Study for the Month of July, 2009

The Tabernacle and its Services, Part II

By Nathaniel Fajardo
A Laymen Ministry Dedicated to Promoting the Pioneer View of the Pillars of Adventism
PO Box 1764 Loma Linda, CA 92354, Tel. (951) 685-7371 Email:natfajardo777@yahoo.com
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The Inner Beauties of the Temple of Truth

In the old sanctuary, and later in the temple of the Jews,
only those dedicated to the holy office of the priesthood were permitted to view
the wonderful glories to be seen within the sacred edifice.
And only those whose lives are dedicated to God
are permitted to see the *inner beauties of the temple of truth*.
Said Jesus to the Jewish leaders: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have
eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.' John 5: 39, 46.
*Louis H. Were, The Moral Purpose of Prophec*y

Strength and Beauty in His Sanctuary

The psalmist declares: "Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." Ps. 96:6

"From the creation and fall of man to the present time, there has been a continual unfolding of the plan of God for the redemption, through Christ, of the fallen race. The tabernacle and temple of God on earth were patterned after the original in heaven. *Around the sanctuary and its service mystically gathered the grand truths which were to be developed through succeeding generations*.

There has been no time when God has granted greater evidences of His grandeur and exalted majesty than while He was the acknowledged Governor of [ancient] Israel. The manifestations of an invisible King were grand and unspeakably awful. A scepter was swayed, but it was held by no human hand. The sacred ark, covered by the mercy seat, and containing the holy law of God, was symbolical of Jehovah Himself. It was the power of the Israelites to conquer in battle. Before it idols were thrown down, and for rashly looking into in thousands perished. Never in our world has the Lord given such open manifestations of His supremacy as when He alone was the acknowledged king of Israel." – *Review & Herald*, March 2, 1886.

"The law of God, enshrined within the ark, was the great rule of righteousness and judgment. That law pronounced death upon the transgressor; *but above the law was the mercy seat, upon which the presence of God was revealed*, and from which, by virtue of the atonement, pardon was granted to the repentant sinner. Thus the work of Christ for our redemption, symbolized by the sanctuary service, 'mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' Ps. 85:10." – *Patriarchs & Prophets*, p. 249.

Spiritual things can only be discerned spiritually, i.e., not by the carnal mind that is of spirit of the world, but by the Spirit which is of God. 1 Cor. 2: 10-14. The tabernacle in heaven in heaven is the sanctuary of the New Covenant. It is *the very center of Christ's*

*work in behalf of me*n. When Christ, in His glorified human nature, ascended to heaven after His resurrection, He entered the *holy place* (the first apartment) *o*f the tabernacle in heaven to begin His final work for the salvation of His people as High Priest, Intercessor, Mediator, and Advocate, pleading His blood in behalf of all penitent sinners. Then, at the end of the 2300-day prophecy in the year 1844 (Daniel 8:14), escorted by the angels of heaven, He entered into the *most holy* place (the second apartment) to begin the work Investigative Judgment or pre-advent judgment, in addition to His mediatorial work as High Priest. God the Father bestows upon Him the authority to judge all mankind. From that time till mankind's probation closes in the days ahead (no one knows exactly when), is known as the antitypical Day of Atonement. The decisions rendered during this tribunal by the books of heaven determines who are worthy of eternal life or eternal death. The decisions rendered for each person born to this earth, starting from Adam and Eve, is irrevocable and final.

Therefore, Jesus Christ in His glorified human body cannot and does not leave His work in the heavenly sanctuary and come to down to earth for whatever reason until this last work is finished—even for short bursts of time. Why? No one in the universe can take His place in His *constant work of intercession in His glorified human body,* particularly now during the investigative judgment period! The plan of salvation as taught in the sanctuary message does not provide for that. Only the high priest can enter into the most holy place for and in behalf of the whole of Israel. The names of the twelve tribes were written on his breastplate. In the Mosaic dispensation, during typical Day of Atonement the high priest did not leave the most holy until his work was finished. Christ is our High Priest and no one else.

Some Christians believe that He has, and makes special appearances in person to certain individuals in certain unique occasions appearing as the "beautiful Jesus speaking with melodious voice," etc. Jesus warned of this deception, saying, many will be will say "Lo, He is here; Lo, He is there." Furthermore, this is one deadly way Satan obscures the vital role and work of the Holy Spirit, even as he has been doing to the Father and Jesus Christ since the beginning of his rebellion: he makes them forget that Jesus sent His Vicar, the Holy Spirit, to be *His very presence and person* to simultaneously perform His specified work on *earth* as Christ performs His in *heaven*. Sad to say, but such individuals, whether young children or adults are either deluded or deceived. They have been seeing some being other than Jesus Christ Himself.

