

## Lesson 12

### "Worship in the Early Church"

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it does it make a sound? If the Holy Spirit is poured out and no one hears it does it make a sound? "For as the rain cometh down, ... and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, ... so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void. ..." (Isa. 55:10, 11).

Peter explained the meaning of Pentecost from the prophet Joel: "I will pour out of my Spirit upon *all* flesh" (Acts 2:17). God pours out His Holy Spirit upon everybody in the world, but it doesn't mean that everybody receives Him. Christ "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). The ancient Jews didn't believe this. They thought they were the only enlightened ones.

Jesus helps us understand: "when He [the Holy Spirit] is come, He will reprove [convict] the world of sin, ... because they believe not on Me" (John 16:7-9). The Holy Spirit sheds light on every human heart; that person may not receive the light, but in the last great judgment day, no one can accuse God of not letting some light shine upon his pathway, some evidence on which that soul could make a choice. In every human heart the Holy Spirit has brought a conviction of sin, a sense of right and wrong. And blessed are those who respond to that conviction the Holy Spirit gives.

Something bigger than the worship on the day Pentecost happened in 1888 and there was minimal reception and maximum rejection. Does that mean that nobody heard it and therefore it never happened? Ellen White pled with "men" to "give up their spirit of resistance to the Holy Spirit, ... The Holy Spirit has been *insulted*, and light has been rejected" (*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1494, Feb. 6, 1896).

"We" have "Pentecostal envy" because they have "light and much power." There is pop "christian" music, dramatic presentations, comic monologues, and light heartedness, mega churches, but they have not followed Jesus into the holiest; consequently, "Satan would then breathe upon them an unholy influence; ... but no sweet love, joy, and peace" (*Early Writings*, p. 56).

It's time for us to awake to the fact that it is only "those who rose up with Jesus [who] would send up their faith to Him in the *holiest*, and pray, 'My Father, give us Thy Spirit.' Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In that breath was light, power, and much love, joy, and peace" (*Early Writings*, p. 55).

The fact of the matter is that Pentecost happened again in 1888. "... The loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the *beginning* of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth" (*Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1892). "... The message of justification by faith ... 'is the third angel's message in *verity*'" (*Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890).

It was greater "light" on the truth of "justification by faith"--a dynamo of power rushing through the floodgates--as the Holy Spirit came straight from the "holiest" with a message of heart-reconciling *agape*-love. The message of the forgiveness of sins was God's declaration of "peace" to the sinner resulting in much "joy". It was our Day of Atonement message.

This message wins the hearts of a "lukewarm" church and they, in turn, share it with the world. "The message given us by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner is the message of God to the Laodicean church, ... Justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ are the themes to be presented to a perishing world" (*1888 Materials*, p. 1052, 1054).

These themes are the "much more abounding grace" of God's love. This is the cleansing of the sanctuary truth. Jesus is ministering the "present truth" of the cross to turn hearts. It is the very "heart and soul" of the Ten Commandments. The "seal" of God's law is the seventh-day Sabbath. The very foundation of His law is *agape*. Hence, the Sabbath is the gospel of Jesus' reconciling love. The Sabbath is the very embodiment of the sanctuary message--the centerpiece of worship.

Our pioneers were divinely directed to choose the name "Seventh-day Adventist." The Sabbath is the cleansing of the sanctuary truth which prepares a people for translation at His second coming. "At the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully" (EGW, *Maranatha*, p. 170). Sabbath day worship is now seen in the light of Calvary as the heart-reconciling truth of the heavenly sanctuary.

We are living in the shaking time, when everything is going to be shaken furiously. The basic idea of a "shaking" among God's people is that the Lord is fed up with the hypocrisy of professed faith that is not validated by appropriate works motivated by *agape*. "Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God's people" (*Early Writings*, p. 270).

Is there an utterly necessary truth that must be held onto, even at the cost of life? The Bible says yes! Clearly so. We have come to the time when 1 Corinthians 13 itself has become a prophecy!

The apostle John agrees with Paul: he says that "God is love [*agape*]" (1 John 4:8), and "anyone who loves not [with *agape*] knows not God."

Is there confusion? No, not a trace: this is the solid building block of Bible truth. It's what Paul meant when he told the Corinthians, "I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). In other words, *agape*.

Obedience to the law is included, for only "*agape* is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). So it's not sentimental emotionalism; love is being crucified with Christ, with joy and gratitude for the privilege of fellowship with Him.

Justification by faith brings the gift of heavenly *agape*-love "shed abroad in the heart" by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). That means a deliverance from all kinds of fear because "perfect *agape* casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). Fear ceases to be a motive in following Christ, for "the *agape* of Christ constrains us" to live not for self, but "for Him who died for us" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

Such *agape* produces the most miraculous change in human hearts ever seen in world history, for as Luther wisely said, a full understanding of justification by faith must grow as the world becomes progressively more wicked just before the end. "More abounding sin" will require a clearer revelation of "grace [that] much more abounds" (Rom. 5:20).

In other words, our "latter rain" truth of 1888 is recoverable! And what is the end result? A people prepared for translation when Jesus returns (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

--*Paul E. Penno*