

Second Quarter 2008 Adult Sabbath School Lessons

Special Insights No. 12

(Produced by the Editorial Board of the 1888 Message Study Committee)

The Efficacy of His Priestly Ministry

Ellen White was overjoyed when she heard the message of justification by faith from the lips of A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner. To her this clear teaching was consonant with the message of the three angels. "The hour of His judgment is come" and our Priest is cleansing the heavenly sanctuary. What connection is there between justification by faith and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary by Jesus our High Priest?

The answer is that since 1844 Jesus was performing the Day of Atonement ministry. He was engaged in the final blotting out of sins. But before the sanctuary could be cleansed in heaven the temple of His people on earth must be cleansed. The source of sin pollution must be ended in His people. The honor of God and the integrity of His covenant were at stake. God has the solution to the problem of sin. The gospel of Jesus Christ can forgive sins and His righteousness has the power by virtue of the Holy Spirit to cleanse the soul temple. This God has promised in His everlasting covenant. [1]

So when she heard this message she recognized in it the power and force of the gospel which would prepare God's people to stand with a pure character in the day of Christ's second coming. They would be a living testimony for God through the crisis hour. They would be part of the 144,000 who would be translated without seeing death at His return. They would be a living testament to the power of God unto salvation from sin. Living in sinful flesh, tempted, tried and afflicted, the mystery of godliness would be revealed in them—"Christ in you the hope of glory."

Like a drumbeat over the course of several weeks Sr. White wrote in the columns of the Review during 1890 of her enthusiasm. The significance of this time frame from January to March 1890 and what was taking place in the ministers' Bible Institute in Battle Creek is of great importance.

Notice her statements: "We are in the day of atonement, and we are to work in harmony with Christ's work of cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. Let no man who desires to be found with the wedding garment on, resist our Lord in His office work. As He is, so will His followers be in this world. We must now set before the people the work which by faith we see our great High Priest accomplishing in the heavenly sanctuary." [2]

"Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary, and He is there to make an atonement for His people.... He is cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. What is our work?—It is our work to be in harmony with the work of Christ. By faith we are to work with Him, to be in union with Him. ... A people is to be prepared for the great day of God." [3]

"Christ is cleansing the temple in heaven from the sins of the people, and we must work in harmony with Him upon the earth, cleansing the soul temple from its moral defilement." [4]

"The people have not entered into the holy place, where Jesus has gone to make an atonement for His children. We need the Holy Spirit in order to understand the truths for this time; but there is spiritual drought in the churches." [5] Notice here that entering the sanctuary with Jesus by faith in the day of atonement means progressing

with the light which Jesus was giving on earth to His people. The truth of justification by faith which Jones and Waggoner were bringing to God's people was to be understood in connection with Jesus' day of atonement ministry in the sanctuary.

"Light is flashing from the throne of God, and what is this for?—It is that a people may be prepared to stand in the day of God." [6]

"If our brethren were all laborers together with God, they would not doubt but that the message He has sent to us during these last two years is from heaven. ... Suppose that you blot out the testimony that has been going during these last two years proclaiming the righteousness of Christ, who can you point to as bringing out special light for the people?" [7] The present message of justification by faith was the third angel's message in verity giving power and force to the cleansing of the sanctuary. This is what she meant by "in verity"—or in truth.

The Sunday-keeping churches had not followed Jesus by faith into His most holy place work in 1844. Hence they were worshiping a god of their own creation—Satan if you please. [8] To this day, for the most part, they view the sanctuary message of Seventh-day Adventists as a colossal error. It has been termed the greatest face-saving device to explain away a mistaken interpretation of Scripture—Daniel 8:14.

But God's people have been given a unique understanding of justification by faith in connection with the cleansing of the sanctuary that is to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord. This is why the Lord gave it to His people to be proclaimed to the nominal Christian churches of the world. They had initially rejected it in 1844.

Christ now stands in the heavenly sanctuary and he ministers in our behalf the merits of His atoning death. And His blood alone can atone for sin. That's not merely a legal atonement. There has to come a practical outworking of that atonement in the hearts and lives of God's people or the great controversy can never be finished. And it must not go on for ever and ever.

While past generations of Adventists may have viewed the investigative judgment as a time to get ready and reform completely, there's a different emphasis today. The gospel, the transformation of our characters from the inside out is what is important. There must be a wedding garment put on in order for us to enter into the wedding.

The important issue looming in the background is that wedding—the marriage of the Lamb—which has been postponed so long. The time must come, and it will come by the grace of God, by His people waking up and sensing how important it is. The time must come when the wife must make herself ready for the wedding.

—Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

1. "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jeremiah 31:33, 34. [[return to text](#)]
2. Ellen G. White, "The Need of Complete Consecration," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (January 21, 1890, p. 33). [[return to text](#)]
3. Ellen G. White, "The Lord Must Be Our Light," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (January 28, 1890, p. 49). [[return to text](#)]
4. Ellen G. White, "The Danger of Talking Doubt," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (February 11, 1890, p. 81). [[return to text](#)]

5. Ellen G. White, "Need of Earnestness in the Cause of God," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (February 25, 1890, p. 113). [\[return to text\]](#)
6. Ellen G. White, "Draw Nigh to God," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (March 4, 1890, p. 129). [\[return to text\]](#)
7. Ellen G. White, "The Present Message," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (March 18, 1890, p. 161). [\[return to text\]](#)
8. "I saw that as the Jews crucified Jesus, so the nominal churches had crucified these messages, and therefore they have no knowledge of the way into the most holy, and they cannot be benefited by the intercession of Jesus there. Like the Jews, who offered their useless sacrifices, they offer up their useless prayers to the apartment which Jesus has left; and Satan, pleased with the deception, assumes a religious character, and leads the minds of these professed Christians to himself. ... He also comes as an angel of light, spreading his influence over the land by means of false reformations. The churches are elated, and consider that God is working marvelously for them, when it is the work of another spirit" (*Early Writings*, 1882, p. 261). [\[return to text\]](#)

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