



The Sanctuary—The Stairway to Heaven

In my last study -- "Perfecting Holiness in the Sanctuary" -- I laid the groundwork for a deeper study and application of the Sanctuary principles to our daily lives as we grow in Jesus. The whole Bible is written in Sanctuary language, and if we do not see the correlation between the Sanctuary and God's requirements of mankind since the fall of Adam and Eve, we will miss so much of what the Bible is teaching us about the work of salvation through Jesus. Rather than repeat the study that was done on the necessity and power of praise, I will just refer to several comments on praise, and then begin the study on the last six steps in the Sanctuary journey to holiness in the presence of God.

"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who has made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." Ps. 100.

"The melody of praise is the atmosphere of Heaven." IHP 94.

"They who seek the Lord will praise him." Ps. 22:26.

"Christ, our mediator, and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding in man's behalf, but the Spirit pleads not for us as does Christ, who presents His blood, shed from the foundation of the world; the Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and petitions, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude which flows from our lips is a result of the Spirit striking the chords of the soul in holy memories, awakening the music of the heart." 6BC 1077, 8.

"The language of the soul should be that of joy and gratitude.... Cultivate only those thoughts and feelings which will produce gratitude and praise.... I entreat you to never utter one word of complaint, but to cherish feelings of gratitude and thankfulness. By so doing you will be learning to make melody in your heart." IHP 36.

It is natural for the human heart to be affected by the variety of things that we experience every day. Some of these may be positive and some negative. But it is not God's will for us to allow our emotions to go up and down with the things that we go through each day. If we are dwelling in the Sanctuary of God's love, our hearts can remain fastened upon Jesus and receiving His grace at all times to face the things that happen to us.

In the Old Testament, the priests came into the Sanctuary every morning with singing and praises to God through voice and musical instruments. By the time they reached the gates of the Sanctuary, they were filled with praises for God, and ready to begin the prescribed rituals for the congregation that day. As they entered the gates into the court of the Sanctuary, they were immediately surrounded by the white curtain which was the border of the whole Sanctuary and its services. In like manner, every one of God's people who follow the heavenly prescription for communion with God and a personal relationship with Jesus, will be covered by the righteousness of Christ from the beginning of their worship and continuing throughout the day as they walk together with Him in holy communion and relationship. Thus every day we can live our lives in such harmony with Jesus, that it will be but a foretaste of what we will experience when we get to Heaven.

"The day is coming in which the battle will have been fought, the victory won.... All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving -- the robe of Christ's righteousness." 8T 42.

After responding to the drawing of the Holy Spirit as we worship God with a time of praise and thanksgiving to Him, the next step in the Sanctuary is the brazen altar of sacrifice. This is the place where the Israelite worshipper was permitted to come with a lamb as a sacrifice for his sins. After confessing his sins upon the head of the lamb, he took a knife, slit the throat of the animal, and as the blood flowed down, the priest caught the blood in a sacred vessel used for that purpose, and proceeded to take the blood to the brazen altar. Dipping his finger into the blood, he applied it to the four horns on the corners of the altar. The blood was then carried by the priest into the Holy Place where it was sprinkled upon the golden altar of incense, and then upon the curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, there to remain until the day of atonement at the end of the year. Then through the ceremonies of that day, the accumulated sins of the people of Israel were blotted out, the old sin-laden curtain was removed, and a fresh, clean curtain was hung in its place, ready to begin the rituals of removing the sins of the people for the next year.

But these were only shadows of things to come. The Bible says that sin cannot be removed by the blood of bulls and goats, but only by the precious blood of the Lamb of God. This does not mean, however, that the Sanctuary services no longer have any meaning for God's people on this side of the cross; for Jesus ascended into Heaven where the real Sanctuary services are being performed by Jesus as our High Priest in the removal of the sins in our lives now.

"When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctified them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!...

"For Christ did not enter a man-made Sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered Heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence....

"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face the judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of the people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." Heb. 9:11-14; 24; 27, 28.

Do you see that Paul says here that when Jesus comes He will not be bearing our sins, but simply bringing our salvation to fruition? There are many Christians who believe and teach that we will sin until Jesus comes. But this is a fatal deception! Nowhere in the Bible does it teach this error. No, -- all sin must be removed from God's people while Jesus is still ministering in the Sanctuary. When He steps out of His work in the Most Holy Place, everyone's destiny will be fixed for eternity.

