

“Justification by Faith Is the Third Angels’ Message in Verity”

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Ellen White was overjoyed when she heard the message of the everlasting covenant and 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. To her the sanctuary message was the way to be prepared for the second coming of Jesus. The cleansing of the people of their sins and the consequent cleansing of sin from the heavenly sanctuary was the fulfillment of God’s everlasting covenant to forgive their sins and write His laws upon their hearts and minds. The covenant message was a translation message.

Like a drumbeat over the course of the weeks that the 1890 ministers’ institute was conducted in Battle Creek, Sr. White wrote in the columns of the *REVIEW* during 1890 of her enthusiasm for the message of the everlasting covenant which she was hearing.

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.¹

The important issue looming is that wedding—the marriage of the Lamb—which has been postponed so long. The time had come, for Christ’s people to awake and sense the time in which they were living. The time had come when the bride must “make herself ready” for the wedding by receiving the gift of His wedding garment. This garment was the High Priest’s message of His righteousness.

¹ Ellen G. White, “The Need of Complete Consecration,” *RH* 67, 3 (January 21, 1890), p. 33.

One week later while the covenant issue was raging at the institute Ellen White again directed the people's attention to the sanctuary on the front page of the *Review*.

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.²

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.³

“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.”⁴

Notice that entering the sanctuary with Jesus by faith in the day of atonement meant progressing with the light which Jesus was giving on earth to His people. The truth of the everlasting covenant and 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.

On March 4, 1890, she emphasized again the translation theme:

² Ellen G. White, “The Lord Must Be Our Light,” *RH* 67, 4 (January 28, 1890), p. 49.

³ Ellen G. White, “The Danger of Talking Doubt,” *RH* 67, 6 (February 11, 1890), p. 81.

⁴ Ellen G. White, “Need of Earnestness in the Cause of God,” *RH* 67, 8 (February 25, 1890), p. 113.

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.⁵

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?⁶

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.

Many spoke of the law, the law, and were concerned there was too much talk about justification by faith.⁷ They ridiculed, spoke slightly, and denounced justification as fanaticism. They inquired of Sister White

. . . if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, "It is the third angel's message in verity." The prophet declares, "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory [Rev. 18:1]."⁸

"The third angel's message in verity" was clearly identified with the angel of Revelation 18:1 and that is "the third angel's message in

⁵ Ellen G. White, "Draw Nigh to God," *RH* 67, 9 (March 4, 1890), p. 129.

⁶ Ellen G. White, "The Present Message," *RH* 67, 11 (March 18, 1890), p. 161.

⁷ "It is true men will say, 'You are too excited; you are making too much of this matter, and you do not think enough of the law; now, you must think more of the law; don't be all the time reaching for this righteousness of Christ, but build up the law.'

"Let the law take care of itself. We have been at work on the law until we get as dry as the hills of Gilboa, without dew or rain." Ellen G. White, *EGW 1888 Materials*, p. 557.

⁸ Ellen G. White, "Repentance the Gift of God," *RH* 67, 13 (April 1, 1890), pp. 193, 194.

verity.” What was the significance of this statement? What did she mean by the affirmation “in verity”?

Justification by faith in connection with the sanctuary cleansing was the third angel’s message in verity. It prepared the way for the great and dreadful day of the Lord. It prepared a people to stand in the hour of crisis and to be translated without seeing death at the second coming of Jesus. It was and still is the shaking message to the Laodicean church. It bore with it all the prospect of the loud cry and latter rain of the Holy Spirit.

The Third Angel’s Message

In 1891 E. J. Waggoner connected the everlasting covenant with the third angel’s message and justification by faith this way:

“We must . . . preach ‘Christ and him crucified’ is the sum of the ‘gospel of the kingdom,’ or, . . . the third angel’s message. . . . Show from the covenant that God made with Abraham, the sacrifice of Christ, justification by faith.
”⁹
. . .

This was the way to reach the Jews—by showing them what God wanted to do with Israel in leading them out of Egypt into the promised land. This is the same work that God would do in gathering His own out of the world and leading them into the possession of the eternal inheritance.

In 1895 Ellen White connected the “most precious message” of Waggoner and Jones with the third angel’s message and the everlasting covenant.

“The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in

⁹ E. J. Waggoner, “How Shall We Reach the Jews?” *PT* 7, 26 (December 17, 1891), p. 413.

obedience to all the commandments of God. . . . It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit.

. . .

“The uplifted Saviour is to appear in His efficacious work as the Lamb slain, sitting upon the throne, to dispense the priceless covenant blessings. . . .”¹⁰

This statement connects the third angel's message with justification by faith and the everlasting covenant.

W. W. Prescott was the last of a generation who had been eyewitnesses to the events of 1888. He published a series of articles on the covenants in biblical history.¹¹ Prescott recognized how important the covenants were in understanding the third angel's message. He wrote:

We have been plainly instructed that justification by faith “is the third angel's message in verity,” and inasmuch as justification by faith is the essential feature of the covenant with Abraham, as is taught in Galatians 3:8 . . . the covenant with Abraham is the very essence of the third angel's message. . . . We should proclaim the fullness of the meaning of that covenant developed from the time of Abraham until now. This is “the everlasting gospel” which is to be preached to the whole world in preparation for the great consummation.¹²

Everything that was necessary to prepare Christ's body; from every nation, kindred, tongue and people; for translation, and the second coming of Christ, was contained in God's promise to Abraham. Ellen White, E. J. Waggoner and W. W. Prescott connected the third angel's message with God's everlasting covenant.

¹⁰ E. G. White, “Testimony to the Battle Creek Church,” Letter 57, May 1, 1895. *op. cit.*, pp. 1336, 1337.

¹¹ W. W. Prescott, “The Gospel of the Covenant,” *RH* 113 (August 20-October 8, 1936).

¹² W. W. Prescott, “The Gospel of the Covenant. IV—The Doctrine of the Promise-Covenant,” *RH* 113, 47 (September 10, 1936), p. 8.