

Most of us are familiar with models. As kids, many of us grew up playing with toy cars and doll houses. Of course, we know that model cars don't actually drive and you can't actually live in doll houses. They are simply replicas made to show what the real things look like. This was the purpose of the entire old covenant system. Under the old covenant people killed animals when they sinned and took the blood of the animals into the sanctuary tent. Like a model car doesn't drive, the old covenant sacrifices didn't work either, since "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). The old earthly sanctuary was just a model used to show us what the real thing would look like. That's why, before He gave the sanctuary service, God said, "let them make Me a sanctuary...According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle" (Ex. 25:8, 9). The earthly sanctuary model was designed after the pattern of the real sanctuary in heaven. Of course, we don't have to worry about the old covenant sanctuary service anymore since we are under the new covenant, right?

Actually, the old covenant sanctuary service and its rituals matter more today under the new covenant than they did in the past. Christians should study the sanctuary today more than ever, since the old sanctuary service was just a pattern of the real sanctuary service going on right now. You see, when the animals in the old covenant were killed it was like paying with a credit card. When you buy things with a credit card you aren't actually giving money, but the card represents the promise that you will pay. Those animal sacrifices were the promise that the payment would be made. Of course, we were not going to pay, since we cannot atone for our own sins. The animal sacrifices pointed forward to Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice who would pay for our sins and yet the service does not stop there. After the animal was sacrificed, the blood was then taken by the high priest into the sanctuary tent, representing the work of our salvation. You see, while many say that salvation ends at the cross, those who study the sanctuary service know that this is not so. There is a greater work being done for your salvation which is going on right now in the heavenly sanctuary!

Have you ever wondered why there is an entire book about the sanctuary service in the New Testament? The book of Hebrews explains the work

Jesus is doing right now in the heavenly sanctuary. Check this out. Over half way through the book of Hebrews the author stops and says, "this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, 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 which the Lord erected, and not man" (Heb. 8:1, 2). Did you catch that? The Bible says that Jesus is now working as our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, for "Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle," "For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:11, 24). While many wonder what Jesus has been doing since He went back up to heaven, the answer is right here in the book of Hebrews. Christ is working out our salvation in the heavenly sanctuary, but we have a part to play.

Those who think that salvation ended at the cross seem to think that after we accept Christ there is nothing left for us to do in our Christian life, as if we are not required to overcome our sins, but this teaching is not consistent with the Bible. Jesus says, "To Him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). We must overcome sin in this life and Jesus is in the heavenly sanctuary helping us do just that! The high priest sprinkling blood in the old covenant sanctuary pointed forward to the day when Jesus would be sprinkling His blood on our hearts under the new covenant. When we pray and ask for power to overcome sin, Christ sprinkles His blood on us from the heavenly sanctuary. This should give us courage to fight against sin, so "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Heb.10:22). You see, once we accept Christ we then must seek the power of God to overcome sin. We must pursue "holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). While this is impossible on our own, "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

Jesus is now working out our salvation in the heavenly sanctuary. When we pray and ask for power, He sprinkles His blood on us because, as the old hymn says, "there's power in the blood." Jesus sprinkles our conscience and cleanses us, then

empowers us to stop sinning. This is why, all the way back in the beginning God told Cain, "sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it," and when Jesus was on earth He said, "sin no more" (Gen. 4:7; John 8:11). In spite of what some of the popular pastors are teaching today, the Bible has consistently called us to overcome sin while Jesus is still working in our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary, blotting out our sins and giving us power. This work going on will not last forever. Under the old covenant sanctuary service, there was a day at the end of the year when the high priest would make a final atonement and leave the sanctuary. At that time, those who had not confessed their sins were lost and cut off from Israel. This Day of Atonement was symbolic of the coming judgment when Jesus will take off His High Priest robes and leave the heavenly sanctuary for good. That means now is our time to overcome.

Jesus is still working in the heavenly sanctuary today. We see an amazing picture of this in the final book of the Bible, where John turns to see Jesus standing "in the midst of the seven golden lampstands" in the sanctuary and "clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band," in His heavenly High Priest clothing (Rev. 1:13). In fact, all through the book of Revelation you see snapshots of the sanctuary as Jesus ministers in our behalf. As long as Jesus continues to work in the sanctuary, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (John 2:10). Still, we must use the time we have now to make our lives right with God. Confess your sins and get right with God now, because the day is coming when He will leave the heavenly sanctuary and return to earth to gather His children. At that time, those who refused to resist and turn from their sins will be stuck with a flawed character. The Bible says at that time, "he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still" (Rev. 22:11). After Jesus leaves the heavenly sanctuary our chance to overcome is finished.

The good news is, Jesus is still in the heavenly sanctuary right now, ministering in your behalf. You cannot save yourself, but Jesus can save you. Christ is greater than any sin and your only hope is in pleading for Jesus to give you the victory. Don't give up and say, "God, you'll just have to accept me in

my sins." Those who do that will end up lost, but God has promised power to anyone who keeps wrestling with God until He gives them the victory. That means, keep praying and claiming His promise that He will give you the power to overcome your defects. No matter how many times you fall, keep getting back up and praying until He finally gives you the victory over that sin. The Bible says, "a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again" (Prov. 24:16). You may have fallen "seventy times seven," but Jesus will still forgive (Matt. 18:22). Salvation is His work and He will take responsibility. Perhaps you feel that you have gone too far to be saved or that your sins are too deep and dark for God to rescue you. Dear child of God, you are not too far from God. Jesus loves you dearly and longs to pull you from your pit of sin if you will just surrender your life to Him.

Perhaps you feel like I have felt at times, lost and cut off, totally rejected and abandoned by God. Don't confuse feeling for fact. Feeling lost does not mean you are lost and without hope. The devil often throws us under the bus of feelings, seeking to destroy us, but God is offering you hope today. God is offering you forgiveness and power. The reach of His arm is longer than the pit of your sin. Sure, you may fall again, but each time get back up and keep praying and pleading to God to give you the victory over your sin until He finally gives it. Like the persistent widow, we must continue to cling to God and cast our petitions on Him. If we persist, He will finally answer (See Luke 18:1). Your only victory is in Christ and He is longing to save you because no matter how you feel, He loves you dearly. So humbly demand that God give you the victory and you will eventually have it.

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