

Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, 9/1-2 (1998): 243–259.
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The Sanctuary and the Mission of the Church

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The purpose of this study is to see if New Testament allusions to the Old Testament sanctuary will help to bring additional clarity to our understanding of the mission of the Christian church in general and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular. Important truths concerning man's redemption were taught by the earthly sanctuary and its services.¹ We will bring the entire Scripture to bear upon these truths and, within the larger biblical context, explore the mission of the church.

This study will limit itself to the symbolism of the furnishings of the sanctuary. We will not examine the typology of the various offerings, the functions of the priesthood, the meaning of special feast days, or the rabbinical understanding of them. Nor will we examine the nature of the church, its origin, universality, and the metaphors that highlight its multi-faceted responsibilities.

The questions to be addressed are: Does the Old Testament sanctuary give us a theological basis for a mission statement for the church? Do the New Testament allusions to the sanctuary, such as we find in Hebrews and in the book of Revelation,² help the church understand its mission more clearly and to carry it out more effectively? To answer these questions and to provide some logical progression to this study, we will begin by looking at the symbolism in the Courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place.

First, let us consider the biblical evidence for the legitimacy of such a study. Throughout the book of Hebrews, Paul (who I believe to be its author)³ compares and contrasts Christ's earthly and post-resurrection ministry with the

¹Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 357.

²Heb 8:10; Rev 2:17; 3:7–13; 8:1–4; 11:1, 2, 19.

³Francis D. Nichol, ed.; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 7:387–388.

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priestly services in the Old Testament sanctuary. In Hebrews 8:5 he says that the earthly sanctuary was an “example and shadow of things to come.” In chapters 9 and 10, Paul tells us that the services of the sanctuary with its offerings and priestly functions were “types” of Christ’s anticipated ministry. These services were a Christological foreshadowing of the Messiah to come, who would live a sinless life, ratify God’s covenant by shedding His own blood as a complete and all-sufficient sacrifice, and then ascend to complete His priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.⁴

Second, if the earthly sanctuary modeled Christ’s ministry, which it did, and if the church is the body of Christ—that is, Christ’s hands and feet in the world—which it is (Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 3:16–17; 12:27; Eph 1:22–23; 4:12; 5:23), we can rightly assume that the sanctuary also has something to say to us about the ministry and mission of the church.

Third, “In the ministration of the tabernacle, and of the temple that afterward took its place, the people were taught each day the great truths relative to Christ’s death and ministration, and once each year their minds were carried forward to the closing events of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.”⁵

The Sanctuary Courtyard

We will consider three furnishings connected with the courtyard to see if they give additional insight into the ministry and mission of the church: (1) the Entryway Curtain, (2) the Altar of Sacrifice, and (3) the Laver.

The Veil at the Entryway. In Hebrews 10:20, Paul tells us that a “new and living” way has been made into the sanctuary, that is, a “newly made” way has been opened to God through the body of Jesus Christ. Paul points to the veil as a symbol of Christ’s body which was the means by which the atonement could take place.⁶ In the earthly sanctuary the veil at the entryway to the courtyard barred people from entering the sanctuary unless they were bringing a sacrifice to the Lord to be offered by the priest. But now that the “reality” through the

⁴Paul uses shadow (*skia*) in contrast to reality. What he wants his readers to understand is that the earthly sanctuary is not the reality of God’s atonement. It actually stands in contrast to Christ’s intercessory ministry in the sanctuary which God built and not man (Heb 8:2). He uses example (*hypodeigma*) to mean copy, model, sketch, or reflective image. What Paul is emphasizing is that while the earthly sanctuary was not the reality of the gospel, it did reflect the ministry of Christ.

Note: Definitions of Greek words given throughout the text and notes are taken from the index of *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged in one volume and edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, translated into English by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

⁵White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 358.

⁶In Heb 10:20, Paul uses the word *sark* to refer to the muscular parts of a body, which played an important part in animal sacrifices. In v. 19, when he speaks of Calvary, Paul uses the word *soma*, meaning the whole body, that is, Christ’s flesh and blood. While the difference between these two words may be soteriologically significant, it does not detract from the focus of our study.

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incarnate Christ has come, the “veil” is no longer a deterrent but an encouragement to the people to come boldly into the courtyard and through Christ on into the very presence of God (Heb 4:16).⁷

Christ is the “rock,” the “chief cornerstone” on which the church is built.⁸ Without the Son of God becoming human there would be no sacrifice, redemption, forgiveness, and resurrection. “It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Savior has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. . . . forever to retain His human nature.”⁹ Christ is Emmanuel, God with us (Matt 1:23). The incarnation shatters all philosophical concepts of man working his own way upward or looking within himself for the answers. The answer comes down to us. As Christ told Nicodemus, “You must be born from above” (John 3:3).

