



GOSPEL LESSONS

IN THE

OLD TESTAMENT



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*Whatsoever things were written aforetime
were written for our learning,
that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures
might have hope.*

Romans 15:4

*All these things happened unto them for examples;
and they are written for our admonition,
upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

1 Corinthians 10:11

Prologue

1. The Sabbath School Work

Signs of the Times, May 10, 1883

E. J. Waggoner

Note: This is an excerpt from the article, "Visit to Healdsburg". Only the relevant part is included here.

THERE is a lack of appreciation of the importance of the Sabbath-school work as supporting discipline of mind and a thorough education, in the things of God. There is a lack of thoroughness in Bible study.

The Sabbath-school has been regarded as different from the day-school, and that it was not expected that the lesson should be learned perfectly. There has been such an apparent fear of formalism, and a desire to be able to generalize and state things in our own language, that we have neglected that accurate knowledge of the Bible which alone can enable us to generalize.

The particular is before the general. Before we venture to state a Bible event or truth in our own words, we must be familiar with the words of the sacred text; then, if necessary we can paraphrase. But the instances where it is necessary or proper to change the expression in the least, in order to convey its exact meaning, are more rare than is commonly supposed.

This thoroughness of work depends on the individual members of the schools. The officers and teachers cannot demand a perfect recitation, as they would in ordinary schools, however much they may desire the result; but if each member of the school will realize the importance of being able to think and talk in the language of the Bible, especially in these last days, our schools will be improved a thousand-fold.

2. Our Sabbath-School Department

Signs of the Times, June 5, 1884
E. J. Waggoner

IT HAS been our aim to make this department of our paper one of general interest. From the very nature of our work the Sabbath-school department of the *Signs* must be different from that of any other paper.

The *Signs* is a missionary paper. Devoted to an exposition of the great truths of the Bible, especially those for the last days, and as such it goes to all parts of the world, and is read by all classes of people. Its circulation is not confined to our own people, but thousands not of our faith, and many with no well-defined belief in Christianity, read it with interest.

Of the thousands of readers of the *Signs*, comparatively few study the Sabbath-school lessons upon which it comments, the great majority using the International series;¹ and those who study the lessons published in the *Youth's Instructor*, are so widely scattered that many do not get the *Signs* in time to make the notes of the immediate use in preparing their lesson.

All these things have been taken into account in preparing our Sabbath-school department, and we have endeavored to make the notes and comments of such a nature as will interest the general reader. The mission of the *Signs* is such that we cannot afford to have any part of it of merely local interest. We have evidence from Sabbath-school teachers and scholars that this department has been useful to them in their work; and we know that it has not been unappreciated by the larger class whom we have had in mind.

¹ **Editor's note:** E. J. Waggoner is referring to the two sets of Sabbath school lessons: those of the Seventh-day Adventist church, and those put together by an International committee for all denominations of Christians. The *Signs* contained lesson notes for both sets of lessons, for a number of years.

But there are many who study the International lessons, who would derive more direct benefit if the *Signs* contained notes on that series also, and we have decided to meet this want.

As all doubtless know, the International lessons are necessarily non-sectarian, being simply portions of the Bible selected by the Lesson committee. While all the Sunday-schools in the country study the same portion of Scripture at the same time, each denomination or journal may publish its own notes and comments. Since the *Signs* is a Bible expositor, to comment on these lessons will be directly in the line of our work.

We therefore begin this week to add these to our own Lesson notes. To those unacquainted with this series, we will say now for all time, that there are only twelve lessons in each quarter; each school can use whatever it desires for the thirteenth lesson. There will therefore be no notes next week.

As in the past, we will endeavor to make these notes of interest and profit to all; we shall also get them out in time so that those who desire may use them in preparing their lessons. We believe that this move will be appreciated by all our present readers, and by thousands yet to come.

3. Good Advice for Sabbath-Schools

Signs of the Times, November 27, 1884

E. J. Waggoner

THE advice which we have to give is not our own, but is a bit that we found in a book written more than eighteen hundred years ago. It is contained in the following words of Paul to Timothy:

2 Timothy 2

²³ But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

If every school would have this verse engrossed in large letters, suitably framed, and hung in a conspicuous place in the classroom, we believe that it would be to its benefit. There is no school in which is not needed as a warning, if not as a reproof.

We would by no means be understood as deprecating a spirit of investigation, or as advocating the shutting off of questions, except such as are indicated in the verse quoted. They are certain death to spirituality either in the school, the teachers' meeting, or anywhere else.

It is a lamentable fact that among any body of persons there will be some whose minds always grasp the fact that is not under consideration. A text of Scripture always conveys to them a hidden meaning, and they feel called upon to make known their doubts, or their new ideas. Others are always reaching out after the unattainable. They want to know more than is revealed.

The question as to where Cain got his wife is still current. "Who was Melchizedek?" is asked with as much anxiety as though eternal happiness depended on the correct answer. The question, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" is still put in spite of the fact that the inspired apostle has marked the mental ability of the questioner

down to zero.²

There is no end to these foolish and unlearned questions. We mention (though not without a blush) a case that occurred in a Sabbath-school which we recently visited. In the course of the lesson, *Genesis 7:14-15* was quoted as a proof text. At the close of the hour, when the leader inquired if anyone had a question to ask concerning the lesson, one pupil rose and with much seriousness asked to know the difference between a bird and a fowl (!), since both words occur in *Genesis 7:14*. It will be said that this is an extreme case, and that so foolish a question is seldom asked. No doubt it is an extreme case, and if the question had been only *asked* we would not mention it; but there were no less than half a dozen persons who were unguarded enough to offer *answers*. It was this fact that convinced us that the bit of advice which we have quoted is greatly needed.

In the current lessons in the *Signs*, on immortality,³ there is room for an abundance of unlearned questions. Some will want to know *how* the spirit can return to God. Others will demand, or offer to give, an exact definition of the terms “soul” and “spirit.” “How is it that the dead can hear the voice of God?” is a question that worries not a few. “What is life?” will probably be asked until mortals reach the state where they will not dissipate their intellectual powers by employing them on unprofitable questions.

2 Timothy 2

²³ ...they do gender strifes.

The strifes do not always appear; in fact, we seldom hear of them in Sabbath-school; nevertheless “strifes” are the legitimate result of such questions. The reason is that there is nothing to decide the question at issue. There is nothing to which

² *1 Corinthians 15:35-36.*

³ These Lessons are included in Volume 3 of the Fragments series, *Life, Death, and Spiritualism.*

either party to the discussion can appeal as a final authority. The opinion of one is of as much value as that of another, and none are worth anything. If the discussion of such questions does not lead to strife, it is solely because the parties have enough grace in their hearts to yield a point, or let the matter drop.

As a general thing, the subject matter of the lesson will suffice to fill all the time allowed. If something in the lesson brings to one's mind a text outside of the lesson, which throws additional light upon it, by all means let him speak of it for the benefit of others. The object of every lesson is to stimulate, not to repress, thought. If the leader sees that the text has no bearing, he can state that fact in a few words, and in a manner not to wound feelings of many.

It may chance that the leader's judgment is at fault, and that the text is to the point, but so long as he is leader he must be allowed to direct the course of the lesson. In a company of earnest students there will be no dearth of good thoughts, and it would be better to let one or two be lost, than to have a discussion to no profit. If a theory can be supported by Scripture, it must be good, but *guesses* concerning the Bible do not amount to much.

As we before said, these questions are usually dropped before they develop into strife; but of what profit are they? Are there not enough glorious *revealed truths* in God's word to occupy all our powers of mind, without frittering them away on foolish questions, or those to which no answer can be given, and which, even if answered, are of no practical importance? Time is too precious to spend on trifles, and therefore let us always and everywhere heed the apostle's admonition:

2 Timothy 2

²³ Foolish and unlearned questions avoid.

4. Helps in Studying the Lesson

Signs of the Times, November 27, 1884
E. J. Waggoner

THE question has been asked,

“At what time in the study of the Sabbath-school lessons should helps be brought in, and how should they be used?”

To this question it is difficult to get an answer in a few words. In order to have a thorough knowledge of the subject, it would be necessary to have a clear understanding of what is meant by “helps;” but that must be waived for the present. We will suppose it to include the concordance, dictionaries, atlas, commentaries, histories, etc. Some will derive help from that which would be of no service to others. Taking it for granted that the things at hand are such as may be a help indeed, we would mark out, in brief, the following as a good plan for starting the lesson:

Having learned from the lesson paper what the lesson is about, and what portion of Scripture it covers, take the Bible at once, there is where you will find the lesson to be studied. Read carefully, several times, all the texts that are quoted, so as to get them well in mind. The next step will be to commit to memory the portion that is to be memorized. This, of course, will not be accomplished at one effort; to commit the text thoroughly will be a work covering the whole week. If the student wishes, and is able, he may commit the whole of the lesson to memory; this is done by some, with profit. But it is not best to attempt too much at once. It is not the desire to tax the memory to such an extent that earnest thought cannot be put upon the matter thus committed.

While thus learning the texts referred to, the student should bear in mind the object for which they are quoted. Very often many things may be learned from a single verse; the question will indicate for what particular thing the verses is quoted.

Then after learning the answers to each individual question, the lesson should be considered as a whole, to see the relation of the questions to one another, and what general point is made by the whole lesson. When this has been done, the student is ready to consult outside helps.

In the matter of consulting commentaries, great care and judgment must be exercised, as on doctrinal points they are often misleading. It is not safe for anyone to consult commentaries indiscriminately, unless he is previously pretty well grounded in the truth. Commentaries are more for the learned than the unlearned.

If one has a good general idea of the subject which he is studying, and is anchored to certain fixed principles, so that he can sift the chaff from the wheat, he will learn much from commentaries. It often happens that a positively erroneous exposition will awaken a train of thought in the mind of the careful student, that will be very profitable.

Those, however, who are most familiar with commentaries, know that quite often the text upon which the student most needs light, is the one upon which the least is said. The reasons for this is obvious. It is perhaps needless to suggest that if there is any work bearing on the lesson, of whose orthodoxy you are fully assured, that is the one to be consulted first. It will aid your judgment in your further search.

One “help” should never be neglected. It is that of the Holy Spirit. It is the author of the Bible,⁴ and can best give light upon it. One of its offices is to guide into all truth,⁵ and it may be had by anyone for the asking.⁶ The promise,

James 1

⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not, and it shall be given him,

⁴ 2 Peter 1:20-21; Ephesians 6:17.

⁵ John 16:13.

⁶ Luke 11:13; Mark 11:24.

–is given to all. This help should be sought before beginning the lesson, and during all the time of studying it. One thing more: The Saviour has said,

John 7

¹⁷ If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine.

He who earnestly and prayerfully studies the word, with a sincere desire to profit by it, cannot fail to be enlightened. Jesus also said:

John 14

²³ If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Now we read that:

1 John 1

⁵ God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

If then He dwells in us, what an all-powerful, ever-present help we have. Without this help, all others are worthless.

5. The International Sunday-School Lessons

Signs of the Times, December 16, 1886

A. T. Jones

THE International Sunday-school Lessons for the first six months of 1887 are in *Genesis* and *Exodus*, ending with the ten commandments—*Exodus* 20. We are glad to see so much of the year given to the study of this portion of the Scripture. And yet we feel well assured that if the lessons are studied according to the guidance of the official “Select Notes” put forth by the Messrs. Peloubet, they will be studied to very little purpose, if indeed to any purpose at all except that of infidelity.

These “Select Notes” are a kind of commentary gotten up by the “Rev. F. N. Peloubet, D.D., and M. A. Peloubet.” The Scripture that contains the lesson is printed in both the Old [KJV] and the *Revised Version*, and then accompanying this are notes of their own with many others selected from all sources which they approve; and are intended to be made the guide especially to the teachers of the International Lessons in the Sunday-schools.

These notes perhaps more largely than any other helps, are used in the Sunday-schools throughout the country. And other than these notes, no better evidence is needed to show how thoroughly the modern “scientific theories” pervade the theology of all the Protestant churches. All the so-called scientific theories, even to evolution itself, of the creation, and of man, of the flood and of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, are here freely admitted if not directly taught.

- Everything must be made to conform to what “science” says.
- All must agree with the decisions of “science.”
- “Science” is the standard by which all must be tested, and if it agrees with “science” that is evidence conclu-

sive that the word is inspired.

All this, however, is just the reverse of the true position. The true position is that the word of the Bible is true; that it is given by inspiration of God. That is the sole unerring standard. If scientific deductions agree with the Bible upon matters of which it speaks, it is well; if these deductions do not so agree then the deductions are wrong, that is all, and they, not the Bible, must be revised; they, and not the words of the Bible, must yield, or be re-stated.

In these "Select Notes" on the creation, we read:

God may have made use of second causes, as, "Let the waters bring forth." "Let the earth bring forth." This does not decide the question of the truth of the development theory or of evolution, but shows that God had a plan of development in his own mind, or made creation so that, under his control, it unfolds as an acorn unfolds into an oak. God states the fact that he created all things; he does not state how he created them. God makes a tree as really when it grows in the field as if he had sent it ready made from Heaven. Let scientists discover how.

Very well but has science discovered how? Can science tell how a tree grows in the field? If God should send a tree ready made from Heaven, and should set it right alongside of one that had grown in the field, we should very much like to see the scientist who could tell how the one came any more than the other. There is not a scientist in all the world who can tell that thing, and there never can be one. For the simple truth is that he would have to be equal to God to do it.

All this technicality, this shifting of changes, upon the point that God states that He created all, but does not tell how, is a sheer contrivance to save appearances. Those who use it are so far advanced in the "advanced science," and the "advanced theology" of the day, that even the appearance of believing the Scriptures can be kept up in no other way.

Suppose the Creator, beside telling us that He did create the oak, had also chosen to tell us *how* He did it. Suppose He had told us that He placed an acorn in the earth, that the earth was wet, that then He caused the sun to shine upon it, that the acorn sprouted and took root and grew and became an oak. Would that help the matter a particle? Would not the question still be, "How?" Still the scientific doubter would say:

God states the fact that He did thus and so, but He does not state how He did it. He states the fact that He placed the acorn in the earth, but He does not state how He did it; He states the fact that He caused the sun to shine upon it, but He does not state how; He states the fact that the acorn sprouted, but He does not tell how; He states the fact that the acorn took root and grew, but He does not state how. Let scientists discover how.

But for scientists to discover how the oak came from the acorn is not enough. They must then discover how came the acorn. If God should state the fact that He created it, still the advanced science doubter would say:

True, God states the fact that He created it; but He does not state how He created it. Let scientists discover how.

But can scientists discover how? We have never yet seen or heard of the scientist who had discovered which was first, the acorn or the oak. We wish Mr. Peloubet or some one else would give us "the latest assured verdict of science" on this point. Then we shall ask them how it was first, and how it was at all. Then, too, it will be time enough for them to tell how.

The truth is that the Creator, in stating the fact that He created all things, has told all that can be told on the subject. At the point of creation we touch the infinite, and the finite cannot fathom it. There is one way and only one in which the finite can get beyond that word "how." That only way is by faith. For thus says the Lord:

Hebrews 11

³ Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

It is by faith alone that we can understand the creation of God. Faith alone can connect the finite with the infinite. Mark it:

³ ...the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear...the worlds were framed by the word of God.

Psalm 33

⁹ He spoke and it was; He commanded and it stood fast.

And “through faith we understand” it. Again says the *Select Notes*:

If it should be proved that the theory of evolution is true to a large extent (not evolution instead of God, but evolution under God’s control with God as Creator and Guide of all), the story of creation as told in *Genesis* would not be inharmonious with such evolution.

But “the latest assured verdict of science” is that “the doctrine of evolution is directly antagonistic to that of creation.” Now if Mr. Peloubet or any of the teachers of the International Lessons can explain just how the story of creation in *Genesis* would not be inharmonious with such evolution; that is, if he can tell just how that story can be in harmony with a theory that is directly antagonistic to it, we should like very much to see how it can be done. Have scientists yet discovered how this can be? Again we read:

That the DAYS are not days of twenty-four hours, is clearly seen by the use of the word in these chapters. It is used of three days before there could have been any such days, as the sun did not appear till the fourth day.

Is it one of “the latest assured verdicts of science” that the earth did not rotate on its axis till the fourth day? If the earth

did rotate, did it not do so once in twenty-four hours, as it still does; or did it then go so slow that it took it ages upon ages to make one rotation? The latter cannot be so, as we believe that it is “the latest assured verdict of science” that it is entirely to its rotary motion that the earth owes its oblate-spheroidal form. If that motion had been so slow as to consume ages in turning once then the earth would not be the shape that it is.

But instead of the rotation being then so slow, it is the “assured verdict of science” that “one hundred million years ago” the rotary motion of the earth was actually nearly three-quarters of an hour faster than it now is. Therefore “the latest assured verdicts of science” prove that the days of creation were not more than twenty-four hours long.

As to there being any difference in the days before and after the sun shone on the earth, there was none. The first day,

Genesis 1

³ God said, Let there be light. And there was light.

⁵ And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning [the darkness and the light] were the first day.

And so it was the first day, and the second day, and so it has been every other day, and so it is now. Causing the sun to shine did not make the day. God made the day—the light—the first day. Thus day was upon the earth before the sun shone on the earth, and then when God made the greater light, it was to rule—not make—the day.

¹⁶ And God made two great lights; the greater light *to rule* the day, and the lesser light *to rule* the night: He made the stars also.

It is singular that the advanced theology has not found out that there was light on the first day and that God called that light Day. Again says Mr. Peloubet, of the creation of man:

If the theory of evolution, believed by so many scientific

men, should prove to be true so far as relates to man's body, and it should be shown (though it has not been proved as yet) that the physical man was developed from monkeys and the lower order of animal life, yet that would not contradict the statement that man was made from the dust of the earth. It would only explain how he was made of the dust—an explanation which the Bible nowhere gives, but leaves men to discover.

But the extreme height of this theologico-scientific nonsense and absurdity, is reached when he comes in his select notes to the creation of woman. He says:

Woman was created from man by taking a rib (not merely the bone, but a piece of the side), and forming it into a woman. This is strictly in accordance with the processes of life as revealed by modern scientific research....God chose the only method in existence among His creatures which the nature of the case rendered possible.

So then this "method" was already "in existence among his creatures" was it? It is a great comfort, however, to know that science has kindly left us the privilege of thinking that the Creator was wise enough to choose "the only method...which the nature of the case rendered possible." Again:

So from a portion of Adam, He made a woman. A miracle, indeed (as all creations are miracles), but a miracle conforming, as far as the conditions admitted, to methods already in use.

"Methods already in use"! By whom, we should like to know? Was that the "method already in use" in the making of women, before ever there was a woman made? Was that "the method already in use" in the making of women, before God made the woman? If so who made them? and if so, then where was the miracle?

And this is the stuff that the children are to be taught in the Sunday-schools throughout the land! This is the way that

faith in God and respect for His word are to be implanted in the minds and hearts of the young! And this is to be called Christianity! Parents, is it so that such senseless jargon as this shall be taught to your children as the word of God? Is this the way that they are to be taught to remember their Creator in the days of their youth?

That such things as these should be put forth to be taught, yea, as part and parcel of the essential teaching, in the Sunday-schools throughout the English speaking world, is, to him who respects the Bible as the word of God, a most startling thing. For it shows how all-pervading this scientific infidelity has become. For infidelity it is and nothing else. If it is not, then there is no such thing as infidelity. If these things can be held consistently with sound belief in Christianity and the Bible as the word of God, then there is no such thing as unbelief. If this be faith there can be no such thing as doubt.

1 Timothy 6

²⁰ Keep that which is committed to your trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

²¹ Which some professing have erred concerning the faith.

Luke 18

⁸ When the Son of man comes shall He find faith on the earth?

For:

Hebrews 11

³ Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

6. An Important Study

Signs of the Times, February 10, 1888

Original title: Back Page

E. J. Waggoner

WE HOPE that none of the readers of the *Signs* will skip the “Notes on the International Lesson,” for the reason that they may not be studying those lessons.

The notes are designed to be of a practical nature, and of no less importance to the general reader than to the Sunday-school scholar.

All who are interested in the consideration of Bible truth should read these notes.

7. About the International Sunday-School Lesson

Present Truth, February 13, 1902

E. J. Waggoner

JUST a word concerning the article that appears each week with a footnote indicating that it deals with the International Sunday-school lesson.

We know that many Sunday-school teachers make use of these articles in preparing their lessons; but they are not written solely for the benefit of the comparatively few Sunday-School teachers among the thousands of *Present Truth* readers.

If the articles were of value only to those few, we should hardly feel justified in devoting so much space to them; but the case is this, that the articles are as general in their nature, and as much designed for the general reader and Bible student as for teachers.

Those who have no connection with any Sunday-school can read them with as much profit as those who do. We simply take advantage of the fact that some are especially interested in a certain portion of Scripture at a certain time, to provide matter of value to all.

8. The Gospel in the Old Testament

Present Truth, June 21, 1894

From the Series: "Studies in Romans"

E. J. Waggoner

THE Gospel of God to which the Apostle Paul declared himself to be separated, was the Gospel...

Romans 1

² ...which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures;

—literally, the Gospel which He had before announced or preached. This shows us that the Old Testament contains the Gospel, and also that the Gospel in the Old Testament is the same Gospel that is in the New. It is the only Gospel that the apostle preached.

That being the case, it should not be thought strange for men to believe the Old Testament, and to refer to it as of equal authority with the New Testament. We read that:

Galatians 3

⁸ [God] preached beforehand the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed.

The Gospel preached to the people when Paul lived, was the same Gospel that was preached unto the ancient Israelites.

Hebrews 4

² For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them.

Moses wrote of Christ; and so much of the Gospel is to be found in his writings that a man who does not believe what Moses wrote, cannot believe in Christ.

John 5

⁴⁶ For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

⁴⁷ But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?

Acts 10

⁴³ To Him gave all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins.

Paul had only the Old Testament when he went to Thessalonica,

Acts 17

² ...and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures,

³ Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead.

Timothy had nothing in his childhood and youth but the Old Testament writings, and the apostle wrote to him:

2 Timothy 3

¹⁴ Continue in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them;

¹⁵ And that from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Then go to the Old Testament with the expectation of finding Christ and His righteousness there, and you will be made wiser unto salvation. Do not discriminate between Moses and Paul, between David and Peter, between Jeremiah and James, between Isaiah and John.

9. Contrasts That Do Not Exist

Signs of the Times, May 24, 1883

E. J. Waggoner

IN A prominent religious journal of recent date, we find the following:

It is at once the peculiarity and the glory of the New Testament that it enunciates principles, not arbitrary laws. No Sabbath day's journey is here laid out, which man may not exceed; his duties are not prescribed in rigid forms or gauged by a yard-stick. Instead, two underlying principles are laid down—love to God first, love to man next. On these two hang all the law and the prophets.

The meaning of the preceding paragraph, so far as it has any meaning, is that while the Old Testament binds men to the performance of special duties, the New Testament deals only in vague generalities, leaving men to draw their own conclusions as to what they may and may not do.

Such a view as this would commend itself quite readily to the world, who would not find it very difficult to conform to a religion that had no fixed rules. When the development of principles is left to men, there are few things which they may not be made to include.

But the references which are brought forward in proof of this assertion are very unfortunate. It is said of the New Testament that:

No Sabbath day's journey is there laid out, which men may not exceed;

—by which it is implied that such a thing is marked out in the Old Testament. But the fact is that instead of a "Sabbath day's journey which men may not exceed" being laid down in the Old Testament, such a thing is not mentioned. The term does not once occur in the Old Testament. The only place in

the Bible in which it is found is in the New Testament, in *Acts* 1:12. So much for that attempt to depreciate the Old Testament.

Again, of the New Testament it is said that in it man's duties...

...are not prescribed in rigid forms, or gauged by a yardstick. Instead, two underlying principles are laid down—love to God first, love to man next.

What a pity it is that the one who wrote that did not read the Old Testament through at least once, before contrasting it with the New. Had he done so, he would have found in *Deuteronomy* these words:

Deuteronomy 6

⁵ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

There is love to God in its fullest extent. Again in *Leviticus* he would read as follows:

Leviticus 19

¹⁸ You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

How much that sounds like New Testament language. We hope that none who despise the Old Testament will reject that text when they find that it is original in that book. For our part we do not know of any more appropriate motto to be hung up for constant reference. If a copy were in a conspicuous place in every house, and read carefully every day, it would improve the manners and customs of this world wonderfully.

Any attempt to find antagonism between the Old and New Testaments, will prove a failure. A house and its foundation are not more closely joined than they. In fact, that is just the relation they bear to each other. The Old Testament is the

foundation; the New is the superstructure. There is not a principle laid down in the New Testament that is not in the Old.

These statements about love to God and love to man are direct quotations from the Old Testament.

Luke 10

²⁵ And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

²⁶ He said unto him, What is written in the law? how do you read?

²⁷ And he answering said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.

²⁸ And He said unto him, You have answered right: this do, and you shall live.

Our Saviour and the apostles quoted continually from it. Indeed, there was nothing else from which they could quote. If all the references to, and quotations from, the Old Testament were taken out of the New, there would be but little left. The New Testament is the Old Testament explained.

And now let us make a little investigation to see if it is true that simple principles alone are laid down in the New Testament; to see if it is true that the Old Testament contains only threatenings of judgments against sin, while the New has only mercy and love. In the preaching of the gospel we find a command at the very outset:

Acts 2

³⁸ Repent and be baptized every one of you.

This is as plain as anything could be. In *Matthew 5:17-48*, the decalogue itself is nearly all repeated, and instead of any of its provisions being made less definite, they are enlarged and made to appear more strict than ever.

And then as to the idea that the New Testament contains only love and mercy. The threats against the sinner are as ter-

rible as any in the Old Testament. In *Romans 2* we read that God will render...

Romans 2

⁸ ...unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

⁹ Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that does evil.

Again Paul says that:

2 Thessalonians 1

⁷ ...the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels,

⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

⁹ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.

Some of the strongest threatenings in the Bible come from the lips of our Lord himself. In *Revelation 14:9-12*, which is the revelation of Jesus Christ,⁷ we read that they who worship the beast, and receive his mark,

Revelation 14

¹⁰ ...shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.

On the other hand, we find in the Old Testament some of the most tender expressions of mercy that are to be found in the Bible. Even in the decalogue itself we learn that God shows mercy to those that keep His commandments:

Exodus 20

⁶ Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

What expression of love could be stronger than this:

⁷ *Revelation 1:1.*

Psalm 103

¹³ Like as if a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.

Again,

¹⁷ The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

⁸ The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.

Nehemiah says that:

Nehemiah 9

¹⁷ [He is] a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.

And, finally, we have this broad principle laid down as the sum of all duty:

Micah 6

⁸ What does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

Here is as broad a principle as is found in the New Testament. We do not exalt the Old Testament above the New, but we would place them on a level. They are one; and this is why we protest against decrying the Old. Undermine the confidence of the people in that, and reverence for the Bible and Bible truth will be a thing of the past.

And it would not be to the glory of the New Testament if it could be proved that specific duties are not there prescribed. We need rigid rules, that our lives may be correct. When man is left to himself, he invariably goes wrong. Now if the Bible dealt in vague terms, leaving us to interpret them to suit ourselves, we would be no better off than if we had no revelation at all.

If we but have the principle of love to God in our hearts, we will love all His word, so that we can say with the psalmist:

Psalm 119

¹⁶⁰ Your word is true from the beginning; and every one of your righteous judgments endures forever.

10. Real Forgiveness

Bible Echo, June 15, 1890

E. J. Waggoner

THE Old Testament is full of promises of forgiveness. When one of the people sinned, he was to make the proper sin-offering, and the promise was,

Leviticus 4

²⁶ ...and it shall be forgiven him.

So the prophet Isaiah said:

Isaiah 55

⁶ Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near:

⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Some have thought that pardon before the death of Christ was not real but only typical, though what sort of a thing a "typical pardon" might be, they have not told us. But the pardon which David received was so real as to cause him to exclaim:

Psalms 32

¹ Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

² Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.

The forgiveness which David received was such as took away the sin so that the Lord did not any longer account him guilty. If that was not actual forgiveness, we should like to have someone tell us what more than that actual forgiveness could do for a man.

This blessedness was Abraham's when his faith was counted for righteousness. Abraham was the father of the

faithful, for he...

Romans 4

¹⁸ ...against hope believed in hope.

He had faith in Christ, who, it had been promised, would be descended from him, when he had no child, and when it was utterly impossible, humanly speaking, that he should ever have one. He is called the father of the faithful, because he exercised stronger faith than any other man who ever lived.

But faith nowadays always brings the fullness of pardon, and Abraham's greater faith must have brought the same thing to him. And so it did, as the Scriptures plainly declare.

Abel likewise, by his sacrifice of faith,

Hebrews 11

⁴ ...obtained witness that he was righteous.

But if he was righteous, he had been cleansed from sin, for no man can be righteous before his sins are forgiven.

Of Enoch we read that he...

Genesis 5

²² ...walked with God.

That is the same as saying that he was at peace with God; for two cannot walk together except they are agreed.⁸ But peace comes only after the faith which brings pardon.⁹ Enoch could not have walked with God, if his sins had been upon him; but if his sins were not actually forgiven, then they were actually upon him.

Forgiveness must precede a righteous life; therefore to say that there was no actual forgiveness before Christ came, is the same as saying that there were no men who were actually righteous before the resurrection of Christ, but that all were

⁸ *Amos* 3:3.

⁹ *Romans* 5:1-2.

hypocrites. Thus the theory of typical or pretended pardon dishonors both God and men.

There is, however, a real difficulty in the minds of some who have no notion of denying God's word, which declares that from the earliest ages men were actually forgiven, and were actually righteous. That difficulty is this: All the blessings that come to men, come by virtue of what is called the "second covenant,"¹⁰ of which Christ is mediator; but that covenant was not ratified until the death of Christ, and Paul says:

Hebrews 9

¹⁷ For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives.

Then how was it possible for men before the days of Christ to receive the blessing of forgiveness, which is promised only in the second covenant? A verse in the 4th chapter of *Romans* will serve to answer this. The apostle, after telling how Abraham received the righteousness of faith, says that he believed God,

Romans 4

¹⁷ ...who quickens the dead, and calls those things which be not as though they were.

God can make a thing that is not just as real as though it actually existed. How is that? The answer is in:

Hebrews 6

¹³ For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

¹⁴ Saying, Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.

¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

¹⁶ For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

¹⁷ Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the

¹⁰ *Hebrews* 8:6-7.

heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

¹⁸ That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

The promise which God made to Abraham was confirmed in Christ. His faith was counted for righteousness, by virtue of the Seed which was to come. And although God cannot lie, He confirmed His immutable promise by an oath, and so made it doubly unchangeable. So although all pardon is granted solely by virtue of the blood of Christ, after Christ had been promised it was the same as though he had actually been slain. So sure is the promise of God, that Christ is called,

Revelation 13

⁸ ...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;

–for the promise that was made to Abraham was nothing more than the promise made to Adam. There is but one plan of salvation.

Hebrews 13

⁸ Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever,

–is the center of that plan, and the grace of God through Him has been equally abundant in all ages since sin entered into the world.

Romans 10

¹² For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.

11. One Book

Present Truth, July 6, 1893

E. J. Waggoner

A GREAT many people who would be shocked at the suggestion that they are infidels, imagine that faith is entirely consistent with a disbelief of many of the records of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament.

They think that they believe the Gospel, yet they make no scruple of pulling the Old Testament record of that Gospel to pieces. There are many portions of the Bible that they are very doubtful about; and as for the story of Jonah, and the account of the flood, they can scarcely have patience with anyone who professes to believe them. The Bible account of the creation of the earth, they regard as at the best only a beautiful fable.

Can one believe the Gospel, and disbelieve the Old Testament? Let us see. The Apostle Peter speaks about the salvation of our souls, and says,

1 Peter 1

¹⁰ Of which salvation the prophets inquired and searched diligently who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

¹¹ Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

¹² Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by these which have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Read the above text carefully, and you will see that it states that the prophets of old ministered the very same things that are announced by those who preach the Gospel. Then the prophets must have written the Gospel. When Peter was preaching Christ in the house of Cornelius, he said,

Acts 10

⁴³ To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins.

And the Apostle Paul said,

Acts 26 [RV]

²² Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come:

²³ How that Christ must suffer, and how that He first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles.

Therefore whoever says that the Old Testament does not contain the Gospel, says that the Apostle Paul did not preach the Gospel.

Suppose the position be taken that the story of creation, and of the fall of man, is only a fable. If that were so, then there would be no Gospel at all. For if there were no fall of man, there need be no redemption. So that if the account of the fall were imaginary, then we have the entire Gospel built on a fable. And besides, if the story of creation and the fall of man be a fable, how can we know that the whole Bible is not the same? We must either accept the whole Bible, or reject it all. We cannot pull it into pieces.

Take the account of the prophet Jonah. Many people would feel almost insulted if it were intimated that they were so simple as to believe it. They say that it never really happened that the great fish never swallowed Jonah, and that it would have been impossible for him to live three days in its belly. But Christ said,

Matthew 12

⁴⁰ As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights

in the heart of the earth.

Now if Jonah was never in the whale's belly, and could not have been, then we have the Saviour likening His death and resurrection to an impossibility. Therefore to deny the story of Jonah, is to deny the foundation of the Gospel.

It will not do in this case to say as so many of the "higher critics" do, that the Saviour spoke of the things that were currently reported among the Jews, as illustrations, taking the people on their own grounds, without stopping to explain that those things were really fables. If the story were not true, the Lord knew it; yet He said that just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale so He should be in the heart of the earth. If the story of Jonah were not true, then we have Christ saying that He would not be in the heart of the earth at all.

Is it not better to believe a thing that we cannot understand, than to throw away the entire Gospel? Who dare say that it is of no importance whether or not we believe all the records of the Old Testament?

The saddest part of this matter is that the people have not been led to this loose way of regarding the Bible by professed infidels, but by professed ministers of the Gospel. It is they who are responsible for the current of unbelief that is carrying so many away. Indeed, one can scarcely pick up a religious journal without seeing more or less about the controversy that is now going on over the Bible.

There is a controversy, for there are many ministers who stand for the truth of the Bible; yet there are so many ministers of high standing and influence, who seem to be actuated by intense fear that the people will really believe too much of the Bible, that it is necessary to raise a voice of warning. We need not pass sentence of condemnation upon those ministers, but simply warn the people to beware of them as false teachers.

Lessons from the Flood

We have just seen a sermon on the flood, which instead of seeking to strengthen the faith of the weak, is almost wholly devoted to an attempt to prove that there never was any such thing. Here are some of the statements. We give them because doubts in regard to the flood are becoming quite common. The preacher says:

“No student of science is able to believe that any such flood as that recorded in the early chapters of *Genesis* ever took place in the history of the human race.”

“We are not to take the account of the deluge for history infallibly inspired and rigidly accurate in all its details.”

That view he tells us,

“...is no longer held by persons of ordinary education.”

How easy it is to brush aside a proposition with the statement that no one of ordinary education believes it. A false fear of being called ignorant is at the bottom of a large part of the infidelity of these days.

But what about the flood? May we throw it aside as a myth, and still hold fast our faith in the Gospel, and in the Bible in general? Let us see. Christ used the flood and its time as an illustration of the last days.

Luke 17

²⁶ As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

²⁷ They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

In the book of *Hebrews* we are informed who the “all” were who were destroyed by the flood.

Hebrews 11

⁷ By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as

yet, moved with fear; prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

It was the world that was condemned by the preaching of Noah, because they did not believe it; and it was the world that was destroyed by the flood. Christ in person, and also through His chosen apostle, bears witness to this.

Again the flood is put in the same list as the creation of the world, and the general judgment. The Apostle Peter says that they who scoff at the promise of the coming of the Lord, are willingly ignorant of the fact that...

2 Peter 3

⁵ ...by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

⁶ Whereby the world that then was being overflowed with water, perished:

⁷ But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Whoever discounts the story of the flood, thereby discounts the story of creation, and also the promise of the coming of the Lord to judge the world. The same word that brought the flood upon the earth, created the earth, and will make it new again. The Scriptures, from Moses onward, testify of Christ, and they cannot be rejected without rejecting Christ.

Still further, if the story of the flood is a myth, then there is no comfort in the Gospel. It is upon that fact, and the things connected with it, that the Lord gives us assurance that He will not forget us. Speaking to Jerusalem which is above, and is the mother of us all, which is now desolate, mourning the absence of her children, God says,

Isaiah 54

⁹ For this is as the waters of Noah unto me, for as I have sworn, that the waters of Noah should no more go over the

earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with you, nor rebuke you.

Her joy and glory will be the restoration of her children, by the salvation of the righteous; therefore the assurance that God will save His people is no greater than the assurance that there was a flood in the days of Noah.

Isaiah 54

⁹ As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with you.

But if there were no flood, then the Lord did not swear that the waters of the flood should no more go over the earth; and so in that case we have no assurance that He will remember to save His people. Again, we read the words of inspiration through the Apostle Peter:

2 Peter 2

⁴ For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

⁵ And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

⁹ The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.

If the Lord did that, He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations; but if He did not do that, what then? the only conclusion is that He does not know how to deliver the godly out of temptations. And so those who deny the story of the flood throw away all the consolations of the Gospel.

More might be said in the same line, but this is sufficient to show that no one can lightly deny any part of the Sacred Record. It all stands or falls together. No, that is not correct: it all stands together; it does not fall, notwithstanding the as-

saults of men.

Psalm 119

⁸⁹ For ever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven.

¹⁶⁰ Your word is true from the beginning; and every one of your righteous judgments endures for ever.

We have written this to call attention to what is involved in setting aside any portion of the Bible, and to enable the reader more clearly to see that:

2 Timothy 3

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

It is all profitable, and all necessary.

12. Judaism and Christianity

Present Truth, June 7, 1894

E. J. Waggoner

MANY people speak about “Judaism,” who have very faint ideas of what it is. When they hear of some who keep the Sabbath according to the fourth commandment, they speak of them as “Judaizing,” because they think that Judaism means the religion enjoined in the Old Testament. But that is a great mistake.

Judaism means the religion of the Jews; but neither in the days of Christ and the apostles, nor since that time, have the Jews understood and believed the teaching of the Old Testament. If they had, they would have been Christians; for the religion of the Old Testament is Christianity.

Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews:

John 5

⁴⁶ Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me; for he wrote of me.

⁴⁷ But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?

From these words we learn that the Jews did not believe the writings of Moses. Therefore it is evident that the religion of the Jews—Judaism—was not and is not the religion taught by Moses. The religion taught by Moses was that which he received directly from the Lord, and it set forth Christ and Him only.

The Apostle Paul says that in his earlier days he made great progress in...

Galatians 1

¹⁴ ...the Jews’ religion,...being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

The Jews’ religion, therefore, or Judaism, consisted in fol-

lowing tradition. But this was directly opposed to Old Testament teaching, for Jesus told them that by their traditions they made void the commandments of God,¹¹ and said of them,

Matthew 15

⁹ In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Here again we see that Judaism is the rejection of the Old Testament, instead of the acceptance of it. No man, therefore, who faithfully follows the religion of the Old Testament, can be called a Judaizer. On the contrary He is a Christian.

Again, the Apostle Paul tells us that a veil was upon the hearts of the Jews, even in the days of Moses, so that they could not understand what Moses delivered to them.

2 Corinthians 3

¹³ And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

¹⁴ But their minds were blinded: for until this day remains the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

¹⁵ But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.

¹⁶ Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

He says, "Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart." But he adds that when the heart turns to the Lord the veil is taken away. This shows still further that the religion of the Old Testament is Christianity, and that the Jews, who reject Christ, do so solely because they do not really believe the writings of Moses. What then is Judaism? It is the rejection of the Gospel, as set forth in the Old Testament,

¹¹ **Matthew 15** ³ But He answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

and a following of tradition.

When therefore we find people who know that the fourth commandment requires the observance of the seventh day of the week, commonly called Saturday, and who keep Sunday instead of that day, although they know that the Scriptures nowhere sanctions it, either in the Old Testament nor the New, but that Sunday observance stands wholly on tradition and custom, we may know that they are following the essential principles of Judaism, which consists in substituting tradition for the commandments of God. They may differ from the Jews in regard to the tradition which they follow, but they are one with them in principle.

Further: we have read the words of Jesus to the Jews, telling them that they could not believe Him, because they did not believe Moses. The reason is that Moses wrote of Christ. It is evident, therefore, that they who do not see Christ in the Old Testament, even in the writings of Moses, do not understand and believe the Old Testament. But they who do not believe the Old Testament, including the writings of Moses, do not really believe in Christ. Therefore they who reject the Old Testament writings, do really also reject the New Testament. They are in precisely the same condition as the Jews, for both fail to see Christ in the Old Testament.

Every word of God is pure and true, and has life. A person, therefore, who knows only a very small portion of the Bible, may know and believe in Christ. But it is impossible for any to be real believers in Christ, when they reject any portion of the word which He has spoken, and which testifies of Him. And it was His Spirit that testified in all the writers of the Old Testament.

1 Peter 1

¹⁰ Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

¹¹ Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Let no one fear that by keeping the commandments of God, as set forth in the Old Testament, he will be a Judaizer. He cannot keep those commandments except by faith in Christ. They are in Christ, and Christ is in them.

The keeping of the commandments of God, by the faith that appropriates the life of Christ, is true Christianity. He kept the commandments,¹² and He is the same today that He was when on earth in the flesh.

Hebrews 13

⁸ Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

All that He did on earth was in order..

Romans 8 [NASB]

⁴ ...that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

1 John 2

⁶ He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.

