

ZECHARIAH: MASTER MASON OR PENITENTIAL PROPHET?

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March 19, 2008

Mark Boda relates a family Christmas memory. There is little question that within my family Christmas was the most anticipated season of the year. With seven children the opening of gifts was a monumental enterprise and took a good portion of Christmas morning. Each year there was one gift that arrived from my grandparents who lived far away in New Jersey: a large box of salt water taffy. I'm sure it produced pleasant childhood memories for my mother who had grown up on the Jersey shore, but for her Canadian children, each with a sweet tooth, it was the gift that kept on giving well into the new year.

Of course, there was a rule associated with the consumption of this delicacy: We could only take one each day. By mid-January the box was empty of its contents, and soon everyone had forgotten about taffy. That was until one day I returned from grade school and was invited into my mother's bedroom for a little chat. On her bed was a plastic bag filled with a multitude of wrappings that had once encased salt water taffy, obviously well beyond one child's allotment.

I knew where mom had found the bag. Over the Christmas holidays I had eaten well beyond my ration, and in order to conceal my deceit I had stuffed them in a bag behind the drawer in my dresser. My mother, who was extremely tidy, had taken out that drawer to clean the dust and discovered my little hiding place.

As I raised my surprised eyes from the bag on the bed, they met the sad eyes of my mother. She asked me to sit down on the bed and then sadly told me that it wasn't the salt water taffy that bothered her, but rather the fact that I had deceived her. My sensitive heart broke; I wept and asked her forgiveness. I have never forgotten this moment, because in it I think I came to the realization that sin is far more an issue of relationship than one of behavior. Surely my sinful actions could not be ignored, but they threatened my relationship with my mother, which was a far greater concern.

Zech. 1:1 "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying."

The mention of Cyrus in Isaiah 44:28; 45:1, 13 reveals the high expectations associated with him among the exilic Jewish community. Ezra 1 describes an early response to Cyrus's policies as a group of Jews returned to Palestine under the leadership of Sheshbazzar (539-537 B.C.). These Jews transported temple utensils that had been confiscated by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C. and had been stored in a temple in Babylon and "laid the foundations of the house of God" (Ezra 5:15, 16).

Cyrus did not rule for long over his expansive realm. He was killed in 530 B.C. on a military expedition on the eastern frontier of the empire and with his death rule was transferred to his son Cambyses. He carried out his father's dream to invade Egypt. While there Cambyses' hold on the home front was challenged by a court Magi, Bardiya. Cambyses had to return from Egypt to deal with this crisis. However, en route he accidentally wounded himself with his knife.

One of Cambyses' generals, Darius, assumed control of the Persian army. He returned to Media and killed Bardiya in September 522 B.C. This action set off further rebellions across the empire that consumed much of Darius's energies in the first few years as he consolidated his power.

Darius found himself having to crush revolts in Babylon (Dec. 522 B.C.); and in Egypt from 519-518 B.C.

During this period Jews continued to return to Palestine, and in the early years of Darius built an altar, reintroduced sacrificial rites, restored the foundation of the temple, and completed the structure by 515 B.C. (Ezra 2-6). This was accomplished through the benevolent intervention of Darius amidst hostility from others in Palestine (Ezra 5-6).

The prophetic utterance of Zechariah 1-8 commence October-November 520 B.C. This period follows an upheaval in the Persian Empire. It was the time of transition from the reign of Cambyses (Cyrus's son) to Darius I, which may have raised hopes among the Jews that now Israel might be able to take its place as the seat of God's universal rule of the nations. But as the powerful Darius quelled rebellions across the empire, any such hopes were dashed. Into this context steps the prophet Zechariah, building on the work of Haggai, who had encouraged the people by revealing God's plan to establish his rule (Hag. 2:6-7, 20-23) and identified rebuilding the

temple as the initial phase of this plan.¹

Ezra 5:1, 2; 6:14 presents Zechariah as a prophetic champion of the temple project. The intimate connection between this prophet and the restoration of the temple is discernible within his book. He promises the rebuilding of the temple (Zech. 1:16; 6:12-15), announces the return of God's presence (1:16; 2:5, 10, 13), supports the reinstatement of priestly service (3:1-7, 6:13), envisions temple furnishings (4:1-14; 6:14), and prophesies at the refoundation ceremony with Haggai (4:6).