The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead is invisible, but His works are visible in the work of conversion of the human heart and the manifestations of the "fruit of the Spirit" in the lives of the true Christians. All who claim to see and know Jesus Christ now, see and know Him *by faith*, as revealed in the law and testimony (Isa. 8:20), not by sight. And, if adjudged faithful by the books of heaven at the end of their probationary lives, they will see Jesus literally in *person*—when He comes in all His glory, escorted by the angels of heaven, but not till then.

Moreover, no man, since Christ walked on earth two thousand years ago, has ever seen His literal physical person. The only available description of His physical form is from the Bible and the "Testimonies." All other popular depictions of Him are from the imaginations of painters and different artists—many of whom are influenced by traditional heathen concepts, spiritualistic ideas, and New Age influences. The persistent efforts to portray Christ whether in paintings or other forms of artwork can be dangerous, *unless these basic truths are emphasized,* starting in the earliest years of the

child. The Roman Catholic faith in particular, constantly features Jesus Christ alongside with Mary and Joseph in such forms for idolatrous worship.

I have been called out in the past for expressing these convictions by such words as: "You are limiting Jesus to what He can do. He can appear to anyone on earth if He do desires," etc. Nothing can be further from the truth. No mortal has an iota of right or privilege "to limit Jesus on what He can do." That is presumption if not blasphemous. I am simply applying what the Word of God clearly teaches regarding the matter. But everyone is entitled to his opinion that will have to stand the closest scrutiny of Scriptures and the searching judgment.

The world, the Christian churches and denominations in particular, must understand two things before it is too late:

- **There is a tabernacle in heaven which is the great original, and *that it is the sanctuary of the New Covenant*—the new covenant of which they often make lively discourses on, declaring that the Ten Commandments were "done away by it," and in so doing they err once more in failing to point their credulous hearers and followers to the sanctuary in heaven, as taught by Moses, Paul, and John. Thus their interpretation of the New Covenant is patently false.**

- **The heavenly sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. This is where the risen, glorified Jesus Christ that all Christians claim to be their Lord and Savior has been working in behalf of all repentant sinners. They cannot yet see Him in person as did the disciples and the Jewish nation as well as the Gentiles to whom He manifested His personal presence in His adopted humanity. They saw, heard, and touched Him, or He touched them in His adopted humanity. But until He returns in His full, undimmed glory, they must see Him by intelligent faith, be with Him by intelligent faith, and abide in Him by intelligent faith—all through the Holy Spirit in the word—written or spoken. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (through the Holy Spirit) and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto good works." 2 Tim. 3:16, K. J.V.**

Paul says: "Now this is the *main point* of the things we are saying: We have a such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty *in the heavens*, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the *true tabernacle* which the Lord erected, and not man." Heb. 8:1, 2, N.K.J.V.

"The subject of the *sanctuary and the investigative judgment* should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. *Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time* or to occupy the position which God desires them to fill. . . . .

The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the

contest between righteousness and sin. It is of utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects and 'be able to give an answer to every one that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them [1 Pet. 3:15].

The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, 'whither the Forerunner is for us entered.' Heb. 6:20, K.J.V. There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected. There we may gain a clearer insight into the mysteries of redemption. The salvation of man is accomplished at an infinite expense to heaven; the sacrifice made is equal to the broadest demand of the broken law of God. Jesus has opened the way to the Father's throne, and through His mediation the sincere desire of all who come to Him in faith may be presented before God." *Great Controversy*, pp. 488-9.

Only then can those who profess to be members of His remnant church on earth today, intelligently follow Him by faith and be saved by Him by faith. If this awesome truth is not brought forth clearly and forcefully, it is not the present, testing, sealing truth even if the focus is on Christ and His death, His resurrection, and ascension---but no further.

There is this mysterious, disturbing failure in the Christian mainstream to move forward and press the questions: When Christ ascended to heaven, *where* did He go and *what* has He been doing in heaven since then? This should be in the mind of all earnest seekers of truth. And if they search the word diligently and systematically and follow through the teachings of the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, they cannot but arrive at the conclusion, as led by the Holy Spirit, that indeed, at this very time, the center of Christ's work in behalf of men is in the sanctuary above—not at the historical site of Calvary. He ascended to heaven to complete the work He begun on earth.

