

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

The Book of Revelation **Lesson 8: Satan's a Defeated Enemy**

The title of this lesson, "Satan's a Defeated Enemy," almost seems like the Great Controversy was wrapped up at the cross. But, of course, the "Quarterly" doesn't leave us there. It gives "hope" and assurance, without any thought to Christ's need to reconcile His alienated Remnant Bride to Himself—The Atonement—the heart of the 1888 message. In many quarters of the church the remnant is no longer an issue. It is just a "remnant" appendage of our curious 19th century history.

There are many religions in the world. Only one claims relevance for the entire world and embodies a built-in compulsion for its proclamation to the world: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). "This is indeed ... the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42). "The bread of God is He which ... giveth life unto the world"; "the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:33, 51). "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). "God our Saviour ... will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3, 4). He "is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10). "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). "The everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6).

Suppose any Christian denomination claims to be the *one* true church described in the Bible: would such a claim be necessarily arrogant? Is there is no one *true* church on earth? And suppose somewhere on earth *one* true church does meet the doctrinal criteria in the Bible, but it is so plagued with internal confusion and apostasy and backsliding that it can make no credible claim before the world, does that mean that it will never be healed and purified?

Bible teaching may seem at present unattained, but that does not mean that it is unattainable, given the leading and ministry of the Holy Spirit of God plus that there are at least some people on earth who are honest at heart who will respond to His leading. If the latter is not true, then it must be obvious that Christ died for nothing!

Is there such a Remnant body whom the Heavenly Bridegroom can draw to Himself? The 1888 message centers on the end-time Day of Atonement work of Christ our High Priest who accomplishes this union with His bride. Scripture speaks of "one body, and one Spirit, ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:4, 5). It speaks of a people who

“keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12), a “remnant ... seed” emerging after centuries of the Dark Ages as those distinguished who “keep the commandments of God, and [who] have the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17). They are distinct from “Babylon,” a false system of worship that will deceive “all that dwell upon the earth” except those “whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 13:8). They will bear a witness to earth and heaven that it is possible for an organized, corporate “body” of believers in Christ to “follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth” who stand displayed before the universe as a corporate body “in [whose] mouth is found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Rev. 14:4, 5). They will eventually be the fulfillment of Paul’s vision of a “glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but ... holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). In all honesty, one must admit that there is no such “spotless church” on earth today, but if the Bible is true, someday there will be.

What will accomplish such a transformation? There’s a hint in Ephesians 5:2: the proclamation of *agape*, which will result in the experience of justification by faith (Rom. 5:8-11). If such a “church” is reconciled to God, it will also be reconciled to God’s holy law.

God has entrusted to His people on earth, His “remnant” of Revelation 12:17 and 14:12 the work of proclaiming the “sealing message.” If they will be faithful in proclaiming “the everlasting gospel” in a way that the message can prepare a people for translation, then the Lord says He will do His part and “hold” or restrain those terrible “four winds” of war. The “sealing” truth is not a watered down message borrowed from Babylon, but the authentic gospel that Paul says “is the power of God unto salvation,” the message of Christ’s righteousness (Rom. 1:16).

Daniel and Revelation clearly teach that the hour of this great Day of Atonement is now. “What is this great ‘Day of Atonement’ when God calls for a special repentance from His people?” It is His final work in the Most Holy Apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. Christ Himself as great High Priest in His sanctuary is totally dedicated to bringing an end to the sin and suffering on this earth. Are we not called to understand, to be in full sympathy with Him?

The cosmic Day of Atonement is just what its name says—the Day of final reconciliation (“atonement” means at-one-with). It is not a difficult idea to grasp.

It’s when the alienated heart of humanity is at last fully reconciled to God and His holy law. Not that every human will submit to this work of “at-one-with”; many will refuse to their bitter end. But the Lord will succeed in winning a “remnant” to full oneness with Himself.

They will demonstrate what “all men” could experience if only they would. This “remnant” will at last fully appreciate Christ for what He is. They will “grow up” out of the immaturity of “children” “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,”

“speaking the truth in love [*agape*]” (Eph. 4:13-15). Thus as their peers, in principle, they will “judge” all humanity.

Opposed and ridiculed, they will “follow the Lamb [the crucified Christ] whithersoever He goeth. ... In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Rev. 14:1-5). This is generally thought of as an impossible dream. But if it doesn’t happen, Christ will forever remain embarrassed and discredited. He died specifically to achieve this goal.

But this “remnant” will never be conscious that they honor Christ. The more like Him they grow to be through sanctification of the Spirit, the more unworthy will they feel themselves to be. In the final Judgment they will not assume that Christ is inviting them, “Come, ye blessed of My Father.” They will look around expecting Him to call others, not themselves (see Matt. 25:31-40).

Fully at-one with Him, a group will “overcome even as [He] overcame” (Rev. 3:21). His Bride will have “made herself ready” for “the marriage of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:1-8). Finally it is His triumph!

Then at last the sacrifice of Christ will have been fully vindicated—He, not they, glorified.

—*Paul E. Penno*

Notes:

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

<https://youtu.be/BxrDK5anYW8>

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