

***Sabbath School Today***  
**With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

***The Book of Revelation***  
**Lesson 11: The Seven Last Plagues**

**Revelation 16:1, 2:** Then I heard a voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.” So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

Never has the Lord been forced to give a command that He dislikes so much to give as this one! He “is longsuffering toward us not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). He said long ago, “I have no pleasure in the death of the one who dies, says the Lord God. Therefore turn and live” (Ezek. 18:32).

If He could have His way He would save everybody: “God our Savior ... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:3, 4). “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2). The only reason anyone will ever suffer the seven last plagues is that he has resisted and rejected the salvation that the Lord has already given him, because “God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (Rom. 12:3).

But painful as this work is to God, He has no choice but to let it come. “The winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great” (Joel 3:13).

It will not be “the blood of the grape” that flows from this great winepress, but the blood of wickedness. Such a terrible sight has not yet been seen on this earth. These literal plagues have not yet fallen, because they are declared to be the “last plagues.” They cannot fall until the world has been warned, and the work of salvation has closed. And that work cannot close so long as there is one human soul somewhere who will yet respond to the Good News of the grace of Christ.

So long as the Holy Spirit has been working in the earth, judgments and disasters have brought many people to think and to repent. It has been true up until this time, as Isaiah says, that “when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa. 26:9). But before the last plagues can be poured out, the Holy Spirit will have been driven finally from the earth by the rejection of the wicked. It will then be demonstrated that troubles will not bring to repentance those who have rejected God’s goodness, for only “the goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Rom. 2:4). Revelation says that Satan will then have full control over the inhabitants of the earth. “They did not repent” (Rev. 16:9).

It is during the pouring out of these plagues that the warnings against worshiping the beast and his image and receiving his mark will be fulfilled, and the rejectors of God's grace will "have no rest day or night" (Rev. 14:10, 11). These plagues will bring the downfall of Babylon in "one day," which in harmony with the year-day principle of interpreting Bible prophecy, could mean one year of literal time.

What would this world be like if it were not for the restraining power of the Holy Spirit? Multitudes do not realize that they owe all their security and happiness under what measure of law and order prevails, to the blessed ministry of God's Spirit in the earth. During the time of the plagues, all will see clearly that when men give themselves up to the control of Satan, they will themselves produce a hell here on earth.

The plague of grievous sores falls on those who have yielded to pressure to receive the "mark of the beast," either sincerely by having the mark in their foreheads, or insincerely by having it in their hands. But to His loyal people, the Lord gives this assurance: "You shall not be afraid of the ... pestilence that walks in darkness. ... A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you ... neither shall any plague come near your dwelling" (Psalm 91:5-10).

How does the 1888 message fit into the meaning of the seven last plagues? The first three sentences that Ellet J. Waggoner published in book form soon after the 1888 Conference summarizes in miniature the "most precious message." As the oak is in the acorn, the essential elements of the view of Waggoner and A. T. Jones on the nature of Christ, sinless living, and the cleansing of the sanctuary are here in a nutshell:

"In the first verse of the third chapter of Hebrews we have an exhortation which comprehends all the injunctions given to the Christian. It is this: 'Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.' To do this as the Bible enjoins, to consider Christ continually and intelligently, just as He is, will transform one into a perfect Christian, for 'by beholding we become changed.'" [1]

We are either hastening the finishing of the gospel commission, or we are continuing our history of over 130 years in postponing the glorious "marriage of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:7, 8). It was 130 years ago that the Lord Jesus wanted to propose to the corporate "woman" whom He loves, "Let's get married!" All heaven had been waiting to rejoice because "the marriage of the Lamb is come, for His wife has made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7). But no, not yet.

And today's question is: "What good does it do if the folks we baptize become just more Laodicean lukewarm adherents? What progress have we made?"

We as a world church are in fact writing a "book" about "discipleship." The last chapter is about a "discipleship" so mature, so complete that it prepares the "disciples" around the world to be ready for the close of human probation, prepares them to stand during the

pouring out of the seven last plagues, prepares them to face the final test of the close of probation. That will be ultimate “discipleship.”

And here we come face to face with the reality of our church story. The “let your light shine” idea was “present truth” 130 years ago when the Lord was ready to shine “our” light upon a dark world, lighting the earth with the glory of that fourth angel of Revelation 18:1-4. (Remember, when Revelation speaks of angels with a message, it’s the people of God who actually *give* the message.)

The idea is clear as sunlight: (1) See Jesus as He truly is; (2) consider His work as High Priest; and (3) faith in Him will transform the believer into “a perfect Christian.” Here was the “beginning” fulfillment of the promise of *Early Writings* of a “refreshing” which will “give power ... and prepare the saints to stand ... when the seven last plagues shall be poured out.” [2]

—*From the writings of Robert J. Wieland*

**Endnotes:**

[1] Ellet J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, p. 7, Glad Tidings ed. (1999).

[2] Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 86.

**Notes:**

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

<https://youtu.be/0Z6gK-4SHK8>

You may subscribe to the e-mail version of *Sabbath School Today* by sending a request to [sabbathschooltoday@1888message.org](mailto:sabbathschooltoday@1888message.org)