This connection to the temple is not surprising because Zechariah apparently came from priestly stock, heading up an important clan in a later period (Neh. 12:16). His grandfather Iddo returned with Zerubbabel and Joshua around 520 B.C. (12:4). Zechariah would have been young in 520 B.C. as he began his prophetic career. For a prophetic voice to arise from a priestly context is not odd (Jer. 1:1; Eze. 1:3). Zechariah is identified as a descendant of a man named Iddo (Zech. 1:1, 7) and as one who led the priestly family of Iddo (Neh. 12:16). The name "Iddo" is associated with a family of Levites in the line of Gershom (1 Chron. 6:21), the same family as that of Shimei (Zech. 12:12, 13).

1:2 "The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers." Zechariah takes restoration to another level by calling the people to covenant renewal alongside their rebuilding project. Although Zechariah's message is connected to the rebuilding of the temple, this is not his main focus. He expands his message beyond the temple to the city as a whole and beyond physical rebuilding to moral renewal. He sets this tone from the outset in this initial section.

GOD BEGINS HIS MESSAGE for the present generation by looking to the past. The text builds up Hebrew words to express the intensity of his anger toward the former generation.² Yahweh's anger is found at many points in the Old Testament.³ Its connection to God reveals that anger is not evil in and of itself. At its core, God's anger reveals his passion that arises out of and protects his holy character. It is not

¹ All of the dates in Haggai precede those in Zechariah, except for those in Hag. 2:10-23, which occur in the month after the first date in Zec. 1:1, but two months prior to the second date in Zec 1:7.

² In Heb. one way of expressing intensity is to repeat a finite verb with the same root in the infinitive or a nominal version of that root.

³ B. E. Baloiian, *Anger in the Old Testament* (American University Studies Series VII, Theology and Religion 99; New York: Lang, 1992).

surprising that the majority of references to that anger are found in the context of the covenant—in particular, the breaking of the covenant. The covenant is the vehicle of relationship between a holy God and his people. Its demands express his holy character and denote the standard required of the community who would relate to this holy God.

Expressions of God's anger in the biblical text nearly always lead to consequences in the lives of humans, usually some form of disciplinary action. Closely related to the covenant relationship between God and his people, his anger often expresses his care for that relationship, whether that lies in disciplining his people or protecting them from foreign nations. In some cases it is used as a vehicle of divine disclosure to encourage the people or to warn those opposed to his purposes.

This use of an emotive relational term (*qasap*) to speak of his punitive destruction of the land and exile of the people reminds Zechariah's generation of the core values that define the Exile and ultimately the restoration for which they long. God is a covenantal God, and he desires exclusivity and devotion in his relationship with his people. The past generation disregarded his covenant, even when Yahweh sent his messengers to remind them, as we will soon hear in 1:4-6a.

One does not usually expect such a statement at the outset of a speech. It appears on the surface to be overtly negative. However, the great paradox of the revelation of God's wrath in the Old Testament is that it is often juxtaposed with and an opportunity for an expression of grace: ". . . the working out of God's wrath is tempered by his grace and mercy. In fact, it is in the midst of wrath that God may reveal his mercy (Hab. 3:2), manifesting and bestowing his grace upon guilty sinners (Gen. 3:15).⁴ It is significant that when the prophets use God's anger, they often do so in the context of the shortness of that anger, promising mercy and assistance (Isa. 57:16; 64:4, 8; Zech. 1:15).⁵ Beginning with a reference to God's anger with the former generation thus produces in the original readers the expectation that there will be a turn to something new, that the mercy of God's imminent.

