

LESSON XXIX

Christ Enters Upon His Work as High Priest

1. FOLLOWING the dedication of the earthly sanctuary and the consecration of the priests, where did the priests begin their work of ministry? Ex. 29:38-44.

The priests began their work in the holy place or first apartment of the earthly sanctuary, following the dedicatory exercises. (See also Leviticus 9; Num. 28:1-15.)

At the command of God the tabernacle was divided into two apartments. One apartment was called the holy place, the other was called the most holy. Ex. 26:31-33. The apostle Paul speaks of these two apartments of the sanctuary in a clear, concise way, for he knew that the Jewish people recognized these two apartments of the earthly or Levitical sanctuary. Heb. 9:2, 3.

2. Shortly after His ascension, where was Christ seen by Stephen? Acts 7:55, 56.

To the deacon Stephen there came a vision from God while he was passing through his bitter experience with the Sanhedrin. For this servant of God the heavens opened, and he declared that he saw our Lord standing at the right hand of God.

3. Who visited the apostle John while he was on the Isle of Patmos? Rev. 1:9-11, 17, 18.

Our Lord appeared in vision to the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos, when the latter was an old man. John the beloved had been a devoted servant of Christ, and the Saviour honored him for his faithfulness, while he was banished upon the rock-ribbed, lonely isle for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Rev. 1:9. To John was given the command to write in a book what should be revealed to him. What he saw was to be sent to the people of God.

The revelation given the apostle at this time was so glorious that John said he felt as if he were going to die. The Saviour comforted the aged apostle by telling him that *He* had been dead, but that *He* had risen again from the dead, and *He* was to live hereafter forever. Furthermore, *He* had the keys, and was able to unlock the tomb.

4. Where did John say Jesus was when he saw Him at this time? Rev. 1:12, 13.

John gives us definite information as to where he saw the Saviour at the time the Lord appeared to him in vision on this barren Isle of Patmos. John says: "I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle."

A similar description of the Saviour is found in Revelation 14:14. There it is written: "I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat

like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle."

There was no mistaking that face. John knew Him. The beloved disciple had been with the Saviour for three and one-half years on earth. John saw Jesus in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

But where was the seven-branched golden candlestick located in the earthly sanctuary? The Scripture says: "Thou shalt set the table without the veil, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south." Ex. 26:35; 25:31-39; 40:24. This golden candlestick was in the holy place, in the first apartment of the earthly sanctuary.

5. What ministry in heaven did the aged apostle say he saw going on? Rev. 8:2-4.

The apostle beheld the angels standing at the altar. In the hands of one of them was a golden censer, and to him was given much incense, which was offered up with the prayers of the saints. The smoke from the incense ascended up to God, and the prayers of God's people with this incense were accepted before Him. The offering of the incense was a daily service in the first apartment of the sanctuary while the people were praying. (See Luke 1:8-10.)

6. Where in the earthly sanctuary were the altar and the golden candlesticks? Ex. 30:1-6; 40:26, 27; 26:35.

7. Of what was the earthly sanctuary a shadow and figure? Heb. 9:8-10, 24; 8:5.

The Scriptures clearly teach that the earthly sanctuary is a shadow or figure of the heavenly sanctuary. Neither the Saviour nor His apostles destroyed any portion of the Scriptures which the Lord gave to His people anciently. Had either the Saviour or His disciples advocated such a program, the people would have had reason to say that the religion of Jesus and His followers was not in harmony with the teachings of the Old Testament. The Saviour taught that if the people refused to heed the writings of Moses and the prophets, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead. Peter declared that Jesus was the prophet like unto Moses. Luke 16:31; Acts 3:22.

At the council held at Jerusalem, the apostles agreed that the Jews were in possession of the writings of Moses, which they read in the synagogue every Sabbath day. Paul avers that the rulers and people who read the prophets every Sabbath fulfilled those writings in putting our Lord to death. The reason the leaders rejected the Saviour was that they did *not understand* those writings. Acts 15:21; 13:27.

Paul never discouraged the reading of, or believing in, the Old Testament. The difficulty with the Jews was that they had a veil on their faces; that is, their minds were blinded when they read the writings of the Old Testament. Had they accepted Christ, their understanding would have been enlightened. For those prophetic Scriptures find their fulfillment in Christ. 2 Cor. 3:13-15.

The revelations given to the prophets in Old Testament times were a forecast of what would be accomplished in reality when Messiah came. The same spirit which gave those revelations to the seers also expounded the interpretations of the same. Dan. 2:19, 36, 45. The Lord never left man to give a human interpretation of the types and symbols. The Holy Spirit made application of the types. John 3:14. For this reason, the apostle says, the earthly sanctuary was the figure or shadow of the heavenly.

8. Do the Scriptures teach that there are holy places in heaven, where God dwells? Ps. 68:35; Heb. 6:19, 20; 9:3-7, 24, 25.

The Scriptures say there are holy places in heaven where God dwells. The

Lord so simplified His instruction as to make it possible for His people to understand the actual work which our High Priest would carry on while in heaven, by giving them an object lesson in the mission of the earthly sanctuary and its ministry. The Bible declares that in connection with the Levitical sanctuary, there were two holy places—the holy and the most holy place. Even so of the heavenly sanctuary the Scriptures declare: "O God, Thou art terrible out of Thy holy places." Ps. 68:35.