¹² **John 15** ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

13. “Jewish” and Christian

American Sentinel, January 23, 1896
A. T. Jones

THE *Cincinnati Weekly Enquirer*, of January 2, quotes the Rev. Mr. Dabb, a Protestant clergyman of New York City, as affirming in a recent discourse that the Sabbath institution is not Christian, but only a part of the ancient “Mosaic code,” with which it passed away at the death of Christ.

The Jewish law, [he said,] was given to the Jewish people and never to any other people. It was binding upon them, but never on Christians, or any other race.

The assertion would not be worth noticing did it not express an idea quite generally entertained by professors of Christianity. There is nothing which casts more confusion over the Sabbath question than this. Were it not for the idea that the Sabbath originated as a “Jewish” institution, and that what was Jewish is necessarily separate and distinct from what is Christian, the Sabbath question would not be today the difficult and perplexing one that it is to the people generally.

We desire, then, to call the attention of as many as possible to two important facts, implied in the foregoing statements:

1. The Sabbath—the seventh-day rest—is not and never was “Jewish,” and
2. Whatever was given by God to His people of old, pertained to Christianity as truly as do any of the ordinances enjoined upon the Church by Christ and His apostles.

The idea has in some way taken possession of the mind of Christendom that there is an antagonism between the “old dispensation” of “the law and the prophets,” and the “new dispensation” of the preaching of Christ and His kingdom; that the “new dispensation” with its ordinances and precepts, nec-

essarily superseded and abrogated that which pertained to the former times. This idea is as far from the truth as anything could be.

God did not have one plan and purpose for the world in Old Testament times and another plan and purpose for the world in this dispensation. He has had but one purpose, and that is:

Ephesians 3

¹¹ The eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord;

–namely,

Ephesians 1

¹⁰ That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth.

This one great purpose He has steadily carried forward since the fall of man. Salvation through Christ was the theme of..

Matthew 22

⁴⁰ ...the law and the prophets.

The Old Testament is as truly the word of Christ as is the New Testament; for Peter tells us that it was the Spirit of Christ that testified through the prophets.

1 Peter 1

¹¹ Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Hebrews 4

² Unto us, [writes Paul,] was the gospel preached as well as unto them;

–that is, to the ancient Israelites who went out from Egypt with Moses. The gospel, we are told by the same writer,

Romans 1

¹⁶ ...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.

And in the 11th chapter of *Hebrews* we are pointed to the ancient worthies who through faith...

Hebrews 11

³³ ...subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

³⁴ Quenched the violence of fire,...

People in their day had faith in Christ, as truly as people have faith in him today. The power of God unto salvation, through that faith,—in other words, the gospel,—was preached to them as truly as it is to us.

The gospel ordinances and ceremonies of their day, very largely, pointed forward to Christ, and as such necessarily passed away when Christ's death upon the cross became an accomplished fact. Since that time the Christian Church has had ordinances and ceremonies pointing back to that event. But whether before or after Christ's death, they pointed to Him as the sacrifice for the salvation of mankind, and as such were the means of expressing faith in Him.

The seventh-day Sabbath is never in the Scriptures called "Jewish," but is termed "the Sabbath of the Lord." And it is today, as it was then, the Sabbath of Jehovah,—the memorial of His creative power, which is also the power by which He redeems the sinner.

Abraham is called in Scripture the father of the faithful.

Galatians

¹⁶ To Abraham and his seed were the promises made.

And we read,

²⁹ If you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Abraham was as truly a Christian as was Peter or Paul. And all those in every age who have believed on Christ for salvation, have been Christians in fact, whether known by that name or not.

Because the law of God was spoken to the Israelites from Sinai, it does not follow that that law was not for Christians. For, as we have seen, a very large number of those to whom it was spoken were Christians. As Christians, they observed God's Sabbath,—the seventh day; and that day was, and still is, the Sabbath for all Christians.

Jesus Christ himself was a Jew, and His apostles were Jews. And we also, if we are Christ's, are Abraham's seed, and therefore Jews in the true spiritual sense of the word;

Romans 2

²⁹ For, [we read,] he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

³⁰ But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of man, but of God.

To say, therefore, that the law of God spoken from Sinai, "was given to the Jewish people and never to any other people," and was never binding "on Christians," simply betrays a fundamental misconception of the purpose and scope of the gospel. If Christendom would shake off this misconception, the whole question of the nature and obligation of the Sabbath, the foundation upon which it rests, and the proper means for securing its observance, would be wonderfully simplified.

Seen in the light of the plain statements of Holy Writ, we find no difficulty in knowing what is our own proper attitude toward the Sabbath, and what course we should pursue toward others with respect to its observance. But without that light, men can but fall deeper and deeper into error, both of belief and practice.

14. Old and New Testament

Original title: Back Page

Present Truth, November 22, 1900

E. J. Waggoner

THE Old Testament is often spoken of by thoughtless people as a yoke of bondage. But if the Old Testament be a yoke of bondage, the New must be also. Its requirements are at least as difficult.

Christ did not introduce a lower standard of conduct in His Sermon on the Mount. The one who takes the New Testament as his standard has got as hard a master as the Jew who found a yoke of bondage in the Old Testament.

The man who accepts them both and *lives by* every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, instead of trying to *live up* to some of them, finds in both Old and New Testament the power of God unto salvation.

Genesis

Other Resources to Consult:

- The Call of Abraham (Waggoner)
- The Everlasting Covenant (Waggoner)
- The Gospel in Creation (Waggoner)
- Through the Bible (Jones)
- Why Genesis? (Jones)

1. Creation

Signs of the Times, December 29, 1887

Genesis 1:1-18

E. J. Waggoner

1. What did God do in the beginning?

Genesis 1

¹ In the beginning God created the heaven and earth.

2. By what means was this accomplished?

Psalms 33

⁶ By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

⁹ For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

3. Are we to understand from these words that the matter of the earth was not in existence before he spoke?

Hebrews 11

³ Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

4. Who was the active agent in creation?

Hebrews 1

¹ God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

² Has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.

5. Is there anything that the Son did not make?

Colossians 1

¹⁶ For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him:

¹⁷ And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

6. Since it was by the Son that the Father created all things, what is His rightful title?

John 1

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

³ All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.

7. How has the Father addressed the Son?

Hebrews 1

⁸ But unto the Son He said, Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom.

¹⁰ And, You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of your hands.

8. Then how should He be regarded by all creatures?

Hebrews 1

⁶ And again, when He brought in the first-begotten into the world, He said, And let all the angels of God worship Him.

9. In what condition was the earth when it was first spoken into existence?

Genesis 1

² And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

10. After the creation of the substances of the earth, what was the first thing done?

³ And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

11. What next?

⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.

12. What did God call the light and the darkness?

⁵ And God called a light day, and the darkness He called

night.

13. What do a period of darkness and a period of light together constitute?

⁵ And the evening and the morning were the first day.

14. Which always comes first in the formation of a day?

The darkness.

Can you explain why?

See *Notes*.

15. What was done on the second day?

Genesis 1

⁶ And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

⁷ And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.

⁸ And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

16. How is this day's work referred to by Job?

Job 26

⁸ He binds up the waters in His thick cloud; and the cloud is not rent under them.

17. What was done on the third day?

Genesis 1

⁹ And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so.

¹⁰ And God called the dry land earth; and the gathering together of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.

¹¹ And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; and it was so.

¹² And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed

after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind; and God saw that it was good.

¹³ And the evening and the morning were the third day.

18. What was made upon the fourth day?

¹⁴ And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

19. What were these lights to govern?

¹⁶ And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; He made the stars also.

20. Then what kind of days were these days of creation?

21. Does the sun make the day, or simply rule the day?

22. Tell what makes the day, and how there could be days before the sun was.

Notes

The reverent reader of the Bible, who accepts the historical portion of the Old Testament, as a narrative of what actually took place, and not as a fiction, can arrive at no other conclusion than that the days of creation were literal days of twenty-four hours each. They were days composed of an evening and a morning,—a period of darkness and a period of light; and they were such days as are governed by the sun and moon.

Now in order that there should be any show of reason in the claim that the days of creation were long, indefinite periods of time, those who make such a claim ought to be able to point to some time when the sun ruled such days as that. That, of course, would be an impossibility, and so is it an absurdity to claim that the days of creation were anything other than literal, twenty-four hour days. Nobody can get any other idea from the text. But the question is presented,

“How could there be days before there was any sun?”

Such a question implies ignorance, or at least forgetfulness, of what forms the day. The day is made by the revolution of the earth on its axis. Each complete revolution makes one day. As a matter of fact, the sun has nothing whatever to do in forming the day. If it should suddenly become a body of darkness, instead of a body of light, it would be days just the same, and they would be just the same length that they now are.

So there were days before the sun was appointed to rule the day. This appointment was not made until after the earth had completed three revolutions, or until three days of time had passed. The very statement that God set the two great lights in the firmament,

Genesis 1

¹⁸ ...to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness,

–shows that there were days independent of the sun. These great lights were to rule in the day and then the night, which had been arranged before they were given their office.

When does the day begin? At evening, according to the record in *Genesis* 1; and in *Leviticus* 23:32 we read that the Jews are directed to celebrate their Sabbaths “from even unto even,” and this could not be unless they regarded other days as beginning at the same time.

But why is this? Is it an arbitrary requirement? or is there a fixed reason why the day begins at evening? It is not an arbitrary matter, but the natural day begins at evening because it cannot by any possibility begin at any other time. When the earth was created,

² ...darkness was upon the face of the deep.

The phrase, “in the beginning,” marks the beginning of time, as distinguished from God’s eternity. The speaking of the

matter of the earth into existence, marked the beginning of the first day of time. But darkness covered the chaotic mass, and consequently the first day of time began in darkness. Before the earth had completed its first revolution, however, light was created.

Genesis 1

³ And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

⁵ And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening [the darkness] and the morning [the light] were the first day.

The first revolution of the earth was completed just at the dividing line between light and darkness; and so, just as the first day began in the unbroken darkness, the second day began with the darkness that had been separated, and put within bounds. And as a matter of necessity, this order must always follow.

To make the day actually begin at any other time than evening, would involve a change in the earth's revolution; and in order to count the day as beginning at midnight, a portion of time had to be ignored. Thus it is evident that the present popular mode of reckoning time is not of God's arrangement.

2. The Creation

Signs of the Times, January 18, 1883

Notes on the Sabbath-school Lesson for January 27

Genesis 1; 2:1-3

E. J. Waggoner

AS THE lesson for this week is a review of the whole book of *Genesis*, it is evident that only a few points can be touched upon. The great point to be kept in mind is the plan that runs through the whole history. This will be spoken of more fully hereafter.

The Days of Creation Week

One thing that is worthy of mention in passing is the days of creation week. Several years ago it was thought to be nothing less than rank heresy to deny that these days were any other than literal twenty-four-hour days. Now, however, he who ventures to intimate that they were literal days is looked upon as an ignoramus. Very recently we saw the statement in one of the leading religious journals, that:

“No one whose opinion is worth anything believes the old theory.”

But for all this, we hold unflinchingly to the fact that the days were literal days. We believe that this is really a vital point, and not a mere matter of opinion. Once admit that these days were long periods, and the way is open for a disbelief in the entire Bible; for if this part of the Bible does not mean what it seems to mean, what warrant have we for thinking that any of the Bible means what it says?

Suppose the days to have been equal to one thousand of our years. Now it is evident that the seventh day of the creation week was of the same nature as the other six. If not, then the case is worse than ever, for there is nothing said by which we can infer that there was any difference. But on the seventh day God rested, and afterwards, because of His rest, He

blessed it, and set it apart for man's observance.

Genesis 2

² And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.

³ And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.

Exodus 20

⁸ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

⁹ Six days shall you labor, and do all your work:

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates:

¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

How absurd to command man to keep holy a day a thousand years long. It is sometimes urged in favor of the popular view, that:

2 Peter 3

⁸ One day is with the Lord as a thousand years.

Exactly so; God is not obliged to have just so much time in which to perform His acts. He could create the world in one day as well as in a thousand years. One would be no more wonderful than the other, for the simple act of creation itself is something that man cannot comprehend. The psalmist says,

Psalms 33

⁶ By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

⁹ For He spoke and it was [done]; He commanded and it stood fast.

This describes the work of creation. God did not speak and

set forces in motion that after the lapse of ages would result in the formation of our world; but at His word everything came into existence perfect and good.

As has been said, the works of God are infinite. The mind of man can find ample scope in contemplating them. And it is proper, and pleasing to God, that we should think upon His works, for the psalmist says,

Psalm 111

² The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

⁴ He has made His wonderful works to be remembered.

But if men were constantly engaged in their own affairs, their minds would not be set upon God and His work. In order, therefore, that man might have an uninterrupted period for meditation, God gave him the Sabbath.

The Sabbath

This institution was not an arbitrary affair, given simply for God's pleasure, that He might be remembered, but was given because man needed it. God can exist without us, but we cannot exist without God. The Sabbath was a necessity of man's nature, therefore God made it for him.

Mark 2

²⁷ And He said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.

But it is not for man to use as he may see fit. It is his to use to the glory of God, and only by so doing we can he get the benefit from it. All the commandments are for man. It is absolutely necessary to his happiness that he should refrain from murder, theft, etc. It is in this sense that the Sabbath was made for man. Only by keeping all of God's commandments can men attain to the highest possible state of enjoyment both here and hereafter.

It is not in the province of these brief notes to say anything

about the perpetuity of the Sabbath. The natural conclusion of any unbiased person would be that the Sabbath is of perpetual obligation. If it was necessary for man six thousand years ago, it is necessary now. If there was danger of forgetting God then, there is a thousand-fold more danger now.

And it is “the day of the Sabbath” that is to be kept. No other day but the seventh day can be the Sabbath, for upon no other day did God rest and pronounce a blessing, and no other day was sanctified.

It is not true, then, that all days are alike, and that any day will do for a memorial. All days are not alike; for one day in the week has been blessed and sanctified, made holy and set apart from the rest. It is a poor excuse for anyone to say that he can see no difference. God expects us to make a difference between the holy and the profane. Read what He says about it, and the consequences of not doing so, in:

Ezekiel 22

²⁶ Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

²⁷ Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

²⁸ And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus says the Lord God, when the Lord has not spoken.

²⁹ The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

³⁰ And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

³¹ Therefore have I poured out my indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own

way have I recompensed upon their heads, says the Lord God.

The Resurrection

Not only is the resurrection taught in the New Testament, but it was understood centuries before that book was written. When Abraham was called upon to sacrifice his only son, the one in whose name, it had been said, his seed should be called, there was no natural probability that the promise could ever be fulfilled.

But Abraham, like Paul, knew whom he had believed. The reason for his great faith is found in the fact that he knew that God possessed all power, and was able to raise Jesus from the dead. He had received his son by a miracle, and he knew that God was able to work another. The “friend of God” was not above believing in miracles.

Perhaps if there were more nowadays who held that relation to God a belief in miracles would be more general.

3. In the Beginning

Signs of the Times, February 24, 1888

Genesis 1:1-5

E. J. Waggoner

THE brother who sent the following questions, says that there has been some dispute over them in the Sabbath-school:

1. What does “in the beginning” refer to in the first verse of the Bible? to the beginning of the first week or to some other time?
2. Was the earth created during the first week, or was it simply fitted up then, and created ages before?
3. Were the sun and moon created during the first week, as the Bible says, or were they created ages before?

1. In the Beginning

Genesis 1

¹ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

In the beginning of what? Not of God’s existence, because He is from eternity. Not the beginning of eternity, because eternity has no beginning. Then the text must mean that in the beginning of time God created the heaven and the earth. Time, then, begun with the first act of the creation of this earth.

2. The First Week

Now read the first verses of *Genesis*:

Genesis 1

¹ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

² And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

³ And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided

the light from the darkness.

⁵ And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

Here we have the work of the first day. What was it? It was the creation of the heaven and the earth, the creation of light, and the separating of the light from the darkness, thus forming day and night. The measurement of time by days and nights must, of course, have begun as soon as time began. So “in the beginning” refers to the first day of the first week of time, in which the heaven and the earth were created.

3. The Sun and Moon

“Were the sun and moon created during the first week, as the Bible says, or were they created ages before?”

We are quite inclined to believe that it was just as the Bible says. We know it is not fashionable nowadays to believe the Bible in all particulars, and those who do so are considered as old-fogyish; but we have never yet found any more reliable authority than the Bible.

We would advise our Sabbath-schools to stick to the Bible, and not to run after the speculations of...

1 Timothy 6

²⁰ ...science, falsely so-called.

4. Creation and Redemption

Present Truth, December 15, 1892

Genesis 1:1

E. J. Waggoner

Genesis 1

¹ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

IN THIS brief sentence we have the whole of the truth of the Gospel summed up. He who reads aright, may derive a world of comfort from it.

In the first place, let us consider who it was that created the heaven and earth. "God created." But Christ is God,

Hebrews 1

³ ...the brightness of the Father's glory, and express image of His person.

He himself said,

John 10

³⁰ I and my Father are one.

He it was who, representing the Father, created the heaven and the earth.

John 1

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² The same was in the beginning with God.

³ All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.

And again we read of Christ,

Colossians 1

¹⁶ By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him;

¹⁷ And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

The Father himself addresses the Son as God, and as Creator. The 1st chapter of *Hebrews* says that God has not at any time said to any of the angels,

Hebrews 1

⁵ You are my Son, this day have I begotten You;

⁸ But unto the Son He says, Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom.

And He has also said to the Son,

¹⁰ You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of your hands:

² ...by whom also He made the worlds.

So we are well assured that when we read in the 1st chapter of *Genesis*, that:

Genesis 1

¹ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,

–it refers to God in Christ. Creative power is the distinguishing mark of Divinity. The Spirit of the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah describes the vanity of idols, and then continues:

Jeremiah 10

¹⁰ But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King; at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation.

¹¹ Thus shall you say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

¹² He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion.

The earth was made by His power, and established by His wisdom. But,

1 Corinthians 1

²⁴ Christ [is] the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

So here again we find Christ inseparably connected with creation as the Creator. Only as we acknowledge and worship Christ as the Creator, do we acknowledge His Divinity.

Christ is Redeemer by virtue of His power as Creator. We read that:

Colossians 1

¹⁴ We have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins,

—because that,

¹⁶ By Him were all things created.

If He were not Creator, He could not be Redeemer. This means simply that redemptive power and creative power are the same. To redeem is to create. This is shown in the statement of the apostle that:

Romans 1

¹⁶ The Gospel...is the power of God unto salvation,

—which statement is immediately followed by another to the effect that the power of God is seen by means of the things that have been made.

²⁰ For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.

When we consider the works of creation, and think of the power manifested in them, we are contemplating the power of redemption.

There has been a great deal of idle speculation as to which is greater: redemption or creation. Many have thought that redemption is a greater work than creation. Such speculation is idle, because only infinite power could perform either work,

and infinite power cannot be measured by human minds.

But while we cannot measure the power, we can easily settle the question about which is greater, because the Scriptures give us the information. Neither is greater than the other, for both are the same. Redemption *is* creation. Redemption is the same power that was put forth in the beginning to create the world and all that is in it, now put forth to save man and the earth from the curse of sin. The Scriptures are very clear on this point. The psalmist prayed,

Psalm 2

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit in me.

The apostle says that:

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁷ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,

–or a new creation. And again we read:

Ephesians 2

⁸ For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

Compared with God,

Isaiah 40

¹⁷ Man is less than nothing, and vanity.

In him...

Romans 7

¹⁸ ...dwells no good thing.

But the same power that in the beginning made the earth from nothing, can take everyone who is willing, and make of him that which is...

Ephesians 1

⁶ ...to the praise of the glory of His grace.

5. In the Image of God

Present Truth, January 25, 1894

Genesis 1:26-27

E. J. Waggoner

Genesis 1

²⁶ And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.

²⁷ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him.

IN THIS respect man was different from all the other creatures that God had made to live upon the earth. To him alone was given the exalted privilege of being the son of God, made in His own likeness, and partaking of His Divine nature, and of His wisdom and glory.

We read that he was made but...

Psalms 8

⁵ ...a little lower than the angels, and [was] crowned with glory and honor;

1 Corinthians 11

⁷ ...[in] the image and glory of God;

James 3

⁹ ...after the similitude of God, [or “likeness of God” RV];

—and that he was...

Ecclesiastes 7

²⁹ ...made upright,

—thus partaking also of the character of God. Oh, to have seen him then, as he came fresh from the hand of his Maker! His looks, his actions, his words, all proclaimed that he was the very image of God. No trouble then to tell to whom he belonged or who was his Father, for His image was plainly seen.

But look at the ravages of sin! What is man now? He is

dwarfed and weak and filled with the seeds of pain and death. His glory is gone, his wisdom is corrupted, and his nature is sinful. He is no longer the free son of God, but is the bond-slave of Satan. The image of God is well-nigh effaced. He who was once a fit companion for God and angels has sunk too low to be able to bear even the sight of their purity and glory.

Isaiah 1

⁶ From the soul of his feet even unto his head there is no soundness in him; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.

But,

1 John 3

¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us!

He who has denied his sonship, and sold himself for nought, and allowed his Maker's image to be defaced until scarcely a trace of the likeness of God remains,—he may again become the son of God, and partake of His Divine nature and be stamped with His image!

John 1

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.

2 Peter 1

⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

He may have his knowledge renewed...

Colossians 3

¹⁰ ...after the image of Him that created him,

Romans 12

² And...be transformed by the renewing of his mind.

He may have a new heart given him;¹³ and a right spirit renewed within him;¹⁴ and be cleansed from all unrighteousness;¹⁵ and clothed in the righteousness of God.

Isaiah 61

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

He may be created anew,¹⁶ and become an entirely new creature¹⁷ now, all but his vile body, and when Jesus comes even that vile body will be changed and...

Philippians 3

²¹ ...fashioned like unto His glorious body.

Then he can again shine forth in the glory of the Father,¹⁸ and as the stars for ever and ever.

Daniel 12

³ And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

How can this wondrous transformation be wrought? And how many can have a share in it?

Revelation 22

¹⁷ Whosoever will,

–is the answer sent forth from God, and:

John 1

¹² To as many as received Him [Jesus] to them He gave

¹³ *Ezekiel 36:26.*

¹⁴ *Psalm 51:10.*

¹⁵ *1 John 1:9.*

¹⁶ *Ephesians 2:10; 4:24.*

¹⁷ *2 Corinthians 5:17.*

¹⁸ *Matthew 13:43.*

power to become the sons of God.

Christ's life in human flesh and death upon the cross redeemed us and made it possible for Him to live in our hearts by faith.¹⁹ Jesus Christ is the perfect...

Colossians 1

¹⁵ ...image of the invisible God.

Therefore when we receive Jesus into our hearts we receive the image of God. The more we yield ourselves to Him, the deeper and deeper grows His image. The more we think upon Him and view His loveliness and glory, the more we...

2 Corinthians 3

¹⁸ ...are changed into the same image from glory to glory.

Is this glorious transformation taking place in you and me?

¹⁹ *Ephesians* 3:17.

6. A Story of True Love

Present Truth, September 20, 1900

Genesis 1:31

E. J. Waggoner

IT BEGINS with the time when the foundations of the earth were laid, when God spoke, and it was, when...

Genesis 1

³¹ God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good;

-and,

Job 38

⁷ The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

That was the wedding song, celebrating the union of God and His creation; for since the world to come will be only the restoration of the world that was, it could be said as truly then as ever that:

Isaiah 54

⁵ Your Maker is your husband;...the God of the whole earth shall He be called.

As the woman was taken from the man, to be his wife, it was but the continuation of God's order, that His spouse should be the entire new creation which proceeded from Him. The earth and its inhabitants were joined to the Lord.

2 Corinthians 11

² I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

³ But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

This shows us plainly that Eve was created the bride of the

Lord. But it was not Eve alone, but all men in her; for when God made man, He made him male and female, and called their name man.²⁰ In Adam all the generations of mankind were created.

The creation is the manifestation of the love of God. In it He gave His life; for it is His offspring; and His life is love.

Jeremiah 31

³ The Lord appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved you with an everlasting love.

In everything that He has made, His everlasting power and Divinity—His own Being—are clearly seen.²¹ Man in Eden, with the delight of God in him, and his land married, formed the perfect picture of the bliss of true love.

The Marriage Covenant Broken

But into this Eden the tempter came. By his subtlety he seduced man from his allegiance to his Lord. He did this by instilling doubts into their mind. Doubt is the death of love, and as soon as the first pair began to doubt God's love, the bond of union was broken. By his artful wiles, the tempter succeeded in beguiling them away from their Maker and rightful Husband, and inducing them to yield themselves wholly to him. Here was the first adultery, which has bred a host of evils. It...

Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden.²²

James 4

⁴ You adulteresses! know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God.

James 1

¹⁴ Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own

²⁰ *Genesis* 5:1-2.

²¹ *Romans* 1:20.

²² John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 1.

lust, and enticed.

¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished brings forth death.

That in the first sin man committed adultery, is evident from this: It was the attraction of the world that led them astray, for in the yielding to the temptation that was presented, we see the power of...

1 John 2

¹⁶ ...the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,

—which constitute the world. The pride of life was appealed to in the words,

Genesis 3

⁵ You shall be like God;

⁶ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

Thus they became wholly joined to the world, which is adultery. The former perfect union between Adam and his Maker, wherein they were “one flesh,”—for the Word was made flesh in the beginning when man was created,—was completely broken, and a new union with Satan and sin was entered into. Then men began to walk...

Ephesians 2

² ...according to the course this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

God's Faithful Love

Then began the long career of marital infidelity. But God did not break His covenant, which is everlasting, nor did He cast off the unfaithful bride.

2 Timothy 2

¹³ If we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny himself.

The faithful one had left His house; but instead of saying,

“Let her go; she went of her own free will, and can come back when she gets ready,”

–or, worse still,

“She has rejected me, and I will have nothing more to do with her,”

–He came to seek the erring one, and to beg her to come back. There is nothing more humiliating than for a man to beg for reconciliation with one who has willfully turned away from him, despising his love, and publicly putting him to shame; yet that is just what the Lord did. Read the 3rd chapter of *Jeremiah*, and the whole of the book of *Hosea*. He says:

Jeremiah 3

¹² Return you backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.

¹³ Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed my voice, says the Lord.

¹⁴ Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

Dying Broken-Hearted For Love

But the love of God is not merely in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. He gave the utmost proof of His everlasting love that could possibly be given:

Titus 2

¹⁴ He gave himself for us.

Life for Him was not worth living without the loved one, and so in His effort to reclaim her He humbled himself to death, even the death of the cross.

John 1

¹¹ He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not.

They would not believe in His protestation of love, and they laughed Him to scorn. He was made the sport of the drunkards, and they that sat in the gate mocked Him. The very worst indignity was heaped upon Him, and spitting in the face was added to blows. Even this did not shake...

Ephesians 3

¹⁹ ...the love of Christ which passes knowledge,

—but it broke His heart, and He died literally broken-hearted, for love of those who were all unworthy of love. In those blows and in that spitting we all had a part, for...

Isaiah 53

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray.

When He was...

³ ...despised and rejected of men,

and...

Isaiah 50

⁶ ...hid not His face from shame and spitting,

we denied Him, and...

Isaiah 53

³ ...hid as it were our faces from Him.

And it was for us, for love of us, that...

Hebrews 12

² [He] endured the cross.

Drawn by the Power of Love

And He is not dead in vain.

John 12

³² I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

Jeremiah 31

³ I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you.

That exhibition of love has broken down the enmity, the middle wall of partition that we had built between us and Him, and as we gaze upon His cross, we say,

Love so amazing, so Divine
Shall have my life, my soul, my all,²³

—and we give ourselves to Him, even as He gave himself to us.

The Marriage Forbidden

But behold! There is an obstacle in the way. Just as, ravished by His love, we say,

“Lord, I am yours,”

—forth steps “the old man,” “the body of sin” and says,

“I forbid the banns; this marriage cannot take place.”

And why not, pray?

“For the reason that this woman is my wife; I am married to her, and I can bring the law to witness to the fact.”

Romans 7

¹ Know you not that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

² For the woman which has an husband is bound by the law

²³ Isaac Watts, Hymn: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, 1707.

to her husband so long as he lives...

³ So then if, while her husband lives, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress.

What a complicated case! The woman (we ourselves) is already an adulteress, because she is living in unlawful union with the lust of the flesh; and she cannot go back to her lawful husband as long as the old man of sin lives; because the law will not allow any such double union. What shall be done?

Death the Only Way of Escape

There is only one way out of the difficulty, and that method is so drastic that it looks like the end of everything. It is nothing else than death. The woman is a criminal, and worthy of death; for death is still the punishment of adultery. If we could only get rid of this seducer, whose presence is now hateful, since he is seen to be nothing but a death's head, we could be married to Him whom our soul loves.

Ah, but that is not so easy a matter. Marriage means the union of two, so that they become "one flesh," and just that intimate relation we sustain to the body of sin. Every fiber of our being is linked to sin, and sin is our own lord and master. Our wound is incurable; the disease is in the blood. So close and vital is the union between us and the body of death that it cannot be broken except by death. We are inseparably joined together until death us do part. When the body of sin dies,—the unlawful husband,—we must die too.

Well, why not? We must die anyhow, for we are but united to a body of death. Its embraces have infected us with the poison of death, and the fruit of the union is death. The question is,

"Shall we wait until we are forced to die, against our will? or shall we, like our rightful Lord, lay down our life voluntarily, that we may take it again?"

We choose the latter. Since we are united to death, and our

life is nothing else but a living death, why not die at once? Let the separation from sin be effected, even though it wrench every nerve and fiber of our being, and drain our heart's blood. We choose rather to die with Him whose love is life, than to live with him whose love is hatred, sin, and death.

United in Death

Romans 6

³ Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death?

But death in Christ does not end all; for He laid down His life only to take it again.

Romans 6

⁴ Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been planted in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.

⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

⁸ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.

The Seducer Destroyed

But what about the old man of sin? Ah, Christ is not the minister of sin. He loves us well enough to die for us, and since His love is life, it delivers us from death, and raises us up, that we may live with Him; but do not for a moment think that He who does this to win us back to our rightful union with Him, will do the same for our seducer, who must necessarily die when we do, since He is bound up with our flesh. No; we were crucified with Christ, and buried with Him,

Romans 6

⁶ ...that the body of sin might be destroyed.

It will never again have a resurrection without our consent—never as long as we abide in Christ;

⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Dead to the Law

Romans 7

⁴ Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Mind, it does not say that the law is dead; far from it; it is the law that has put us to death as criminals.

Galatians 2

¹⁹ I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

A dead law could not put anybody to death. It was the law that gave me the knowledge of my sinful condition,

Romans 3

²⁰ ...for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

By I knew that I was living in adultery, and therefore doomed to death. I consented unto the law, that it is good, and delivered myself up, to receive the death penalty. But I died with Christ, and not alone, so that I have a resurrection in Him.

Galatians 2

²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

The person who committed the sin is dead, and another has taken his place, and therefore I am...

Romans 7

⁶ ...delivered from the law,

–inasmuch as I am dead to that wherein I was held, namely, sin. The same law which before condemned me as an adulteress, now witnesses to my lawful union with Christ. It reckons me, the sinner, a dead man; and as long as I reckon myself likewise to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God, and yield myself unto God, as one that is alive from the dead, it will not condemn me, for:

Romans 8

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Alive Unto God

Being now married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, we...

Romans 7

⁴ ...bring forth fruit unto God.

The fruit is unto holiness, and...

Romans 5

²² ...the end everlasting life.

Now we are in harmony with God, and so in harmony with all His perfect creation. His law—His life—fills us, and directs our movements. We are one with Him, and He is the head of the body. The love that drew us holds us. The cords of love drew us to Him, and we are bound to Him by the ties that bound Him to the cross. His goodness brought us to repentance, and the contemplation of it keeps us faithful.

Yea, we are kept by His faith.

Galatians 2

²⁰ The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Think of it!

2 Timothy 2

¹³ If we believe not, He abides faithful: He cannot deny himself.

He was faithful in all our wandering from Him.

1 John 3

⁵ In Him is no sin.

Now being one with Him, we live not by anything that pertains to ourselves, but by Him.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁷ Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

¹⁸ And all things are of God, who has reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ.

So we live by His faith, and therefore as long as we abide in Him, we are as secure from sin as He himself.

The New Creation

The new creation has begun, even while we are in this tabernacle, for...

2 Corinthians 4

¹¹ ...the life of Jesus is made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Romans 8

⁸ They that are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

Since "all things are become new," we experience the joy, the blessedness, and the power of the world to come. The Spirit is the first-fruits of our inheritance. We are thenceforth to live (not merely is it our duty so to live, but the grace and strength thereto are given to us) as we shall continue to live in the new earth.

The only difference between the condition now and in the future world is this: Then we shall live perfect lives, free from sin, having no temptations, no sinful flesh, nothing to contend with; whereas now we live the selfsame life in spite of all these difficulties. We live in the flesh as though the flesh were dead and buried, and we had already received the resurrection body. This glorious freedom is possible only by our death with Him who is the resurrection and the life. But it is possible:

1 John 2

⁶ He that says he abides in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.

Do you say that this is a hard saying? Oh say not so; it is a glorious saying. It is the good and joyful news of salvation. It is the proclamation of emancipation from the bondage of corruption, and the deliverance into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. How can it be hard to live that life of righteousness, when it is no more I, but Christ, that lives in me? What marvelous love, and what a transforming power it has! It changes us into the Divine image. And it is...

Song 8

⁶ ...stronger than death,

—since it has conquered death. Our union with Christ was effected in death. It was at the worst state that sin and Satan can reduce men to, that we were united to Him in love; therefore:

Romans 8

³⁸ I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Have you this persuasion?

7. God's Garden

Present Truth, October 4, 1894

Genesis 2:8-9

E. J. Waggoner

IN THE beginning, when the work of creation had been finished,

Genesis 2

⁸ The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.

⁹ And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

The Lord still has a garden upon the earth, though Eden has long since been removed. Not the trees nor the shrubs nor the flowers were the most essential things in the garden, but the man and woman whom He created. The purpose of God was centered in these, and not in the beautiful things which surrounded them.

That purpose He has been steadily carrying out since time began. He has had a spiritual garden, in which Adam and Eve were the first plants, and which has spread out over the whole world, as the physical garden which was removed was doubtless designed to do. In this garden grow both wheat and tares; for the devil has sowed tares which have sprung up and developed more abundantly than the wheat. But the Saviour has said,

Matthew 15

¹³ Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up.

And when that rooting up has taken place, the physical garden will be restored and cover the whole earth, and thus the full purpose of God will be carried out. But while in this present state the tares grow largely in excess of the wheat, there is still abundant opportunity for the latter to attain a

luxurious growth. It is...

Ephesians 3

¹⁷ ...rooted and grounded in love,

–and so has an abundance of the richest soil; for the Psalmist says,

Psalm 33

⁵ The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord,

–and,

Psalm 119

⁶⁴ The earth, O Lord, is full of your mercy.

And he also testifies that:

Psalm 92

¹² The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

Psalm 1

³ [He is] like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he does shall prosper.

This garden is also full of most beautiful flowers, which are the promises of God. Not all the tares that are growing around us can hide these from our view, or shut us out from their fragrance. God has poured out His Spirit upon all flesh, and its work is:

Isaiah 61

³ To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.

If we will but let the Lord plant us in His garden, we shall find this world still a beautiful place in which to live.

8. The Fall of Man

Signs of the Times, January 13, 1888

Genesis 3

E. J. Waggoner

1. In what condition was the whole creation when it came from the hand of God?

Genesis 1

³¹ And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

2. Did this include man also?

Ecclesiastes 7

²⁹ Lo, this only have I found, that God has made man upright.

3. Did man retain his uprightness?

Romans 5

¹² Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

4. What prohibition had God laid upon the pair in the garden of Eden?

Genesis 2

¹⁷ But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.

5. Who first partook of this forbidden fruit?

Genesis 3

⁶ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

6. Was Adam deceived as to the consequences of the act?

1 Timothy 2

¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

7. How was Eve deceived?

2 Corinthians 11

³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

8. Who was the serpent?

Revelation 20

² And He laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.

9. How did he begin his work?

Genesis 3

¹ Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

10. When Eve repeated the prohibition, what did the serpent reply?

⁴ And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die.

11. What did he say that eating from the tree would do for them?

⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

12. In so saying, what imputation did he cast upon God?

13. In telling them that by eating the forbidden fruit they should be like God, what was Satan instilling into their minds?

Pride.

14. What was the cause of Satan's fall?

Isaiah 14

¹² How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations!

¹³ For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

15. What always follows pride?

Proverbs 11

² When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the lowly is wisdom.

Proverbs 16

¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

16. What was it that brought the heathen nations into their deplorable condition?

Romans 1

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

17. What was the result of Adam's transgression?

Genesis 3

¹⁷ And unto Adam He said, Because you have hearkened unto the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it:

cursed is the ground for your sake; in sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸ Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field;

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and unto dust you shall return.

18. Was he allowed to remain in the garden?

Genesis 3

²³ Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

²⁴ So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

19. How extensive were the consequences of his fall?

Romans 5

¹² Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men...

20. Did death pass upon all men regardless of their character, just because Adam sinned?

Romans 5

¹² ...for that all have sinned.

21. What kind of nature do all men inherit?

Mark 7

²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

²² Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

²³ All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

22. By what means may we get rid of this evil nature, and have a better one?

2 Peter 1

⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine

nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

1 John 5

⁴ For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

Notes

The mean cunning of the serpent may be seen in the way that Satan approached Eve. From the fact that while they were talking Eve took of the forbidden fruit, and ate, indicates that when the conversation began they were near the tree. Said the serpent,

Genesis 3

¹ Is it so, that God has said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

“Is it possible that God would make so arbitrary and unjust a command?”

The object of this speech can be seen at once. It was three-fold, namely:

3. To cause her to doubt the goodness of God;
4. To raise himself in her estimation to the same extent that he lowered God; and
5. To make her feel that she was being deprived of her “rights.”

Pride and discontent were aroused, which prepared the way for open rebellion.

Genesis 3

⁴ And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die; for God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Here was a square issue between Satan and God, and Eve had been worked into such a condition of doubt and discon-

tent that she readily sided with Satan. This was the first sermon on the natural immortality of the soul of man. Notice that it was this teaching that caused the fall; consequently the teaching that man is by nature immortal, is responsible for all the evil that has ever come to mankind.

“For God knows,” etc. Here again Satan charged God with deliberately withholding a good thing from Adam and Eve, so that He might keep them in a position inferior to that which their natural talents entitled them to. What was that position?

Genesis 3

⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat thereof,...you shall be like God.

This is just what Satan said, and a literal translation of the Hebrews. Said Satan,

“You might as well be like God; He knows this, and has placed this prohibition upon you, so that He may keep you down. Now will you consent to be thus imposed upon? Don’t do it; assert your rights and be free.”

Who is there that doesn’t recognize this kind of talk? We see that Satan caused Eve to fall, by instilling into her mind the same ideas that caused his fall.²⁴ We see, also, whence Spiritualism comes, which claims that:

1. What the Bible calls evil is a necessity;
2. Men cannot die, no matter what they do; and
3. Each individual is the judge of his own acts, and is therefore equal to God.

But read the fate of those who call evil good:

Isaiah 5

²⁰ Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

²⁴ See *Isaiah* 14:12-14.

²¹ Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

²² Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink:

²³ Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

²⁴ Therefore as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Beware of the flatterer. When a man begins to sympathize with you, to tell you how you are being “kept down” and abused, and what high positions you might occupy if it were not for the grasping selfishness of some in authority, then make up your mind at once that Satan is talking to you through him. Don’t listen to him. Says Paul:

2 Corinthians 11

³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

There is a vast difference between honest praise and flattery. It is right and just to encourage people by letting them know that their good work is appreciated. But flattery is always lying. It is Satanic in its origin. Look up and read carefully what the Bible has to say of the flatterer.

Proverbs 29

⁵ A man that flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

See also:

Job 32

²¹ Let me not, I pray you, accept any man’s person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man.

²² For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away.

Psalm 12

³ The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things.

Proverbs 20

¹⁹ He that goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flatters with his lips.

Proverbs 26

²⁸ A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth works ruin.

Solomon's words in *Proverbs* 20:19 indicate that a talebearer is likely to be a flatterer. Satan's question to Eve,

"Is it so that God has said..."

—carries with it the air of virtuous indignation. The idea designed to be conveyed was,

"I would never do such a thing; just trust me, and you shall have liberty."

How aptly the apostle Peter describes the people who work in this Satanic manner:

2 Peter 2

¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

The man who comes with some false story about somebody else, trying to cast reflections upon him, does so only to conceal his own faults. The gist of all his talk is this:

"You and I wouldn't do such things, would we?"

He is seeking to build himself up, and by flattering your

vanity, to take advantage of you. Look out for such; and, above all,

Matthew 6

⁸ Be not like unto them.

9. The Death of Adam

Signs of the Times, June 8, 1888

Genesis 2:17, 3:4, 5:5

E. J. Waggoner

WE FIND on our table a question concerning the death of Adam. The writer quotes God's words,

Genesis 2

¹⁷ In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die,

—and thinks there is some plausibility to the objection that they were not fulfilled, and that the devil told the truth when he said,

Genesis 3

⁴ You shall not surely die.

But the fact is, Adam did die, for the record says that:

Genesis 5

⁵ All the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.

This therefore disposes of the supposition that Satan told the truth. Now how about the words of the Lord? Adam did not die that day, but lived nine hundred and thirty years. Our answer is found in the words of Christ:

John 3

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

To say that God ought to have put Adam to death that very day, is equivalent to saying that God had no right to provide a plan of salvation for fallen man. All must admit that God does not deny himself by offering salvation to sinners. God is...

