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From time to time the question is raised whether Seventh-day Adventists should continue talking about 1844 and the things that happened then. Implied in this question is the thought that the events of 1844--i.e., the belief that Christ would come then and the great disappointment of those who expected to see Him--are a page from our Millerite past and that in discussing these things we are merely talking about ourselves. Would it not be better to talk about Jesus instead? Let me respond briefly to this challenge.

Millerites were not the ones who entered the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844. That is something Jesus did--as prophesied by Daniel many long years in advance. So if we understand what actually happened in 1844, talking about those events does not constitute talking about ourselves. Admittedly the discussion could degenerate to such a level, but what I am saying is that it need not. There is nothing in the events themselves that would require this.

If the year 1844 marks a transition in Christ's ministry for us in heaven rather than something that happened on earth--this is what the Millerites were disappointed by after all--we should understand what this event implies. But if it really is unimportant to know what Jesus did in 1844, why is it important to know what He did previously? I am not talking about 1843 or 1842 when I say this but the years leading up to A.D. 31. Why is the story of His life preserved for us in the gospels? This question is not intended to be rhetorical. It deserves an answer. I submit that what makes Christ's deeds important is precisely the fact that He does them. The only reason why the cross of Christ has any more value for us today than the two planted beside it is that He was the One crucified there. We must get first things first. The cross derives its significance from Christ and not the other way around.

I submit that what Christ started doing for us in A.D. 1844 has value for all the same reasons that what He finished doing for us in A.D. 31 has value. Saying this does nothing to compromise the uniqueness of the cross. It is the reasons that are the same, not the events. "He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself" (Heb 7:27). This sacrifice does not need to be repeated because it was all-sufficient the first time. But what makes Christ's sacrifice on the cross important for us is the fact that it was He who died and no other. Once this point is understood we are left asking, What else did Jesus do for us (see John 21:25)?

One thing He did prior to the cross was to live a sinless life. This is no small or incidental detail. If Christ had not lived as He lived, the fact that He died as He died would have no saving value for us. So His holy life is one thing. And what shall we say about His resurrection from the dead, which--please notice--occurred after the cross? What Paul says about it is that "if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. . . ." (1 Cor 15:14).

There are those who feel that talking about Christ's high priestly ministry in heaven at any time of history detracts from the cross. If this is so, why does His resurrection not detract from it? Or were the apostles merely being triumphalistic as they went everywhere preaching the good news of Christ's victory over death? No one would make such a claim, but why does His resurrection not compete as it were with His crucifixion? What are the reasons? Why is it not only safe but necessary to talk about both, even though one of these events occurred after the cross? When we finish answering these questions, all the same arguments can be used to show why Christ's high priestly ministry in heaven for us now does not detract from the cross or compete for our attention with His death or resurrection. The reason why it is not only safe but necessary to talk about Christ's high priestly ministry in heaven, which underwent a transition from one major phase of activity to another in 1844, is that it is His ministry.

Christ is not in competition with Himself. Every aspect of what He does for us is important. Otherwise, He would not have done it or still be doing it. When He acts on our behalf, we need to understand His activity for precisely the reason that it is His. I think we are in danger of being too apologetic about these things.