



The Theology of the Three Sections of the Sanctuary

When Adam and Eve were created, they were placed in a beautiful garden home called Eden, which was fashioned after the garden in heaven which is the dwelling place of God. In Ezekiel 28:12, 13, God speaks of this heavenly garden in describing Lucifer's position in heaven before he sinned.

"This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God.'"

Here are some of the other quotations that are found in both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy which describe the dwelling place of God:

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." Ps. 84:1, 2.

"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells." Ps. 46:4.

"In the temple in heaven, the dwelling place of God, His throne is established in righteousness and judgment." GC 415.

"The heavenly temple (is) the abiding place of the King of Kings." PP 357.

In their idyllic environment, Adam and Eve were granted daily access to their Creator, and to frequent visits by heavenly angels. After man sinned they were no longer able to have access to the privileges they once enjoyed. But God did not abandon them. He had a plan by which communication between Himself and His earthly children could be re-established. Since sinful man in their fallen state could no longer communicate face to face with God, He set up an alternate plan by which we can communicate freely with Him. This plan is called, "the sanctuary."

At first, the plan of salvation was revealed in a simple service at the gate of the Garden of Eden where an altar was set up, and a lamb was slain on the altar, representing the sacrifice of God's only Son for the sin of breaking, or coming short of God's perfect law. Throughout the age of the patriarchs, wherever they might pitch their tent, this ritual was the requirement for their salvation.

Eventually, God revealed to His ancient people through Moses the intricate details of the Old Testament sanctuary services which were to remain until the first coming of Christ, the real Lamb of God, who would be the sacrifice for all mankind. But even though these earthly services are no longer required by God in order to have a relationship with Him, we can still learn valuable lessons which will help us to understand the plan of salvation as it is revealed in these services.

The first item of significance in considering the importance of the sanctuary, is the name itself. What does the word "sanctuary" mean? Yes, it is a place of safety from dangerous predators. And who is our most dangerous predator? It is Satan, God's enemy, and our enemy if we love God and desire to keep His commandments. Before Adam and Eve sinned, Satan could have access to them in only one place, and that was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In every other place in the garden they were safe from being tempted by the evil one. But when they disobeyed God's command and ate of the forbidden tree, Satan was now set loose in the world to tempt anyone, anytime, anywhere.

So the sanctuary has been given to us to protect us from the constant presence, temptations, and accusations of the enemy. Have you ever heard dark, accusing voices in your mind when you have done something wrong, or critical voices that bring darkness and discouragement? Please remember what I am telling you today—these are never from God. They are always from the evil one who wants to pull you into discouragement, depression, and sinful pathways of thinking. And he wants you to think that the accusatory voice that you hear is from God. This is why the sanctuary pathway is so vital, because it has the prescription which is needed for us to possess mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

The very first step in the sanctuary is praise and thanksgiving to God for all His wonderful gifts to us. David said, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name." Ps. 100:4. God wants us first to focus our mind and emotions upon Him and His great love and mercy in providing salvation and mental health and healing for us through His Son, Jesus. Satan cannot stay where Jesus is being praised.

David says in Psalms 35:28:

"My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long."

If we stay, as David says, in an attitude of praise all day long, no matter what we experience that day, we will stay in the center of God's loving care and His will for us. Thus our enemy Satan cannot break through into our thought-life and torture us with doubts, fears, and depression. Some days may be more difficult than others because of what we experience that day. But we can always go to the scriptures and find something there that will help us stay in connection with God and receive the elements of spiritual, mental and emotional health which God has provided for us through the sanctuary principles.

Early in Ellen White's calling to be a witness for God, she had an impressive dream about the temple. Here are the main elements of that dream:

"I dreamed of seeing a temple to which many people were flocking. Only those who took refuge in that temple would be saved when time should close. All who remained outside would be forever lost. The multitude without... were deriding and ridiculing those who were entering the temple and told them that this plan of safety was a cunning deception, that, in fact, there was no danger whatever to avoid....

"On entering the building I saw that the temple was supported by one immense pillar, and to this was tied a Lamb all mangled and bleeding. We who entered the building seemed to know that the Lamb had been torn and bruised on our account. All who entered the temple must come before it and confess their sins.

"Just before the Lamb were elevated seats upon which sat a company of people looking very happy. The light of heaven seemed to shine upon their faces, and they praised God and sang songs of glad thanksgiving that seemed to be like the music of angels. These were they who had come before the Lamb, confessed their sins, been pardoned, and were now waiting in glad expectation of some joyful event." EW 78-81.

Notice that "only those who took refuge in that temple would be saved when time should close. All who remained outside would be forever lost." This indicates clearly that within the sanctuary services everything that is necessary for salvation is revealed. Follow me now through these steps.

The first step in the process of sin by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was a conscious act of disobedience to a known command of God. Therefore, the first step in the recovery of mankind is based upon behavior. In the court of the sanctuary, a lamb was slain for the breaking of a known command of God, which was contained in the ten commandments, such as: Do not misuse God's name, keep the 7th day holy, honor your parents, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not kill, etc.

