

Sabbath School Today
With the 1888 Message Dynamic

The Least of These:
Ministering to Those in Need
Lesson 11: Living the Advent Hope

The “Advent Hope” is centered on the second coming of Christ. That “hope” has its foundation in the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary message found in Daniel 8:14 that motivated our pioneers to self-sacrificing zeal in preaching the three angels’ messages. They were certain that before Christ could come again, His ministry as our High Priest must be brought to an end.

We have frequently referred to the statement from *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection* in which A. T. Jones stated that “the very first work in the cleansing of the sanctuary was the cleansing of the people.” Referring to Daniel 9:24, Jones went on, “It is plain that the transgression must be finished, and the end of sins and reconciliation for all iniquity must be made, and everlasting righteousness must be brought in, in the heart’s experience of every believer in Jesus, before the cleansing of the true sanctuary can be accomplished.” [1]

The cleansing of the sanctuary depends on the “finishing of transgression” or the “finishing of sin” in the lives of God’s people. As long as we continue to sin and continue to pray for our sins to be forgiven, we keep Jesus “employed” in his “job” as our High Priest. He cannot finish His work there in the heavenly sanctuary until He has finished His work here in the hearts of His people, to purify unto Himself a living witness of the power of God over Satan and sin.

From this we see that we must learn what “living the Advent hope” really means. We cannot enter the kingdom of God without the *faith of Jesus Christ*. They go hand in hand, and are the summation of the third angel’s message that will result in God’s declaration: “Here are they that keep the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). In this verse we learn what is essential to our Advent hope. We find two elements in this verse: Commandment keeping and the faith of Jesus. We cannot keep the Commandments of God without the faith of Jesus.

There is much discussion concerning the apostle Paul’s use of the phrase “faith of Jesus” in Galatians 2:16, 21; Ephesians 4:13; and the “beloved” apostle John’s use in Revelation 14:12. What does “*faith of Jesus*” mean? Is it literally *His* faith? Does the faith of Jesus mean His actual faith that He exercised while living on earth in fallen human flesh, or is it our faith *in* Jesus? Is the “gift of faith” in Romans 12:3 literally the faith of Christ given to “every man,” or is it our “believing” in Jesus that constitutes “faith”? Is this even very important for us to grasp, or are we merely creating argument for argument’s sake?

“It is commonly said that theological harmony is impossible in the church until after the second coming of Christ. Theologians just *must* squabble, we think; teachers *must* disagree; pastors *must* preach against each other; you’re not smart unless you demonstrate where you differ with everyone else. Paul says no; this ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Spirit’ means what it says. We are to ‘grow up’ out of our pitiful childishness into ‘the unity of the faith.’ Christ is not divided.

“That means a development of character that brings God’s people unto the enormously high standard of the Son of God Himself—a perfect man, ... the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” [2]

Was the “faith of Jesus” important to the two men who first preached the “1888” message? Was it even a part of the message at that time?

“When the Lord had given to my brethren [A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner] the burden to proclaim this message I felt inexpressibly grateful to God, for I knew it was the message for this time. The third angel’s message is the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. The commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the *faith of* Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists as of equal importance, the law and the gospel going hand in hand. I cannot find language to express this subject in its fullness.” [3]

Here we read that the message brought to us through Waggoner and Jones was unique, focusing on both Commandment-keeping and the faith of Christ. It had not been preached in its fullness prior to this time.

“‘The faith of Jesus.’ It is talked of, but not understood. What constitutes the *faith of* Jesus, that belongs to the third angel’s message? Jesus becoming our sin-bearer that He might become our sin-pardoning Saviour. He was treated as we deserve to be treated. He came to our world and took our sins that we might take His righteousness. Faith in the ability of Christ to save us amply and fully and entirely is the *faith of* Jesus.” [4]

“In chapter one of Ephesians our apostle/author almost loses himself in his efforts to do justice to the grand dimensions of what Christ did. No language, his or ours, has words adequate to portray it. The quality of our Christian experience, our happiness in Christian living, and our fruitfulness, depend on how adequately we grasp this reality of truth. Grasp only a smattering and we are mired in spiritual frustrations. Learn to ‘glory’ in it all, to appreciate it, then ‘the world has been crucified to [us] and [we] to the world’ (Gal. 6:14). A thousand weary ups and downs in following Jesus become one unending triumph.” [5]

But when you attempt to teach “perfection” of character through the “faith of Jesus” you immediately face opposition. You are accused of preaching “perfectionism” which is legalism, and not the gospel. “Someone may ask, ‘Is that the heresy of perfectionism?’

