

“THE PATHWAY INTO THE HOLY PLACES” (HEB 9:8): DOES IT END AT THE CROSS?¹

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Heb 9:8 is a crucial verse for understanding Christ’s work as High Priest. Often, however, it has been studied in isolation from the larger message of the book which portrays the Christian life as a journey along a pathway opened up by Jesus himself who now stands in the presence of God as *the* representative human being. This “pathway into the holy places” begins at the cross, extends “within the veil” into the heavenly sanctuary, and ends in the heavenly city. It reflects a contrast not between the holy and most holy places of the wilderness sanctuary but between the tabernacles of the old and new covenants. The final verses of the chapter clarify in a relative way the time of the judgment, associating it with the second advent of Christ rather than with his sacrifice.

Key Words: holy places, sanctuary, *ta hagia*, veil, judgment, forerunner, *archēgos*, Day of Atonement, most holy place, Heb 9, pilgrimage, second advent

1. Introduction

Just one year and two months after turning from atheism to faith in Jesus Christ and being baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I was in my second year at Pacific Union College, sitting in the Irwin Hall Chapel. The air was electric with excitement as we waited to hear what Desmond Ford would say. The address was widely reported by the news media and its ripples were felt worldwide. I remember one sentence in particular very well: “In 1844, the Lord drew the attention of this people to the torn veil on Calvary.” When Dr. Ford finished speaking, there was enthusiastic applause and a standing ovation—not necessarily because the audience agreed with what he said, though many did, but because here was a man with *courage* to say what he really believed.

Ford made a number of assertions in that speech which we do not have time to discuss in detail. Some of the main points related to our study of Hebrews are: (1) Jesus’ death on the cross, by putting away sin, was a *fin-*

¹ This article is a slightly edited version of an inaugural professorial lecture delivered at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies on January 28, 2008. The oral nature of the lecture has been largely preserved.

ished and complete atonement, fulfilling both the sacrificial and priestly aspects of that which took place in the typical service on the Day of Atonement. (2) At his ascension, Jesus entered the most holy place and sits enthroned at the right hand of the Father. (3) The world was judged at the cross and the destiny of every person is settled based *solely* on their acceptance of Christ's sacrifice and justification. (4) The judgment that Adventists understand to have begun in 1844, actually began at the cross.²

Being a new Christian at the time, I resolved that if I had been deceived I wanted to know it. Thus began my journey of reinvestigation. My study focused on the book of Hebrews, because it seemed to me that this was where Ford's strongest arguments were found.³ Whenever we examine a particular view, it is important for us to focus on the weightiest arguments and the strongest evidence rather than picking away at the edges. It does not take much effort to assail someone's weak points. But if the strongest reasons given are shown to be false, then something valuable and important has been learned. What I discovered in this process was that Hebrews, together with the book of Revelation, has more relevance for Seventh-day Adventists than any other part of the NT. I am convinced that there is very solid evidence for the Adventist doctrine of the sanctuary. My purpose here is not to refute the various points which Desmond Ford sought to establish. Many studies published over the past 25 years or so have attempted to do that, including a very helpful collection of scholarly essays on the book of Hebrews itself.⁴ Rather, I would like to get at what seems to me to be the

² The seminal ideas expressed on this occasion are enlarged upon in Desmond Ford, "Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment" (unpublished manuscript, Leslie Hardinge Library, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, 1980).

³ Ford himself indicates this by placing Hebrews first among the biblical material he considers. "The only book of the New Testament which discusses the meaning of the Day of Atonement, the significance of the first apartment ministry, and the fulfillment of the cleansing of the sanctuary is Hebrews. Chapter 9 deals with all three topics, but in no place gives the traditional Adventist position on these points" (*ibid.*, 7).

