

What Is
“the 1888 Message”
&
Why Is
1888 So Important?



What happened at the
1888 General Conference?

What actually is
“the 1888 message”?

How does it (or does it) differ
from what we hear commonly?

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Interest in “1888” is the most far-reaching movement now taking place within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is not a looking backward, but a looking forward. In its entirety it concerns the future finishing of God’s message to the world.

The reason is that “1888” is a watershed in history that focuses on the grand climax of the plan of salvation. It’s complementary to 31 A. D. when heaven opened its windows and poured upon the disciples the beginning of a large gift of God’s Holy Spirit, never before known in His fullness. This was known as the “early rain,” something the prophets in Old Testament times had longed for but never experienced.

“1888” demands attention because that was when heaven again opened its windows and poured upon the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church the “beginning” of the final gift of the same Holy Spirit. According to Ellen White’s enthusiasm, it was like Pentecost revisited.¹ It was “showers of the latter rain” in the same continuum of which Pentecost was the “early rain.”²

The “former rain” of Pentecost marked the beginning outreach of the gospel. Through those many centuries since, untold numbers around the world heard of the Good News of Jesus’ ministry in the First Apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. Those who believed died in the faith of Jesus and await their resurrection at His second coming when He calls them from their sleep “in the dust of the earth.”

“1888” marks the occasion that complements Pentecost— the most awesome step the Holy Spirit has taken since then. According to Ellen White, God sent a special message divinely intended to complete the gospel commission which began at Pentecost. It focused on Christ’s ministry in the Second Apartment of the heavenly sanctuary.³

Thus the blessing of the Holy Spirit poured out in 1888 was intended to prepare *that generation* for translation without seeing death at the second coming of Christ. Immense news! The greatest to come since 1844—yes, since Luther in the 16th century; yes— even since Pentecost.

This is why “1888” and Pentecost mark two glorious “beginnings”: one, of the “go-ye-into-all-world” commission; the other, of its finishing that must “lighten the earth with glory” before probation can close.

“1888” ushers in that final blessing. There are two parts to it: (1) The initial “showers from heaven of the latter rain” that prepare God’s people for the second part. (2) Our first glimpse of what the message will be that will penetrate Islam, Buddhism, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and all the other “isms” of our modern world. It will be a gospel presentation of such convincing, converting power that nothing in the world’s past history has ever equaled it.

All This Is What “Began” In 1888.

Revelation describes the dynamics of the closing scenes. A mighty fourth angel comes “down from heaven having great power” (18:1). Explains Ellen White, prophetically:

“This message seemed to be an addition to the third message, joining it as the midnight cry joined the second angel’s message in 1844. The glory of God rested upon the patient, waiting saints. ... The light that was shed upon the waiting ones penetrated everywhere. ... I saw that this message will close with power and strength far exceeding the midnight cry.

“Servants of God, endowed with power from on high with their faces lighted up, and shining with holy consecration, went forth to proclaim the message from heaven” (*Early Writings*, pp. 277-279).

“The rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord’s side” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 612).

Wonderful!

God is still alive, and He has not turned His back on the Seventh-day Adventist Church, nor the needy world beyond. As we would expect about something so important, the Holy Spirit keeps moving upon hearts worldwide to ponder the significance of “1888.” The subject can’t be laid to rest. From top to bottom of the church organization, it arouses attention and commands respect. Many awake as from sleep. Questions long perplexing find answers. Many church members for decades have been asking, “Why haven’t we known sooner of this thrilling development? I have heard ‘1888’ mentioned but have never understood what it means. Is heaven coming down and touching earth? I don’t want the Holy Spirit to pass me by.”

Probably best of all, “1888” is the answer to numerous false movements which try to get us to join offshoots. These “winds of doctrine” are blowing more than ever, confusing youth and sincere church members. The 1888 message renews confidence in the triumph of the *organized* church because it offers convincing evidence

that repentance within the church is a reality, a gift that God will not withhold and that eventually will not be rejected. The church will be strengthened and purified by the cleansing power of God’s Holy Spirit. “1888” is bigger than any individuals or any group. It taps into heaven’s phone line and encourages members by fresh evidence of Jesus’ personal continuing ministry for the leadership of His church.