1:3 "Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts;

⁴ Gerard Van Groningen, *TWOT*, § 2058, 2:808.

⁵ See *TLOT*, 3:1158.

Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.”

This opportunity for a transformation in the relationship occurs as God calls Zechariah’s generation to turn to him, so that he may turn to them. Although this turning surely has moral implications as seen in 1:4 (“turn from your evil ways”), at the outset it is defined primarily in relational terms: “Return to me.”⁶ This reflects the agenda for renewal after exile laid out in Deuteronomy 30:2. Key to restoration after the discipline of the Exile is a return to Yahweh. God promises to reciprocate by returning to them. God promises to return with his presence to his people, the presence and glory that abandoned them in Ezekiel 10 and was promised to return in Ezekiel 43.

Rather than the dedication of the rebuilt temple, Zechariah 1-8 displays links to a tradition of prayer that arises out of the ashes of the exilic experience in response to the agenda of both Moses and Solomon.⁷ This kind of prayer, which exerts its influence on Jewish liturgical practice throughout the intertestamental period, has been tagged penitential prayer, defined in the following way: “a direct address to God in which an individual or group confesses sins and petitions for forgiveness. Frequently, the petitioner hopes that the prayer will also be the first step toward removing the problems facing the community or the petitioner.”⁸

Penitential prayer arises from the agenda for renewal presented in the blessings and curses of the Torah (Lev. 26; Deut. 28-30) and Solomon’s prayer of dedication for the temple (1 Kings 8). Deuteronomy 30 anticipates life for Israel after disobedience has resulted in the curse of exile. Moses presents a return to God as essential to begin the process of restoration. However, it is Leviticus 26 that provides the specific way in which one displays such a return to Yahweh: confession of one’s sin along with the sins of previous generations. Moreover, as Solomon anticipates life for future

⁶ See also Mal. 3:7, where there is no disjuncture between the personal, relational, and the ethical.

⁷ See *ibid.*; see also R. A. Werline, *Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution* (SBLEJL 13; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); M. J. Boda, *Praying the Tradition: The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9* (BZAW 277; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999); R. J. Bautch, *Developments in Genre Between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament* (SBLABS; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

⁸ Werline, *Penitential Prayer*, 2.

generations in exile, he sets an agenda for renewal that begins with confession (1 Kings 8:46-51).

This agenda for renewal is evident in the biblical penitential prayers of Ezra 9; Nehemiah 1 and 9; Psalm 6; and Daniel 9. These prayers were seen as essential to bring an end to the Exile and to begin the restoration. This is particularly noticeable in Daniel 9, when Daniel realizes that the time is nearing for the end of the exilic seventy-year period. His penitential prayer is evidence that the community felt this was the first step in inaugurating the new age.

In penitential prayers, one finds that the former generation (“fathers”; Ezra 9:7; Neh. 1:6; 9:2, 9, 16, 23, 32, 34, 36; Ps. 106:6, 7; Dan. 9:6, 8, 16), who did not listen to the prophets (“my servants”; Ezra 9:11; Neh. 9:26-30; Dan. 9:6, 10), are attacked, and the present generation responds by confessing their culpability (Ezra 9:6, 7, 13; Neh. 1:6 [2x]; 9:2, 29, 33, 37; Ps. 106:6, 43; Dan. 9:5, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 20) while affirming Yahweh’s justice (Ezra 9:15; Neh. 9:33; Dan. 9:7, 9, 15). In particular, phrases found in one of these prayers (Neh. 9) are limited almost exclusively to Zechariah 1:1-6; 7-8.⁹ In addition, Zechariah 7-8 comments on the exilic liturgical cycle of fasting, seeking to shape the agenda for this cycle. Fasting is also a common feature in the penitential prayer tradition.

By the time of Ezra and Nehemiah the penitential prayer tradition is clearly associated with the priests. Zechariah, arising out of the priestly context as a prophetic voice, is a good candidate to set the agenda for true repentance to accompany such liturgical acts of penitence. As a cultic prophet his messages may constitute God’s response to such acts of contrition and function as shapers of appropriate penitence to bring restoration for God’s people.

