

Messiah's Mansion Overview

Stephen Pitcher

The Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches that the work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary is as integral to salvation as his work on the cross. Historically, they have been careful to explain that there are at least two phases to the atonement of Jesus Christ.: First, his death on the cross secured the possibility of salvation for some. Second, his work in the heavenly sanctuary, particularly beginning on October 22, 1844 when he supposedly moved into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, makes his work on the cross available to believers as they appropriate the results of his cross-work into their lives and begin to live righteously. Since the 1950's they have modified the terms they use to make these things appear biblically sound.

In Adventism, righteousness by faith means that one has faith in the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, and lives according to the Old Testament law, particularly the fourth of the ten commandments. At the end of time, believers will have to live in the sight of God without Christ's mediation. These believers will vindicate God, proving to the “watching universe” that he has been correct in his method of dealing with sin and sinners.

This teaching is an important part of the basic teachings of the SDA church. Contained in the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church is number 24 as follows:

24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary:

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Heb. 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Lev. 16; Rev. 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12.)

At Messiah's Mansion, it will be stated that there is a heavenly sanctuary. This heavenly sanctuary is said to be exactly like the earthly one. It is on the fact that the two are said to be exact representations of each other that much of the SDA theology is built. On the fact of their apparent similarity, SDAs build a speculative theology of the work of Jesus as a continuation of the work of the Levitical priests.

Jesus is said to be ministering in the heavenly sanctuary. This is what scripture teaches. The SDA understanding of the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary is based on the Levitical system. The book of Hebrews is clear that Jesus is not a priest after the order of Aaron (Levitical,) but after Melchizedek.

When Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the earthly temple was torn, indicating a new way into the presence of God through the person of Jesus Christ. The veil of the temple represented his flesh which was “torn” for us, spilling his blood, and through which we now have access directly to the Father.

Any attempts to explain the heavenly ministry of Christ based on the Levitical system fails to understand what God revealed in the book of Hebrews, that Jesus is superior to all things former, and his atonement was a once-for-all accomplishment on the cross 2,000 years ago. There is no continuation of the act of atonement.

Messiah's Mansion Stations

When you attend the 75 minute presentation at Messiah's Mansion, you will be led through five stations within the sanctuary. At each of these stations a significant article will be addressed with an explanation as to its role in the ancient sanctuary. Each item was important in the ancient Israelite sanctuary service, and each had a fulfillment in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The stations identified in Messiah's Mansion are as follows:

Station 1 is an overview of the layout of the ancient Tabernacle.

Station 2 is in the courtyard. At this point the tour guide will explain the Altar of Sacrifice and the Laver.

Station 3 is in the Holy Place. Here three items will be explained: the Table of Shewbread, the Altar of Incense and the Candlesticks.

It may be explained that it is in the Holy Place where the priest mediates between the Lord and his people. Jesus, it may be said, performed his work of mediation in this place from the time of his ascension until October 21, 1843. On the following day, according to official SDA teaching, Jesus went from this place to the Most Holy Place where he began a work called the Investigative Judgment.

Station 4 is in the Most Holy Place, the inner compartment of the sanctuary. Here, the tour guide will point out the Ark of the Covenant.

It is at this point that the tour guide may identify the contents of the Ark. Along with Aaron's staff it will be stated that the Law of God (the Ten Commandments) is contained in the Ark.

The Ark has been the source of much speculation throughout history. Most recently, Hollywood has banked on this item with the 1981 hit, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. The SDA Church has also banked heavily on this item from the sanctuary. It is at this point that the SDA Church has relied on the presence of the Ten Commandments in the Ark for a primary teaching: the seventh-day Sabbath of the Old Testament.

As is stated, the Ark is the “most important element in the tabernacle.” For SDAs, it is the most important because of the presence of the fourth commandment, to remember and keep holy the seventh day of the week. If one doubts or discounts the importance of the fourth commandment to SDAs, simply remember the name, Seventh-day Adventist, and one will be reminded of the primacy of the day of worship in the theology of this church.

A very important teaching of the SDA Church is of the beginning of the investigative work of Christ in the Most Holy Place, where he moved into on October 22, 1844. Known as the Investigative Judgment (IJ), or pre-Advent Judgment, this is a doctrine not to be found in any other organization in the history of the Christian church.

When William Miller's predictions did not come true about the return of Jesus on Oct. 22, 1844, some of his mistaken followers re-interpreted the event into what is now known as the IJ. This was the foundational doctrine of what would become the SDA Church.

At station 5, the tour will conclude with some statements about Jesus' ministry for us in the heavenly sanctuary. This will be made to sound very Biblical. Much of it is. The sole intent of this Biblical foundation is to lay the groundwork for further study into the specific doctrines of the SDA Church.

Conclusion

Messiah's Mansion is a tool used by some Seventh-day Adventist students from the SDA Academy in Harrah, Oklahoma, a boarding High School, to successfully introduce the Seventh-day Adventist Church to people all over the United States. Many of those attending, already familiar with Jesus and the New Testament, are unprepared for the subtle introduction to Adventism presented in Messiah's Mansion. A tool to not only evangelize unbelievers, but to also convert Christians to Seventh-day Adventism, Messiah's Mansion is one that must be looked at carefully and scrutinized Biblically.

A statement from the website of the Oklahoma Academy is as follows:

Located 20 miles east of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Academy (OA) exists to provide today's teenagers with a quality, Christian education. We are committed to teaching our students the character traits called for by the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy while equipping them to meet the challenges of the world. We are a unique boarding high school, operated by Seventh-Day Adventists. In all matters, our primary objective is to

fully prepare our students to participate in finishing the work that God has called our church to do and to challenge them with an education that will prepare them for the “race of a lifetime”. (Hebrews 12:1)

We believe that the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are given by divine inspiration so that we can truly understand who God is and more fully comprehend His perfect plan in our lives. We believe that as an instructive institution, the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy should form the foundational principles of our educational philosophy. We believe that Jesus is coming again soon and our mission should be to prepare ourselves and others to meet Him.

From this statement is seen that not only the Bible, but the “Spirit of Prophecy” is believed to have been given by divine inspiration. No distinction is made between the inspiration given to the Bible and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. The term “Spirit of Prophecy” in the SDA church specifically refers to the writings of Ellen G. White, the churches “messenger of God.”

Starting, as we have, with the Fundamental Belief number 24 of the SDA Church, one can begin to see the not-so-subtle truth of where Messiah's Mansion can lead an unsuspecting attendee.

As the Lord has commanded us through Paul, “Examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good.” (First Thess. 5:21, NASB)

May you examine these things carefully searching the scriptures, particularly the book of Hebrews in the New Testament, to see if these things are so.