

CHRIST AND THE SANCTUARY

Introduction

“Andy Woodland writes: Working as Bible translators in Asia, we had come to two verses spoken by Jesus to his disciples: ‘I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor . . .’ (John 14:16 RSV) and ‘In that day you will ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you’ (John 16:26 RSV). Our immediate thought was to use the common vernacular for ‘pray’ or ‘beg,’ but our cotranslator had a better idea. ‘Use the phrase *do paarat*,’ he suggested. ‘It’s a recommendation an influential person brings in behalf of someone else.’ Not until a trip to the hospital in our adopted country did I fully understand its meaning. My wife, Ellie, and I had been asked to help a friend’s daughter experiencing post-natal complications. Ellie found the girl, her mother, and mother-in-law waiting in the ward. I stayed outside with the father. Immediately, he turned to me and said, ‘You must tell Ellie to speak to the doctor and *do paraat* on my daughter’s behalf. We are just poor people from a minority group. They won’t respect us or treat us well. But if you *do paraat*, they will give us proper treatment.’ Ellie agreed, not knowing if it would make a difference. Thankfully, the doctors did listen and the girl recovered quickly. For us, it was a humbling illustration of how Jesus comes before the Father on our behalf.”¹

In this lecture we will take a brief look at two NT books and see what they have to tell us about the sanctuary and Jesus Christ. The focus is on Jesus more than on the sanctuary. We will start with Hebrews and go on to Revelation.

A. Christ and Sanctuary in the Epistle to the Hebrews

I. Jesus’ Priesthood, the Unique Perspective of Hebrews

In Hebrews we encounter Jesus as King, as Son of God, and as our brother. He is also called High Priest. The Epistle to the Hebrews contains some unique features with regard to Jesus’ priesthood not found elsewhere in the NT.

¹Craig Brian Larson, *Choice Contemporary Stories and Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Writers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 139.

1. Priest, High Priest, and Priesthood

First, three words are used in Hebrews to describe Christ's priestly ministry: priest, high priest, and priesthood. None of these is used for Christ in the rest of the NT. According to 1Tim 2:5 Jesus is our mediator. He is our advocate—John 14:16; 1John 2:1. Although the Book of Revelation depicts Jesus as a priest, when in Rev 1 he walks among the seven churches clothed with a priestly garment and when in Rev 8:3 in the form of an angel he seems to administer the prayers of the saints, he is not called priest or high priest. Priests elsewhere in the NT are pagan priests (Acts 14:13), Levitical priests serving at the earthly sanctuary (Lk 1:5), and the redeemed ones (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). The latter group is also called “a priesthood” (1Pt 2:5,9). Therefore, we talk about the priesthood of all believers. In Hebrews the word family “priest” is found 35 times. Although it also describes the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek, the context is always the priesthood of Jesus. Jesus' priesthood is compared to those of Melchizedek and Aaron. Believers are not called priests or a priesthood in Hebrews. But five times Jesus is referred to as priest. Three out of the five times the same OT quotation is applied to him.² He is not just the priest but also the *great* priest (Heb 10:21). In addition, Jesus is called high priest ten times.³ Again he is also the *great* high priest (Heb 4:14). Finally, his “priesthood” is mentioned once (Heb 7:24). With the exception of Hebrews, nowhere in Scripture is Jesus directly called priest or high priest. Thus, Hebrews offers a unique perspective.

2. The Use of Psalm 110:1 and 4

Secondly, in the NT Ps 110 is quoted quite frequently. But it is always the first verse of that chapter to which NT authors refer.⁴ Not a single NT book with the exception of Hebrews quotes Ps 110:4. Yet, in Hebrews both verses occur, and they relate to each other.⁵ “. . . the Messiah is appointed by God ‘a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek’. Though Ps 110:1 was widely

²Ps 110:4 is quoted in 5:6 and 7:17,21.

³Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14,15; 5:5,10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11.

⁴Direct quotations are found in Mt 22:44; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:42,43; Acts 2:34,35; Heb 1:13. Yet, a number of other texts such as 1Cor 15:25 and Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12 allude to Ps 110:4.

⁵Ps 110:4 is quoted in Heb 5:6; 7:17,21 and alluded to in Heb 5:10; 6:20; 7:3,11,15.

used as a Messianic psalm, there is no evidence that anyone had thought of exploiting this verse before.”⁶ Hebrews and Ps 110 both present Jesus the Messiah as the priest-king.

3. The Main Point: Jesus Our High Priest

Thirdly, Heb 8:1-2 is clear about what is most important in this letter: “Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up.” Hebrews is interested in the ministry of Jesus as our High Priest which chronologically follows his life on earth and his death on the cross. The heavenly sanctuary is important, but Jesus is more important. Without him there would be no salvation. Christ’s work as High Priest is crucial for our own lives. Paul’s audience must know that the cross was not the end. Christ’s ministry on our behalf continues in another way. We are not abandoned and are not left alone with our problems, needs, and sins. There is no need to look for someone else than Jesus and fall away from him. Lindars suggests that the term “high priest” forms a connection to the Day of Atonement,⁷ because it was the high priest who was involved in the service of that day. However, Hebrews does not limit Jesus’ ministry to this special phase only. It is interested in the overall picture of Jesus as our priest serving us. As both a divine and human being Jesus understands both sides as no one else does. He is the real mediator, priest, and high priest.