Deut. 4:26 “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong [your] days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

4:27 “And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.

4:28 And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood

⁹ Neh. 9:29 = Zech. 7:1 1 (stubbornly they turned their backs); Neh. 9:30 = Zech. 7:12 (by his Spirit through the earlier prophets); Neh. 9:34 = Zech. 1:4; 7:11 (refused to pay attention); Neh. 9:35 = Zech. 1:4, 6 (turn from your evil ways).

and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

4:29 "But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

4:30 "When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;"

4:31 "(For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them."

Lev. 26:15 "And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, [but] that ye break my covenant. . .

26:31 "And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors."

26:32 "And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it."

26:33 "And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste."

26:34 "Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths. . . ."

26:38 "And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up."

26:39 "And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them."

26:40 "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me;"

26:41 "And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:"

26:42 "Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land."

Jer. 29:10 "For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."

29:11 "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected

end.”

29:12 “Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.”

29:13 “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”

29:14 “And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.”

1:4 “Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD.”

Having identified the expected goal of this prophetic message through the imperative “return,” the prophet fills out further the negative example of the former generations, which is to be avoided (1:4-6a). The phrase “earlier prophets” refers to the prophets of the preexilic period in general but draws from Jeremiah in particular (cf. Jer. 7:3, 5; 1 1:8; 23:22; 25:5; 35:15).¹⁰ This summary of Jeremiah’s message places Zechariah securely in the same line as the earlier prophets, stressing continuity in Yahweh’s message to his people. At the same time it reminds the people that they must heed this message because the prophetic word had dire consequences.

1:5 “Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?”

In 1:5 Zechariah uses a series of rhetorical questions to outline the result of ignoring the prophetic message. This technique forces the original audience to reflect deeply on the negative example of the former generation and on how they will respond to the same message of the prophets in their generation.

The point of the rhetorical questions is to contrast the nature of human existence with the nature of God’s word. The first two questions remind the people that human existence is ephemeral, for the disobedient generation had died, many punished with the curses brought on by their rebellion. Even the prophets who spoke God’s word display the passing nature of human existence. The one constant throughout the ages is God’s word, which must be heeded

¹⁰ See Boda, “Penitential Prophet,” 49-69.

when it is delivered by the prophets. The word “overtake” (Hiphil of *nsg*) is used often in contexts describing a battle in which one army or person pursues another (1 Sam. 30:8; 2 Kings 25:5; Ps. 7:5; 18:37). This is drawn into the covenant context in Deuteronomy 28:2, 15, 45, where Yahweh defines the blessings and curses that are essential to the covenant relationship (cf. Jer. 42:16).

1:6 “But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.”

Zechariah’s reflection on the past with the subtle yet powerful depiction of the consequences of disobedience has its desired effect on his generation in 1:6b. The translation “repented” in the NIV obscures the connection with the previous verses, for the Hebrew word underlying this translation (*swb*) is the same one used in the imperatives in 1:3-4 (“return”). The prophet’s immediate audience reflects the agenda for renewal spelled out in Deuteronomy 30 in order to bring restoration.

The specifics of this “turning to God” in 1:6b are not revealed. Many have concluded that it refers to rebuilding the temple and is thus linked to the work of Haggai. But this does not appear to be the case. Zechariah’s view of “turning” is first of all relational (see 1:3), and when this is fleshed out further, it is ethical in nature (1:5; 7:9-10). Although his ministry is intimately related to the temple, it seems to build on the foundation of Haggai and move the agenda a step further, focusing more attention on the core covenant values of relationship and ethics.

