

We Have an Altar. . .

The Time and Purpose of the Writing of the Book of Hebrews

1. The book of Hebrews appeared during a critical time in the history of the early church. It was written by Paul in 66-67 AD to the Hebrews converts; Paul felt that they needed a clearer understanding of the work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary for the following reasons:

a. **Jerusalem and the temple about to be destroyed (Heb 8:13)**--The book was written around 66 A.D.-- The destruction of Jerusalem was impending and many of the believers thought that the end of the world was near; Paul's intention was to take their eyes away from the temple and its services because in a matter of 3 or 4 years, the Romans were going to come and destroy it; the those who continued sacrificing animals there included not only the unconverted Jews but also Jews who had converted into Christianity;

b. **New converts**--- The apostles were dying one by one and the new converts were coming in who were new-modeling the cause because they had no clear understanding of the work of Jesus as Sacrifice and Priest;

The people needed a clear conception of the work Christ was doing in the heavenly sanctuary to restore their wavering faith. Just as there was a lot of misconception as to the nature of the work of Christ in the sanctuary back then, so it is today.

c. **Intense persecution from the Jews**-- the leaders of the church in Jerusalem sought to avoid it by conforming and reverting back to the Jewish ceremonial laws; in the book of Hebrews, Paul clearly explains that this action constituted nothing less than compromise of the truth and a denial of faith;

Cowardice & Compromise

2. The thousands of Jews in Jerusalem who believed (in Christ) had compromised their faith by reverting back to Judaism while claiming to be Christ's (Acts 21:20)

- a. Contrast this with the small home churches Paul established in Asia (**Philem 1:2; Col 4:15; 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5**)
- b. NOTE: The persecution against the Christian church that flared up 20 or so years (34 AD) before had obviously stopped and the Christian church in Jerusalem was obviously flourishing (**Acts 8:1**); by 55-57 AD (after Paul's 3rd missionary journey and return to Jerusalem, the Jewish Christians were now living peacefully side by side with the unbelieving Jews because of compromise and concessions (**LP 213; AA 404**);

The leaders of the church in Jerusalem knew that by non-conformity to the ceremonial law, Christians would bring upon themselves the hatred of the Jews and expose themselves to persecution. The Sanhedrin was doing its utmost to hinder the progress of the gospel. Men were chosen by this body to follow up the apostles, especially Paul, and in every possible way to oppose their work. Should the believers in Christ be condemned before the Sanhedrin as breakers of the law, they would suffer swift and severe punishment as apostates from the Jewish faith.

Many of the Jews who had accepted the gospel still cherished a regard for the ceremonial law and were only too willing to make unwise concessions, hoping thus to gain the confidence of their countrymen, to remove their prejudice, and to win them to faith in Christ as the world's Redeemer. **AA 404-405.**

The disciples themselves yet cherished a regard for the ceremonial law, and were too willing to make concessions, hoping by so doing to gain the confidence of their countrymen, remove their prejudice, and win them to faith in Christ as the world's Redeemer. **(LP 213).**

- c. Among the thousands in Jerusalem who believe were companies of priests who were obedient to the faith (**Acts 6:7**); and who would later be involved in the offering of sacrificial animals in the temple (**Heb 8:4**)

3. In the book of Hebrews, Paul makes it clear that this move meant apostatizing from the Christian faith (**Heb 2:3; Heb 6:4-6; Heb 10:35-36**) A Christian who has followed Christ by faith in the holy place at his resurrection, cannot draw back and worship in the courtyard of the sanctuary at the same time.

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4. Paul's final argument against compromise towards Judaism is found in **Heb 13:10-11**)

-only available to those who follow Christ into the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary.

- i. **Lev 6:25, 30; Lev 10:16-17**---**Law of the sin offering**---in the old covenant the body of the sacrifice could not be eaten if the blood was brought into the tabernacle
- ii. in the New covenant, believers can eat of the sacrifice even though its blood was brought into the tabernacle; (**Heb 9:12; John 6:51-53, 63; GC 421-422**)
- iii. those who remained in the courtyard of the sanctuary with their animal sacrifices and failed to follow Jesus by faith into the Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary were in danger of missing out on the benefit of Christ's ministration there and being cut off.

It is those who by faith follow Jesus in the great work of the atonement who receive the benefits of His mediation in their behalf, while those who reject the light which brings to view this work of ministration are not benefited thereby. The Jews who rejected the light given at Christ's first advent, and refused to believe on Him as the Savior of the world, could not receive pardon through Him. When Jesus at His ascension entered by His own blood into the heavenly sanctuary to shed upon His disciples the blessings of His mediation, the Jews were left in total darkness to continue their useless sacrifices and offerings. The ministration of types and shadows had ceased. That door by which men had formerly found access to God was no longer open. The Jews had refused to seek Him in the only way whereby He could then be found, through the ministration in the sanctuary in heaven. Therefore they found no communion with God. To them the door was shut. They had no knowledge of Christ as the true sacrifice and the only mediator before God; hence they could not receive the benefits of His mediation. **(GC 430)**

The Adventist Altar

5. Those who follow Jesus by faith in the 3 angels messages into the Most holy place ALSO have an altar which those who remain in the holy place have no right to eat: **(Rev 10:8-10)**

- a. **Message of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary**--The little book open has to do with the message of the cleansing of the sanctuary; only those who enter into the most holy place have the right to partake of the benefit of Christ's full and final atonement;
- b. the message of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is the message that should comfort those who are to go through the final crisis of earth's history;
- c. what it means to eat of the little open book (**John 6:63**)--to study and assimilate with the mind;