II. Jesus and the Aaronitic Priesthood

Although the priesthood of Christ can be found throughout the Letter to the Hebrews with the exception of chapters 1 and 11, it is especially developed in chapters 5 and 7. However, it is interesting to notice that in chapter 5 Christ’s high priestly ministry is compared with the Levitical high priest, whereas in chapter 7 the focus is on the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. Lane has suggested the following helpful outline of Heb 5a:⁸

⁶Lindars, 64.

⁷See., Lindars, 61, 62, 72.

⁸Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 111.

Heb 5:1-10

- A** The old office of high priest (5:1)
- B** The solidarity of the high priest with the people (5:2-3)
- C** The humility of the high priest (5:4)
- C'** The humility of Christ (5:5-6)
- B'** The solidarity of Christ with the people (5:7-8)
- A'** The new office of high priest (5:9-10)

Aaron's priesthood and the priesthood of Christ are similar and yet also different.

- (1) Both Jesus and Aaron are human
- (2) Both are chosen by God.
- (3) As mediators they represent humankind before God.
- (4) They offer sacrifices. In Aaron's case the sacrifices were mainly animals that were slaughtered and burned or partially eaten. Sometimes they consisted of cereal offerings. When it comes to Jesus Heb 5:9 states that "he was made perfect" which seems to refer to his death on the cross, his supreme sacrifice.
- (5) Both Aaron's service and Jesus' ministry is "for the sins" of humanity. Thus, it is an atoning service.
- (6) They deal gently, mercifully, and patiently with the sinners and have compassion on those who err.
- (7) Both are humble and do not usurp their priesthood.

In spite of these similarities, there are also a number of differences between Jesus and the Levitical priesthood.

- (1) Jesus is human, but he is also the divine Son of God (Heb 5:5-6).
- (2) There is also a difference with regard to sacrifices. The sacrifice of Jesus is a unique and single sacrifice sufficient for all humankind and--because it is forever valid and effective--it cannot be replaced by any other.
- (3) Furthermore, Jesus is both sacrifice and priest. Aaron offered animals. Jesus has offered

himself. Even if Aaron would have wished to die for sinners, never could he have been the sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people. Only Jesus could be that sacrifice.

- (4) Only Jesus has brought about a real solution to the sin problem, because he did not sin. He did not share in Aaron's weakness that required him to sacrifice not only for the people but also for himself (Heb 5:2-3). Jesus' ministry is not weakened by sin.
- (5) The Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Jesus are both said to deal sympathetically with the sinner. However, this is true only for the ideal Levitical priest. There are sufficient biblical examples showing that Levitical priests could be quite rude, faithless, and wicked.⁹ However, Hebrews stresses especially the compassion, mercy, and faithfulness of Jesus the true high priest. Although being sinless himself he sympathizes with us and helps us. However, this sympathy is not sentimentalism which overlooks all mistakes and sins and does not take seriously God's will.
- (6) A further distinction is that Aaron served on earth, whereas Jesus serves in heaven. Although the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries are typologically related to each other, Jesus serves at the real temple and not just its counterpart. His ministry makes all the difference.
- (7) The passage in Heb 5 ends with three important statements (Heb 5:9-10): (1) Jesus has been made perfect, (2) he became the source of eternal salvation, and (3) he is high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This leads us to Heb 7.

III. Jesus and the Priesthood of Melchizedek

From a human perspective Jesus does not have the right to function as priest. He came from the tribe of Judah, not from Levi and Aaron. God had restricted the priesthood to the tribe of Levi and within Levi to the male descendants of Aaron.¹⁰

Because Jesus is the Son, the only one to share divinity and at the same time humanity,

⁹E.g., Lev 10:1-2; 1Sam 2:12,22; Jer 2:8; 5:31; 6:13; 23:11; 26:8. During the intertestamental period some of the later Maccabees, also called Hasmoneans, were high priests and kings. As supporters of Hellenism and because having committed acts of cruelty they were despised by the pious Jews. And it was under the leadership of the high priests that Jesus was executed and his followers were persecuted.

¹⁰And even then some restrictions applied. For instance, bodily defects excluded men from the priesthood (Lev 21:17-23). This was also the case when they were not able to trace their lineage to Aaron (Neh 7:64).

because he has lived among us and died in our place on the cross, he is by nature the only perfect mediator of the universe and the only one who in the final sense can be our high priest. But does Scripture allow for that? The apostle has to prove from Scripture that Jesus has the right to be not only king, but also priest. Therefore, he points out that Ps 110:4, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek" has been fulfilled in Jesus and in him alone. He is a priest of a different order.