Romans 3

²⁶ ...just, [at the same time that He is] the justifier of him that believes in Jesus.

Although God had announced a specific penalty for transgression, He certainly could with perfect justice remit that penalty in the case of anyone who should accept the offering which He freely provided, and which was outside the demands of the law.

Moreover, if God provided such a plan, it must necessarily, in order that strict and equal justice should be done, include all men, not excepting Adam.

And, still further, since such a plan was provided, the execution of the penalty must necessarily be stayed, in order to give man an opportunity to accept the offered salvation, if he wished; for it would be but mockery to devise such a plan and still execute the penalty without giving the fallen one any chance to accept it.

Adam had a second probation, and if, as we believe, he repented of his sin and exercised faith in Christ, he will receive eternal life when Christ comes to confer immortality; but since he was only dust, and was removed from the source of life, he necessarily, in the course of time, returned to the dust, just as God said he should. And all of his posterity being likewise of the earth earthy,²⁵ have also returned to earth. Men die now simply because they are born mortal; Adam died as the direct consequence of his sin.

The penalty, however, whose execution was stayed, still hangs over the fallen race, and when Christ shall cease to interpose in man's behalf, it will fall upon all who have not hidden in Him. Then the folly of those whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil, because sentence is not executed speedily, will be manifested, and it will be seen that every word of God is sure.

2 Peter 3

⁹ The Lord...is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any

²⁵ *1 Corinthians 15:47.*

should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Happy are those who believe that:

2 Peter 3

¹⁵ The long-suffering of our God is salvation,
–and who accept that salvation.

10. Beginning of Sin and Redemption

Present Truth, July 4, 1901

Genesis 3:1-15

E. J. Waggoner

THERE was a time when the man who dared say openly that he did not believe the whole Bible was called an infidel; in these days it is a rare thing to find a minister of the Gospel who dares say that he believes the Bible account of the creation and the fall of man.

Even the most “orthodox,” men who vigorously combat the “higher criticism,” do not hesitate to declare the Mosaic record “a beautiful allegory.” So far have those who are set to be leaders in the church departed from the old paths, that if a man professes to believe even a little of the Bible he is not classed among the infidels.

But a man does not have to tell falsehoods continually in order to be a liar; if he occasionally lies, so that you are not always sure whether he is telling the truth or not, he cannot be considered a truthful man. In like manner, if certain portions of the Bible are untrustworthy, it could no more stand as...

Daniel 10

²¹ ...the Scripture of truth.

Therefore whoever impeaches any of its testimony brings a charge against the whole of it; and he who disbelieves a portion of it is most certainly an infidel, no matter what his profession.

The Beginning of the Word is True

The first three chapters of *Genesis* are the basis upon which the entire Bible is built. With that portion torn away, there would be no foundation for the Gospel,—no proof that the Gospel is needed, no evidence of its power to save. If the first chapters of *Genesis* were an allegory, all the rest of the Bible

would be only a myth.

All the Scripture writers accepted the first part of the Bible as the literal Word of God. Their references to it show this. The Apostle Paul speaks thus of the event which forms our lesson this week:

2 Corinthians 11

³ I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ.

The Gospel which Paul preached was based upon the story of the fall and the redemption then made known; therefore that account is as true as the writings of the Apostle Paul.

Psalm 119

¹⁶⁰ Your Word is true from the beginning.

An exact word-for-word rendering of the Hebrew of that verse, however, is this:

“The beginning of your Word is truth.”

Thus the Holy Spirit has anticipated the attacks that have been made on the beginning of the Bible, and has linked all together. Of some things it is said,

“It all stands or falls together.”

But of the Bible we say,

“It all stands together.”

For...

2 Timothy 2

¹⁹ ...the foundation of God stands sure.

Psalm 119

¹⁶⁰ Every one of your righteous judgments endures for ever.

The Subtlety of Satan

Genesis 3

¹ Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast in the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Yea, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

The extreme subtlety of “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” is not in this text made as apparent by our version as it might be. The words of the serpent contain a sneer, a covert insinuation against the justice of God, which was made all the more effective in that the thought that God had dealt arbitrarily was suggested to Eve by a question which feigned a doubt that it was possible that He had done so monstrous a thing. It is difficult to translate into English all that, is conveyed by the Hebrew word here rendered “Yes.” It is a sniff of scorn or incredulity.

Gesenius, in his *Hebrew Lexicon*, cites this very verse, in illustrating the meaning of the word, and renders the passage thus:

“Is it even so, that God has said, You shall not eat?” etc.

Read this with that forcible breathing through the nose,—humph,—which indicates surprise, incredulity, or contempt, or all combined, and you will see how subtly doubt of God was insinuated into the mind of Eve.

Lifted Up

Habakkuk 2

⁴ Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.

The beginning of sin was the lifting up of self. Before the foundation of the world, Lucifer, the light-bearer in heaven, who, because of his pride, fell so low as to become only a crawling serpent, said in his heart:

Isaiah 14

¹³ I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north [literally, “the uttermost north”]; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.

Now it is perfectly right to be like the Lord, if one sets about it in the right way; for He says,

1 Peter 1

¹⁶ Be you holy, for I am holy.

And Christ says,

Matthew 5

⁴⁸ Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

But perfection is not found in self-exaltation. Although God dwells in...

Isaiah 57

¹⁵ ...the high and holy place,...

–and is himself...

¹⁵ ...the lofty One,

–He dwells...

¹⁵ ...with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.

Christ, who is the revelation of God, says:

Matthew 11

²⁹ I am meek and lowly in heart.

It is evident, therefore, that whoever thinks to become like God by lifting himself up, deceives himself, and is drawing himself away from God.

Micah 6 [margin]

⁸ He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does

the Lord require of you, but to do justly, love mercy, and to humble yourself to walk with God?

Isaiah 2

¹² The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.

It was by instilling his spirit—the same spirit that caused his fall from heaven—into man, that Satan compassed his fall. When Eve, in reply to the serpent’s insinuation, repeated the prohibition against eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the penalty for disobedience, the Deceiver said:

Genesis 3 [RV]

⁴ You shall not surely die;

⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

It was not with an indefinite promise of being “like gods,” that the serpent seduced Eve, but with the assurance that she should be like God himself. Alas! her ambition was not to be like Him in goodness, but to equal Him in knowledge and power; and this is impossible.

The Spirit that Now Works

The same spirit works in the children of disobedience today. Satan still makes thousands believe that God is unkind, and arbitrary, sitting in solitary grandeur, unmindful of the needs of man. The spirit that caused the fall of Eve is in the words so often uttered,

“If God is just and all-powerful, why does He not put an end to all the misery on the earth?”

Or in these words,

“God doesn’t care anything about me.”

And so, in their impatient and unbelieving pride, they set

about righting things themselves, and succeed only in making everything worse.

In the lie that the serpent uttered there was the germ of all wickedness and every form of unbelief. In accepting it, Eve turned away from God, repudiating Him utterly. Casting off all allegiance to Him, she put herself in His place. For the lie which she believed was to the intent that she was already equal to God, and needed only to assert her right, and take of the prohibited fruit, to assume her real position.

Heathenism in all its forms was in that falsehood, and there is not a phase of error that cannot be traced to it. The fall was complete, and but for the mercy of God there never again would have been in the heart of man the slightest desire for God and His goodness.

What the Woman Saw

Genesis 3

⁶ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

But she saw what was not so. She saw through the glass that the serpent held before her eyes. The fruit of that forbidden tree was not good for food. Its...

...mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden.²⁶

But the same deception that made Eve “see” that the fruit of the tree was good for food still blinds the judgment of men. Although God...

1 Timothy 6

¹⁶ ...gives us richly all things to enjoy...

²⁶ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 1.

–showing no partiality, but giving...

Acts 17

²⁵ ...to all life, and breath, and all things,

–men count it all as nothing, compared with something that is forbidden on account of its harmful nature.

A table may be loaded with the bounties of the earth, yet a tea-topper will consider that she has nothing if there is no tea; or the one who eats to tickle his palate will complain of “starvation diet” if his particular dainty is not present. To many the world is all out of joint unless they have had their dram, or their pipe; their whole happiness depends upon something which makes slaves of them, and gives them only wretchedness.

A Too Hasty Decision

One thing that people ever since the days of Eve have overlooked is that one can never get the complete taste of anything the moment it is placed in one’s mouth. The Bible tells of things that are sweet in the mouth and bitter in the belly.

A person takes a cup of tea or a glass of spirits, and fancies that it is exceedingly pleasant to the taste, and to be desired to make one wise. Some hours afterwards that same person has a headache, and wonders what is the cause, not knowing that the headache is part of the taste of the drink.

One partakes of rich viands, and thinks that he has had a delicious dinner. Later on he is terribly sick, and suffering from griping pains; he does not know that all that is part of the taste of big dinner.

If all the effects of the things that are so pleasing to the perverted appetite, but which lay a heavy tax on the system, were concentrated into the moment of putting the things into the mouth, so that the eater could not fail to recognize the connection, there would be very little intemperance in eating

and drinking. But,

Ecclesiastes 8

¹¹ Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

There are thousands of people suffering from cancer, consumption, gout, and many other common diseases, which are yearly becoming more common, who will never know until the Judgment day that their diseases were simply the “mortal taste” of their delicate meat.

Yet they might know. God has given the warning; let all who know the danger labor by word and example to sound the warning to others.

The Things That Enslave Men

Another thing that should be understood is that what is wrong always enslaves its devotees, and what is good always leaves a man free. No person ever becomes a slave to anything that is really good to eat or drink.

For example: A person who is accustomed to drinking tea or spirits, or to using tobacco in any form, is utterly lost and in a maze without it. Such ones become nervous and even very irritable, and sometimes are unable to go on with any work that is in hand, if they are deprived of their favorite beverage or weed beyond the usual time.

How many there are who admit that they are “good for nothing” in the morning until they have had their accustomed stimulant, ranging from coffee to whiskey. The writer has heard dozens of people say that they “couldn’t live without eating meat!” Their food and drink was their master, not their servant.

Now it is not so with the man who lives of the simple, yet delicious and nourishing food that the Creator gave to man in

Eden. It is good for a man to have regular hours for big meals. But if a truly healthful liver is compelled to delay a meal for some hours, or is deprived of it altogether, or when he gets it does not find the food that he expected, but some other equally good, he is not discommoded in the least. One thing, provided it is really good, suits him just as well as another. He is never the slave of any article of food or drink, so that he cannot eat if he does not have it.

But everybody knows, most of us from experience, that this is the case with all who eat to gratify their appetite, rather than simply to live.

The Life is More Than Meat

People often say,

“One might as well not live at all, as to deprive oneself of all the good things of life.”

That is what Eve thought. What was the use of living, if she could not have the forbidden fruit? There are not many of us that can throw stones at our common mother. But those same persons are often heard saying,

“What is the use of living in this misery?”

And too often they put a summary end to their lives.

Matthew 6

²⁵ Is not the life more than meat?

Would it not be far better to deny the appetite, and even to eat food not quite so pleasing to the palate, and always be full of life and vigor, able to enjoy everything to the full, than to have pleasure at the table, and misery everywhere else? But this is an extreme statement of the case.

The fact is that the man who is content with the things that God gave to man in Eden as his bill of fare, gets more positive enjoyment out of the hours that he spends at the table than

anybody else in the world possibly can. He alone knows the meaning of the word “delicious.” Every morsel of food is a delight to him, for he alone has the “good things” of life. As he eats he thanks God,

Psalm 68

¹⁹ ...who daily loads us with benefits.

And not by any means the least of the enjoyments of the clean table is the knowledge that there will be no bad taste afterwards.

What They Learned

Genesis 3

⁷ And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.

It is most significant that the words “subtle” and “naked” are only two forms of the same word in the Hebrew. “Subtlety” is not at all a bad thing, if obtained from the right source. The *Proverbs* of Solomon are...

Proverbs 1

⁴ ...to give subtlety to the simple; to the young man knowledge and discretion.

And the word “subtlety” in this place is the same as the word used of the serpent; but the subtlety that the Word of God gives is something entirely different from that which comes from listening to the serpent.

The wisdom of the serpent is a desirable thing, if it be combined with the harmlessness of the dove. God is wise, and He “gives wisdom” (*Proverbs 2:6*); the Serpent is wise, but whoever learns of him gains only the knowledge that he is naked. It is a poor school; Christ’s is far better. He says,

Matthew 11

²⁹ Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls.

It is better to know a few things that are so, than to learn much that is only emptiness and nakedness.

The Knowledge of Good and Evil

God never designed that man should know anything but good. Why should anybody wish to know anything else? Is one better off for knowing how a nauseous thing tastes? How many people are there who think that there is a lack in their lives because they do not know how it feels to be bitten by a mad dog? Who is pining to know what it is to have small-pox or the plague?

It is far better to know only that which is good; and in spite of what some “moralists” teach, it is not necessary to know evil in order to attain to real virtue. The strongest character ever known on earth,

2 Corinthians 5

²¹ ...knew no sin.

But He knew everything good, and there is enough of that to keep us all well employed throughout eternity.

Many who are set to be teachers of the Gospel imagine that they have to be acquainted with every form of heresy, in order to guard the flock against error. But the shepherd that leads the flock only in the green pastures that the Chief Shepherd provides, has no need to study noxious weeds. He who obeys the injunction to...

2 Timothy 4

² Preach the Word,

–will never feel the lack of the knowledge of unbelief. The missionary to heathen lands has no need to study the so-called “sacred books” of those who know not God. To be well acquainted with...

1 Corinthians 2

² ...Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,

–is a whole university education.

Vice No Aid to Virtue

Neither is it necessary that a man should have become acquainted by experience, with all sorts of vice, in order to be able to deal effectively with souls. It is true that God, who makes the wrath of man to praise Him, can turn even a man's lost life to account, but be sure that good never comes from evil.

Job 14

⁴ Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

It was said of Christ,

John 7

⁴⁶ Never man spoke like this Man.

And it was because His life had always been the perfection of purity.

Losing the Knowledge of Evil

Galatians 3

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse.

Romans 3

²⁴ Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

–we are delivered from every vestige of the fall. Therefore in Christ there is deliverance from the mixed knowledge of good and evil. The sin is “put away,”²⁷ and only the good remains, and that is multiplied.

Who has not wished that he had never heard some things, and had never learned some forms of evil? And who has not longed to be able to forget at least some of his past life? Well, the Gospel makes provision for that. God says of the people who enter into His covenant,

²⁷ *Hebrews* 9:26.

Hebrews 8

¹² Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Now God cannot forget anything that exists, and when He forgets our iniquities it is because there is no trace of them in the universe, least of all in us. Just as the haters of God at the last day...

Obadiah

¹⁶ ...shall be as though they had not been.

So will it be with the sins of those who have become the friends of God. Even so is it now; for God casts their sins behind His back, and buries them in the depths of the sea.

Micah 7

¹⁹ He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Christ is the tree of life, and if we feed continually on Him, and drink from the fountain of His life, the evil that comes from the forbidden tree will cease to be. The worshipers once purged shall have no more consciousness of sin.²⁸ Like their Master, they will “know no sin.”²⁹ This is the crowning blessedness of the Gospel.

Bear in mind that we are not speaking merely of the specific sorts of sin committed, but of sin as a whole. The blood of Christ cleanses; from all sin,³⁰ so that no trace of it will remain. The carnal mind, the mind that thinks evil, is to be exchanged for the mind of the Spirit,³¹ and it has no trace of evil in it.

Is it not glorious to know that the hardened sinner, whose mind has been filled with evil, is not obliged to be tortured

²⁸ *Hebrews* 10:2.

²⁹ *2 Corinthians* 5:21.

³⁰ *1 John* 1:7.

³¹ *Romans* 8:6-7, 27.

after conversion with temptations from his own mind, but may have the innocence of a child, combined with the prudence of a man?

Man Hides—God Seeks

Luke 19

¹⁰ The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

This was first demonstrated when...

Genesis 3

⁹ The Lord God called to Adam, and said unto him, Where are you?

Sin produces fear.

Proverbs 28

¹ The wicked flee when no man pursues.

So as soon as a man becomes conscious of sin he seeks to hide from the Lord. But that is a useless proceeding, for...

Proverbs 15

³ ...the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

Jeremiah 23

²³ Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord.

So the Lord is sure to find every soul; and if that soul be not saved, it is only because he loves death rather than life.

Jonah thought to hide from the Lord, and he chose as his hiding-place the depths of the sea; but the Lord found him there. Yea, the Lord was there before him, and had a place all prepared for him, and from the pit of destruction He brought the runaway back to safety.

Psalm 139

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

¹⁰ Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

¹² Yea, the darkness hides not from You.

Then let no one despair because some loved one who has been the subject of many prayers has run away to escape the restraints of piety. No matter where he runs to, he will run into the arms of the Lord, which are always outstretched even to a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Oh, the height of Jesus' love!
Higher than the heaven above,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Lasting as eternity;
Love that found me,—wondrous thought!
Found me when I sought Him not.³²

This being the case, who can measure the hope of the one who turns to seek the Lord?

The Enmity

Genesis 3

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed.

Blessed enmity! But for that enmity which God by His grace implanted into the heart of mankind, no human being, provided the race had continued, would ever have had any more desire for righteousness than the devil himself has; for the fall of man was complete; he had sold himself wholly to Satan, and “for nought.”

³² William McComb, Hymn: *Chief of Sinners Though I Be*, 1864.

Isaiah 52

³ For thus says the Lord, You have sold yourselves for nought; and you shall be redeemed without money.

But we have been “redeemed without money,” even with the incorruptible life,³³ “the precious blood of Christ.”

1 Peter 1

¹⁸ Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

It is because of this enmity against sin, which the life of Christ places in every man, that we are able to “feel after”³⁴ God when He seeks us in the dark. It is...

John 1

⁹ ...the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.

No matter how tainted an inheritance a child may have, no matter how vicious and depraved its parents are, it has as its birthright from God a spark of the light of life, which may be fanned by the breathing of the Spirit into everlasting glory in the kingdom of God.

The Bruising

Genesis 3

¹⁵ ... it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

We get some sore wounds from the serpent, and the wound on our heel makes us often stumble; but we can always say,

Micah 7

⁸ Rejoice not against me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall arise.

³³ *1 Peter 1:23.*

³⁴ *Acts 17:27.*

Victory is ours, for the promise is that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, and that means its utter destruction. Christ has been tempted on every point to the utmost of Satan's power; and...

2 Peter 1

³ His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.

He took part in our flesh and blood, in equal measure with us,

Hebrews 2

¹³ ...that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

¹⁴ And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Everyone involuntarily names Christ as the seed of the woman, who is spoken of in *Genesis* 3:15. But many overlook the obvious fact that we are the seed of the woman, as well as He. Think of the wonder of it!

The ordinary idea is reversed: instead of saying that Christ is Man, as well as we are, we learn from this verse to say that we are men, as well as He is; and therefore all the promises to the Son of man belong to us. So we have the promise renewed in these words:

Romans 16

²⁰ The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

1 Corinthians 15

⁵⁷ Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

11. Abel's Sacrifice

Signs of the Times, January 20, 1888

Genesis 4

E. J. Waggoner

1. What was the name of the first son of Adam and Eve?

Genesis 4

¹ And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

2. What was the name of the second son?

² And she again bare his brother Abel...

3. What, occupation did each follow?

² ...And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

4. What offering did Cain bring to the Lord?

³ And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

5. What was Abel's offering?

⁴ And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof...

6. How did the Lord regard Abel's offering?

⁴ ...And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.

7. How did the Lord regard Cain's offering?

⁵ But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

8. What made Abel's offering more acceptable than Cain's?

Hebrews 11

⁴ By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,...

9. What did Abel obtain by his offering?

⁴ ...by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaks.

10. What was the defect in Cain's offering?

Hebrews 9

²² And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

11. Then since Cain did not take the proper steps to secure the remission of sins, what lay at his door?

Genesis 4

⁷ If you do well, Shall you not be accepted? and if you do not well, sin lies at the door. And unto you shall be his desire, and you shall rule over him.

12. Through whose blood alone may remission of sins be obtained?

Romans 3

²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

²⁴ Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

²⁵ Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

13. Then since Abel was accepted, in whom must he have had faith?

Acts 4

¹⁰ Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him does this man stand here before you whole.

¹¹ This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

¹² Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

14. What is the highest attainment of faith?

Romans 5

¹ Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 5

⁴ For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

15. Since Abel was justified, was not his faith in Christ as perfect as ours can be?

16. What did Cain do to Abel?

Genesis 4

⁸ And Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

17. Why did he do this?

1 John 3

¹¹ For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

¹² Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

18. Of what scripture was Abel the first to demonstrate the truth?

2 Timothy 3

¹² Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

19. Is it any wonder if the world hates the righteous?

John 15

¹⁸ If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

²⁰ Remember the word that I said unto you. The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

20. How should the righteous feel when they are persecuted for their faith?

Matthew 5

¹¹ Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

21. What consolation has the Christian in all tribulation?

John 16

³³ These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Notes

Hebrews 11

⁴ By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.

The difference between the two offerings was in the matter of faith. That is, it was faith in Abel, and a lack of faith in Cain, that made the offerings different.

By bringing “of the firstlings of his flock,” Abel showed his faith in the fact that “without shedding of blood is no remission,” and in the Lamb of God, whose blood alone can cleanse from sin. By this sacrifice he obtained witness that he was righteous. Here was a case of justification (making righteous) by faith. As with the woman in the days of Christ,³⁵ so with

³⁵ *Matthew 9:22.*

Abel, his faith made him whole.

The same witness, and in exactly the same measure, may be obtained in this generation. Says Paul:

Romans 8

¹⁵ You have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

¹⁶ The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

And the beloved disciple says:

1 John 5

⁹ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.

¹⁰ He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself; he that believes not God has made Him a liar; because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son.

¹¹ And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

This witness is not primarily a certain feeling of pardon, but is the assurance of God's word, than which there can be no better witness. He who believes this witness, and knows that his sins are forgiven because he has complied with the conditions upon which God has promised that He will certainly pardon, will find joy and peace in believing. But the joy and peace will never come until the witness of God is accepted, for the sole reason that it is the word of God.

Although verses 6 and 7 of *Genesis* 4 are not quoted in the lesson, the thorough student will certainly read them in studying the context, and the thoughtful student will wonder what their force may be. From the *Authorized Version* the reader gets the idea that Abel's desire would be to Cain, and that Cain would rule over him. But this seems forced and unnatural, because it is sin that the Lord is talking about, and Abel is not once mentioned in God's talk to Cain at this time.

Every Bible reader must have noticed that the masculine pronoun is often used to designate a neuter object, and by substituting the neuter for the masculine in this place the meaning will be more apparent. Following are the verses, with the marginal reading, as given in the *Revised Version*.

Genesis 4 [RV]

⁶ And the Lord said unto Cain, Why are you wroth? and why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted? and if you do not well, sin lies at the door.

⁷ And unto you shall be his desire, and you shall rule over it.

This is harmonious throughout. Cain had not yet committed his great sin, but he was envious of Abel. Those envious feelings if not repressed would result, as they finally did, in murder, for in envy murder lies concealed.

So the Lord represented sin as a wild beast, just ready to spring upon its prey. It was there beside Cain's door, and its desire was to him; but as yet he had the power to rule over it, and drive it away. In this we are taught to shun the beginnings of sin.

James 1

¹⁴ Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

Therefore the thoughts should be carefully guarded.

Proverbs 4

²³ Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

12. The Earth Corrupted

Signs of the Times, January 27, 1888

Genesis 6:1-13

E. J. Waggoner

1. When men became very numerous on the earth, what did they do?

Genesis 6

¹ And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,

² That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

2. What commandment then was specially disregarded?

The seventh.

3. In pursuing this wicked course, what good influence were they resisting?

Genesis 6

³ And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.

4. What is the special office of the Spirit in connection with sinners?

John 16

⁸ And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

5. By what means does the Spirit reprove the world of sin?

Ephesians 6

¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

6. What two things always necessarily work together in producing a perfect character?

2 Thessalonians 2

¹³ God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation

through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

1 Peter 1

²² Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently.

7. Then how must the Lord have striven with the antediluvians by his Spirit?

By keeping continually before them the right way.

8. By whom was the right way presented to them?

2 Peter 2

⁵ And spared not the old, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.

9. How long did God say that He would bear with them?

Genesis 6

³ And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.

10. At the end of that time, how great was the wickedness of men?

⁵ And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

11. What was the condition of the whole earth?

¹² And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

12. With what was it filled in consequence?

¹¹ The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

13. What was the only consistent thing that God could then do?

¹³ And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14. Upon whom alone did the Lord look with favor?

Genesis 6

⁸ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

15. Why did the Lord regard Noah with special favor?

⁹ These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

Genesis 7

¹ And the Lord said unto Noah, Come you and all your house into the ark; for you have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

16. Upon what alone does the Lord look in His estimation of men?

1 Samuel 16

⁷ For the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

17. How was it possible for Noah to remain upright in the midst of universal corruption?

Genesis 6

⁹ Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah *walked with God*.

18. What is the extent of God's requirement of man?

Micah 6

⁸ He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

19. What effect did Noah's godly life have upon the world?

Hebrews 11

⁷ By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his

house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Notes

Genesis 6

³ And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with men, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.

“The long-suffering of God”³⁶ was abundantly manifested here. Men were recklessly plunging into vice, disregarding the marriage relation, and violating the seventh commandment, and with that every other one, yet the Lord said that He would bear with them one hundred and twenty years.

1 Peter 3

²⁰ The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.

Waited because God...

2 Peter 3

⁹ ...is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The Lord does not wait for sinners to desire pardon, before He makes an effort to save them, but...

Romans 5

⁸ [He] commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

So He says through the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 65

¹ I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.

² I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walk in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.

³⁶ 1 Peter 3:20.

At least two lessons should be learned from this. One is a lesson of hope and courage, because of God's intense longing for the salvation of sinners. We should also learn a lesson of forgiveness, for Paul exhorts us to forgive one another even as God has for Christ's sake forgiven us.

Ephesians 4

³² And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

That is, willingly, gladly, and without reserve. More than this we are to be willing to forgive, to long to forgive, before the one who has offended makes any sign of repentance or of wishing to be forgiven,—from the very moment that the offense is committed. That utterly excludes all malice or hard feelings from our hearts. We have no right to entertain such feelings for a moment.

Yet though God is so long-suffering, stretching out His hands to a rebellious people, it will not do to be presumptuous, and to continue in sin, in order that He may have an opportunity to display His mercy. There will come a time when God will leave the rebellious to themselves. He will cut them off because nothing else can be done with them. But if they are cut off, it is solely their own fault. Because they deliberately reject God's gracious invitation, and choose the evil,

Proverbs 1

³¹ Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

³² For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

It is by His Spirit that God strives with men. This striving is not the producing of a vague, uncertain impression, but is a conviction of sin. In this work the Spirit uses a sword,

Ephesians 6

¹⁷ Which is the word of God;

–a sword which is...

Hebrews 4

¹² ...quick living and powerful,...piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

From this we learn that conviction of sin is produced by the Spirit bringing to our remembrance, and keeping before the mind, the truth of God, which condemns our evil course.

But some will imagine that the Spirit sometimes, at least, works independently of the truth of God as revealed in His word, because many persons who have not had the Bible, have been convicted of sin. Paul explains this, when he says:

Romans 2

¹⁴ For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves;

¹⁵ Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

That is, everybody by nature knows something of right and wrong, from the traces of the law that remain in their hearts. The natural tendency is to forget, but the Spirit keeps it before the mind as much as possible, so that conviction of sin may be produced. The antediluvians had the truth brought to them by Noah,

2 Peter 2

⁵ ...a preacher of righteousness.

We said above that the natural tendency of men is to forget the truth. So the Spirit of God has to strive with them. Some persons will submit themselves to God, and willingly yield to the influence of the Spirit. In such will be perfected...

Galatians 5

²² ...the fruit of the Spirit.

Ephesians 5

¹⁸ And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

Philippians 1

¹¹ Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

But to by far the greater number of people it might be said as Stephen said to the Jewish Sanhedrin:

Acts 7

⁵¹ You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Ghost.

With such the Spirit finally ceases to strive, because there comes a time when the law is entirely obliterated from their hearts, and they become insensible to all appeals, being unable to see any difference between right and wrong.

While the Spirit is striving with them, Satan is also working through their own natural inclinations to fasten them in sin. So Paul says of those who have pleasure in unrighteousness, that strong delusion shall come upon them, that they should all be damned.

2 Thessalonians 2

⁹ Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Men cannot live under a continued conviction of sin; they must obtain peace of mind in some way. Those who do not obtain true peace from God,³⁷ try to get peace of mind by re-

³⁷ See *Romans* 5:1; 8:1; *Isaiah* 48:18.

sisting the strivings of the Spirit, and putting from them the sense of their sin. When they have succeeded in this, they feel perfectly easy, but it is a fatal ease. It is the case which the man feels who is benumbed and about to perish with the cold. And so it often happens with the wicked that...

Psalm 73

⁴ ...there are no bands in their death.

A seemingly peaceful death is not by any means a sure sign of acceptance with God.

Genesis 6

⁹ Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

The man who walks with God must be a perfect man, for God is perfect, and two cannot walk together except they be agreed.

Amos 3

³ Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

The man who walks with God, must forsake his own ways, and adopt the ways of God.

Isaiah 55

⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

David speaks thus of those who walk with God:

Psalm 119

¹ Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.

² Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart.

³ They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways.

Then to walk with God is to keep the commandments of God. Those who walk in the way of His commandments, must be perfect, for:

Psalm 19

⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.

The law of God is the righteousness of God:

Isaiah 51

⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

⁷ Hearken unto me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings.

It is His will:

Romans 2

¹⁷ Behold, you are called a Jew, and rest in the law, and make your boast of God,

¹⁸ And know His will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law.

Psalm 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart.

It is a transcript of His character, a description of the ways of God. All that God requires of men is that they should do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him. And in order that they may know what justice and mercy are, and what they must do to walk with Him, He has described himself and His way in His law.

The life of the man who thus walks with God, is the best sermon that can be preached to the ungodly. Such a life can be lived only by faith, for:

Hebrews 11

⁶ Without faith it is impossible to please Him.

They who seek righteousness in any other way than by faith, will come short of it. And so it was by faith that Noah obeyed God and condemned the world.

13. The Flood

Signs of the Times, February 3, 1888

Genesis 6:13 to Genesis 9:15

E. J. Waggoner

1. When the world became wholly corrupt, what did God determine to do?

Genesis 6

¹³ And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

2. What provision did the Lord make for the preservation of righteous Noah?

Genesis 6

¹⁴ Make an ark of gopher wood; rooms shall you make in the ark, and shall pitch it within and without with pitch.

¹⁷ And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

¹⁸ But with you will I establish my covenant; and you shall come into the ark, you, and your sons, and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

3. Had there ever been anything to indicate the possibility of a flood?

Genesis 2

⁵ ...the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth...

4. In obeying the command of the Lord to make an ark, what grace did Noah manifest?

Hebrews 11

⁷ By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

5. After the ark was completed, and Noah and his family had

gone into it, what wonderful thing took place to convince the people of the truth of what Noah had preached?

Genesis 7

⁷ And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

⁸ Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creeps upon the earth,

⁹ There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

6. How long after this before the flood began?

¹⁰ And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

7. Was it possible then for Noah to do anything more for the people?

¹⁶ And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him; and the Lord shut him in.

8. How long did it rain?

¹² And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

9. What besides rain from heaven helped to make the flood?

¹¹ In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

10. How extensive was the flood?

2 Peter 3

⁶ Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

Genesis 7

¹⁷ And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it was lift up above

the earth.

¹⁸ And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

¹⁹ And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

²⁰ Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

²¹ And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth, and every man:

²² All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

²³ And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

11. How long did the waters remain at their height?

²⁴ And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.

12. How long did Noah have to remain in the ark?

Genesis 7

¹¹ In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

Genesis 8

¹² And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.

¹³ And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.

¹⁴ And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

¹⁵ And God spoke unto Noah, saying,

¹⁶ Go forth of the ark, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you.

13. When Noah came out what did he do?

Genesis 8

²⁰ And Noah built an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

²¹ And the Lord smelled a sweet savor.

14. What did the Lord say about floods in the future?

Genesis 9

¹¹ And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

15. What pledge did he give to confirm this promise?

¹² And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

¹³ I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

¹⁴ And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

¹⁵ And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16. What peculiar force is there in the expression, "I do set my bow in the cloud?"

Revelation 4

¹³ And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

Ezekiel 1

²⁸ As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round

about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke.

17. Then how strong was the assurance that there should never be another universal flood?

God has pledged His own glory that it shall not be.

18. Will this earth never be destroyed by any means?

2 Peter 3

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

19. What word has decreed this?

The same word that created the earth in the beginning, and that destroyed it once by a flood. Verses 5, 7.

20. Why will this destruction take place?

Luke 27

²⁶ And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

²⁷ They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

21. What description have we of the wickedness that shall be in the last days?

2 Timothy 3

¹ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

22. Will the earth be filled with violence as it was before the flood?

³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good.

23. Who alone will be saved from the destruction that comes because of this wickedness?

Isaiah 33

¹⁴ The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

¹⁵ He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly; he that despises the gain of oppressions, that shakes his hands from holding of bribes, that stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil;

¹⁶ He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.

¹⁷ Your eyes shall see the king in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off.

Notes

From the flood, and the time just before it, many lessons are drawn for us. We are told that...

Luke 17

²⁶ ...as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

The wickedness of man will be just as great before the coming of the Lord, as it was in the days before the flood. To many this seems incredible, but if it were not so, God would not destroy the earth. Men will be lovers of their own selves, and utterly indifferent to the welfare of others, except as the welfare of others may contribute to their own selfish gratifica-

tion. They will be incontinent and fierce, and so, through sensuality, violence will fill the earth as it did in the days of Noah.³⁸

Many think that the spread of civilization and the general diffusion of knowledge will be an effectual bar to any such moral degeneration. But these very things, which may be instruments of the highest good, will be what will bring the world to the condition that it was in before the flood.

The Egyptians were the wisest people in the ancient world, yet their idolatry was of the grossest character. The Greeks were the most intellectual people who ever lived; it is doubtful if the civilization of the present day is equal to that of ancient Greece; and it is certain that in the fine arts and in scientific knowledge they were far superior to any nation now in existence. And yet they were heathen, and their worship was often characterized by the grossest licentiousness.

No; intellect never can keep a nation from moral degradation. In fact, it was their knowledge, or rather their trust in their own wisdom, which led to their ruin.

Romans 1

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

Nothing but humble faith in Christ, can keep any soul from ruin.

The elements that will result in bringing this world into the degraded state that existed before the flood, are working to-day.

- First, men are trusting to science, and to their own wisdom.
- Second, many who occupy the highest positions, are

³⁸ See 2 Timothy 3:1-7.

teaching that evil is a necessity, and that there is in reality no such thing as evil, but that what we call evil is only a lesser form of good.

This position was taken by Professor Fiske, of Harvard College, in a lecture in Oakland, last summer. Anyone can figure out the result of such a theory, if it should become general; and the fact that such men hold it is evidence that it would not require a miracle to make it general.

- Then there is Spiritualism, a cardinal doctrine of which is that there is no atonement, and that every man is his own judge, and is amenable to no one but himself; that his own heart is the only tribunal before which he is to be judged.

Read *Mark* 7:21-25 and *Galatians* 5:19-21, and you will find out what will result when men follow the natural promptings of their own hearts.

Now bear in mind the fact that the corner-stone of Spiritualism, namely, a belief that man is by nature immortal and cannot die, is part of the faith of the mass of professed Christians, and you will see how the way is prepared for all to accept the teachings of Spiritualism, as soon as Satan shall present to them the forms of their dead, whom they believe are really alive.

This is but the barest outline, yet the reader can see from it how easily men may be led into the grossest sins. At the same time they will talk of virtue, and will actually think that they are working for the up-building of humanity. Such power has Satan to blind those who do not receive the love of the truth.

It is becoming quite common to say that the flood was limited in extent. Such a statement is directly contrary to the express declarations of Scripture. Peter says that:

2 Peter 3

⁶ The world that then was, being overflowed with water, per-

ished.

And the word of God has decreed that the heavens and the earth which followed the flood, shall be destroyed by fire. The flood, then, must have been as extensive as the heavens and the earth which now exist, and as the destruction at the last day. To limit the flood to a small portion of the earth, is virtually to deny that...

2 Peter 3

¹⁰ ...the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

It is, in fact, to place one's self among the scoffers who say,

⁴ Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

Let all take heed how they receive the word of God.

14. Saved in the Ark

Present Truth, July 11, 1901

Genesis 7

E. J. Waggoner

THE title of the lesson for this week is “Noah Saved in the Ark,” but the Scripture cited, namely, the 8th chapter of *Genesis*, does not correspond thereto, inasmuch as it tells us only of the closing scenes. We shall therefore have a brief study of the flood in general, without regard to the text referred to in the lesson outline.

Unbelief and Blindness

Everyone will have heard of the doubts that have been cast upon the Scripture record of the flood. Not only avowed infidels, but many professed ministers of the Gospel, do not believe that there ever was a general flood, covering the whole earth.

The same cause of unbelief exists in this case as in that of the story of creation. Satan has instilled doubts of that in the minds of men, in order that they might become blinded to the power of the Gospel, and especially to the Sabbath, the sign of the cross, which creates new men.

As disbelief of the story of creation hides the beginnings of this world, so disbelief of the story of the flood hides the view of the end; for the days of Noah are referred to by the Saviour as a parallel to the days of the coming of the Son of man.

Matthew 24

³⁷ But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

³⁸ For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,

³⁹ And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

The adversary of God and man would be glad to have all men ignorant concerning the coming of the Lord; and that is the cause of the disbelief in the record of the flood.

Willing Ignorance

Still further: We are told that:

2 Peter 3

³ There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

⁴ And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

How is it that these scoffers thus throw discredit upon the promise of the Lord's coming, and declare that there is no evidence of any such thing? The answer follows:

⁵ For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water:

⁶ Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

⁷ But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Further on we are told that...

¹⁰ ...the elements shall melt with fervent heat,

–and that...

¹¹ ...all these things shall be dissolved.

At the day of Judgment there will be a sea of fire overwhelming the earth, just as the waters covered and destroyed the earth in the days of Noah.

From the margin of our Bible, together with the reading of the *Revised Version*, we can get a more clear idea of the text than we now have. We know that when the earth was created

it was a watery mass.

Genesis 1

² Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Then the waters were separated, some remaining on the surface of the earth, and the larger portion of it being stored up in the earth. These are called...

Exodus 20

⁴ ...the water under the earth.

That is, in the beginning, “of old,” the earth was “compacted out of water and amidst water,” or “consisting of water,” a large portion of which was stored up in the earth. Now by this water “the world that then was perished.” After Noah went into the ark,

Genesis 7

¹¹ ...all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

The very material out of which the earth was composed, and which was stored up in it, was made the agent of its destruction. If men were not willingly ignorant of this fact, they would not be blind to the coming of the Lord, and the approaching destruction of the world by fire.

The flood reduced the earth almost if not quite to its original chaos. At that time all the changes took place, which by unbelievers are attributed to the lapse of ages. Whole forests of huge trees were buried deep in the earth. These have since turned to coal, which has generated large amounts of oil and gas. As a consequence, there is a vast amount of fire stored in the earth, reserved till the flood of fire that is to overwhelm it.

As in the time of the flood the water out of the depths of the earth united with that which poured forth from the open windows of heaven, so in the last day the fires in the interior of the earth will unite with that which comes down from God

out of heaven, to destroy the earth.

All things have *not* continued as they were from the beginning of creation. Once was the world destroyed by the very elements out of which it was composed, and all the agencies are ready for its second destruction, which, instead of leaving it more curse-marked than before, as was the case with the flood, will cleanse it from the curse, so that there will be a new earth, as in the beginning.

The texts already quoted prove that the flood was universal. It was as extensive as the fires of the last day will be. To deny this is to deny the writings of the apostles, and thus to undermine the Gospel. The 3rd chapter of *2 Peter* mentions three worlds:

1. The world that was “of old,” from the creation;
2. Another, the one that now is, since the flood; and
3. The third, the new earth, which will emerge from the fires of the day of the Lord.

The three worlds are the same world in three different stages of existence. The universality of the flood is denied only by those who do not credit the prediction that the earth is to be destroyed again, this time more completely than before, by fire.

Saved by Water

In *1 Peter* 3:18-21 there is reference to the flood, which sometimes puzzles the reader. The first portion of the text tells us that by the same Spirit by which Christ was raised from the dead, He went in the days of Noah,

1 Peter 3

²⁰ ...while the ark was a preparing,

¹⁹ ...and preached unto the spirits in prison,

—that is, to the captives of sin, shut up under the law.

²⁰ The longsuffering of God waited one hundred and twenty

years, while Noah was building the ark, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.

²¹ The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Just a word about the expression, “saved by water.” In the margin of the *Revision* we have this reading:

“Few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through water.”

The Greek word is the same as that in *Acts* 23:24, where we read that the two centurions were commanded to provide beasts for Paul, whereby they might “bring him safe” to the governor; and a close parallel to the one in Peter is found in *Acts* 27:43-44, where we read of Paul’s escape from shipwreck, together with his traveling companions. Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship,

Acts 27

⁴⁴ ...they escaped all safe to land.

By means of the boards and broken pieces of the ship the people who were with Paul were all conveyed through the water to a place of safety; and by the ark Noah and his family were brought safely through the water. So here we see that the ark, and not the water of the flood, is referred to as the means of salvation.

Baptism Does Now Save Us

1 Peter 3

²¹ The like figure whereunto baptism does also now save us.

How does baptism save us?