It all began at Bethlehem—God in the flesh—the new veil for the new sanctuary. It was the birth of Christ announced by the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem that started the church on its joyous mission. “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). This same note of praise and joy is part of the mission of the end-time church, which is to take the good news of the gospel to the world. John said,

I saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, preaching the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, saying with a loud voice: Fear God and give glory to Him for the time to complete His work has come, and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the foundations of waters. (Rev 14:6, 7)

The Altar of Sacrifice. The sacrificial altar stood in the very center of the courtyard (Exod 40:6; 2 Chron 7:7). It is called the altar of burnt offering, more precisely, the altar of “whole” burnt offering (Exod 30:28; Deut 33:10). In Hebrew it literally means the “place of slaughter” (*mizbeah*) and in the Septuagint the “place of holocaust” (*holokautoma*). The hill called Calvary was that place of slaughter; the Hill of the Skull was the place of holocaust.

This is the message that Paul tried to convey when he says that Christ put away sin by sacrificing Himself (Heb 9:26). Isaiah says that it pleased the Lord for Him to be made an offering for sin (Isa 53:10). For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes will not perish

⁷Some commentators understand Paul to be speaking of the veil at the entrance to the courtyard, while others think it the veil or the “screen” into the Holy Place. Still others believe it is the veil at the entrance to the Most Holy Place. From the context, Paul seems to have the veil at the entryway in mind, because throughout Heb 8–10 he emphasizes the sacrifice of Christ, in contrast to the sacrifices of animals which are no longer needed (Heb 10:11–12). It is also possible that Paul had all three veils in mind, for it is Christ’s incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension that give the believer the right to come into the presence of God.

⁸ Matt 16:13–18; 1 Pet 2:4–7.

⁹White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 25.

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(John 3:16). Paul makes it clear that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). We are justified by faith and have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 5:1). Faith does not save us but takes hold of the grace of God made visible in the gift of His Son (Eph 2:8, 9). Christ set us free from having to win God's love and earn our way into heaven. God loved us while we were yet sinners (Rom 5:8). John says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). This is the heart of the gospel: The good news of salvation.

The cross of Christ is the very center of the mission of the church, even as the altar of sacrifice was centrally placed in the courtyard. At the night meeting with Nicodemus, Christ told Nicodemus that the Son of Man must be lifted up for all to see, just as Moses lifted up the metal serpent in the wilderness (Num 21:9; John 3:14). During His last visit to the Temple, Christ told the people that when He is crucified He will draw people from all nations unto Himself (John 12:32, 33). A few years later, Paul went to Athens, where his less successful mission led him to change his method of approach from a broad-based rational discussion on the nature of man (Acts 17:16-34) to a focus on Christ and Him crucified so that the gospel would stand not in the wisdom and excellency of men but in the power of God (1 Cor 2:1-5).

"The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary, . . . I present before you," Ellen White says, "the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross of Calvary."¹⁰ "The cross stands alone, a great center in the world. It does not find friends, but it makes them. It creates its own agencies."¹¹ Just as the altar of sacrifice in the center of the courtyard was the soteriological center of all the rituals and services of the sanctuary, so the Son of God sacrificed for our sins must be at the center of the mission of the church.

The Laver. Also in the courtyard we find the laver or "wash basin" which was used by the priests to wash their hands and feet to "purify" themselves before entering the Holy Place (Exod 30:17-21), just as the people were expected to follow the laws of washings and purification (Num 19:1-22; Heb 9:6-10). The "washing" points the believer to the cleansing waters of baptism, to a new life in Christ, and to the continual need of God's grace (Ps 51:1, 2; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Titus 3:3-8).

¹⁰White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Supplement, Vol. 5 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1956), 5:1137.

¹¹Ibid., 5:1138.

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When Paul spoke to the Sanhedrin in his defense and recounted his conversion experience on the road to Damascus, he told them how the Lord sent him to Ananias, who told him to be baptized and wash away (*apolousai*) his sins (Acts 22:16). In Luke 11:38 the word baptize (*baptizo*) is used for washing before a meal, to purify oneself, to be clean. Jesus Himself was led by the Holy Spirit to be baptized and washed (Matt 3:13-17), not as a sinner, but as an example. “Jesus did not receive baptism as a confession of guilt on His own account. He identified Himself with sinners, taking the steps that we are to take, and doing the work that we must do.”¹² When after Peter’s sermon at Pentecost the people were convicted by the Holy Spirit of sin, they asked, “What must we do?” Peter said, “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:37, 38).