What happened in “1888”?



Many books have been published about “1888,” but it is rare to find a simple review of the history. The only totally credible account is found in Ellen White’s observations. She was a first-hand witness whose mind was guided by the Holy Spirit. What was happening couldn’t be understood except by prophetic insight. She discerned significance in “1888” history that none of her contemporaries could see clearly. She tells us over a hundred times that it went over their heads much as Christ’s ministry went over the heads of the Jewish leaders.⁴ A few salient points:

(1) “The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones” who had something no other minister has been said to have—“heavenly credentials” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 91, written 1896).⁵ No other messengers in our history rate those solemn recorded endorsements.

(2) They were two young ministers from the West Coast, delegates to the 1888 General Conference Session in Minneapolis—moved by the Holy Spirit to proclaim “the third angel’s message” in a new light none of their brethren had ever before perceived as such Good News. In humble low-key presentations, the two young “messengers” showed that the true heart or essence of “the third angel’s message” is not a fear-motivated old covenant legalism, but a welcome message of grace much more abounding. It added up to a more mature view of justification by faith, based on the kind of

faith that “works” and produces a holy, righteous life.

What made Ellen White’s heart rejoice when she first heard the message was that something was happening. Proclaiming that kind of faith made people become obedient to all the commandments of God.⁶ She saw something she hadn’t seen in 45 years—the message would give sinners (plenty of them in the church!) the gift of repentance, would blot out sins, and would prepare them to meet Jesus and not be ashamed in His presence.⁷

After the message had done its work within the church, it would spill out to the world at large. What the ancient prophets and apostles had longed for was about to happen!

(3) The two messengers majored in Romans and Galatians, but presented Paul’s message in a fresh light that went beyond what the 16th century Reformers were able in their day to grasp. Jones and Waggoner did not seek to belittle obedience to God’s holy law; rather their message reconciled *hearts* to God and thus reconciled *lives* to His holy law. That’s why obedience resulted from within, not imposed by a fear motivation. It was powerful. In that little season after Minneapolis when the people had a chance to hear it, the message worked miracles. Ellen White was ecstatic because at last justification by faith, properly presented, would motivate people to keep the Sabbath apart from the usual laborious work needed to convince and motivate them.

The reason why the two messengers saw justification by faith in a fresh light is that they joined that truth with the unique Seventh-day Adventist idea of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, an idea that none of the early Reformers nor Sunday keepers of the day had thought of. It had to be unique—righteousness by faith in this cosmic Day of Atonement.

Both truths came together like a tide from two rivers joining that can float great vessels to sea. These fresh truths that neither the 16th century Reformers nor their Protestant or Roman Catholic contemporaries could grasp were what Ellen White called “big ideas.” (A problem developed when it became apparent to Ellen White that not many even of Seventh-day

Adventists in the 1888 era grasped the idea of the Day of Atonement; fewer do today.)

(4) Youth were especially drawn to the “1888 message” (the term embraces not only what the two “special messengers” taught at Minneapolis but also during the time of Ellen White’s continuing endorsements for about a decade following). Youth had never perceived the “third angel’s message” as being such Good News. It gripped their hearts.

(5) Far from being dry theology, the message was seen as living truth. The record says that revival/reformation results among lay members and younger pastors in the months following the 1888 Conference were impressive. Ellen White together with Jones and Waggoner visited camp meetings, and everywhere they went the refreshment followed. There were distinct, “most marked” “manifestations” of the Holy Spirit.⁸ She was overjoyed; that mighty fourth angel of Revelation 18 had descended and had started his mission! She could not sleep at night for joy. The dreary decades of pioneer work from 1844 to 1888 were now to be rewarded with triumph for the work, and for the church. The world was about to be lightened at last with the glory of the message. The *Early Writings* prophecies were in process of fulfillment. If you had been in her place you would have rejoiced too.