²¹ ...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Romans 6

³ Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Je-

sus Christ were baptized into His death?

⁴ Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Galatians 3

²⁷ As many of you as have been baptized into Jesus Christ have put on Christ.

Baptism means being enclosed in the life of Christ as really as Noah was shut up in the ark. Only in the ark could he find safety, and only in Christ is there salvation for any man.

Baptism saves us, but not if it is only a form. It is not the washing of the body in water, but “the answer of a good conscience toward God;” it is the cleansing of the conscience by the water of the life of Christ.

Riding on a Sea of Fire

But there is a still further parallel. When the waters overflowed the earth, destroying it, Noah and his family, safe in the ark, rode upon the sea. That which covered up the corrupt earth with its wicked inhabitants, bore righteous Noah in safety. Even so it will be in the last days, the day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Before the final act of Judgment, the holy city, the New Jerusalem, will come down from God out of heaven, and will take its place upon the earth. We know that it comes down upon this old earth, before it is made new, because we read in *Revelation 20* that at the close of the thousand years during which the earth will lie desolate, the second resurrection—the resurrection of the wicked—will take place, and that Satan will then go forth among them to deceive them, and to gather them together to battle.

Revelation 20

⁹ And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city;

and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

After that the new heaven and the new earth are seen. And where will the New Jerusalem be all the time that the flames are devouring the earth with its wicked inhabitants? It will be riding on the lake of fire as securely as the ark rode on the billows of the flood. The saints of God inside of it will be saved through the fire. They will be able to dwell with the devouring fire, and with everlasting burnings.

Isaiah 33

¹⁴ The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

¹⁵ He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly; he that despises the gain of oppressions, that shakes his hands from holding of bribes, that stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil.

The Ark of Safety

It is just that great salvation that is secured by baptism into Christ, by being hidden in Him.

Isaiah 26

¹ We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.

Its walls shall be called Salvation, and its gates Praise,³⁹ because:

Psalms 46

⁵ God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved.

Its strength is simply the strength of the everlasting God, our refuge. The safety of the saints in the city, as it rides on the billows of fire that will rise literally “mountains high,” will be only the safety that everyone now finds, who is hidden in

³⁹ *Isaiah* 60:18.

the Rock of Ages.

Not rocks nor hills could guard so well,
Fair Salem's happy ground,
As those eternal arms of love,
That every saint surround.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Isaac Watts, *Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*, "Psalm 125," 1719.

15. Look Unto Jesus

Present Truth, December 19, 1901

Original title: Back Page

Genesis 11:4-5

E. J. Waggoner

THE insignificance of human works when viewed by God is forcibly indicated in the familiar story of the tower of Babel. The people said,

Genesis 11

⁴ Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.

⁵ And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men built.

They thought to reach heaven; but so far short of it did they come, that God is represented as having to come down even to see it. Very often when we fancy that we are doing a great thing, and think that everybody must surely be looking on, we have not accomplished enough to attract any notice at all.

It is quite common to hear people echo the poet's wish that we might see ourselves as others see us. We may be glad, however, that we do not. We should have more foolish notions, and commit more blunders, than we now do. Some of our friends think so highly of us, at times, at least, that nobody would be able to live with us, if we saw ourselves as they see us. And others hold us in such low esteem that if we saw ourselves with their eyes we should not want to live.

Neither is it any better for us to see ourselves as God sees us, as many well-meaning souls often wish they could. The fact is, self-consciousness is the worst thing in the world for people. We do not need to see ourselves at all, and the Lord does not wish us to. He says,

Isaiah 45

²² Look unto me.

It is only while we are...

Hebrews 12

² ...looking unto Jesus,

-that we are able to...

Hebrews 12

¹ ...run with patience the race that is set before us.

We have the...

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁷ ...eternal weight of glory

¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

2 Corinthians 3

¹⁸ Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [we are] changed into the same image.

We become like what we look at. If we look at ourselves, we only increase our faults; if we look at the Lord Jesus we do not see ourselves at all, but the glory of God, and thus we become transformed into His Divine image.

16. A Question of Figures

Signs of the Times, March 9, 1888

Genesis 5:32; 7:11; 9:22-23; 10:21; 11:10-26, 32; 13:4

E. J. Waggoner

A BROTHER in Philadelphia sends the following three questions on one of the Sabbath-school lessons, which he wishes answered through the *Signs of the Times*:

1. How do you prove that Adam lived 233 years with Methuselah? *Smith's Dictionary* says it was 243 years. So does the Bible. By an error in copying, the lesson came short just ten years. This was better than to have had the number too large.

2. How do you count to get 352 years in the 20th question? The genealogy of Shem, in *Genesis* 11:10-26 counts only 262 years from the flood to Abram.

The brother's difficulty arises from the fact that he supposes Abram to have been born when Terah was seventy years old. The fact is that Abram was not born till Terah was one hundred and thirty years old. We learn this as follows:

- Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran (*Genesis* 13:4);
- He did not go out of Haran until his father was dead (*Acts* 7:4); and
- Terah, his father, was two hundred and five years old when he died (*Genesis* 11:32).

Now a very slight mathematical calculation will enable anybody to see that Abram was born when Terah was one hundred and thirty years old: $205-75=130$. With this in mind, the brother will have no difficulty in finding that from the flood to the birth of Abraham was 352 years.

3. If Noah was five hundred years old when Shem was

born (*Genesis* 5:32), and Shem was one hundred years old when Arphaxad was born (*Genesis* 11:10); two years after the flood, how could Noah have been six hundred years old when the flood came? (*Genesis* 7:11).

The brother has fallen into the same difficulty here as in the case of Abram; he evidently thinks that Abram, Nahor and Haran were all born at the same time, and that Shem, Ham and Japheth were also born at one time. But the Bible does not say so.

Terah was seventy years old when his first son was born, but Abram was not born until sixty years later, so we have seen. So *Genesis* 5:32 tells how old Noah was when his eldest son was born; but that oldest son was not Shem. From *Genesis* 10:21 and 9:22-23 we learn that Japheth was the oldest son of Noah, and that Ham was the youngest, and that consequently Shem was the second son.

Although Abram was undoubtedly the youngest of the sons of Terah, he is mentioned first because he is the only one of importance. Shem was the second son of Noah, yet he is always mentioned first because he is the one from whom the genealogy of Christ is reckoned.

17. The Call of Abram

Signs of the Times, January 13, 1887

Notes on the International Lesson, January 30

Genesis 11:31 to 12:7

A. T. Jones

Genesis 12

¹ Now the Lord had said unto Abram.

ABRAM was a native of Ur of the Chaldees, not far from the mouth of the Euphrates; though, through the river deposits of ages, the ruins of Ur are now about 125 miles from the Persian Gulf and about six miles from the Euphrates. The oldest of its temples are certain ones whose bricks bear the name of Uruk, who calls himself "King of Ur and Accad." The signet cylinder of Uruk's son, Ilgi, has been found and is preserved in the British Museum. Uruk is supposed to have lived about a hundred years, or perhaps a little more, before Abram left Ur.

Terah was Abram's father and an idolater, for...

Joshua 24

² [He] served other gods.

These gods were mostly the sun, the moon, and the planets. Sin, or Hurki, was the moon-god; San, or Sansi, was the sun; Vul was the god of the atmosphere; Nin was Saturn; Mero-dach was Jupiter; Nergal was Mars; Ishtar was Venus; and Nebo was Mercury. With each of these and in his worship was associated a female divinity. Ana was the god of the lower world, the lord of darkness or death. The chief seat of his worship was Erech.⁴¹ The principal temple at Erech was built by Uruk to Sin, the moon-god. He also built temples to the sun to Belus and his wife Beltis, as well as to many others, for he was a mighty builder and a devout worshiper of the gods.

It was in such a place, and amidst such idolatry, that Abram

⁴¹ *Genesis* 10:10.

was born and grew up, his own people and even his own father serving those gods. Yet Abram turned from it all and served Jehovah. When all about him had forsaken the true God and served idols and walked in their evil ways, Abram stood faithful to the Lord. While all others did not like to retain God in their knowledge, Abram gave himself up to the sincere worship of the Lord. Therefore he became...

James 2

²³ ...the friend of God,

Romans 4

¹¹ ...[and] the father of all them which believe.

Galatians 3

²⁹ For if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

It was from the midst of this idolatry that God called Abram to go out into a land which He would show him, and he obeyed,

Hebrews 11

⁸ ...and he went out not knowing where he went.

For,

Acts 7

² The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran [Haran],

³ And said unto him, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and come into the land which I shall show you.

⁴ Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran; and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein you now dwell.

Coming out of Ur, Abram was accompanied by Terah, his father, Lot, his nephew, and Sarai, his wife.⁴² It seems that Nahor had preceded them to Haran, and had built that city, for

⁴² *Genesis* 11:31.

Haran was “the city of Nahor.”⁴³ Haran was on a tributary of the Euphrates, the Belichus, about seventy-five miles north-east of Carchemish.

Genesis 11

³¹ And they came to Haran and dwelt there.

³² ...and Terah died in Haran.

And after his father died, Abram, in obedience to the call which the Lord had given him in Ur, went on to the land which should be shown him.

Genesis 12

⁴ So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him; and Abram was seventh-fifty years old when he departed out of Haran.

⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

God had said to him while he was in Ur:

² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing;

³ And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you; and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.

And now when Abram had passed through the land unto the plain of Moreh, the Lord again appeared to him, and said,

⁷ Unto your seed will I give this land.

Acts 7

⁵ And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.

⁴³ Compare *Genesis* 24:10 with 27:43.

Galatians 3

¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ.

²⁹ And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Romans 4

¹³ For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

And,

Hebrews 11

⁹ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

¹⁰ For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

¹³ ...and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

¹⁴ For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

¹⁶ ...wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared for them a city.

If we will be Christ's we must take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, for He is...

Matthew 11

²⁹ ...meek and lowly in heart,

–and it is meekness and lowliness in heart which we must learn of Christ, that we may be His. And if we be His, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. So says Christ:

Matthew 5

⁵ Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

18. Promises to Abraham

Signs of the Times, March 26, 1885
Lesson for the Pacific Coast – April 15
Genesis 12:1-5
E. J. Waggoner

1. When did the Lord first appear to Abraham?

Acts 7

² And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken: The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.

2. What did He then say to him?

³ And said unto him, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and come into the land which I shall show you.

3. To what place did Abraham go from Mesopotamia?

⁴ Then he came out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran; and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed into this land, wherein you now dwell.

4. How long did Abraham stay in Charran (Haran)?

Ibid.

5. After the death of his father, where did he go?

Ibid.

6. Locate, as nearly as possible, all these places on the map.

7. Where do you find the record of these events of which Stephen speaks?

Genesis 12

¹ Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you:

² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing:

³ And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be

blessed.

⁴ So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

8. How old was Abram when he went into the land of Canaan?

⁴ So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was *seventy and five years old* when he departed out of Haran.

9. How old was he when his father died?

10. When the Lord told Abram to leave his native country, what promise did he make?

Genesis 12

² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing:

³ And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.

11. What expression shows that this promise was not merely a local affair?

12. How extensive was it?

13. What will be the condition of the world when this promise meets its fulfillment?

14. Who are they who are blessed?

Psalms 1

¹ Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.

² But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law does

he meditate day and night.

15. Then what will all the world do when this promise is fulfilled?
16. And when God's will is thus perfectly performed, what will be on this earth?

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your kingdom come, Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.

Notes

The answer to question 9 will be readily seen by those who connect *Genesis* 12:4 with *Acts* 7:4. He went out of Charran [or Haran] into Canaan when his father was dead, says Stephen. Moses says that he was seventy-five years old when he went into Canaan. So he was seventy-five years old, and his father died.

From a single expression in the promise contained in *Genesis* 12:2-3, we know that it was not a local affair. That expression is this:

Genesis 12

³ In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

It embraces all the inhabitants of the earth. But it is not fulfilled until all the inhabitants of the earth are blessed. That condition does not now exist, and has never yet existed. Now we learn in *Psalms* 1:1-2 who are blessed,—those who love and obey the law of God. Of course; if the curse came because of sin, the blessing will come only when there is obedience.

Therefore, when this promise is fulfilled, every inhabitant of the earth will be delighting in the law of the Lord. In harmony with this are the words of Christ in his prayer,⁴⁴ showing that such a state exists only when the kingdom of God exists on earth.

⁴⁴ *Matthew* 6:10.

19. Call of Abraham

Signs of the Times, February 17, 1888

Genesis 12:1 to 15:6

E. J. Waggoner

1. Where did Abraham live when the Lord first appeared to him?

Acts 7

² And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.

2. What did the Lord say to him?

³ And said unto him, Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and come into the land which I shall show you.

3. What promise did the Lord then make to him?

Genesis 12

¹ Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you:

² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing:

³ And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you; and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4. What did Abraham then do?

Acts 7

⁴ Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein you now dwell.

5. How old was he when he went to the land of Canaan?

Genesis 12

⁴ So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him; and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

6. Did he know before he started where he was going?

Genesis 12

¹ Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you.

Acts 7

³ And said unto him, Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and come into the land which I shall show you.

7. In thus going from his home, what did he manifest?

Hebrews 11

⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went.

8. What promise did the Lord afterward make him?

Genesis 13

¹⁴ And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

¹⁵ For all the land which you see, to you will I give it...

9. To whom besides himself was the promise made?

¹⁵ ...and to your seed for ever.

10. How numerous did the Lord say that his seed should be?

¹⁶ And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered.

11. Had Abraham any children at this time?

Genesis 15

² And Abram said, Lord God, what will you give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus.

12. What did the Lord again say as to the number of his posterity?

⁵ And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you be able to number them; and He said unto him, So shall your seed be.

13. How did Abraham regard the word of the Lord?

⁶ And he believed in the Lord...

14. How did God regard Abraham's faith?

⁶ ...and he counted it to him for righteousness.

15. What is meant by faith being counted for righteousness?

The forgiveness of sins.

Romans 4

⁵ But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

⁶ Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputes righteousness without works,

⁷ Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

⁸ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

16. Through whom were the promises confirmed to Abraham?

Galatians 3

¹⁷ And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

17. And who are the promised seed?

Galatians 3

²⁹ And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

18. What is the inheritance of which they, with him, are heirs?

Romans 4

¹³ For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Notes

Romans 4

³ Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

What was involved in this? Nothing less than the forgiveness of sins,—the imputing of righteousness without works. Paul, after stating that Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness, says that David describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works, but solely on account of faith, in the following words:

⁷ Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

⁸ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

This counting a man righteous without works is the stumbling-stone over which so many fall. Some say that it is impossible, while others go to the other extreme and say that it at once and forever releases the believer from all obligation to make any effort. But it is done, and it does not release the individual from obligation to put forth continued effort.

How else can a man gain acceptance with God? He cannot do good deeds to make up for his past sins, for it is impossible for him to do more than his duty at any one time. Besides, an evil deed cannot be canceled by a good one. If he gets rid of

the sins that he has committed, they must be taken away as an act of free grace on the part of God. Faith is the condition on which they will be removed.

Take Abraham as an example. The Lord made a promise to him, that would have staggered most men, it was so great, so incomprehensible. But Abraham...

Romans 4

²⁰ ...staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God,

²¹ And was fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform;

²² And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

The Lord made a great promise; Abraham said, I believe; and the Lord, in return for that simple faith, declared his sins forgiven. Thenceforward Abraham lived by faith, and thus it could be said by the Lord,

Genesis 26

⁵ Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

He could not have done this without faith, for...

Hebrews 11

⁶ Without faith it is impossible to please God.

In what did Abraham have faith? In just the same thing that we are required to have faith if we would obtain the forgiveness of sins and eternal life,—that is, in the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul says that the promise to Abraham was confirmed in Christ.

Galatians 3

¹⁷ And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Therefore Abraham's faith was of the same nature that ours

must be. He believed in Christ,

Romans 3

²⁵ Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

No one can possibly have more perfect or more intelligent faith, than Abraham had, for he is...

Romans 4

¹¹ ...the father of all them that believe.

²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it [righteousness] was imputed to him;

²⁴ But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

²⁵ Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.

But why is it that this faith does not tend to presumption, and to looseness of life? The reason is this: The possession of such faith as Abraham had, indicates humility, and submission to the will of God. Faith and humility are co-existent. Neither can exist without the other.

Habakkuk 2

⁴ Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.

The man who will implicitly trust God's word, even against his own judgment, shows that he believes that God knows more than he does; he has put himself into God's hands, to be guided as God shall think best. Then of course as long as he retains that faith, he will gladly do the will of God. Thus true faith always leads to obedience. Abraham's faith was shown to be perfect by his works.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *James 2:21-24.*

20. Promises to Abraham – Continued

Signs of the Times, April 2, 1885

Lesson for the Pacific Coast – May 2

Genesis 13:14-17

E. J. Waggoner

1. Under what circumstances was the promise first made to Abraham?
2. Repeat this promise?

Genesis 12

² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing:

³ And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you; and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.

3. What condition of things will exist when this is fulfilled?
4. What scripture contains additional features of the promise?

Genesis 13

¹⁴ And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

¹⁵ For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever.

¹⁶ And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered.

¹⁷ Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto you.

5. When was this promise made?

¹⁴ And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward.

6. What did the Lord promise at this time?

Genesis 13

¹⁴ And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

¹⁵ For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever.

7. To whom besides Abraham was the land promised?

Ibid.

8. How long was it said that they should have it?

Ibid.

9. How numerous did the Lord say his seed should be?

¹⁶ And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered.

10. If his seed was to be “as the dust of the earth,” how much of the earth would it occupy?

11. Then to what was the promise equivalent?

12. How much territory does Paul say that the promise included?

Romans 4

¹³ For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

13. Why did the Lord make such great promises to Abraham?

Genesis 18

¹⁸ Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

¹⁹ For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring

upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him.

Notes

In our last week's lesson we learned that the first promise was made to Abraham while he was in his native country, when God told him to go out into a land which he should show him. *Genesis* 12:1-3. We found that the promise affected not only Abraham, but all the people who should live at a certain time upon the earth; that at that time all would be blessed, and would, consequently, be keeping God's commandments.

After Lot had separated from Abraham, we find the promise renewed, with some additional particular. This will be found in *Genesis* 13:14-17. There we find that land was promised to Abraham, and to his seed, and that it was to be theirs forever.

In the sixteenth verse we learn that his seed was to be "as the dust of the earth." This is but another way of saying that his descendants should fill the whole earth. That being so, it follows that the promise given at that time was that he and his descendants should possess the whole earth. In *Romans* 4:13 we learn that this conclusion is correct.

We must not fail to note, however, as recorded in *Genesis* 18:18-19, that the Lord's promise to make of Abraham a great nation, was based on the fact that Abraham would command his children and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord.

21. Abraham and Lot

Signs of the Times, February 24, 1888

Genesis 12:5 to 14:12

E. J. Waggoner

1. When Abraham left his native land, whom did he take with him?

Genesis 12

⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

2. After his sojourning in Canaan, where did he go?

¹⁰ ...Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there;...

3. Why did he go there?

¹⁰ And there was a famine in the land;...the famine was grievous in the land.

4. How was he prospered while there?

Genesis 13

¹ And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.

² And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

Genesis 12

¹⁶ And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maid-servants, and she asses, and camels.

5. How was Lot situated as regards wealth?

Genesis 13

⁵ And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

6. What was the consequence of the great wealth of both Abram and Lot?

Genesis 13

⁶ And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together; for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

⁷ And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle; and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land.

7. How was Abraham affected by this strife?

⁸ And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray you, between me and you, and between my herdmen and your herdmen; for we be brethren.

8. What generous part did Abraham act?

⁹ Is not the whole land before you? separate yourself, I pray you, from me; if you will take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

9. How did Lot respond to this generous offer?

¹⁰ And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as you come unto Zoar.

¹¹ Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves the one from the other.

10. What alone seemed to influence Lot in his choice?

11. Near what city did Lot pitch his tent?

¹² Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

12. What was the character of the men of Sodom?

¹³ But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

13. Did Abraham lose anything by his generosity?

Genesis 13

¹⁴ And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

¹⁵ For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever.

¹⁶ And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered.

¹⁷ Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto you.

14. What great battle was fought some years after?

Genesis 14

⁸ And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim;

⁹ With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five.

15. What happened to the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and their people?

¹⁰ And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.

¹¹ And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

16. Who else was taken captive?

¹² And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

17. What do you think was the indirect cause of Lot's misfortune?

18. What charge is given to the rich?

1 Timothy 6

¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy;

¹⁸ That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

¹⁹ Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

19. How sure may a man be of retaining riches?

Proverbs 23

⁴ Labor not to be rich; cease from your own wisdom.

⁵ Will you set your eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

20. What proverb was fulfilled in the case of Lot?

Proverbs 15

²⁷ He that is greedy of gain troubles his own house; but he that hates gifts shall live.

Notes

Now note the result:

- Abraham was unselfish, and was willing to take whatever should be left, yet his wealth increased right along;
- Lot eagerly took the first choice, looking out for his own interests, and lost everything.

It doesn't always pay, even from a worldly standpoint, to be too eager for gain. We would not dwell unduly on the course of Lot, for the Bible makes no comment upon it; but we cannot but note that Abraham appears as the grand patriarch worthy of our admiration.

While the Bible says nothing directly concerning Lot's course, there is a great deal suggested in the statement that:

Genesis 13

¹³ The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

It is strongly implied that Lot knew this, and that he ought therefore to have kept away from there.

¹² [He] pitched his tent toward Sodom,

—but we find that before long he was in Sodom. No doubt it was a good business town, affording a good market. Having started towards Sodom with the idea of bettering his fortunes, it was a very natural thing for Lot to go into Sodom for the same purpose.

1 Timothy 6

⁹ But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

We do not learn that Lot himself was at all swerved from virtue by the wickedness with which he was surrounded; on the contrary, we know that he was very much vexed by it; but he suffered terribly in the loss of his family and his property.

1 Timothy 6

¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy,

—is the exhortation of the apostle Paul. Riches themselves are not an evil; but trusting in them is. Money is a good thing; but the love of it is the root of evil.

¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil.

When men set their hearts on riches, then they show where their trust is. The man who didn't know what to do with his goods, and so pulled down his barns and built greater, and said to his soul,

Luke 12

¹⁹ Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry,

–trusted in his riches, and not in God. So does every man who hoards up his wealth. Such a man is an idolater; he sets gold ahead of the Lord; he tacitly says that his sole dependence for support is in his hoarded treasure, thus grieving God.

The warnings in the 6th chapter of *1 Timothy* are not all for the rich. The poor may love money, and by their strivings after it for its own sake, even though they strive in vain, they may show that they trust in uncertain riches, rather than in the living God.

22. Lot's Choice

Signs of the Times, January 20, 1887

Notes on the International Lesson, February 6

Genesis 13:1-13

E. J. Waggoner

THOUGH the place of Sodom and Gomorrah was as beautiful “as the garden of the Lord,” the people were so corrupt that neither earth nor Heaven could endure them but a little while longer.

Genesis 13

¹³ The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners exceedingly before the Lord.

And,

Ezekiel 16

⁴⁹ Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

⁵⁰ And they were haughty, and committed abomination.

This was the iniquity of Sodom. And though Lot found the place beautiful, he found the people abominable; and his righteous soul was...

2 Peter 2

⁷ ...vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

⁸ For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.

But,

1 Corinthians 15

³³ Evil communications corrupt good manners.

And although Lot is given by the word of God the title of “just” and “righteous,” yet his family was so far influenced by the “evil communications” of those wicked people, that his

wife did not escape destruction, and is daughters, though they escaped, showed themselves more thoroughly familiar with the wicked ways of Sodom than with the righteous ways of their father.

“Lot’s choice” was a miserable choice. Worldly prosperity is no evidence of the fear of God, but rather tends to make the naturally corrupt heart still more corrupt. Let it be the aim of all to...

Romans 4

¹² ...walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham,

–that we may all be partakers with him of the same promise in view of which he ever lived and walked.

Scripture Statements vs. Conjecture

Signs of the Times, February 24, 1887

E. J. Waggoner

WE CANNOT refrain from expressing the wish that the writers of the Sunday-school lesson notes in some of the religious papers, would occasionally read what the Bible says upon the subject of the lesson. If they should, it would save them from some egregious blunders, and would be a mercy to the pupils whose ideas are molded in large measure by the lesson notes in their favorite journals.

The lesson entitled “Lot’s choice” was improved by nearly everyone to moralize on the wickedness of Lot. The *Christian Standard* writer ended his sentimentalism as follows:

“Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom, then entered the city, ceased to be shocked by its gross sins and idolatry, was humiliated by being captured and plundered by the five kings. His soul hardened against even such direct warnings as angel messengers from Heaven. At last forced to flee from the city empty-handed, and look back on what once seemed the garden of the Lord, as a fiery furnace, he makes his home in the

caves of the earth, and finally ends life a drunken outcast, dishonored by men and disowned by God.”

Now read in *2 Peter 2:4-8* that God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with an overthrow, turning them into ashes,

2 Peter 2

⁷ And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

⁸ (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds).

Lot may have been selfish in his choice of territory, although the Scripture nowhere gives any intimation of such a thing. But we do have emphatic testimony to his righteousness, and that he himself was uncontaminated by the horrible wickedness around him, and from which he suffered greatly. Unscriptural morals are among the worst things written.

In this connection we would call attention to the *International Lesson Notes* that are given every week in the *Signs of the Times*. The writer indulges in no guess-work, but directs the student's attention solely to the Bible. Sunday-school teachers and students will find it to their advantage to read the *Commentary Department* in the *Signs*. Those notes alone will more than make up for the price of the paper.

23. A Lesson in Unselfishness / Abram and Lot

Present Truth, July 25, 1901

Genesis 13:1-18

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN Abraham left his native country at the call of God, and came into the land of Canaan, he took his nephew Lot with him. For some time they remained together, Lot accompanying Abraham in all his journeyings. From the 12th chapter of *Genesis* we learn that they passed through Canaan, and went down into Egypt; our present lesson tells of their return to Canaan.

Genesis 13

² And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

³ And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai;

⁴ Unto the place of the altar, which he had made here at the first; and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah.

Abraham a Preacher

We see that Abraham did not forget his mission in the land, which was to preach the Gospel. Bear in mind what was said concerning the expression, “called on the name of the Lord.” In the Hebrew the words are exactly the same as those in *Exodus* 34:5, where we read that the Lord descended in the cloud to Moses upon the mount, and...

Exodus 34

⁵ ...proclaimed the name of the Lord.

Now it is evident that this is correctly rendered; because it is exactly what the Lord did on that occasion, as we learn from the succeeding verses; and it is equally evident that it would be most improper—absolutely impossible—to render the expression, “called on the name of the Lord,” as in *Genesis* 12:8; 13:4. Therefore we are justified in giving to the term in

these instances the same rendering that it has in *Exodus*, where we know it is correctly rendered. So we render the last part of *Genesis* 22:4 literally, thus:

“And there Abram proclaimed the name of the Lord,”

or, which is the same thing,

“...preached in the name of the Lord.”

Division in the Church

Genesis 13

⁵ And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

⁶ And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

⁷ And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram’s cattle, and the herdmen of Lot’s cattle; and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land.

⁸ And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray you, between me and you, and between my herdmen and your herdmen; for we be brethren.

⁹ Is not the whole land before you? separate yourself, I pray you, from me; if you will take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you will depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

We have termed this a division in the church, for Abraham’s large family was emphatically a church—a congregation of believers. Abraham was “called out,” which is the literal meaning of the Greek word commonly rendered church; and we have seen that his sole business in the land of Canaan was to proclaim the name of the Lord, and to establish the worship of the true God.

The immense wealth that God gave him contributed to this end; it was simply a means of supporting the workers. Rightly used, as it was, it gave Abraham prestige among the people of the land, and assured him a hearing wherever he went.

But while possessions bestowed by the Lord,

Deuteronomy 8

¹⁸ For it is He that gives the power to get wealth.

—are designed as a great blessing,⁴⁶ they may, and often do, prove a source of trouble and backsliding from God. A blessing misused and its source unrecognized, always becomes a curse; for a curse is simply the wrong side of a blessing.

So the first trouble in the church in the land of Canaan, even as it was in the church in the days of the apostles,⁴⁷ was over the matter of the division and distribution of funds. In the case before us it was Lot that made the mistake, and Abraham who acted strictly according to Christian principle.

The Secret of Abraham's Generous Conduct

This is found in the last five verses of chapter 13, together with *Genesis* 15:5-6.

Genesis 13

¹⁴ And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

¹⁵ For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever.

¹⁶ And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered.

¹⁷ Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto you.

⁴⁶ **Malachi 3** ¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. ¹¹ And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, says the Lord of hosts. ¹² And all nations shall call you blessed: for you shall be a delightsome land, says the Lord of hosts.

⁴⁷ See *Acts* 5:1-10; 6:1.

¹⁸ Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.

Genesis 15

⁵ And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall your seed be.

⁶ And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.

Abraham remembered the promise of God, that the whole earth was to be given to him and to his seed; therefore he could afford to be generous. The man who has everything can always be generous; in fact, we should expect him to be. Now the same promise applied equally to Lot, for:

Galatians 3

⁹ They which be of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham.

We are also included in the promise; for:

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse,...

¹⁴ That the blessing of Abraham might come on [us] through Jesus Christ.

Romans 8

³² He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

The early Christians not only gave liberally, but...

Hebrews 10

³⁴ ...took joyfully [even] the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

It was this knowledge that made Abraham so generously courteous. He looked for a better country, that is, a heavenly, and whatever of temporal possessions he might have were only an incident. He knew that he was but a sojourner in the

land; then why should he strive for the possession of any portion of it?

All men are but sojourners, equally with Abraham, and if they recognized that truth there would be no wars. Who would not think it most foolish, even in small children, to fight for the possession of soap bubbles? Yet the greater part of mankind is engaged in equally foolish and profitless work.

1 Timothy 6

¹⁷ The world passes away, and the lust thereof; but he that does the will of God abides for ever.

It is useless to contend over that which we cannot hold, even if we succeed in seizing it. As to the everlasting possession that God gives, the fact that God himself gives it to us shows that it is not to be gained by strife and contention; and nobody can take it from us, even though they kill us. Moreover the inheritance is inexhaustible, therefore we may be very...

1 Timothy 6

¹⁸ ...ready to distribute.

All Things Common

If Lot had been as mindful as Abraham was, of the purpose for which God had sent them into the land, he would not have separated from Abraham in the way he did. It might indeed have been necessary for them to separate for the more extensive proclamation of the name of the Lord; but it would not have been over a division of property.

Lot was a righteous man, and he did not allow his wealth to corrupt him, for his character remained pure even in Sodom; but he allowed the cares of this world to prevent him from being a missionary, and so he eventually lost all that he had.

Earthly possessions are for no other purpose than to be used in the propagation of the Gospel; whoever uses them to

this end will always have...

2 Corinthians 9

⁸ ...all sufficiency in all things,

¹¹ Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness.

But those who attempt to hold them for their own personal use, will finally lose everything. They may be saved, as Lot was, yet it will be...

1 Corinthians 3

¹⁵ ...so as by fire.

On this basis, and on this only, can men have all things common, as was the case in the early church.

Acts 4

³² The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

And as a matter of course,

³⁴ Neither was there any among them that lacked.

Modern Socialism aims at an equal distribution of property, but it is radically defective, and can never succeed. Its principles, while they seem to many to be Christian, are directly opposed to Christianity, as everything must be that leaves Christ out.

- The Christian way is for each one to say that what he has does not belong to him, but is given him in trust, to be used for the benefit of the world;
- The human way is for each one to say that he has a right to what belongs to somebody else, and that the world owes him a living.

The former method will provide everybody with all he needs all the time; the latter loads some down temporarily with that which they cannot use, while others are destitute,

and at last leaves all empty-handed, for their riches take wings of fire, and in smoke fly away towards heaven.

So we say that if Lot had not allowed his wealth to tie him up, so that he could not continue in the missionary work, but had remembered that it was not his, his life would not have been the total failure that it was.

Opulence and Sin

Genesis 13

¹⁰ Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere,...even as the garden of the Lord;...

¹¹ Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan,...

¹² ...and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

¹³ But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

Now read what God afterwards said to Israel—the church—when they had lost the missionary spirit, and had become like the heathen round them:

Ezekiel 16

⁴⁹ Behold this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

While it is true that wealth is a blessing from God, if received as from Him, the majority of mankind, who are poor, have no reason to complain; because poverty is a still greater blessing than wealth.

James 1

⁵ Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?

Jesus said unto His disciples:

Matthew 19

²³ Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Better, infinitely better, poverty in this world, with the heirship of heaven and earth, than to have the whole world and lose our souls.

Look abroad over the world in history or at the present time, and see where the simple virtues are most prevalent, and where vice most abounds. The inhabitants of tropical and semi-tropical lands, where abundance of food grows almost spontaneously, and people can live with scarcely any exertion, are invariably of looser morale than their brethren of lands where severe toil must be put forth in order to enjoy the products of the earth. This does not apply to the natives of those regions, whose desires are moderate, so much as to those who go there because of the ease with which wealth may be gained.

It is in the North, where the climate is severe, and the earth in many places yields but a scanty supply, that the Word of God finds freest course. Compare the Scandinavian countries with Italy and Spain.

In the early history of the United States, and especially in the Colonial period, when the population was mostly confined to the North-east, where the land is rocky and responds only to the most patient industry, the simple, sturdy virtues were predominant. But when wealth began to multiply from the rich farming lands and the mines of the far West, and when money literally flowed from the ground, in the oil regions, dissolution and crime increased in proportion.

There is no other country on earth where wealth is so abundant, and no other country has degenerated as the United States has in the last few years. When wealth accumulates, men always decay.

1 Timothy 6

⁹ They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain.

⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

⁸ And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.

24. Abraham and Melchizedek

Signs of the Times, March 2, 1888

Genesis 14:13-24

E. J. Waggoner

1. Where did Abraham dwell when Lot was taken captive?

Genesis 14

¹³ And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner; and these were confederate with Abram.

2. When he heard of Lot's misfortune, what did he do?

¹⁴ And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

3. What success did he have?

¹⁵ And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

¹⁶ And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

4. Who went out to meet Abraham on his return with the spoils?

¹⁷ And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

5. Who else met him and brought refreshments?

¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine...

6. Who was Melchizedek?

¹⁸ ...and he was the priest of the most high God.

Hebrews 7

¹ For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

² To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.

7. What besides giving him refreshments did Melchizedek do for Abraham?

Genesis 14

¹⁹ And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.

8. Which was the greater man, Abraham or Melchizedek?

Hebrews 7

⁴ Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

⁷ And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

9. What did Abraham give to Melchizedek?

Genesis 14

²⁰ And blessed be the most high God, which has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

Hebrews 7

⁴ Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

10. What did the king of Sodom say to Abraham?

Genesis 14

²¹ And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to yourself.

11. What reply did Abraham make?

²² And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

²³ That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich.

12. What only did Abraham reserve of the spoils?

Genesis 14

²⁴ Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

13. What had he taken out before he reserved the portion for the young men who went with him?

²⁰ And blessed be the most high God, which has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

14. Since Abraham said that he would not take so much as a shoe latchet that belonged to the king of Sodom, whose property must he have regarded the tithe which he gave to the priest of the Lord?

Leviticus 27

³⁰ And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord.

15. Who is our priest?

Hebrews 4

¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

16. Of what order is he the priest?

Hebrews 6

²⁰ Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

17. Then ought we not to pay tithes as well as Abraham?

18. What words of the apostle Paul indicate that our great High Priest should receive tithes of us?

Hebrews 7

⁸ And here men that die receive tithes; but there He receives them, of whom it is witnessed that He lives.

19. What did Jesus himself say concerning men's duty to pay tithes?

Matthew 23

²³ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these you ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Notes

But although Abraham was a man of peace, he could fight when it was necessary. Taking three hundred and eighteen of his servants he pursued the enemy, and brought back Lot and his family, and everything that had been taken from Sodom. We must not understand that Abraham's servants comprised the whole of the army, for we learn that Amer and Eshcol were confederate with him, and accompanied him on the expedition. Doubtless each of these had a large number of followers.

It was not a small thing for Abraham to conquer Chedorlaomer and his confederate kings. The seat of Chedorlaomer's kingdom was beyond the Euphrates; and a glance at the map will show how extensive his kingdom was when the city of Sodom was subject to him. Rawlinson says of his defeat by Abraham:

The actual slaughter can scarcely have been great, but the prisoners and the booty taken had to be surrendered; the prestige of victory was lost; and the result seems to have been that the Mesopotamian monarch relinquished his projects, and, contenting himself with the fame acquired by such distant expeditions, made no further attempt to carry

his empire beyond the Euphrates.⁴⁸

This event, which stopped the course of an empire, is passed by in the Scripture narrative with a word. Rawlinson says that the word “slaughter” (*Genesis* 14:17) is too strong a rendering of the original. The Hebrew does not mean more than “defeat” or “overthrow.” When we read that...

Genesis 13

² Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold,

—we cannot form any estimate of his greatness. But when we think that on an expedition of this kind he was able to arm three hundred and eighteen servants that were born in his own house, we know that he was not an ordinarily rich man. This one item, more than any other, gives us an idea of how God had prospered Abraham. In his case we have a comment on the words of our Saviour:

Matthew 6

³¹ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

³³ But seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Abraham’s first desire was to have the righteousness of God; he looked for a heavenly country, and God gave him the wealth of this. We must not expect to see such wealth given to everyone who seeks God and His righteousness; He has not promised more than food and raiment, and, having that, the Christian will be content. But that is sure to be given. Says David:

Psalms 37

²⁵ I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

⁴⁸ *Seven Great Monarchies*, First Monarchy, chap. 8.

So,

1 Timothy 4

⁸ Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

The first recorded instance of tithing is this one, where Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. Abraham had a right to all the property that he recovered from the Chaldeans, and this right the king of Sodom acknowledged when he said,

Genesis 14

²¹ Give me the persons, and take the goods yourself.

But Abraham answered:

²² I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich.

Abraham would not be under obligations to a wicked man. The wealth that he had was received through the blessing of God; and now he would not give anybody a chance to say anything that would detract from the glory of God. So Abraham returned the goods to him, with the exception of a share for the young men who went with him.

But before Abraham had this talk with the king of Sodom, he had taken out a tithe of all, and had given it to Melchizedek.

²⁰ And he gave him tithes of all.

This was before the young men took out their portion. From this, then, we learn how we should pay tithe. The tithe should be the first-fruits. It should come out before we take out of our earnings that which is necessary for our support.

Leviticus 27

³⁰ The tithe...is the Lord's.

When we pay it to Him, we are simply giving to Him His own. For this reason Abraham could say that he would not keep back anything that belonged to the king of Sodom. One-tenth of all the wealth of Sodom belonged to the Lord, and ought to have been given to Him. But the king was an unfaithful steward, and had kept the Lord's money. But when it came into Abraham's hands, he promptly gave the Lord that which belonged to Him.

Malachi 3

⁸ Will a man rob God?

Alas! too many do. How is it with you, reader? Have you stolen property in your possession?

Many will ask the question,

“Who was Melchizedek?”

The best answer that we can give is that he was...

Genesis 14

¹⁸ ...king of Salem,...and...priest of the most high God.

Our information does not go beyond this. That he was a type of Christ is stated in *Psalms* and in *Hebrews*. Christ is a high priest,

Psalms 110 [Hebrews 5:10; 6:20, etc]

⁴ ...after the order of Melchizedek.

He combines the kingly and the priestly office in one person. And since Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek, the type of Christ, surely the children of Abraham ought to pay tithe to Christ, the great high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

25. God's Promise to Abraham

Present Truth, August 1, 1901

Genesis 15:1-18

E. J. Waggoner

OUR last lesson left us with Lot separated from Abraham, and on his way to Sodom. Although the nephew of Abraham improved his worldly condition by his new move, he was very soon in a position where he owed all that he had, and possibly his own life, to his generous uncle.

The king of Sodom rebelled against the powerful King Chedorlaomer, to whom he had become subject, and the latter, with his confederate kings, came against the king of Sodom and the other kings of the plain, and reconquered them.

Genesis 14

¹¹ And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

¹² And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

News of this was brought to Abraham, who took three hundred and eighteen of his own servants, with some chiefs who were friendly to him, and pursued the victorious army. Coming upon it at night, he scattered it, and recaptured all the prisoners and the property.

This encounter might well give Abraham some uneasiness, for he could scarcely expect anything else than that the hosts of the East would return in stronger force, and give him trouble. But God did not forsake Abraham, but appeared to him in a vision, saying,

Genesis 15

¹ Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward.

God Our Defense and Reward

We have all things in having the Lord himself, He is our righteousness, our strength, our light, our reward, and our salvation. He does not merely impart strength, righteousness and salvation to us, but He himself is all that to us. So He is our reward. Having Him, we need nothing more. The psalmist says:

Psalm 73

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.

Or, as the Norwegian has it:

“When I have You, I have no desire for anything on earth.”

There is nothing also that one can desire; for since...

Colossians 1 [RV]

¹⁷ ...in Him all things consist,

—that which is not in Him cannot continue. Note here that God never promises or gives anything to His people separate from himself. The land that He promised to Abraham could be inherited by him and his seed only as they were in Christ; and the countless seed of Abraham are only those who are Christ's.

Galatians 3

²⁹ And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Those who have not God as their strength, their life, their salvation,—who are not satisfied with Him as their portion, can never have any part in the inheritance promised to Abraham.

Abraham's Descendants Not To Be Servants

Abraham evidently understood what God meant, but he could see no other way for the inheritance to come than

through his servant Eliezer. He said,

Genesis 15

² What will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

³ And Abram said, Behold, to me, You have given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is my heir.

Verse 2 is thus given in the *Revision*:

“He that shall be possessor of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus.”

