databank of past emotional experiences. Research has shown that it is the amygdala that produces the fight or flight response that we share when facing a dangerous or threatening situation. Our amygdala holds all the emotions we have ever experienced and can pull them up at any time.

[The above information is taken from the book, "EQ and Your Child," by Eileen D. Healy, MA, LMFT.]

Now let's go back to the record of Adam and Eve and the story of their fall. Before Eve had been created, Adam was instructed by God that if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die. Gen. 2:17. Eve knew this, and mentioned it to the serpent in her dialogue with him at the tree. Gen. 3:3. As we know, she was beguiled by the serpent's flattering words and deceptive reasoning, and disobeying God's express command, she ate of the fruit of the tree and then took some of it to Adam, and he also ate with her. Now notice the emotional journey that happened to Adam and Eve as a result of their disobedience.

"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.' And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?' The man said, 'The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.' And the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'" Gen. 3:7-13.

What a scene is here described between the Lord God and our first parents on that fateful day when sin entered our world. Many interesting and important things could be said about the scene described here. But what I want to point out is the kaleidoscope of emotions which were experienced by Adam and Eve as a result of their sin and disobedience.

The first and most profound emotion was fear, accompanied by guilt and shame. Next comes blaming. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. Notice that Jesus, the Divine Person in this scenario, accepted their description of what they had experienced, and pronounced the sentence that would result from their disobedience. Sometimes we may wonder why so much suffering and woe has come from the experience of Adam and Eve in the garden and why it is taking so long to rectify what they did. But it is important to remember that we were created in

the image of God, and our brain is in His likeness. Of course, we are not infinite and eternal. Only as Adam and Eve obeyed God perfectly would they retain their God-given ability to reason and think and act in the image of their Creator. So let's consider what happened to their minds when they chose to disobey God's instructions.

As I have already pointed out, the way the brain is created, everything that we experience is permanently retained, and influences us for the rest of our lives unless corrected and healed by God. This is why God immediately instituted the plan of salvation to give hope to Adam and Eve and their posterity. They could not have known it would take six thousand years and the sacrifice of the Son of God to correct and heal the human race from what they did in a few unthinking moments.

In addition to what I have already described, what happened even before the apple was tasted is also important. According to the writings of Ellen White in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Eve presumptuously went to the tree and imagined herself able to withstand the temptations she might meet there. [PP 54]. Then she listened to the serpent, and interacted with him, and was flattered by his praise of her beauty and his suggestions that she would become even more wise by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. Adam listened to his wife, and perceiving that she was even more beautiful and alluring than she had been before she ate, was deceived by her appearance and excitement, and so he also ate of the forbidden fruit. All these thoughts and feelings were written in their minds as a permanent record to pass on to their progeny. And as a result of the capitulation of our first parents to Satan and his temptations, he now has access to tempt and annoy every person born into this world. Is it any wonder then, that the recovery of the human race has taken so long and has cost such a price?

Fortunately, our wonderful God had a recovery plan from the foundation of the world by which He could save mankind. This recovery plan is best displayed in the Old Testament sanctuary services. This is why it is absolutely essential as we near the close of time that we understand the pathway of recovery which God has provided for us through the sanctuary.

The first lesson to be learned in our recovery is that obedience to God's Commandments and restrictions is necessary for salvation. Unless we have this understanding and desire to obey God and receive His salvation, there is no hope for our recovery from the sin problem. But if we accept God's plan of salvation and follow His prescription for righteousness, we can be healed from our own sins and the sins of our forefathers which have been passed down to us. As God has said in Jer. 17:1, 2, 7-10, 12:

"Judah's sin is engraved with an iron tool, inscribed with a flint point, on the tablets of their hearts and on the horns of their altars. Even their children remember their altars and Asherah poles beside the spreading trees and on the high hills....

"But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve..... A glorious throne, exalted from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."

As we see here, sin is engraved upon the tablets of the heart and mind, even in children, and passed on from generation to generation. In contrast, the perfect law of God is engraved upon tablets of stone and placed in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. I believe that the part of our brain that corresponds with the most holy place in our mind is the amygdala, where incoming information and the feelings associated with it is stored permanently in the brain of every person, causing repeated feelings, reactions, and behaviors from these stored memories. The only hope of our recovery from sinful thoughts and feelings is found in the plan of salvation, which is revealed in the Bible, and especially in the sanctuary.

The first lesson to be learned in the sanctuary services is found in the court, where a slain lamb burned day and night, exemplifying the crucial fact that without a personal acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God for our sins, there would be no hope of salvation, and certain death would be the fate of every sinner. The carnal mind is destined to repeat over and over any sin that is recorded there, and unless new pathways of emotional and spiritual health are formed, the pull of sinful thoughts, feelings and responses is inevitable. Therefore the first step in the sanctuary is coming into agreement with God that sinful behavior is unacceptable, and living our lives on the principles of the law of God is our conscious and willing choice. Adam and Eve fell by disobeying a command of God concerning their behavior, and God's people must return to obedience by having victory over behavioral sins.

The second lesson of the sanctuary is symbolized in the holy place experience, where the perfect life of Jesus while He was upon earth can be transferred to our lives as we are converted and come into harmony with God through a personal relationship with Jesus. In the Old Testament sanctuary services, only the designated priest was allowed behind the curtain which separated the court from the holy place. The blood of the animal over which the sinner had confessed his sin was used in various ways, but for brevity's sake, the blood of the sins of Israel was carried into the holy place by the priest and sprinkled on the horns of the altar of incense and upon the curtain separating the holy place from the Most Holy Place. This ritual foreshadowed the time when Jesus completed His work on earth and ascended to heaven as our High Priest, symbolically carrying the blood of His own sacrifice into the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary.