"The Son of God... has fulfilled His pledge, and has passed into the heavens, to take upon Himself the government of the heavenly host. He fulfilled one phase of His priesthood by dying on the cross for the fallen race. He is now fulfilling another phase by pleading before the Father the case of the repenting, believing sinner, presenting to God the offerings of His people. Having taken human nature and in this nature having overcome the temptations of the enemy, and having divine perfection, to Him has been committed the judgment of the world. The case of each one will be brought in review before Him. He will pronounce judgment, rendering to every man according to his works." 7BC 929.

It is absolutely imperative to recognize that the Old Testament Sanctuary services were pointing forward to the actual work of Christ as High Priest in the Sanctuary in Heaven as He applies His blood and His sacrifice to every person who cooperates with Him in the cleansing of their lives in preparation for entrance into the kingdom of Heaven. With this in mind, let us consider the meaning of this ritual which was required of the sinner in the Old Testament Sanctuary service.

The brazen altar was a symbol of imperfection, for brass is not refined as completely as is gold. Therefore, on the altar was kept a lamb burning day and night to represent the constant need of Christ's atonement for us on the cross of Calvary. But the Sanctuary service did not stop at that point. The blood of the slain lamb, representing the sinner, was taken all the way into the Sanctuary and sprinkled upon the curtain which divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. This represents the truth that more has to be done for the sinner for their salvation than a repeated, continuing confession of sin, but never receiving the full cleansing that is available through the Sanctuary. Especially is this to be understood by the final generation who live in the time of history when Jesus is completing His work of cleansing and blotting out of all the sins that are recorded against His people, preparatory for leaving the Sanctuary and going out to pour out the vials of the wrath of God in the seven last plagues upon the wicked.

There are Christians who want to stay in the court of their experience with Jesus, sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting, and never going forward to the completion of the cleansed character that Jesus provides for us if we go all the way into the Most Holy Place experience with Him. Ellen White makes this appeal:

"The truth is kept altogether too much in the outer court. Bring it into the inner temple of the soul, enthrone it in the heart, and let it control the life. The Word of God should be studied and obeyed, then the heart will find rest and peace and joy, and the aspirations will tend heavenward; but when truth is kept apart from the life, in the outer court, the heart is not warmed with the glowing fire of God's goodness." 5T 547.

There is much Sanctuary symbolism in this quotation but let us break it down into understandable language. The outer court represents behavior, versus a personal relationship. We can learn to do correct behavior without a personal relationship with God, or even other human beings. How many people, unfortunately, go throughout their whole lives without ever really knowing true love and connection with other human beings, or God! That is why Jesus said:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" Matt. 7:21-23.

"Personal effort for others should be preceded by much secret prayer; for it requires great wisdom to understand the science of saving souls. Before communicating with men, commune with Christ. At the throne of heavenly grace obtain a preparation for ministering to the people."
COL 149.

Notice the Sanctuary symbolism in this quotation. "The throne of heavenly grace" refers to the second apartment, or Most Holy Place, for the throne of God is symbolized in the Sanctuary by the Ark of the Covenant, containing the law of God. The more we know about the Sanctuary and how to apply it to our daily lives and our relationship with Jesus, the more we will notice in the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy, Sanctuary language which has hidden keys which will guide us to perfection of character and a relationship with Jesus that cleanses us of all sin and imperfection.

Now that we have laid the groundwork for a walk through the Sanctuary in our daily devotions, let us consider the application of the spiritual experience that we need, which is symbolized by the altar of sacrifice. Unlike the sinner who brought his lamb to the Old Testament Sanctuary but had no relationship with the officiating priest, we need to focus upon the necessity of a personal connection with Jesus, for He is our High Priest, and He desires to lead us through every phase of our devotional, and to establish a personal relationship with us. Without Jesus we cannot even perceive or comprehend the depth and nature of our sins, and if we are living what we feel is a good Christian life, we may have sins in our lives that we do not even realize.

One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin, and then bring us to repentance and cleanse us from anything in our lives that would hinder us from having a deep and joyful walk with Jesus. On the other hand, Satan, who is the "accuser of the brethren," likes to

counterfeit the voice of the Holy Spirit and cause us to feel a sense of sinfulness that can only be relieved and washed away by a personal walk with Jesus.

"Then I heard a loud voice in Heaven say: now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short....

"Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the remnant [KJV] of her offspring -- those who obey God's commandments and have [KJV] the testimony of Jesus." Rev. 12:10-17.

