

Unlocking Revelation

The Key That Unlocks Revelation

The Seven Trumpets

- Opens with an angel standing at the altar of incense in the Holy Place and holding a golden censer full of much incense, which represents the prayers of God's people ascending to heaven (see 8:3, 4).
- Under the sixth trumpet a command is given to "measure the temple" (11:1, 2), corresponding to the day of atonement-judgment of ancient Israel (see Leviticus 16).
- Under the seventh trumpet the Most Holy Place is opened and the ark of the testament is seen, which contains the ten commandment law (see Revelation 11:19).

The Pure Woman, Her Child, and the Dragon

- The people of God overcome by the blood of the slain Lamb (see 12:11).
- The people of God keep the commandments seen in the ark (see 12:17).
- The beast power blasphemes God's temple (see 13:5).
- Those who gain the victory over the beast follow the Lamb wherever He goes (see 14:4).
- They stand faultless before God's throne (see 14:5); final atonement has been made.
- They keep the commandments shown in the ark of the Most Holy Place (see 14:12).
- Angels from the temple reap the earth (see 14:15-18); every case is judged for eternal life or damnation.

The Seven Last Plagues

- The seven angels who pour out the plagues proceed from the temple in heaven (see 15:5-8; 16:1).
- No person can enter the temple while the plagues are poured out, indicating the close of probation (see 15:7, 8).

- The final pronouncement of the completed plague-judgments comes from the temple: "It is done" (16:17).

The Judgment of Babylon

- The judgment of Babylon proceeds from the temple; one of the angels from the temple explains (see 17:1).
- Babylon seeks to make war on the One who is the Lamb (see 17:14).
- Those who dwell in the temple proclaim the justice of God in thus judging Babylon (see 19:1, 2).

The Second Coming and the Millennium

- Satan is bound in the bottomless pit, corresponding to the banishing of the scapegoat (see 20:1-3).
- Thrones of judgment are established for judgment during the millennium (see 20:4).
- The great white throne judgment is seen after the millennium (see 20:12).
- After the destruction of the wicked, the temple of God's presence is with His people on earth (see 21:3).

The Kingdom of God Established

- The Lord is the temple of the new earth. His immediate presence will dwell with His people (see 21:22).

Clearly, Revelation is a book of sanctuary imagery. From beginning to end it is an unfolding of the great purposes of God foreshadowed long ago in the symbolism of the Old Testament temple service.

In the studies that follow, we will look in greater detail at each of the prophecies that comprise Revelation. We will bring into clearer focus each progressive phase of the Savior's warfare against evil. We will see how the high priestly ministry of Jesus in the Heavenly Sanctuary guides the events that transpire on earth.

It has been estimated that of the 404 verses in Revelation, 278 contain phrases from or allusions to the Old Testament scriptures. That amounts to almost three-quarters of the material in Revelation. More specifically, the book of Revelation draws much of its imagery and actually forms its guiding theme from the Old Testament sanctuary service. This being the case, we will discover in this study that the sanctuary service of the ancient Hebrew people is the key that unlocks the message of Revelation.

A Basic Sketch of the Sanctuary

After having delivered the Israelite people from Egyptian slavery through the leadership of Moses, God brought His chosen nation into a wilderness place. As they camped at the base of Mt. Sinai, the Lord communicated to them through the prophet Moses.

First, God gave them His ten commandment law (see Exodus 19 and 20). Next He gave them instructions to build a sanctuary and institute a system of sacrifice and

