

Sabbath School Today

With the 1888 Message Dynamic

Preparation for the End Time

Lesson 2. Daniel and the End Time

Our quarterly provides interesting lesson studies on the first chapters of the book of Daniel, but “hidden” in the Discussion Questions at the very end of this week’s study is something that is possibly one of the most misunderstood concepts of the 1888 message—“corporate guilt” as exhibited in Daniel’s prayer in chapter 9, and the resultant “corporate repentance.”

“Burdened in behalf of Israel, Daniel studied anew the prophecies of Jeremiah. They were very plain—so plain that he understood by these testimonies recorded in books ‘the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem’ (Dan. 9:2).

With faith founded on the sure word of prophecy, Daniel pleaded with the Lord for the speedy fulfillment of these promises. He pleaded for the honor of God to be preserved. *In his petition he identified himself fully with those who had fallen short of the divine purpose, confessing their sins as his own.* [1]

“What a prayer was that which came forth from the lips of Daniel! What humbling of soul it reveals! ... Heaven responded to that prayer by sending its messenger to Daniel. In this our day, prayers offered in like manner will prevail with God. ‘The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much’ [James 5:16]. ...

“Have not we as great need to call upon God as had Daniel? I address those who believe that we are living in the very last period of this earth’s history. I entreat you to take upon your own souls a burden for our churches, our schools, and our institutions. That God who heard Daniel’s prayer will hear ours when we come to Him in contrition. Our necessities are as urgent, our difficulties are as great, and we need to have the same intensity of purpose, and in faith roll our burden upon the great Burden-bearer. There is need for hearts to be as deeply moved in our time as in the time when Daniel prayed. [2]

The word “corporate” has nothing to do with legal organization, boards, or committees. It is strictly a biblical idea having its source in Paul’s brilliant chapter on the church and its members being united with Christ. The church is “the body of Christ,” “not one member, but many.” “As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.”

There is no English word to describe this; hence we use a Latin derivative, *corporate*, which comes from *corpus*, “body.” It is impossible to appreciate what mature union with Christ or reconciliation with Him means without grasping Paul’s idea. “All the members ... being many, are one body” means they bear a corporate relationship to one another. “We [are] all baptized into one body” describes the corporate unity of the church (1 Cor. 12:12-14)

But there is more than unity: “The foot, ... the ear, ... the eye, ... God [hath] set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.” Here is corporate diversity. “The eye cannot say unto the hand, ‘I have no need of thee.’” Here is corporate need. No one member can despise another.

God has built something else into the body: “God [composed] the body, having given more abundant honor to that which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body.” Here is corporate balance. The purpose? “That the members should have the same care one for another” as the parts of a human body have a corporate concern. If “one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.” Here is corporate pain. If “one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.” Here is corporate joy (vss. 15-26).

The idea of the human race being a corporate whole “in Adam” was deeply imbedded in Hebrew thinking (1 Cor. 15:22). Daniel asks forgiveness for the sins of “our fathers,” saying, “We [have not] obeyed the voice of the Lord our God,” although he himself was obedient (Dan. 9:8-11). Jesus charged the murder of Zacharias on the Jewish leaders of His day, although the act occurred about 800 years earlier (Matt. 23:35; 2 Chron. 24:20). All this illustrates corporate identity and corporate guilt.

This means that the sin that another human has committed, I could commit if Christ had not saved me from it. The righteousness of Christ cannot be a mere adjunct to my own good works, a slight push to get me over the top. Our righteousness is all of Him, or it is nothing.

This was the stumbling block in 1888 and still offends many today. Apart from the grace of a Savior, the sins of the whole world would be mine if I had the “opportunity” to be in the shoes of other people, to be tempted as they in their circumstances.

This idea is impressively stated by Ellen White: “God knows every thought, every purpose, every plan, every motive. The books of heaven record the sins that would have been committed had there been opportunity.” [3] Do those “computer records” show sins that do not in fact exist deep

Those sins “that would have been committed had there been opportunity,” which we have not repented of, represent our *unrealized* guilt. Other people have committed them and we have been thankful that we have not been pressured sufficiently by temptation to do them ourselves. It follows that *corporate repentance is repenting of sins that we would have committed had we had the opportunity*. This goes rather deep.

Wesley said of a drunk in the gutter, "There but for the grace of Christ am I." When the church learns to appreciate such contrition, Christ's love will course through its veins and transform it into a truly "caring church," the most effective soul-winning "body" history has ever known (Zech. 8:20-23). [4]

Ellen White discerned truth. The great gospel commission could have been completed before the horrors of World Wars I and II were unleashed on the world. [5] The reason is that the 1888 message was the "beginning" of the latter rain and the loud cry; she says it was "to a large degree" rejected by the leadership of the church. Thus those who fervently believed in the doctrine of the second advent actually delayed it for generations. The sorrow of what "might have been" filled Ellen White's soul with anguish. [6]

If we were to have another 1888 session where the Holy Spirit manifested Himself as the latter rain, would we again insult Him? Unless there is repentance for doing it the first time, the answer has to be yes. We must repeat the mistakes of our brethren of the past so long as we do not welcome a corporate repentance that cleanses us from every similar "purpose" or "motive," however deep.

Is such a repentance possible? Will God ever have a people who have so learned contrition that they feel that all the sins of the human race could be theirs but for the grace of a Savior, and who thus stand before the throne "cleansed"? Will He have a people who recognize their 100 percent need of the imputed righteousness of Christ, who fully realize what they would be without it?

Some sadly say no; ancient Israel failed and so must modern Israel. But the bottom line of Bible prophecy says: "Then the sanctuary shall be cleansed" (Dan. 8:14). Zechariah foretells an experience of corporate and denominational repentance, followed by a glorious experience of cleansing (Zech. 12:7-14; 13:1). Such an experience permeating the church is denominational repentance. Christ calls for it in His message to Laodicea. Isn't it time for us to respond?

As part of the human race, we share the corporate guilt of the murder of the Son of God, but are not held accountable or "condemned" unless we refuse the gift of repentance (see John 3:16-19). [7] As Seventh-day Adventists we also share the corporate guilt of our forebears' rejection of the beginning of the latter rain and the loud cry, but we will not be condemned for that sin if we accept the gift of repentance. For a long time, the Lord Jesus has been pleading with us to respond.

Is it time to do so? A world in darkness and the great universe beyond await our decision.

—From the writings of *Robert J. Wieland*

Endnotes (Ellen G. White):

[1] *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 554, 555 (emphasis added).

[2] "The Prayer That God Accepts," *Review and Herald*, Feb. 9, 1897.

[3] *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1085.

[4] See also *The Great Controversy*, pp. 611, 612.

[5] See also *Counsels for the Church*, p. 29; *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, Feb. 28, 1893, pp. 419-421; *Evangelism*, p. 696.

[6] *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 104-106; *Review and Herald*, Dec. 15, 1904.

[7] See also *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 38.

Notes:

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

<https://youtu.be/Wwpk9nwIPKE>

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