

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

Oneness in Christ **Lesson 8: Unity in Faith**

The *Quarterly* begins with a snapshot of the controversy of 1888, but the image is blurred, and must be brought into proper focus.

Yes, there was discussion about just which tribes constituted the ten horns of Daniel 7. However, the controversy and “hostile attitudes” began two years before, and remains with us to this day. In 1886, E. J. Waggoner wrote a commentary on the covenants that focused Galatians 3:24 on Christ instead of the law. The General Conference leadership took exception to Waggoner’s position because they saw it as undermining the foundation of their argument in support of the perpetuity of the Sabbath. Their attitude was, throw out the law and you throw out support for the Sabbath truth! Waggoner was not throwing out the law. He was instead placing the law where it belonged. The goal was not perfect law-keeping, but the perfect righteousness of Christ as the only source of our salvation.

When Ellen White came down on the Waggoner and Jones’ side of the debate, the older and “more experienced brethren” became upset. A. G. Daniells later wrote that she had to stand “almost alone” against nearly the entire General Conference in her defense of Waggoner and Jones’ position on righteousness by faith in Christ alone. [1] The elder brethren’s feet were firmly set in the concrete of their “stand by the old landmarks” position. They could not accept that two young men with practically no theological experience could have been chosen of God, and given “divine credentials” [2] to teach them—the theologically experienced brethren—concerning the everlasting covenant and righteousness by faith.

As the argument continued through the years following Minneapolis, in 1890 Ellen White wrote to Uriah Smith that he, Dan Jones, and “Brother Porter” were “spending [their] investigative powers for naught to produce a position on the covenants to vary from the position that Brother Waggoner has presented. ... The covenant question is a clear question and would be received by every candid, unprejudiced mind ... You have turned from plain light because you were afraid that the law question in Galatians would have to be accepted.” [3]

Ellen White wrote, “In the manifestation of the power that lightens the earth with its glory [referring to Rev. 18:4 under the power of the latter rain], they [the opposers of the 1888 message] will see only something which in their blindness they think dangerous, something which will arouse their fears and they will brace themselves against it. Because the Lord does not work according to their expectations and ideas, they will oppose the work.” [4]

Tuesday's lesson discusses our unique sanctuary doctrine. We most assuredly must stand firmly on our distinctive and essential doctrines—the work of our High Priest for His people, and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. This is our “essential doctrine” that called us out in 1844, and separates us from all other denominations in the whole world. But when was the last time you heard a sermon on Sabbath morning on any aspect of the sanctuary? [5] There are other people who keep the Sabbath, who long for the coming of Christ in clouds of glory, and who understand the non-immortality of the “soul” of man. But no other people understand the ministry of our High Priest in purifying a “peculiar people” who will defend His character of love before a disintegrating world on the brink of self destruction.

During the same time when God was seeking a people upon whom He could rain down the blessings from heaven, Satan was fast at work creating a counterfeit theory of righteousness so deceptive that it captured the minds of many of God's “elect.” This deception was rooted in pantheism, taught by J. H. Kellogg at Battle Creek, and infected some of the “brightest stars” of the church at that time. It was a theory that made the sanctuary unneeded baggage in man's quest for holiness.

“Any man who seeks to present theories which would lead us from the light that has come to us on the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary, should not be accepted as a teacher. A true understanding of the sanctuary question means much to us as a people.” [6] These words were written in the context of the pantheism crisis precipitated by the teachings of Kellogg on the nature of God. “If God is an essence pervading all nature, then He dwells in all men; and in order to attain holiness, man has only to develop the power within him.” [7]

The crisis that confronted the church at the turn of the last century (the “alpha”), will raise its head again (as the “omega”) just before Christ returns. Many people will be confused about our distinctive doctrines, and will be led to abandon the sanctuary truth and all that is part of that truth (e.g., the investigative judgment; cleansing and transformation of our characters before the second coming).

“There is in it [pantheism] the beginning of theories which, carried to their logical conclusion, would destroy faith in the sanctuary question and in the atonement. I do not think that Dr. Kellogg saw this clearly. I do not think that he realized that in laying his new foundation of faith, he was directing his steps toward infidelity.” [8]

Pantheism's theory is that all is one and all is god (monism). If all is god, then man is god. This idea was deceptively transformed into “Christ in you,” a counterfeit to the Biblical teaching of “Christ in you, the hope of glory ... that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” (Col. 1:27, 28). If all is god, then all is good, and the concept that sin separates us from God is denied, and salvation “from sin” loses all meaning. We don't need a Saviour if god is “us,” as pantheism declares. All a person needs to do is “seek the god”—or “divine spark”—within each of us, by opening the mind through “mindfulness” meditation, controlled breathing, slowly repeating resonant syllables while attempting to obtain a “clear mind,” and “focusing on the divine.”