But it was not God’s purpose that the seed of Abraham should be a race of servants. So the Lord said to him:

⁴ This shall not be your heir; but he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be your heir.

⁵ And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now, toward heaven, and tell the stars if you be able to number them; and He said unto him, So shall your seed be.

⁶ And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.

The Faith that is Righteousness

Why should Abraham’s simple belief in the promise that he should have a posterity as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea be counted to him for righteousness? Only because it was righteousness; for we may be sure that God does not play at a thing, calling it so when it is not so.

Romans 10

¹⁰ With the heart man believes unto righteousness.

Read the context, and see that the thing which the heart believes unto righteousness is that Christ, the Word, is very nigh, even in the mouth and in the heart. Now remember that Abraham “believed in the Lord.” He believed in Christ revealed in his flesh, and that from the life at Christ all this would be wrought.

2 Corinthians 1 [RV]

²⁰ For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yes; wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us.

So we see that the promise to Abraham was in Christ, and Abraham saw Christ in it. It was the Gospel to Abraham. It was no half-way Gospel, dimly get forth, but the complete Gospel of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read that Abraham...

Romans 4

²⁰ ...staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief,

–although the vastness of the promise to a man in his circumstances was enough to stagger one; but he was...

²¹ ...fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able to perform.

²² And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

²⁴ But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

²⁵ Who was delivered for offenses, and was raised again for justification.

What Abraham Believed

That which Abraham believed in, was the offering of Christ for sin, and His resurrection for our justification. That is, he believed that Christ was already crucified,

Revelation 13

⁸ ...from the foundation of the world,

–and that He had come in his flesh with His resurrection life. He believed in and experienced the power of the resurrection; and he knew that God, who could make a new man of him, could make millions more.

More than this, he saw Christ revealed to all the world in

his flesh, recognized as descended from him according to the flesh, and he knew that the power that could perform this is the Divine power that gives to us...

2 Peter 1

³ ...all things that pertain unto life and godliness.

So God indicated to Abraham, and through Abraham to us, that his seed is to be composed only of those who, through Christ, are free from sin.

A Covenant Confirmed by Death

Then God made a covenant with Abraham. The Hebrew idiom expressing, to make a covenant, is, “cut a covenant.” It always implies the shedding of blood. The covenant was based on the life of God, the shed blood of Christ. In the deep sleep that fell on Abraham, in which...

Genesis 15

¹² ...a horror of great darkness fell on him,

—God said to him:

¹³ Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

¹⁴ And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterwards shall they come out with great substance.

¹⁵ And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.

¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

What does this tell us? In the first place it confirms the statement that the faith which was counted to Abraham for righteousness was faith in the resurrection; for he was plainly told that he should die without inheriting the land. Not only so, but none of his posterity could have any inheritance in the land of Canaan until after four hundred years.

Acts 7

⁵ He gave him no inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.

Abraham died in faith, not having received the promised inheritance. It is evident that he never looked for a possession in the land except by means of and after the resurrection of the just. The covenant taught Abraham not only that death could not break it, but also that death—the death of Christ, and his death with Christ—was the very means by which it would be established.

When the Land Was To Be Possessed

Another thing that we learn from the verses quoted is that Abraham's seed were to return to the land "in the fourth generation," after four hundred years of sojourning and oppression. That is, they were to inherit the land at that time. There would then be nothing in the way of their possessing the country, for the iniquity of the Amorites would be full.

But the children inherit from the father, not the father from the children. The seed cannot enter into the inheritance of the father before the father himself possesses it. Therefore since there was a definite promise that Abraham's seed should inherit the land of Canaan after four hundred years, it follows that this was the time appointed for the resurrection. If the children of Israel had not failed, because of unbelief, to possess the land, the resurrection of all the righteous dead would have taken place at the time of the Exode.

Giving the Heathen a Chance

Again, we learn that God will not cut off the heathen, as long as there is any hope that they will accept the Gospel. He would not allow the Israelites to dispossess the Canaanites of their land until the Canaanites had sinned so grievously that

the land could not hold them. And in the meantime there was salvation for any of them who would accept a place among the people of God, as demonstrated by the case of Rahab.

This truth shows the fallacy and the blasphemy of the doctrine of a future probation—a probation after death. It is not necessary, because God has given all men “a chance” ever since the creation, “so that they are without excuse” if they have not repented.⁴⁹ And to claim that a future probation is necessary, is blasphemous because it charges God with trifling with men, and not dealing in the same way with all.

Canaan to be Possessed Only by the Righteous

Still further: from the passage in *Genesis* we learn that the land of Canaan could be possessed according to God’s promise only by righteous people. The Canaanites were cast out because their cup of iniquity became filled up. The Israelites who came out of Egypt could not enter because of unbelief. Therefore those who did enter did not hold the possession, because they did not keep the faith; and they were at last carried far away into captivity because of their sins.

The promise was of land for an everlasting possession; not that it should pass from one generation to another, but both Abraham and all his seed were to possess the land for ever. But an everlasting possession means an everlasting life in which to possess it; and everlasting life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore it follows that all talk about the fulfillment of the promise by the emigration of the Jews to Palestine is not only absurd, but is a denial of the Gospel.

The promise is to us, if we have the faith of Abraham. Christ is now in the heavens until the time of restoration of all things; and in the meantime He comes to us by the Spirit, in the power of His resurrection, to bless us, in turning us away

⁴⁹ *Romans* 1:18-21.

from our iniquities, so that we may share the inheritance with Abraham when He appears in glory.

Hebrews 4

¹ Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

Proverbs 2

²¹ The upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it.

26. Promises to Abraham – Continued

Signs of the Times, April 9, 1885

Lesson for the Pacific Coast – May 9

Genesis 17:1-8

E. J. Waggoner

1. Repeat the promise made to Abraham after Lot had separated from him.
2. Where is this promise found?
3. What did this promise embrace?

Romans 4

¹³ For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

4. How great a posterity did the Lord say Abraham should have?

Genesis 13

¹⁶ And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered.

5. On another occasion, what did the Lord say of his posterity?

Genesis 15

⁵ And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall your seed be.

6. Had Abraham at this time any children?

² And Abram said, Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

7. How did he regard this promise from the Lord?

Genesis 15

⁶ And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for

righteousness.

8. How did the Lord regard Abram's belief?

Ibid.

9. How old was Abram when the Lord next appeared to him?

Genesis 17

¹ And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect.

10. What part of the promise did the Lord at this time renew?

² And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.

⁶ And I will make you exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you.

11. What name did the Lord at this time give him as a continual reminder of this promise?

⁵ Neither shall your name any more be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made you.

12. What is the meaning of "Abraham"?

Genesis 17 [margin]

⁵ ...father of a great multitude.

13. What did the Lord at this time say He would give to Abraham and his seed?

⁸ And I will give unto you, and to your seed after you, the land wherein you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

14. How long did the Lord say they should possess this land?

⁸ ...an everlasting possession.

15. And how much land have we learned that they were to have?

Romans 4

¹³ For the promise, that he should be the heir of *the world*...

16. On what condition was this promise given?

Genesis 17

¹ And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect.

17. Then to what other promise is this equivalent?

Psalms 37

¹¹ But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Notes

The promise made to Abraham after Lot separated from him, will be found in *Genesis* 13:14-17. It will be remembered that the promise embraced a grant of land, and this land, we learned (*Romans* 4:13), was the whole earth.

In *Genesis* 17:1-8, we have the same thing repeated. At that time the Lord gave him his name, "Abraham," meaning, "a multitude of nations," or a "father of many nations." This would serve to continually keep in mind the promise that his seed should be as the dust of the earth, and as the stars of heaven.

God also at this time repeated the statement that he would give the land (the earth) to Abraham and his seed for an "everlasting possession." As noted in our last lesson, this promise was on condition that Abraham should walk perfectly before the Lord. Since a meek person is a follower of Christ, and therefore perfect, it follows that this promise is equivalent to that already learned in *Psalms* 37:11.

27. Abraham's Plea for Sodom

Signs of the Times, March 9, 1888

Genesis 18:1-32

E. J. Waggoner

1. Who came to Abraham while he lived in Mamre?

Genesis 18

¹ And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre; and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

² And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground.

2. Who were these men?

²² And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

Genesis 19

¹ And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

3. Did Abraham recognize the Lord as one of the three men?
4. How did Abraham show his hospitality?

Genesis 18

³ And said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, pass not away, I pray you, from your servant:

⁴ Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

⁵ And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort you your hearts; after that you shall pass on: for therefore are you come to your servant. And they said, So do, as you have said.

⁶ And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.

⁷ And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hastened to dress it.

⁸ And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

5. What exhortation based upon this occurrence is given to us?

Hebrews 13

² Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

6. When the men rose to go, what did Abraham do?

Genesis 18

¹⁶ And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.

7. What did the Lord say?

¹⁷ And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

¹⁸ Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

8. Why did the Lord honor Abraham in this manner?

¹⁹ For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him.

9. What did the Lord say of Sodom and Gomorrah?

²⁰ And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous.

10. What did Abraham say to the Lord?

²¹ I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

²² And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

²³ And Abraham drew near, and said, Will You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

²⁴ Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; will You also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

²⁵ That be far from You to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from You; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

11. What reply did the Lord make?

²⁶ And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

12. In what spirit did Abraham continue his plea?

²⁷ And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.

13. What was the second request, and the reply?

²⁸ Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: will you destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

14. What concession did the Lord still further make in answer to Abraham's earnest prayer?

²⁹ And he spoke unto Him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And He said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

15. How did Abraham still further pray, and what was the result?

³⁰ And he said unto Him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And He said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

16. For what still smaller number did the Lord say He would spare Sodom?

³¹ And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak

unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

17. Finally, how many righteous persons did the Lord say would save Sodom?

³² And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

18. In this simple narrative, what scripture do we see fulfilled?

James 5

¹⁶ The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

19. Cite some notable instances where wicked men's lives were spared on account of a righteous man.

Acts 27

²¹ But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, you should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

²² And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

²³ For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

²⁴ Saying, Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you.

²⁵ Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

Job 42

⁷ And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against you, and against your two friends: for you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job has.

⁸ Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that you

have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job.

20. What relation do the righteous sustain to the people of the earth?

Matthew 5

¹³ You are the salt of the earth.

21. Will the presence of righteous men always be sufficient to save the wicked from merited punishment?

Ezekiel 14

¹⁹ Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast:

²⁰ Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

22. What is the only safe place for people to occupy?

Psalms 91

¹ He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

² I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in Him will I trust.

³ Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

⁴ He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

Notes

We cannot always judge people by their appearance. In fact, judging from the appearance is about the most unsafe thing a person can do. Those three men who came to Abraham were no doubt very ordinary looking. Very likely they looked heated and dusty. Nevertheless two of them were angels, and one was the Lord himself. What a lesson for us, and how

forcible are the words of the apostle:

Hebrews 13

² Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

How many people are there who would invite the Saviour into their houses if He passed by just as He used to walk along the dusty roads of Judea and Galilee? Isaiah said that there was no beauty in Him that He should be desired. When we think of all the circumstances of the case, we shall be less likely to justify ourselves by condemning the ancient Jews for not accepting Christ. Their conduct was inexcusable; but would we have done any better?

It may not be amiss in connection with this incident in Abraham's life, to speak of the ancient practice of feet washing. Many people claim that in washing his disciples' feet, as recorded in *John* 13:1-17, the Lord was simply impressing on them the importance of hospitality, and that he did a thing that was very common in those times. Christ's own statement to Peter,

John 13

⁷ What I do you know not now,

—and also the simple fact that it was a thing absolutely unknown for a host to wash the feet of a guest, ought to be sufficient to disprove this; Abraham was the prince of hospitable men; but he said to the men:

Genesis 18

⁴ Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

They were to wash their own feet, just as they were to rest themselves. No principle of hospitality or courtesy required one man to wash another's feet; but Christian fellowship does require just that, and not only that, but all the service one for another that may be implied by it.

Another lesson that ought not to be lost sight of may be learned from Abraham's prayer for Sodom.

- First, Abraham asked for just what he wanted, and
- Second, he was importunate. He gained confidence as he proceeded.

There is altogether too much formality in prayer. By this we do not wish to be understood as favoring in the slightest degree that familiar style of speech that is becoming common, with a certain class, and which cannot fail to shock a reverent person. Prayer should be uttered just as one cannot help uttering it if he realizes the greatness of the One whom he is addressing; but still the petitions should be such as would be made to a father.

A great deal of the formality in prayer is due to the fact that people don't expect to have their prayers answered. In fact, all the formality in prayers comes from that source. The people who have the most faith will be the most careful in their petitions.

28. Abraham Pleading for Sodom

Signs of the Times, February 3, 1887

Notes on the International Lesson, February 20

Genesis 18:23-33

A. T. Jones

THE time had come when Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, had filled up the measure of their iniquity, and like the inhabitants of Canaan afterward, and the antediluvians before, the earth could bear them, and the justice of God could spare them, no longer.

Yet they, as all others, were called, and were given an opportunity to escape the impending ruin. The Lord kept it not a secret from Abraham, and sent Lot to call whoever he could induce to escape. The responsibility for every wicked man's destruction is upon himself; God calls all, and will save all who will give him the opportunity.

Genesis 18

¹⁷ Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?

Amos 3

⁷ Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets.

And Abraham was a prophet.

Genesis 20

⁷ Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for you, and you shall live: and if you restore her not, know you that you shall surely die, you, and all that are yours.

He was God's trusted servant, and the Lord would not destroy that city, so fearfully wicked as it was, without telling Abraham; He would not bring the flood without telling Noah; He would not give up Israel without sending them prophets in abundance; He did not at the last destroy Judah till, in addition to all the prophets, He had sent them His own Son, who,

as He beheld the city in her stubbornness of spiritual pride, burst into weeping, exclaiming,

Matthew 23

³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!

Luke 19

⁴² If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace! but now they are hid from your eyes.

⁴³ For the days shall come upon you, that your enemies shall cast a trench about you, and compass you round, and keep you in on every side,

⁴⁴ And shall lay you even with the ground, and your children within you; and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another; because you knew not the time of your visitation.

That has been and is the trouble with all, they know not the time of their visitation.

- The people upon whom the flood came knew not the time of their visitation;
- The cities of the plain knew not the time of their visitation; nor Jerusalem.
- Felix knew not the time of his visitation, although he trembled at the message of God.
- Agrippa knew not the time of his visitation, although, by the earnest words of Paul, he was almost persuaded to be a Christian.
- Nero knew not the time of his visitation, though God called him twice.

It is a fearful thing to be so dulled by the influences of sin that we cannot perceive the gracious visitation of the love of God.

Hebrews 3

¹⁵ Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.

2 Corinthians 6

² Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

¹ We...beseech you that you receive not the grace of God in vain.

Ten righteous people would have saved Sodom and the cities of the plain! No community knows, no city knows, no nation knows, the world itself does not know, what it owes to the few humble, pious people of God. They who fear God and walk in the steps of Christ are the salt of the earth. It is they who preserve from destruction the vast multitude of the wicked; they are the light of the world, and God still bears with the wicked in patient waiting that they may in that light see His goodness and glorify Him in the day of visitation.

The long-suffering of God is salvation. It is the history of the human race illustrated over and over, that as long as there is any possibility of getting any good out of a nation or a people, so long God suffers them to remain, though there be iniquity in them. But when all hope of good is gone, then that people is given over, as were those in the lesson today. Sodom and Gomorrah are made an example to all who live ungodly.

2 Peter 2

⁶ And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.

But in this lesson on Sodom, there is a special lesson for all who live today. It is a lesson of the greatest importance. Jesus said,

Luke 17

²⁸ As it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;

²⁹ But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire

and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

³⁰ Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

The announcement is now being made throughout the land and to the ends of the earth, that the time is at hand when the Son of man will be revealed in a glory that will cover the heavens. Accompanying the announcement is a message of God which will make ready a people prepared for the Lord. If the message is heeded by you, you may be among that people. That message is the Third Angel's Message:

Revelation 14

⁹ If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation...

¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

And that which follows closely upon the message is the coming of the Lord. God,

¹⁴ I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

¹⁶ And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

Thousands of people will study the lesson of Sodom today, and will wonder why they and those others listened not to the call of God, and knew not the time of their visitation; and yet will reject the message of God today, and will not now know the time of their visitation.

It is easy enough now to believe that the flood, or this destruction of Sodom, came and destroyed all but those who believed and escaped. It is easy enough now to express surprise at the people there for not believing the message of God. It is

easy enough now to do all this, and at the same time do exactly as they did in rejecting the message of God in our day, as they did in theirs.

God has now in the earth a message of warning, of entreaty, and of salvation, as really as he had in the days of Noah or of Lot. It must be believed and heeded as really if we would escape a destruction as real as was then. While the world stands, Paul's words to the men of Antioch are ever apt:

Acts 13

⁴⁰ Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish:

⁴¹ For I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

29. The Revealer of Secret Things

Present Truth, August 8, 1901

Genesis 18:16-33

E. J. Waggoner

WHOWER reads the Old Testament thoughtfully cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that the people who knew the Lord in the days of which it tells, lived on very intimate terms with Him. It could really be said of them that they knew Him. They did not merely know *of Him*, but they were personally acquainted *with Him*.

Simple Living Gives Clear Vision

If you ask for the reason for this familiarity with God, you will find it in this, that the lives of the people in those days were more simple than the lives of people now. They did not live in so great a rush. They did not have so many artificial wants to be supplied. There were not so many inventions as there are now, to make living complex. For it should not be overlooked, that what are called “modern conveniences” have greatly increased the trouble of living.

People often wonder how our forefathers managed to live without the “improvements” that we have. The truth is that they lived much better and more happily than the most of their descendants. Many inventions have now made wants that then were unknown, and people were then, as a general thing, more satisfied and contented. They lived peaceful lives, and had time to think. They did not have so many books, but they studied the vast book in which God is revealed, and He was to them a personal Being, and not an article in the creed.

Abraham's Intimacy with God

Nowhere is the intimacy that existed between God and men more strikingly apparent than in the history recorded in the 18th chapter of *Genesis*. The Lord himself, accompanied by two angels, visited Abraham in visible form, enjoyed his hospital-

ity, and talked familiarly with him.

When Abraham first saw them he could not recognize in them anything more than ordinary travelers, and such he received them. Yet when he learned, as he soon did by their conversation, that his guests were heavenly beings, it does not seem to have made any difference with him. He did not become embarrassed, and begin to apologize. There was the same free yet dignified hospitality. One would think that he had been accustomed to meet and talk with heavenly messengers every day, and so he had. He was acquainted with the Lord, and to see Him face to face did not throw him out of balance.

How to Treat Our Fellow-Men

There is one thing that we must not forget in reading this narrative, and that is the instruction it gives us as to how to treat our fellow-men. Abraham treated the Lord and His angels just as if they were really ordinary men, because he was accustomed to treat mere men as courteously as if they had been the Lord. He did not have two sets of manners; his best were for everyday use; and when the Lord came to visit him, he could not do any better than he was in the habit of doing. This is true courtesy, true hospitality. It is the courtesy that comes from daily association with the inhabitants of the court of the King of kings.

God Cannot Keep Aloof From Men

When Abraham's guests started away, he accompanied them a little distance. Then the Lord said,

Genesis 18

¹⁷ Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

¹⁸ Seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

That is to say,

“How can I keep a secret from Abraham?”

That is the language of one with regard to another, whose friendship he values; and this was the case. The Lord loves the society of men, and has chosen them for His intimate companions. He cannot hold himself aloof from them. It is wonderfully helpful and encouraging to know that it is not mere pity, that prompts God to seek to save us. It is not merely because He has compassion on us in our fallen condition, but because He loves us. His love for us, and His desire for our companionship, leads Him to search us out. How greatly He longs for us may be learned from the sacrifices He makes to obtain us.

The Lord thought so much of Abraham, that He could not keep anything secret from him; but Abraham is not the only one so favored.

Psalm 25

¹⁴ The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant.

Jesus says:

John 15

¹⁴ You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you;

—and friends share one another’s secrets. Again Jesus said:

John 5

³⁰ The Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He does.

But Jesus also prayed that His disciples might know that the Father loved them even as He loved Him.

John 17

²³ I in them, and You in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them, as You have loved me.

Therefore we may be sure that God will show us all things

that He does.

Amos 3

⁷ Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets,

–and He reveals His secret to them in order that they may in turn pass it on to whomsoever will hear.

The Joy of the Revelation

Many fail to get the comfort that they should from the statement that there is nothing secret that shall not be revealed, because they do not sufficiently consider the connection. Jesus was sending the disciples out to preach, and in forewarning them of persecutions that they must endure at the hands of wicked men, He added:

Matthew 10

²⁶ Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

²⁷ What I tell you in darkness, that speak in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach upon the housetops.

We see that the hidden things that are to be revealed are the deep things of God, which we in turn are to proclaim to the world.

Daniel 2

²³ He reveals the deep and secret things; He knows what is in darkness, and the light dwells with Him.

God Knows Whom He Can Trust

The best reading of *Genesis* 18:17-18 is,

“Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; *and* Abraham shall surely become a great nation,” etc.

The connecting word is “and,” and not “seeing.” That Abraham should become a great nation comes in incidentally, and not as the reason why the Lord would favor him with His

confidence. The reason for that is found in the next verse:

Genesis 18

¹⁹ For I know him.

That was why the Lord could not keep His plans hidden from Abraham: He knew him; He could trust him. How easy of comprehension the character of God is! We do not trust our secrets with those whom we do not know, but only to those whom we know, and whose loyalty is approved. God knows whom He can trust, and He trusts those whom He knows.

¹⁹ For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him.

What God's Foreknowledge Does For Us

The expression, "I know him," implies more than mere acquaintance. Gesenius renders it:

"I have chosen him, that he may command," etc.

The French of Segond, and the Swedish also have,

"I have chosen him."

That is, the Lord had known, or recognized, Abraham in the multitude as a kindred spirit, and had singled him out. He knew what Abraham would do, and He had chosen him to do that very thing. The Lord knew Abraham so well that He allowed Abraham to know Him.

In this we have a sidelight on the unnecessarily difficult question of foreknowledge; for it is evident that the saying that God had known, or chosen, Abraham, indicates that He foreknew him. He knew him beforehand. He knew Abraham before Abraham knew Him. He knows us before we can possibly know Him, He knew Cyrus more than a hundred years before he was born, and appointed him to the great work of

his life. He knew Jeremiah, and ordained him to be a prophet, before his birth. So also with Samson, John the Baptist, and, in fact, everybody; only most people will not accept God's foreknowledge, with the position of labor and blessing to which it calls them.

Then let us be glad and rejoice in God's foreknowledge and fore-ordination, for:

Romans 8

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

²⁹ For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

³⁰ Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.

³¹ What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Commandments of Righteousness

God said of Abraham:

Genesis 18

¹⁹ He will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.

He knew that there would be force to Abraham's commands—the force of his own righteous life. He would command, and it would be done. Here we see a likeness to God's commands:

Psalms 33

⁹ He spoke, and it was; He commanded, and it stood fast.

Why? Because His own life was in the word spoken. When men "say, and do not,"⁵⁰ there is no life in their teaching, and it cannot be expected that there will be any results. The scribes

⁵⁰ *Matthew 23:3.*

and Pharisees, as the successors of Moses, taught good precepts; but they did not cause the people to do righteousness, because there was not the power of righteousness in their utterances. When a man has learned to rule himself in righteousness, that is, to submit himself completely to the rule of the Spirit, he can rule others; but there will be nothing of the despotic in his commands.

Parents Saved in the Salvation of Their Children

Genesis 18

¹⁹ They shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him.

Abraham's salvation depended upon his children. This is strikingly suggested in the fact that the promise could be fulfilled to him only through his Seed—Jesus Christ. In that the Lord indicates that the salvation of the fathers depends largely upon their sons.

Isaiah 9

⁶ Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the Government shall be upon His shoulder.

God could not bring upon Abraham that which He had spoken of him, unless he so commanded his children that they kept the way of the Lord. If the father allows his children to go to destruction, there is fear that he will also be destroyed. The Christian must be able to say with Christ:

Isaiah 8

¹⁸ Here am I, and the children whom You have given me.

The last part of the 18th chapter of *Genesis* is taken up with the account of Abraham's intercession for the city of Sodom. It reveals in a striking manner the humble boldness of Abraham. There was no self-assertion, he was most humble and respectful, and yet he pressed his petitions with increasing boldness. Each point gained gave him confidence to press another.

This speaks volumes for the longsuffering kindness of the Lord. He can be pleaded with in behalf of weakness and transgression.

Hebrews 4

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

30. Destruction of Sodom

Signs of the Times, March 16, 1888

Genesis 19:1-26

E. J. Waggoner

1. While Abraham was pleading with the Lord for Sodom, what were the two angels who accompanied him doing?

Genesis 18

²² And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

2. At what time did the angels reach Sodom?

Genesis 19

¹ And there came two angels to Sodom at even;...

3. How did Lot greet them?

¹ ...and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

4. What trait had Lot in common with Abraham?

Hospitality.

5. How did he exhibit it?

² And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and you shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

³ And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

6. What place of honor did Lot occupy in the city of Sodom?

¹ ...and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom.

7. Cite other instances that indicate that those who sat in the gate occupied an office of public trust.

Daniel 2

⁴⁹ Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

Esther 2

¹⁹ And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate.

²¹ In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

²² And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name.

Esther 3

² And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

³ Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why do you transgress the king's commandment?

Proverbs 24

⁷ Wisdom is too high for a fool: he opens not his mouth in the gate.

Proverbs 31

²³ Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.

Lamentations 5

¹⁴ The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music.

8. What words of the Sodomites corroborate this?

Genesis 19

⁹ And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with you, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break

the door.

9. Did Lot participate in the wickedness of the Sodomites?

2 Peter 2

⁶ And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

⁷ And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

⁸ For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.

10. What was the crying sin of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Jude

⁷ Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

11. What marked contrast was there between the hospitality of Lot and the actions of the men of Sodom?

Genesis 19

⁴ But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

⁵ And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to you this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

⁶ And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

⁷ And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

12. What did the angels say to Lot?

¹² And the men said unto Lot, Have you here any besides? son in law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whatsoever you have in the city, bring them out of this place:

¹³ For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord has

sent us to destroy it.

13. What did Lot do?

¹⁴ And Lot went out, and spoke unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city...

14. How did his sons-in-law regard his appeal?

¹⁴ ...But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

15. What did the angels say as soon as it was morning?

¹⁵ And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take your wife, and your two daughters, which are here; lest you be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

16. What steps did they take to hasten Lot and his family?

¹⁶ And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

17. What earnest charge did the angels give them?

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for your life; look not behind you, neither stay in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.

18. As soon as Lot had escaped, what did the Lord do?

²³ The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

²⁴ Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;

²⁵ And He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

19. What happened to his wife because she disregarded the command of the angels?

²⁶ But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

20. What warning is given to us, in view of such facts as this?

Hebrews 2

¹ Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

² For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

³ How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.

21. What did Jesus say of the condition of the world just before his second coming?

Luke 17

²⁸ Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;

²⁹ But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

³⁰ Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

22. What will he do when he is revealed?

2 Thessalonians 1

⁷ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

⁹ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.

23. Of what was the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah an example?

Jude

⁶ And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains

under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

⁷ Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

24. What charge is given to us who are living in these last days?

Luke 21

³⁴ And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

³⁵ For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

³⁶ Watch therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

25. What warning is given us?

Luke 17

³¹ In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

³² Remember Lot's wife.

Eternal Fire

The student may also notice that the fire which doomed the cities of the plain is called “eternal fire.”⁵¹ Yet it is not now burning. Then when the wicked, at the last day, shall be driven away into “everlasting fire,”⁵² we need not conclude that the fire will never cease to burn.

But must it not continue to burn forever, if it is not quenched? Not by any means. The fire that consumed Sodom and Gomorrah was not quenched, and as a consequence it turned them into ashes. If it had been quenched, they would

⁵¹ *Jude* 7.

⁵² *Matthew* 25:11.

not have been turned completely to ashes, but some ruins would have been left standing. Well, we read that the wicked shall be burned up root and branch,⁵³ and that...

Malachi 4

³ ...they shall be ashes.

Now when a thing has been reduced to ashes what becomes of the fire that did the work? It goes out for lack of combustible material to feed upon. So it was with the “eternal fire” that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah: so it will be with the “everlasting fire” that shall destroy those who are found wicked at the last day; and from that fire will come forth the renewed earth, purified from the curse, and restored to its Eden beauty.

⁵³ *Malachi 4:1.*

31. The Destruction of Sodom

Signs of the Times, February 10, 1887

Notes on the International Lesson, February 27

Genesis 19:3-25

A. T. Jones

WHEN Abraham had reduced to ten the number in whose behalf he would plead with the Lord to spare Sodom, and the Lord had said He would not destroy it for ten's sake, Abraham ceased to plead any further. It has been supposed that ten was just the number of Lot's family and connections. And this seems probable from close attention to the narrative.

We find Lot and his wife, and his two daughters that escaped, making four. Then we read of..

Genesis 19

¹⁴ ...his sons-in-law, which married his daughters,

—and that these daughters were two, which seems to be implied in the words of the angels to Lot,

¹⁵ Arise, take your wife, and your two daughters, which are here.

This would seem to imply that there were two daughters who were not there. Then besides these we read of his “sons” (verse 12), which would require at least two. Thus we have Lot and his wife, and his two daughters unmarried, two sons, and his two daughters and their husbands, his sons-in-law, making just ten.

It is, therefore, most probable that when Abraham ceased pleading at the number ten, he had in view Lot and his whole family. And when the Lord agreed that if these were righteous, the city should stand, it seems that Abraham considered that sufficient, for if these should not be found righteous, it would be unreasonable to ask anything more.

Genesis 18

³³ And the Lord went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

The two angels that had departed from Abraham and the Lord went on toward Sodom, and came to Sodom at evening. Lot, sitting at the gate of the city, arose to meet them and invited them into his house to stay overnight. The angels proposed to stay in the street all night, but Lot, not knowing but that they were only men, and knowing the dreadful wickedness of the place,

Genesis 19

³ ...pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

The men of Sodom, however, knew of their coming, and before very long a great crowd gathered from every quarter and surrounded the house, demanding that the angels whom they thought men, should be delivered up to them. Lot attempted to remonstrate with them, but it only made them worse and they attempted to break the door. Then the angels drew Lot into the house and shut the door, and smote the mob with blindness,

Genesis 19

¹¹ ...both small and great; so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

Then the angels made known to Lot who they were, and said to him:

¹² Have you here any besides? son-in-law, and your sons and your daughters, and whatsoever you have in the city, bring them out of this place:

¹³ For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.

¹⁴ And Lot went out, and spoke unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.

¹⁵ And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take your wife, and your two daughters, which are here; lest you be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

¹⁶ And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for your life; look not behind you, neither stay in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.

Here the personal pronoun changes from “they” to “he,” and from “we” to “I,” showing that the Lord, with whom Abraham had talked, had come to Sodom, and that he was the One in whose power the destruction lay. Lot pleaded to be allowed to stop in the little city—Zoar—and the Lord granted that, and...

²³ The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

²⁴ Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;

²⁵ And He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

Luke 17

²⁸ As it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;

²⁹ But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

³⁰ Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

The people of those cities arose that bright, beautiful morning, as they had arisen morning by morning, year after year,

always. One went about this business, another that; one to his merchandise, another to his building; one to his eating and drinking, another to his planting. To them all things were as they always had been. They knew of nothing unusual that was about to occur; and, worse than that, they would not be convinced that there was.

When Lot spoke to them of the destruction that hung over the place, to them it was only foolish mockery. And when they saw Lot and his two daughters—and his wife as far as she went—running swiftly across the plain, we have no doubt but they sent after them many a ribald shout. They knew nothing, they believed nothing, they feared nothing, of any destruction coming. But it came. Their unbelief did not delay it a moment, nor did it temper the terror when it came.

Luke 17

³⁰ Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

The Lord sends a message to the world that He is coming again. He gives line upon line, precept upon precept, prophecy upon prophecy, and sign upon sign, that His coming is at the doors, and that men must be ready to meet Him in peace without spot and blameless.

But His messengers are despised, His word is slighted, and all His tokens are set at naught. Men will not believe that He is coming. To them all things go on as usual, and as they always have gone. But one of these days will be the last, as it was with Sodom.

Christ has declared that the end of the world shall be. He points to a certain generation and says that that generation shall not pass away before He himself appears. And in that generation He will appear as surely as destruction came upon Sodom. Men may not believe it, as those of Sodom did not; these may treat the message as mockery, as did those; these may scoff at the messengers, as did those; but none of these

things will nullify the promise of Christ, nor delay His coming, nor deliver those who are not prepared to meet Him when He does come.

When now in preparing to meet the Lord, men separate themselves from the world and from everything in the world, they will be counted as foolish as was Lot when he left Sodom and hurried across the plain. But there those who left all were the ones who escaped, while those who remained to scoff remained to perish.

Luke 17

³⁰ Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

Micah 2

¹⁰ Arise, and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.

And as you depart,

Luke 17

³² Remember Lot's wife.

32. The Test of Faith (1888)

Signs of the Times, March 23, 1888

Genesis 22:1-18

E. J. Waggoner

1. What was the character of Abraham?

Genesis 26

⁵ Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

2. Were his early associations favorable to the formation of such a character?

Joshua 24

² And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods.

3. For what reason was Abraham counted righteous?

Romans 4

³ For what says the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4. What will true faith do?

Galatians 5

⁶ For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love.

1 John 5

⁴ For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

5. What did the Lord do to test Abraham's faith?

Genesis 22

¹ And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Behold, here I am.

² And He said, Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and get into the land of Moriah; and offer

him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of.

6. How did Abraham obey?

Genesis 22

³ And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

7. How long did they travel before they came to the place?

⁴ Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

8. What did Isaac say to his father as they were going together to the place of sacrifice?

⁷ And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here I am, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

9. What was Abraham's reply?

⁸ And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

10. When they came to the place what did Abraham do?

⁹ And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

11. How far did he proceed toward slaying Isaac?

¹⁰ And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

12. How was he prevented from completing the sacrifice?

¹¹ And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here I am.

¹² And He said, Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do any thing unto him...

13. What did the angel of the Lord say was now proved?

Genesis 22

¹² ...for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.

14. How were Abraham's words, that God would provide himself a lamb, fulfilled?

¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

15. What promise did the Lord make because Abraham had done this?

¹⁵ And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

¹⁶ And said, By myself I have sworn, says the Lord, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son;

¹⁷ That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

¹⁸ And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice.

16. What made this a peculiarly strong test of Abraham's faith?

Isaac was Abraham's only son (*Genesis 22:2*); there was no earthly hope that he could ever have another; and more than all, God had promised that his numerous seed should come through Isaac. *Hebrews 11:17-18*.

17. What did Abraham believe that God was able to do?

Hebrews 11

¹⁹ Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from

the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

18. What did this act prove concerning Abraham's faith?

James 2

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

²² Do you see how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

19. What wonderful title did Abraham thus gain?

²³ And the scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the Friend of God.

20. Who may share this blessing?

Galatians 3

⁹ So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

The question that troubles many people is, How can it be true that:

Romans 3

²⁸ A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,

—and also that:

James 2

²⁴ By works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

This question is answered in the case of Abraham, as cited above. In the first instance he was justified by simple faith, without works. Works could not have entered into that justification. Afterwards when he offered Isaac, he was justified by works, but, let it never be forgotten, that work was the outcome of his faith; it was the evidence of perfected faith. If it had not been for Abraham's faith, he never would have performed that work.

²² Faith wrought with his works.

That is, faith made use of works, to show that it was not dead, but was in active existence. So faith is necessarily first. There cannot be works that will justify, without underlying faith. A man is justified by works, and not by faith only, simply because...

James 2

²⁰ ...faith without works is dead.

And so if he has “faith only,” unaccompanied by works, it is not real faith at all. Yet whatever good works are manifested in a man’s life, must be the result of faith; and thus it is true that:

Romans 1

¹⁷ The just shall live by faith.

33. The Test of Faith (1901)

Present Truth, August 15, 1901

Genesis 22:1-14

E. J. Waggoner

DOUBTLESS everybody who has read the history of Abraham and Isaac has thought that the test that Abraham was called upon to undergo was the severest that could possibly come to any man. Yet, few readers grasp all the details, and comprehend all that was involved in it. Let us briefly rehearse the facts.

Abraham was an old man, as men reckon, when he received the promise from God that he should have a son. He was seventy-five years old, and his wife was sixty-five. They had no child, and, humanly speaking, it was impossible for them to have one. Nevertheless God assured them that it should be as He said—that they should have a son of their own.

But not at once did God fulfill the promise. The promised son was to be His gift, received by faith, and it must be very apparent that it was wholly His gift; and also the faith of Abraham and Sarah must be so strengthened and purified that the deadness of their bodies would not in the least degree diminish their assurance that it would be even as God said.

Accordingly, they had to wait twenty-five years before the birth of Isaac. It was thus that their faith became strong, purged from everything earthly and fleshly, and centered only in Christ.

How different from men's ideas! People talk about faith getting weak through long waiting; and most of the joyous professions of "faith"—statements to the effect that "now I fully believe the Lord"—that one hears come as the result of a gift already received. In their joy over finding their desires fulfilled, people fancy that they have perfect faith in God. But that is not true faith. It is not the faith that comes by hearing

the Word of God, but a manufactured faith. It is of the same nature as that expressed in the remark,

“I’ll believe you when I see you do the thing.”

It is not that kind of faith that justifies and gives peace with God. Abraham believed God when the promise was first made known to him; and, with the exception of one misstep, which resulted from uninstructed faith rather than absence of it, his faith grew stronger as the years of waiting passed. And,

Hebrews 11

¹¹ By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted Him faithful who had promised,

—although she had once laughed at the mention of such a thing. There is a great lesson for us in this; for only those who walk in the steps of our father Abraham can share the promise with him.

John 20

²⁹ Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

At last Isaac, the child of promise and of long expectation was born. The joy of Abraham and Sarah was more than ordinary joy when...

John 16

²¹ ...a man is born into the world;

—for the promise ran,

Genesis 28

¹⁴ In your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed,

—and,

Genesis 21

¹² In Isaac shall your seed be called.

They well know that this meant the Messiah, Jesus, and that on the Seed that was to be born in Isaac’s line depended their

eternal salvation, and that of the whole world. No other person, save Mary of Nazareth, ever had such wondrous reason to rejoice over the birth of a son.

In this joy Abraham and Sarah lived for twenty-five years, until Abraham was one hundred and twenty-five years old, and Sarah one hundred and fifteen. Isaac was twenty-five, in the full vigor of young manhood. Then came the supreme test:

Genesis 22

² Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and get into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of.

Cutting Off the Messiah

From what we have already learned, we know that this meant literally the cutting off of the Messiah. The call tested not merely Abraham's fatherly love, but his faith in God's love, who...

John 3

¹⁶ ...so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

He had believed that God would give him a son, through whom the Messiah should be born, and now he was called on to sacrifice that son, and, seemingly his hope of salvation, since another son was not in the question.

Faith in the Resurrection

But,

Hebrews 11

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

¹⁸ Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed be called:

¹⁹ Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham could offer up his only begotten son, because of his confidence that God had—not would, but had—already offered up His only begotten Son, and that by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, Isaac would be raised from the dead. That is, the Messiah yet to be born of Isaac's line would raise Isaac from the dead in order that He might be born! (Yet in the face of this, men talk about the pre-existence of Christ as though it were a debatable question.)

This was but a test of the faith by which Abraham first received Isaac; for the birth of Isaac was life from the dead. Abraham did not lose sight of the promise that in Isaac his seed should be called, and he knew that the same power that brought Isaac into the world would raise him from the dead.

A Fiery Trial

However, if anybody thinks that Abraham set about the execution of this order with a light heart, let him read the story of Gethsemane. Although Christ knew that He came into the world for the express purpose of giving His life for it, and had repeatedly told His disciples that He should be crucified and should rise again the third day, the night of His betrayal was the trial of His life.

Be sure that Satan whispered all sorts of doubts into Abraham's mind before he set out on his journey to the land of Moriah. It is no sin to be tempted; the sin comes only in yielding to the temptation; and Abraham let all the doubts that Satan could suggest be swallowed up in the promise of God.

A Type of Christ

Isaac was a type of Christ. In him we see all the particulars of Christ's birth, life, and death pictured out.

- He was born of the Spirit, contrary to nature, as men

understand it.

- On him rested the salvation of the world, because of the promise of God; and
- In his cutting off it looked to human understanding as though all hope was lost, even as to the disciples it seemed that everything perished when Christ was laid in the tomb. Yet that very cutting off was what was to beget a living hope in thousands; and so the offering of Isaac assured salvation, since it was the crowning act of faith, by which we are saved.
- Christ carried the cross on which He was to be offered, and Isaac carried the wood for the altar on which he was to be offered.
- Christ offered himself voluntarily, although sent by the Father; and Isaac likewise meekly yielded himself to death; for he was young and strong, and his aged father could not have bound him to the altar without his consent.

The Climax of Faith

Genesis 22

⁴ And on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

⁵ And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

Here we have the climax of faith. In those two verses we read *Hebrews* 11:17-19, which have already been quoted. Abraham knew that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, and he expected that it would be done at once, so that they would come back together. For notice that his words to the young men were that they would both go to worship, and that both would return to them. There was no trace of doubt in this faith.

We do not need to follow the history farther, for we well

know the result. Now that Abraham had showed that his faith was perfect,⁵⁴ and that he believed the simple word of God, that word was confirmed by an oath. Thus we see that the strongest assurances come as the result of faith, instead of faith depending on the fulfillment of something. Faith itself is...

Hebrews 11

² ...the evidence of things not seen.

