

Sabbath School Today

With the 1888 Message Dynamic

Stewardship: Motives of the Heart

Lesson 10. The Role of Stewardship

This week's lesson concentrates on two essential elements of the 1888 message—the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary from all sin, and the second coming of Christ. The first must be accomplished in the hearts of God's people before the second can take place. The judicial declaration of forgiveness of sins rests solely upon Christ's work on the cross and in the heavenly sanctuary. Christ's death provided the atoning sacrifice, and His work as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary carries out the application of that sacrifice's blessing in the lives of the faithful. Therefore, the very first work in the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is the cleansing—the removal of all sin—from the hearts and minds from God's people. [1]

This is the object of the everlasting covenant (see 1 John 3:5-10). "While the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14." [2]

"Forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. ... God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He set us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin." [3]

The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the second coming of Christ are the very core of the unique Seventh-day Adventist message. No other group on earth have been called to carry forward this work. It is the reason for our being in this world as God's ambassadors. The apostle Paul's declaration, "we are ambassadors for Christ, certain that God is appealing through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, 'Be reconciled to God'" (2 Cor. 5:20, *Holman Christian Standard Bible* [HCSB]), is the driving force of our last day message.

The first angel of Revelation 14 appointed a people to the preaching of the everlasting gospel. The everlasting covenant (gospel) calls all men, everywhere in the earth, to recognize the Creator as the one true God, who not only created all things "in the beginning," but recreates the characters of penitent sinners through the power of the faith of Jesus Christ. As soon as a person recognizes the comprehensive significance of the fact that the God of heaven is the Creator, the Sabbath comes into focus as the one day that honors God and praises Him for His work both for us and in us.

The second angel then tells us that the fundamental truth of God as Creator and the sanctity of His seventh-day Sabbath, are in direct contrast and in conflict with Babylon's message, which centers on the works of man. Recognizing the gospel truth of these two

messages means that all other ideas about God and salvation fall to the ground as unsustainable denials of God's power to save from sin.

The third angel calls all humanity to heed the messages of the first and second angels, and to "come out" of those false ideas about salvation that have plagued the human race since the Fall.

The three angels' messages are, together, "the everlasting covenant" concerning the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. Christ's work in the first apartment is a work of forgiveness, but His work in the most holy place is a work of the blotting out of all sin. God has a superabundance of forgiveness that continues to the close of probation for the world, but the blotting out of sin in the hearts of God's people prepares the way for the second coming of Christ. This is the distinctness of "the third angel's message in verity"—the faith and righteousness of Christ that cleanses from sin, all who will believe the good news. [4]

Through the work of Christ in His sanctuary ministry He is preparing His people for the second coming. This preparation in our hearts involves a deepening knowledge of His character so that we become so intimately acquainted with Him that deception will be impossible during the final misrepresentation of His character to the world through the "great wonders" and blasphemy propagated by the two beasts of Revelation 13. In this preparation, Christ Himself is reflected to the world through His people who lift Him up, and thus "draw all men" to Him (John 12:32).

"The time of the coming of the Lord and the restitution of all things is indeed at the very doors. And when Jesus comes, it is to take His people unto Himself. It is to present to Himself His glorious church, 'not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,' but that is 'holy and without blemish.' It is to see Himself perfectly reflected in all His saints.

"And *before* He comes thus, His people must be in that condition. Before He comes we must have been brought to that state of perfection in the complete image of Jesus. Eph. 4:7, 8, 11-13. And this state of perfection, this developing in each believer the complete image of Jesus—this is the finishing of the mystery of God, which is Christ in you the hope of glory. ...

"The present time being the time when the coming of Jesus and the restitution of all things is at the very doors; and this final perfecting of the saints having necessarily to precede the coming of the Lord and the restitution of all things; we know by every evidence that *now* we are in the times of refreshing—the time of the latter rain. And as certainly as that is so, we are also in the time of the utter blotting out of all sins that have ever been against us." [5]

We are God's special stewards of the most unique message of Christ and His righteousness. It is a message that is not being preached by any other entity on earth. That being the fact, we should ask ourselves: If this is God's focus; if the message that God entrusted to A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner in 1888 is the message that will

prepare a people to receive the outpouring of the latter rain, to fit a people to be God's final ambassadors to the world; if it is the message that will bring an end to Christ's ministry in heaven so that He can come as "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16), then what business do we have employing our energies with any other message? [6]

—Ann Walper

Endnotes:

[1] See pages 119, 120, A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*, Glad Tidings ed. (2003).

[2] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 425.

[3] Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

[4] See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372.

[5] Jones, *The Consecrated Way*, pp. 125, 126.

[6] With current events that are challenging, confusing, and counterfeiting the proclamation of God's vital truth, see Ellen G. White statement in *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 204: "The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. ... The fundamental principles that have sustained the work ... would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. ... A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced."

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno's video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

https://youtu.be/bAhGjN_9vY

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