

Chapter Three

Christ The Priest

The greatest theme of the Bible is Jesus, and His divine plan whereby sinners can be separated from sin and given eternal life. What a wonderful Savior! What marvelous love! How thrilling salvation's story as unfolded in the sanctuary.

In this chapter, we shall discover that Christ is our High Priest who shed His precious blood on the altar, as the Lamb of God. *"Without blemish and without spot."* *I Peter 1:19.* Symbolically, Christ takes His very own blood into the heavenly sanctuary making it possible for Him, as High Priest, to separate us from our sins and then present us before God, the Father, as though we had never sinned.

Let us begin by reading from the New Testament. *"Christ being come an high priest of good things come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."* *Hebrews 9:11,12.* (See Figure #11, p 35). Could anything possibly be more thrilling and wonderful? This means that heaven can be ours. Praise God! We don't have to die the second death, but we can live forever in peace and security with Jesus. How can we comprehend such wondrous redemption?

How marvelous to know that at this very moment,



Figure #11
THE HIGH PRIEST

Jesus Christ is within the heavenly sanctuary where He is appearing before God in our behalf. Ellen White wrote of this in *The Great Controversy*, pg. 489.

“The intercession of Christ in man’s behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross.”

Praise God for the cross! We could not have been saved without it. We should also praise God for the truth, that is taught only within the Seventh-day Adventist message, which reveals how the merits of the cross can be applied to the individual sinner. A work that is as necessary as the cross to our salvation.

Consider carefully, *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” Hebrews 4:14.* When we hear the strange “new theology” of Babylon being preached in some pulpits, that salvation full and complete was made at Calvary’s cross, and that there is no such thing as a heavenly sanctuary, don’t ever listen to this doctrine of Satan! Never let such evil thoughts enter your mind.

Now let us explore the need for a high priest in God’s plan to save us. Why do we need a high priest? The Bible gives us the answer. *“Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.” Hebrews 8:3.* Notice the two reasons for our needing a high priest. First, he was to offer gifts. And secondly, he was to offer sacrifices. Now we know all about gifts,

for we have both given and received gifts. But what about a sacrifice? What is a sacrifice for? Again, the Bible explains, *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. Hebrews 5:1.* Now we have found what we were searching for. The sacrifice is for sin!

Suppose that under the sanctuary system of the Old Testament I have sinned, and I brought an offering for my sacrifice. I cannot take it into the sanctuary, for only the priest can enter this place. Why is this? Because God dwells there. A sinner would be instantly destroyed, should he appear before God. So, a way must be found for my gift and my sacrifice to be carried into the sanctuary before the very presence of God that I may be accepted. Therefore, I need a priest to do this for me. These facts are very important because,

“The correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith.”

Evangelism, pg. 221.

Let us review how an individual is to secure eternal forgiveness for his sins. Man was to bring a lamb as a sacrifice for his sin. He was then to place his hands on the lamb’s head and confess his sin over the substitute. In this way his sin was transferred to the sacrifice. And then the man is to slay the sacrifice by his own hand. Now, there is nothing more that he could do, but his sacrifice is incomplete. This is why he needs a priest. Notice what the priest can do for him. The

priest takes the shed blood and carries it within the sanctuary; for this is absolutely necessary to bring justification to the sinner. If we are to be forgiven, justified, and redeemed, we should understand what the priest is doing with the blood. *"We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer."* Hebrews 8:1-3.

In the previous chapter, we discovered that Christ represented the lamb, which man must have for a sacrifice. The scriptures also teach that it is equally important that the priest have something to present before God. The fact is—Christ is the priest and He is also the sacrifice! Now to help us understand this great truth, Paul further explains, *"For if he (Christ) was on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law."* Hebrews 8:4. These words were written while the Jewish temple was still in existence in Jerusalem, and the priests were daily carrying out their duties. But, Paul is explaining that since Jesus is in heaven, He is now the priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Listen as he continues, *"Who serve unto (as) the example and shadow of heavenly things."* Hebrews 8:5. It is so clear! The word "shadow" means that the work of the priest on earth was a shadowy outline of the movements of our great high priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Let me illustrate. I was once a counselor in a summer youth camp, in which there was a problem

child under my care. Now during the rest period, every child was expected to lie on his cot and sleep. But this child decided to slip out of his cot and get into some mischief. He made sure to stay behind the building so I could not see him. But, he forgot about his shadow. I was able to observe everything that he was doing by watching his shadow, and just so, as we study what went on in the earthly sanctuary, we can understand the importance of what Christ is now doing for us in the heavenly sanctuary.

Please bear with me as I review once more for clarity. In Leviticus 4 verses 32 and 33, we find the sinner bringing his sacrificial lamb to the tabernacle for his sins. The next thing he does is lay his hands on its head, and confess his sin over the head of the lamb, thereby transferring his sin to the lamb. He then took the life of the victim. Now, the sinner has done everything that he can do. At this point, the priest takes over in the man's behalf. What does the priest do? The blood of the substitute was brought into the sanctuary in one of two ways. Either the priest ate a designated portion of the sin offering and thus carried it in his person into the sanctuary, or he carried it into the sanctuary as described by the blood of the bullock: *"And the priest that is anointed shall take of the bullock's blood, and bring it to the tabernacle of the congregation."* Leviticus 4:5.

Now, what does the priest do with this blood which he takes into the sanctuary? *"The priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord, before the veil of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar*

of sweet incense before the Lord, which is in the tabernacle.”
 Leviticus 4:6,7. God instructed just what the priest was to do. Only the priest could do this, and only Jesus Christ, our High Priest who is presently in the heavenly sanctuary, can perform this work for us now.