⁴ Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 7; Silver Spring, Md: Biblical Research Institute, 1989). See also Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1981, 1989 [abridged, ed. Frank B. Holbrook]); George E. Rice, "Hebrews 6:19: Analysis of Some Assumptions Concerning *Katapetasma*," *AUSS* 25 (1987): 65-71; Roy E. Gane, "Re-Opening *Katapetasma* ('Veil') in Hebrews 6:19," *AUSS* 38 (2000): 5-8; Richard M. Davidson, "Christ's Entry 'Within the Veil' in Hebrews 6:19-20: The Old Testament Background," *AUSS* 39 (2001): 175-90; *idem*, "Inauguration or Day of Atonement? A Response to Norman Young's 'Old Testament Background to Hebrews 6:19-20 Revisited,'" *AUSS* 40 (2002): 69-88; Carl P. Cosaert, "The Use of ἄγιος for the Sanctuary in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Philo, and Josephus," *AUSS* 42 (2004): 91-103; Daniel M. Gurtner, "Καταπέτασμα:

heart of the matter, the reference to the sanctuary in Heb 9:8. This verse is, in some respects, the crux of the whole chapter,⁵ but all too often it has been studied in isolation from the larger message of Hebrews which portrays the Christian life as a journey from earth to heaven, the pathway for which has already been blazed by Jesus himself. To begin with, then, after some general remarks about how the book has been interpreted, I would like to sketch in broad strokes the larger message of Hebrews, which is crucial for the proper understanding of this challenging verse. Finally, I hope to show how this larger perspective has particular relevance for our time.

2. Pathway or Pilgrimage?

The book of Hebrews makes for interesting reading as it is actually an ancient sermon, providing us a window into early Christian worship.⁶ It is also unique in that it provides the most detailed explanation in the NT of the relation between the old and new covenants/testaments.⁷ Consequently it is also a touchstone for theology, because how one interprets Hebrews shows clearly how the rest of the NT will be understood. Catholic and Protestant interpreters have tended to read the book quite differently as a result of their divergent understanding of the gospel and the relation between the Old and New Testaments.⁸ Adventist interpreters, for their part, have tended to see in Hebrews evidence for a strong link between the testaments on the basis of typology, with OT shadows or types finding fulfillment in their NT counterparts. Over the years, occasional reference has been made to a motif of wandering or pilgrimage in Hebrews.⁹ But while this charac-

Lexicographical and Etymological Considerations on the Biblical 'Veil,'" *AUSS* 42 (2004): 105–11.

- ⁵ Similarly Felix H. Cortez, "From the Holy to the Most Holy Place: The Period of Hebrews 9:6-10 and the Day of Atonement as a Metaphor of Transition," *JBL* 125 (2006): 527–47, here 537.
- ⁶ The book is a self-described "word of exhortation" (Heb 13:22). The same expression in Greek is used of Paul's sermon to the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:55). Further, see F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), xlvi; Harold W. Attridge, "Paranesis in a Homily (λόγος παρακλήσεως): The Possible Location of, and Socialization in, the 'Epistle to the Hebrews,'" *Semeia* 50 (1990): 210–26.
- ⁷ Apart from Hebrews, only 2 Cor 3 approaches the issue in some detail but in a far briefer way.
- ⁸ Cf. John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 7: "'Blood' has meant the saving death of Christ or the Real Presence in the eucharist—or else such terms were treated Platonically, as material metaphors for spiritual realities, to be swiftly transcended."
- ⁹ Ernst Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk* (FRLANT 55; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1938); C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The*

terization is not completely unfair, the author of Hebrews envisages something better than this for the Christian.

A more accurate and in some ways more helpful description of the Christian journey is as a pathway rather than a pilgrimage. Not only is there a clearly defined beginning and ending to this journey, but the pathway itself has been clearly marked out and traveled ahead of us by Jesus himself. Unlike Israel in the wilderness, Jesus has succeeded in this journey. Whereas Matthew describes Jesus as the embodiment of Israel and succeeding where Israel failed, Hebrews has a more universal perspective: Jesus has taken on humanity and redeemed Everyman's failure. The importance of the humanity of Jesus for the theology of the book has recently been highlighted by Steve Motyer:

... Hebrews makes Jesus' humanity, his sharing of our flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14), a permanent feature of his identity, for—as we will see—he does not leave it behind when he enters the Most Holy Place as our 'forerunner'. As High Priest he is one of us (Heb. 5:1, etc). For the author of Hebrews, a permanent change has been introduced into God, signaled by the 'sitting' of the Son at the right hand of the majesty on high (1:3, etc.); and we may summarise that change by saying that, as a result of the incarnation, flesh and blood have been taken into deity.¹⁰