Heb 7 is the main passage to discuss the priesthood of Melchizedek.¹¹

Heb 7

- (1) Melchizedek meets Abraham: Melchizedek's superiority (7:1-10)
 - (a) Melchizedek as priest-king (7:1-3)
 - (b) Melchizedek is superior because he receives Abraham's title (7:4-10)

- (2) Jesus priest according to Melchizedek's order: Christ's superiority (7:11-28)
 - (a) The question of perfection (7:11-19)
 - (b) Priesthood and oath (7:20-28)

Melchizedek is greater than Abraham because Abraham gave him his title and was blessed by him. By implication he is also greater than Abraham's descendants, even the Levitical priests, who also received title and who blessed the people.

The second part of Heb 7 draws the conclusion and dwells on Christ. The law which instituted the Aaronic priests was superseded by the promise of Ps 110:4. Jesus is the real high priest and fulfills the OT prophecy. Multiple priests are unnecessary because Jesus' priesthood is permanent.

¹¹Aside from Heb 5-7 only two passages in Scripture deal with Melchizedek, Gen 14:18-20 and Ps 110:4. The first describes Melchizedek's encounter with Abraham. The second is a messianic prophecy and focuses more on the Messiah than on Melchizedek. Gen 14 furnishes the background for Heb 7a. Ps 110:4 is partially or fully quoted a couple of times in Heb 5-7. Heb 7 consists of two parts. The first part refers to Gen 14 and explains it. The second part is built on Ps 110:4, shows its fulfillment in Jesus, and expounds the verse. The passage culminates in a fantastic statement about Jesus our high priest.

IV. Jesus' Characteristics as High Priest

- (1) Jesus remains forever (Heb 7:24) and always lives (Heb 7:25). He is not limited by death as are the Levitical priests.¹² What he did for us as sacrifice and priest will affect us forever. We can count and rely on him.
- (2) Jesus is interested in the well-being of others. He has a caring attitude and is not self-centered (Heb 7:25). Jesus is called merciful and faithful in Heb 2:17 (see, Heb 4:14-5:10).
- (3) Jesus is holy (Heb 7:26). There are two Greek terms for “holy,” namely *hagios* and *hosios*. The term *hagios* is used in Hebrews for the Holy Spirit,¹³ the sanctuary with its departments,¹⁴ and for Christians.¹⁵ However, the term *hosios* is reserved for Jesus alone. Apparently this holiness is related to his sinlessness.
- (4) Jesus is called “holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, higher than the heavens” (Heb 7:26). Jesus’ innocence (Heb 7:26) points to a moral quality. He was guileless in his relationship with others and untouched by evil. Jesus also manifested cultic purity. He was undefiled (Heb 7:26). “Taken together these three adjectives describe the sinlessness of the high priest . . . In contrast to the Levitical high priest, of whom there was demanded only ritual purity (Lev 21:11) and bodily integrity (Lev 21:17), the high priest appropriate to the Christian community was qualified by spiritual and moral perfection.”¹⁶
- (5) Jesus is “higher than the heavens” (Heb 7:26). And yet “he offered himself” as a sacrifice (Heb 7:27). His superiority goes along with his ultimate humility.
- (6) According to Heb 7:28 Jesus has been made perfect. Therefore, he is the perfect high priest. His priesthood is dependent on his incarnation and passion.
- (7) Jesus is Lord and yet servant. He is willing to serve, to mediate, to intervene, to listen to us

¹²His throne stands forever (Heb 1:8). He is a priest forever (Heb 5:6; 6:20; 7:17,21). He “has been made perfect forever” (7:28). The author of Hebrews states: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8). Therefore, to Him “be glory for ever and ever” (Heb 13:21).

¹³Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 10:15.

¹⁴Heb 8:2; 9:1,2,3,8,8,12,24,25; 10:19; 13:11.

¹⁵Heb 3:1; 6:10; 13:24.

¹⁶Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 192.

and help us. The servant concept is part of the motif of the priesthood. It is repeated in Heb 8:2. Jesus' priesthood, which implies ministry on our behalf, is linked to the heavenly sanctuary. The concern of the author of Hebrews is "to ground Christian confidence in objective *facts* . . . *Real* deity, *real* humanity, *real* priesthood—and we may add, a *real* ministry in a *real* sanctuary . . . it is the heavenly and not the earthly that is genuine."¹⁷

V. Jesus' Work and Function as High Priest

After having looked at Jesus' characteristics and qualifications, we return to his functions as our high priest.