(6) As a phenomenon, at the same time the United States Senate and Congress were stirred with clamors for a national Sunday law. Never since has the crisis seemed to be nearer. The same two who brought the beginning of the latter rain were providentially cast in a role to defend the American Constitutional principle of religious liberty. Jones went to Washington and moved the Senate with an impassioned plea for loyalty to the Constitution, and virtually single-handedly defeated a national Sunday law. Waggoner contributed articles for publication. If the American public knew this history, they would erect a statue to Jones and Waggoner on the Mall. We have had a century-plus of religious liberty, largely the fruit of their labor at a time when the government was on the verge of

repudiating the First Amendment. Their triumph in Washington was seen as a heavenly endorsement that impressed church members.

Ellen White, supporting Jones and Waggoner, wrote articles and numerous letters endorsing their message. The laity listened. Never had their hearts been so deeply stirred.

But an Unforeseen Tragedy Entered the Picture.

(7) The Revelation “dragon” who is “wroth with the woman” infiltrated the Conference at Minneapolis and in the years following. For the first time in our denominational history the leadership “in a great degree” and “in a great measure” resisted a message that came from God. We read that they “kept it away from the people” and “from the world.”⁹ God had mysteriously passed by the gray-haired stalwarts in high office and had bestowed His Spirit upon two young upstarts. Unprecedented in Adventism in two ways—the great extent of God’s blessings from heaven, and the great extent of our human unbelief.

Those members and young pastors whose hearts at first responded faced a problem. Why should opposition emanate from the church’s headquarters in Battle Creek and in the church paper, the *Review and Herald*? The sincere people were perplexed and did not know what to do. Their hearts were moved, but their heads were bewildered by this stream of antagonism from the highest offices in Battle Creek. In 1891, contrary to the Lord’s leading (says Ellen White), she was “exiled” to Australia on a “missionary” assignment. True, for nearly a decade God richly blessed her missionary work there, but the movement promoting the latter rain and the loud cry at home was severely curtailed.¹⁰

Waggoner found himself shipped off to England the next year, when both he and Jones needed the constant close personal fellowship and counsel that only Ellen White could give them. It was such a crisis as the church had never before faced.

The End Result.

Nearly a decade after the all-important Minneapolis Conference Ellen White was forced to declare: “By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world” (*Selected Messages*, Book One, pp. 234, 235; 1896).

That pretty well sums up the history, written in retrospect after the early revivals had been blocked and almost nullified by official opposition.

Heaven was forced to withdraw the precious latter rain and loud cry gift. Since then, no serious effort has been made to recover or proclaim the actual message that she endorsed so highly. Plenty of people proclaim what they call “righteousness by faith” but it has often been assumed that we don’t need what “the Lord in His great mercy sent” to us. Evangelical concepts borrowed from the Sunday-keeping churches take its place. In other words, we are “rich and increased with goods.” The question many are asking is, Must we await some future generation? With terrorism being now the prime concern of the world, should we postpone until future generations what the Holy Spirit wanted so much to give us?

The 1888 history has been clarified by much research on the part of numerous denominational historians and scholars. The record of the past is indelibly etched. No one can change it. There is now general agreement on the main facts.

Recognizing the widespread hunger to understand, the Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate in recent years released everything that Ellen White wrote about the episode—sermons, talks, articles, and even personal letters. These are found in the four-volume set of *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*—1,821 pages published by The Ellen G. White Estate. There is no longer any reason for perplexity about how she felt toward the message, or about the truth of its history or

about its content.

But an even more important question awaits us.

What Was (Or Is) the Actual 1888 Message?



Fortunately the message itself has been largely preserved in the archives along with the story of how it was received. A number of scholars have dug deeply into the research.

The actual message which Jones and Waggoner sought to proclaim is in their books, prolific articles, and sermons delivered at subsequent General Conference Sessions taken down in shorthand. Also, sometimes their contemporaries give us valuable insights. By the principles of motif analysis, a reasonable understanding of the actual “1888 message” emerges.