As High Priest, Jesus can fully represent us as the perfect human being: "It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer [ἀρχηγός] of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb 2:10). The word ἀρχηγός is used in the Septuagint for the chiefs of Israel (Exod 6:14; Num 10:4), including captains of the army (2 Chr 23:14). It also refers to the leaders sent to spy out the land of Canaan (Num 13:2–3) and is used of a leader whom Israel could follow back to Egypt (Num 14:4). In Hebrews, ἀρχηγός refers to someone setting the prime or archetypical example.¹¹ Jesus *learned* obedience. Jesus *prayed* for deliverance (5:7–8). Jesus was *tempted* in every way as we are (4:15). Jesus did everything human beings are expected to do and more, and he did it *without sinning*. He has pioneered a pathway for humanity and opened up a way that did not exist before.

Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology (ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 363–93; William G. Johnsson, "The Pilgrimage Motif in the Book of Hebrews," *JBL* 97 (1978): 239–51; P. J. Arowele, "The Pilgrim People of God (an African's Reflections on the Motif of Sojourn in the Epistle to the Hebrews)," *AJT* 4 (1990): 438–55.

¹⁰ Steve Motyer, "'Not apart from us' (Hebrews 11:40): Physical Community in the Letter to the Hebrews," *EvQ* 77 (2005): 235–47, here 238.

¹¹ Cf. *MM*, s.v. "ἀρχηγός," 81: "founder," "leader," used also of the high priest of Mithras (ἱερέων ἀρχηγού).

It is only after showing how Jesus has cleared the pathway in chapter two that Israel's failure to follow their leader is discussed in Heb 3–4. Neither Moses nor even Joshua, the OT Ἰησοῦς, were able to give the rest God intended because of Israel's unbelief (3:19; 4:2). The significance of Israel's wilderness journey for the larger message of Hebrews becomes clearer in Heb 8–10. Rather than making reference to the Jerusalem temple, our attention is directed back to the wilderness tabernacle. *Not* because the temple had already been destroyed—in fact, we see plenty of hints to the contrary¹²—rather the author is worried at the prospect of Israel's experience being repeated in the nascent Christian church. Hebrews draws our attention to the connection between this wilderness tabernacle and the heavenly original after which the earthly was patterned (8:5) in order for us to see that pathway more clearly, which becomes a major focus in Heb 9.

3. The Pathway into the Holy Places

It is at this point of the book that the picture gets more complicated.¹³ After a discussion of the two apartments of the earthly sanctuary and their associated furniture in Heb 9:1–5, the writer describes the ministry of each apartment, culminating with the comment in v. 9 that the sanctuary rituals are a metaphor or "parable." How the metaphor is to be understood depends on the interpretation of the preceding verse. Unfortunately, the Greek text of Heb 9:8 is ambiguous:

τοῦτο δηλοῦντος τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου, μήπω πεφανερῶσθαι τὴν τῶν ἁγίων ὁδὸν ἐπὶ τῆς πρώτης σκηνῆς ἐχούσης στάσιν,

Notice two translations of this verse which reflect the two ways it has been understood:

¹² The present tense is used in describing what appear to be ongoing temple rituals (e.g. 9:6, 8, 22; 10:4, 8, 11; 13:11). Also the writer remarks that these old covenant rituals are "close to disappearing" ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ (8:13). See now Peter Walker, "A Place for Hebrews? Contexts for a First-Century Sermon," in *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting: Essays on Context and Background in Honour of B. W. Winter on His 65th Birthday* (ed. P. J. Williams et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 231–49, esp. 232: "Most English-speaking scholars may now lean towards a date before AD 70."

¹³ Heb 9:6–10 constitutes one long sentence known as a "period" (see n. 5 above).

