

Cleansing the Sanctuary – 1888 Convention at PUC – July 4, 2008

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Why is there so much confusion among Seventh-day Adventists regarding what is meant by “cleansing the sanctuary”? Answer: 1) They have fundamental differences as to what is meant by “righteousness by faith.” 2) They have a variety of answers to the question: What does God want to accomplish in His plan of salvation?

My purpose in this presentation is not to speak to the choir but to our many friends who are confused about these core questions; that is to say, what I think the messengers of 1888-1896 were saying that brought clarity to Adventism’s last-day message to the world. (The PP study will summarize the essentials of this study).

Basic question: What does God want to accomplish with His Plan of Salvation? **His answer:** Repopulate this cleansed earth with former rebels who will never distrust God again.

All of which leads to the **next question:** How does God expect to find people that He can trust, rebels who will come to the place where angels will vouch for their trustworthiness.

Ever since the deaths of Adam and Eve, the issue of future trustworthiness will be determined by God and affirmed by created intelligences and angels throughout the inhabited universe.

In a way, all those who have died so far have been judged regarding whether or not they would be safe to save and entrusted with eternal life.

For those in our day who are still alive and who live in the possibility of being translated without seeing death, **the issue of trustworthiness will be settled before Jesus returns.**

For each of us today, the most important question that anyone can ask is: ***How do I become trustworthy*** so that angels and others throughout the universe will endorse God’s decision that I could, or should, be entrusted with eternal life.

That I would never again think or utter a rebel thought, ever! That I would **be so “settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually,” that I “cannot be moved.”** -- (MS 173, 1902); 4BC 1161.6)

This is why, for us alive today, understanding the relationship between Cleansing the Sanctuary and Righteousness by Faith is so important. Especially for some Seventh-day Adventists who use these phrases as if they are mere doctrines to be regurgitated for some final exam. **These are not subjects to be merely memorized but thoughts to be internalized**—or else we really do not get the point of connecting the Cleansing the Sanctuary (CS), the Investigative Judgment (IJ) with Righteousness by Faith (RXF).

Let’s briefly state first our doctrines so that we are all on the same page. And then we will briefly state how all this doctrine becomes internalized.

In a quick overview:

- 1. The CS and the IJ and RXF are the most important subjects on the Adventist agenda. We can't have one without the other two anymore than we can have water without both hydrogen and oxygen:**

“The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill. . . . The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin” (GC:488).

“The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great advent movement, and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people” (GC: 423).

- 2. If you were Satan, your first priority would be to subtly and convincingly (with sly arguments) fog over this subject, even to those who think they believe the real thing:**

“Satan invents unnumbered schemes to occupy our minds that they may not dwell upon the very work with which we ought to be best acquainted. The arch-deceiver hates the great truths that bring to view an atoning sacrifice and an all-powerful Mediator. He knows that with him everything depends on his diverting minds from Jesus and his truth” (GC: 488).

- 3. The messengers to the 1888 General Conference (White, Jones, Waggoner) highlighted the indissoluble connection between IJ and JXF, perhaps for the first time in “HD, living color. “ In a series of RH articles written shortly after the 1888 Conference, EGW emphasized this living connection:**

“Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary, and he is there to make an atonement for the people. He is there to present his wounded side and pierced hands to his Father. He is there to plead for his Church that is upon the earth. 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. (RH, January 28, 1890).

“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” (RH, February 11, 1890).

“The service in the earthly sanctuary shows also that in order for the sanctuary to be cleansed and the course of the gospel service there to be finished, it must first be finished in the

people who have a part in the service. That is to say: In the sanctuary itself, transgression could not be finished, an end of sins and reconciliation for iniquity could not be made, . . . until all this had been accomplished *in each person* who have a part in the service of the sanctuary. The *sanctuary itself could not be cleansed until each of the worshipers had been cleansed*. . . Therefore the very *first work in the cleansing of the sanctuary was the cleansing of the people*. . . When the stream that flowed into the sanctuary was thus *stopped at its source*, then, and then alone, could the sanctuary itself be cleansed from the sins and transgression which, from the people, by the intercession of the priests, had flowed into the sanctuary” (Jones, *The Consecrated Way*, 117-119).

4. Why did this fresh emphasis (HD, living color) connecting RXF with CS and the IJ arouse consternation when contrasted with the prevailing gray-toned leadership’s understanding of CS and RXF and the IJ?