It turns out that it is distinctly different from what is commonly understood widely as “righteousness by faith.” Here is a brief summary of the most outstanding elements of the message:

(1) The most amazing feature of the message stands out: the gospel is wondrously better Good News than popularly understood.

For example, although both “special messengers” firmly supported obedience to God’s law, they declared that it is easy to be saved and hard to be lost *if one understands and believes that pure gospel*. This is a tectonic shift in Adventist thinking.

They saw the Ten Commandments in a different perspective—as ten promises. (Ellen White says that God gave Waggoner a unique but clear understanding of the two covenants.) They saw the Good News preamble in Exodus 20 as necessary before we can begin to understand the law itself. Without that preamble, the law becomes

distorted. With it, it is transformed into Good News: “I am the Lord thy God, which *have brought* thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage [past tense]” (vs. 2, KJV). Before we hear even the first commandment, here is the News of what Christ has *already* accomplished in our deliverance from sin.

K The Savior is for us, not against us.

K The roadblocks and difficulties are strewn in the pathway to hell, not in the pathway to heaven.

K Those who think the opposite have just not understood “the third angel’s message in verity.”

The dragon who is at war with Christ has begun by frustrating His Good News. Jesus says, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ... My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30). The Savior does not stand back idly unconcerned if you go the wrong way. He takes you by the hand and says, Come, let’s go to heaven! “I am with you; ... I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. ... I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand” (Isa. 41:10, 13). “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways” (Psalm 91:11).

He won’t force anyone, but if you lose your way and take a wrong path, He will do for you what He did for Saul of Tarsus who was hell-bent on going the wrong way. The Lord set up roadblocks to make the wrong way “hard” for him. Reports the apostle, now changed in heart: “I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads’” (Acts 26:14). No way does the Lord permit any souls to be lost without confronting them every step of the wrong way!

The Savior’s love is stronger than to let even one perish unprotected. This is a totally different view than what many believe. Youth have often been taught that the way to heaven is difficult and the way to hell is easy. The confusion involves a mistaken view of God’s character.

The confusion engendered by the lack of this “most precious message” has also led many, young people especially, to think that

Ellen White herself majors in portraying devotion to Christ as difficult. And boring.

Yes, there is self-denial required every step of our way, but what Paul calls “the truth of the gospel” makes self-denial become the joyous choice of anyone who appreciates Jesus’ choice of self-denial in our behalf.

Identifying with Him by faith changes self-denial into a delight for us as it was for Him when He said, “I delight to do Your will, O My God.” His love actually motivates us to kneel with Him in Gethsemane; we join Him when He prays, “Not as I will, but as You will.” Imagine the surprise of youth to discover how different Ellen White is than often supposed. She strongly supports the bold Good News ideas of the 1888 “messengers”:

“Do not therefore conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the easy way. All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God’s love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves” (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 139; 1896).

(2) In harmony with this primary Good News idea comes a clearer view of what the Son of God accomplished on His cross. It supplies a new motivation for following Him.

Jones and Waggoner understood that the Bible teaches that Christ accomplished much more than making an offer of salvation to “every man.” He has *given the gift* to all. They saw that the death Christ died was equivalent to the second death and that He actually “tasted [the second] death for everyone” (Heb. 2:9). He paid the price of the sins of the *whole world*. “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us *all*” (Isa. 53:6):

“The gift of God is not to be compared in its effect with that one man’s [Adam’s] sin; for the judicial action, following upon the one offence, issued in a verdict of condemnation, but

the act of grace, following upon so many misdeeds, issued in a verdict of acquittal. . . . It follows, then, that as the issue of one misdeed was condemnation for all men, so the issue of one just act is acquittal and life for all men” (Rom. 5:16, 18, NEB).

