

# ***Sabbath School Today***

## **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

### ***Preparation for the End Time***

#### **Lesson 5. Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary**

What is the truth of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary? How shall we present Him “standing toward the sinner”?

There are serious arguments that can be presented in support of the fear motivation to give up sin. Fear is not completely or necessarily negative. A perfectly healthy person with no hang-ups will look both ways before crossing a busy street. It's common sense. Nor can it be denied that throughout the millenniums of years of human history God's inspired servants have often employed fear as their motivation tool for inducing sinners to respond. The Old Testament prophets frequently speak of God destroying nations and people. There is no question that God sent the Flood to destroy sinners, also the fires of Sodom and Gomorrah, and destroyed the Egyptians at the Red Sea crossing.

The question that is of concern in the 1888 message is, What appeal will God use in that final “lighting of the earth with glory”? A “voice” will sound from heaven with unprecedented power, “Come out of [Babylon], My people.” Will the motivation be associated with a uniquely clear revelation of the cross, what the Son of God accomplished there, and what it cost Him to save the world? Or will it be the quintessential appeal of fear inspired by the most terrorism-sounding message of all time? “The third angel's message in verity” [1] appears on the surface to be the latter.

In seeking a “balance” between what appear to be contradictory views, we can ask, Does the cleansing of the sanctuary ministry of our High Priest include a clearer concept of the atonement than God's people as a body have perceived in the past? If so, will it result in a more complete reconciliation with God than has ever in the past been experienced by God's people as a body? And again, if so, will it be a clearer revelation of the *agape* of Christ? It must be true that nothing less can achieve such an unprecedented reconciliation!

Admittedly, this question reopens a contention that has boiled for half a century—was the 1888 message genuinely new light, or was it a mere re-emphasis of 16th century Reformationist and current Evangelical ideas? The 1888 message was far in advance of the Protestant Reformation message. The 1888 message idea of justification by faith is one that is parallel to and consistent with that unique truth of Christ our High Priest cleansing His people and the heavenly sanctuary.

Correctly understood the 1888 message presents an appeal to the heart with a motivation imposed by *agape*. The reason must be that the cleansing of the sanctuary

accomplishes a “final atonement,” seen as an ultimate heart experience of reconciliation with God.

Wherein is the message “be ye reconciled to God” associated with comprehending the cross? The context of 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15 can help.

“The love [*agape*] of Christ [is what] constraineth us,” that is, motivates us (Peterson in *The Message*, renders it, “moved me to such extremes”). But in this final day of atonement, it’s not just an “extremist” apostle Paul so moved, but a corporate “body” of believers. Never before has this happened to such a “body.”

Why this development? The church matures, to think and to appreciate that “love,” more deeply. Because of clearer light, more cogent, meaningful concepts, “we” conclude from reasonable evidence—“we thus judge.”

“Judge” what? The answer: how “One died for all.” The equation probes why He died, and what He accomplished thereby. The cross has to become the focus of “the third angel’s message in verity.”

What does the resulting motivation accomplish? It accomplishes an unprecedented degree of consecration sensed by “all saints.” “Those who live” can no longer “live unto themselves,” which is the only solution to the problem of Laodicea’s corporate lukewarmness. This would seem to be the motivation that “constrains” that corporate body of believers to “follow the Lamb (the crucified Christ) whithersoever He goeth.” It is a new level development in Christian history deemed worthy of special mention in Revelation, where all references to the church are couched in corporate terms.

The context indicates that “be ye reconciled to God” experience depends on a clear comprehension of how “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,” how He took upon Himself “their trespasses.” The last rays of light to shine upon this dark world, we are told, will therefore be “a revelation of God’s character of love.” Here is objective truth, not merely subjective emotion.

So the issue is evangelistic, not complex theology. What message can reconcile the alienated, world-loving, self-centered, “lukewarm” heart to God? Unless a clearer understanding of the gospel becomes involved, the result must inevitably be further lukewarmness of devotion perpetuated generation after generation for centuries more.

The present-day cleansing truth pleads with the sinner “in Christ’s stead.” That is, as soul-winners we are to enable the sinner to identify with Christ so fully that he experiences a first-hand encounter with Him as vivid as did the Samaritan woman at her well or Nicodemus in his night interview. This is soul-winning and soul-holding evangelism. Nothing else grips bored, world-loving Adventist youth.

—Paul E. Penno

**Endnote:**

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372.

**Notes:**

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

<https://youtu.be/ABKn5wCXJyg>

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