Horizontal Pathway	Vertical Pathway
"The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place [τὸ ἅγιον] had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing" (NIV).	"By this the Holy Spirit signifies that so long as the earlier tent still stands, the way into the sanctuary [τὸ ἅγιον] remains unrevealed" (NEB).
<i>Spatial metaphor</i> πρώτη = first or <i>outer</i> tabernacle	<i>Temporal metaphor</i> πρώτη = <i>earlier</i> tabernacle
<i>Temporal meaning</i> Two <i>eras</i> symbolized: Holy place = OT Most holy place = NT At his ascension, Jesus began a ministry of forgiveness and judgment symbolized by the most holy place	<i>Spatial meaning</i> Two <i>places</i> symbolized: Earlier tent = Earthly sanctuary τὸ ἅγιον = Heavenly sanctuary At his ascension, Jesus began a ministry of forgiveness symbolized by both the holy place and the most holy place

Table 1: Divergent Interpretations of Heb 9:8

In the first translation, a spatial metaphor is given a temporal meaning while in the second a temporal metaphor is given a spatial meaning. Either the holy place blocks the way into the most holy place (NIV) or the earthly sanctuary blocks the way into the heavenly sanctuary (NEB). Which option we choose makes a huge difference theologically.¹⁴ Those favoring the first option, the horizontal pathway, construe v. 8 to mean that the way into the second apartment (i.e., the "yearly" Day of Atonement ministry) is hindered while the first apartment ("daily" ministry) has validity. According to this view, two eras are being symbolized: the holy place stands metaphorically for all of the old covenant ceremonies, while the most holy place stands for the new covenant ministry of Christ symbolized by the Day of Atonement.¹⁵ We will leave aside for the moment the questionable logic that

¹⁴ Ford, "Daniel 8:14," 184, wants to have it both ways: even if the first tabernacle stands for the "earthly sanctuary," still the second tabernacle can only refer to the second apartment ministry.

¹⁵ E.g., Ford, "Daniel 8:14," 167: "The first apartment stands for the era before the cross, but the second apartment for the era after the cross." James Moffatt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1948), 118; George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews: Translation, Comment and Conclusions* (AB 36; Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 147-48; Norman H. Young, "The Gospel according to Hebrews 9," *NTS* 27 (1981): 198-210; Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 240; Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews* (NIBC 14; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990), 130; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* (WBC 47B; Dallas: Word, 1991), 223; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 398.

the Day of Atonement is implicated with the rest of the old covenant ceremonies as meaningless, and yet somehow still epitomizes Christ's heavenly ministry. Those favoring the second option, the vertical pathway, interpret v. 8 to mean that the way into the heavenly sanctuary (heavenly ministry) is hindered while the earthly sanctuary (earthly ministry) has validity.¹⁶ In short, what ministry did Jesus inaugurate at his ascension? Is it a ministry symbolized specifically by the most holy place or a ministry symbolized by both apartments?

Choosing between these two options rests on the interpretation of several Greek words: ἅγια, σκηνή, and πρώτη. Unfortunately, the meaning of each of these words is ambiguous in this context.

Ἄγια refers to the holy place in v. 2, but to the sanctuary as a whole in vv. 24–25.¹⁷ In 9:8, the NIV translates it "the Most Holy Place" while the NEB translates it "the sanctuary." Similarly, σκηνή could mean either the holy place or the sanctuary as a whole. How these two words are understood really hinges on the translation of the third Greek word. Πρώτη "first" can be understood either spatially ("outer") or temporally ("earlier").

It is not necessary to discuss this passage in detail here. As I have already mentioned, a number of studies have been published over the years dealing with such questions. It will be enough to summarize some of their key findings as it relates to Heb 9 and, more particularly, to see how this chapter connects with the larger message of the book as I have outlined it so far.

In the Greek Septuagint and other Jewish literature, both σκηνή and ἅγια consistently refer to the sanctuary *as a whole*.¹⁸ So the natural way to

¹⁶ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 194–95; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 323; Richard M. Davidson, "Typology in the Book of Hebrews," in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (ed. Frank B. Holbrook; Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 7; Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 121–86, and specifically 180; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 438; George R. Knight, *Exploring Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary* (Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 2003), 155. Some find both spatial and temporal interpretations to be compatible with 9:8 (Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* [NTL; Louisville: John Knox, 2006], 224–25; cf. Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* [7 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald, 1957], 7:451).

¹⁷ Use of ἅγια in v. 25, as in v. 24, refers to the entire sanctuary (see Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 482), though some read ἅγια more restrictively as a reference to the most holy place (e.g., Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 383, and n. 38; Hagner, *Hebrews*, 148; Lane, *Hebrews* 9–13, 229).