The baptismal water has no curative power, but is a symbol of a new life in Christ. In Romans, Paul adds the “reality” and power of Christ’s resurrection to the meaning of baptism (Rom 6:1-4). Baptism becomes a statement that the old man controlled by sin is dead and buried. Then a new man arises from the watery grave, resurrected to a new life by the transforming power of the Spirit. This watery death to a life of sin and the resurrection to a new life is a grateful response to what Christ has done for us through His death and resurrection (v. 5). Baptism also means being totally immersed in the love of Christ. As Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Gal 2:20).

We have looked at three symbols in the courtyard of the earthly sanctuary which together form the foundational triad of the Christian faith: Christ’s sinless human life, His death, and His resurrection. Bethlehem, Calvary, and the Garden Tomb are the first watchwords of the church. The mission of the church is to write into its mission statement this triad of faith and then, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19).

The Holy Place

The triad of the courtyard is matched by the triad in the Holy Place: (1) The Table of Shewbread, (2) the Altar of Incense, and (3) the Seven-branched Candlestick. If the first triad directs us to the Son of Man, to Calvary, and to a resurrected life in Christ, and the church has been “espoused” to one husband—that is, to Jesus Christ (2 Cor 11:2)—this new relationship must be nourished (Rom 7:1-6). It is not only the mission of the church to lead people to salvation in Christ but to help them to grow into mature believers, committed to extending His Kingdom. As Jesus said, “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8). While the church

¹²White, *The Desire of Ages*, 111.

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must carry the gospel to the world, it must also nurture and equip the family of God (Eph 4:11-16) to ensure its continual growth in Christ and to provide a strong spiritual base from which to launch the church's mission.

The Table of Shewbread. As the priest entered the Holy Place the table of shewbread would be on his right toward the north (Exod 40:22). Two stacks of six flat cakes of freshly baked unleavened bread were placed on the table each Sabbath (Lev 24:5-8), and small golden bowls of fresh grape juice were placed nearby (Exod 29:38-41).¹³

The mission of the church is to feed the people the “bread of heaven” (John 6:22–58), rightly dividing the word of truth (1 Pet 2:2; Heb 5:12-14; 2 Tim 2:15). It has been called to preach the gospel not after the wisdom of men, lest the cross of Christ be made of none effect. For it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe so that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Cor 1:21-29). But Paul warns that the time will come when people will not endure (*anecho*) or “hold up” sound doctrine but have itching (*knetho*) ears, that is, ears that like to be tickled and entertained rather than hear the truth, especially the truth about themselves (2 Tim 4:3). For the word of God can be as sharp as a two-edged sword, cutting into a man’s spirit, exposing his motives and intentions (Heb 4:12). Scripture is given not only to comfort and encourage but also to correct and if need be to wound and heal in order to bring about a life filled with good works (2 Tim 3:16, 17).

“Men who assume the responsibility of giving to the people the word from the mouth of God, make themselves accountable for the influence they exert on their hearers. If they are true men of God, they will know that the object of preaching is not to entertain. It is not merely to convey information, not to convince the intellect. The preaching of the word should appeal to the intellect and should impart knowledge, but it should do more than this. The minister’s utterances, to be effectual, must reach the hearts of his hearers.”¹⁴

What does it mean to preach the Word? First, it means that those who preach the word must believe just what it claims to be: The Word of the Living God. While the common writings of men and women might contain insight into truth—for Christ lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1:9) and

¹³The twelve flat cakes of bread represented the twelve tribes of Israel as they stood in unity before the Lord. There was one table with bread and wine even as the church partakes of one unleavened bread and unfermented wine at communion, recalling the broken body and shed blood of their Lord and Savior (1 Cor 11:23-26). Paul also reminds us that there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism as we are led by the gifts of the Holy Spirit to continue to come into and continue in the unity of the faith (Eph 4:1-15).

The “pierced” unleavened bread, together with the grape juice, not only represented the body and blood of Christ which He would give for the sins of the world (Isa 53:5; Zech 10:12; John 6:48-51) but, as with the manna, also represented spiritual food and drink (vs. 52-57). When those who heard Jesus say that He was the bread of heaven could not understand what He meant, He spoke to them plainly and said, “The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life” (v. 63).

¹⁴White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 152.

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the Holy Spirit guides into all truth (John 16:13)—there is a distinct difference between insight into truth and inspired truth (2 Pet 1:21). The church must be fully committed to Scripture before she can effectively carry out her mission. “It is written,” must be given with certainty, not with equivocation. It must not be clouded with the Cartesian doubt of rationalism which demands that nothing be accepted as truth about which doubt may be entertained. It is an affront to God to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit while we doubt and do not trust what the Holy Spirit has written. The Word of God must be believed and shared with conviction and in this sense become the incarnate word—the word made flesh in us.¹⁵

Second, to preach the word means to know the difference between Scripture speaking from within an ancient culture and being a product of that culture. If we say that Scripture was a product of its culture, then we have obligated ourselves to demythologize the Word of God to fit the modern mind and unintentionally set man above Scripture. There is no evidence that Christ changed the meaning of the Old Testament to fit the Hellenistic culture of His day. The Sadducees did this, but Jesus rebuked them for accepting only selected portions of the Old Testament and for not believing in the resurrection or in the power of God (Matt 22:23-33). Nowhere in the New Testament do we find Paul or any other inspired writer massaging the Old Testament to make it more acceptable to the thinking of the day. Though given in human language, the Bible is still the Word of God (2 Pet 1:19-21).