- (1) Jesus has offered himself as a sacrifice (Heb 7:17). Without sacrifice no high priestly ministry is possible. In Jesus high priest and sacrifice are the same person. Jesus' sacrifice is unique, once for all, and all-sufficient. Therefore, cross and exaltation of Jesus go together. The priesthood depends on the sacrifice. Jesus applies his blood and his righteousness to us.
- (2) He is able and willing to "expiate the sins of the people" (Heb 2:17). He provides the only possible solution for the sin problem.
- (3) Jesus has opened the way to the throne of grace (Heb 4:15,16). We now have direct access to God. In boldness and confidence and yet reverently we address God.
- (4) Jesus sympathizes with us (Heb 4:15). Humans desire to be loved, to be cared for, and to have hope beyond death. This is what the high priest offers us. Day for day he serves us and is about to bring to a close human history in order to establish his kingdom of glory.
- (5) Jesus saves. ". . . he is able to save completely those who come to God through him" (Heb 7:25). We have already stated that He applies his death on the cross to those who believe in him. But He will also bring about the final consummation and salvation.
- (6) "He always lives to intercede for them" (Heb 7:25). Jesus works as our mediator and intercessor. Whereas other priests attempt to reconcile estranged parties, it is only Jesus whose mediation makes a basic difference. Furthermore, Jesus is a unique mediator, because no other being in the universe belongs totally to the divine side and at the same time completely to the human side. The outcome of this ministry is also unique. No one can save

¹⁷Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, 91.

forever beside Jesus. Christians know that their high priest is with them even to the end of the age. They are children of God and brothers of Christ.

- (7) Jesus' ministry as our high priest is not only unique. It is also objective. It is not dependent on how we feel or think. We can focus on him instead of on us. Although there are subjective elements in the Christian life, our faith is based on what Jesus has done and is doing for us right now.

VI. The Daily Ministry in Hebrews

The apostle uses the OT sanctuary and its sacrificial system to describe Christ's ministry in the heavenly temple. They are related to each other as type and antitype. The earthly realities allow us to explain the heavenly realities to a certain extent (Heb 9:23).

In agreement with the OT Hebrews distinguishes between a ministry in the first apartment of the tabernacle, the Holy Place (Heb 9:6), and a ministry in the Most Holy place (Heb 9:7). In the former the priests and the high priest serving on a daily basis offered sacrifices and atoned for the sins of the people (Ex 29:38-42; 30:7-8). In the latter the high priest made final atonement for sins and cleansed the sanctuary from it once a year (Ex 30:10; Lev 16). Thus, the two types of services are clearly differentiated. However, both have in common the use of blood to atone for sins and the priestly administration of it.

The service in the first apartment—described in Heb 9:6--comprised more than the manipulation of blood. For instance, the lamps were trimmed daily and incense was burnt (Ex 30:7-8). Therefore, the apostle may have decided to stay somewhat more general, stating only that the priests were "performing the divine worship." However, as soon as he comes to verse 7 he hurries to mention blood. Sin defiles, and blood acts "as a purging medium."

In addition to Heb 9:6 the daily ministry in the earthly sanctuary is mentioned in Heb 7:26-27; 10:11-12; and probably indirectly in Heb 13:10. Atonement was made by taking the blood of the sacrifice into the Holy Place or by the priests eating the meat and thus affecting the sanctuary. The goal of the sacrificial system was to take away sin. Although God loves sinners, he hates sin which is utterly destructive. The sanctuary provides a solution for the sin problem.

VII. The Day of Atonement in Hebrews

The annual Day of Atonement is not omitted in Hebrews. (1) There are three clear references to this yearly service. (2) The terms used to describe the sanctuary in Hebrews, especially *ta hagia*, should be understood as referring to the entire tabernacle and not just a part of it, unless they are clearly specified or the context demands a different understanding. (3) The references to the veils in Heb 6:19 and 10:20 are disputed within Adventist circles. Do these text describe the first or the second veil, the veil to the Holy Place or the veil to the Most Holy Place? (4) The high priestly office may point to the Day of Atonement, because only the high priest was ministering on that day, however, his ministry was not limited to that occasion. He also performed the daily service.

Unambiguous references to the Day of Atonement occur in Heb 9:7,25-26; 10:1-4. Heb 9:7 refers to the Day of Atonement found in Lev 16 and other passages. This annual ceremony was a solemn ritual involving aspects of cleansing and judgment. Heb 9:7 discusses the Day of Atonement in the earthly sanctuary only. This is also true for Heb 9:25. This text stresses that the high priest performs the Day of Atonement service once a year only. However, it is repeated year after year (Heb 10:1-4). Thus, the Day of Atonement in the earthly sanctuary cannot be the final solution of the sin problem. The solution is the once and for all sacrifice of Christ and his ministry.

Judgment is part of the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:27-30). Heb 10:26-30 is a passage dealing with judgment. This judgment is not yet executed. We rather find a comparison between trampling under foot the Son of God and violating the law of Moses. In an investigation process witnesses have to confirm the unrighteousness of the guilty, before the execution of the sentence can take place. “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (10:29). Although a direct relation to the Day of Atonement is not established, we find an allusion to an investigative process.