It was for our sakes that God confirmed the promise by an oath. Abraham did not need it; but in order that we who flee to Christ for refuge might have strong consolation,⁵⁵ God gives us even stronger assurances than He did Abraham.

The Friend of God

James 2

²⁸ And he was called the friend of God.

That test brought Abraham and God very near together. They were bound together by mutual suffering and mutual sacrifice. In offering up his only begotten son, Abraham entered fully into the experience of God in offering up His only begotten Son. Abraham became the special friend of God, not because of any partiality on the part of God, but because no one who had not passed through that experience could possibly be so closely bound to Him. True friendship is not a matter of fancy, but the communion of souls that are bound together by a peculiar experience common to both, and by mutual understanding.

The honor of being friends of God may be ours as well as Abraham's, and we may each be received into as close fellowship, if we are willing to share His sacrifice and suffering.

1 Peter 4

¹² Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial

⁵⁴ See *James* 2:22.

⁵⁵ See *Hebrews* 6:18.

which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

¹³ But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy.

34. Promises to Abraham – Continued

Signs of the Times, April 16, 1885

Lesson for the Pacific Coast (May 16)

Genesis 22:16-18

E. J. Waggoner

1. After Abraham had obeyed the command to offer up Isaac, what did the Lord swear to do?

Genesis 22

¹⁶ By myself have I sworn, says the Lord, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son:

¹⁷ That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

¹⁸ And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice.

2. How numerous did he say Abraham's seed should be? Ib.
3. Where have we found similar expressions?

Genesis 13

¹⁶ And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered.

Genesis 15

⁵ And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall your seed be.

4. What did the Lord say that Abraham's seed should possess?

Genesis 22

¹⁷ ...your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

5. What is indicated by the statement that his "seed shall possess the gate of his enemies"?

6. Then with what other scriptures already learned, is this parallel?

Genesis 12

³ And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you; and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 13

¹⁵ For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed forever.

Romans 4

¹³ For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

7. What further shows that the promise in *Genesis 22:16-18* is the same as those already learned?

Compare *Genesis 22:18* with *Genesis 12:3; 18:18*.

8. Why did the Lord now say that He would do this thing?

Genesis 22

¹⁸ And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice.

9. And what have we before found was the condition on which the promise was based?

Genesis 18

¹⁹ For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him.

10. What did Stephen say as to the fulfillment of the promise recorded in *Genesis 13:15; 17:18*?

Acts 7

⁵ And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet

he had no child.

11. What do we know concerning all of God's promises?

2 Peter 3

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

2 Corinthians 1

²⁰ For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

12. Then what must we conclude concerning these promises to Abraham?

Notes

Genesis 22

¹⁷ Your seed shall possess of the gate of his enemies.

Ancient cities, as is well known, were surrounded by walls, and the only means of entrance was by means of gates, which were well guarded. Whoever controlled those gates, controlled the city. If an enemy could gain possession of the gates of a city, they could keep the inhabitants closely confined within, or could admit whomsoever they chose. So to possess the gate of one's enemies would signify supreme rule.

When it was promised that Abraham's seed should "possess the gate of his enemies," we understand that his seed was eventually to occupy all the territory then occupied by those who were antagonistic to him. But this was equivalent to the inheritance of the earth, thus showing that this text is parallel with *Genesis* 12:13; 13:15; *Romans* 4:13, which have already been considered.

Notwithstanding these promises, which were made to Abraham as well as to his seed, Abraham died without seeing their fulfillment. Stephen says that God did not give him enough of

the land to set his foot on, although He promised that He would give him the whole of it. But we know that the Lord is not slack concerning His promises, and that all His promises are yea and amen; they cannot be broken. Every one will be fulfilled to the letter.

This being the case, we must conclude that the Lord did not intend that Abraham should receive the inheritance immediately, but that the promise should be fulfilled to him at some future time. When we read that Abraham “died in faith,”⁵⁶ although he had not received the inheritance, we know that this was the way he understood the Lord. Had Abraham not thus understood the Lord, he would have died discouraged, instead of “in faith.”

⁵⁶ *Hebrews* 11:13.

35. Bartering for the Birthright

Signs of the Times, March 30, 1888

Original title: The Commentary

Genesis 25:20-34

E. J. Waggoner

1. How old was Isaac when he was married?

Genesis 25

²⁰ And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

2. How old was he when his two sons were born?

²⁶ And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel, and his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was threescore years old when she bore them.

3. What were their names?

²⁵ And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.

²⁶ And after that came his brother out,...and his name was called Jacob...

4. What difference was there between them?

²⁷ And the boys grew; and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

5. How did the parents regard them?

²⁸ And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

6. What did Jacob have as Esau came in one day from a hunting trip?

²⁹ And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was fain.

7. What did Esau say to Jacob?

³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray you, with that

same red pottage; for I am faint; therefore was his name called Edom.

8. What did Jacob reply?

Genesis 25

³¹ And Jacob said, Sell me this day your birthright.

9. How did Esau reason concerning the birthright?

³² And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

10. What transaction was thus made by the two brothers?

³³ And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him; and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way; thus Esau despised his birthright.

11. What was the birthright, and what was its importance to anyone?

12. How did Esau regard his birthright?

³⁴ ...thus Esau despised his birthright.

13. How highly did he value it?

He considered it worth no more than a meal of victuals to satisfy present necessity.

14. What language is used concerning Esau for this proceeding?

Hebrews 12

¹⁶ Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

15. How did he afterward feel concerning the blessings of his birthright?

¹⁷ For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

16. Relate, in brief, the circumstances.

Genesis 27:1-40.

17. Was he able to get back the birthright?

Hebrews 12

¹⁷ For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected...

18. Why not?

Because he had deliberately sold it, and could not alter the trade.

19. What is the exhortation given to us in this connection?

¹⁴ Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

¹⁵ Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

¹⁶ Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

¹⁷ For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

20. If we are children of Abraham, what is our birthright?

Romans 4

¹³ For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Colossians 1

¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

1 John 3

¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.

² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet

appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

21. Through what are we made heirs of this inheritance?

Colossians 1

¹³ Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son:

¹⁴ In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

22. What does the Spirit through Paul say of one who despises his heavenly birthright?

Hebrews 10

²⁸ He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

²⁹ Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

23. How may we do this?

2 Timothy 4

¹⁰ For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.

24. What can you say of the condition of one who deliberately barter his interest in the blood of Christ, and his hope of eternal life, for a little present enjoyment?

Hebrews 10

²⁹ Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

³⁰ For we know Him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people.

³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Notes

Esau might have had a share in the promise if he had wanted it. True, Paul says that before the birth of Jacob and Esau, it was said unto Rebekah,

Romans 9

¹² The elder shall serve the younger.

¹³ As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

But this was simply because:

Romans 4

¹⁷ God, who...calls those things which be not as though they were,

—could foresee just what kind of character Esau would develop. God is no respecter of persons, and He does not bestow His favors arbitrarily. Esau was rejected, not simply because he deliberately sold his right to the promised inheritance, but because of the utter lack of faith, which led him to so lightly esteem the promises of God.

The objector will no doubt say that Jacob appears in a worse light than Esau does, and that if God is a respecter of character, and not of persons, Jacob was less entitled to regard than Esau was. But that is a very superficial view of the case.

So far as character is concerned, there is no man that has by nature anything that is worthy of the approbation of God. Even the zealous Paul, whose great aim was...

Acts 24

¹⁶ ...to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men,

—and who could say before the Jewish council,

Acts 23

¹ I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day,

—said that he had suffered the loss of all things that he might win Christ,

Philippians 3

⁹ And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

God respects an upright character, but since there can be no perfect character except...

Galatians 2

¹⁶ ...through the faith of Jesus Christ,

–it is evident that His promises and favor must be extended to the one whose faith gives promise of a growth toward perfection.

So far as the record shows, at the time of which our lesson treats, Esau had naturally the advantage of Jacob; but Esau lacked faith, and Jacob possessed it, and from that time we see a growth for the worse in Esau, and for the better in Jacob. God never showed any approval of Jacob's course in securing the blessing; on the contrary Jacob had to suffer grievously on account of his duplicity; but through the faith that Jacob had, although it was crude and uninstructed, God could work for his complete moral reformation.

Peter shows the work of true faith, when he says to the people of God that they may suffer manifold temptations,

1 Peter 1

⁷ That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

And in that day this will be found to be the case with Jacob. The case of Rahab may be taken as an illustration. James says that Rahab the harlot was justified by works when she had received the messengers and sent them out another way:

James 2

²⁵ Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works,

when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

And Paul says that...

Hebrews 11

³¹ By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

Yet in concealing the spies, for which she received the promise that she should not perish, she deliberately lied.⁵⁷ She was not saved because of her falsehood, but because of her faith that the God of the Israelites was the true God. She acted up to the best light that she had. Among the heathen it was esteemed a virtuous thing to lie, and she knew no better. But her faith brought her into relation with God's people where she could learn the way of truth. Thus we see that...

Romans 1

¹⁷ ...the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, [for,] The just shall live by faith.

Esau is not the only one who has sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. An old pipe, a plug of tobacco, a jug of whiskey, the pleasure party, the card table, and other "good things" of this life have been sufficient to cause many to turn their backs on their heavenly inheritance. Esau said,

Genesis 25

³² Behold, I am at the point to die; and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

Thousands of others when brought face to face with some duty, the performance of which would interfere with their worldly interests, have virtually said the same thing. They have said,

"I know that this is the truth of God, but if I should obey it I couldn't make a living,"

⁵⁷ See *Joshua* 2.

-thus intimating that they did not believe the promises of God would be of any profit to one who should die for them. It is more than probable that many who have accepted the truth, are putting self and selfish pleasures above the service of God, and are thus bartering their birthright. Let such beware lest they complete the sale and then find it too late to repent. And,

1 Corinthians 10

¹² Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

36. Isaac the Peacemaker

Present Truth, August 22, 1901

Genesis 26:12-25

E. J. Waggoner

Matthew 5

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

WHAT is a peacemaker? Most people suppose that it is one who separates people who are fighting, or who acts as mediator between two persons who are quarreling, bringing them into at least outward agreement. A peacemaker is this and much more: it is one who literally makes—manufactures—peace, and who always keeps a stock on hand, so that nobody and nothing can exhaust the supply.

The man who makes peace by being so peaceable that it is impossible for anybody to quarrel with him, is a peacemaker in a far higher sense than is one who merely induces belligerents to cease their outward warfare. It was this sort of peacemaker that Isaac was. Read the story of how he made peace in the land of the Philistines, whither he had gone on account of a famine in the land of Canaan. No apology is necessary for reprinting it.

Genesis 26

¹² Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him.

¹³ And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great:

¹⁴ For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him.

¹⁵ For all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.

¹⁶ And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for you are much mightier than we.

¹⁷ And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the val-

ley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

¹⁸ And Isaac dug again the wells of water, which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

¹⁹ And Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

²⁰ And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek [contention]; because they strove with him.

²¹ And they dug another well, and strove for that also; and he called the name of it Sitnah [hatred].

²² And he removed from thence, and dug another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth [room, or wideness]; and he said, For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

Take in the whole situation, and you have a most striking lesson. Isaac was wealthy and powerful. His father Abraham had so many trained servants in his own household that he could arm them and pursue a victorious army and put it to flight; and Isaac had inherited all his father's wealth and had greatly increased it. The Philistine king himself acknowledged that Isaac was mightier than he; yet at his request that Isaac should leave him, Isaac left without a word. This was the first instance of Isaac's peaceable disposition.

It would have been but natural for Isaac to respond to Abimelech, when the latter said, "Go from us; for you are much mightier than we,"

"Go yourself; I am more powerful than you are, and you cannot help yourself; I have as much right to the country as you have; and shall stay where I please."

That would have been natural; but Isaac was born of the Spirit, and therefore the peace of God reigned in his heart; so to avoid all trouble he quietly went away.

Then the Philistine herdman claimed a well of water which clearly belonged to Isaac. It had formerly belonged to his father, and Isaac's servants had dug it out afresh.

“There,” someone might say, who believes in one's standing up for his rights, “that is just what might have been expected: let people impose on you once, and they will keep on imposing on you; when once they find that you will not resist, they will take everything you have.”

Well, it didn't work that way in the case of Isaac, as the story shows. True, the Philistines did take advantage of Isaac's meekness to seize two valuable pieces of property that belonged to him; but at the last God made room for him, and he really lost nothing; whereas if he had stood on the defensive, some lives might have been lost, and no property on earth is worth as much as one human life.

The second well was dug, and the herdmen strove for it; but Isaac would have no strife, so he quietly went away and dug another. What a marvelous exhibition of meekness! Why was the account written? In order that we might know how all might act; who claim to be heirs of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 4

²⁸ Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

It is said of the Christians immediately after the great Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out so abundantly, and all were filled with it:

Acts 4

³² Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own.

That being the case, it is evident that none of them would have fought or gone to law to recover any property which a covetous person might have seized. Whenever professed

Christians make use of carnal weapons, or go into the courts of earth, in defense of their possessions, they really deny God; they tacitly say that their support is the same as that of the world, and that God does not specially care for His people, but that they must look out for themselves. Oh, how little real Christianity there is in the world!

It is a hard thing for those who have riches, or for those who want to have riches, and who trust in them, to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Isaac had riches; but he held them only under God, and therefore he would not strive for them. The man who does not claim anything that he has as his own, has no occasion or inclination to fight for it.

When at last the Lord had made room for Isaac, he built an altar, and preached in the name of the Lord, just as Abraham had done.

Genesis 26

²⁵ And he built an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord...

What effect do you think his preaching would have had if he had quarreled with the Philistines, even in the most dignified and legal way, for the possession of his property? Do you not see that when Isaac proclaimed the name of the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the heathen readily saw that he believed in the existence of such a Being?

But if Isaac had striven with them, and had insisted on maintaining his “rights,” they would have said,

“If you believe in a God that made heaven and earth, and that still upholds all things by the word of His power, why do you not trust Him to take care of you, and to protect you? you make use of exactly the same methods that we do; what is the difference between you and us?”

How often the name of God is blasphemed among the heathen through the worldly policy and unbelief of professed

Christians! Who will show himself to be a child of God indeed, by keeping the peace of God, which Christ left to all His followers?

37. Jacob's Vow

Signs of the Times, April 6, 1888

Genesis 27 to 28:22

E. J. Waggoner

1. Relate the means by which Jacob secured the blessing.
2. Was this honorable on the part of Jacob?

Genesis 27

³⁵ And he said, Your brother came with subtlety, and has taken away your blessing.

3. What is the meaning of the name "Jacob"?

³⁶ And he said, Is he not rightly named Jacob [margin: "A supplanter"]? for he has supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he has taken away my blessing. And he said, Have you not reserved a blessing for me?

4. How did Esau regard Jacob for his course in securing the birthright?

⁴¹ And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him...

5. What did he purpose to do?

⁴¹ ...and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

6. What did Jacob's mother advise him to do?

⁴² And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, your brother Esau, as touching you, does comfort himself, purposing to kill you.

⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee to Laban my brother to Haran;

⁴⁴ And tarry with him a few days, until your brother's fury turn away;

⁴⁵ Until your brother's anger turn away from you, and he forget that which you have done to him: then I will send, and

fetch you from thence; why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?

7. Into how many years did the “few days” expand?

More than twenty.

8. What sort of a sleeping-place did Jacob have one night on his journey?

Genesis 28

¹⁰ And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.

¹¹ And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

9. What dream did he have there?

¹² And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

10. Who stood at the head of the ladder?

¹³ And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed.

11. What promise did the Lord make to him?

¹⁴ And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

¹⁵ And, behold, I am with you, and will keep you in all places whither you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.

12. What did Jacob say when he awoke?

¹⁶ And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.

13. What did he say of that place?

¹⁷ And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

14. When the Lord appeared to certain of his servants what did he say to them?

Exodus 3

⁵ And he said, Draw not nigh hither; put off your shoes from off your feet; for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.

Joshua 5

¹⁵ And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose your shoe from off your foot; for the place whereon you stand is holy. And Joshua did so.

15. What may we learn from this?

That the presence of God in any place makes that place holy.

16. Where has the Lord promised always to be?

Matthew 18

²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

17. What lesson should this teach us?

That places dedicated to the worship of God are sacred, and should always be entered with reverence.

18. What did Jacob do in the morning?

Genesis 28

¹⁸ And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

¹⁹ And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

19. What vow did he make?

²⁰ And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me

bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

²¹ So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God:

²² And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that you shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto you.

20. What was the extent of Jacob's desire from the Lord?

²⁰ If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on...

21. Could he have asked for less?

22. Yet what did he purpose to do?

²² ...of all that you shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto you.

23. Is it right to make vows or pledges to the Lord?

Psalm 76

¹¹ Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God; let all that be round about Him bring presents unto Him that ought to be feared.

24. When a person makes a vow, what should he be careful to do?

Ecclesiastes 5

⁴ When you vow a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he has no pleasure in fools: pay that which you have vowed.

⁵ Better is it that you should not vow, than that you should vow and not pay.

25. Why should we be so careful to pay our vows?

Deuteronomy 23

²¹ When you shall vow a vow unto the Lord your God, you shall not slack to pay it; for the Lord your God will surely require it of you; and it would be sin in you.

Notes

God is able to make a small quantity equal to the largest amount. When the widow had only a handful of meal, and a

small cruse of oil, the Lord made that small amount sufficient support for a family of three for a full year.⁵⁸ With only five loaves and two small fishes, the Lord fed more than five thousand people.⁵⁹ It may be said that these were miracles. So they were; and he who does not see a miracle in his being kept alive and provided with daily food,

1 Corinthians 8

² ...knows nothing yet as he ought to know.

Lamentations 3

²² It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

²³ They are new every morning.

Surely since God gives us everything that we have, working miracles daily for our support, and is able to multiply a handful of meal into many barrels, he may well be depended on to make a little go a great ways for one of his servants.

Some people there are who refuse ever to make a pledge for the Lord's cause. They profess to believe that it is wrong to do so. How they can think so in the face of the Scripture record is a mystery. Not only does the Scripture contain instances of vows that have been made, but it expressly commands us to make vows.

The man who refuses to make a reasonable pledge to the Lord's cause, for fear that when the time comes he may be unable to pay, is in the same condition as one who refuses to make a profession of religion, for fear he will not be able to hold out. Such ones show a total lack of confidence in God, indicating that they expect to have to do in their own strength all that is done. Their action is equivalent to saying,

"I am afraid that the Lord will fail me; I dare not run the risk."

⁵⁸ *1 Kings* 17:8-16.

⁵⁹ *John* 6:8-13.

And yet those very persons who are afraid to promise to do what they know to be their duty, have no hesitancy in giving a note to a man, promising to pay him a certain sum of money at some future time. The sincerity of any who profess to think it wrong to pledge, may well be doubted.

The Lord has said,

Matthew 18

²⁰ Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Yet how many who go to the prayer-meeting, where there undoubtedly are more than two who have come in the name of Jesus, could say,

“The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not”?

The Lord was at Bethel before Jacob had his dream; so the presence of the Lord in any place does not depend upon our recognition of it. We do not have to wait until the prayer-meeting is over, in order to be able to say that the Lord was present. Those who do so, lose a great deal of the blessing of His presence. But we should begin the meeting knowing that He is there because He has promised to be there; in that case we shall be prepared to receive the fullness of His blessing.

38. From Earth to Heaven

Present Truth, August 29, 1901

Genesis 28:10-22

E. J. Waggoner

AN INFIDEL once thought to tease a little girl by asking her,

“How far is it to heaven?”

She replied,

“I don’t know, sir; but I sent a message there this morning, and got an answer back in less than a minute.”

It was this nearness of heaven to earth that Jacob learned that lonely night at Bethel. Up to that time he had been an ignorant believer. He was not...

Hebrews 12

¹⁶ ...a profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

He had a believing nature, or rather, we may say, he had retained his childish faith; but it was uninstructed. He believed in the promise made to his father, so much that he was willing to use any means to secure this inheritance, but he was so ignorant of spiritual things that he did not know God can be worshiped only...

John 4

²⁴ ...in spirit and in truth,

—and that He must fulfill His own promises. It was an exceedingly crude faith that he had, but God recognized it and responded to it.

Psalms 27

¹⁰ When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.

This Jacob learned also that night. It is true that his parents had not cast him off, yet he was nevertheless an outcast from his home. He had the birthright, but he was a fugitive from home, with no possessions but a traveling staff. Then God gave him his first real lesson in fatherhood and home. For the first time Jacob had a conception of the magnitude of the Father's house, in which there are many mansions. That night he learned that God is everywhere—that heaven is His throne, and the earth His footstool,⁶⁰ and that one cannot travel so far as to be out of His presence.

Psalm 139

⁷ Whither shall I go from your spirit? or whither shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, You are there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

¹⁰ Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

¹² Yea, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You.

There are many professed Christians today as ignorant as Jacob was. Often, if their eyes were opened, they would be compelled to exclaim,

Genesis 28

¹⁶ Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.

Wherever one may go or stay, it can truly be said:

“The Lord is in this place.”

The sad thing is that His people do not recognize His presence. When one awakes to the truth that God is in every place,—not as a dim theory, but as a living personality,—the

⁶⁰ *Isaiah* 66:1.

earth to him becomes new, and heaven rests upon it. Then one first begins really to live. To see God everywhere, in everything that He has made, and where nothing at all is visible to the eye of the body,—more than this, to feel Him, and know Him, is the highest wisdom possible to man.

Genesis 28

¹⁷ And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Do not make the mistake of confounding the word “dreadful” with “frightful.” The Hebrew word here rendered “dreadful” is identical with that which in *Psalms* 111:9, is translated “reverend”:

Psalms 111

⁹ ...holy and *reverend* is His name.

That is, the name of God is holy and to be feared. Think of this word as synonymous with awful, that is, “filling with awe.” Such is the place and the presence of God; and they who dwell in His house will never be found indulging in light and foolish talk or actions. A knowledge of God’s presence must produce a dignity and steadiness of character.

Psalms 93

⁵ Holiness becomes your house, O Lord, for ever.

Yet this consciousness of being in God’s house, in His immediate presence, by no means begets sadness, gloom, or melancholy. Quite the contrary. There are no long, woe-be-gone faces in His house.

Psalms 84

⁴ Happy are they who dwell in your house: they will be still praising You.

Before Jehovah’s awful throne,

Ye nations bow with sacred joy.⁶¹

Christ the Connecting Link

What is the ladder that Jacob saw, set up on earth with the top reaching heaven, and...

Genesis 28

¹² ...the angels of God ascending and descending on it?

John contains the answer in the words of Christ to His disciples:

John 1

⁵¹ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

It is He who unites earth to heaven, and makes both one.

Colossians 1

¹⁶ In Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth;...

¹⁷ And in Him all things consist.

In coming to earth, He has brought heaven with Him, and His presence recognized makes a heaven of any place in earth.

In Him all my wants are supplied,
His love makes my heaven below.⁶²

Christ is so much greater than anybody has ever yet realized. No one has yet comprehended to the full,

Ephesians 3

¹⁸ ...what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,

¹⁹ ...[of the] love of Christ, which passes knowledge.

He is the substance of all reality. Scientists have for years vainly sought "the missing link;" if they would only look to Christ in simple yet perfect faith, they would find it. In Him is

⁶¹ Isaac Watts, *Psalms of David*, "Psalm 100," 1719.

⁶² Annie Wittenmeyer, Hymn: *Jesus is Might to Save*.

life, for He is the Word of life which was from the beginning:

1 John 1

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

² For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.

And it is His life that gives every created thing its existence and its distinctive character. He it is, also, who gives to all things in creation their family likeness. There is indeed a unity in all nature; but instead of teaching, as evolutionists imagine, that all things are but developments of one original portion of matter, which evolved itself from nothing, this likeness reveals the presence of Him from whom all things have come.

The highest intelligent creature is indeed related to the lowest plant, but this relation is not that of offspring to parent, but of brotherhood, because all things, high and low, great and small, draw their life from one common Source. From the bosom of God all created things draw their nourishment; for in Christ all things were created and still consist, and He is in the bosom of the Father.

Isaiah 57

¹⁵ [God] dwells in the high and holy place,

—and at the same time with Him,

Hebrews 8

¹ ...on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

—He is on earth with His people.

Acts 17

²⁷ He is not far from every one of us.

But that alone is not enough; we must by our conscious

recognition of His presence, come near to Him. God has united all men in himself,

Acts 17

²⁷ ...if haply they might feel after Him and find Him.

Many jostle against Him in the throng; few touch Him by faith; but the few know the reality of the joys of heaven. Christ is the first and the last, the beginning and the end,

Ephesians 1

²³ ...the fullness of Him that fills all in all,

—so that when we come unto Him by intelligent faith we at once receive the end of it. Thus in Him, earth and heaven meet.

39. Jacob and the Angel

Signs of the Times, April 13, 1888

Genesis 31:38 to 32:28

E. J. Waggoner

1. How long was Jacob with his uncle Laban?

Genesis 31

³⁸ This twenty years have I been with you; your ewes and your she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of your flock have I not eaten.

2. Was his service an easy one?

³⁹ That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto you; I bore the loss of it; of my hand did you require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night.

⁴⁰ Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from my eyes.

⁴¹ Thus have I been twenty years in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your cattle: and you have changed my wages ten times.

3. How did God prosper him?

⁷ And your father has deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.

⁸ If he said thus, The speckled shall be your wages; then all the cattle bore speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be your hire; then bore all the cattle ringstraked.

⁹ Thus God has taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.

⁴² Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely you had sent me away now empty. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you yesternight.

4. When Jacob fled from Laban, how did the Lord interpose to protect him from Laban's wrath?

²⁹ It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spoke unto me yesternight, saying, Take heed that you speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

5. As Jacob went on his way, who met him?

Genesis 32

¹ And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

6. What did Jacob say, and what did he call the place?

² And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host; and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

7. For what purpose are angels sent to earth?

Hebrews 1

¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

8. What message did Jacob send to Esau?

Genesis 32

³ And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

⁴ And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall you speak unto my lord Esau; Your servant Jacob says thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:

⁵ And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in your sight.

9. What news did the messengers bring back?

⁶ And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to your brother Esau, and also he comes to meet you, and four hundred men with him.

10. How was Jacob affected by this news?

⁷ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands.

11. What good reason had Jacob for fearing Esau?

12. What prayer for deliverance did he make?

⁹ And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me, Return unto

your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you:

¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which You have showed unto your servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

¹¹ Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.

¹² And You said, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

13. What precautions did he take for safety?

Genesis 32

⁷ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;

⁸ And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

¹³ And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;

¹⁴ Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams,

¹⁵ Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals.

¹⁶ And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space between drove and drove.

¹⁷ And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meets you, and asks you, saying, Whose are you? and whither go you? and whose are these before you?

¹⁸ Then you shall say, They be your servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us.

¹⁹ And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall you speak unto Esau, when you find him.

²⁰ And say moreover, Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goes be-

fore me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.

²¹ So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.

14. When Jacob was left alone who encountered him?

²⁴ And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him...

15. How long did he wrestle with the stranger?

²⁴ ...until the breaking of the day.

16. Who was it that was wrestling with him?

Hosea 12

⁴ Yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto Him: he found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke with us;

⁵ Even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial.

17. What act opened Jacob's eyes as to the real nature of his antagonist?

Genesis 32

²⁵ And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with Him.

18. What did the Lord then say?

²⁶ And he said, Let me go, for the day breaks...

19. What may we conclude from this?

That as soon as Jacob found out who it was that he was wrestling with, he ceased wrestling, and threw his arms about the Lord.

20. What reply did Jacob make to the Lord's request?

²⁶ ...I will not let You go, except You bless me.

21. How urgent was Jacob's plea?

Hosea 12

⁴ Yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto Him: he found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke with us.

22. Why was Jacob so urgent at this time?

23. What evidence did he finally receive that his prayer was successful?

Genesis 32

²⁷ And He said unto him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob.

²⁸ And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince you have power with God and with men, and have prevailed.

24. What was involved in this blessing?

The pardon of all the sins of his past life.

25. Into what condition do sinners usually come before obtaining pardon?

Romans 7

²⁴ O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

²⁵ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

26. What further evidence did he have that he had prevailed with God and with man?

See *Genesis* 33:1-16.

27. What exhortation is given us from this case?

Hosea 12

⁶ Therefore turn to your God; keep mercy and judgment, and wait on your God continually.

28. Of what time in the history of the people of God was this

experience of Jacob a figure?

Daniel 12

¹ And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time your people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

Jeremiah 30

⁷ Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

29. What will be granted to all those who finally prevail?

Revelation 3

²¹ To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Notes

The reason why Jacob was so urgent when he found out with whom he had been wrestling, was that he felt that he had come to a crisis in his life; he had no earthly friends who could help him, his own brother was his sworn enemy; and he knew that if God did not interpose to help him he was lost.

He knew also that this calamity had come upon him because of his own wicked course. And since sin separates from God, he knew that if Esau met him before he made his peace with God, he would be eternally lost. For this reason he had sought that retired place to pray.

We can imagine the agony of mind which he suffered while he was wrestling with one whom he doubtless supposed was a robber; he had retired to seek the Lord in this emergency, and precious time was rapidly passing while he was being kept from his purpose by this stranger.

And it requires no stretch of imagination to believe that as

soon as he found that his antagonist was the Lord, whom he had come to seek, he ceased wrestling, and threw his arms about the Lord, while he declared,

Genesis 32

²⁶ I will not let You go, except You bless me.

This holding onto the Lord was indicative of his importunity and the strength of his faith, and is an example for all who seek special blessings from the Lord.

40. Face to Face with God

Present Truth, September 5, 1901

Genesis 32

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN Jacob had by treachery secured the birthright and the father's blessing,

Genesis 27

⁴¹ Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will slay my brother Jacob.

Rebekah heard of Esau's purpose, and she told Jacob of it, and said to him:

⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee to Laban my brother to Haran;

⁴⁴ And tarry with him a few days until your brother's fury turn away;

⁴⁵ Until your brother's anger turn from you, and he forget that which you have done to him; then will I send and fetch you from thence.

Alas, poor woman, she little knew the depth of fury that was in Esau's heart. He was a...

Hebrews 12

¹⁶ ...profane person,

Amos 1

¹¹ ...[and] did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever.

The "few days" had lengthened into twenty years, but never had Rebekah dared send for Jacob. Now, after long exile, he was venturing back, driven by unbearable oppression in the place whither he had fled for safety.

Uncertain as to the state of Esau's mind, Jacob sent messen-

gers ahead to greet him, and to seek his favor; but those had returned, bringing the alarming news that they had met Esau coming to meet him with four hundred men. The situation was most critical, and Jacob might well be...

Genesis 32

⁷ ...greatly afraid and distressed.

But Esau's company was not the only band that was ahead of Jacob and his family. Before this, as he went on his way,

¹ ...the angels of God met him.

² And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of the place Mahanaim, [margin: "that is, Two hosts, or camps."]

Psalm 34

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.

There were two companies encamped on the plain,—one with no strength at all, and the other with all power,—and between them they were invincible without striking a blow. What a blessed thing to know ourselves as part of...

Ephesians 3

¹⁵ ...the whole family in heaven and earth.

Jacob saw the angels of God, and called it God's host—*Mahaneh*. Then he saw his own feeble company, and straightway doubled it—*Mahanaim*—two hosts. It is as though God's hosts of angels, strong and mighty as they are alone, have double power when doing service for those who shall be heirs of salvation.

It was night, and the next day Jacob must meet his revengeful brother. How could he face him? There was only one way: he must first meet God. So, having done all that lay in his power to provide for the safety of his family, he remained alone by the brook Jabbok, to have a season of secret prayer. He must know that there was no separation between himself

and God, before he could meet his angry brother.

Now it is sin alone that separates men from God, and prevents Him from exercising His strong arm in their defense; therefore we know that Jacob went to the secret place of prayer to confess his sin to God, and to receive the assurance of pardon and of union with God. What a grand thing it was that years before he had learned the way into the house of God.

Genesis 32

²⁴ And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day.

²⁵ And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

²⁶ And He said, Let me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me.

²⁷ And He said unto him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob.

²⁸ And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed.

²⁹ And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray You, your name. And He said, Wherefore is it that you do ask after my name? And He blessed him there.

We read of Jacob that...

Hosea 12

³ ...by his strength he had power with God:

⁴ Yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto Him: he found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke with us;

⁵ Even the Lord of hosts; the Lord is His memorial.

It was "by his strength" that Jacob prevailed. And what was his strength? It was his helplessness. Jacob wrestled all night with one whom he supposed was a man seeking to take his life; but when that mysterious stranger touched his thigh and

put it out of joint, he knew that he was in the presence of God. Then what did he do? He most certainly did the only thing that a man under such circumstances, with his thigh suddenly put out of joint, could do—he threw his arms round the neck of the angel for support.

And now a wonderful thing happens: the victor turns suppliant. He who had power utterly to disable Jacob with a light touch, begs the stricken, clinging man to let Him go. What does this show? That God cannot tear himself away from the helpless one that clings to Him for support. He is the Almighty, and can easily loose the joints of the stoutest wrestler, but He cannot unloose the arms that confidently clasp His neck. Jacob caught at that word,

“Let me go,”

—and declared,

“I will not.”

Ah, with what boldness we may draw near to God.

Matthew 11

¹² The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

Do not fail to notice how Jacob first began His request to God. He said,

Genesis 32

¹² You said, Lord, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

He pleaded God’s promise. He told God what He had said; and when one does that, and remembers that God cannot lie, he has the things that he asked for. Only one thing is necessary to enable anyone to have all good things that He needs, and that is to believe that God is true.

From henceforth Jacob had a new name. Up to that time he had been the “supplanter,”—the one who in the battle of life would stoop to take a mean advantage of his brother, and, catching him by the heel, would trip him up. But that method could not give him a real victory. He earned the name Israel—prince, overcomer, by yielding himself up.

Now we know who are Israel. They are the sons who overcome. No matter what the nationality—the man who has power in prayer with God, is an Israelite. The first one who received the name was a Syrian; since then men of every nation under heaven have been enrolled by that name in God’s book. Such ones have power indeed.

Revelation 2

²⁶ He that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, [says the Lord,] to him will I give power over the nations:

²⁷ And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

No enemy can stand before the face of the man who can stand before the face of God. He who can see God face to face and have his life preserved, need have no fear of man. Esau’s fury was disarmed while Jacob was weeping in the arms of God. Before that Jacob was afraid, but he said,

Psalms 56

³ What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.

And then, having seen the Lord, he could say,

Isaiah 12

² Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid.

41. A Man of Noble Birth

Present Truth, February 14, 1901

Genesis 37 to 39

E. J. Waggoner

THE history of Joseph is one of the most interesting and instructive to be found in the Bible. In it all the virtues and graces are set forth, yet in so natural a manner as not to make the possessor seem lifted out of the range of ordinary mortals.

Joseph is one of the few Bible characters of whom no evil is recorded, yet he is very human in his goodness. His life shows how a young man may cleanse his way, and keep his life pure under the most unfavorable conditions, by taking heed to it according to the word of God.⁶³

Both Moses and Samuel were early thrown into the midst of evil, but their earliest life was spent in surroundings the most favorable to piety. Joseph, on the other hand, was born into a family where envy and strife, and consequently...

James 3

¹⁶ ...confusion and every evil work

—prevailed. The two wives of Jacob were naturally jealous of each other, and the two concubines did not by any mean contribute to the happiness of the family. The sons of these unequal and unnatural unions, were selfish, envious, quarrelsome, cruel, revengeful, and vicious in their lives.

The little lad Joseph, early deprived of his loving mother's care, might naturally have been expected to grow up like his brothers: but he did not. On the contrary, his life from first to last presents a direct contrast to theirs in almost every particular.

⁶³ **Psalm 119** ⁹ Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to your word.

It seems as though Joseph was specially exposed to temptation, for when only seventeen years of age he was set to caring for the flock, with the sons of the two maid-servant concubines,⁶⁴ where there was opportunity for him to learn all sorts of wickedness; but their vicious practices made no impression on his pure mind, except that in innocence, and with a desire for their reformation, he...

Genesis 37

² ...brought unto his father their evil report.

Psalms 37

¹² The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth,

—and,

2 Timothy 3

¹² All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

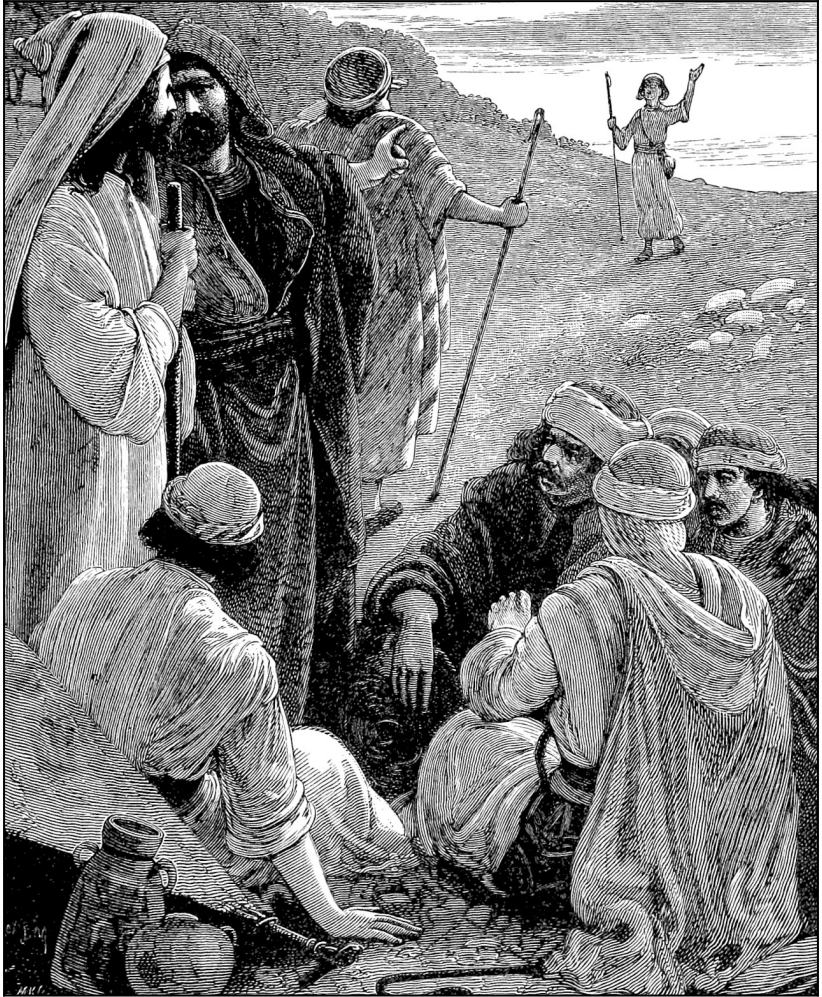
In being envied and hated by his brethren, as well as in his early knowledge of the fact that God designed great things for him, Joseph was a type of Christ; and the figure is carried to completion in Joseph's kindness to his brethren, in return for their abuse, and in his being the means of their salvation.

In the illustration on the next page the contrast between Joseph and his brethren is strikingly presented by the artist. He was frank, free, open, joyous, and kind-hearted; they were deceitful, morose, sour, and vindictive; and these characteristics are shown in their respective attitudes.

Joseph knew that the others hated him, and he had doubtless been made to feel their spite in many petty ways, even when at home with their father; nevertheless he gladly and patiently accepted the task of finding them and inquiring after their welfare. Joyfully he came to greet them after his, weary wandering, but he encountered only cross, hateful looks, bit-

⁶⁴ *Genesis 37:2.*

ter words, and rough usage.



Saved from immediate death, he was sold into slavery so that to him and to his father the suffering was far worse than death. But his mind was soon absorbed in the duties of his new life. What a change for the shepherd lad, from feeding sheep on the plain to a place in the palace of the highest officer of the king of Egypt!

But his head was not turned, nor his mind corrupted, by the

display of wealth, and by the contact with vice in more seductive forms than he had ever seen in his country home. Why not? Because...

Acts 7

⁹ ...God was with him.

Yet in reality God was no more with him than with every other young man; for:

Acts 17

²⁷ He is not far from every one of us,

–and,

²⁸ In Him we live and move, and have our being.

But Joseph recognized the Divine presence, and loved it. His members were yielded as instruments of righteousness to God, and he was fully under the Spirit's control.

It was no ordinary temptation that came to Joseph, for to seductive beauty was added high position. Surely Potiphar's wife must have great influence, and there was no knowing what preferment might come to Joseph if he but listened to her desires. Many servants would have thought it a high honor to be thus singled out as Joseph was; but none of those things moved him. When tempted in the most open and pressing manner, he rehearsed the entire situation, and said,

Genesis 39

⁹ How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

Faithfulness to God made him faithful to his earthly master. And what was the immediate reward of his loyalty and virtue?

Psalms 105

¹⁸ His feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in irons.

Surely he might be excused for becoming downcast and mo-

rose, and for murmuring at his fate, if such things are ever excusable. But they are not, and Joseph wasted no time in self-pity. The road to power lay through the dungeon, and if his life were to end there, he would make it fruitful. Even in captivity he was...

Genesis 49

²² ...a fruitful bough.

He could not see any farther into the future than anybody else can, who is in sore distress from the seeming destruction of all earthly hope, and whose outlook is dark and gloomy. It was necessary to serve in prison, in order to be brought to Pharaoh's notice, and to become even his lord; but Joseph could not know that. Nevertheless he did not worry about the future, nor murmur over the present. Whatever his hand found to do he did it with his might, and for such hands there is always plenty to do. The man with whom God abides will be a ruler even though he be a slave in prison.