Third, to preach the word means to recognize that Scripture is both self-authenticating and sufficiently authoritative. The Word of God needs no additional help to give it authority. It is not Scripture plus tradition or Scripture and archaeology, as valuable as archaeology might be, nor is it Scripture and some additional theological authority. Even the gift of prophecy given by the Holy Spirit must be subject to Scripture. The true prophetic gift will never teach truth contrary to Scripture, for they both have the same Author. The authority of Scripture is as sufficiently authoritative for doctrine as Calvary is for salvation. It is not Christ plus works nor Christ plus religious rituals, nor is it Christ plus the transcendental search for meaning which so characterizes this Post-Self Age. It is Christ and Christ alone who saves us, *sola gratia*, by grace alone. Similarly, we know of this by Scripture alone—*sola scriptura*—so the Scriptures must be our authority.

¹⁵“Those who bring to the investigation of the word a spirit which it does not approve, will take away from the search a spirit which it has not imparted.” White, *Signs of the Times Articles*, Vol. 4 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, n.d., reprints from 1899 to 1915), 254; article, July 30, 1902.

“Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. . . . When the Word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God, or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubts; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct.” White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1908), 110.

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The church, especially the end-time church, must continue to draw its strength from Scripture in order to carry out its mission not only presently but especially in the crisis days ahead. The need to do so is dramatized by Christ's post-resurrection instruction to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. As these two sadly walked along, disturbed over the news that the tomb was empty and that Christ's body was most likely stolen, the Lord suddenly appeared by their side. When they shared their sadness with the stranger, He revived their faith by pointing them to Scripture, beginning at Moses and proceeding through the writings and on to the prophets. Their hearts were strangely warmed as He talked with them. And when He said the blessing for the evening meal, they recognized Him and knew it was the Lord. Then they ran back to Jerusalem to share the good news with the twelve (Luke 24:13-35). Commenting on this experience, Ellen White says, "Had He first made Himself known to them, their hearts would have been satisfied. In the fullness of their joy they would have hungered for nothing more. But it was necessary for them to understand the witness borne to Him by the types and prophecies of the Old Testament. Upon these their faith must be established."¹⁶

The mission of the church must not rest primarily on a celebrated relationship with Jesus Christ, as joyous as that is, but it must rest primarily on Scripture, according to the instruction of Christ Himself, and the joy in the risen Christ will follow. "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). This order of priority is biblical and is not to be confused with bibliolatry, worshiping Scripture in place of Christ. While it is possible to place Scripture above Christ (John 5:39), it is not bibliolatry to give the written word the priority given to it by Christ. This is especially important during the end-time crisis. When Satan appears as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14), the crisis-issue will be between two authorities, the authority of the impersonated Christ and the authority of what is written. As the impersonated Christ, Satan will claim that he has authority over Scripture and therefore has power to change it. The logic of his argument cannot be denied. But there will be those who remain faithful to what is written, for that is what Christ told them to do (Rev 12:17; 14:12). They will not be swept away by the joy they see in other believers worshiping the impersonated Christ, for they know that Christ would not change what through the Holy Spirit He has written.¹⁷ As He said, "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt 24:35).

The Altar of Incense. The second piece of furniture in the Holy Place is the Altar of Incense, which stood in front of the veil of the Most Holy Place (Exod 30:6), although its function was part of the Most Holy Place (Heb 9:1-5). In vision John saw a golden altar before the throne in heaven and an angel adding incense (*thumiamma*) or fragrance to the prayers of the saints (Rev 8:3, 4). Paul

¹⁶White, *The Desire of Ages*, 799.

¹⁷White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 624.

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says that the Holy Spirit takes our prayers and adds to them His own “groanings” (*stenagmos*), that is, His own sighs of love (Rom 8:26). Or, as Ellen White says, “Lift up your eyes toward the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ your Mediator stands before the Father to present your prayers, mingled with His own merit and spotless righteousness, as fragrant incense.”¹⁸ We have the assurance that “Every sincere prayer is heard in heaven. It may not be fluently expressed; but if the heart is in it, it will ascend to the sanctuary where Jesus ministers, and He will present it to the Father without one awkward, stammering word, beautiful and fragrant with the incense of His own perfection.”¹⁹

Prayer is an important part of the mission of the church. It was the united prayer of those in the upper room that prepared the way for the Holy Spirit to be poured out at Pentecost, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:1-47). “From the secret place of prayer came the power that shook the world in the Great Reformation.”²⁰ The end-time church is urged to ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain so the Lord will give it showers of rain, to every one grass in the field (Zech 10:1).