VIII. Other Ceremonies and Sanctuary Services in Hebrews

In Heb 9:13-22 different animals used as sacrifices as well as different ceremonies of the old covenant are hinted at. Beside the daily burnt offerings other sacrifices were offered during OT times. Lev 1-5 discusses the basic sacrifices of the OT. They include the burnt offering (Lev 1:3),

the grain or cereal offering (Lev 2:1), the peace offering (Lev 3:1), the sin offering (Lev 4:3), and the guilt offering (Lev 5:15). A special ceremony involved the sprinkling of the blood of the red heifer (see Heb 9:13; Num 19). This was applied when someone touched a corpse.

Sacrifices of goats and bulls, and the heifer (Heb 9:13) do not particularly point to the Day of Atonement but seem to describe the entire system of sacrifices.¹⁸ Heb 9:18-21 refers to the dedication of the sanctuary, a special ceremony. The word “to inaugurate” in Heb 9:18 is crucial. Its noun forms are used in the LXX for the dedication of the sanctuary, but not for the Day of Atonement.¹⁹ When it comes to entering the Most Holy Place, we have to keep in mind that this place was entered at two occasions only: (1) when Moses dedicated the sanctuary and the Levitic priesthood—in this case his brother and his nephews—(Ex 40:1-9; Lev 8; Num 7:1) and (2) at the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). This is an important observation. The Most Holy Place is not only linked to the Day of Atonement but also to the dedication of the sanctuary. Heb 10:20 is the only other place in the NT that uses the very same word “to inaugurate” that Heb 9:18 employs. As the old covenant and its sanctuary was inaugurated, so Jesus inaugurated the new covenant and its sanctuary and provided access to the throne of grace.

Following the passage on the dedication of the sanctuary another fascinating text is found-- Heb 9:23: “Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” Just as the earthly things, that is the entire earthly sanctuary,²⁰ require purification, the heavenly things do as well.²¹ However, the heavenly require better sacrifices. The preceding context points us into the direction of the dedication of the heavenly sanctuary, whereas Heb 9:25 includes a reference to the Day of Atonement. Thus the immediate context contains the concept of the dedication of the sanctuary as well as the Day of Atonement. The term “to purify” (*katharizo*) is the same term that is found in Lev

¹⁸See the discussion in chapter 6.

¹⁹Num 7:10,11,84,88. This is the chapter in Numbers dealing with the dedication of the sanctuary (see, Num 7:1).

²⁰See, Heb 9:21.

²¹The word “things” is not found in the Greek text but is required when an article, pronoun, or adjective neuter plural is used that does not refer to a specific noun. This is the case in 9:23. Therefore, the vast majority of translations inserts the term “things.”

16, when the purification of the sanctuary at the Day of Atonement occurred (Lev 16:19,20, 30,30). It is also found in Dan 8:14. It hints at Christ's second phase ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Although Hebrews does not elaborate more on this theme, it affirms not only that there is a sanctuary in heaven but that it needs cleansing and purification through a better sacrifice.

Was this sanctuary already purified at the cross? If this were the case, the heavenly ministry of Christ would be obsolete. Verse 24 has a post-crucifixion dimension. "Now," i.e., at the time when the apostle writes his letter, decades after the cross, Christ appears "in the presence of God for us." "The cross event did not cleanse the heavenly sanctuary at the moment of the Savior's death, but it did provide the basis upon which Christ, as man's high priest, could mediate his merits and bring about a total reconciliation of the universe (cf. Eph 1:10; Col 1:20) and thus restore the heavenly sanctuary and government of God 'to its rightful state' (Dan 8:14, RSV)."²²

Looking back at Heb 9 we notice that the chapter presents the daily service (verse 6), different ceremonies (verse 13), the dedication of the temple (verses 18-22), and the Day of Atonement (verses 7 and 25). All of them require better sacrifices, and all sacrifices find their fulfillment in the shedding of Jesus' blood, which alone makes forgiveness possible (vs. 22).

IX. The Role of the Day Of Atonement in Hebrews

Hebrews contains the heavenly sanctuary and its ministry. However, elements of the Adventist sanctuary doctrine seem to be missing. We do not find very explicit statements on a two-part heavenly sanctuary and on two phases of Christ's ministry, although we find hints. There is no strong emphasis on the investigative judgment. There are no clear time spans such as found in Daniel, relating to different phases of Christ's heavenly sanctuary ministry. Therefore, some have concluded that Hebrews contradicts or undermines the Adventist sanctuary doctrine.