But sinful behavior is always associated with sinful emotions, such as fear, anger, lust, self-justification, blaming, jealousy, etc. All these emotions are recorded in our brains throughout our lives and can be used by the devil to tempt us again in the future. This internal area of sin cannot be cured by the blood of animal sacrifices. Outward sins are a result of inward thoughts and feelings. Jesus introduced this concept to His hearers early in His public ministry:

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.... You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.... You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."
Matt. 5:21, 22; 27, 28; 43, 44, 48.

Please notice that Jesus here introduces the concept of perfection, even as our heavenly Father is perfect. The goal of the sanctuary and the whole plan of redemption is to bring people back to the original state of mankind before Adam and Eve sinned. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But Jesus is the second Adam, and He lived the perfect life that is required for salvation. Through Him, the human race can be restored to our original perfection if we accept Christ and allow Him to cleanse us and live out His life in us.

This brings us to the next apartment of the sanctuary, which is called the holy place. In the earthly sanctuary, only the priests were allowed beyond the curtain which hung between the court and the holy place. A curtain also separated the most holy place from the eyes of everyone except the high priest, who entered behind that curtain on the Day of Atonement once a year to cleanse the sanctuary of all the sins of the people.

Each section of the earthly sanctuary represented a period of history in the plan of salvation, from the sin of our first parents in the Garden of Eden until Jesus comes back to rescue His chosen ones and take them to heaven. Section one, the court, extended until Jesus died on the cross of Calvary for our sins. At that moment the inner veil of the sanctuary was torn by an unseen hand, signifying that the earthly sanctuary was no longer efficacious for the forgiveness of sin, for God had provided the spotless Lamb of His Son, who could now enter the heavenly sanctuary by His perfect life and provide for the cleansing of the sins of the people by His own blood.

As the book of Revelation opens, we see Jesus in His priestly role in the heavenly sanctuary, walking among the seven golden lampstands.

The apostle John was told in this vision that the seven lampstands represent the seven churches. These seven churches represent the seven eras of the Christian church from the beginning of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary until He comes back to earth to receive His bride. A succinct description of each of these eras is given in Revelation, chapters two, and three.

Jesus gives each church a charge and a reward for faithfulness and for overcoming the particular problems and challenges of their time in history. In the early church, overcoming spiritual pride, and enduring persecution were the requirements for victorious living. The churches of the middle ages were faced with the development of the papacy and the errors taught during the long years of apostasy. Each church was given commendation and instruction as to how to face the challenges they would meet during this dangerous time in earth's history.

Then came the church of Philadelphia, representing our forefathers who preached the message of 1844, when Jesus finished His ministry in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, and moved into the second apartment to cleanse the record books of heaven. Beginning with the righteous dead, all who died in the faith of Jesus and lived up to all the light they knew were accredited worthy of salvation and their sins were blotted out. God's people who were alive at that time fervently hoped they would live to see Jesus come. But Jesus knew that they were not yet ready to meet their Lord. [See GC 424, 25.] A time of cleansing was still ahead for those who would be prepared to live through the time of Jacob's trouble which would take place after

Jesus finished His work in the most holy place. Nevertheless, Jesus gave words of love and commendation to His faithful people of that generation:

"Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

"I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Rev. 3:10-13.

But what about those in the seventh and last church who will live to see Jesus come? In order to be saved, God's final people must respond to the message and counsel of Jesus to the Church of Laodicea:

"These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.... I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline, so be earnest and repent.... To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne." Rev. 3:14- 21.

Notice the level of perfection that is required of the final church which was not required of the other six churches. The gold tried in the fire is the gold of Christ's perfect character. The spotless white raiment is the perfection of Christ which is given to His bride as she cooperates with Him in the cleansing process. [See Rev. 19:6-8.] The eyesalve is the work of the Holy Spirit enabling us to see the defects in our character so that we can come to Jesus for cleansing. This is why Jesus says that we are to overcome as He overcame and then sit down with Him on His throne. This is not said to any of the other churches. They were only responsible for overcoming the particular problems of their era in history. But when our names come up in the celestial judgment, Jesus wants to reveal to us through the Holy Spirit the particular sins that He sees that are recorded in our book. But in order for us to participate in this cleansing, we must have a personal relationship with Jesus that allows Him to speak to us and guide us through this experience.

In the past, our church members have thought that they would never know when their name came up in the judgment of the living. But I want to refer you to the chapter in Early Writings called, "The Shaking." Here is a quotation from that chapter:

"I saw that the testimony of the True Witness has not been half heeded. The solemn testimony upon which the destiny of the church hangs has been lightly esteemed, if not entirely regarded. This testimony must work deep repentance. All who truly receive it will obey it and be purified." EW 270.