We are in the great day of atonement, and the sacred work of Christ for the people of God that is going on at the present time in the heavenly sanctuary should be our constant study. **5T 520**

The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill. Every individual has a soul to save or to lose. **GC 488**

The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin. It is of the utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects and be able to give an answer to everyone that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them. **GC 488-489.**

Parallels and Lessons

6. Just as the majority of the church (thousands in Jerusalem) rejected the present truth for their time (the new covenant and ministry of Jesus in the holy place), the majority of the Christian world will reject the proclamation of the third angel as it swells into a loud cry (EW 54-55; GC 608);

I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, "If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist." Before the throne I saw the Advent people--the church and the world. I saw two companies, one bowed down before the throne, deeply interested, while the other stood uninterested and careless. Those who were bowed before the throne would offer up their prayers and look to Jesus; then He would look to His Father, and appear to be pleading with Him. A light would come from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the praying company. Then I saw an exceeding bright light come from the Father to the Son, and from the Son it waved over the people before the throne. But few would receive this great light. Many came out from under it and immediately resisted it; others were careless and did not cherish the light, and it moved off from them. Some cherished it, and went and

bowed down with the little praying company. This company all received the light and rejoiced in it, and their countenances shone with its glory.

I saw the Father rise from the throne, [SEE PAGE 92.] and in a flaming chariot go into the holy of holies within the veil, and sit down. Then Jesus rose up from the throne, and the most of those who were bowed down arose with Him. I did not see one ray of light pass from Jesus to the careless multitude after He arose, and they were left in perfect darkness. Those who arose when Jesus did, kept their eyes fixed on Him as He left the throne and led them out a little way. Then He raised His right arm, and we heard His lovely voice saying, "Wait here; I am going to My Father to receive the kingdom; keep your garments spotless, and in a little while I will return from the wedding and receive you to Myself." Then a cloudy chariot, with wheels like flaming fire, surrounded by angels, came to where Jesus was. He stepped into the chariot and was borne to the holiest, where the Father sat. There I beheld Jesus, a great High Priest, standing before the Father. On the hem of His garment was a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate. Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest, and pray, "My Father, give us Thy Spirit." Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In that breath was light, power, and much love, joy, and peace.

I turned to look at the company who were still bowed before the throne; they did not know that Jesus had left it. Satan appeared to be by the throne, trying to carry on the work of God. I saw them look up to the throne, and pray, "Father, give us Thy Spirit." Satan would then breathe upon them an unholy influence; in it there was light and much power, but no sweet love, joy, and peace. Satan's object was to keep them deceived and to draw back and deceive God's children. **EW 54-55.**

As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them. **GC 608**

A company was presented before me under the name of Seventh-day Adventists, who were advising that the banner or sign which makes us a distinctive people should not be held out so strikingly; for they claimed it was not the best policy in securing success to our institutions. This distinctive banner is to be borne through the world to the close of probation. **2SM 385.**

7. Just as Paul could not depend on his own brethren in the faith and suffered prejudice under them, so it will be with those who preach the third angel's message. There will those who will draw back and renounce their belief out of cowardice and will make concessions to avoid penalties and gain popularity;

The time is not far distant, when the test will come to every soul. . . . In this time, the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy, will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness.—**5T 80,81.**

In the last solemn work few great men will be engaged. They are self-sufficient, independent of God, and He cannot use them. The Lord has faithful servants, who in the shaking, testing time will be disclosed to view. There are precious ones now hidden who have not bowed the knee to Baal. They have not had the light which has been shining in a concentrated blaze upon you. But, it may be under a rough and uninviting exterior the pure brightness of a genuine Christian character will be revealed. In the daytime we look toward heaven, but do not see stars. They are there, fixed in the firmament, but the eye cannot distinguish them. In the night we behold their genuine luster. **ChS 49**

8. Our only hope is to “hold fast” and not “draw back”; “cast not away our confidence,” need of patience” **(Heb 10:23-27, 35-39)**

- a. Hold fast to the profession of our faith,
 - iv. i.e. present truth which is Christ in the Most Holy Place
 - v. Not to open to the door to the holy place which the Lord has closed and “draw back” by preach justification by faith based on continual sinning and forgiving
 - vi. Know the present truth and be sanctified by it doers and not hearers only. **(Rom 2:13, Jas 1:22)**
- b. Remain patient in tribulation so we can inherit the new covenant promises **(Heb 10:35, 36; Matt 24:13)**
- c. To eat the little book constantly (drawing light) and finding it sweet (through exercising the faith for this time) in the mouth is the only anchor that will support t the believers who are worshipping in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary; Just like the believers in the time of Paul needed a clear picture of the work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary in order to remain sound in the faith, those who are living in the time of the end, at the time when the announcement is made that "Unto 2300 days then shall the sanctuary be cleaned" should have a clear, solid understanding of the meaning of this passage, if they are to withstand the rigors of the time of trouble and continue to glorify God by remaining faithful to his Law when the whole world declares it void;
- c. No room for willful ignorance **(Hos 4:6)**;

The condition of the unbelieving Jews illustrates the condition of the careless and unbelieving among professed Christians, who are willingly ignorant of the work of our merciful High Priest. In the typical service, when the high priest entered the most holy place, all Israel were required to gather about the sanctuary and in the most solemn manner humble their souls before God, that they might receive the pardon of their sins and not be cut off from the congregation. How much more essential in this antitypical Day of Atonement that we understand the work of our High Priest and know what duties are required of us. **{GC 430-431}**

d. learn to bear the reproach of preaching an unpopular message instead of compromising **(Heb 13:12-13)**