

Sabbath School Today
With the 1888 Message Dynamic

The Book of Revelation
Lesson 7: The Seven Trumpets

The 1888 message and its history have a direct bearing on the truth of the seven trumpets of Revelation 8-11. Ellen White clearly identified the 1888 message as “the beginning” of the loud cry of Revelation 18, and the beginning also of the latter rain:

“The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth [Rev. 18:1-4].” [1]

“[If it had been accepted] then the strong, clear light of that other angel who comes down from heaven having great power, would have filled the earth with his glory. ... The very message that God meant should go forth from the Minneapolis meeting.” [2]

“[It was] showers of the latter rain from heaven.” [3]

The seven trumpets occupy four chapters of Revelation—nearly a fifth of the book. We know that Revelation 2 and 3 describe God’s true church throughout seven periods of world history from the time of the apostles down to the end of the world. *It’s the story of God’s true people in relation to Him:*

“The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world.” [4]

Likewise, chapter 6 of Revelation describes the seven seals, which also cover “different periods in the history of the world” “to the end of time,” *describing God’s true people in relation to the world:*

Then comes an interlude during which a great final world storm threatens to break out continually, but is held in check by “four angels” who “hold” the tornado back. During this time, God “seals” His people to be ready for the second coming (chapter 7): The seventh trumpet is the end of the world, and “silence in heaven.” Again, the cycle of world history is complete.

Four entire chapters devoted again to world history! The seven trumpets *describe world events as they relate to God’s true church*. This is the view that Seventh-day Adventists have held ever since the time of the early pioneers, all through the decades of Ellen

White's ministry. She never said a word to disparage the prophetic understandings of those pioneers, or of church leaders in the 1888 era. There was nothing wrong with their main prophetic understandings; their problem was in misunderstanding the message of Christ's righteousness. The seven trumpets are the seven main periods of world history since the time of Christ, and include:

- (1) The high priestly ministry of Christ for the world (8:2-5).
- (2) The abysmal fall of the world civilization that prevailed in the time of Christ (8:6-13).
- (3) The rise of Islam as a protest against apostasy, and the reasons for its world-shaking philosophy (9:1-21).
- (4) The rise of the Great Second Advent Movement and its impact on the world including the story of the Great Disappointment of 1844 (chapter 10).
- (5) The end of the persecution of the saints during the Dark Ages (11:1-3).
- (6) The care of God for His people and their nurture in persecution (11:4-6).
- (7) The French Revolution and the beginnings of world Communism (11:4-7).
- (8) The persecution of God's people in France and papal rejoicing over it (11:9, 10).
- (9) The growth and ministry of the great world Bible Societies (11:11, 12).
- (10) The French Revolution history (11:11).
- (11) The inauguration of Christ's Most Holy Apartment ministry (11:15-17).
- (12) The beginnings of the final great time of trouble for the world (11:18).
- (13) The work of Christ's final atonement performed in the Most Holy Apartment (11:19).

And there is where the 1888 message and its history figure prominently in chapter 10. It's the event which announces the completion of the great gospel commission which began long ago at Pentecost: "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets" (10:7).

When the "seventh" of the angels who blow the "seven trumpets" shall "begin to sound," the message that God sends will not be a works message, but a faith message. It won't be clench your fists and grind your teeth and try harder, but it will be a revelation of the much more abounding grace of a complete Savior, whom we are to "behold." We are "to consider Christ ... intelligently, just as He is, [this] will transform one into a perfect Christian, for 'by beholding we become changed.'" [5]

Some ridicule this as the heresy of perfectionism, but it is not perfection of the flesh, but growing up into Christ, *by faith in Him*, to perfection *of character* while God's people are still in sinful flesh. In other words, it will simply be overcoming as He overcame, as Jesus Himself says: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame" (Rev. 3:21). It will be the living out in the lives of His people who have fallen, sinful flesh, His overcoming life in our fallen sinful flesh which He "took."

There are two Greek words for righteousness that describe this marvelous accomplishment of Christ. To the reader who does not see "the third angel's message in verity" in this passage in Romans, it will help to make the distinction crystal clear. The

unique 1888 message of Christ's righteousness is unfolded in the Greek of Romans, and once you see it, it will astonish you: "The righteousness of God [*dikaiosune*] ... is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. 3:22).

Now note what happens when God's people "believe"—there is a second Greek word used this time: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law [*dikaionomata*] might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3, 4).

Now at last the *dikaiosune* (righteousness of Christ) is manifested in the lives of those who believe how good the Good News is, and it is now *dikaionomata* in them. We see it brought to view again when at the close of the blowing of the seventh trumpet in the Day of Atonement, this blessed living out process (by faith) has been completed:

"I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, ... 'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints [*dikaionomata*]" (Rev. 19:6-8).

This transition from "the righteousness of Christ" (*dikaiosune*) to "the righteousness of saints" (*dikaionomata*) was the theme of the 1888 message of Christ's righteousness all during those years when Ellen White was so happy to hear the message. She had never before heard it proclaimed publicly. This was what the seventh angel blows his trumpet to say: "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets" (Rev. 10:7).

"When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas in Minneapolis, it was the first clear teaching of this subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the conversations between myself and my husband. ... And when another presented it, every fiber of my heart said, Amen." [6]

What glorious Good News! Note that the constant emphasis is something that is never seen in any of the "righteousness by faith," "gospel" messages of the Sunday-keeping Evangelical churches. Let us say they are sincere and faithful to the light as they have been permitted to see it. But they don't comprehend it. It's totally unique to the Seventh-day Adventist message that was "sent" to us in the 1888 era: this special ministry of Christ as High Priest is centered in the Most Holy Apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, where the "door" was "opened" for the "voice of the seventh angel," a message never before clearly heard in world history. It's the message of the final cosmic Day of Atonement, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary that began in 1844.

Yes, that "most precious message" was not ashamed to speak this word: "Perfection, perfection of character, is the Christian goal—perfection attained in human flesh in this world [note, *not of* "human flesh"]. Christ attained it in human flesh in this world, and

thus made and consecrated a way by which, *in Him*, every believer can attain it. He, having attained it, has become our great High Priest, by His priestly ministry in the true sanctuary to enable us to attain it.” [7]

What made Ellen White so happy when she heard this was what she saw was a cutting of the Gordian Knot in Adventism: “This [1888] message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.” [8]

She perceived that deep inside the message was this grand truth of a universal legal justification for the sins of *the whole world*, for they were all “imputed” unto Christ. This glorious achievement for “all men” made it possible for God to treat every human being as though his or her debt of sin was paid, to send His rain on the just and on the unjust alike. “The sacrifice of the sins of the whole world” involved Christ coming to “taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9), for: “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, ... [for] the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:5, 6).

“... the uplifted Saviour, [said Ellen White, is] the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness [*dikaioisune*] of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God [*dikaionomata*]. ... It is the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.” [9]

Thank you, you “seventh angel,” for the blowing of your seventh trumpet! You have brought us a message for the world to hear.

—From the writings of Robert J. Wieland

Endnotes:

[1] *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1073.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 1070.

[3] Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies*, Series A, No. 6, p. 19.

[4] Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 585.

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

[6] *1888 Materials*, p. 349.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 89.

[8] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 91.

[9] *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91, 92 (1896).

Notes:

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

<https://youtu.be/RQMXd-JesZo>

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