The narrative description of the people’s response is followed by the declaration of the people. At first sight this may seem inappropriate as an expression of one’s “turning” to God. However, an important feature in the penitential prayer tradition so influential in this period is the affirmation that the hardship that has entered their lives is a result of the discipline of God and that this discipline is just. Note, for example, Nehemiah 9:33: “In all that has happened to us, you have been just; you have acted faithfully, while we did wrong” (cf. Dan. 9:7, 14; Ezra 9:15).

The people, in other words, agree that the covenant curses did overtake the people and that this was Yahweh’s purpose. This purpose is described by the Hebrew verb *zmm* (“determined”), which

occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible with God as its subject, usually with the negative connotation of punishment (Jer. 4:28; 51:12; Lam. 2:17). However, Zechariah 8:14-15 reveals that Zechariah will proclaim the other side of God's purpose. For a penitent people, God's purposes are positive.

The people reflect another feature of the penitential prayer tradition when they refer to the sins of the past generations as their own sins (cf. Ezra 9; Neh. 1; 9; Dan. 9). They understand that their lives are intimately connected to this former generation that rebelled against God's word and received his discipline. Renewal begins by turning away from the rebellious heritage that has preceded them. The agenda for this feature in the penitential prayer tradition can be traced to the words of Moses reflecting on the future rebellion of God's people (Lev. 26:39-40), where he tells them that they will experience discipline because of their sins and those of former generations and that renewal begins with confessing their sins and those of former generations. Verse 6b, then, represents a response to this agenda of Moses in Leviticus 26, along with Deuteronomy 30, which emphasizes the need to return to God.

The prophetic message of these six verses is a message for the church today. The book of Zechariah begins with an invitation to the Persian period community to return to God. They are also reminded of the dire consequences that followed the rejection of this message in past generations. Zechariah's generation takes the first step toward the resolution of the covenant crisis through a repentance characterized by confession of sin and affirmation of God's justice.¹¹

This same message of repentance will reverberate throughout the ongoing "exile" of God's people in the centuries that follow as they long for the completion of the restoration program initiated in the early Persian period.¹² It is not surprising, then, to find that this message of repentance launches the redemptive program of God in the Gospels, where it appears on the lips of the prophetic figure John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2, 8, 11; Mark 1:4, 5; Luke 3:3). He was the voice preparing the way for the return of Yahweh and the release of his people from exile. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance (Matt. 3:11; Mark

¹¹ See *ibid.*, also M. J. Bodo, "The Priceless Gain of Penitence: From Communal Lament to Penitential Prayer in the 'Exilic' Liturgy of Israel," *HBT* 25 (2003): 51-75.

¹² See Werline's *Penitential Prayer* for the use of penitential prayer in this period.

1:4; Acts 13:24; 19:4). When Jesus underwent this baptism, he was not admitting sin but rather functioning as representative Israelite, symbolically confessing the sins of the nation and being cleansed by the waters.

This theme of repentance was also a feature in the preaching of Jesus (Matt. 4:17; 11:20-21; Luke 5:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10). When he sent his disciples out to preach and teach, the Gospel writer tells us that repentance was also their theme (Mark 6:12). This explains why the message of repentance was an essential component in the proclamation of the gospel by the early church (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:9-10; 12:21; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 6:1, 6; 2 Peter 3:9; Rev. 2:5, 16, 21, 22; 3:3, 19; 9:20, 21; 16:9, 11).

Zechariah's call to repentance is thus applicable to Christians today. It is a call to all humanity to return to the One who created us. It also reminds those who have entered into covenant relationship that they should live a life of repentance, turning to God in relationship and forsaking all affections and actions that threaten that relationship.

Generational issues. For Zechariah's generation repentance was not an individual issue; it was corporate and generational. The Persian period community lived with the consequences of the disobedience of early generations, including loss of political independence, payment of taxes to a foreign overlord, and a significant decrease in population. Their repentance not only expresses their desire not to continue in the sinful tradition of past generations, but it is also on behalf of the offenses of a generation now long dead.

As already noted, this view of intergenerational guilt is founded on the instruction of Moses in connection with the discipline of the people through exile (see Lev. 26:39-42).