The plan of redemption specifies *both heaven and earth as the work sites*. The courtyard of the sanctuary of the Old Covenant represents the earth; the altar of sacrifice represents Calvary—both on earth,—while the two apartments of the earthly tabernacle or temple, the holy and the most holy, represent the two apartments of the heavenly tabernacle. I struggled for awhile on this aspect of the sanctuary message. I could not immediately figure out what the courtyard would represent *in heaven*—on the overly simplistic application that everything about the earthly sanctuary was a type of the heavenly. But in John's vision of the heavenly temple he saw no altar of sacrifice or laver—the only two furniture in the courtyard—but the furniture of the holy and most holy only. That problem has been now been resolved in my mind.

The inspired writer says:

"Heb. 8: 1, 2 quoted. The question, What is the sanctuary? is clearly answered in the Scriptures. The term 'sanctuary,' as used in the Bible, refers, first, to the tabernacle built by Moses, as a pattern of heavenly things, and, secondly, to the 'true tabernacle' in heaven, to which the earthly sanctuary pointed. At the death of Christ the typical service ended. *The 'true tabernacle' in heaven is the sanctuary of the new covenant*.

The holy places of the sanctuary in heaven are represented by the two apartments in the sanctuary on earth. As in the vision the apostle John was granted a view of the temple of God in heaven, he beheld there 'seven lamps' of fire burning before the throne.' Rev. 4:5. He saw an angel 'having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which

was before the throne.' Rev. 8:3. Here the prophet was permitted to behold the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven; and he saw there 'seven lamps of fire' and 'the golden altar,' represented by the golden candlestick and the altar of incense in the sanctuary on earth. Again, 'the temple of God was opened' (Rev. 11:19), and he looked within the inner veil, upon the holy of holies. Here he beheld 'the ark of his testament,' represented by the sacred chest constructed by Moses to contain the law of God.

Moses made the earthly sanctuary after a pattern which was shown him. *Paul* [in the book of Hebrews] teaches that the pattern was the true sanctuary which is in heaven. And John testifies that he saw it [in vision] in heaven.

The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. When Christ ascended to heaven, He ascended as our Advocate. We always have a Friend in court." – E. G. White, *The Faith that I Live By*, p. 202.

The Most Holy Place and its Lessons

The tabernacle, the Greek generally *skene*, meaning, "tent," "booth," "lodging," or "dwelling place," is any tent or dwelling place, but especially the tabernacle erected by Moses at Mount Sinai—God's sacred dwelling place (Exo. 25: 8, 9)—the center of the Hebrew worship for more than four centuries. It is important to note that the tabernacle with its courtyard and its holy places entrances were positioned so that the east was always at the back of those offering sacrifices at the altar of sacrifice. This was clearly to prevent anyone from facing the east where the sun arose while engaged in the act of worship. Sun worship is the most ancient form of idolatrous worship.

"Under the theocracy God was the Supreme Ruler, and in the most holy place of the tabernacle abode the visible glory of the *symbolic* of the Divine Presence (Exo. 25:22; 40: 34, 35), sometimes called Shekinah, which, however, is a rabbinical term and is not found in the Bible. Mishkan, 'dwelling place,' designates the 'ohel,', 'tent,' as the residence of the glorious 'abiding Presence.' The visible glory hovered above the mercy seat of the ark between the two cherubim (ch. 25:22)."- *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary,* Commentary Reference Series, vol. 8.

The altar of incense in the holy place also served the most holy place. The most important article of furniture in the *first apartment* or holy place was the altar of incense because it *served* the second apartment or the holy place as well. M. L. Andreasen says:

"It was thirty-six inches in height and eighteen inches square. . . . . It was on this altar that the priest in the daily service placed the coals of fire taken from the altar of burnt offering, and the incense. As he put the incense on the coals on the altar, the smoke would ascend, and as the veil between the holy and the most holy did not extend to the top of the building, the incense soon filled not only the holy place but also the most holy. In this way, the altar of incense, although located in the first apartment, served the second apartment also. For this reason it was put 'before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, where I will meet with thee.' Exo. 30:6." *The Book of Hebrews, pp. 367.*

The incense of His righteousness. Much more can be learned about this incense of His righteousness. Paul says: "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." Eph. 5:2. E.G. White says:

"In the offering of the incense the priest was brought more directly into the presence of God than in any other act of the *daily ministration*. . . . The incense, ascending with the prayers of Israel, represents the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people, and can alone make the worship of the sinful beings acceptable to God. *Before the veil of the most holy place, was an altar of perpetual intercession, before the holy, an altar of continual atonement. By blood and by incense, God was to be approached*—symbols pointing to the great Mediator, through whom sinners may approach Jehovah, and through whom alone mercy and salvation can be granted to the repentant, believing soul." *The Faith I Live By*, p. 197.