With Joseph's final vindication, and his elevation to a place far above that of his former master, Potiphar, and of his success as a deliverer, we have not now to do. That which concerns us most at the present time is the fact of the possibility for a youth to receive such an impulse to virtue that no evil associations can cause him to swerve from the right way.

In the case of Samuel, and especially of Moses, who was for a longer time with his godly mother in a quiet home, we can see clearly the laying of the foundation of such a character; but, so far as the record is concerned, we must go farther back for it in the case of Joseph. What can account for the marvelous difference between the character of Joseph and that of the other sons of the same father, but the fact that Joseph was the child of love, while the others were the fruit of marriages of convenience?

All know the deception that was practiced upon Jacob, by which he got a wife whom he did not love, and how he got

the two secondary wives, for whom he never could have had any affection. There could never have been any real happiness in Jacob's household; but between him and Rachel, the beautiful mother of Joseph, there was a bond of love that never was broken. Certainly Joseph had a far nobler birth than his elder brothers, and a much better start in life,—just such a start as every child ought to have.

But although we may not have had the advantage of such a free birth as this, by our earthly parents, we may even now secure all the advantages of it, and far more, through the eternal Father,

Colossians 1 [RV]

¹³ Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

Christ is the Son of pure, perfect, everlasting love, and so is free, and of nobler birth than the kings of the earth; and we in Him may be heirs of the same true nobility, partakers of the Divine nature, and free indeed.

42. Plotting Against the Just

Signs of the Times, April 20, 1888

Lesson 18 – Sabbath, May 5

Genesis 37

E. J. Waggoner

1. Where did Jacob dwell?

Genesis 37

¹ And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

2. In what light did the patriarchs consider their residence in the land of Canaan?

Hebrews 11

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

3. To what did they look forward as a permanent residence?

¹⁶ But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city.

4. How many sons had Jacob?

Genesis 55

²² Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.

5. Which one did Jacob love the most?

Genesis 37

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors.

6. How did Joseph's brethren regard him?

⁴ And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

7. What made them hate him still more?

Genesis 37

⁵ And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

⁶ And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

⁷ For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

⁸ And his brethren said to him, Shall you indeed reign over us? or shall you indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

⁹ And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

¹⁰ And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to you to the earth?

¹¹ And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

8. Upon what errand did Jacob send Joseph?

¹³ And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not your brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send you unto them. And he said to him, Here I am.

¹⁴ And he said to him, Go, I pray you, see whether it be well with your brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

9. When his brethren saw him coming, what did they propose to do?

¹⁸ And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

²⁰ Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast has devoured him:

and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

10. What did they do with him when he came?

Genesis 37

²³ And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him;

²⁴ And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

11. How did they afterwards dispose of him?

²⁵ And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

²⁶ And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

²⁷ Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

12. For how much did they sell him?

²⁸ Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver; and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

13. How do the wicked ever regard the just?

Psalms 37

¹² The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth.

14. What trait was it that moved Joseph's brethren to sell him into Egypt?

Acts 7

⁹ And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him.

15. What scripture was verified in their case?

James 3

¹⁶ For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

16. In what class is envy placed?

Galatians 5

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like...

17. What is said of those who do such things?

²¹ ...of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

18. What course did they take to deceive their father?

Genesis 37

³¹ And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

³² And they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be your son's coat or no.

19. When Jacob saw the coat, what did he at once conclude?

³³ And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

20. How did this affect Jacob?

³⁴ And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

³⁵ And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

21. Can you recall any actions of Jacob that were of a similar

character to this wicked deception? Relate them.

22. When had Jacob been forgiven for his wicked deeds?

23. What important lesson may we draw from this?

That although a sin may be forgiven, the results of it may remain, and the one who committed it will often have it brought before him, and will suffer in consequence.

24. What scripture is fulfilled even in this life?

Matthew 7

² For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Notes

Joseph has been the subject of a great many moral lectures against tale-bearing. Well-meaning but ignorant persons have censured him as the cause of all the discord in Jacob's family. Such censure is most unjust. Joseph's brothers were envious of him; but their envy was only the outgrowth of their own wicked hearts,

James 3

¹⁶ For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

A corrupt heart is the only soil in which envy can grow. There is not a particle of evidence that Joseph did any wrong. He is one of the few Bible characters concerning whom no evil is recorded. His father loved him more than all the rest of his sons, because he was more worthy of his love than they were.

The same thing moved his brothers to think of killing him, and afterward to sell him, that moved Cain to kill Abel; because their own works were evil, as his were righteous.⁶⁵ We do not mean to intimate that Joseph was born without faults;

⁶⁵ See 1 John 3:12.

but he certainly had the fear of God before his eyes.

It is worthwhile in passing, to note the features in which Joseph's experience resembled that of Christ:

- Joseph was hated by his brethren; Christ came unto his own, and his own received him not, neither did his brethren believe in him.
- Joseph was sold into slavery; Christ was sold to his enemies.
- And both suffered thus, not on their own account, but that they might deliver others.

Of course it is not designed to place Joseph on the same plane with Christ, but he may be considered as in some respects a type of Christ.

If it was wrong to allow envy and jealousy to control the heart in those days it is equally wrong now. Indeed, it would seem that in this age of gospel light and privileges, with the experience of men for ages past written out for our learning, it must be worst then to indulge in such feelings now than then. And, so, it is more dangerous now than then.

The nearness of the coming of the Lord is given as a special reason why peace and love should prevail. Says the apostle:

James 5

⁹ Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest you be condemned; behold, the Judge stands before the door.

What a terrible thing it would be if he should open the door and find us thus engaged.

1 Peter 2

¹ Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

² As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby:

³ If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

⁴ To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed

of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

⁵ You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Psalm 133

¹ Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

43. Joseph Sold into Egypt

Present Truth, September 26, 1901

Genesis 37:12-36

E. J. Waggoner

WHO that has ever read the Bible at all does not know the story of Joseph and his brethren? To most it is little, if anything, more than an interesting story; but it is really one of the most striking likenesses of the work of Christ to be found in the Bible. Of all the Old Testament characters, Joseph is throughout his whole life the most complete type of Christ. This is set forth most vividly in the scripture appointed for our present lesson, although we have only a partial view.

It is often said of a child who exhibits unusual strength of character, that he is "wise beyond his years." If that were ever an allowable expression it might be used of Joseph; but it is not. At twelve years of age Jesus astonished the learned scribes and doctors of the law by the depth of his understanding; and the account of it is given us, not to show us how different He was from other children, but to teach us what all children of that age ought to be and know.

So Joseph, before he was seventeen, had wisdom from God, that made him envied and hated by his brethren, who were many years older than he. Like Daniel, he had understanding in visions and dreams. The secret of his wisdom is given in:

James 3

¹⁷ The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.

Matthew 5

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.

Joseph was pure in heart, and therefore he had communion with the great Source of wisdom and knowledge. "First pure." That is not only the requisite for wisdom, but it is the begin-

ning of it. In order to be wise, one needs only purity of heart. This ought to be, and often is, most found in children, and it is for this reason that the deep things of God are hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes.

Psalm 37

¹² The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth.

2 Timothy 3

¹² All they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.

So,

Acts 7

⁹ The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt.

Thus it was with Christ. His pure life was a constant reproof to the wickedness and hypocrisy of the rulers of the Jewish people. His righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and so He would not resort to the multitudinous forms and ceremonies to which they had recourse to conceal their emptiness. They hated Him, because He was better than they; and when at last they seized Him, and delivered Him bound to the Roman governor,

Matthew 27

¹⁸ Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered Him.

Genesis 37

¹³ And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not your brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send you unto them. And he said to him, Here I am.

¹⁴ And he said to him, Go, I pray you, see whether it be well with your brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

In like manner Christ, came to declare the name of His Father unto His brethren. Joseph went to “see the peace” of his

brethren, and to carry greetings from their father: and Christ came preaching peace.

John 1

¹¹ He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.

They said, “Let us kill Him,” even as Joseph’s brethren said when they saw him coming. Seldom has the church had a reformer whom it has not slain, or attempted to slay.

Acts 7

⁵² Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?

But not every one who is on the side of the hosts of evil is willfully bad. Many are not decidedly against the truth, but they are simply not for it. They would be in favor of it, with all the heart they have, if others were; but they are “unstable as water,” and must needs go with the wind of public sentiment.

Such a man was Reuben. He would gladly have rescued Joseph from his murderous brethren, for he had no desire to kill him. We see that they readily fell in with his proposal not to kill Joseph, but to put him into a dry well; and we may be sure that if he had only had enough strength of character to assert himself, he might as the oldest, have turned aside all their ill will, and sent Joseph back to his father in safety. But he temporized, and therefore his good intentions went for nothing, and he became one with those who had no thought of good. Indeed such a temporizer is really worse than the brutally wicked, since he has impulses to good of which they know nothing, and allows them to be stifled.

In Reuben we see the type of Pilate, who could have rescued Jesus from the mob if he had had the courage of his convictions. Reuben proposed a compromise, to save the life of Joseph; Pilate said to the Jews who were clamoring for the death of Jesus,

Luke 23

²² I will scourge Him, and let Him go.

But there was no reason for doing Joseph any harm, and there was no cause for scourging Jesus, since no fault was found in Him. Having made some concessions to the spirit of murder, everything had to be yielded. A compromise with error is always a victory for the devil. Truth and error, righteousness and sin, will not mingle.

The greatest lesson of all, however, both in the case of Joseph and that of Jesus, is how all things work out the will of God. It is true that Joseph's brethren sold him to the Ishmaelites to gratify their own hateful, envious dispositions; yet we read that:

Psalm 15

¹⁷ [God] sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant.

And Joseph himself, seeking afterward to comfort his brethren, said,

Genesis 45

⁵ Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.

In this he represented the tender lovingkindness of Jesus, who said,

Luke 23

³⁴ Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

But the main thought now before us is that God causes the wrath of man to praise Him. So,

Acts 4

²⁶ The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ.

²⁷ For of a truth against your holy child Jesus, whom You have anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

²⁸ For to do whatsoever your hand and your counsel determined before to be done.

God works all things after the counsel of His own will. Whether we will or not, His will must be done. If God's will is done with our will, it is well for us; if our wills are opposed, our very obstinacy and opposition will accomplish His purpose, but we shall suffer.

When His will is done through us, He counts it the same as though we had done it; but if we do not wish His will to be done, then our sin is as great as though we had defeated His purpose, even though our act accomplishes His design.

Thus since God's purpose will be carried out in any case, how much more sensible for us to yield to it gladly, than to be unwilling instruments of it.

The comfort and hope that we get from this story of how God's will is done even by men who are doing their utmost to thwart it is this: Since the wrath of men praises God; since even our hatred and opposition are used in His service, how much more must our willing mind be used by God, even though we have no power.

How easy it is for us to know that our faith is counted for righteousness, when even our unbelief and rebellion work out His righteous will.

44. The Consequence of Pleasing God

Signs of the Times, April 20, 1888

Lesson 19 – Sabbath, May 12

Genesis 39

E. J. Waggoner

1. To whom did Joseph's brethren sell him?

Genesis 37

²⁸ Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver; and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

2. What did the Midianites do with him?

³⁶ And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

3. Who was with Joseph in this strange hand?

Genesis 39

² And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

4. What was the consequence to Joseph of the Lord's being with him?

³ And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

⁴ And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

Acts 7

⁹ And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

¹⁰ And delivered him out of all his affliction, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

5. What was the result to Potiphar, from having a godly man in his house?

Genesis 39

⁵ And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

6. How much responsibility was placed upon Joseph?

⁶ And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored.

7. How old was Joseph when he was sold into Egypt?

Genesis 37

² These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

8. When he was strongly tempted in Potiphar's house, what noble stand did he take?

Genesis 39

⁸ But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master knows not what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand;

⁹ There is none greater in this house than I; neither has he kept back any thing from me but you, because you are his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

9. Did he stand firm to this resolution?

¹⁰ And it came to pass, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

10. What was the immediate result of his upright conduct?

¹⁹ And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke unto him, saying, After this man-

ner did your servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.

²⁰ And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound; and he was there in the prison.

Read also verses 11-18.

11. Who was with Joseph still?

²¹ But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

12. What can always be said by one who has the Lord for a companion?

Psalm 23

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

³ He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

13. How was this verified in Joseph's case?

Genesis 39

²¹ But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

14. What trust was committed to Joseph in the prison?

²² And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

15. Why was this?

²³ The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that

which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

16. What scripture was fulfilled in Joseph's case?

Proverbs 16

⁷ When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

When David had committed the grievous sin of taking the wife of Uriah, and his sin had been brought home to his conscience, he cried out to the Lord:

Psalms 51

⁴ Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight.

He realized that his sin was primarily against God. So when Joseph was tempted to wrong his master, he recalled how his master had trusted him by putting everything into his hand, he said,

Genesis 39

⁹ How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

Every act which shows a lack of love for our neighbor, shows a lack of love for God; the wrong which one may do to his fellow-man is only secondary; the greater wrong is against God. Only conscientious souls realize this; those who have not the "fear of God" before their eyes,⁶⁶ will not stop to consider the interest of their neighbor, when it comes in conflict with their own pleasure.

⁶⁶ *Psalm 36:1.*

45. God Was With Him

Present Truth, September 12, 1895

Genesis 39

E. J. Waggoner

Acts 7

⁹ And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into

Egypt: but God was with him,

¹⁰ And delivered him out of all his afflictions.

THESE are the words of Stephen as he stood before the council full of the Spirit of God, and with a face like an angel. God was with Joseph. When was God with him?

- God was with him when his brethren cast him bound into the pit in the wilderness, and when he went down to Egypt as a slave.
- God was with him when he was a bond-servant in the house of Potiphar, and He was with him when he resisted the temptations of his mistress.
- God was with him also when he was in prison, no less than when his captivity ended, and he was made ruler over all the land of Egypt.

God did not come to him, but He went with him. He did not merely come to deliver him from his afflictions, but He went into prison with him. It was because God was with him that he was delivered.

Let this fact be remembered, that the Lord goes to prison when His servants go there for His sake. Christ said that when He comes in glory He will say to some,

Matthew 25

³⁶ I was in prison, and you came unto me,

—and to others that they did not visit Him when He was in prison. There are many people who think much of being with the Lord in heaven, when He comes, but who do not realize

the necessity and the blessedness of being with Him here in this present time. And it is a mistake to suppose that we have the presence of the Lord only when everything seems to favor us. When Jacob said,

Genesis 42

³⁶ All these things are against me,

—God was with him as much as when he was in Bethel or Peniel, and was preparing, out of those afflictions, the means of his future sustenance. So very often it is the case that we can have God with us only by suffering affliction.

Joseph, for instance, could not have kept God with him without going to prison. He might have kept out of prison if he had been willing to deceive his master, and sin against God, but not otherwise. Now it is certain that if Jesus of Nazareth had been in the place of Joseph, He would have done as Joseph did, and would have been obliged to suffer imprisonment for refusing to sin. Indeed, it was only because Jesus was with him, that he resisted the temptation and went to prison. He had the choice, therefore, of going to prison with the Lord, or of staying out of prison without the Lord. Joseph did not hesitate a moment in choosing.

When Jesus was on earth His delight was to do the will of God, whose law was within His heart.

Psalms 40

⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart.

He said,

John 15

¹⁰ I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

Not one of the ten commandments did He slight, not even

the fourth.

Luke 4

¹⁶ As His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

Every one who reads the New Testament must say, in the words of Canon Knox-Little,

“It is certain that our Lord when on earth did observe Saturday, and did not observe Sunday.”⁶⁷

Now we read of Jesus Christ that:

Hebrews 13

⁸ [He is] the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

He kept the commandments when He was in the earth, because they were in His heart before He came to earth. They were His life. He did not come to earth to act a part, but to reveal God to men; and this He could do because He was in the beginning with God, and was God. He was the same on earth that He was in heaven, and He is the same in heaven that He was on earth.

⁸ Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

Therefore it is absolutely certain that if Jesus were on earth today, in the flesh, as He was eighteen hundred years ago, He would keep...

Luke 23

⁵⁶ ...the Sabbath day according to the commandment.

In other words, it is certain that He would keep the seventh day, and would not keep Sunday. What then would be the result? Just this:

- If He were in Russia, He would be banished;
- If He were in America, He would be imprisoned, and

⁶⁷ *Sacerdotalism*, p. 75.

driven to work in the chain-gang;

- If He were in England, He would have His goods sold, if He had any, and if not, He would be thrust into prison, for refusing to recognize Sunday as worthy of receiving in the slightest degree the honor due to the Sabbath of the Lord.

Indeed, when He was on earth, He suffered imprisonment, and every form of indignity, simply because of His faithfulness to the law of God.

It is only by the faith of Jesus that any man can keep the commandments of God. Whoever is truly faithful and keeping the commandments of God, even though the laws of men forbid him to keep them, can be so only if the Lord is with him. If for that faithfulness he suffers the loss of all things, or goes to prison, he may have the comfort of knowing that he is sharing the affliction with the Lord.

But if he knows the Lord to that point, he will know that poverty and imprisonment with the Lord, are more to be desired than riches and freedom without Him. With Moses, he will find that “the reproach of Christ,”⁶⁸ is greater riches than all the treasures of earth.

- The Egyptians did not know that they were sending the Lord to prison when they put Joseph into the dungeon.
- The Jewish rulers did not know that they were sending the Lord to prison when they shut up His apostles.
- The princes of this world did not know that they were crucifying the Lord of glory when they condemned the humble Galilean carpenter to death.

Yet they might have known, because in every case the penalty of the law was inflicted because of loyalty to the truth, and whatsoever is of the truth is of God.

⁶⁸ *Hebrews* 11:26.

46. In Prison with the Lord

Present Truth, October 3, 1901

Genesis 39 and 40

E. J. Waggoner

THE life of Joseph is a practical illustration of the words of Christ:

Matthew 5

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.

At home in the vale of Hebron he had recoiled from the coarse words and actions of his brothers, and received in dreams from God intimations of future events. Sold into Egypt, and thrown at the tender age of save seventeen into the society of vicious servants, and a still more vicious mistress, he retained his integrity. Most youths of that age would be carried away by their surroundings; but Joseph had character, and his life in Potiphar's household was pure as in his father's tent.

“And to what profit?”

—some in his position would be inclined to ask.

“They will not believe that I am innocent; I might as well have the satisfaction of doing the thing, since I shall be suspected anyhow,”

—is language that is not infrequently heard. Oh, it is under just such circumstances that one's character, or lack of it, appears. The one who wishes to sin, but who is restrained only by fear of the consequences, will take advantage of the opportunity if he can do so without being found out, or if he is sure to be suspected of it whether he does it or not.

But Joseph did not regard the committing of sin as any satisfaction. A conscience void of offense was to him the highest satisfaction. When tempted from a quarter where even to be noticed was flattery, he was firm as a rock. To the strongest

assaults upon his virtue, he replied:

Genesis 39

⁹ How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

It was not with him even a question of how he could keep from sinning; but in him we find an illustration of the scripture:

1 John 3

⁹ Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Acts 7

⁹ And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him.

Genesis 39

²⁰ And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

²¹ But the Lord was with Joseph.

Joseph had not forsaken God, and God did not forsake him; when Joseph had to go to prison, God went there with him.

Most people look on going to prison as a great disgrace; "jailbird" is with them the worst form of reproach. But the truth is, that there is no disgrace whatever in going to prison. Hardship and suffering there may be, but not disgrace. The disgrace connected with prison life is all in the sin that brings the victim there, and if the prisoner be innocent, and especially if he is imprisoned because of his uprightness, the prison is no disgrace, but on the contrary a palace of honor. There is a special blessing for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Matthew 5

¹⁰ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness'

sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

No one need ever be afraid or ashamed to go anywhere with God. Any place is pleasant where He is; for...

Psalm 16

¹¹ ...in His presence, is fullness of joy.

The man with whom God goes to prison is far more free, than the man who can go where he chooses, and who chooses a way apart from God. God's presence with Joseph gave him favor with all with whom he came in contact.

Genesis 39

²² The keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

²³ The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

Here we have the same word as in *Psalms* 1:3, where we read of the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, that...

Psalm 1

³ ...whatsoever he does shall prosper.

Joseph's case shows that the prosperity that comes from keeping God's law and taking it for one's life is very real. No amount of "political influence" or of "standing in" with prominent men of shady reputations could have won that position of trust for Joseph. The Hebrew slave had confidence reposed in him, because God was with him.

The keeper of the prison did not know this last fact; he knew nothing of God's influence in the matter; he only knew that Joseph was trustworthy. But we well know that Joseph's faithfulness soon made the name of God known, not only in the prison, but in the palace as well.

Few men would regard a prison, where one is held in bondage, as a place to win success; but Joseph found it so. That prison was the way to the palace, and to the governorship of Egypt. Joseph did not know that at the time, but it made no difference to him. He knew that God was with him, and he was content with that.

Instead of bemoaning his fate, and brooding over his unjust treatment, he improved his time in preparing to be ruler of Egypt. He did not know that he was fitting himself for that position, but he nevertheless went the right way about it, namely, making himself useful where he was, without worrying about either the future or the past.

Be sure that Joseph did not associate so much with the Lord without becoming well acquainted with Him. So when the two most notable prisoners in the prison had dreams that troubled them, Joseph said to them,

Genesis 40

⁸ Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me then, I pray you.

Deuteronomy 29

²⁹ The secret things belong unto the Lord our God,
—and,

Psalms 25

¹⁴ The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

Now Joseph began to reap some of the visible fruits of his purity of life. The pure in heart see God; and they who see God—not occasionally merely, but continually—are seers. The wisdom that is possible to the soul that is joined to God, is beyond all calculation. Such a one sees clearly where others stumble in darkness.

The way to deliverance, not only for Joseph himself but for all his people, was through the prison. In this Joseph was still

the type of Christ. Christ had to be bound, in order to break the bands from His people. Joseph's committal to prison was his release from slavery; and so we see that instead of saying that Joseph's loyalty to righteousness got him into difficulty, we may rather say that it procured for him freedom and honor. People generally take too short views.

Still it was not for his own sake that all this happened to him; Joseph, as a figure of Christ, was to be the saviour of his people; and no man can truly serve others except by personal sacrifices and suffering.

It is marvelous how well a man can get along, and keep not only "abreast of the times," but far ahead of them, when shut up in prison, away from the world. This shows us not merely that a man can get along without the world, but that real separation from the world is the best way to prosperity.

This does not mean that one must shut himself up in a cloister, or be out of touch with human needs; but the rush and gossip of the world do not tend to make one really wise or useful. Some of the best things in the world have come from prisons. The world would probably never have been blessed with *Pilgrim's Progress*, if John Bunyan had not gone to prison; and some of the brightest of the epistles of Paul were written in a dungeon, in chains. It all depends on whether or not God is with the man.

47. Joseph Before Pharaoh

Signs of the Times, May 4, 1888

Genesis 41

E. J. Waggoner

1. What is wisdom?

Job 28

²⁸ And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

2. Who have a good understanding?

Psalms 111

¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments; his praise endures forever.

3. How was this shown to be true in the life of Joseph?

See *Genesis* 40.

4. Who had a dream two years later?

Genesis 41

¹ And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed; and, behold, he stood by the river.

5. What was the dream?

² And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favored kine and fat-fleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

³ And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favored and lean-fleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river.

⁴ And the ill favored and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well favored and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

⁵ And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

⁶ And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

⁷ And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream.

6. What success did Pharaoh have in getting his dream interpreted?

Genesis 41

⁸ And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

7. How was Joseph's experience in prison now turned to his favor?

⁹ Then spoke the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:

¹⁰ Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker:

¹¹ And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

¹² And there was there with us a young man, a Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

¹³ And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto my office, and him he hanged.

¹⁴ Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

8. What did Pharaoh say to Joseph when he came before him?

¹⁵ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of you, that you canst understand a dream to interpret it.

9. Who did Joseph say of himself, and to whom did he ascribe the power?

¹⁶ And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

10. After Pharaoh had related his dream, how did Joseph interpret it?

Genesis 41

³⁰ And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

³¹ And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

11. What did he say the repetition of the dream indicated?

³² And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

12. What advice did he give to Pharaoh?

³³ Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

³⁴ Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

³⁵ And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

13. What did Pharaoh think of this advice?

³⁷ And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

14. Whom did Pharaoh think was the most suitable for the work which Joseph had advised?

³⁸ And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

³⁹ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God has showed you all this, there is none so discreet and wise as you are:

⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and according unto your word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than you.

15. To what position did Pharaoh advance Joseph?

⁴¹ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.

⁴² And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

⁴³ And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

⁴⁴ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without you shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

16. What scripture was fulfilled in the history of Joseph in Egypt?

Psalm 37

³² The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him.

³³ The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

17. What sure promise is given to those who trust and serve the Lord?

⁵ Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.

⁶ And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.

Notes

Pharaoh showed his appreciation of the fact that true wisdom comes from God to those who are his servants in truth, by saying of Joseph when he had advised that men be appointed to preserve food for the time of famine:

Genesis 41

³⁸ And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

He knew that there was no use in looking further. A man to whom God had given such wisdom, was just the one to carry

out the work which he had advised. The question may arise,

“Was this knowledge that Joseph had miraculous? Did God give him special knowledge, just because he was a good man?”

We believe not, at least not wholly. The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. Says the psalmist:

Psalm 111

¹⁰ A good understanding have all they that do His commandments.

The law of God is infinite in breadth, and it is that in which a righteous man meditates. Surely then it ought to make him broad-minded. When the mind contemplates little things, it contracts; when it dwells upon great themes, it expands. Therefore since the law of God is the greatest thing,

Psalm 119

⁹⁶ ...exceeding broad,

—it must enlarge the understanding of the man who thinks of it continually, in order that his way may be right. Take the book of *Proverbs* alone. The man who studies that book carefully, and who follows its teachings cannot go wrong. It is the best book in the world for a man to study, who wants to be successful in business. It is fully in harmony with the words of our Saviour:

Matthew 6

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

But we are not to suppose that every man who studies the word of God and walks in its light, will have an equal amount of knowledge. God gives man the power to get wealth, but He does not give equal ability to all. So He does not give to all equal ability to acquire knowledge. And this should keep those of superior ability from boasting over those of less abil-

ity.

1 Corinthians 4

⁷ For who makes you to differ from another? and what have you that you did not receive? now if you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?

48. God's Servant Exalted

Present Truth, October 10, 1901

Genesis 41:38-49

E. J. Waggoner

Isaiah 3

¹³ Behold, my Servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted, and extolled; and be very high.

Christ the Pattern

THESE words of God were spoken directly concerning Christ; but Christ, as the servant of God; sets the pattern of service for all other servants; for all who yield themselves to God, to serve Him, are accepted as His servants. Christ declares himself to be the pattern, in these words:

Matthew 20 [RV, margin]

²⁶ Whosoever would be great among you shall be your servant,

²⁷ And whosoever would be first among you shall be your bond-servant,

²⁸ Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto [served], but to minister [serve], and to give His life a ransom for many.

But Christ was made in all things like His brethren, in order that they might in all things be like Him. He has no honors that He does not share equally with His brethren; for we are...

Romans 8

¹⁷ ...heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

So as He sets the pattern for the kind of service to be rendered, we may be sure that He is also an example of the honors and promotions to be received. Every true servant of God—every one who gives undivided service,—no matter who or where he may be, or how meager his advantages have been, has the promise that he shall deal prudently, and shall be exalted.

Natural Promotion

It was therefore really in the natural order of events when Joseph, who was faithful as a shepherd lad, doubly faithful and loyal as a slave in the house of Potiphar, and who still served with cheerfulness and fidelity when he was most unjustly shut up in prison, should be exalted and placed very high. His governorship of Egypt began in prison, or, earlier still, when he was caring for his father's sheep.

Being pure in heart, and knowing God's Word as a life, and not as a mere creed, Joseph had insight into the secret things of God; so when the King of Egypt had dreams that he was sure meant something, but he knew not what, Joseph was the one man who was ready at a moment's notice to give the interpretation,

Calamities are Stepping-Stones to Success

Here we see an illustration of how...

Romans 8

²⁸ ...all things work together for good to them that love God.

It was cruelly thoughtless in the chief butler, to whom Joseph had brought such a cheering message, to pay no more heed to him after he was out of prison. Two long years Joseph was compelled to wait after freedom had seemed almost in sight. It might well seem that his bondage would never end, when suddenly a messenger came with the command for him to appear at once before Pharaoh, and within a few hours at most Joseph was the second man in the kingdom in name, and the first in real power.

But what if the butler had thought of Joseph, and had secured his release from prison as soon as he himself gained his liberty? Doubtless Joseph would never have been heard of again. But God had a great work to be done,—a work affecting the whole world, even to the end of time,—and His servant had to be kept where he could be found for service when he

was needed. Joseph was serving God as faithfully in prison, as he ever did anywhere, and it was because he was a real servant of God under every condition, that he was so marvelously exalted.

The Wisdom of Obedience

Genesis 41

³⁸ And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

³⁹ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God has showed you all this, there is none so discreet and wise as you are:

⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and according unto your word shall all my people be ruled.

Here we have a practical fulfillment of a truth stated long afterwards through Moses:

Deuteronomy 4

⁵ Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land whither you go to possess it.

⁶ Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

Joseph's wisdom was nothing more than that which naturally comes with perfect obedience to the law of God,—not mere forced compliance with its precepts, but a life which springs from the inborn Word. God gave Joseph success, and caused all that he did to prosper, in harmony with this truth:

Psalms 1

¹ Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.

² But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law does he meditate day and night.

³ And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,

that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper.

Job 28

²⁸ The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

Psalm 111

¹⁰ A good understanding have all they that do His commandments.

Wisdom and understanding are as natural to the one whose life is the law of God, as beauty and odor are to the flower. Such lives as that of Joseph are recorded in the Bible, not as something strange and unique, but to show what is really the natural state of everyone whose life is wholly the Lord's.

How To Get Employment

One of the commonest complaints that men (and boys) make is that they "cannot get any employment." Joseph had no difficulty. He could get all his own work, and that of others, as well. Everybody was willing to let him work.

The keeper of the prison turned all his work over to Joseph, and even the king entrusted all his duties to him. And Joseph welcomed all the work that came. That was the reason why he had so much to do.

And right here we discover the reason why so many people are out of work. They are afraid of overwork, of doing too much. They carefully calculate how much, or how little, they ought to do for their wages, or how much they feel like doing, and when work is slack their employers have no difficulty in determining that they can easily dispense with their services.

But real worth makes a place for itself. The man who knows, and who can do, and who, above all, is hungry for work, and not merely for wages, will never be long out of employment. There is lots of work waiting to be done in the world, but it yields only to the one who will do it, and not to

the one who merely toys with it.

When Joseph was in prison, receiving no wages, he put all his heart and strength into the work, as much as though it had been his own private business. Whoever will do that, will find that he is wanted. Most men out of employment would laugh to scorn the suggestion that they should take hold and do something, working for nothing rather than be idle.

“I can’t afford to work for nothing,”

—would be the reply. But a man can afford to work for nothing a great deal better than he can afford to be idle for nothing. Real, lasting success comes to the men who love work for its own sake.

Genesis 41

⁴² And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a chain of gold about his neck;

⁴³ And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Exalted Through Humility

Here again, without the slightest straining of the matter, we see in Joseph the likeness of Christ. It was not merely after his humiliation, but because of it, that Joseph received honor from the king, and homage from the people. The mind was in him that was also in Christ Jesus,

Philippians 2

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant;...

⁹ Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name:

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

Luke 14

¹¹ He that humbles himself shall be exalted.

The Prince of Life

Lastly, the name given to Joseph was most significant. *Zaphnath-paaneah*, according to Egyptian etymologists, means,

“Prince of the life of the world,”

or,

“Saviour of the world.”

Bread is the staff of life; and as Joseph had supreme control of all the corn in the land, he was literally prince of the life of the world; and he was, under God, of course, or, by God working through him, the saviour of the world; because it was through his wisdom and energy that corn was laid up in abundance,

Genesis 41

⁵⁶ And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

⁵⁷ And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

It was no fancy title that was given to Joseph. In this, Joseph was a type of Christ, the Saviour of the world, the Prince of life, the Bread of life that came down from heaven to give life to the world.

But we should see more in this than Joseph as a type of Christ. We should see in it the truth that we, like Him, are to be saviours of the world: for as Christ is the Bread of life, so:

1 Corinthians 10

¹⁷ We being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

Bread is made solely to be eaten, that men may get life from

it; so as Christ gave himself for the life of the world, we likewise...

1 John 3

¹⁶ ...ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

This we do in holding them always ready for any kind of service, no matter how humble, hard, or exacting.

49. Divine Forbearance

Present Truth, October 17, 1901

Genesis 45:1-15

E. J. Waggoner

FILLED with the Spirit of inspiration, Jacob on his death-bed said:

Genesis 49

²² Joseph a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall:

²³ The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot him, and hated him:

²⁴ But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.

Whatever happened to Joseph tended to his advantage,

Acts 10

³⁸ ...for God was with him.

But if we leave the story of Joseph with merely the thought that he was a wonderfully successful man, we shall make a great mistake. His life history was not recorded for the sake of making us wonder, but to show us the sure result of loyalty to God and faithfulness to duty. Of every man who delights in the law of the Lord it is said,

Psalm 1

³ ...whatsoever he does shall prosper.

Yet professed Christians will even today, in the face of this testimony of the Scripture, argue that strict obedience to the law of God, including the fourth commandment, will lead to ruin. We must remember that the Bible is not a book of amusing stories, but a guide to everlasting life.

The likeness of Joseph to Jesus is nowhere more apparent than in his treatment of his brethren. To be sure he spoke harshly to them when they first came to Egypt to buy corn,

but that was only in keeping with what another in his position would have done, and was for the purpose of proving them. Even in his seeming harshness, however, he was kind to his brethren, providing for their needs without cost, giving them bread for nothing. And now the time had come when Joseph could no longer refrain from making himself known to his brothers.

Genesis 45

¹ And he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

² And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

³ And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; does my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

⁴ And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.

⁵ Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.

⁶ For these two years has the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing [ploughing] nor harvest.

⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

Notice the tender regard for the feelings of his brethren, who had never shown any consideration for his feelings. How careful Joseph was to avoid giving his brethren pain, and to make their wicked conduct appear a slight matter. There was not a word of reproach. Not a word was uttered about the injury done him; there was no hint of the years of loneliness and suffering and anguish. On the contrary he would make as though he had never been in any worse condition than he then was, and he seemed to give his brethren credit for the good results which followed their unnatural deed.

How natural it is for us, even when we feel the most kindly-disposed toward an offender, to say something intended to cause him to feel the heinousness of his offense, and the great concession that we are making in passing it by; but Joseph did not spoil his record. He had never complained in time of trial, and he did not indulge in any accusations or insinuations when he had his persecutors in his power. He manifested only whole-souled generosity that marked him a true type of Him who on the cross said of His murderers,

Luke 23

³⁴ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Joseph recognized that he was sent as a saviour of life. He had been charged with the mission to save the lives of his brethren who had hated him, and God was in Him to do it, even as...

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁹ God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

From the action of Joseph we may learn how we are to act as ambassadors for Christ, to whom is committed the ministry of reconciliation.

How different things look to us after the bitter experience has past. When Jacob heard that Simeon had been kept a captive in Egypt, he said,

Genesis 42

³⁶ Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

But they were not against him; on the contrary there were all working for him—working out a great deliverance, and a peaceful, happy old age. We can see it clearly enough; yet when our trials come we complain, just as though ours were exceptions to the rule that...

Romans 8

²⁸ ...all things work together for good to them that love God.

If we were absolutely sure that good would result, we should bear the trial and the pain uncomplainingly; but in spite of all the assurances and all the examples of God's Word, we persist looking at things as they seem now, instead of from the standpoint of eternity.

Does anybody suppose that when we stand by the river of life in the Paradise of God we shall have any regrets or sorrow for what we have suffered here? Of course not. We know that we shall not, then what is the use of doing so here? We know that if God be for us nothing can be against us, and that all things work—are now working—together for good to them that love God. Moreover, it is our privilege and our duty to look at things from the eternal side instead of from the temporal side; for God is our dwelling-place, and He inhabits eternity.

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁷ Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The glory is being worked for us while we look, if we only look beyond the seen to the unseen. Why not do it, and get all the joy and happiness as we pass along, instead of putting the bliss off till the future?

50. Confidence in God's Promise

Present Truth, October 24, 1901⁶⁹

Genesis 50:15-26

E. J. Waggoner

Genesis 50

¹⁵ And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will certainly requite us [literally, "he will surely return upon us,"] all the evil which we did unto him.

¹⁶ And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Your father did command before he died, saying,

¹⁷ So shall you say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray you now, the transgression of your brethren, and their sin; for that they did evil unto you: and now, we pray you, forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. And Joseph wept when they spoke unto him.

¹⁸ And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we are your servants.

¹⁹ And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?

²⁰ But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

²¹ Now therefore fear not: I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spoke kindly unto them [to their hearts].

²² And Joseph lived in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived a hundred and ten years.

²⁴ And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

²⁵ And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from hence.

²⁶ So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

⁶⁹ The *Pioneer Writings* collection that comes on the EGW CD has listed this article as October 17, 1901. This is wrong...it should be October 24.

IT IS characteristic of evil-minded people, that they cannot comprehend goodness in another. They cannot conceive of such a thing as disinterested benevolence. They imagine some ulterior motive in every kind act they see. This is expressed in God's words to the wicked:

Psalm 50

²¹ You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourself.

So Joseph's brethren thought that he had shown kindness to them out of respect for his father, but that now he would surely have revenge, and do to them as they had done to him. Their suspicions showed what they would have done in the same circumstances.

Genesis 50

¹⁷ And Joseph wept when they spoke unto him.

Nothing can wound love more than to suspect it. He was not angry, but grieved. It was not that his feelings were hurt (he had suffered too much injustice and oppression to be wounded by misunderstanding of his motives), but he wept even as Jesus did over Jerusalem, when He said,

Luke 19

⁴² If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace!

It was sad that Joseph's brethren had received only the physical benefit of his kindness all these years, and had not understood it well enough to be won by it and be transformed by it.

2 Corinthians 13

⁸ We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

How plainly this is demonstrated in the case of Joseph and his brethren. God had by dreams foretold that his brethren should bow down before him. They had taken effectual measures as they thought, to make it impossible for such a thing

ever to take place. They had said,

Genesis 37

²⁰ Let us slay him,...and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

By selling him as a slave they had separated him from them so completely that for years they themselves believed him to be dead; yet it transpired that what they did to prevent the fulfillment of his dreams was what brought it about.

Genesis 50

²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.

Ephesians 1

¹¹ [He] works all things after the counsel of His own will.

Lamentations 3

³⁷ Who is he that says, and it comes to pass, when the Lord commands it not?

Isaiah 14

²⁷ The Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

Whatever the Lord thinks will surely be done, no matter though all the world tries to prevent it. All that is done will only further His plans. This is for our comfort; for just as in the case of Joseph His purpose was to save life, so now,

1 Thessalonians 4

³ This is the will of God, even your sanctification.

And though Satan and all his hosts array themselves against us they cannot thwart God's will. His will must be done, and will be done. The only question is,

“Shall it be done in spite of us to our destruction, or with our hearty assent, to our salvation?”

Joseph's hope was in the promise made of God unto the Fathers. See the article on "The Hope of the Promise."⁷⁰ He knew that when God said to Abraham,

Genesis 15

¹³ Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again,

—and afterwards confirmed this promise with an oath, saying,

Genesis 22

¹⁷ Your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies,

—He was promising the inheritance through the resurrection, when death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed. He understood the glorious hope that God was holding out to Israel, and died full of faith in it.

The course of Joseph, in directing that his bones should not be buried in Egypt, but should be kept until God delivered His people, is a lesson even for us.

Hebrews 11

²² By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

During all the oppression, when the children of Israel experienced that which their fathers had made Joseph undergo, they had the bones of Joseph as a constant reminder of his trust in the faithfulness of God, and how it had been justified. Never had they any excuse for forgetting the promise of God;

⁷⁰ Editor's note: Waggoner is referring to another article that appeared in this same issue of October 24, 1901. That article is now included in the collection of articles, *Paul and the Early Church*. Note also that the *Words of the Adventist Pioneers* FolioViews collection has got the date wrong. It includes this article (and a few others) under October 17, whereas they should be October 24.

and during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness, the bones of Joseph were a constant reproof of their unbelief and murmuring. That same promise is ours today. The fact that they to whom it was preached did not believe it, and...

Hebrews 3

¹⁹ ...could not enter in, because of unbelief,

–does not in the least shake the surety of it.

2 Peter 3

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Thus,

¹⁵ ...the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.

51. Man's Thought and God's Thought

Present Truth, January 1, 1903

Genesis 50:17-20

E. J. Waggoner

Acts 7

⁹ The patriarchs moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt;
but God was with him,

¹⁰ And delivered him out of all his afflictions.

JOSEPH saw the hand of God in the matter, and said to his brethren,

Genesis 50

²⁰ You thought evil against me, but God meant it for good.

The full force of the Hebrew is not given in the translation, for both clauses have the same verb in the Hebrew; and the verse really reads thus:

“You thought evil against me, but God thought good.”

The contrast, it will be seen, is very striking: Joseph's brethren thought evil against him, even planning his death; but God thought good, even purposing...

²⁰ ...to save much people alive;

—and God's thought prevailed. So much more powerful was God's good thought than Joseph's brethren's evil thought that their evil design was made to work out God's good purpose. How vividly this illustrates the truth that:

Ephesians 1

¹¹ [God] works all things after the counsel of His own will,

—making even...

Psalms 76

¹⁰ ...the wrath of man to praise Him.

So we need not fear or worry even though a wicked man

seems to succeed in his evil way, and...

