

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

***The Book of Revelation***  
**Lesson 9: Satan and His Allies**

One hundred fifty years ago a little group of Bible students discovered what is known as “the third angel’s message.” From the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation they understood that the papacy was to rise in power, its “deadly wound” of 1798 to be healed, and all the world should wonder after the beast (Rev. 13). They saw that the time would come when the papacy would dictate to the United States of America what to do, and that this republic would join in the worship of the beast and tell the world to “make an image to the beast, which had the wound by the sword, and did live” (Rev. 13:14).

At that time in the early 1800s, the United States was a fiercely Protestant nation. Today the American media repeatedly call the pope “the vicar of Christ,” “His holiness,” and “the holy Father,” which is a remarkable fulfillment of the understandings which the Adventist pioneers derived from their study of Scripture. It’s uncanny; it’s awe-inspiring—this massive, enormous prestige which the papacy enjoys now.

Yet prominent descendants of those Adventist pioneers are today deriding those pioneer views of prophecy, telling us it doesn’t matter what doctrine we believe, all that’s important is “a relationship with Jesus.” The question is: which Jesus? The one of which the pope is the vicar? Or the one who is ministering in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary on the cosmic Day of Atonement, preparing a people to stand when the mark of the beast is enforced?

“What difference does it mean to me in my life?” ask millions of sincere people who simply want to follow Jesus and believe in Him. “Are we to believe that salvation is by grace through faith alone? Or is it by faith *plus* by our own efforts?” The difference sounds trivial? But think again!

Ultimately, when the smoke has cleared away, it’s going to mean the difference between accepting the seal of God or accepting the mark of the beast (Rev. 7:1-4; 13:11-18; 15:2-4). It’s either one or the other, very serious!

The apostle Paul did not muddy the waters of Christianity; he powerfully clarified the gospel. And the 1888 messengers saw what Paul was teaching. Paul taught that justification by faith is an experience of total heart-reconciliation with God (Rom. 3:23-31; 5:11). And if your heart (which by nature is “enmity against God,” Rom. 8:7) is reconciled to God, it will at the same time be reconciled to His holy law. And if your heart is truly reconciled to God’s holy law, you will obey that law—gladly, willingly. In other words, there will be a life-change.

The final issue that the Book of Revelation says will polarize humanity will be that of truth versus falsehood—the seal of God versus the mark of the beast. And today, every issue you and I will face is related to that final one: are we searching for, accepting, welcoming, truth?

The pope argues for Sunday sacredness, employing cleverly stated reason and logic (or illogic) to support the idea that Sunday is now the true Sabbath of God. He reasons that the seventh-day was the Sabbath of the “old covenant,” and Sunday is the Sabbath of the “new covenant.” Thus the Bible doctrine of the two covenants is now seen to be integral to the final issue of the mark of the beast versus the seal of God.

What has been thought to be a minor theological squabble turns out to be an issue of tremendous importance. The 1888 message points to the issue. The two covenants are not matters of time or dispensation; they are timeless. There were some people in Old Testament times who were living under the true new covenant; there are people living today who are still in bondage to the old covenant. Where you stand depends on your understanding and your belief of “the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:5, 14), or your willingness to believe un-truth, that is, the falsehood of a counterfeit or what Paul said was “another gospel” (Gal. 1:6, 7). One will lead to the seal of God, the other to the mark of the beast. And when this truth is understood clear as sunlight, a people will be prepared for Christ’s second coming.

It’s time to stop wavering between two opinions. If Baal be God, follow him, as Elijah said; but if the Christ of the third angel’s message is God, let’s follow Him *all the way*. And that means to believe and accept “the third angel’s message in verity,” which is the message of Christ’s righteousness that must yet lighten the earth with glory.

—Paul E. Penno

**Notes:**

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

<https://youtu.be/6at3kBtdXV8>

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