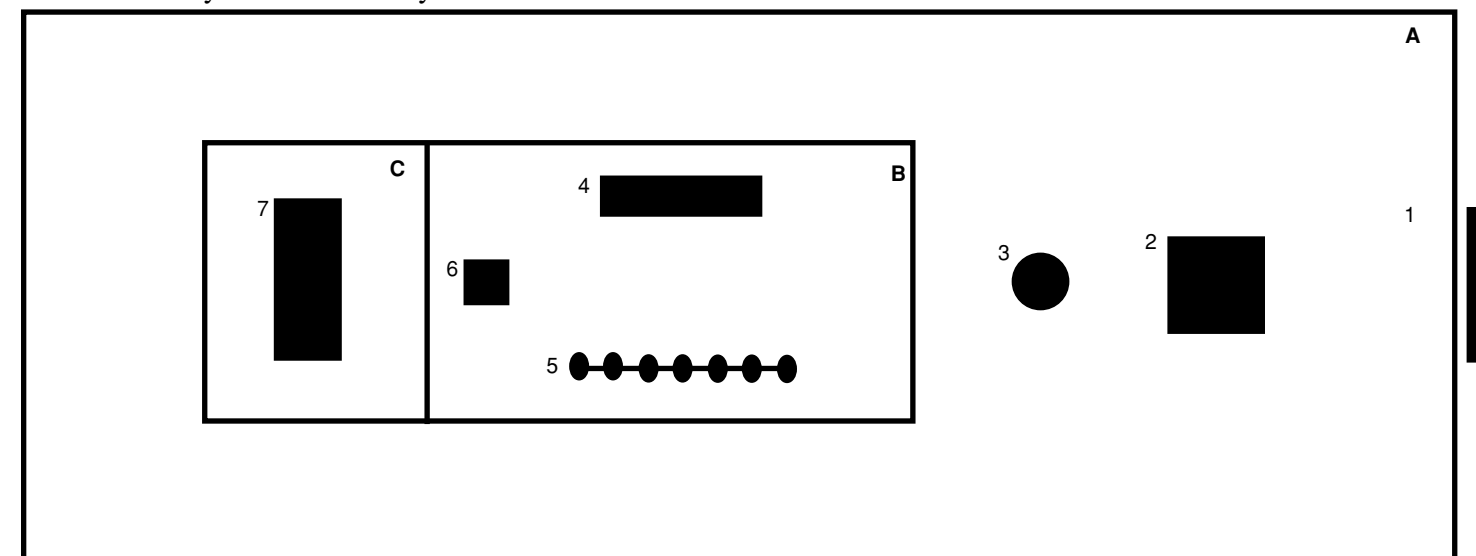
priesthood (see Exodus 25:8). The entire sanctuary and its service was designed to be a symbolic lesson book to illustrate the plan of redemption that would ultimately become reality through Jesus Christ.

A detailed blueprint of the building was given, along with careful directions for conducting the ceremonial services.

Below is the basic floor plan of the temple:

- A. Courtyard
- B. Holy Place
- C. Most Holy Place

1. The Gate
2. The Altar of Sacrifice
3. The Laver of Cleansing
4. The Table of Shewbread
5. The Seven-Branched Candlestick
6. The Altar of Incense
7. The Ark of the Covenant/Testimony



Two Phases of Ministry

There were two basic phases to the earthly sanctuary service: First, there was the daily service, which involved the courtyard and the Holy Place or the first apartment of the temple. Second, there was the yearly service, which included the courtyard and Holy Place but centered in the Most Holy Place or the second apartment.

The Daily Service

The daily service was designed to illustrate the forgiveness of sins freely given us by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ's life in our place and ministered to us by Him as our heavenly High Priest.

The repentant sinner in the Israelite camp would bring his sacrifice to the temple courtyard. Placing his hands upon the animal's head, confession of sins was made, thus in symbol transferring the guilt of the sinner to an innocent substitute. The lamb was then slain to represent the coming Savior who would "die for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3). When Jesus stepped out of eternity into our world, John the Baptist declared Him "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The blood of the daily sin offering was applied in one of two ways: (1) It was taken into the Holy Place and sprinkled before the inner veil and on the horns of the altar of incense (see Leviticus 4:6, 7, 17, 18). Or (2) it was placed on the horns of the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard, in which case the priest ate part of the flesh of the sacrifice. The point of both procedures was to transfer responsibility for the sin to the sanctuary and its priesthood (see Leviticus 6:24-26).

Day by day this service was conducted to illustrate the death of Christ and His continual mediation for the forgiveness of sins. For "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). And "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

The daily service clearly communicated two basic facts about God's plan of salvation: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23); but no sinner need die for his sins, because our great God of love has provided His own Son as a substitute to be slain in our stead (see 1 John 2:2).

The Yearly Service

The yearly service was intended to prefigure the final day of judgment, at which time "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10). This was the day of atonement, known as "Yom Kippur," the *day of judgment*. Throughout Israel's sacri-

ficial year, the sins of the people symbolically accumulated in the sanctuary as they were confessed. Then came the day of final atonement when the sanctuary would be cleansed of its defiling record of sin.

Ten days prior to the solemn event, trumpets were blown to warn the people that all sin must be confessed and put away. Anyone who did not participate would be cut off from the camp. Yom Kippur, the last of these ten days of grace, was the final opportunity to repent of every sin and thus be prepared to stand the day of test.

When the solemn day arrived, two goats were chosen—one for the Lord and the other designated "the scapegoat" (Leviticus 16:8). The Lord's goat was sacrificed as "a sin offering" (Leviticus 16:15, 16). This part of the ceremony pointed to Jesus, our sin-bearer. His death on Calvary has sufficiently paid the atonement price for all our sins.