Commenting, Waggoner said:

“The faith of Christ must bring the righteousness of God, because the possession of that faith is the possession of the Lord himself. This faith is dealt to every man, even as Christ gave himself to every man. Do you ask what then can prevent every man from being saved? The answer is, Nothing, except the fact that all men will not keep the faith. If all would keep all that God gives them, all would be saved (*Waggoner On Romans*, p. 69; 1896).

“‘By the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.’ There is no exception here. As the condemnation came upon all, so the justification comes upon all. Christ has tasted death for every man. He has given himself for all. Nay, he has given himself *to* every man. The free gift has come upon all. The fact that it is a free gift is evidence that there is no exception. If it came upon only those who have some special qualification, then it would not be a free gift.” (Ibid., p. 101).

Jones was in full agreement. It is probably safe to say that no one since Luther had spelled it out quite so clearly: (a) As our “second Adam,” Christ has justified every person *legally*“ by His blood” (Rom. 5:9). (b) But “everyone” is free to despise, sell, throw away, reject, what Christ has already *given* him. (And that is the only reason why anybody will at last be lost.) Multitudes do as Esau who “despised” and “sold” his precious birthright which had already been given him, just as Christ has given the birthright to “every man” by virtue of His shed blood.¹¹

This of course raises a question immediately. It’s true, that’s

what John 3:16 says; but does Ellen White agree with understanding the Good News idea in such a simple way?

When she heard Jones and Waggoner, she listened, and she learned. In a book written shortly after she heard them, she wrote for the first time:

“The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God’s dear Son” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 27; 1892).

(3) The widely prevalent view is that Christ’s sacrifice merely makes possible an “offer” of salvation to everyone.

This ill-founded view is contingent on the sinner taking the initiative first to believe. Thus it becomes logical to conclude that our salvation is initially due to what we do. In other words, we help save ourselves.

In contrast, this “most precious message” declares that our salvation is 100% due to Christ’s initiative, and by faith we let *Him* do it. We stop resisting Him. And conversely, the loss of our souls is due to *our* initiative in *dis*-believing the Good News. It about takes one’s breath away, but there it is—the gospel. The only way to be lost is to resist and reject what Christ has already accomplished for us, and is constantly doing for us by His Holy Spirit. In other words, *unbelief*. What is our part? It’s correspondingly simple: *believing*, or faith. A heart response, a heart appreciation, of what He did for us by His sacrifice.

That’s what we read: “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14, 15; KJV). In other words, such faith makes it impossible to go on living a selfish life! The gospel is infinitely more than good advice; it is “the power [“dy-

namite,” Greek] of God to salvation” (Rom. 1:16).

Too Good to Be True?

That’s precisely what our dear opposing brethren thought over a century ago.

Maybe you are beginning to see why Ellen White was so happy when she heard this message. It fulfilled, or at least it *began* to fulfill, the dreams of her youth. Here was the beginning of what would grip hearts in Islam, Buddhism, paganism, Roman Catholicism, yes, it would “lighten the earth with glory.”

We Could Go On and On.

The 1888 message makes practically every page of the Bible glow with new light:

K The Savior’s nearness to us is what the alcoholic, the drug addict, yes, every sinner, needs to see. He took upon His sinless nature our fallen, sinful nature that He might know how to succor us who are tempted. He “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). We may be tempted likewise but we don’t have to give in to sin!

K The Roman Catholic Church traditionally opposes every aspect of the “most precious message,” and has invented a counterfeit for each point. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception (proclaimed 1854) declares that the Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception was “exempt” from receiving genetically the human nature of the fallen Adam; thus she gave to her Son a sinless nature. All human flesh is sinful in nature; therefore their view of Christ declares that He took only the sinless, unfallen nature of Adam before the fall. That brings the apostle’s warning into focus: “Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist” (1 John 4:3).

K The 1888 message reclaims the sanctuary message from the confusion so prevalent today. It becomes thrilling Good News because the cleansing of the sanctuary is seen as not what *we* do, but what we let *the High Priest do for us*. We stop resisting Him.