So-called arguments from silence are always dangerous. We have to base our conclusions on what a biblical book teaches, not on what it omits. Matthew does not include the Millennium in his end time scenario. Does this mean that he denies the thousand years following the Second Coming of Christ. Certainly not! We are not to focus on what is not addressed but on those topics

²²"Daniel and Revelation Committee Report," in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, ed. by F. B. Holbrook (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 9.

that are. If we do not find the 2300 evening and mornings in Hebrews does that mean that the apostle rejects the prophetic time span?²³

On the other hand we may ask which elements of the sanctuary message the author of Hebrews confirms. He confirms that the sacrifice of Christ surpasses all OT sacrifices including those of the Day of Atonement and that Christ is the fulfillment of all these sacrifices. He confirms that there is a high priestly ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. He confirms that the heavenly sanctuary is a real place, even if it surpasses our imagination. He confirms that the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries are related and that it is permissible to draw basic conclusions from one that also apply to the other. He confirms that the heavenly sanctuary needs purification. He confirms that there is a future judgment. He confirms that the sanctuary and its ministry is tied in to our salvation.

According to Davidson the Book of Hebrews teaches “first, Christ’s death as the antitypical fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system. This includes *all* the Old Testament sacrifices, even those of the Day of Atonement . . . Second, when Christ ascended in 31 A.D., He did not immediately commence the antitypical Day of Atonement but *inaugurated* the entire heavenly sanctuary. This is indicated explicitly by the specific Greek word *enkainizo* ‘inaugurate,’ employed in Heb 10:20 and 9:18 . . . Third, the ongoing work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary at the time when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written was not the yearly Day of Atonement ministry, but rather the daily . . . , holy place ministry . . . (See Heb 7:25-27; 10:11-14; 13:10-12). Finally, from the point of view of the apostle, the Day of Atonement work of judgment was still in the future. And this concept of future judgment is not limited to Hebrews 9:23-27. . . . the entire epistle is structured by a five-fold warning of future judgment, and . . . this judgment includes an *investigative* as well as executive judgment that specifically involves the *professed people of God* . . . Hebrews 10:26-31.”²⁴

²³Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, 116, Johnsson states: “The fundamental misunderstanding of Hebrews . . . lies in putting the wrong questions in the text. The apostle here definitely does *not* deal with the work of Christ in the heavenly tabernacle from a time perspective. What he is concerned with is one supreme idea—the *all-sufficiency of His death*. He contrasts the OT sacrifices with the one Superlative Sacrifice. To do this he takes the high point of the Old Testament religious year—Yom Kippur—and argues that even on this day the sacrifices did not resolve the sin problem, as shown by the annual reenactment of Yom Kippur . . . The argument of Hebrews, then, does not deny the SDA sanctuary doctrine, because basically it does not address the issue.”

²⁴Richard M. Davidson, “In Confirmation of the Sanctuary Message,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 2 (1991):107-108.

X. Jesus' Ministry

The Book of Hebrew calls Jesus a priest and high priest. The Epistle stresses the importance of the death of Christ and his priestly ministry. However, not all the priestly functions of Jesus are very much developed. What were the functions of priests in the OT? Priests were responsible to administer sacrifices (Lev 1:7-9,11), trim the lamps (Ex 27:20-21), burn incense (Ex 30:7-8), and replace the shew bread (Lev 24:8-9). However, they were also responsible with regard to health related issues (Lev 13:1-3). They blessed the people (Num 6:22-27). They inquired God's will for individuals (Dt 33:8; 1Sam 14:36-42). And they taught the law of God (Dt 33:10).

Many of these functions can be seen in Christ's life on earth. He cared for the well-being of people. He healed and blessed them. He preached and taught. Although Hebrews does not focus on these aspects, our heavenly High Priest is not less thoughtful, merciful, and caring now that he ministers in heaven. He still exhibits the same love that he showered upon humanity during his incarnation.

According to Hebrews Jesus is sacrifice, priest, high priest, minister of the true tabernacle, mediator, and intercessor (Heb 7:25; 8:2; 9:15,25; 10:12,21). "He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (7:25).

A priest had to take care of relations between estranged parties. He was a connecting link between God and humanity. "The priestly ministry in connection with the first apartment in both type and antitype is *primarily individual-centered*. It is concerned with reconciling the sinner to God by providing a way to satisfy divine justice and securing for the penitent both forgiveness and spiritual growth. This priestly activity is thus focused on the doctrinal areas of justification and sanctification . . . Moreover, these subjects of the first apartment ministry in type are also the concerns of Christ's antitypical ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Hence, we properly describe His initial priestly service as a *ministry of forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration*."²⁵ He applies his sacrifice, makes propitiation, suffers with us, helps us in different ways and areas, and opens access to God.