- a. Leadership saw RXF virtually in terms of holy works, faithfulness in tithes, doctrinal integrity, and in a list of many things not to do on the Sabbath, etc. They had most of the words but not the music of genuine RXF. “These ought ye to have done but . . .”
- b. Leadership feared that EGW, Waggoner, Jones were veering too closely to the *pervasive* “believism, of only believe,”(that was so appealing to Methodists, Salvation Army, and Baptists)—the prevailing opposition that Adventist preachers faced when proclaiming the relevancy of the Ten Commandments, etc.
- c. Leadership had not connected their cold, doctrinal understanding of IJ with the warmth of NT RXF, now being emphasized by the three spokesmen.
- d. b. Leadership had not yet understood that the return of Jesus did not depend on merely more missionary work but on people who were ready to be “sealed” and thus ready for God’s Latter- Rain power to “finish the work.”
- e. In no way does the 1888 message emphasis deny, or overlook, or make secondary, the *objective elements* in God’s gift of pardon, reconciliation, etc.
- f. However, the “ungodly” were not “accounted righteous *by faith* (Romans 4:22--big difference). But all mankind were to hear *the good news*, “*the gospel*,” that included the objective truths that they, though open sinners, were *still in the family of God*—what a fresh thought (Luke 15).
- g. These “objective truths” included: 1) that unfallen angels and intelligences on unfallen worlds saw plainly that God was right and Satan wrong about the principles that could best secure a world of peace and love; 2) Jesus proved that created beings could keep the law cheerfully and convincingly, without caving in to Satan’ temptations—and so could they with the same help Jesus had; 3) They all saw how malignant sin becomes when power and self-assertion is unrestrained. *All this was done without any human participation*.
- h. *All this was an objective gift and message gladly given to all men and women after our Lord’s resurrection*. Paul saw it most clearly and was ready to die proclaiming these objective facts.¹ The mighty gift of RXF to those who were sinners rested on what Jesus had

¹ Luther: “Wherefore Christ apprehended by faith and dwelling in the heart is the true Christian righteousness for which God counts as righteous and give us eternal life.” –*Galatians*, Trans by Watson, 135, 160. For Luther justification is the experience of receiving Christ into a heart-experience, turning the unbeliever into a grateful believer.. Seen from this angle Luther's justification is not mere legal acquittal; it is a deliverance from chronic unbelief. Justification by an infusion of faith is not Catholic doctrine as Ford stated it was and as many who follow

done for all prodigal sons and daughters, the Father's door was wide open, the Christian's appeal is to return home, all bills paid, nothing in the hand to bring. Those who accept the Father's appeal were reinstated as sons and daughters, reconciliation is complete.

- i. Obviously, there is no hint of universalism because "coming home" depends on the act of faith—the whole-hearted and growing commitment of trusting and obeying the Father who is always standing with His Arms wide open.
- j. To be specific, the "reconciliation" of Romans 5:10-11, because of our Lord's objective sacrifice on the cross, God "permits" Himself to *treat* "all men/woman" as though they had not sinned! The Father has always kept His front door open—the wandering sons and daughters must become aware of this love, and the "return home" is called "by faith." "Saved by grace through faith (the grateful response of trust and obedience)" Eph. 2:8-10.

5. What then can we do in our day to supplement what was put in place in 1888, especially in connecting the CS and IJ and RXF?

a. *We must clearly understand what we mean by RXF, which involves the NT meaning of faith and righteousness.*

- *Righteousness* : "Righteousness" and "justification" are English translations of the same Greek word—*dikaioisune*, a confusion that we can thank the Calvinists for who translated the King James Version. Misunderstanding this word has split the Christian church for 2000 years.
- The English word, "righteousness," is a mutation of the Old English word, *rightwiseness*. We see the same word linkage in "clockwise," and "sidewise." *Rightwiseness describes a person who is going in the right direction, a direction that someone has said is the correct direction.* "Right" is an old English word that simply meant that which is *correct or straight*.
- Main issue: Who defines what is right? Hitler defined what was right for Nazi Germany and a whole generation of Germans marched off to conquer the world.. Modern educators are telling grade school boys and girls that condoms are very important. Are they right or wrong? Who says so?
- Bible-believing Christians accept the simple fact that God has the right to determine what is right. Not especially because He says so but also because we have had thousands of years of evidence as to what is right: God's principles, or the opinions of men and women.
- Righteousness is a word that describes the way of right choices. They choose to live right-wisely. They don't go "sidewise" when they come face to face with that which God says is right!
- If Adam and Eve had always obeyed God, and if every man and woman since had obeyed God, this planet would be filled with "righteous" people. The question is: Could Adam and Eve, and anyone since, ever become "righteous" again?
- Why has this word caused so much division in the Christian church for 2000 years and in ours for at least fifty years?
- Some believe that we become righteous by only believing that Jesus died for our sins on Calvary. Some call that, "justification by faith." This is where many are confused. When we use that

him today still insist. In Luther's teaching, Christ's inner presence empowers the sinner to keep trusting (believing). Luther's followers, Chemnitz, et al., modified or rejected Luther's concept of justification and thus the confusion since the 16th century.

phrase, “justification by faith,” rarely are we told that the word “justification” is exactly the same Greek word that we translate as “righteousness” —always, an existential experience.