But when Jesus entered the holy place in heaven for us, His intercession provided the way for us to personally experience what He is doing for us in the heavenly sanctuary. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus becomes a personal friend, and walks with us and talks with us, applying His victories over sin to everyone who wants to live a life like His own. This process is symbolized through the seven branched candlestick--the ever-burning light of the presence of the Holy Spirit; and the table of showbread, representing the life and character of Jesus, which is to become a part of us as we partake of Him through ingesting the written Word.

But there is one more apartment in the sanctuary that is necessary to bring an end to sin. This is the Most Holy Place where the blotting out of sin takes place. In the earthly sanctuary, this happened once a year and lasted for only one day. It was called the Day of Atonement. On that day all the sins of those who had participated in the sanctuary services throughout the year, were ceremonially removed from the sanctuary, never to be remembered again. By this service, all sin was atoned for, and placed upon the head of the scapegoat, who symbolized Satan, the originator of rebellion against the law of God. Thus even the memory of sin was removed from the hearts of the participants on that day, and from the sanctuary itself.

As Jesus officiates in the finishing work of the second apartment in the heavenly sanctuary, He wants to remove even the memory of our sins and cleanse them forever out of our lives, for the feelings stored there still have an effect upon us in times of stress and temptation, and can cause us to feel and react from those original sources. As we have seen, it is the amygdala of the brain that has all the stored emotional memories. No human being can cleanse these stored memories. Only Jesus, our Creator, can do this. But He must have our permission and cooperation in order to remove the defects and sins completely from us. In order to do this, He must reveal to us the roots of our sins that go all the way back to Adam and Eve and have been passed on through our ancestors. Science tells us today that these things are passed down in the DNA of body cells from generation to generation. But Jesus can cleanse these things out of us if we will cooperate with the work that He is doing in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary.

In the Old Testament services on the Day of Atonement, the people were to spend the day searching their hearts for any sin that might still be lurking in the recesses of their minds. Every Israelite was required to participate or be cast out of the camp.

"This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny [afflict-KJV] yourselves and not do any work—whether native-born or an alien living among you—because on this day atonement will be made for you to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins." Lev. 16:29, 30.

"Anyone who does not [afflict] himself on that day must be cut off from his people." Lev. 23:29.

Likewise, those who wish to be counted among the saved remnant of God's people at the end of time must participate with Jesus in the work that He is doing in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. Seventh-day Adventists originated from the divinely revealed time of the beginning of this work of Jesus on October 22, 1844. For 177 years this work has been in progress. Some may wonder why it is taking so long for Jesus to accomplish His work in the Most Holy Place. The answer is in the fact that Jesus will not finish this work unless He has a people who will cooperate intelligently with Him. Just as in ancient Israel on the Day of Atonement, there has to be a corresponding work among us of heart searching and repentance. Without this we shall not know the hidden sins of the inner life that are stored there and the roots of sin which have been passed on down to us and continue to affect our lives today. Only Jesus can reveal, cleanse and blot out these deep-rooted sins which have been hidden from us.

But He can and He will if we participate in the heart searching that is necessary to participate with Jesus in His second apartment Most Holy Place work.

"While Christ is cleansing the sanctuary, the worshippers on earth should be carefully reviewing their life, and compare their character with the standard of righteousness." Ev 224.

"Without the transforming process which can come alone through divine power, the original propensities to sin are left in the heart in all their strength, to forge new chains, to impose a slavery that can never be broken by human power." Ev 192.

Remember that the sin problem resides in the impulses and memories of the amygdala, which began in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, and has been passed on down to the whole human race.

"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. Review the past for me, let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence. Your first father sinned; your spokesman rebelled against me." Isa. 43:25-27.

Sin is so serious that it took the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly ministry of Jesus to provide a remedy for mankind. It is only by the sanctuary process that sin can be understood and overcome. Those who look to Jesus learn to appreciate the principles by which He lived, and are willing to change by the power of the Holy Spirit into His image, and thus they will be restored to our original state of perfect obedience and relationship with God. Then at last the great controversy will be over, and the sin problem will be finished. God will have a cleansed product from the human race who reflect the image of Jesus perfectly.

"Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there will be a special work of purification, of putting away of sins, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14.

"When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing." GC 425.

Brothers and sisters, are we willing to walk the entire way of the sanctuary, including the blotting out of our original sinful propensities and inherited defects of character? Are we willing to part with cherished feelings and self-protection that we have built up over the years? Are we willing to battle with lifelong habits that have been planted in us by the enemy of our souls? We can never do this by ourselves, but Jesus has walked this pathway before us and He can give us His own victory over the sins of the flesh. Just now He is inviting each of us to come to Him and allow Him to cleanse us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit:

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." 2 Cor. 7:1.

This is the process which is necessary for the reception of the latter rain and the sealing of God's people. Many are waiting for the latter rain to prepare them to be ready for the day of God. But this is a fatal deception. Cleansing of the mind and spirit is the preparation which will enable us to be ready to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, just as it was for the outpouring of the early rain.

"Are we emptying our hearts of all selfishness, and cleansing them, preparatory to receiving the latter rain from heaven? Now is the time when we are to confess and forsake our sins, that they may go beforehand to judgment, and be blotted out." 4 BC 1178.

"Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation.... Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble." GC 623.

What a wonderful privilege it is to live in the last moments of earth's history! While the trials are great, and will escalate until the end, we have a mighty Savior who is bending over us with infinite love and mercy for us. And there is nothing that He cannot do if we allow Him to take full possession of our hearts and minds, and bestow upon us His own perfection of character. Let us follow Him to victory, today and every day until He comes!

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