However, “As activity increases and men become successful in doing any work for God, there is danger of trusting to human plans and methods. There is tendency to pray less, and to have less faith. Like the disciples, we are in danger of losing sight of our dependence on God, and seeking to make a savior of our activity. . . . While we are to labor earnestly for the salvation of the lost, we must also take time for meditation, for prayer, and for the study of the word of God. Only the work accomplished with much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good.”²¹

The importance of prayer for the ongoing work of God is compellingly and painfully illustrated by the release of Peter from prison (Acts 12:1-19) and the non-release of Paul (Acts 25:1-12). Ellen White, commenting on the difference, says, “When Peter had been made a prisoner and condemned to death, the brethren had offered earnest prayer to God day and night for his deliverance. But no such interest was manifest in behalf of him who was looked upon as an apostate from Moses, a teacher of dangerous doctrines. . . . God had not in his providence ordained that Paul’s labors should so soon end; but he did not work a miracle to counteract the train of circumstances to which their own course gave rise.”²²

A praying church must not only concern itself with the needs of its local members but with the needs of the global church. Corporate prayer, being globally united in prayer, has power with God and is an important factor in the

¹⁸White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 241.

¹⁹White, *The Desire of Ages*, 667.

²⁰White, *The Great Controversy*, 210.

²¹White, *The Desire of Ages*, 362.

²²White, *Sketches From The Life of Paul* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, [1883] 1974), 226, 231.

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church's mission for completing the work God has given us to do. "It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, what which He would not bestow did we not thus ask."²³ It is an indictment of the church that it accomplished less because it prayed less.

The Seven-Branched Candlestick. As the priest entered the Holy Place, on his left toward the south and directly opposite from the Table of Shewbread, stood the Seven-branched Candlestick also called the Menorah (Exod 25:31, 32).

The lampstand with its seven lights filled with the holy oil also pointed to Christ. He came filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:16-19) to bring light to the world (John 1:9). The Menorah is never spoken of in the plural (Exod 37:17) for, although there were individual flames, there was only one light, and every true light that shines in the world will be part of and united with that one light.

In Revelation 1:12, John alludes to the Seven-branched Candlestick when he speaks of seeing Christ walking among seven lampstands. Although John's vision has no direct reference to the Menorah in the Holy Place, the allusion is quite striking. While Jesus tells John that the seven lampstands represent seven churches on earth (Rev 1:20), what John saw does remind us of the Holy Place in the earthly sanctuary. We must remember that the sanctuary was always central to the Hebrew mind, to the disciple's way of thinking, and whenever they could they would use sanctuary imagery to describe what they saw or to emphasize the importance of what they wanted to say.²⁴

However, the question we need to address is: How does the Seven-branched Candlestick and what it represents help clarify the mission of the church? If Christ is the Light of the world, which He is, and if the church is the physical presence of Christ in the world, then the church must also be filled with the Holy Spirit and bring the light of life to the world. Christ's mission was two-fold: (1) to glorify His Father by removing the dark shadow that Satan had cast between the world and the infinite love of God; and (2) to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to recover the sight of the blind and to set at liberty those who were spiritually bound.²⁵ His ministry was broad-based and all-inclusive. He came, not to be ministered unto but to minister (Mark 10:45).

It is the mission of the church to give the light to the world as it has been given the light. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your

²³White, *The Great Controversy*, 525.

²⁴Peter also uses sanctuary analogy when he speaks of God's people as a royal priesthood called to show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into light (1 Pet 2:10). Paul says that the church is the Temple of God (1 Cor 3:17); that those who are Jews are those who are such inwardly (Rom 2:28, 29); and that those who are Christ's are the sons of Abraham (Gal 3:29). The sanctuary analogy and the references to Israel are again obvious.

²⁵White, *Steps to Christ*, 11.

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good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt 5:14-16). He also alludes to the mission of the church when He says, “If therefore thine eye be single [healthy], thy whole body shall be full of light. . . . You cannot serve two masters” (Matt 6:22-24). The Greek word for single is *haplous*, meaning a spiritually healthy mind has singleness of purpose, not double-minded (*dip-suchos*) or unsettled (*akastastatos*) (James 1:8). The church’s singleness of purpose must be to take the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and tribe (Rev 14:6) within the two-fold mission of Christ, which is to glorify the Father by what we do and to minister to those physically and spiritually in need.

