

# Who is Your High Priest?

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**W**ho is your High Priest? We would probably expect such a question to be asked to a group of children in a Sabbath School. We would not expect it to be asked to adults. After all, anyone who has learned anything about the Bible knows the answer to such a simple question. The answer is so patently obvious that most, if not all, Christians would be in harmony in answering it. We all know that Christ is our High Priest. Who else could it be? I would like to explore this simple question and its obvious answer from a different perspective. While we may think that we know the right answer to this question its worth our while to examine it carefully.



## The High Priest and the Sanctuary

It is not possible to adequately discuss the subject of our High Priest without examining the Sanctuary. After all, the two are intimately connected. As Adventists, we are told that the subject of the Sanctuary is the foundation of our faith<sup>1</sup>. The doctrine of the Sanctuary is one of the distinctive truths of Adventism. The importance of the Sanctuary truth is outlined clearly in the Bible. The Psalmist expressed it well when he said **“Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?”** Psalms 77:13. Everything that God does and is can be found in the Sanctuary. It is the storehouse of truth. Paul makes it clear that this subject is a vast and deep one that we can never fully understand. **“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”** Romans 11:33. If God’s way is in the Sanctuary and His ways are past finding out it simply means that we are dealing with a subject that is of infinite depth and vastness. After all, the entire truth of God (His way) is housed in this all-encompassing subject. This should inspire us with a cautious humility when studying this topic. No matter how well we may think we know this subject there is always more to learn.

## The Sanctuary – is it just a building?

To most Adventists the word Sanctuary evokes images of a building. It could be the wilderness tabernacle, Solomon’s temple, or the temple in the time of Christ. However, the most common answer is usually the heavenly Sanctuary. This is the most common image associated with the word Sanctuary today. While all this is true, we must not forget that the Sanctuary refers to

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<sup>1</sup> “The sanctuary question is the foundation of our faith.” {MR760 26.3}

more than just a building or a physical structure. In speaking of the New Jerusalem, John says “And I saw no temple therein: **for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.**” Revelation 21:22. The temple here is the Father and the Son. Yet it is not common for us to think of the temple or the sanctuary in this way (note: the words sanctuary/temple/tabernacle are often used interchangeably in the Bible). A building is not all there is to the sanctuary truth. After all, aren’t the Father and Son the “house” of all truth? Thus the sanctuary building or structure is a revelation of the true temple – the Father and the Son.

Someone may say that this verse is speaking of how things will be after sin. Nevertheless, the fact that God does not change<sup>2</sup> demonstrates that the Father and Son were the temple even before the entrance of sin into the universe. It was God’s intention in the creation of moral beings that they would be a miniature temple filled with His presence<sup>3</sup>. This was clearly seen in the creation of mankind who were made in the image and likeness of the Father and the Son<sup>4</sup> – to be the indwelling of the Father and Son.

### **The Human Temple Captured**

Man was created with a special covering of light just like God. “**Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment:** who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.” Psalms 104:2. This light was an outward physical manifestation of an inner spiritual reality. Man was a temple where God dwelt. At the tragic fall of humanity, we find that the lights went out. “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. **And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked;** and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” Genesis 3:6-7. Their spiritual loss was now reflected by the physical loss of the garment of light. It was only when Adam, not Eve, ate the fruit that the light went out. Adam was the head of the human family and in His fall the human family fell. As a result, mankind ceased to be dwelling place for God. This is what the loss of the light signified<sup>5</sup>. Someone had captured the temple of humanity.

The connection between the inner spiritual and the outward physical aspects are clearly seen in this story. The spiritual loss comes first (decision to eat from the tree) and is then followed by an outward physical manifestation (loss of the light) that reflects the inner loss. In the same way, the restoration of the temple of humanity must begin on the inner spiritual level (change

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<sup>2</sup> Malachi 3:6

<sup>3</sup> “From eternal ages it was God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator.” {DA 161.1}

<sup>4</sup> “And now God said to His Son, "Let us make man in our image."” {TMK 13.2}

<sup>5</sup> “Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One.” {DA 161.1}

of mind) to be followed by an outward physical manifestation (fruit of conversion until ultimate glorification).

### **The Human Temple not Abandoned**

God had a very costly plan whereby He could restore mankind to be a temple for His indwelling once again. The wilderness tabernacle given to Moses indicates God's plan and purpose to seek and restore the lost temple of mankind<sup>6</sup>. Thus, the study of the sanctuary, and the import of the sanctuary doctrine, is how God will reclaim the lost temple that He may inhabit it again. This is the essence of the sanctuary doctrine. Just like the Jews, who focused on the temple and sacrifices and missed the Lord of the temple, we have a tendency to focus on the building and articles of furniture of the sanctuary and miss the ultimate import of them. There is a false sense of security in the thinking that says "I am safe because I believe in the Sanctuary doctrine (A building in heaven)." This reduces the grand sanctuary truth to a mere doctrinal theory. God's plan is to restore us spiritually and physically, not merely to give us a doctrine about a building in heaven.