In the OT sanctuary service the priest would take the blood of animals and bring it to the sanctuary. He, as a representative of others, would go where these persons could not go. The priests would have to perform this ministry day after day in the daily service and year after year in the Day

²⁵ Holbrook, *The Atoning Priesthood*, 112.

of Atonement service. Under the new covenant, instead of earthly and sinful priests, we have Jesus, the mediator of a better covenant with better promises. Sinners today do not have to find or purchase an animal, do not have to bring it to a sanctuary, do not have to kill it, and do not need another sinner to mediate that blood for them. All this is being done for us through Jesus. Through Him we have access to God any time, at any place, wheresoever we are. When we sin, we repent, we confess our sins, and Jesus, because of His merits, His perfect righteousness, stand in the presence of God for us, representing us, not with our righteousness, which is just like a filthy garment, but with His own. His merits become ours by faith, and he applies in our behalf the benefits of His perfect life and death. This is the only means, by which we sinners can be accepted by God. Jesus Christ the righteous intercedes for us and stands in the presence of God for us. He also hears our prayers and cries. He knows what we desperately need more than we know ourselves, and He will provide what he deems best.

The yearly ministry was more corporate-centered and dealt with the final eradication of sin, the cleansing of the sanctuary, the vindication of believers and God, and judgment. Its antitypical reality is not developed in Hebrews, but it is not excluded either. Rather some aspects of Hebrews indirectly point to it which are (1) the term “high priest,” (2) the description of the yearly ministry of the OT priests, (3) the references to the Most Holy Place and (4) the important text in Heb 9:13 which talks about the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. Whereas Jesus priestly ministry follows the order of Melchizedek, its is patterned after the Levitical priesthood.

B. Christ and the Sanctuary in Revelation

I. Jesus in Revelation

The Book of Revelation depicts Jesus with many different names and titles.²⁶ The most

²⁶He is called (1) Jesus Christ (1:1,2,5), (2) Jesus (1:9; 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10,10; 22:16), (3) Christ (11:15; 12:10; 20:4,6), (4) Lord (11:8), (5) Lord Jesus (22:20f), (6) Ruler of the Kings on Earth (1:5), (7) Lord of Lords and King of Kings (17:14; 19:16), (8) the One like a Son of Man (1:13; 14:14), (9) Son of God (2:18), (10) Male Child (12:5,13), (11) Firstborn of the Dead (1:5), (12) the First and the Last (and the Living One) (1:17-18; 2:8; 22:13), (13) the Alpha and Omega (22:13), (14) the Beginning and the End (22:13), (15) the Beginning of the Creation of God (3:14), (16) the Faithful Witness (1:5) / the faithful and true witness (3:14) / Faithful and True (19:11), (17) the Amen (3:14), (18) The Holy and True One (3:7), (19) the Word of God (19:13), and (20) the bright Morning Star (22:16). Descriptions of Jesus are: (1) He is the root of David (out of the tribe of Judah) (5:5; 22:6). (2) The rider on the white horse in Rev 6 und Rev 19 describes Jesus and his ministry. (3) The strong angel of Rev 10 may represent him because he is described with divine attributes. (4) Michael in Rev 12 points to Jesus. (5) The kings of the east drying out the Euphrates river may

prominent is “Lamb” stressing the sacrificial death of Jesus through which he has purchased us (Rev 5:9-10). Thus, Revelation refers to Jesus as the sacrifice.

What about his priesthood? Are there any traces in Revelation? Jesus is not called priest or high priest in Revelation. In chapter 1 Jesus is portrayed as walking among the seven lampstands, i.e., the seven churches, clothed with a long robe. It has been suggested that this is a priestly garment, and Jesus is depicted as a priest who cares for his churches. In Rev 8:3 the angel who administers the prayers of the saints at the golden altar, seems to be Jesus. The altar is the altar of incense of the heavenly sanctuary. Obviously, the so-called daily ministry is envisaged.

In Rev 19:11 Jesus is the rider on the white horse who judges in righteousness. According to Rev 14:7 God’s end time church is commissioned to proclaim: "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come; worship him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." This hour of judgment precedes the second coming of Jesus which is described at the end of the fourteenth chapter and in Rev 19. It is the pre-Advent or investigative judgment. Thus, in Revelation we find hints to a priestly ministry of Jesus as well as to a judgment activity. Judgment is part of the antitypical Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement deals with the eradication of sin and unrepentant sinners and therefore includes judgment.

In Revelation we also detect time spans. Five times the 1260 days of Dan 7 and 12 are found.²⁷ Although in Revelation this time period is not directly connected with Jesus, it affects his people and his book, Scripture. In Daniel 7 we find a similar situation. The saints are threatened and persecuted by the little horn. But judgment is held in favor of the saints. In this judgment the one like a Son of Man is involved (Dan 7:13), a heavenly being who comes to the Ancient of Days in a judgment setting. In Revelation the person “like a Son of Man” is Jesus. The title is used for Jesus, the priest of Rev 1, and for Jesus, the returning Lord of Rev 14. His coming will result in a positive grain harvest and a negative grape harvest (Rev 14:14-20). This double harvest is part of the execution of the judgment and presupposes the investigative judgment of Rev 14:7. It corresponds

be Jesus and his heavenly army (16:12). (6) Jesus is also compared with a lion (5:5), and (7) most of all, he is the Lamb (5:6,8,12f; 6:1,16; 7:9f,14,17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1,4,4,10; 15:3; 17:14,14; 9:7,9; 21:9,14,22f,27; 22:1,3).