Early in 1890, Ellen White had been working on an expansion of Volume I of *The Spirit of Prophecy*. When she received divine confirmation on March 6, 1890, of Waggoner's position on the two covenants, she incorporated it into her revised edition entitled *Patriarchs and Prophets*.¹³ This was completely new material. It was one of the best statements on the relationship between the covenants

¹³ E. G. White, "The Law and the Covenants," *The Patriarchs and Prophets* (Pacific Press Publishing Company, Oakland, California: 1890), pp. 363-373.

and righteousness by faith.¹⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets* was published August 26, 1890.¹⁵ Ellen White said:

“The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden. . . . This same covenant was renewed to Abraham. . . . This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it (see Galatians 3:8, 16), and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God’s law. . . .

“The law of God was the basis of this covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God’s law.

“Another compact—called in Scripture the “old” covenant—was formed between God and Israel at Sinai, and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice. The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ,”¹⁶

Then she affirmed the validity of the new covenant for Old Testament times.

“That the new covenant was valid in the days of Abraham is evident from the fact that it was then confirmed both by the promise and by the oath of God—the ‘two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie.’ Hebrews 6:18.”¹⁷

Ellen White continued her observations regarding the covenants:

“But if the Abrahamic covenant contained the promise of redemption, why was another covenant formed at Sinai? In their bondage the people had to a great extent lost the knowledge of God and of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant. In delivering them from Egypt, God sought to reveal to them His power and His mercy, that they might be led to love and trust Him. He brought them down to the Red Sea—where, pursued by the Egyptians, escape seemed impossible—that they might realize their utter helplessness, their need of divine aid; and then He wrought deliverance for them. Thus they were filled with love and gratitude to God and with confidence in His power to help them. He had bound them to Himself as their deliverer from temporal bondage. . . .

¹⁴ Tim Crosby, “Ellen G. White and the Law in Galatians: A Study in the Dynamics of Present Truth,” p. 28.

¹⁵ See Ron Duffield, “The Return of the Latter Rain,” unpublished mss.

¹⁶ E. G. White, *The Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370, 371.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

“Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, they had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God's law, and their need of a Saviour. All this they must be taught. .

. .

“ . . . The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God's law; and they readily entered into covenant with God. Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” Exodus 24:7. . . . Only a few weeks passed before they broke *their covenant* with God, and bowed down to worship a graven image. They could not hope for the favor of God through a covenant which they had broken; and now, seeing their sinfulness and their need of pardon, they were brought to feel their need of the *Saviour revealed in the Abrahamic covenant* and shadowed forth in the sacrificial offerings. Now by faith and love they were bound to God as their deliverer from the bondage of sin. Now they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant.

“The terms of the ‘old covenant’ were, Obey and live: . . . The ‘new covenant’ was established upon ‘better promises’—the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God's law.”¹⁸

Here she picked up the theme of Waggoner that there was no “hope for the favor of God” in their broken covenant. Their sinfulness became pronounced. They felt “their need of pardon.” They were brought to the Saviour of the Abrahamic covenant. Now instead of coming with their promises, they were bound to God by genuine “faith and love.” They had a new appreciation for His deliverance from “bondage” to sin.

Reflected in her statements were the exact terms which Waggoner had used to describe the relationships between the old and the new covenants. If the Holy Spirit ever endorsed a concept more clearly, it was the everlasting covenant of the 1888 message.

Ellen White emphasized Waggoner's point that the old covenant was legalism. The new covenant promise alone provided pardon from sin and divine aid. The *Patriarchs and Prophets* statement was one of

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 371, 372. Emphasis supplied.

the most beautiful and succinct comments on the glad tidings of the everlasting covenant ever written aside from Scripture.

Had our fathers believed the prophet, Ellen White, regarding the two covenants we would not have been in exile in this world for 128 years. The Biblical model of corporate repentance should receive our serious consideration as the prolonged delay in the Lord's return punctuates our inattention.