This restoration could only be accomplished by one person. It is the person who initially built the temple. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6. Only Christ can kindle the light of God's glory and presence in the sin darkened soul temple. The mission of Christ on earth reveals this purpose in a very graphic incident. "And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." John 2:15-16. By cleansing the temple in Jerusalem from the greedy merchants, Christ announced His mission to cleanse the temple of the heart from the evil selfishness that rules there. The temple of Jerusalem was a picture of what man's heart looked like.

Christ did the same thing again towards the end of His ministry on earth. "And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them." Matthew 21:12-14. Have you ever wondered why Christ did this again? It shows us that Christ does not give up quickly in His work of cleansing the heart sanctuary. After cleansing us, we may fall and refill the heart with rubbish but He can cleanse it again. If you backslide, He can restore you. He is a relentless Saviour.

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<sup>6</sup> Exodus 25:8

The other important thing we learn from this story is that only Christ can cleanse the temple. We do not see Him delegating some tasks to His disciples with Him. He did not tell Peter to take care of the dove sellers and Andrew the sheep traders. He did the entire work all by Himself – both times. This speaks volumes as to who alone can cleanse the soul temple. Christ does not delegate that task to anyone else.

### **The Restoration**

Christ's mission on earth was to restore to mankind what was lost. "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" John 20:22. This is a parallel verse to the creation of Adam when Christ breathed into his nostrils the breath of life<sup>7</sup>. Just as Christ breathed life into the human family (Adam) so now, as the second Adam, He is breathing the new life into the human family. In this restoration of life is also a restoration of the rightful position of Christ, as the one who inhabits the reclaimed temple. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Hebrews 2:17. Christ is the High Priest, not just of the temple in heaven, but He must be the High Priest in the reclaimed soul temple. That is why He was made like unto His brethren. Christ does a dual work in heaven and on earth<sup>8</sup>. We only have one High Priest, Christ, and He must be the High Priest of *every* temple. The purpose of the work in the heavenly sanctuary is to ensure the restoration of the human soul temple.

It would be a real tragedy for us to hold firmly to the sanctuary doctrine, believing Christ as our High Priest in heaven, while at the same time holding to a theology that teaches that He is *not* the High Priest of His temple on earth (His church). We may look with horror at someone who denies the heavenly sanctuary truth while we may be holding to a position that is no less horrifying – that Christ has delegated the work of cleansing the soul temple to *someone else*! It does not matter who this someone else is – if it is *anyone* other than Christ Himself then we are in a sad deception. This is one of the problems of the theory of the trinity. It forces us to believe that Christ has delegated the work on earth to someone else – someone called "God the Holy Spirit". It does not matter how firmly we might believe in a building and a sanctuary in heaven, our sanctuary doctrine is useless unless Christ Himself is the High Priest of every single temple that exists! So the question really is who is your High Priest in the soul temple? Is it really Christ or someone else in His place?

### **Only Christ**

Hebrews 5:1 "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins". Christ alone is qualified

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<sup>7</sup> Genesis 2:7

<sup>8</sup> "While Jesus ministers in the sanctuary above, He is still by His Spirit the minister of the church on earth." {DA 166.2}

to be our High Priest for only He was taken from among men. Has there been anyone else who came from heaven and took on humanity? Certainly not. Therefore, we offer Christ the greatest of insults when we suggest, insinuate, or even blatantly teach that there is another high priest working among men in the temple on earth. We rob Christ of the honor due to Him when we attribute His work to someone else. This is why we are admonished “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” Hebrews 3:1. We are to consider Him as our High Priest – in every temple! This especially applies to the work that He is doing here on earth, not just in heaven! The cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven has to parallel the cleansing of the sanctuary on earth, and there is but one person in the universe who can accomplish this work. Let us consider Him indeed for what He is, ponder, and be changed by what He is doing. The collective temple on earth (the church) of which Christ is the High Priest has to be cleansed in conjunction with the heavenly Sanctuary of which Christ is also the High Priest. How sad if we adopt a theology that replaces Christ as the one who can cleanse the soul temple. It is a sad inconsistency to accept His work and role in heaven and reject and deny His work and role on earth.

### **Is Your Temple Clean?**

Just as it was obvious when Christ cleansed the temple in Jerusalem so it also must be obvious when Christ cleanses your soul temple. We may feel a sense of security in believing that Christ is indeed the High Priest of the soul temple (knowing the truth about God), but unless the fruit of His work is manifest in our temple then our belief does not amount to much. Christ removed the sellers and thieves from the temple and the people came in and the sick were healed. Are all the “sellers” and “thieves” gone from your temple? Can His work in your life be seen by others? This is really the purpose and import of the Sanctuary truth. Otherwise all we have is a dry and lifeless theory.

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” Revelation 21:3. Here is the ultimate realization of the Sanctuary doctrine. This can only take place one day if Christ tabernacles in our heart today. The fruit of Christ’s work is not strife, animosity and alienation. It is not contention, debate and argumentation. It is not pride of opinion and doctrinal superiority. These are the fruits of self occupying the seat of Christ. I pray that you will make Christ your High Priest and claim His promise today “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:21-22. ✍

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