The following points need to be emphasized for few really understand, appreciate, and therefore, cannot appropriate by faith the means God has specified of approaching Him and obtaining His mercy and salvation!

- Before the veil of the most holy place was an altar of *perpetual intercession*—the golden altar of incense located in the first apartment or holy place.

- Before the holy place or first apartment of the sanctuary was the altar of *continual atonement*—the altar of sacrifice—where the daily sacrificial offering was made by the priest for the whole nation, in addition to the other individual sacrifices and for certain feasts.

- It is only by the blood of Christ, and the sweet-smelling savor of the incense of Christ's perfect, sinless righteousness that God can be approached! This is how mercy and salvation can only be obtained--not automatically to all "believe"—but to all *repentant* believers. Christ declared: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the *kingdom of heaven,* but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord,' have we not prophesied in Thy name, cast out demons in Thy name, and done many wonderful works in Thy name?' And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who that work iniquity (practice lawlessness)." Matt. 7: 21-22, K.J.V., N.K.J.V.

It is only by Christ's perpetual intercession, and His continual atonement,--while probation lasts—by blood and incense,—that God the Father can and must be approached. Many approach Him with such an attitude and demeanor, and address His various names and titles as if He were on their same level or even lower. Such either do not know how angels, who have never fallen, come into His presence, misled by the wrong example, teachings, and doctrines. Others, in Pharisaical pride or Laodicean lukewarmess assume they are already saved by their good deeds and works and feel no need anything more—not even *more* reverence in worship or prayer. Such will have to repent from these sins otherwise they will obtain no mercy and will not be able to gain an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory when Christ comes!

Then, the most important part of the earthly sanctuary was the most holy place, also called the second apartment, *Hagion Hagion* in the Greek. It was a cube measuring 10 cubit feet on one side. It had only one piece of furniture, that ark of the testimony, also referred to as the ark of the testament. M.L. Andreasen says: "The ark was made in the form of a chest, *almost forty-five inches long and twenty-seven wide*. The cover of this chest was called the mercy seat. Around the top of the mercy seat was a crown of gold,

the same as on the altar of incense. In this place Moses placed the Ten Commandments written on two tables of stone with God's own finger. *For a time,* at least, the ark also contained the golden pot that had the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. (Heb. 9: 4).

The Mercy Seat and God's Mercy

"The covering of the ark of the testament, also referred to as the ark of the testimony, called in the Hebrew *Kapporeth,* covering (especially if not exclusively in the sense of atonement), and in Greek, *'Ilasterion,* propitiatory (Exo. 21: 34; Heb. 9:5). Its name did not suggest a mere lid, but brought to mind the act and place of atonement and the accomplished atonement. The rendering mercy seat is therefore a happy one adopted by Tyndale from Luther. It was made of pure gold; its length was two and half cubits, and its breadth a cubit and a half. (Note: a cubit is, originally, the length of the forearm, from the elbow to the end of the middle finger; In English measure, 18 inches, 45.72 cm.).

"On each side of it and wrought as one piece with it stood a cherub, with its face towards the other cherub, but bent downwards toward the mercy seat, and with outstretched wings, so that a wing of each extended over the mercy seat and met that of the other cherub. Between these cherubim the glory of Jehovah was manifested, and there Jehovah communed with His people. Exo. 25: 17-22; 30:6; Num. 7:89).

"There was a similar arrangement in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6: 23-28; 8: 6-11; 1 Chron. 18: 11). Once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, the high priest, after he had offered a sin offering for himself, entered the most holy place and burnt incense, symbol of accepted worship, in the presence of Jehovah, which rose and enveloped the mercy seat in a cloud. He then sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice bullock on and before the mercy seat. Having sacrificed the goat that was the sin offering for the nation, he carried its blood also beyond the veil, into the most holy place, and sprinkled it upon and before the mercy seat. He made atonement for sins of himself and the nation in the presence of the covenant law, which was written on the tables of stone and was lying in the ark, and of Jehovah, who dwelt between the cherubim (Lev. 16:2, 13-17)." John D. Davies, PhD. D.D., L.L.D, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 492, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1942.

God communed with His ancient people from the mercy seat, which was upon the ark of the testimony in which was stored the law of God as He wrote it with His finger on two tables of stone. To Moses, who stood in behalf of Israel when transacting the welfare of Israel with God, and for God when he faced Israel with God's commands and injunctions, God said, "There will I meet with thee, and will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim, which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." Exo. 25: 22.

How comforting and encouraging it is to know that the Father, the God of the universe communes with those on earth who seek to know and do His will from a position of mercy! Were it not for this specific grace and attribute of God not a single person beginning with Adam and Eve would be able to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. None would have any glimmer of hope in his sinful, corruptible flesh in this life, much less of eternal life. Let us therefore explore further the subject of **mercy** as taught in the Word of God.