After the High Priest completed the cleansing ceremony with the blood of the Lord's goat, the scapegoat was brought to the door of the temple. This animal was not sacrificed as was the Lord's goat, and there is good reason for this. The scapegoat was not a symbol of Christ, who would die for our sins, but rather represented Satan—the originator of sin, the tempter, the accomplice in every transgression. In God's plan Satan must bear ultimate responsibility for his diabolical part in all the sin and suffering that has tormented humanity. Thus in the day of atonement service, the high priest, representing Christ, transferred the sins of the people to the scapegoat. Then it was led away into the wilderness to perish in the heat of the desert (see Leviticus 16:10). In this way the day of atonement pointed beyond Calvary to the ultimate eradication of sin and the final demise of the Devil.

The Meaning of the Sanctuary

Through the medium of symbolism, the Old Testament sanctuary service explained in advance the entire plan of salvation as it would be accomplished through the Lord Jesus Christ. Although there are many beautiful details, *four* main purposes of the plan of salvation are outlined in the sanctuary:

1. *To provide forgiveness for sinners by virtue of the blood of Christ.*

This was illustrated by the sacrifice of the lamb on the brass altar in the courtyard. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was the fulfillment of this aspect of the symbolism (see Matthew 26:28; Romans 3:24-26; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter

1:18, 19; 1 John 1:7, 9; Revelation 1:5; 7:14; 12:11).

2. *To provide merciful mediation and power to overcome sin by virtue of the priesthood of Christ.*

This was illustrated by the earthly priest entering the Holy Place of the temple to apply the blood of the animal sacrifice. After His crucifixion for our sins, Christ ascended to heaven to intercede for us before the Father and His broken law (see Hebrews 13:12, 20, 21; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 1:7, 9; Revelation 1:5; 7:14; 12:11).

3. *To finally pass judgment on every human being, separating the righteous who have taken Christ as their Savior from the unrighteous who have refused the gift of salvation by persisting in rebellion.*

This was illustrated through the yearly day of atonement service, Yom Kippur, or the day of judgment. All of Israel was gathered to the sanctuary in a spirit of repentance and affliction of soul. All who were found to be depending on the mercy of God by virtue of the blood sacrifice were judged righteous. Those who refused to enter into full and final repentance for sin retained their guilt and were cast out of the camp to die in the heat of the desert. They were judged wicked.

Ultimately Christ will judge every person as either worthy of eternal life by virtue of his dependence on the shed blood of Christ, or as worthy of eternal damnation due to his rejection of the sacrifice. The wheat and the tares, the just and the unjust, the good and the evil will be separated into two distinct groups, destined for one of two very distinct ends (see Matthew 13:24-43; 25:31-46; 22:1-14; 12:36; John 5:22-29; 12:48; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 10:27; James 4:12).

4. *To remove the ultimate responsibility for sin from our loving Heavenly Father and place it where it really belongs, on the father of rebellion himself, the Devil; and to eradicate Satan and sin from the universe, thus vindicating the character of God in His dealings with sin.*

This final phase of the plan of redemption was illustrated on the day of atonement by the part of the ceremony that involved the scapegoat. This goat was not sacrificed as was the Lord's goat, which represented Christ. The scapegoat was led into the wilderness to perish alone in the heat of the desert. Such will be the ultimate demise

of the Devil as the originator of sin (see Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:18, 19; Jude 6; 2 Peter 3:9-13; Revelation 20:1-21:8).

The Sanctuary in Revelation

Revelation is comprised of eight basic prophecies:

1. The Seven Churches.
2. The Seven Seals.
3. The Seven Trumpets.
4. The Pure Woman, Her Child, and the Dragon.
5. The Seven Last Plagues.
6. Judgment on Babylon.
7. The Second Coming and the Millennium.
8. The Kingdom of God Established.

Each of these prophecies contains language and imagery from the Old Testament sanctuary, which demonstrates that Revelation is, in essence, a revelation of the plan of salvation from Christ's death straight through to the final eradication of sin, Satan, and unrepentant sinners.

Let's notice the sanctuary setting of each of the eight prophetic scenes:

The Seven Churches

- Jesus introduces Himself to John in high priestly garments standing among seven golden candlesticks (see Revelation 1:12, 13).
- Not only does Jesus appear as a High Priest, John describes Him in language that actually pictures the sanctuary itself.
 - A. feet of brass = altar of brass (see 1:15).
 - B. seven stars in His right hand = seven-branched candlestick (see 1:16).
 - C. face shining like the sun; eyes of fire = the glory of the Most Holy Place (see 1:14, 16).
- The sixth church presents a closed door and an open door, reminiscent of the ending of the Holy Place ministry of mediation for pardon and the opening of the Most Holy Place ministry for final judgment (see 3:7).

The Seven Seals

- Opens with a vision of the temple in heaven, God's throne, and a slain Lamb (see 4:1-11).
- After the first six seals are opened, the 144,000 are presented under the symbolism of the 12 tribes of Israel who camped around the sanctuary in Old Testament times (see 7:4-8).