The second triad of the church’s faith is represented by the furnishings in the Holy Place and is an integral part of her mission statement. She is not only to lead men and women to Jesus Christ, but also to help those who are in Christ to become a well-functioning body of believers through which Christ can work (Eph 4:1-16). The symbolism in the Holy Place calls the church to a commitment to Scripture (1 Pet 5:1-4), to global prayer (Luke 11:1; 1 Tim 2:8; James 1:6), and to an all-inclusive ministry (Matt 25:31-46).

The Most Holy Place

The contents of the Ark in the Most Holy Place consisted of: (1) The Tables of the Law, (1) The Golden Pot of Manna, and (3) Aaron’s Rod.²⁶ The Most Holy Place ministry of Christ which began at the end of the 2300-year/day prophecy when the full meaning of the sanctuary would be restored (Dan 8:14) gives a dimension of responsibility to the end-time church which the church in previous ages did not fully have (Rev. 10:5-11). This added dimension of responsibility calls for an eschatological examination of the symbolism of these three items, all of which were placed inside the Ark (Heb. 9:4), to see what added degree of clarity they give to the church’s mission.

The Tables of the Law. The Ten Commandments are the only words in Scripture written by God (Exod 31:18; 32:16) unless we take into account Jesus’ writing in the sand (John 8:6-8) and the handwriting on the wall in Babylon (Dan 5). The first set of the tables of the law Moses threw to the ground and broke at the foot of Sinai (Exod 32:19). The second set, also written by the finger of God, was placed in the Ark, which was God’s intention for the original set (Exod 30:6; 34:1-4, 28; Heb 9:3, 4).

God’s law, in whatever form, has always existed; for without law there is no sin (Rom 5:13). Yet, sin began in heaven and spread to this world (Isa 14:12-14; John 8:44; Gen 3:1-15), so death reigned from Adam to Moses, showing that the law of God did exist before it was written at Sinai (Rom 5:12-14). God amplified the law by writing the Ten Commandments in order to help the Hebrews better understand the offensiveness of sin and to help them sense their need of God’s mercy and grace (v. 20).

²⁶ The meaning of the Ark with its mercy seat, the cherubim, and the Shekinah glory need to be dealt with in a later study.

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“Everything in nature, from the mote in the sunbeam to the worlds on high, is under law. And upon obedience to these laws the order and harmony of the natural world depend. So there are great principles of righteousness to control the life of all intelligent beings, and upon conformity to these principles the well-being of the universe depends.”²⁷ God is not only merciful and benevolent, but a God of impartial justice. He is a moral governor as well as a loving Father. In no kingdom or government are lawbreakers left to decide the importance of the law. But a law that is not enforced has no meaning.²⁸ “I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn from your transgressions, so iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away your transgressions, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek 18:30-32). “Let us hear the conclusion of the matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl 12:13).²⁹ As Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

The eschatological mission of the church must correspond to Christ’s Most Holy Place ministry (Rev 11:1, 2, 18-19). It is time for the church to seal the law among His disciples (Isa 8:16) and to magnify the law and make it honorable (Isa 42:21). Daniel prophesied there would be an attempt to change God’s law and to cast down the truth of the Sanctuary, but at the time of the end the truth of the Sanctuary would be cleansed and restored (Dan 7:25; 8:9-17). This restoration of Sanctuary truth is the special mission of the end-time church. The hour is late. His judgment has come (Rev 14:6, 7). He will have a people who unashamedly keep and proclaim the immutability of God’s commandments, of which the

²⁷Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1896] 1955), 48.

²⁸Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), 240-241.

²⁹Christ Himself gave Moses the Ten Commandments (Neh 9:13-15). While on earth as a man He kept them (Heb 4:15; John 15:10). If we love Christ and are His friends, we also will keep them (John 14:15; 15:14). If we say that we love God and do not keep His commandments, we lie (1 John 1:3-4; 5:3). While we are justified by faith, we do not use our liberty to make void the law but uphold it (Rom 3:28-31; 6:15; James 2:10-12). We do not keep the law in order to be saved, but because we are saved. There is no higher form of worship and honor we can bestow on our God than to obey Him; there is no better way to show God that we trust Him and believe what He says than to do it. Jesus said, “Whosoever heareth these saying of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man , who built his house upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not , will be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand” (Matt 7:24-27).

“The essence of God’s law is made visible by Jesus’ experience in Gethsemane and at Calvary. ‘Father, not my will, but thine be done’ (Matt. 26:39-42). ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit’ (Luke 23:46). The law of self-renunciation is the law of life for earth and heaven. It is a love that “seeketh not her own” and finds its source in the heart of God. Sin originated in self-seeking, breaking this law of love. To love means to give. It is the glory of our God to give, and this glory is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. The angels also find their joy in giving. There is no tree, shrub, leaf, ocean or fountain that does not pour out that element of life without which animal or man could live. Everything created serves, except the sinful heart of man. Yet nothing has a right to life unless it serves” (see White, *The Desire of Ages*, 19-21).