God' s Mercy is Described as:

G*reat*. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee in a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." Isa. 54: 7, 8.

S*ure, or confirmed*. "Incline your ear, and come unto Me. Hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Isa. 55: 3.

Abundant. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hast begotten us again unto a lively (living) hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Pet 1:3-5.

For His goodness sake. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions. According to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness sake, O Lord. The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity for it is great." Ps. 25:6-11.

New every morning. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Lam. 3: 22-26

The Mercy of God is seen in:

Salvation. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." Titus 3:5, 6.

Christ's mission. "As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life." " Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high visited us." Luke 1: 70-72, 78);

Forgiveness. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleans me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." Ps. 51:1-3.

In the Christian's life:

Taught as a principle of life in the kingdom of God on earth. See Matt. 5: 7. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." This is exactly the same principle of the kingdom expressed in the golden rule: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Matt.

7: 13. The law and the prophets refer to the Old Testament, the "law" being the Pentateuch or the firs five books, and the "prophets" referring to the "minor" and "major" books of prophecy.

Practiced as a gift. See Rom. 12: 6-8. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."

Evidenced in God providences, as in His healing mercies upon Epaphroditus. See Phil. 2:25-30. "For indeed he was sick nigh [close] to death: but God had mercy on him; and not him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when you see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be less sorrowful." Verses 27, 28.

Obtained by faith in Christ, as our merciful and all-powerful High Priest. See Heb. 4: 14-16. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast [firmly] to our profession [faith]. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched by the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then come boldly

Reason and means of full consecration. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Rom. 12:1.

Reason for hope of eternal life. See Jude 21, 22. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Special injunction concerning:

Must be put on. See Col. 3: 12, 13. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christy forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Col. 3:12, 13.

Examples of:

David to Saul. See 1 Sam, 23: 1-29; 24: 1-22. David was given the opportunity to kill Saul who was hunting him, bent on killing his own son-in-law out of jealousy. But David spared him, saying," Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee nor, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it." Verse 11. "And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee with evil. And thou has shewed this day how thou has dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killest me not." Verses 16-18.

Christ to sinners. Jesus passed by a Matthew at his tax office, and said to him, "Follow Me." And Matthew arose and followed Him. Jesus, with His disciples accepted Matthew' invitation to eat at Matthew's house, where many publicans (the hated tax collectors) and sinners had come and joined them. When the Pharisees saw this they said to His disciples, "Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" Jesus answered them, saying, "They that be whole need not a physician, but that that are sick. But go ye and learn that that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, for I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Matt. 9: 10-13.

Attitude of believers towards God's mercy:

Cast themselves on. See 2 Sam. 24:1-25, 14. David had committed the terrible sin of "numbering the people of Israel and Judah" within the space of "nine months and twenty days" against his captain Joab's advice. Israel had 800,000 valiant men; Judah, 500,000. David was relying on the strength of numbers of his army instead of upon God. He then realized his terrible mistake, but it could not be left unpunished. Speaking though Gad the prophet of David, God offered David three punishments to choose from: 7 years of famine upon the land, to flee his enemies as they pursue him for 3 months, or 3 days pestilence upon the land. Knowing the nature of God, David wisely replied: "I am in a great strait: *let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for His mercies are great: and let us not fall into the hands of men*." Verses 13, 14. He left the decision to God for he was appealing to God's mercy. God chose pestilence. *Seventy thousand* men from Dan to Beersheba died from that pestilence. Verse. 15.

God's Divine Grace and Mercy

(Spirit of Prophecy References)

The covenant of mercy is called the everlasting covenant

"Let those who are oppressed under a sense of sin remember that there is hope for them. The salvation of the human race has ever been the object of the councils of heaven. *The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed from all eternity, and is called the everlasting covenant*. So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity."- *Signs of the Times*, June 12, 1901/7 BC 934.

This divine grace manifested to fallen humanity is in His divine mercy—as defined in the second of the Ten Commandments that says: "For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, *but showing mercy to thousands [of generations], who love Me and keep My commandment*s." Exo. 20: 5, 6, N.K.J.V.

Christ was ever showing mercy

"It is no part of Christ's mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, who seek to compel the conscience. Under a pretense of zeal for righteousness, men who are confederated with evil angels sometimes bring suffering upon their fellow men in order to convert them to their ideas of religion; but Christ is

ever showing mercy, ever seeking to win by the revealing of His love. He can admit no rival in the soul, nor accept of partial service; but He desires only voluntary service, the willing surrender of the heart under the constraint of love." –*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 541.