While Jesus works in the sanctuary above, the Holy Spirit works in every human heart that will permit Him. Before the sanctuary cleansing can be declared finished, sins will be not only *forgiven* but they will be *blotted out* from human hearts that have been sinful from birth. Sinners will be cleansed, characters changed or transformed; a miracle of grace, and a demonstration never seen prior to the great cosmic Day of Atonement (unless two men, Enoch and Elijah, are exceptions).

You don't have to stop sinning before you come to Jesus; come as you are. His business is accepting sinners and saving them *from* sin. He is continually drawing you; respond!

It's not that the sinful nature is blotted out—God's people retain that until glorification when Jesus comes (confusion there discourages people). They are still tempted, as Jesus was tempted. But while they still have a sinful nature, it doesn't have to continue to be a sinning nature. "The grace of God ... teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age" (Titus 2:11, 12, NIV; the NIV is very forceful here). Simple, and it works! That Teacher gives every student in His class an "A" who will stay in the class and let Him teach. Not one will fail.

And, wonderful Good News! "The marriage of the Lamb" is on the way. "The Lord in His great mercy sent" that 1888 message in order to help the Bride-to-be "make herself ready" for the wedding (Rev. 19:1-9).

Conclusion.

The purpose of this little booklet is not to feed you but to make you hungry. By now you want to know more. There is a staff waiting to consider your questions, which are always welcome, or what may be confusing or perplexing about "the most precious [1888] message" or its history. Please contact us.

- ¹ *Selected Messages*, Book One, p. 235.
- ² *Special Testimonies*, Series A, No. 6, pp. 19, 20; *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1478.
- ³ *Review and Herald*, January 21, January 28, February 4, February 11, February 25, April 8, 1890.
- ⁴ A few examples: *1888 Materials*, pp. 406, 512, 541, 911-913, 1478, 1479, 1651, 1656.
- ⁵ The phrase “heavenly credentials” can be found in *Review and Herald*, March 18, 1890; and in *1888 Materials*, pp. 497, 543, 545, 575, 595, 722, 835, etc.
- ⁶ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91-93.
- ⁷ *1888 Materials*, *op. cit.*, p. 1814.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1478.
- ⁹ *Selected Messages*, Book One, pp. 234, 235.
- ¹⁰ See *This Day With God*, p. 61; *1888 Materials*, pp. 1622, 1623.
- ¹¹ The story of Esau is in Genesis 25:27-34 and Hebrews 12:16, 17.
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What Did the 1888 Message Say?

Ten Unique, Essential Elements of the 1888 Message

1. Christ's love is active, not merely passive. As Good Shepherd, He is continually seeking the lost sheep. Salvation does not depend on our seeking Him but on our believing that He is seeking us. For us to seek Him is our believing response to His seeking us. He has taken the initiative. Those who are lost at last resist and despise His initiative in the drawing of His love. This is what unbelief means.
2. Thus it is difficult to be lost and it is easy to be saved if one understands and believes how good the good news is. Since Christ has already paid the penalty for everyone's sin, the only reason anyone can be condemned at last is continued unbelief, a hard-hearted refusal to appreciate the redemption achieved by Christ on His cross and ministered by Him as High Priest. The true gospel unveils this mysterious unbelief and leads to a repentance that prepares the church for the return of Christ. Human pride, praise and flattery of human beings, is inconsistent with true faith in Christ but is a sure sign of prevailing unbelief, even within the church.
3. In seeking lost mankind, Christ came all the way, taking upon Himself and assuming the fallen, sinful nature of man after the fall. This He did that He might be tempted in all points like as we are, yet demonstrate perfect righteousness "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3, 4; the 1888 message accepts "likeness" to mean what it says, not un-likeness). Righteousness is a word never applied to Adam in his unfallen state, nor to holy, sinless angels. It can only mean a holiness that

has come into conflict with sin in fallen human flesh, and triumphed over it.