How do we know the difference between the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the denigrating voice of the evil one condemning us? It is this very problem that makes it imperative to begin our worship with praise and to stay in praise at all times, no matter what happens in our lives. Satan is ever watching for opportunities to depress, discourage, and blame us, and then make us feel that it is God who is bringing these accusations against us. In fact, Satan loves to lead us into sin and then goad us with guilt to separate us from our joyful walk with Jesus.

"By pressing upon the soul the idea that God is displeased with us, Satan tries to torture us with unbelief." Ltr. 24, 1895, pp. 4-6.

"If we will restrain the expression of unbelief, and by hopeful words and prompt movement strengthen our own faith and the faith of others, our vision will grow clearer. The pure atmosphere of Heaven will surround our souls.

"Be strong and talk hope. Press your way through obstacles. You are in spiritual wedlock with Jesus Christ. The Word is your assurance. Approach your Savior with the full confidence of living faith, joining your hands with His. Go where He leads the way. Whatever He says to you, do. He will teach you just as willingly as he will teach someone else." 6T 462.

"You have the assurance that angels whose home is in the pavilion of the Eternal, and who see the glory of God, are your helpers." Ibid.

"We are to pray without ceasing, and we are to live our prayers. Faith will greatly increase by exercise.... Learn of Christ. Have faith in His power to help and save you. Faith is the very lifeblood of the soul. Its presence gives warmth, health, consistency, and sound judgment. Its vitality and vigor exert a powerful though unconscious influence. The life of Christ in the soul is a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It leads to a constant cultivation of the heavenly graces and to a kindly submission in all things to the Lord." 6T 471, 2.

"We must rise to a higher and still higher spirituality. We must cease all complaining and cultivate the giving of thanks. We must work for the salvation of perishing souls. We must lay

hold of the supreme power and close our ears to complaint and fault-finding. Crush this inclination and empty the soul temple of evil thinking. Let not one unhappy thought remain within." TDG 347.

So, we can see that it is up to us to reach out in faith to Jesus and trust him even when we sin or fall into darkness. Jesus has not left us. But when we give in to the tempter and sin against God, we give the devil an opportunity to speak to us to discourage and accuse us. We must turn immediately to Jesus and ask Him to forgive us and help us keep our eyes focused upon Him and rejoice in His salvation!

The story of Peter when he attempted to walk on water [Matt. 7:25-33] can be a lesson for us. He was secure until he took his eyes off of Jesus and began to think about himself. But even though Peter became afraid and lost his faith and connection with Jesus and began to sink into the water, Jesus was right there; and when Peter called for help, Jesus took him by the hand and they were immediately back into the security of the boat.

So it is with us. At times in our lives, we may experience a falling away of our closeness and connection with Jesus. Then we are tempted to be discouraged, and the voice of Satan can be heard more clearly in our minds than the voice of Jesus. But this is no indication that Jesus has left us, for He understands our weaknesses, and that our only hope is to trust that He is right beside us beckoning us to return to Him and receive pardon and the assurance of our salvation. This is when it is imperative to remember that to reconnect with Jesus, we begin with praise.

It is not because Jesus personally needs our praise in order to accept us. Praise is needed because our minds and hearts need to look away from our sins and look up to our Savior. Praise gives us hope, courage, and faith to come to Him and know that He still loves us and that His arms are open wide for the prodigal to return. It has been proven that praise actually produces positive electrical currents in the brain, while negative thinking produces negative currents in the brain. Negativity tunes us in to Satan's channel, while praise connects our minds with Heaven. Then our confessions at the altar of sacrifice will not be a mournful tale of woe and discouragement, nor a perfunctory recitation of sins committed, but a joining together of confession and repentance mingled with praises to Jesus that He can cleanse us of all sin and give us victory as we join with Him in our daily walk in the Sanctuary.

The next aspect to consider in our Sanctuary walk is the laver. In the Old Testament Sanctuary, the laver was the basin of water located between the altar of sacrifice and the curtain which concealed the Holy Place from the eyes of the people. The laver was for washing the hands and feet of the priest after handling the animal sacrifices to cleanse him so that he could officiate in the first compartment, behind the curtain. Likewise, we need further cleansing of our hearts and minds from the defilement which sin has made in order to prevent us from continuing to repeat the deep grooves in our brain and habits that have caused us to sin. We need a transformation of heart and mind, and this can only be done through the power of the Word of God, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit working through the Word. This process is described in Eph. 5:25-27:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

In other words, if we do not use the Word of God to change and wash our minds of our own attitudes and sinful habits and ways of thinking, we are doomed to repeat them for as long as we live, for we have no power to cleanse ourselves from sinful thinking and behaving. But as we read the Word of God with the purpose of learning God's ways, His thoughts, and His purposes for us, the Holy Spirit can work to change our hearts, change our thoughts and feelings, and present us to Christ as a cleansed person, fit to be the bride of the King.