- If one chooses to believe that we are born sinners or that we will always be sinners no matter what we do—*he/she will choose a false understanding of justification/righteousness*. Then, for them, justification/righteousness means that a legal change in the heavenly books is made whenever a *person merely believes* that Jesus died for his sins. First, they believe that we will always be sinners and second, they believe that “being saved,” or “justified,” happens *without any change necessarily happening in one’s life*. (“Lordship-No Lordship Controversy” within Evangelicalism today—MacArthur vs Ryrie, et al.).
- When one believes that some kind of legal transaction *only* is made in the heavenly books, whenever we accept Jesus as our Savior, obviously there is great relief. Pardon is a very happy experience. ***But righteousness involves a right-wise life, not merely a make-believe, “pardoned” life that is not changed after being “justified.”***
- Justification/righteousness is pardon, but much more. Pardon is necessary to *dikaiosune* but not identical to it. *God requires moral corrections before actual sins are forgiven but these corrections are not in any way the reason why God forgives.*
- *Dikaiosune* aims directly at character—at right-wiseness, that is, righteousness aims at making men and women be and do rightly with God’s help.

b. Faith is a great NT word that sums up 1) appreciation for God’s gift in Jesus and 2) trust that leads to unequivocal obedience to the One trusted. Again, the King James Version has fed the confusion by translating the Greek word, *pistis*, as “believe, belief,” etc. Translators are only human and they have revealing prejudices!

- Justification/righteousness by faith *does not mean that faith substitutes* for righteousness but that genuine faith *is* righteousness.² Faith is like the living seed or the acorn; when we have the seed or acorn, we have the fruit of that seed ready to develop and work. Romans 4:5: “faith is ‘accounted/reckoned’ for righteousness/justification *because Something wonderful has really happened!*”
- The act of faith begins a righteous life, thus, a righteous character.
- The act of faith guarantees that we are not made inherently holy by any act on our part because it remembers that righteousness by faith is derived from God. Faith is our response to God’s double grace of pardon and power.
- Therefore, when we are declared “righteous/justified by faith,” it is *more than a legal fiction* that has no reference to personal character.

² Some may wonder what Paul may mean in Romans 12:3—“God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” Ellen White reads Paul’s context well when she wrote that “faith that enables us to receive God’s gifts is itself a gift, of which some measure is imparted to every human being. It grows as exercised in appropriating the word of God” (*Education*, 253, 254). Our minds are drawn also to John 1:9—that everyone ever born into this world has received “the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.” This aspect of faith emphasizes its objective giftedness. Some also may see a connection between the “enmity” (Genesis 3:15) that God imbedded in the human race, an inner capacity to listen to God’s side of the controversy between good and evil.

Paul’s phrase, “the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3), in context emphasized that Christians ought not to be high minded but sober minded in their evaluation of others and themselves. He realizes that this scale of measuring one’s self and others may be different in different persons so that the line between conceit and sober thinking is not the same for all. (See Vincent’s *Word Studies* on Romans 12). Thus, the standard for doing all this “right” would be according to the “measure of faith” one has. In other words, genuine faith should give to the mature Christian the only safe measure by which he or she judges himself or others.

- In other words, being declared justified/righteous is true to fact, because we are in a new, harmonious relationship to God who is the source of all righteousness.
- Thus the purpose of the gospel is fulfilled: Romans 8:4 uses a different variation of “righteousness” (*dikaïoma* instead of *dikaïosune*) which is a “result” word—NKJV is correct: “righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us.” *Character change is the issue.*
- This same result word, *dikaïoma*, is used in Revelation 19:8: Speaking of the saved who are invited to our Lord’s marriage supper: “To her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the *righteous acts* of the saints.” *Character change is the issue.*
- Again, the intent of justification/righteousness by faith is to be conformed to Christ’s image—Romans 8:29-30
- In summary, justification/righteousness by faith *that does not remove the wrong condition* in man that had put him at enmity to God *is not genuine, NT/righteousness by faith.* If our sinful attitude is not removed, then whatever is called justification/righteousness by faith is *only a legal fiction.* (Many Bible commentators, other than Calvinists, understand this well).