²⁷Rev 11:2,3; 12:6,14; 13:5.

to some extent with Dan 7 in which the one like a Son of Man is involved in judgment in favor of the saints and against the enemies of his people. The little horn will be destroyed. Although Revelation is not as clear as we would wish and does not explicitly mention a heavenly, post-ascension first phase ministry of Jesus and a second phase ministry we still find hints indicating that this seems to be the case.

II. The Sanctuary in Revelation

Similar to the Letter to the Hebrews sanctuary language is dominant in the Book of Revelation. The book consists of different visions which all have introductory scenes. These scenes are sanctuary scenes.²⁸ For instance, the vision of the seven churches is introduced by Jesus the priest, the vision of the seven seals by God on his throne in the heavenly sanctuary as well as the Lamb who alone is able to open the scroll, and the vision of the seven trumpets by the angel who in the temple of God at the golden altar administers the prayers of the saints. The vision of the satanic trinity in the center of the book (Rev 12-14) begins with an introductory scene in which the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary is in view (Rev 11:19). The Arch of the Covenant is located there. The setting reminds us not only of God's law and his grace, but also of the Day of Atonement. These introductory scenes prepare the way for the main vision and contain in a nutshell the important topics to be discussed. So, the introductory scene to the center vision of Revelation prepares for the antitypical Day of Atonement which in the form of the investigative judgment is found a little later, namely in Rev 14:7. This vision has strong connections to Daniel, especially to Dan 7 which depicts a pre-advent investigative judgment.

Revelation again and again refers to the sanctuary. The further we get in the book the deeper we get into the heavenly sanctuary. There is a progression to be seen in the introductory scenes of Revelation in which we move from the courtyard of the temple into the Most Holy place.

In Rev 11:1 John is asked to measure the temple, the altar, and the worshipers. K. A. Strand²⁹,

²⁸Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis*, 2nd edition (Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1979), 52.

²⁹Kenneth A. Strand, "An Overlooked Old-Testament Background to Revelation 11:1", *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 22 (1984): 317-325.

has shown that although this verse has parallels in Zechariah and Ezekiel, the best OT background is Lev 16, the Day of Atonement. In Lev 16 atonement is made for (1) priest, (2) sanctuary, (3) altar, and (4) the church (Lev 16:6,11,16-18). Three of the four elements are found in Rev 11:1, namely temple, altar, and church (worshippers). The priest is missing. However, this is understandable, since Jesus as High Priest does not need to make atonement for himself. Not only are the same elements found in Lev 16 and Rev 11:1, even the sequence is the same.³⁰ The Day of Atonement was in some respect a time of “measuring.” The congregation was asked to humble their souls. “If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people” (Lev 23:29). Therefore, in Rev 11:1 we seem to have a reference to the antitypical Day of Atonement. As in the OT the high priest was involved, so it must be assumed that in the real Day of Atonement Jesus is involved performing the so-called “yearly” ministry.

C. Conclusion

- (1) The Pentateuch distinguishes between priests and the high priest as well as between their responsibilities and functions. Although the high priest performs all functions the priest does, he is the only one to be active involved in the Day of Atonement ministry.
- (2) The Pentateuch also distinguishes between different parts of the sanctuary and the continuous daily ministry in the Holy Place and a special ministry in the Most Holy Place once a year.
- (3) Since the Bible understands as type and antitype the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly sanctuary, the sacrifice of animals and the sacrifice of Jesus, the levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Jesus, it can be assumed that as the earthly priesthood performed a daily and a yearly ministry so Jesus is also performing a two phase ministry.
- (4) To some extent Heb 9:23 allows us to draw conclusions from the “earthly copies” to the heavenly reality and not only the other way around as is often claimed.
- (5) To the kingdoms of Dan 2, Dan 7 adds the dimension of God’s saints and Dan 8 God’s sanctuary. These prophecies are parallel and throw light on each other. Whereas Dan 8 talks about the cleansing and restoration of the heavenly sanctuary after the 2300 years, Dan 7

³⁰See, Jon Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussion", in *Symposium on Revelation--Book I: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, edited by Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 189-190.

describes an investigative judgment in favor of the saints and against their enemies which starts some time after the 1260 years and is followed by the execution of the verdict. These two events of Dan 7 and 8 are found in the same places of their respective visions and together refer to the antitypical Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement includes the cleansing of the sanctuary and affirms the judgment aspect for those who claim to follow their Lord.

- (6) Hebrews contains allusions to Christ's second phase ministry by referring to the Most Holy Place several times, the High Priest, and the cleansing of heavenly things.
- (7) The Book of Revelation strongly emphasizes the sanctuary and its ministry. The term "high priest" is not used at all, but the word "priest" is three times. However, each time it refers to humans and not to Christ. Yet, Christ's priesthood and ministry are affirmed indirectly.

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