

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

***Oneness in Christ***  
**Lesson 3: “That They All May Be One”**

Almost every Sabbath School class can be split on Bible issues such as what nature did Christ “take” in His incarnation, or what is the unique Adventist idea of the cleansing of the sanctuary, or what is justification. The good news of our overcoming “even as [Christ] overcame” is often denigrated as the heresy of “perfectionism.” “Independent ministries” and independent publications are legion. Our interpretations of the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation are variant and contradictory.

Our leaders wistfully ask with reference to the earth-lighting fourth angel’s message of Revelation 18, “How can we light the world with the glory of the three angels’ messages if we are busy fighting among ourselves?” Some times in our Sabbath School Lessons, Christlike unity is spoken of, as “it-would-be-nice-if.” Is Jesus still praying His prayer of John 17? The nearer we come to the end of the world, the more we seem to be riven asunder by our heart convictions of what is truth. Most pastors now refuse to preach about the solid Seventh-day Adventist core truths that established our identity.

What is the only effective solution?

Jesus asked His Father to “sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. ... For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. ... I pray ... that they all may be one ... that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (vss. 17-21). In other words, Revelation 18 is a mere fantasy unless we come into unity in the simple experience of believing revealed truth.

In the celebrated 1848 Sabbath Conferences our pioneers on their knees wrestled their “sanctified” way through to solid truths that established this church. They resolved the Great Disappointment confusion by whole-heartedly embracing the truth of the sanctuary doctrine.

But the Lord Jesus saw that after a few decades the truth was still largely an intellectual conviction. A dead formalism was gripping the church and its ministerial or pastoral leadership. Therefore in 1888 “in His great mercy” He “sent a most precious message” which He intended should bring us into a perfect heart and intellectual unity, prepared for the final movement of Revelation 18. For many decades the full truth of what happened was carefully concealed from our knowledge as Ellen White’s testimonies regarding “1888” were buried in her Ellen G. White Estate Vault and research was discouraged. In 1987, preparatory to a grand Centennial in 1988, the White Estate published in four huge volumes, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, every word that she had written about “1888.” The total is 1821 pages.

The result: we find that numerous times she likens “our” denominational reaction to that “most precious message” as “just like the Jews” reaction to Jesus Christ. She compares the same raw unbelief that plagued ancient Israel in the days of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, to our disunity of unbelief regarding the Lord’s leading in the 1888 message. [1] This spirit was not one-hundred percent, but it was “in a great measure” and “in a great degree.” [2] The result was decisive in that it turned away the gift of the latter rain and prevented that generation from witnessing the events of Revelation 18.

A genuine faith includes within itself a belief of the truth. Ellen White declared that the time will come when Seventh-day Adventists will be totally united in their heartfelt belief of theological truth, as it was in our pioneer beginning. There will be no more split Sabbath School classes or divided churches. Speaking of “those who are engaged in proclaiming the last solemn message to a dying world,” she says, “although possessing different temperaments and dispositions, they will see eye to eye in all matters of religious belief. They will speak the same things; they will have the same judgment; they will be one in Christ Jesus.” [3]

Ancient Israel’s problem was rebellion against the Lord’s leading; it’s ours, too. But the Holy Spirit is giving the gift of denominational repentance: “Then the work will move forward with solidity and double strength. A new efficiency will be imparted to the workers in every line. Men will learn of the reconciliation from iniquity which the Messiah has brought in through His sacrifice. The last message of warning and salvation will be given with mighty power. The earth will be lightened with the glory of God, and it will be ours to witness the soon coming in power and glory, of our Lord and Saviour.” [4]

—Paul E. Penno

#### **Endnotes:**

[1] *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 600.

[2] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 235.

[3] Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches*, p.124.

[4] Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry*, p. 185.

#### **Notes:**

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

[https://youtu.be/urzd\\_BTmU28](https://youtu.be/urzd_BTmU28)

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