6. **In understanding the above, we can better understand the “sealing work” and “the cleansing of the sanctuary.” In reality, these terms describe the same event!**

- a. In Revelation 7. Jesus gave us the time when probation will close and, thus, when He will return: *Probation closes when God steps back and allows Satan to be unrestrained in his final attempt to rule this earth.* It will be the Job Syndrome in living color! God is telling His angels to hold the four winds until His people are ready to be sealed, ready to receive His stamp of approval, ready for His signature to be written on their foreheads.—ready for Latter Rain Power that goes on and through people who can be trusted to represent God fully.
- b. *Why the wait?* Because He needs faithful witnesses to rightly represent Him as He steps in with His last appeal to Planet Earth. In other words, God will end up the Controversy “right”—no one will ever say out of the last generation that they “never saw all this coming!”
- c. Our Lord wanted all this faithful response to happen in the nineteenth century but He is *willing to wait*, decade after decade, for His people to catch on as to what their last-day mission really is—a final, lucid, revelation of the truth about God that only His witnesses can provide. (See *Selected Messages*, bk.1, 67-69).
- d. Remember those TV ads for Hanes clothing? Can’t you see that determined female inspector on the assembly line, with all of her formidable charm, looking over each item as it goes by, and saying: “*The quality goes in before the name goes on!*”
- e. That’s what God is trying to get across to His professed people for more than a century: “Please let the Holy Spirit do His work in you so that I will not be embarrassed in giving you Latter Rain Power. The world needs to hear my call with a very Loud Cry: “Come out of her, my people.” But that call must be convincing, fair, and global.
- f. *So, what exactly is the “sealing work”*—that one event that keeps delaying the return of Jesus? What is this seal that makes Satan so furious?
- g. Listen to this wisdom: “*Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God’s people are sealed and ready for the shaking, it will come*” (*Last Day Events*, 219)³

³The phrase “the shaking,” when referring to last-day events, refers to the experience of God’s loyalists after the “sealing” when their habit (neural) patterns are so fixed that they never again will choose to think or do contrary to God’s expressed will. Of course, everyone has “shaking times” when serious issues have to be decided. But our classic phrase refers to that awesome time *when even nominal church members in God’s last-day church will be sifted and weeded out*—only the most loyal remain while new adherents join them during that turbulent time.

This truly is the work of faith – joining the head with the heart. They have studied out the reasons for their commitment to God’s calls for loyal Christians and they have discovered the validating assurances of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The intellectual grasp of truth has reached its transforming purpose—men and women have developed characters that will vindicate God’s wisdom as He waits for the purpose of the gospel to be fully developed in the lives of men and women.

- h. Why can God be sure that He can seal these people? Or, that these “sealed” people should be entrusted with eternal life? He knows these men and women will never disappoint Him! **Why is He so sure?** Because they are “so settled into the truth . . . they cannot be moved.” Whatever Satan throws at them, they cannot be moved!
- i. This is why we on earth should not keep looking at the heavenly sanctuary for unseen events to happen *when all the universe knows that all the action is going on here on earth*, the cleansing or sealing of God’s people determines when God says, “It is finished and I come quickly.”

7. **Why is all this so important in the finishing of the Great Controversy?**

Angels and unfallen worlds know (1) that the sealed ones are those who will never again rebel against the will of God. Their habit patterns, their neuron-pathways, are so settled into truth they never would be moved throughout eternity to say “No” to God!

(2) The sealed ones have proven God to be fair and true and Satan to be a liar: created intelligences can obey God’s law and still be happy, at peace, and trustworthy. (“Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways” (Rev, 15:3).

3) Everyone in the last generation, saved and unsaved, will have seen an undeniable display of loyalty and commitment to God under the worst of times—no one will be denied an opportunity to decide what they will do with truth. No one will say, “I never had a chance!”

8. **Conclusion: The 1888 messages set the stage for the final chapter in the Great Controversy.**

- a. **Those messages unambiguously clarified what the NT means regarding “righteousness by faith” and what that phrase was meant to accomplish.**
- b. **Those messages further explained why our Lord’s ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary today should be a daily experience in joining with Him in the business of character transformation, or in other words, “cleansing the sanctuary.”**
- c. **Those messages highlighted the connection between the responsibility of God’s loyalists and the time when Jesus could return.**