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Sabbath is the point at issue (vs. 8-12).³⁰ The gospel must not be preached without the law; love must not be preached without justice. In the final phase of the great controversy between good and evil, it is God's justice that is called into question more so than His love. If the gospel is denuded of justice it is no longer gospel. Without the law to point out sin the gospel has no meaning other than a good "man" died because he taught some unacceptable ethical truths. Without law there is no accountability for wrongdoing and sin has no opposition. God's love as well as His justice must be preached to the pew as well as to the public. For He who said, Do not dishonor my Sabbaths, said also, Do not commit adultery and Do not kill. Now if you commit adultery, but do not kill or break the Sabbath, you are still a transgressor of the law (James 2:11).

Loving obedience is above legalism. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The highest form of worship, the highest man can give to God is respect and obedience. "With what shall we come before the Lord and bow before the High God? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil? He has shown you what is good, what he requires of you, to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:6-8). The end-time call to worship in Revelation 14:6-8, is a call to grateful, respectful, and loving obedience.

The Golden Pot of Manna. There are multiple meanings that can be drawn from the giving of the manna, such as its daily appearance to provide for the needs of Israel, its disappearance by noon, its preservation over the Sabbath and its symbolism of Jesus as the bread of heaven (Exod 16:15-26; John 6:30-58). However, the question we need to pursue is: Does the manna also clarify the mission of the church?

First, the symbolism of the pot of manna adds no new dimension to our understanding of God's concern for the welfare of His people that He had not previously expressed (see Exod 16). The apostolic church not only adhered to the principles of the "health" message that was given to Israel but commissioned Paul and others to teach it to their new converts (Acts 15:19, 20). Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, admonished them to eat and drink only to the glory of God (1 Cor 6:19, 20; 10:31). John also expressed his concern for the health of believers in his letter to Gaius (3 John 2).

Daniel was aware of the effects of diet on his mental and physical health (Dan 1:8-20). Priests were forbidden to drink alcoholic beverages (Num 10:1-

³⁰"The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been,—just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents,—perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. But Christ was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, that is, His obedience is credited to our account as if we had never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21). But the love of the church for her Master must be tested. The Eden test was to trust God by believing and doing what He said; the end-time test is to trust God and to remain loyal to Jesus Christ in the face of the final onslaught of evil by believing and doing what He said (Rev. 13:11-17)."

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11), as were the parents of Samson (Judg 13:1-5) and also John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-15). Neither did Jesus provide alcoholic wine for the guests at the wedding in Cana and in the process contradict His own teaching, but turned water into fresh grape juice (*oinos*) (John 2:1-10).³¹ “Be assured that He did not make intoxicating wine on the occasion of His first miracle. . . . Christ never placed a glass of fermented liquor to His lips or to the lips of His disciples.”³² His purpose was to bring their taste into harmony with a healthful appetite.”³³

Second, God gave the “health” message not only to help His people physically but also to change their dispositions as a witness to others (Exod 16:4, 5, 22-28; Num 11:4-6, 32). Whenever the appetite of the Israelites was restricted, they complained. In Egypt their tastes had become perverted. It was God’s design to restore their appetite to a healthy state so the surrounding nations might be led to glorify Him because of the perfect health they saw in Israel.³⁴ Furthermore, His plan was to bring the “higher powers” of their minds into active exercise. That is why He gave them angels’ food from heaven.³⁵

Third, within the above context, the manna also symbolizes the concept of “wholeness” as expressed by Paul in 1 Thes 5:23, when he says, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are to sanctify (*hagiazo*), to consecrate, or set part our whole being, body, soul, and spirit, for the Lord Jesus Christ as He set aside His own being for us.³⁶

The concept of “wholeness” also negates the Platonic concept of dualism which sees the body and the soul as two distinct realities functioning best independently, each in its own sphere. This concept is totally contrary to Scripture. What a person does in the body impacts the soul. “God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl 12:14). Jesus said, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they will give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt 12:36). Paul is even more explicit when he says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath

³¹The Greek word *oinos* is translated by the LXX from the Hebrew word *yayin* and is used interchangeably for both new and fermented wine. See *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 7:299, 314. Ellen White says, “Paul advised Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach’s sake and oft infirmities, but he meant the unfermented juice of the grape. He did not advise Timothy to take what the Lord had prohibited.” *Signs of the Times Articles*, Vol. 4 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, n.d., reprints from 1899 to 1915), 4:58; article, September 6, 1899.

³²Ibid.

³³White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, [1877] 1969), 2:104.

³⁴White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Supplement, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953), 1:1102.

³⁵Ibid., 1:1112, 1113.

³⁶In 1847 and 1863, the Lord gave the early Advent believers the “health” message for our physical and spiritual well-being, not merely for longevity.