This mercy is not weakness

The following quote is one of the most profound explanations on the relation of Mercy and Justice as they met at Calvary, and as they are both applied now by Christ as He, in His penultimate office as High Priest, intercedes, advocates, mediates, and judges His people during this antitypical Day of Atonement.

"(Ps. 89:14; Gal. 6: 14). The Cross Joins justice and Mercy. – His (Christ's) object was to reconcile the prerogatives of Justice and Mercy, and let each stand separate in dignity, yet united. His mercy was not weakness but a terrible power to punish sin because it is sin; yet a power to draw to it the love of humanity. Through Christ, justice is enabled to forgive without sacrificing one jot of its exalted holiness.

Justice and Mercy stood apart, in opposition to each other, separated by a wide gulf. The Lord our Redeemer clothed His divinity with humanity, and wrought out in behalf of man a character that was without spot or blemish. He planted His cross midway between heaven and earth, and made it the object of attraction which reached both ways, drawing both Justice and Mercy across the gulf. Justice moved from its exalted throne, and with all the armies of heaven approached the cross. There it saw One equal with God bearing the penalty for all the injustice and sin. With perfect satisfaction Justice bowed in reverence at the cross, saying, It is enough." –(MS 94, 1899)/7BC 935.

This mercy can never be repaid

"The gospel of Christ includes in its requirements every soul that has heard the message of glad tidings. What shall we render unto God for all His benefits to us? *His matchless mercy cannot be repaid*. We can, only by willing obedience and graceful service, testify our loyalty, and crown with honor our Redeemer." – *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 87.

The conditions for obtaining God's mercy are simple and reasonable

The psalmist says: "He that covereth his sins shall no prosper: but whoso *confesseth* and *forsaketh* them shall have mercy." Ps. 28:13. True repentance, a deep sorrow for the sin committed, not merely the painful consequences of it, is a gift of God in itself. Sinful man cannot originate it. This precedes confession. And genuine contrition leads one to forsake that sin he repented of, for it is sin that separates us from God.

"If those who hide and excuse their faults could see how Satan exults over them, how he taunts Christ and his holy angels with their course, they would make haste *to confess their sins and put them away*. Through defects in the character, Satan works to gain control over the whole mind, and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed. Therefore he is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome. But Jesus pleads in their behalf His wounded hands, His bruised body; and He declares to all who would follow Him, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' 2 Cor. 12:9. . . . Let none, then, regard their defects as incurable. God will give faith and grace to overcome them." – *The Faith I Live By*, p. 203.

"The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing in order to gain forgiveness. We need not make long and wearisome pilgrimages or perform painful penances, to commend out souls to the God of heaven or to expiate our transgression. He that 'confesseth and forsaketh' his sin 'shall have mercy.' Prov. 28:13." - *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 552.

Let no one deceive himself, thinking that God, in His mercy, will save rejecters of His grace

"If you see your sinfulness, do not wait to make yourself better. How many there are who think they are not good enough to come to Christ. Do you expect to become better through your own efforts? 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spot? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.' Jer. 13:23. There is help fro us only in God. We must not wait for stronger persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are.

But let none deceive themselves with the thought that God, in His great love and mercy, will yet save even the rejecters of His grace. The exceeding sinfulness of sin can be estimated only in the light of the cross. When man urge that God is too good to cast off the sinner, let them look to Calvary. It was because there was no other way in which man could be saved, because without this sacrifice it was impossible for the human race to escape from the defiling power of sin, and be restored to holy communion with holy beings,---impossible for them again to become partakers of spiritual life,---it was because of this that Christ took upon Himself the guilt of the disobedient and suffered in the sinner's stead. The love and suffering and death of the Son of God all testify to the *terrible enormity of sin* and declare that there is no escape from its power, no hope of the higher life, but through the submission of the soul to Christ." –*Steps to Christ*, p. 31

Erroneous views regarding God's mercy:

"We should beware of treating lightly God's gracious provisions for our salvation. There are Christians who say, 'I do not care to be saved unless my companion and children are saved with me.' They feel that heaven would not be heaven to them, without the presence of those who are so dear. But have those who cherish this feeling a right conception of their own relation to God, in view of His great goodness and *mercy* toward them? Have they forgotten that they are bound, by the strongest ties of love, honor, and loyalty to the service of their Creator and Redeemer? The invitation of mercy are addressed to all; and because our friends reject the Savior's pleading love, shall we also turn away? The redemption of the soul is precious. Christ has paid an infinite price for our salvation, and no one who appreciates the value of this great sacrifice, or the worth of the soul, will despise God's *offered mercy* because others choose to do so. The very fact that others are ignoring His just claims should arouse us to greater diligence that we may honor God ourselves, and lead all whom we can influence, to accept His love." - *Patriarchs & Prophets,* p. 162.