¹⁸ On the meaning of σκηνή, see C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (2 vols.; EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1952–1953), 2:253–54; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 194–95; Knight, *Exploring Hebrews*, 154–55. That the consistent Jewish usage of ἅγια is for the sanctuary as a whole, see A. P.

understand v. 8 is as a reference to the *earthly* sanctuary in contrast to the *heavenly* sanctuary, rather than as a contrast between the two apartments. Study of the context makes the case for this even stronger. The main point of Heb 9 is that the ministry of Christ in heaven is superior not only to the daily service in the first apartment but to the yearly service of the Day of Atonement as well. This is evident already in 8:13–9:1 where the first covenant, with its “sanctuary of this world” (τὸ ... ἅγιον κοσμικόν), is “obsolete, growing old, and soon to disappear.” By contrast, Christ is the High Priest of “a greater and more perfect tabernacle [σκηνή], that is, not of this creation” (9:11). Clearly, the contrast of covenants in chapter 8 leads smoothly to a contrast in chapter 9 of earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. Covenant and sanctuary are inextricably related in these chapters. So it should not be surprising that there is also a contrast of earthly and heavenly ministries. As Buchanan points out: “In contrast to the priests who entered the holy continually [9:6], and the high priest, who entered the holy of holies every Day of Atonement [ἅπαξ τοῦ ἑνιαυτοῦ, 9:7], Christ entered ‘once for all’ [ἑφάπαξ, 9:12].”¹⁹

Hebrews goes still further by way of contrast with the Day of Atonement. About the sacrifices, it mentions specifically that it was “not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood” that Christ entered the holy places (τὰ ἅγια) in heaven once for all (9:12). Furthermore, the first apartment service did not prevent the second apartment service from happening. On the contrary, the Day of Atonement included rituals connected with the first apartment and even the outer court. It is an unfortunate misconception that the only part of the sanctuary of importance on the Day of Atonement was the most holy place.²⁰ Blood was sprinkled in both apartments in order to fulfill the Day of Atonement ritual. In addition, the morning and evening burnt offering, the trimming of the lamps, and the offering of incense—all of which were aspects of the daily service—also took place on the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement did not end the daily service and could not end it. According to Hebrews, only Christ’s obedience to the will of God in his once for all sacrifice did that (10:9; cf. Dan 9:27). But as long as the temple continued to dominate the life of Israel, the significance of Jesus’ death on the cross and his entrance into the “greater and more per-

Salom, “*Ta Hagia* in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *AUSS* 5 (1967): 59–70, esp. 60; Gerhard F. Hasel, “Christ’s Atoning Ministry in Heaven,” *Ministry* (January 1976): 21c; Davidson, “Christ’s Entry ‘Within the Veil’ in Hebrews 6:19–20,” 180–81; Cosaert, “Use of ἅγιος for the Sanctuary.”

¹⁹ Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 148 (brackets mine).

²⁰ This seems implicit in Ford, “Daniel 8:14,” 168: “The fact that the high priest entered *ta hagia* yearly with blood (verse 25) makes it clear that *ta hagia* is that innermost sanctuary only open for entrance on the Day of Atonement.”

fect tabernacle" (9:11) was obscured. That is why Heb 9:9 describes the metaphor as being "for the *present* time," apt for this time prior to the destruction of the temple in AD 70, when earthly sacrifices and priestly mediation were rivaling the better sacrifice and more excellent ministry of Christ.²¹

Two other passages are very important in this connection: 6:19–20 and 10:19–20. In the first, Jesus is called our "forerunner" (πρόδρομος), who has entered "within the veil." In the second, Christians are urged to follow the pathway that Christ has newly opened (ἐνεκαίνισεν) "through the veil." Differences of opinion exist as to which veil is meant in these passages.²² The word καταπέτασμα is used in the Septuagint for all three curtains of the wilderness sanctuary: the one hanging at the entrance to the outer court, the veil at the entrance to the tabernacle itself, and the veil separating the holy and most holy places.²³ From what has already been said about the contrast between earthly and heavenly sanctuaries in Heb 9, there is no reason to be more specific than Hebrews itself is.²⁴ Clearly, the main point is that this "veil" (whichever one is intended) is no longer a barrier because Christ has made a pathway for us *through* it, into the heavenly sanctuary, into the very "presence of God" (9:24), so that we may "approach the throne of grace" (4:16). According to 10:20, it is through Christ's flesh that we are enabled to enter. Because Jesus has taken on humanity and because he has taken it with him *there*, into the holy places in heaven, we are able to follow him there.