But the Israelites had a part to act in cooperation with their high priest. They were not only to repent but to make amends as recorded in Leviticus 6:1-7. *“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, “If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbor in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbor; or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein: Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering. And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering, unto the priest: And the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord: and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein.”*

The same principle applies today: First we go to our heavenly High Priest. He,

“...sends the Holy Spirit to bring us to repentance.”

I Selected Messages, pg. 393.

We must make amends to those whom we have wronged, thus showing, not only our desire to be forgiven, but also to forsake our sins. In other words, we are to give to Jesus, our Substitute, all of our sins. Listen to the words of Christ in Matthew 5:23,24: *“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”* Once the sinner has done his part as required, then the blood can be applied in his behalf by the priest for his atonement.

Here comes a question, What does blood represent? Listen carefully, meditate upon it, memorize it, and never, never forget it. The inspired word of God tells us, *“The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”* Leviticus 17:11. This is so important, *“The life of the flesh is in the blood.”* What a gem of truth. The blood represents the life. Therefore, Christ's blood represents His life.

Now, pause and do some reasoning. Isn't your very life in your blood? For example, if you happen to cut your jugular vein and don't do anything about it, you will quickly bleed to death. And this is why, when we encounter a serious accident, in which we are losing a tremendous amount of blood, for example, from a

lacerated limb, quickly we apply a tourniquet to stop the flow. Why? So we will not die. The very life of Jesus was poured out on Calvary in His shed blood. Of this the prophet wrote, *"Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin."* Isaiah 53:10. Christ poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, because He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressor.

Now let's go back to verse six of Leviticus 4. *"The priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord, before the veil of the sanctuary."* Did you notice that the blood was placed on the horns of the altar, before the veil? What did this mean? Well, step with me into the sanctuary and you will notice that a veil is hanging just before the ark containing the law of God, the Ten Commandments, which were written by the finger of God on two tables of stone. And just above the law is the mercy seat, which represents the very throne of God, where we can obtain mercy through the sacrifice and the ministry of Christ our High Priest.

Think this through carefully. Every individual is to be measured by the character standard of the law. All of us have transgressed that law through sin, so we are doomed to die. For we read, *"As by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* Romans 5:12. But wait! I don't have to die. And you don't have to die. The great truth is that God doesn't want any of us to die. So how can we be saved? Someone had to die for us, and that someone was the Son of God.

This is why Jesus came to this world, to live

under the law of God, in our flesh, without committing one sin. So that when He went to the cross, He could give a perfect life as a substitute for you and me. This is what makes it possible for Christ, Who is now in the heavenly sanctuary, to present His blood in our behalf. *"But Christ being come an high priest,...by His blood entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for all of us."* Hebrews 9:11,12. Yes, the law said I must die; but Jesus, our great High Priest, with His own blood, stands before that very law, the throne of God, to represent you and me, who are sinners. He paid the supreme price on Calvary by His perfect life which He now presents before the Father in our behalf. And He will do this for you and me this very moment, if we but ask Him.

I like the way that Charles Wesley contemplated the sacrifice of Jesus as he wrote of how our High Priest presents His blood in our behalf before God. *"Arise, my soul, arise, shake off thy guilty fears. The bleeding Savior, in my behalf, appears. Before the throne, my assuredness stands, My name is written on his hands. He ever lives above for me to intercede; His all redeeming love, His precious blood to plead. His blood was shed for all our race, and sprinkled now, the throne of grace. Five bleeding wounds He bares, received on Calvary, they pour effectual prayers. They strongly speak for me, Forgive him! Oh, forgive! they cry, Nor let the contrite sinner die."* How we should praise God for the provision in which Jesus Christ is interceding before God as our High Priest for you and me.

May I ask you a personal question? Have you

ever trembled in fear at the thought that someday you must approach God's throne and stand in judgment? Just listen to this:

"Every man's work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the book of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every work, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, every secret sin, with every artful, dissembling. Heaven sent warnings of reproof neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil, with its far reaching results. All are chronicled by the recording angel, for the law of God is the standard by which the character and lives of men will be tested in the judgment, says the wise man. "Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment." Ecclesiastes 12:13,14.

The Great Controversy, pg. 482.

I ask again, have you ever been troubled in fear at the thought that someday you must approach God's throne and stand in judgment? If you are right with God you need not be fearful. For your High Priest, Jesus Christ, will be your Advocate. He will go in before the Father to represent you. Wonder of wonders! Who is in a better position to present your case before God than Jesus Christ for He is the Son of God? He knows the Father.

Let me ask you another question, have you made it possible for Jesus, your High Priest, to appear before the Father for you? You know you are a sinner because the Bible says so. And you are in desperate need of help. Let me suggest what you should do. In your mind you should go to Calvary and watch Jesus die for you. Then follow Him by faith as He rises from the dead and returns to heaven. Follow Him by faith as He enters the heavenly sanctuary, into the very presence of God. There, He will offer His blood for you. Listen in faith as Christ presents your name before God the Father. If you will do this, it will fill your heart with assurance. If you are right with God you need never, never, fear the coming judgment. Christ *"is able also to save them to the uttermost" that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*" Hebrews 7:25. Now you can understand how Jesus Christ is able to present you faultless before the throne.

May I ask another question, what kind of blood is it that is sprinkled in the sanctuary before God? The answer is the blood of the divine sin-bearer. This is very important, we must fully understand this, since the life is in the blood. Would you permit me to make this personal? If I have repented of all known sin my sins have been transferred to Christ, the Substitute. So, as Christ goes in before the Father's throne, bearing my sins in His blood they are then transferred to the altar by figuratively sprinkling His blood. Now you are ready for an astounding truth! There is now no more known sin in me. My sins have been transferred into the sanctuary. My sins have been separated from me. What a wonderful thought! What a wonderful truth!