Spiritual Gifts, volume II, also has a chapter on this subject, called, "The Laodicean Testimony." Here are some quotes taken from that chapter:

"God leads His people on step-by-step. He brings them up to different points which are calculated to manifest what is in the heart. Some endure at one point, but fall off at the next. At every advanced point the heart is tested, and tried a little closer. If the professed people of God find their heart opposed to this straight work of God, it should convince them that they have a work to do to overcome, or be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. Said the angel, 'God will bring His work closer and closer to test them, and prove every one of His people.' Some are willing to receive one point, but when God brings them to another testing point, they shrink from it and stand back, because they find it strikes directly at some cherished idol. Here they have opportunity to see what is in their hearts that shuts out Jesus. They prize something higher than the truth, and their hearts are not prepared to receive Jesus. Individuals are tested and proved a length of time to see if they will sacrifice their idols, and heed the counsel of the True Witness.... Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will be fitted by the latter rain for translation." 2 SG 225, 26.

Here we see that the church of Laodicea will be brought into an experience of judgment, and those who pass this experience by overcoming as Jesus overcame and receive from Him the perfect righteousness of His character, will be prepared to be among the 144,000, and live to see Jesus come. But sadly, there will be those who refuse to participate with Jesus in this cleansing experience. They will cling to their pet sins and be spewed out of the mouth of Jesus:

"These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm -- neither hot nor cold -- I am about to spit you out of my mouth.'" Rev. 3:14-16.

"To those who are indifferent at this time Christ's warning is: 'Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.' Revelation 3:16. The figure of spewing out of His mouth means that He cannot offer up your prayers or your expressions of love to God. He cannot endorse your teaching of His word or your spiritual work in any wise. He cannot present your religious exercises with the request that grace be given you." 6 T 408.

The church of Laodicea is the finished product of the work of Jesus Christ in bringing the human race back to the perfection of our first parents before they sinned. There are only two groups in the Laodicean church -- those who reach the perfection of Christ's character, and those who refuse to experience what is necessary to reach that condition. The Bible tells us that before Jesus comes there will be a message of cleansing from sin that Jesus will do for His people:

"'See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the Lord Almighty.

"But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord as in days gone by, as in former years.

"So I will come near to you for judgment." Mal. 3:1-5.

"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." Mal. 4:5, 6.

The Laodicean church is the judgment church-- the final work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, and the product of His life, death, resurrection, and intercession for mankind. All the preceding churches had a vital part to play in the progress of God's people toward the complete eradication of the problem of sin in the human race. But God's last people must reflect all that has been learned about God and His law and His character through the preceding ages, as well as the additional light given to the remnant church through the Spirit of Prophecy. Unfortunately, many people today want to stay in one of the other eras of history, and not strive for a relationship with Jesus that includes the perfection of their characters. All such will be terribly disappointed on the day when Jesus comes to take His faithful children home. The latter rain will fall upon those who have been walking with Jesus through the cleansing experience of the second apartment. Their sins have been blotted out of the books of heaven, and they are prepared for the seal of God upon their foreheads, which means that their thought processes are in perfect harmony with God. Jesus said of Himself:

"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." John 6:27.

"I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." John 8:28, 29.

The perfection of Jesus is the perfection required of all those who will receive the seal of God, for they will walk with Jesus in a personal relationship which will reproduce Christ's character in them. No amount of trying harder to stop sinning will suffice for the kind of victory that only Jesus can give to us. This is why many are now becoming satisfied to believe that we will sin until Jesus comes. What a tragedy! This belief does not come from the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, or from Jesus Himself. This comes from those who are not willing to heed the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans, and receive from Jesus gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and spiritual eyesalve from the Holy Spirit which would allow them to see their defects and overcome them. The Holy Spirit will seal each person who cooperates with Him. To receive the seal of God on our foreheads means that we have come into perfect agreement with God on every issue of our lives. "Holiness is agreement with God" (5T 743), and "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

Friends, do not deceive yourselves into believing that the blood of Jesus will cover the sins that you are harboring, and allowing to be in your life. Yes, Jesus' blood does cover us while we are cooperating with Him in the cleansing process. But if we are knowingly permitting sin to be in our lives, and hoping that our sins will be eradicated at His coming, we will be lost. God has a people around the world right now who are moving into harmony with Jesus' cleansing work and receiving the victory of Jesus over their sins. Jesus will have 144,000 who are blameless! Do not let this cleansing time pass by until it is too late; for all who sleep on in their spiritual lethargy will find themselves among the foolish virgins who will knock on the door of heaven and hear the sad reply from Jesus, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you." Matt. 25:12.

Friend, Jesus loved you enough to die for you. Will you love Him enough to accept the cleansing work He wants to do in your life right now? While the door of mercy is still open, come into the sanctuary and find healing and cleansing from every spot and defilement in your character.

"All of God's people should come near to Him and wash their robes of character in the blood of the Lamb." 3 T 324.

Jesus is calling you to this experience just now.

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me and I will give to everyone according to what he is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.... The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." Rev. 22: 12-17.

"Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.... And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn this song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.... They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men, and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless." Rev. 14:1-5.

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