No. 'Perfectionism' is indeed a heresy, but this is not it; the heresy part is the idea of *perfection of the flesh*. The flesh never becomes perfect until Jesus comes." [6] Teaching "perfection" of our characters so that Jesus may finish His work in the heavenly sanctuary is not the same as teaching the heresy of "perfectionism."

Jesus admonished us, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33). And He said, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." (Mark 10:15). We must learn to "keep the faith of Jesus" as a little child, not continually questioning and debating. Faith and truth can easily become lost in "vain philosophy" when we doubt previously cherished beliefs and church doctrines in an effort to accommodate the world's view.

"The kingdom of God is that realm and dominion, that place and order of authority and government, in which God is king. Where God is king the rule, the authority, the power, the law—the whole order of things—is His alone; else it is not the kingdom of God in truth. In the kingdom of God, God is king of all and in all that is there. Where God is king there is no room for any other authority or law or order of things. He is not king in a divided kingdom; no one can serve two masters. In this it is always God manifest in Christ by the Holy Spirit—the Godhead—that is meant." [7]

If we hope to reach the "high calling" that God has put before us, we must learn our lessons concerning faith and that includes overcoming all sin in this life, *before* the second coming of Jesus. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived" (1 Cor. 6:9, 10), and then Paul wrote a list of grievous sins that are common in our world today, and ends with "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Both our justification and sanctification are found in the "faith of Jesus" given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Paul also wrote that "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." (1 Cor. 4:20). Salvation from sin is not words only, but a reality in the life of each and every one who will allow the Holy Spirit to accomplish His cleansing work in the perfection of our characters so that we may worship God in "spirit and in truth," and be ready for translation to the kingdom of God at the second coming of Jesus. We must learn now to submit our whole life, heart and mind, to the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way we are freed from the fear of judgment and death, and can live *now* in the kingdom of God while still on this earth. The sorrows, pains, evils, and injustices of this world will have no effect on us because we "look for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

The apostle Paul wrote that the true gospel, which is the message of Christ's work in His human flesh while on earth, and in His High Priestly ministry in heaven is "for the perfecting of the saints." It is the message that will bring "unity of the faith, and of knowledge of the Son of God, unto the perfect Man, unto the measure of the statute of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, 13). "This is Christlike *perfection of character*. The

Bible does not even claim perfection of Christ's flesh. As a Carpenter, He was a careful workman, and faithful; but must we say that He never bent a nail or hit His thumb? Hebrews says He learned 'perfection' by the 'things which He suffered' (5:8, 9). ... It takes your breath away ... forever, as it were. *That is love (agape)*, says Paul! How can you ever hold back an ounce of devotion from Him?" [8]

"When you're perplexed about whether a message you hear or read comes from God or is a counterfeit from the Enemy, just watch and see: does it *build up* the church? ... But let us beware of ridiculing the idea of overcoming sin, because it's what Christ died to accomplish in His people! It's the final fruit of His work as High Priest in the second apartment of His heavenly sanctuary, the time of its ultimate cleansing on this antitypical Day of Atonement. It's His work going forward just now. It's His ministry of the 'growing up' of His people that they may no longer be immature, 'tossed about' by confusion, but may 'grow up' before His coming." [9]

This is what it means to experience and "live the Advent hope" in this present evil world!

—Ann Walper

Endnotes:

[1] A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*, pp. 120, 121; Glad Tidings ed. (2003).

[2] Robert J. Wieland, *Ephesians: You've Been "Adopted,"* p. 73; Glad Tidings ed. (2005).

[3] *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 217; cf. *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 172.

[4] *The 1888 Materials*, *ibid.*

[5] Wieland, *Ephesians: You've Been "Adopted,"* p. 20.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[7] A. T. Jones, *The Medical Missionary*, vol. 18; April 14, 1909.

[8] Wieland, *Ephesians: You've Been "Adopted,"* pp. 73, 72.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 74.

Notes:

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WGqDWBapcU>

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