And it is with this idea more than any other that Hebrews shows how *unlike* the Day of Atonement the work of Jesus really is. Only the high priest could enter the sanctuary on that day. The pathway was forbidden to everyone else. But Jesus has made the pathway open to all willing to follow him there. As one commentator has observed, "The Aaronic high priest did not enter into the Holy of Holies as a forerunner, but only as the people's representative. He entered a place where the one in whose behalf he minis-

²¹ Cf. n. 12 above.

²² Most consider it a reference to the inner veil: Ford, "Daniel 8:14," 166; Norman H. Young, "Where Jesus Has Gone as a Forerunner on Our Behalf (Hebrews 6:20)," *AUSS* 39 (2001): 165–73; Davidson, "Inauguration or Day of Atonement?," 69; Gane, "Re-Opening *Katapetasma* ('Veil') in Hebrews 6:19." Others think the veil at the entrance to the tabernacle is meant (Rice, "Hebrews 6:19").

²³ William G. Johnsson, "Day of Atonement Allusions," in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (ed. Frank B. Holbrook; Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 7; Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 105–20, esp. 111.

²⁴ The possibility that it refers to the outer or first veil, however, should not be excluded since, of the three references to καταπέτασμα in Hebrews, only 9:3 specifies the second veil.

tered, could not follow him. He entered ... in the stead of the believer, not as one cutting a pioneer path for him."²⁵

4. Where Does the Pathway End?

So where does the pathway end? While it may seem obvious at this point, it is helpful to emphasize that the goal of the journey in Hebrews is pointed *upward* and *forward* rather than backward. At the cross, Jesus made the all-sufficient, perfectly efficacious sacrifice. At the cross, he made purification for sins (1:3), he set aside sin by the sacrifice of himself (9:26). The cross is the great turning point at "the consummation of the ages." But it is not the end of the journey. It is where the journey *begins*. If we begin at the end and end at the beginning where have we gone? ... Nowhere. That is not a journey. But Hebrews describes a very real journey. A journey *upward* to the heavenly sanctuary, now, by faith (10:22), and *forward* to the heavenly city, "in a little while" (11:37).

In terms of a pathway, having the right destination is crucial. I was reminded of this on a visit to Germany for a conference a few years ago. I flew into Stuttgart, proceeded to the train station, and ordered a ticket for my destination. I told the agent, "Ich möchte eine Zugkarte nach Rottenburg kaufen." He paused for a moment, seeming a little confused, but finally gave me the ticket and took my money. I boarded the train and settled in for a comfortable journey to my destination. Unfortunately, it was not until the train began moving that I looked at my ticket. When I did, I realized that I had made a dreadful mistake. Printed clearly on the ticket was my destination: Rothenburg *ob der Tauber*. But I wanted to go to Rottenburg *am Neckar*! Obviously, the ticket agent sized me up as a foreigner and decided I wanted to visit the city more well-known to tourists. Thanks to German efficiency, the conductor with his handheld computer was able to reroute me quickly so I did not lose much time. Knowing the place where the pathway ends is crucially important.

Hebrews points us forward from the cross and upward to the throne of grace. The cross is the indispensable beginning. But it is still and forever *the beginning*. We are to look to Jesus who *endured* the cross, not to Jesus on the cross because he is no longer there. Sometimes as Christians we are like the women who went to Jesus' tomb. They were looking for the right person but they were looking in the wrong place. They were told, "*He is not here.... But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you*" (Mark 16:6-7). For the first disci-

²⁵ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies* (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 2:125.

ples also, the cross and the empty tomb were but the beginning of the journey. Their attention also was directed forward and upward.