Now we are ready to enter with Jesus into the inner chambers of the Sanctuary.

The first item that captures our attention is the seven-branch candlestick on the left side of the Sanctuary. It is here that we ask for the infilling of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. This is why it is so vital to be cleansed by the Word of God so that our hearts may be open and ready to receive the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. These are listed in primarily three places in the Bible: Isa. 11:1-5; 4:4; Prov. 8:12-14; 9:1.

As indicated in these verses, the seven aspects of the candlesticks are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, the fear of the Lord - which is hatred of evil - and judgment.

How much we need these vital ingredients to be in our characters! And we can have them every day as we empty ourselves of our sinful thoughts and feelings and ask God to fill us with every aspect of His Spirit!

We also need daily to receive the fruit of the Spirit. Paul gives us good council about this:

"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature....

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Gal. 5:16, 17; 22-25.

In addition to this, there are the gifts of the Spirit which are to be received by those who are living in harmony with God. A list of these gifts for the building up of the body of Christ can be found in Ephesians 4:1-16, Romans 12:3-8, and 1Corinthians 12:4-11.

At this point in our walk through the Sanctuary, it is our privilege to eat of the Bread of Life, which is represented by the table of showbread. This is our opportunity to focus completely upon the life of Christ and commune with Him personally. Jesus refers to this in John 6:32-40:

"Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from Heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world.... I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.... For I have come down from Heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.'"

At this point in our walk through the Sanctuary, we have been cleansed with the Word of God, filled by the Holy Spirit, and are walking together in harmony with Jesus and having a personal relationship with Him. We can now come to the golden altar, which is before the inner curtain, and present our requests to God, having full faith that our prayers will be answered according to His will.

"If we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." Rom. 8:25-27.

"Plead for the Holy Spirit. God stands back of every promise He has made. With your Bible in your hands say, I have done as Thou hast said. I present Thy promise, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

"We must not only pray in Christ's name, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This explains what is meant when it is said that the Spirit 'maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.' Romans 8:26. Such prayer God delights to answer. When with earnestness and intensity we breathe a prayer in the name of Christ, there is in that very intensity a pledge from God that He is about to answer our prayer 'exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.' Ephesians 3:20.

"Christ has said, 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' Mark 11:24. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.' John 14:13.... 'If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.' 1 John 5:14, 15. Then press your petition to the Father in the name of Jesus. God will honor that name." COL 147, 8.

Isn't it wonderful to know that when we are cleansed of self and selfishness and filled by the Holy Spirit, we can ask what we will, and it will be done for us? If we are tempted to ask amiss, the Holy Spirit will guide our sincere requests and enable us to be in harmony with His will. However, without the cleansing and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will ask in response to our own uncleansed spirit, and then our prayers cannot be answered.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does." James 1:5-8.

Can you see the positive progression in the steps of the Sanctuary, leading us to be fully filled by the Spirit, and in tune with Jesus, so that we can cooperate with Him, as He cleanses us and prepares us for the reception of the latter rain? Those who participate in Jesus' ministry in the second apartment will be those who are sealed and ready to be translated without seeing death when Jesus comes.

Unfortunately, the great majority of Christians today, even Seventh-day Adventists, are unaware of the necessity of cooperating with Jesus as He ministers for us in the second apartment of the Sanctuary. Only unbroken communion with Him will prepare us for the holiness of character that is needed to be ready for the close of probationary time. How many who thought they would be saved, will be found wanting in that day!

"I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty." EW 43.

I believe that the preparation God wants for His people to prepare them for the time of trouble is found only in the Sanctuary experience. It is a walk with God that brings us to the point where sin no longer is a part of our thinking and our lives. It is the same state to which Enoch was able to reach through this personal walk with Jesus. Then He will not only forgive our sins, but He will remove them completely from our lives so that there will be nothing between us and our Savior.

Does your heart long to be among this number? You can be, if you hold nothing back from Jesus that is in your life that would separate your heart from His. In our next study I will focus completely upon the necessity and way of cooperating with Jesus in the cleansing work that He is performing right now for His people in the second apartment, or Most Holy Place, of the Sanctuary in Heaven.

"Thy way, O God, is in the Sanctuary." Psalm. 77:13.

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