Thus “the message of Christ’s righteousness” that Ellen White was so happy about in 1888 is rooted in this unique view of the nature of Christ. If He had taken the sinless nature of Adam before the fall, the term “Christ’s righteousness” could not make sense. The 1888 messengers saw that the teaching that Christ took only the sinless nature of Adam before the fall is a legacy of Romanism, the insignia of the mystery of iniquity which keeps Him “afar off” and not “nigh at hand.”

4. Thus our Savior “condemned sin in the flesh” of fallen mankind. This means that He has outlawed sin; sin has become out of date in the light of His ministry. It is impossible to have true faith in Christ and continue in it. We cannot excuse it by saying, “I am only human” or, “the devil made me do it.” In the light of the cross, the devil cannot force anyone to sin. To be truly “human” is to be Christlike in character, for He was and is fully human as well as divine. For the church and its leadership to accept the message means a preparation for translation.
5. It follows that the only element God’s people need in order to prepare for Christ’s return is that genuine faith. But that is what the church lacks. She imagines herself to be doctrinally and experientially “rich and increased with goods” when in fact her root sin ever since 1888 has been a pathetic unbelief. Righteousness is by faith; it is impossible to have faith and not demonstrate it in the life, because faith always works by love. Our moral and spiritual failures are the fruit of keeping alive Israel’s ancient sin of unbelief.
6. Righteousness by faith since 1844 is unique. It is “the third angel’s message in verity.” This means that it is greater than what the

Reformers taught or what the popular churches understand today. It is a message of “much more” abounding grace. It makes sense with the unique Adventist truth of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, a work that includes the full cleansing of the hearts of God’s people on earth.

7. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is not merely provisional but effective for the whole world. The only reason anybody can be lost is that he chose to resist the saving grace of God. For those who are saved at last, it is God who has taken the initiative; for those who are lost, it is they who took the initiative. Salvation is by faith; condemnation is only by non-faith, which is unbelief. But true faith is distinguished from its counterfeit.
8. Thus Christ’s sacrifice has legally justified “every man,” and has literally saved the world from premature destruction. All men owe even their physical life to Him, whether or not they believe. Every loaf of bread is stamped with His cross. When the sinner hears and believes the pure gospel, he is justified by faith. The lost deliberately negate the justification Christ has effected for them. They throw away the salvation already given them.
9. Justification by faith is therefore much more than a legal declaration of acquittal which depends on the initiative of the sinner. Faith is an appreciation of God’s initiative, and it changes the heart. The sinner has now received the atonement, which is reconciliation with God. It is impossible to be truly reconciled to Him and not also be reconciled to His holy law. Therefore true justification by faith makes the believer to be obedient to all the commandments of God. (There is a direct link between true justification by faith and Sabbath-keeping.)

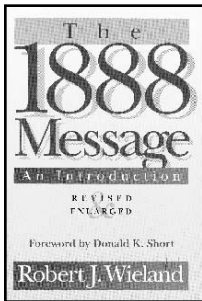
10. This marvelous change is accomplished through the

ministry of the new covenant. The Lord actually writes His law in the heart of the believer so that obedience is loved. This provides a new motivation which transcends fear of being lost or hope of reward. (Either of those motivations is what Paul means by his phrase, being “under the law.”) The old and new covenants are not matters of time but of condition. Abraham had faith and lived under the new covenant. Many today live under the old covenant because self-centered concern is their motivation. The old covenant was the people’s promise to be faithful to God; the new covenant is God’s promise to be faithful to them. Salvation comes by believing God’s promise to us, not by our making promises to Him.

As edited by Pastor Don Anderson, British Columbia Conference



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by Robert J. Wieland

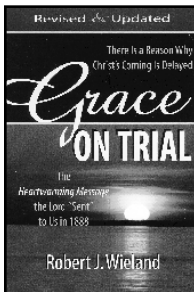
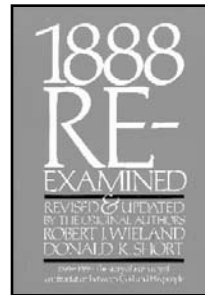
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