God's mercy does not set aside His justice

"God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. *It has been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice*. He sought to prove that the righteousness of God's law is an enemy to peace. But Christ shows that in God's plan they are indissolubly

joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. *'Mercy* and truth met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' Ps. 85:10.

By His life and death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His *mercy*, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.

Another deception was now to be brought forward. *Satan declared that mercy destroyed justice, that the death of Christ abrogated the Father's law*. Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died. But to abrogate the law would be to immortalize transgression, and place the world under Satan's control. It was because the law was changeless, because man could only be saved through obedience to its precepts, that Jesus was lifted up on the cross. Yet the very means by which Christ established the law Satan represented as destroying it. *Here will come the last conflict of the great controversy between Christ and Satan*." – *Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

God's mercy blends with His holiness, justice, and power (AA 588-9).

John in vision in the Island of Patmos was shown the triumphant culmination of the six thousand years of the great controversy between Christ and Satan and their respective agencies on earth—the church versus the dragon, the beast, and his image—pagan Rome, papal Rome, and apostate Protestantism in the last days.

"And to the faithful ones who were striving against evil, John heard the promises made: 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' 'He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.' 'To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.' Rev. 2:7; 3; 5, 21.

John saw the mercy, the tenderness, and the love of God blending with His holiness, justice, and power. He saw sinners finding a Father in Him of whom their sins made them afraid. And looking beyond the culmination of the great conflict, he beheld upon Mount Zion 'them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.' Rev. 15: 2, 3." – *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 588-9.

This door of mercy was shut selectively on the rejecters of truth in the days of Noah, Abraham, and Christ (1 SM 63).

For a time, after the Great Disappointment in 1844, the early *Advent body* with William Miller at their head, (the Seventh-day Adventist church and their fundamental beliefs had not yet been formed at this time), believed that when the judgment hour message and second angel's message were rejected, the door of salvation had closed upon the world; earth's probation was ended. This body of believers, including the young E.G. White, did not, at that time, understand the full nature of the investigative judgment that would take place in the most holy place where Christ had entered. This erroneous interpretation of the "shut door" was corrected later in E.G. White's first vision. She wrote (emphasis mine):--

"For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold, in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. This position was taken *before my first vision* was given me. *It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position*.

I am still a believer in the shut-door theory, but not in the sense in which we at first employed the term or in which it is employed by my opponents.

There was a shut door in ***Noah's day.*** There was at that time a withdrawal of the Spirit of God from the sinful race that perished in the waters of the Flood. God Himself gave the shut-door message to Noah: 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years' (Gen. 6:5).

There was a shut door in the days of ***Abraham.*** Mercy ceased to plead with the inhabitants of Sodom, and all but Lot, with his wife and two daughters, were consumed by the fire which came down from heaven.

There was a shut door in ***Christ's day.*** The Son of God declared to the unbelieving Jews of that generation, 'Your house is left unto you desolate.' (Matt. 23: 38).

Looking down to the stream of time to the last days, the same infinite power proclaimed through John: 'These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the keys of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth' (Rev. 3: 7)." - *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 63.

The shut-door theory: One door of mercy was shut in 1844 but another door was opened (GC 429-30).

There indeed was a shut door in 1844, but not as the early Advent believers thought so. E.G. White explains what was shut and to what class of people it was shut. Notice:

"**I was shown in vision, and I still believe, that there was a shut door in 1844**. *All who saw the light of the first and second angels' messages and rejected that light, were left in darkness. And those who accepted it and received the Holy Spirit which attended the proclamation of the message from heaven, and who afterward renounced their faith and pronounced their experience a delusion, thereby rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleaded with them*.

Those who did not see the light, had not the guilt of its rejection. It was only the class who had despised the light from heaven that *the Spirit of God could not reach*. And this class included, as I have stated, both those who refused to accept the message when it was presented to them, and also those who, having received it, afterward renounced their faith. These might have a form of godliness, and profess to be followers of Christ; but having no living connection with God, they would be taken captive by the delusions of Satan. These two classes are brought to view in the vision---those who declared the light which they had followed a delusion, and the wicked of the world who, having rejected the light, had been rejected of God. No reference is made to those who had not seen the light, and therefore were not guilty of its rejection."- *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 63.