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done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10). We cannot with impunity live in sin such as adultery or incest without making an effort to change while with our mouths praising God for our growing relationship in Christ (1 Cor 5:1, 2; James 3:10-12). The mission of the end-time church must include ministering to the health and well-being of men and women in the context of “wholeness,” not simply for longevity but to bring their “higher powers” into active exercise and as a witness to glorify God.

Aaron’s Rod. The third item in the Ark was Aaron’s rod that had budded, blossomed and produced almonds in one night (Num 17:1-10). The issue that brought about God’s intervention was whether or not Moses and Aaron were Israel’s rightfully chosen leaders (Num 16:1-10).

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, professing to be defenders of the congregation’s rights, accused Moses and Aaron of taking more authority to themselves than God had intended and putting themselves above the congregation (Num 16:3). Korah and his friends had discussed this question so long that they really believed they were led by God. They had deceived themselves into thinking Moses and Aaron had appointed themselves. Moses sensed that the real reason behind their accusations was a desire to be the leaders and priests of Israel (vs. 9–10). But he did not dare to lay down his own leadership until God released him. So he decided to turn the matter over to God and plead for Him to be the judge. He would make no effort to vindicate himself.³⁷ The crisis erupted over who chose Israel’s leadership. It was then that God decided to step in (Num 17:5). The leaders of the twelve tribes were asked to bring their rods to Moses, who took them, together with Aaron’s rod, into the Most Holy Place. The next morning, Aaron’s dry stick had budded, bloomed, and produced fresh almonds (vs. 6-8). The issue was settled, and Aaron’s rod was placed in the Ark for future generations (Heb 9:4).

What clarity does this experience give to the eschatological mission of the church? The end-time question is: Do we believe there is a “remnant” church, a “last” church with no other to follow (Rev 12:17)? Scripture recognizes a special “last day” people who keep the commandments of God (Rev. 14:12) and call others out of Babylon (Rev 18:1-4). Paul admonishes God’s people to assemble or to group themselves together, and so much more as the day approaches (Heb. 10:23-25).

Do we have faith that God has established the Seventh-day Adventist church, provided the mechanism whereby leaders are chosen, and is still guiding the church through that general process today? And do we believe that God is speaking to the church today through a body of its representatives assembled in a General Conference from around the world? The answers to these questions are crucial for the church’s understanding of its global mission.

³⁷White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 395-399.

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The church needs to listen to what the Spirit is saying (Rev 3: 22). Notice these observations by Ellen White: “The world is filled with strife for the supremacy. The spirit of pulling away from fellow laborers, the spirit of disorganization, is in the very air we breathe.”³⁸ That is why “God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority.”³⁹ Also, “It has been a necessity to organize union conferences, that the General Conference shall not exercise dictation over all the separate conferences. The power vested in the Conference is not to be centered in one man, or two men, or six men; there is to be a council of men over the separate divisions.”⁴⁰

“Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this people, and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential, and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the Word of God!”⁴¹ Speaking for his mother, W. C. White said, “that God would not permit this denomination to so fully apostatize that there would be the coming out of another church.”⁴² “The work is under the control of the Author and Finisher of our faith. . . . He never leaves His work to chance. This work is a great and solemn one, and it is to go forward.”⁴³

As Ellen White reviewed our past history, she said, “Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”⁴⁴ And in 1892, Ellen White wrote from Australia: “There is no need to doubt, to be fearful that the work will not succeed. God is at the head of the work, and He will set everything in order. If matters need adjusting at the head of the work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong. Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port.”⁴⁵

The Most Holy Place provides the third triad of faith for the church’s mission statement and derives this eschatological component from Christ’s end-time ministry, symbolized by the tables of the law, the manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded.

³⁸White, *Testimonies for the Church*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1909] 1948), 9:257.

³⁹Ibid., 261.

⁴⁰White, *Last Day Events*, 55.

⁴¹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:257, 258.

⁴²White, *Last Day Events*, 57.

⁴³White, *Selected Messages*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 2:228.

⁴⁴White, *Life Sketches of Ellen White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 196.

⁴⁵White, *Selected Messages*, 2:390.

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Conclusion

In summary, the church's mission statement correlates with the furnishings of the Old Testament sanctuary in the Courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. The proclamation of the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ is the first triad of faith to be written in the church's mission statement; the Word of God as the bread of life, the incense of prayer, and the light of service to others which nurtures and strengthens the church is the next triad; and the final triad to be included is the church's eschatological mission to call the world to obedience, to wholeness for God, and to identify with God's remnant, uniquely guided by the Holy Spirit.

While the Old Testament sanctuary enlarges and gives eschatological clarity to the mission of the church, it is understood that the church's witness is rooted in a loving Savior—whose body the church is—embracing all peoples in arms of divine love.