In a similar way, the horizon of Hebrews extends beyond the earth to heaven and beyond Jerusalem to the heavenly city and heavenly country. To some extent, this is clear already in Heb 9. From the author's first-century perspective, Jesus' work in the heavenly sanctuary is *not yet* about judgment. While Hebrews is not precise about the time of the judgment, it does describe it in a relative way.²⁶ Heb 9:22 implies a sacrifice in its reference to the application of the blood to effect forgiveness.²⁷ Succeeding verses introduced by ἀνάγκη οὖν establish a typological correspondence between the earthly and the heavenly, including allusions to the Day of Atonement, the judgment, and the Second Advent in that order (vv. 23, 27–28).²⁸

In other words, the judgment of human beings did not take place at the cross but will happen in connection with the second coming of Christ. By the way, Heb 9:28 is the only verse in the NT which calls Christ's coming a "second" coming. Order is important. The first advent should not be confused with the second advent. Nor should the judgment be confused with the cross, though the NT does talk about a judgment at the cross: it was a judgment of "this world" in the sense of a judgment on sin, and a judgment of the "prince of this world" because he is the author of sin (John 12:31). The cross forever planted a different kingdom here than the one Satan has tried to set up. But the first advent does not concern the judgment of human beings (John 12:47–48). The first advent was a judgment on sin. That is why, according to Heb 9:27–28, the second advent is *not* about sin but about judg-

²⁶ Some such refinement is needed along these lines in William G. Johnsson, "Defilement/Purification and Hebrews 9:23," in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (ed. Frank B. Holbrook; Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 7; Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 79–103, esp. 98–99.

²⁷ The word, αἱματεκχυσία, has frequently been translated "shedding of blood" but more likely means "pouring of blood," referring to the pouring of blood beneath the altar of burnt offering and the application of blood within the holy place. See T. C. G. Thornton, "The Meaning of αἱματεκχυσία in Heb. IX.22," *JTS* 15 (1964): 63–65; so also Lane, *Hebrews* 9–13, 232, note bb; Koester, *Hebrews*, 420.

²⁸ See Davidson, "Typology," 141, 174; Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "Syllabus for Studies on the Doctrine of the Sanctuary" (Biblical Research Institute, rev. ed. 2004), 167. While it is not possible to deal with this passage in detail here, vv. 24–26 further clarify and elaborate upon the "cleansing" mentioned in v. 23 in terms of the ultimacy of the *place* (v. 24: "the true [sanctuary]," "heaven itself," "the presence of God") and of the *sacrifice* (vv. 25–26: "not to offer himself many times" but "once at the consummation of the ages" and not "by the blood of another" but "by the sacrifice of himself").

ment, and final salvation, and the heavenly reward for "those who eagerly wait for him."²⁹

5. Conclusion

Jesus, as our forerunner, has blazed a pathway for us from earth to heaven so that we can already follow him "through the veil" into the very presence of God. A major part of the reason why he can be our high priest is because of his kinship with us. He is *the* representative human being before the Father. Because he shares our flesh and blood, his bodily presence, as our prayers of faith follow him there, is efficacious for our forgiveness, which is what the pouring of the blood beneath the altar and the application of blood in the sanctuary ritual symbolized. Faith is an essential element. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (11:6). It was a failure of faith that kept Israel from entering God's rest. And, as Heb 11 makes abundantly clear, it is only through faith that anyone will ultimately receive what God has promised. Jesus has opened the way. It is left with us whether or not we will follow.

The ministration in the earthly temple outlasted its usefulness but its perpetuation largely obscured what Jesus had actually done and was doing in heaven. Might not the parable of Heb 9:8 have applicability and relevance also for our day? The two elements of faith most characteristic of Seventh-day Adventists, inherent in the name, are both enshrined in this ancient sermon to the Hebrews:

1. Recalling that neither Moses nor Joshua were able to give Israel rest, that Jesus alone could give the promised rest: "A sabbath rest still remains for the people of God" (Heb 4:9); and
2. Jesus will come the second time in order to save those who eagerly await his appearing (Heb 9:28).

The cross is the beginning of the journey or, to use the metaphor of Heb 12, the beginning of the race. Could it be that we have not yet reached the finish line because we are still looking backward to where Jesus was, instead of looking upward to where Jesus *is*?

The message of Hebrews is a message of salvation. It is a message also of judgment. But, above all, it is a message of the *Jesus* of salvation and judgment. By looking to *him* and following the pathway *he* has opened up

²⁹ Some see this phrase in v. 28 alluding to the coming of the high priest out of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement (*ibid.*, 172; Koester, *Hebrews*, 423).

as the pioneer and perfecter of faith, the promise remains sure that all may receive that "something better" foreseen and foreordained by God.

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. "For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul (Heb 10:35-39, NAS95).