"In the service of the earthly sanctuary, which, as we have seen, is a figure of the service in the heavenly sanctuary, when the high priest on the Day of Atonement entered the most holy place, the ministration of the first apartment ceased. God commanded: 'There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he comes out.' Lev. 16:17. *So when Christ entered the holy of holies to perform the closing work of the atonement, He ceased His ministration in the first apartment. But when the ministration in the first apartment ended, the ministration in the second apartment began*. When in the typical service the

high priest left the holy [place, the first apartment] on the Day of Atonement, he went in before God to present the blood of the sin offering in behalf of all Israel *who truly repented of their sins. So Christ had only completed one part of His work as our Intercessor, to enter another portion of His work*, and He still pleaded His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners. *This subject was not understood by Adventists in 1844.*"- *Great Controversy,* pp. 428, 429.

God's mercy is abused continually by self-righteous deceivers

"As we near the close of earth's history, perils and dangers thicken around us. A mere profession of godliness will not avail. There must be a living connection with God, that we may have spiritual eyesight to discern the wickedness which is a most artful and secret manner creeping into our midst through those who make a profession of our faith. The greatest sins are brought in through those who profess to be sanctified and claim that they cannot sin. Yet many of this class are sinning daily and are corrupt in heart and life. Such are self-sufficient and self-righteous, making their own standard of righteousness and failing to meet the Bible standard. Notwithstanding their high claims, they are strangers to the covenant of promise. *It is in mercy that God bears with their perversity and that they are not cut down as cumberers of the ground, but still remain within the possibilities of forgiveness. The forbearance of God is continually presumed upon and His mercy abused.* David in his day thought that men exceeded the boundaries of the longsuffering of God, and that He must interfere to vindicate His honor and restrain unrighteousness." – *Testimonies,* vol. 5, p. 139.

The door of mercy is forever shut upon all mankind only at the end of the Investigative Judgment

"'The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.' Nahum 1: 3. O that men might understand the patience and long-suffering of God! *He is putting under restraint His own attributes. His omnipotent power is under control of Omnipotence.* O that men would understand that God refuses to be wearied out with the world's perversity and still holds out the hope of forgiveness even to the most undeserving*! But His forbearance will not always continue. Who is prepared for the sudden change that will take place in God's dealing with sinful men?* Who will be prepared to escape the punishment that will certainly fall upon the transgressors?" – *Counsels to Teachers and Parents*, p. 415-6.

"The crisis is stealing gradually upon us. The sun shines in the heavens, passing over its usual round, and heavens still declare the glory of God. Men are still eating and drinking and giving in marriage. Merchants are still buying and selling. Men are jostling one against another, contending for the highest place. Pleasure lovers are still crowding to theaters, horse races, gambling hells. The highest excitement prevails, *yet probation's hour is fast closing, and every case is about to be eternally decided.* Satan sees that his time is short. He has set all his agencies at work that men may be deceived, deluded, occupied and entranced, until the day of probation shall be ended, and the *door of mercy* be forever shut." – *Desire of Ages,* p. 636.

"When the work of investigation shall be ended, when the cases of those who in all ages have been examined and decided, then, and not till then, probation will close, and the door of mercy will be shut. Thus in the one short sentence, 'They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage; and the door was shut,' we are carried down to the

Savior's final ministration, to the time when the great work for man's salvation shall be completed." – *Great Controversy*, p. 428.

The destruction of impenitent sinners, a demonstration of God's mercy

From the beginning of men's rebellion against God's government, authority, and law, God has reluctantly allowed His early judgments to fall on the finally impenitent of each and *every generation*. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 2:9. They were destroyed by the various agencies of God's own choosing. Probation had closed for them. Each had been afforded all that heaven could do to warn the wicked to repent from their sins and wicked ways through the patriarchs, prophets, and special messengers God raised and sent to His people and the world in the Old Testament times. In the New Testament times (the Christian dispensation), He gave this sacred work to His apostles and disciples. And in the very last days of earth's history, a special group of character-prepared people will be endowed with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain; they will give the final loud cry of Revelation 18—which will be the very last warning of the third angel before probation closes and the seven last plagues fall upon the earth. From the beginning, God's "mercy which endureth forever" is exercised through all His divine judgments.

It is therefore a bold contradiction of God's word when men teach that anyone and every one who dies automatically goes directly to heaven although unprepared, meaning, they died living in open sin in defiance of God's law and His revealed will. Notice:

"Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there---every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,---could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? NO, no; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. *Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them*; *the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place*. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, *and just and merciful on God's part*."

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. They have no disposition to submit to divine authority. Their will has been exercised in revolt; and when life is ended, it is too late to turn the current of their thoughts in the opposite direction, too late to turn from transgression to obedience, from hatred to loving." – *Ibid,* pp 542, 543.