However, there is a vast gulf between this “new age” type of hypnotic meditation and the “meditate upon every Word of God” type of “thoughtful hour” we are counseled to do when “contemplating the life of Christ.” “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.” [9]

Notice: The focus is not on us, but on Christ’s work of righteousness. Such deep contemplation may and should elicit a response from a broken and contrite heart. Tears may flow, heart rate quicken (rather than slow, as in “new age” meditation), as our mind reflects on the differences between our sinfulness, and the love and righteousness demonstrated by God in Gethsemane and on the cross.

Returning to our discussion on the sanctuary, we find that an essential element to the sanctuary doctrine is Christ, our High Priest, and His ministry in cleansing a people from all sin. The nature which Christ assumed in His incarnation is a necessary aspect of the sanctuary. If Christ was not “touched with the feelings of our infirmities” so that He could be “in all points tempted like as we are” (Heb. 4:15), then He does not qualify as our High Priest. In God’s design in the earthly sanctuary, the priest was taken from among the people he was to represent in his work of intercession. The priest had common temptations and inclinations to sin; he “knew what was in man” (see for example John 2:25), and therefore was prepared to present the repentant petitions of fallen men and women before the throne of grace.

When Christ became human, in order to save the human race, He had to assume that which He was not. Even though Jesus took upon Himself the common inclinations and propensities of fallen flesh, never once did He indulge them, and never once did Jesus sin, not even by a thought. Therefore, Paul implores us, “let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” because with that mind, we too can overcome all sin. [10]

“Now as to Christ’s not having ‘like passions’ with us: In the Scriptures all the way through He is *like* us and *with* us according to the flesh. He is the seed of David according to the flesh [Rom. 1:3]. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh [Rom. 8:3]. Don’t go too far. He was made in the likeness of sinful *flesh*, not in the likeness of sinful *mind*. *Do not drag His mind into it*. His flesh was our flesh, but the mind was ‘the mind of Christ Jesus.’ Therefore it is written: ‘Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.’ [Phil. 2:5]. If He had taken our mind, how, then, could we ever have been exhorted to ‘let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus?’ It would have been so already.” [11]

If we would just “let” this mind be in us—stop fighting against the work of Holy Spirit to cleanse us—then Christ could finish His work in the heavenly sanctuary, and come to take His purified people home. The work of purifying a people must begin in the hearts of the people, which is the source of the fountain of sin that flows into the heavenly sanctuary.

“The service in the earthly sanctuary shows also that in order for the sanctuary to be cleansed and the course of the gospel service there to be finished, it must first be finished in the people who have a part in the service. ... The cleansing of the sanctuary, as to the sanctuary itself, was the taking out of and away from the sanctuary all the transgression of the people ... And this stream must be stopped at its fountain in the hearts and lives of the worshipers, before the sanctuary itself could possibly be cleansed. ... The ministry of Christ in the true sanctuary does take away sins forever, does make the comers thereunto perfect, does perfect ‘forever them that are sanctified.’” [12]

Overcoming all sin in this present life through the power of Christ’s faith alone working in us to “will and to do of His good pleasure,” will produce the outworking of His love through us toward others (Phil. 2:12, 13). This is the goal of Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary—the final display of God’s power to transform our characters. Then we will be prepared to visibly display His character of love to the lost world. [13] It is this that will develop a united and “peculiar people” of whom He can declare: “Here are they that keep the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus!” (Rev. 14:12).

—Ann Walper

Endnotes:

[1] See A. G. Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, p. 369.

[2] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 91; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 259.

[3] *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 604; Letter 59, 1890.

[4] *Review and Herald Extra*, Dec. 23, 1890.

[5] An excellent source book for studying the sanctuary message is *The Cross and Its Shadow*, by S. N. Haskell, who was a delegate to the 1888 conference, and one of the few at that time who believed the Jones and Waggoner message.

[6] Ellen G. White, Manuscript 125, 1907, p. 6.

[7] Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 40.

[8] Ellen G. White, Letter 33, 1904, par. 4.

[9] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

[10] See Robert J. Wieland’s *The Good News is Better Than You Think*, CFI Book Division ed. (2018), pp. 13, 14, 24, 52, and 53 for a discussion of how we “let” Christ’s mind be in us.

[11] A. T. Jones, “The Third Angel’s Message No. 17,” *1895 General Conference Bulletin*, p. 327.

[12] A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*, pp. 120, 121, Glad Tidings ed. (2003).

[13] See Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 415, 416.

Notes:

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

<https://youtu.be/Sdn9GeTx5yk>

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