9. How long did the priests continue their uninterrupted ministry in the holy place of the sanctuary? Num. 28:3; Ex. 29:38, 39, 42; Heb. 9:6.

The priests in the Levitical sanctuary continued their ministry in the holy place day by day throughout the entire year, with the exception of one day. It must not be understood that the priests remained in the sanctuary every minute during the entire twenty-four hours of each day, of each week, of each month, throughout the entire year, ministering in the holy place by day and by night.

They did carry on the work in the first apartment throughout all the months of the year. Num. 28:14. They did not enter the most holy place at any time during the year while they were daily carrying forward the work of ministry in the first apartment.

10. Where did the high priest complete his annual round of ministry in the earthly sanctuary? Heb. 9:7, 25; Lev. 16:2.

The high priest concluded the year's ministry in the most holy place, the second apartment of the sanctuary. For the high priest to enter the inner apartment at any time during the year, with the exception of the one day, in order to complete the annual round of ministry, would have meant certain death to him. Aaron and his sons were commanded not to minister at any time in the most sacred place, where was the ark of God, except at the time appointed.

In ancient times God, by inflicting sudden death, impressed the people with the importance of obedience to His commands. Aaron's sons died immediately when they offered strange fire before the Lord, instead of offering the fire which God had provided for this purpose. Ananias and Sapphira met instant death when they falsified to the Holy Ghost. Lev. 10:1, 2; Acts 5:1-10. While all cases of disobedience did not meet with the same immediate retribution, God has declared that disobedience to His commands will meet its rightful penalty. Eccl. 8:11, 12.

11. How long must the Saviour have remained in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary?

From what has been said in the preceding notes, it is evident that Jesus our great High Priest, must remain in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary until the time comes for Him to complete His ministry in the most holy place in the heavenly temple. The typical service was not completed in the first apartment of the earthly sanctuary; it was on the Day of Atonement that this work in the Levitical sanctuary was finished for that year. The apostle Paul says: "Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others." Heb. 9:25. (Read also Heb. 10:1, 3.) This repetition of the Day of Atonement was an annual affair. This one day which was set apart for the completing of the sanctuary ministry was to impress the Israelites that the work of intercession would some time come to a final end. For fifteen centuries this typical yearly ministry of the sanctuary was annually repeated.

So likewise must the Saviour conduct His work for sinful man in the holy place in the heavenly temple, until the time came when, in God's plan, our

heavenly High Priest should enter the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary to complete the work of the gospel for sinners.

12. Does John the beloved mention the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary? Rev. 11:19; 15:5.

The apostle declares that the temple of God was opened in heaven, and in that temple he saw the ark of the testament. In the earthly sanctuary the ark was in the most holy place. Ex. 26:34; 25:21; 40:20, 21. This ark was a shadow of the one in heaven.

The most holy place is again described by the apostle. The next time he speaks of the most holy place he describes it as the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven. The inner apartment is so designated because the most holy place contained the two tables of testimony. (See Ex. 32:15; 34:29.) The two tables of stone were written the ten commandments. In the heavenly sanctuary are the two original tables of God's law, the ten commandments, written by the finger of God. Ex. 32:16.

13. What were some of the outstanding features of the ministry in the Day of Atonement? Lev. 16:30, 33.

On the typical Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh Bible month, when the high priest ministered the last rites in the most holy place in the Levitical sanctuary, he performed a thorough cleansing of the sanctuary, and a complete cleansing of the sins of all the people of Israel. This day was a cleansing-up time.

14. At what time did the angel Gabriel say the sanctuary would be cleansed? Dan. 8:14.

The angel Gabriel told the prophet Daniel that at the end of the twenty-three hundred days the sanctuary would be cleansed. This long period of time ended in the seventh Bible month of the year 1844. It was in the seventh Bible month of the year 1844, our month October, that Jesus, our great High Priest, completed His ministry in the holy place in the heavenly sanctuary.

15. When, therefore, must the great antitypical day of atonement have begun, during which our High Priest will complete His ministry as man's intercessor? 1 Cor. 15:24-28.

The great antitypical day of atonement must have begun at the close of the twenty-three-hundred-year period. At this time our Lord entered upon His final work of cleansing the sanctuary and its worshipers. Rev. 11:1. It was announced upon the day of Pentecost that Jesus had entered the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary and that He had begun His work of intercession for sinners. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, declared to the assembled multitude that this work of intercession had been entered upon in heaven, that Christ was now seated at the right hand of God. Acts 2:14-36.

For ten days prior to this Pentecostal experience the disciples had been gathered together, preparing for this great work. Acts 1:12-26, 1-3. Would we expect that when the time arrived for our heavenly Intercessor to enter upon His last effort to save men, God would make this fact known? Can we imagine that the God of heaven, who in all ages of the past has declared His secrets unto His servants the prophets, would permit one of the greatest events in human history to take place, the finishing of the work of salvation for men in the earth, and not give His children warning of it? Would the Lord enter the most holy place in the heavenly temple, when eternal weal or eternal woe for the world was involved, inaugurate the great antitypical day of atonement, and send no message to earth's inhabitants concerning His movements? Amos 3:7.