Psalm 37

⁷ ...brings wicked devices to pass,

–or, literally,

“...does his thoughts.”

It makes no difference how much evil a man may think against us, nor how fully he may accomplish his designs; if God thinks good, all the evil will come to nothing, and only good will result. How calmly confident, then, we ought to be, since God says:

Jeremiah 29

¹¹ I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil.

Aggrieved Love

As soon as Jacob was buried, his sons said to one another,

“Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.”

So little did they appreciate Joseph’s character and understand real forgiveness, that they thought that Joseph had for years been cherishing hatred against them, and had been dissembling out of deference to his father. So they came begging Joseph to forgive them, and pleading, as though it were necessary, that their father had left word that he should do so.

Genesis 50

¹⁷ And Joseph wept when they spoke unto him.

The severest blow that can be given is to discredit one’s expressions of love. We can easily picture to ourselves how Joseph’s tender heart was grieved at the thought that his brethren had so little perception and understanding of the genuineness of his kindness toward them; but how often are we guilty of the same lack of appreciation of God’s kindness

and love. How often God must be grieved as He sees His children doubting Him.

Let us not dishonor Him any more by our doubts, but trust Him at all times.

52. Suggestions for Quarterly Review

Signs of the Times, June 15, 1888

Genesis Overview

E. J. Waggoner

1. Give a brief Bible description of the character of Abraham.
2. What was the foundation of Abraham's righteousness?
3. Tell how Abraham's faith was tested.
4. What made this such a test of his faith?
5. How did Jacob come to leave his father's house?
6. Relate the dream which he had while on his journey.
7. What vow did he make?
8. Give proof that it is right for us to make such vows.
9. Where is this narrative recorded?
10. Relate the circumstances of Jacob's wrestling with the angel.
11. Who was the angel?
12. What was the cause of Jacob's impotency, and what did he receive?
13. For what purpose was this narrative recorded?
14. What led to Joseph's being sold into Egypt?
15. How did he suffer there, and what for?
16. What subsequent position did he occupy?
17. What was the real cause of Joseph's prosperity?
18. Show how God overruled the purposes of wicked men for good.
19. How did the Israelites come to settle in the land of Egypt?
20. After they became very numerous, what was done to them?
21. Tell how Moses was fitted for the work of delivering the

people.

22. Relate the circumstances of his call to return to Egypt to deliver Israel.
23. What was God's special object in delivering his people?

Notes

Faith was the foundation of Abraham's righteousness, as indeed it is of all righteousness. The apostle tells us that:

Hebrews 11

⁶ Without faith it is impossible to please God;

–but we know that God is pleased with righteousness, and with those who are righteous; therefore, without faith it is impossible to be righteous. And this is just what the Saviour meant when He said:

John 15

⁵ He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.

But these words of our Saviour suggest another thought, namely, that being merely justified for past transgressions is not enough; the man who is justified must, if he would retain his justification, abide in Christ by a living faith. This is aptly stated elsewhere by the same apostle who recorded the words of our Saviour just quoted. He says:

1 John 2

⁶ He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.

There must be a growth, a development; the Christian must bring forth fruit. Paul tells us what some of these fruits are,⁷¹ and in 2 *Peter* 1:9 we are assured that:

⁷¹ *Galatians* 5:22-23.

2 Peter 1

⁹ He that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

The professed Christian who is not giving all diligence to add to his faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity,⁷² may well doubt the genuineness of his faith.

Bible faith is not simply a passive belief of the declarations and promises of God, but it is an active, living principle which permeates the whole being, rules the life, and incites its possessor to action. We know that Abraham's faith was of this character, for the Lord himself said to Isaac:

Genesis 26

⁵ Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

And the apostle James says,

James 2

¹⁷ Faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone.

In proof of this proposition the apostle cites the case of Abraham, thus:

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

²² Do you see how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

The apostle does not teach that works can by any means take the place of faith, but that real faith will work. Abraham obeyed God because he had faith; and in the very act of obedience his faith was strengthened. This is well explained by these words of the apostle John:

1 John 3

²¹ Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then we have confi-

⁷² 2 Peter 1:5-7.

dence toward God.

²² And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

It is thus that “by works was faith made perfect” in the case of “the father of the faithful.” And it is thus that faith must be perfected in each one of our cases. Faith is implicit trust in, or confidence towards, God; but if our hearts condemn us, as they certainly will if we are living in sin, we cannot have this confidence, and consequently no true faith, but, like the devils, we also will believe only to tremble.

Exodus

Other Resources to Consult:

Keeping the Commandments (Jones)
The Everlasting Covenant (Waggoner)
The Law of Life (Waggoner)

1. The Bondage in Egypt

Signs of the Times, May 18, 1888

Genesis 45:9 to 46:4; Exodus 1

E. J. Waggoner

1. When Joseph had made himself known to his brethren, what did he tell them to do?

Genesis 45

⁹ Make haste, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not:

¹⁰ And you shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near unto me, you, and your children, and your children's children, and your flocks, and your herds, and all that you have:

¹¹ And there will I nourish you; for yet there are five years of famine; lest you, and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty.

2. What liberal offer did Pharaoh make?

¹⁷ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto your brethren, This do; load your beasts, and go, get unto the land of Canaan;

¹⁸ And take your father and your households, and come unto me; and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land.

¹⁹ Now you are commanded, this do; take wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.

²⁰ Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.

3. What timely caution did Joseph give his brethren?

²⁴ So he sent his brethren away, and they departed; and he said unto them, See that you fall not out by the way.

4. How did Jacob feel when his sons returned with this story?

²⁵ And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of

Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.

²⁶ And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

5. What finally induced him to consent to go?

Genesis 45

²⁷ And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them; and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived:

²⁸ And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die.

6. When he started, what encouragement did the Lord give him?

Genesis 46

¹ And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

² And God spoke unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.

³ And He said, I am God, the God of your father; fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation:

⁴ I will go down with you into Egypt; and I will also surely bring you up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon your eyes.

7. How many were there who went down into Egypt?

Acts 7

¹⁴ Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

8. How long did they live there in peace?

Compare *Genesis* 41:46; 45:11; 50:26.

9. How did the children of Israel prosper in Egypt?

Exodus 1

⁷ And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the

land was filled with them.

10. What took place some time after Joseph's death?

Exodus 1

⁸ Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

11. What did they do to the Israelites?

¹¹ Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

12. How did this affect them?

¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

13. What did the children of Israel have to suffer at the hands of the Egyptians?

¹³ And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor:

¹⁴ And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor.

14. Of what prophecy was this a fulfillment?

Genesis 15

¹³ And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

15. What cruel order did the king of Egypt make?

Exodus 1

²² And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.

16. Relate the story of one child who was saved from the

king's decree.

Exodus 2:1-10.

17. What led the parents of Moses to do as they did?

Hebrews 11

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

Notes

In connection with their discovery, considerable light is thrown upon the statement that:

Exodus 1

⁸ There arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

He was literally "a new king," inasmuch as he was the founder of a new dynasty. He was not an Egyptian, but an Assyrian, and therefore it could not be expected that he would be moved by any sentimental consideration of what Joseph had done for Egypt. The memory of Joseph's service for the country might have prevented a native king from oppressing his countrymen, but would have no weight with a foreigner. With this view of the case, *Isaiah* 52:4 becomes perfectly clear:

Isaiah 52

⁴ For thus says the Lord God, My people went down afore-time into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

We are not to understand from *Genesis* 15:13 that the Israelites were in Egypt four hundred years. The actual time spent in Egypt was only about two hundred and fifteen years, but they were sojourners in a land that was not theirs for a much longer period than that. As the four hundred and thirty years of *Exodus* 12:40 are to be dated from the promise to Abraham, so the four hundred years are to be dated from thirty years later, or about the time that Ishmael,

Galatians 4

²⁰ He that was born after the flesh, persecuted [Isaac] him that was born after the Spirit.

2. Prosperity by Adversity

Present Truth, October 31, 1901

International Sunday-school Lesson for November 10

Exodus 1:1-14

E. J. Waggoner

Psalm 119

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept your Word.

Romans 5

³ Tribulation works patience;

⁴ And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

⁵ And hope makes not ashamed.

James 1

⁴ Let patience [endurance] have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.

James 5

¹¹ You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Nothing happens by accident in this world.

Proverbs 26

² The curse causeless does not come.

No person on this earth ever suffered anything that was not made necessary, either by his own sins or the sins of others. If the suffering was wholly the result of his own sins and errors, it was in the nature of instruction and warning, that he might learn to shun the evil course and its consequences in the future; and so it was a message of peace.

And whether the suffering came for his own sins, or wholly because of somebody else's failure, it was that the sufferer might be filled to assist others in affliction. Even the Captain of our salvation was made...

Hebrews 2

¹⁰ ...perfect through sufferings,

–being...

¹⁷ ...in all things...made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

¹⁸ For in that He himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.

Thus one object of the oppression which the Israelites suffered in Egypt was to teach them mercy. God said to them,

Deuteronomy 24

¹⁷ You shall not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge:

¹⁸ But you shall remember that you were a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you thence: therefore I command you to do this thing.

In many places were the Israelites admonished to be merciful, by the memory of what they had suffered in Egypt. Furthermore, if the children of Israel had never been oppressed, they would never have wanted to leave Egypt. They were situated in the most fertile part of the country, and if they had been left wholly at ease, they would have had no incentive to go to the far better country which the Lord had given them.

Deuteronomy 32

¹¹ As the eagle stirs up her nest,

–throwing the young ones out when they will not of themselves attempt to fly, so the Lord dealt with Israel. Even so it is now. If we had everything to our liking, we should be far less likely to listen to the message of salvation. This is the way it is with those who are...

Psalms 73

⁵ ...not in trouble as other men,

–but who have only prosperity.

Psalms 73

⁶ Pride compasses them about as a chain; violence covers them as a garment.

⁷ Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish.

⁸ They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily.

¹¹ And they say, How does God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?

¹² Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; the increase in riches.

But they stand in slippery places, and shall...

Proverbs 1

³¹ ...be filled with their own devices.

³² For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

It is much better, therefore, to be afflicted and saved from ruin, than to have prosperity and go to destruction. For although God stirs His people out of their nest, He also, like the eagle, bears them on His wings.

Exodus 1

⁷ The children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly [literally, “swarmed”], and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

⁸ Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

⁹ And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:

¹⁰ Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falls out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.

¹¹ Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.

Truly,

1 Corinthians 3

¹⁹ The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

That “new king,” the first of a new dynasty from Assyria, who “knew not Joseph,” and therefore “without cause”⁷³ oppressed Israel, thought that he was planning very shrewdly; but the very course that he took to crush the numbers and strength of the Israelites only caused them to multiply and grow stronger.

It was not simply that God worked an unusual miracle, to defeat the purpose of the heathen king; the truth is that hardship and toil, instead of breaking down the human frame, build up and harden it. Idleness and ease are the foes of health and strength. With the luxuries of civilization, and labor-saving machinery, come unfruitfulness, feebleness of body, and inability to resist disease.

There is a practical lesson here for us, not only as a nation, but as individuals. People are taught to think that their benefactors are those who procure them “shorter hours of labor,” and to bring luxuries within their reach and “make life easy” for them. All this is indeed pleasanter for the time, and more acceptable to natural inclination; but if it be a benefit to have a long life of health, then it is a question whether all the “modern conveniences” are benefits. This is not an apology for oppression; for,

Proverbs 14

³¹ He that oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker.

But it is a plea for people to exercise a wise self-restraint, and, like the Apostle Paul, to keep the body under, and...

1 Corinthians 9

²⁷ ...bring it into subjection.

⁷³ *Isaiah 3:4.*

It is, indeed, a fact, that in spite of all the oppression of the poor by capitalists and trusts, the most of the real troubles of the poor in every land arise from their own evil habits and lack of desire for self-improvement.

In every government, though terror reign;
Though tyrant laws and tyrant kings restrain;
How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure.
Still to ourselves in every place consigned,
Our own felicity we make or find.⁷⁴

Exodus 2

²³ And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

Although oppression of God's people always causes them to prosper (for the man whose delight is in law of the Lord, and who meditates in it day and night will have prosperity whatever his circumstances⁷⁵), that does not make oppression a virtue. The Lord is always on the side of the oppressed, and against the oppressor.

Psalm 102

¹⁹ He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary;
from heaven did the Lord behold the earth;

²⁰ To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death.

Psalm 12

⁵ For the oppression of the poor, for the signing of the needy, now will I rise, says the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him.

Read *James* 5:1-8, to see how God regards the poor and their oppressors. The only obstacle in the way of the poor is disbelief in God, and the lack of regard for Him. If they would be-

⁷⁴ Oliver Goldsmith, Poem: *The Traveller*.

⁷⁵ *Psalm* 1:2-3.

lieve in Him as a present help in trouble, and would heed His commandments, walking in His ways, and would cry to Him, instead of to Parliament, they would see even in their adversity such prosperity as they have never dreamed of.

The treasure cities which the Israelites built for Pharaoh have ceased to exist. Their very sites unknown, and the treasures they contain have long ago been scattered to the winds, or consumed by the moth. The pyramids, which they doubtless helped to construct, are empty shells, serving only to show that there was once a great and powerful kingdom in the land of the Nile; but the poor, oppressed slaves, who were to be exterminated, are still flourishing.

Though still oppressed in many lands, they nevertheless multiply, and never swell the list of paupers. Even though they have forgotten God and His covenant, and have ceased to be His peculiar people, His mercy has preserved them as a monument of how futile it is to fight against the Most High. Though we believe not,

2 Timothy 2

¹³ ...yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny himself.

3. A Rare Opportunity

Present Truth, November 7, 1901

International Sunday-school Lesson for November 17

Exodus 2:1-10

E. J. Waggoner

1 Corinthians 1

²⁷ God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

NEVER, except in the case of the Babe of Bethlehem, of whom he was a type, has this been more fully exemplified than in the case of Moses. The outcast child of a slave father and mother, is the one chosen of God to make the haughty monarch tremble on his throne, and to be known in all ages, over all the earth, as one of the mightiest leaders of men.

Moses was born and at a most critical time for Israel. Heavy burdens and cruel bondage had only resulted in making them more hardy and fruitful, and the decree had gone forth that all the male children that were born should be cast into the river. This was more than a threat; it was actually done; for Stephen said of Pharaoh the oppressor:

Acts 7

¹⁹ The same dealt subtly with our kindred, and evil intreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end that they might not live.

²⁰ In which time Moses was born.

How many young children perished, we have no means of knowing; but we can see how similar the circumstances attending the birth of Moses were to those at the time when Christ was born. At both times an effort was made to destroy all the male infants.

Hebrews 11

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, because they saw he

was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

They were not afraid of the king's commandment, but they took every precaution to save the life of their child. Indeed, their very efforts showed their lack of fear; for it is very evident that the decree to destroy all the male children was accompanied by a severe penalty to be visited upon all who disregarded it. But the parents of Moses would not destroy their child, no matter how arbitrary the king's commandment.

²³ ...because they saw that he was a proper child.

When his mother...

Exodus 2

² ...saw him, that he was a good the child, she hid him three months.

Stephen says that:

Acts 7

²⁰ Moses was...exceeding fair;

–literally, “fair to God.” The expression just quoted from *Exodus*, that his mother saw that he was a goodly child, is identical with that which occurs so frequently in the 1st chapter of *Genesis*:

Genesis 1 [also vs. 12, 18, 21, 25]

¹⁰ God saw that it was good.

The Swedish of *Acts* 7:20 has it that:

“He was pleasing to God.”

From all this it is evident that Moses had a good birthright inheritance, and that these were plain indications that God had designed him for a special work. Since the Lord has given...

Mark 13

³⁴ ...to every man his work,

–ought not the same to be true in the case of every child?

Acts 7

²¹ And when he was cast out Pharaoh's daughter took him up.

In this there was a fulfillment of the words:

Psalm 27

¹¹ When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.

It was not accidental that Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river that day, nor that her heart was moved with compassion when she saw the little baby in the basket. That was God's way of taking up the child. Here, as in the case of Joseph, the thing that seemed the end of hope was the means used by God to fit His servant for the work He had for him to do. By being brought into the household of Pharaoh, Moses gained an experience that stood him in good stead in his afterlife.

But, after all, the secret of his success in life, and of his steadfastness in the path of duty, lay in the few years that he spent with his mother, who was hired to nurse him. How marvelously God wrought in answer to the faith of the parents of Moses. They would not tamely submit to the king's wicked commandment, and instead of suffering for their faith it was so ordered that the mother could have her child openly, and be paid good wages for the service that she so gladly rendered. It was because...

Hebrews 11

²³ ...they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

Fearlessness delivers one from many threatened dangers. Fear invites attack, and it is the fearful soul that is lost. Confidence in God will not only give one victory over trial, but will often save one from difficulties that overwhelm the fearful. So because Amram and his mother were fearless souls on ac-

count of their faith in God, they had their son with them during the most important years of his life.

A Roman Catholic priest is reported to have said that if he could have the training of a child till it was six years old, he did not care who had him afterwards; he was sure that the impressions made on it at that period of life would never be erased, and that it would be a Catholic. The mother of Moses evidently appreciated her opportunity and did her work so well, teaching her infant son the principles of the Gospel and promises of God so thoroughly that:

Hebrews 11

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

Would Jochebed have been so earnest and faithful in teaching Moses, and have improved time so well, to sharpen his mind with the Divine precepts, if she could have had him with her as mothers ordinarily have their children? It is hardly probable. There is no doubt but that the knowledge of how brief her time with him would be, of the influences which he was soon to meet, quickened and increased her diligence.

But this case is left on record for an example and a warning. It is a warning: for no mother knows how soon her child may be torn from her arms, and be thrust into conditions exactly opposite from those that she has provided. The death of a mother leaves many a child subject to influences as unlike those of its home as it is possible to conceive. And the case is an example, in that it shows how much a mother may accomplish in a few short years.

Oh, that all parents would see and appreciate what far-reaching consequences depend on how they train or neglect

their children even in earliest infancy, and what a mighty power God has placed in their hands.

4. Moses and His Work

Signs of the Times, May 25, 1888

Exodus 2:10 to 4:31

E. J. Waggoner

1. Who claimed Moses as her son?

Exodus 2

¹⁰ And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses; and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.

2. What advantages did this give him?

Acts 7

²¹ And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

²² And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

3. What happened one day when he was grown?

Exodus 2

¹¹ And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren.

¹² And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

4. How old was he when this happened?

Acts 7

²³ And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

²⁴ And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian.

5. Why did he do this?

²⁵ For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they under-

stood not.

6. What is indicated by this verse?

That Moses had in some way learned that God would make use of him to deliver the children of Israel; and he supposed that they would understand it also.

7. Did they understand it?

8. What shows that they did not?

Acts 7

²⁵ For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

²⁶ And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, you are brethren; why do you wrong one to another?

²⁷ But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?

²⁸ Will you kill me, as you did the Egyptian yesterday?

9. By this attempted deliverance of Israel, what stand did Moses take?

He identified himself with Israel.

Hebrews 11

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

10. What choice did he make?

²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

11. What did he value more highly than the wealth of Egypt?

²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

12. When Moses found that even his own people would not acknowledge him as a deliverer, what did he do?

Exodus 2

¹⁵ Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.

Acts 7

²⁹ Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.

13. How long did he remain there?

³⁰ And when forty years were expired...

14. What did he do all these years?

Exodus 3

¹ Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.

15. At the expiration of forty years, what took place?

Acts 7

³⁰ And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

16. What did the Lord then propose to do with Moses?

³⁴ I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you into Egypt.

17. Did the Israelites believe in the mission Moses this time?

Exodus 4

²⁹ And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:

³⁰ And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

³¹ And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

18. What must have been the reason that they did not accept him before?

Because although he had been appointed to do the work, he did not go in the Lord's way nor the Lord's time; he had only his own credentials.

Notes

Still further Rawlinson says (we leave out his references):

No one will for a moment imagine that the wisest of the Greeks went to study in Egypt for any other reason than because it was there that the greatest discoveries were to be learned; and that Pythagoras or his followers suggested, from no previous experience, the theory of the sun being the center of our system; or the obliquity of the ecliptic, or the moon's borrowed light, or the proof of the milky way being a collection of stars....The same may be said of the principle by which the heavenly bodies were attracted to a center, and impelled in their order, the theory of eclipses, and the proof of the earth being round. These and many other notions were doubtless borrowed from Egypt, to which the Greeks chiefly resorted.⁷⁶

Stephen's statement would indicate that Moses was not simply well versed in the arts and sciences, but that he was a practical man. Josephus says that he was placed at the head of the Egyptian armies, and that by his skillful leadership he defeated the Ethiopians, gaining great glory for the Egyptians.⁷⁷ Whether this is true or not, it is certain that he was a great general.

In all the years of his stay in the court of Egypt, as well as while he was in the land of Midian, God was preparing him for the great work of his life. God works through means. While he could have miraculously endowed an ignorant man with the knowledge necessary to lead his people, he chose to

⁷⁶ *The History of Herodotus*, vol. II, chap. 7.

⁷⁷ *Antiquities*, book 2, chap. 10.

take a man possessed of all the natural and acquired qualifications that from a human standpoint would seem necessary, and to place his Spirit upon him.

The Lord doesn't usually call people to do a work for which they have no fitness. One of the qualifications of a minister of the gospel is that he should be...

1 Timothy 3

² ...apt to teach.

If he has not this aptness, and cannot cultivate it, he may accept that fact as evidence that God has not called him to the ministry. When God calls a man to a work, he calls him to prepare for it.

5. Called of God

Present Truth, November 21, 1901

Exodus 3:1-12

E. J. Waggoner

THE miraculous deliverance of Moses in his infancy, the king's edict for his destruction being the means by which he was given a home in the royal palace, indicated that he was intended for no ordinary work.

In the few years that he was with his mother he learned the history of his people, and God's promises to them, becoming imbued with her faith; and in later years the word of the Lord came to him in the palace, just as it afterwards came to John in the wilderness, asking his mission known to him. So,

Hebrews 11

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.

But his faith and zeal were not fully instructed, and he did not know the way of the Lord. He thought himself competent for the task to which he was sure that God had appointed him, and he proceeded to deliver his brethren according to his own way, the way that would naturally command itself to the whole world; for in all ages men have been taught that whoever would be free must himself strike the blow.

This is what is being taught today to men who are in some respects in similar circumstances to those Israelites. They were slaves, suffering under a most grinding monopoly. No other laborers have ever been so cruelly oppressed as they were. In our day laborers, in far more favorable circumstances are being encouraged by professed Christians to combine, and strike together for freedom, to resist monopoly even with

weapons. This was the plan that Moses tried, and it failed, as it will now, because it is not God's way.

For forty years in the wilderness tending sheep Moses had an opportunity to unlearn some of the lessons that he had learned at court, and to learn some new ones. In the sheep-folds the Great Shepherd...

Psalm 103

⁷ ...made known His ways unto Moses,

—and at last when his preliminary training was complete, God met him and gave him a very definite call. In the burning bush God appeared to him, and said,

Exodus 3

⁷ I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows;

⁸ And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large...

¹⁰ Come now, therefore, and I will send you unto Pharaoh, that you may bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

But Moses was not nearly so anxious to go, now that he was really prepared for the work, as he was forty years before. He demurred, and excused himself, pleading that he was not eloquent and could not speak well. His lack of confidence in himself was admirable; but he should have taken note of the fact that God had said He himself had come down to deliver His people; Moses was to be only an instrument in God's hands; and though he himself could do nothing, God could do everything either with him or without him.

1 Corinthians 1

²⁷ God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

The way in which God appeared to Moses was an object les-

son.

Exodus 3

² ...he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

A dry bush is a very inflammable thing, and...

Hebrews 12

²⁹ ...our God is a consuming fire;

—yet His presence in that combustible object preserved it. What an incentive to confidence in Him!

To Every Man His Work

The same God lives today, and the same work remains to be done; for in that day the people...

Hebrews 3

¹⁹ ...could not enter in because of unbelief.

Therefore, the Lord has...

Isaiah 11

¹¹ ...set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people,

—and He calls,

Isaiah 6

⁸ Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?

Everyone who hears is commissioned to say,

Revelation 22

¹⁷ Come!

—for the Lord has given...

Mark 13

³⁴ ...to every man his work.

So has the Lord commanded us, saying,

Isaiah 49

⁶ It is a light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the world.

Hebrews 5

⁴ But no man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God.

God appointed John the Baptist, Jeremiah, and others who were specially prominent, for a definite work, even before they were born; but there came a time in their lives when He was ready for them to engage in it. If they had gone before the Word of the Lord came definitely to them, their work would have been a failure. David was anointed king over Israel when he was a lad tending sheep; but it was years before God called him to the throne.

So although God has given to every man his work, it is our privilege to know so definitely as did those men when it is the Lord's time for us to enter upon our special part of it. No one can tell how the call will come; but each one who has an ear to hear will recognize it when it does come. If it is a grave mistake for any man to neglect the call of God to the work, it is no less serious a matter for anyone to assume responsibilities to which God has not definitely called him, or to run ahead of the Lord.

The Ability to Speak

Exodus 4

¹⁰ And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since You have spoken unto your servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

¹¹ And the Lord said unto him, Who has made man's mouth? or who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?

¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall say.

It is the Lord that has put into us the word of reconciliation, and we are to speak only with His words. God's Word is the good seed that, though it be wrapped in never so many coverings, will surely at the appointed time burst through all its fetters and make itself known. When the time comes for it to be spoken, the children will proclaim it, if their elders are not ready; and if the children should hold their peace,

Luke 19

⁴⁰ ...the stones would cry out.

None, therefore, who have received the Word of the Lord, and who know definitely as Moses did in the wilderness that God has appeared to them and called them to proclaim His message, it may be in a very humble capacity, and a limited sphere, need fear that utterance will not be given them. The Lord's promise is,

Acts 1

⁸ You shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses.

And how this can be fulfilled was shown on the day of Pentecost, when the company of believers,—a people few and despised by the world,—began to speak...

Acts 2

⁴ ...as the Spirit gave them utterance.

There was a time when the prophet Daniel saw a vision from God, and the sight of the heavenly visitant took away all his strength, made him dumb, and deprived him of breath, so that there was no breath left in him. Then the mighty one of God touched his mouth, and he began to speak, even while destitute of strength and breath.

Daniel 10

⁸ Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

⁹ Yet I heard the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

¹⁰ And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.

In this there is a lesson for us all, even though it be not our lot to proclaim God's message by word of mouth. Our part is simply to...

Psalm 103

²⁰ ...do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word,

–and allow Him to work in us both to will and to do, and to speak, if necessary, according to His good pleasure.

6. Moses Sent to Egypt

Signs of the Times, June 1, 1888

Exodus 3:2 to 4:16

E. J. Waggoner

1. When Moses went out the first time to deliver Israel, by slaying the Egyptians, what did he manifest?

Pride and self-sufficiency.

2. What must we conclude was his idea of the way deliverance would come?

That the people would rally around him, and that under his military guidance they would fight their way out of bondage.

3. In that case who alone would have received the glory?

4. What was God's design?

Exodus 14

¹⁷ And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

¹⁸ And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

5. While Moses was keeping sheep in the wilderness, what did he learn?

Numbers 12

³ Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.

6. When he went with the Lord's commission, how was he regarded?

Exodus 11

³ And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

7. How did the Lord appear to Moses, when he would send him to Egypt?

Exodus 3

² And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

³ And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

⁴ And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here I am.

8. When Moses went to see the burning bush, what was said to him?

⁴ And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

⁵ And he said, Draw not nigh hither; put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.

9. Who was it speaking from the bush?

⁶ Moreover he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

10. What other instances can you name where people were required to put off their shoes on account of the presence of God?

11. What did the Lord say He had seen and heard?

⁷ And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.

Acts 7

³⁴ I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you into Egypt.

12. What did he say he now proposed to do?

Exodus 3

⁸ And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

⁹ Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

¹⁰ Come now therefore, and I will send you unto Pharaoh, that you may bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

13. How eager was Moses now to go?

¹¹ And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

14. What did the Lord say?

¹² And he said, Certainly I will be with you; and this shall be a token unto you, that I have sent you: When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.

15. What question did Moses ask?

¹³ And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers has sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them?

16. What did the Lord reply?

¹⁴ And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and He said, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you.

17. What did God say of this name?

Exodus 3

¹⁵ And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me unto you; this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

18. What is its meaning?

It means “the One who is,” that is, the self-existent One, thus expressing the distinguishing characteristic of God.

19. What objection did Moses still interpose?

Exodus 4

¹ And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, The Lord has not appeared unto you.

20. What three signs did the Lord give him by which he might prove that he had a divine commission?

² And the Lord said unto him, What is that in your hand? And he said, A rod.

³ And He said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

⁴ And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth your hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

⁵ That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared unto you.

⁶ And the Lord said furthermore unto him, Put now your hand into your bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.

⁷ And He said, Put your hand into your bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.

⁸ And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, nei-

ther hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

⁹ And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto your voice, that you shall take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which you take out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.

21. Was Moses ready to go then?

Exodus 4

¹⁰ And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since You have spoken unto your servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

22. What reply did the Lord make!

¹¹ And the Lord said unto him, Who has made man's mouth? or who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?

¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall say.

23. What did Moses still say?

¹³ And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray You, by the hand of him whom You will send.

24. How did the Lord regard this continued refusal?

¹⁴ And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses...

25. What help did he provide for Moses?

¹⁴ ...and He said, Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he comes forth to meet you; and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.

26. Who did he say should instruct them both?

¹⁵ And you shall speak unto him, and put words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do.

¹⁶ And he shall be your spokesman unto the people; and he shall be, even he shall be to you instead of a mouth, and you

shall be to him instead of God.

27. What confidence may the Lord's servants have in this age as they go to preach the gospel?

Matthew 28

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

¹⁹ Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

When God sent Moses back to Egypt, He gave him the best commission that was every given to man.

Exodus 3

¹⁴ Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you.

God made himself known as the self-existent one—the living God. He is the living God, in contradistinction from all other gods of every kind. He has...

John 5

²⁶ ...life in himself,

—He is the Author of life. The title, "I AM" comprises all that may be said of God, for that He is the Creator of all things is necessarily conveyed in the idea that He alone lives by His own power. The possession of life, inherent life, marks Deity. The man who claims to have life in himself, whether he has faith in Christ or not, actually claims to be God.

On the changing of the rod into a serpent, *Speaker's Commentary* says:

This miracle had a meaning which Moses could not mistake. The serpent was probably the basilisk or Uracus, the Cobra. See Tretram, *Nat. His.*, p. 271. This was the symbol of

royal and divine power on the diadem of every Pharaoh. It was a poisonous snake, as is shown by the flight of Moses, and by most passages in which the same word occurs, *sehash*, derived from hissing. This snake never attacks without first inflating its neck, and then hissing; on the monuments it is always represented with its neck enormously swollen. The conversion of the rod was not merely a portent, it was a sign, at once a pledge and representation of victory over the king and gods of Egypt.

7. Shrinking from Duty

Signs of the Times, December 21, 1888

Original title: The Commentary. Shrinking from Duty

Exodus 3:4 to 4:16

E. J. Waggoner

1. Under what circumstances did the Lord appear to Moses at Horeb?

Exodus 3

⁴ And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here I am.

⁵ And He said, Draw not nigh hither; put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.

⁶ Moreover He said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

2. For what purpose did the Lord appear to him?

⁷ And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

⁸ And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

⁹ Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

¹⁰ Come now therefore, and I will send you unto Pharaoh, that you may bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

3. By what name did the Lord say He would be known?

¹³ And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers has sent me unto you; and they shall say to me,

What is His name? what shall I say unto them?

¹⁴ And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you.

¹⁵ And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me unto you; this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

4. What is the significance of this name?

The One who is; the self-existence and eternal One.

5. What similar terms do we find in the New Testament?

Revelation 1

⁴ John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne.

Hebrews 13

⁸ Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

6. What sign was given to Moses, by which the Israelites might know that the Lord had appeared to him?

Exodus 4

¹ And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, The Lord has not appeared unto you.

² And the Lord said unto him, What is that in your hand? And he said, A rod.

³ And He said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

⁴ And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth your hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

⁵ That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared unto you.

7. What additional sign was given?

Exodus 4

⁶ And the Lord said furthermore unto him, Put now your hand into your bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.

⁷ And He said, Put your hand into your bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.

8. What further sign was Moses to give in case the Israelites should not believe the first two?

⁸ And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto your voice, that you shall take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land; and the water which you take out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.

9. What excuse did Moses then make?

¹⁰ And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since You have spoken unto your servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

10. What rebuke and encouragement did the Lord give him?

¹¹ And the Lord said unto him, Who has made man's mouth? or who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?

¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall say.

11. What reply did Moses make?

¹³ And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray You, by the hand of him whom You will send.

12. With what did Moses thus indirectly charge God?

See note.

13. How did the Lord regard this?

¹⁴ And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses...

14. What further encouragement did He give Moses?

Exodus 4

¹⁴ And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said, Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he comes forth to meet you; and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.

¹⁵ And you shall speak unto him, and put words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do.

¹⁶ And he shall be your spokesman unto the people; and he shall be, even he shall be to you instead of a mouth, and you shall be to him instead of God.

15. What practical lesson may we learn from this occurrence?

See note.

Note

When Moses said to the Lord,

Exodus 4

¹³ Send, I pray You, by the hand of him whom You should send,

–he indirectly charged God with not knowing who He ought to send. If the Lord had not seen that Moses was the best man for the place, He would not have selected him. While God does not want a man to run when he has not been sent,⁷⁸ He does want a man to go when He sends him. If God indicates that He wants a man to do a certain work, that is sufficient evidence that He will sustain him in that work.

It is a terrible thing to refuse to obey the Lord. To beg off from labor to which one has been appointed, is not always humility. It may be an evidence of pride or stubbornness.

This case under consideration may naturally call to the minds of many the case of Jonah, although Jonah was not like Moses except in that he did not want to do what the Lord

⁷⁸ See *Jeremiah* 23:2.

wanted him to do. The motives of the two men were different. The teacher, however, who exhausts the lesson before the allotted time has expired, will do well to call attention to the case of Jonah, and of others that come to his mind, as different phases of this shrinking from duty.

Very often people who plead inability to do a certain work in the church or Sabbath-school, to which they are called, think that their refusal is an evidence of their humility, when, in fact, it is an evidence of nothing but pride. They fear that if they should take hold of it, they might make mistakes, and that people might not think so much of them in consequence. And so, in order to avoid possible criticism by men, they are content to be drones, and to risk the displeasure of God. That is one of the worst kinds of pride.

8. The Rod of God

Present Truth, January 8, 1903

Exodus 4:20

E. J. Waggoner

Exodus 4

²⁰ And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

WHAT was this “rod of God,” which Moses took in his hand as he journeyed back to Egypt? It was none other than the rod that he had carried with him when he led the flocks of his father-in-law. Moses was keeping the flocks in the wilderness, when God appeared to him in the bush, and told him to return to Egypt.

Exodus 4

² And the Lord said unto him, What is that in your hand? And he said, A rod.

That was all it was—a branch from a tree. At the command of God, Moses cast it down and it became a serpent, and at the same word he took it up, and it became a rod again. This was done also before Pharaoh. The same rod was lifted up over the Red Sea, to make a way for the children of Israel; and with it Moses smote the rock in Horeb, and water gushed forth for the people to drink.

It was this rod also, still called “the rod of God,” that Moses took in his hand when he stood on the top of the hill, and lifted up his hands to God for the deliverance of Israel from their enemies the Amalekites. When Moses lifted up his hand Israel prevailed, and when he let it down, Amalek prevailed.

Exodus 17

⁹ And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.

¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

¹¹ And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

That rod had a wonderful history; one would almost say a wonderful experience, so full of power did the rod seem; yet it was never anything more than a plain stick. But we see why it was called the rod of God: it was because the Lord used it in so wonderful a manner. Some of the greatest wonders that have ever been done on earth were performed through the agency of that simple rod.

But what power was there in the rod? None at all. It had absolutely no virtue whatever. It could not even lift itself up, much less perform any work. It never did anything, but was merely the visible instrument through which God exhibited His marvelous power. But it never had any more ability to do anything than it had when Moses carried it as his shepherd's staff in the land of Midian.

Then why did it figure so largely in the history of the deliverance of Israel? There can be no other answer than that it was used because it so evidently had no power in itself. When so insignificant and helpless a thing as a stick was used in the performance of the mighty miracles, everybody could see that it was God alone, without any human aid, that did the work. This is the lesson that is taught us in *2 Corinthians*, chapter 4:

2 Corinthians 4

⁶ God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

By the deliverance from Egypt God would show us that there is no more power in man than there is in a stick, and

that whenever any man will yield himself to God; to be as passive in His hands as the rod of God was in the hand of Moses, all the power of God can be exerted and manifested in him. It is thus that we become instruments of righteousness unto God.

This is the lesson that is taught in all the sacrifices and in all the ceremonies that God ever gave the people. There was never any efficacy in them, and their obvious futility was designed to show that salvation is of God alone. Thus, anybody with any sense whatever, who gave a moment's thought to the matter, would know that all the sheep and calves and bullocks in the world could not bring a single dead man to life, and so could not atone for a single sin. Thus men who used the mind that God gave them would be constrained to say,

“In the Lord is all righteousness and strength.”⁷⁹

But let us not forget the primary lesson.

Exodus 4

² What is that in your hand?...A rod.

Then with that rod will God work deliverance. God takes us as we are, and with just the ability that we have, to work out His own vast designs. The first instrument that is ready to hand, He will take. Though one may say that he is of no more value than a stick, let him not forget that if it be but the rod of God it may accomplish wonders.

Isaiah 41

¹⁴ Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you few men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁵ Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills chaff.

Yet one thing more:

⁷⁹ **Isaiah 45** ²⁴ In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.

Psalm 23

⁴ Your rod and your staff they comfort me.

Here is comfort not merely in weakness, but through it: for the veritable rod of God is Jesus of Nazareth—Israel—born in weakness, yet the power of God. Out of weakness God ordains strength.⁸⁰ What a marvelously blessed hope we have in God, when even our weaknesses and temptations are a cause for rejoicing!

Romans 8

³¹ If God be for us, who can be against us?

⁸⁰ **Psalm 8** ² Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength because of your enemies, that You might still the enemy and the avenger.

9. God's Requirement for Israel

Signs of the Times, June 8, 1888

Exodus 4:23 to 5:19

E. J. Waggoner

1. Who met Moses as he was on his way to Egypt?

Exodus 4

²⁷ And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

2. What did Moses tell Aaron?

²⁸ And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

3. When they reached Egypt, what did they do?

²⁹ And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:

³⁰ And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

4. How did the people receive the message, and what did they do?

³¹ And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

5. With what words did Moses and Aaron greet Pharaoh?

Exodus 5

¹ And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

6. What reply did Pharaoh make?

² And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.

7. What further statement did Moses and Aaron make, showing the urgency of the case?

Exodus 5

³ And they said, The God of the Hebrews has met with us; let us go, we pray you, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest He fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.

8. Had God told Moses to make this request?

Exodus 3

¹⁸ And they shall hearken to your voice; and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and you shall say unto him, the Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now let us go, we beseech you, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.

9. Do you think that Moses expected Pharaoh to grant this request?

¹⁹ And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

10. Then why was he directed to make it, and why did he ask that the people might be allowed to go and sacrifice, when they wanted complete deliverance?

See note.

11. What did Pharaoh charge Moses and Aaron with doing?

Exodus 5

⁴ And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do you, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get unto your burdens.

⁵ And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and you make them rest from their burdens.

12. What did he say was the reason that the people wanted to go and sacrifice?

⁸ And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore,

you shall lay upon them; you shall not diminish ought thereof; for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.

¹⁷ But he said, Ye are idle, you are idle; therefore you say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord.

13. How were their burdens increased in consequence?

Exodus 5

⁶ And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,

⁷ You shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore; let them go and gather straw for themselves.

¹⁷ But he said, You are idle, you are idle; therefore you say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord.

¹⁹ And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was said, You shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task.

14. After the Israelites had been delivered, what exhortation was given to them, based on their hard usage in Egypt?

Deuteronomy 5

¹⁴ But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your ox, nor your ass, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates; that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you.

15. What were they told to remember in order that they might not be led to require their servants to work on the Sabbath?

¹⁵ And remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God brought you out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

16. For what purpose did God deliver them from bondage?

Exodus 4

²³ And I say unto you, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your son, even your firstborn.

Psalms 105

⁴³ And He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with gladness:

⁴⁴ And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labor of the people;

⁴⁵ That they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws. Praise the Lord.

17. What does this indicate?

That they could not properly serve Him in Egypt.

18. What may we conclude from this fact, and Pharaoh's statement to Moses and Aaron that they made the people "rest from their burdens," and the exhortation in *Deuteronomy* 5:14-15?

From *Exodus* 4:23 and *Psalms* 105:43-45 we learn that the children of Israel could not serve the Lord in Egypt. In *Deuteronomy* 5:14-15 we find special emphasis given to that portion of the fourth commandment requiring the man-servant and the maid-servant to rest, and the Israelite was told to remember that he had been a servant in the land of Egypt; also in *Exodus* 5:5 we learn that Moses and Aaron made the people "rest from their burdens."

From these facts we may conclude that the Sabbath was one of the things in which they could not serve the Lord in Egypt; and when Moses and Aaron came with the message of God,⁸¹ they attempted a reform, which only increased their oppression. The Israelites were delivered that they might observe the statutes of the Lord, including the Sabbath, and this placed upon them an additional obligation to keep the Sabbath strictly as well as to keep all the commandments.

⁸¹ *Exodus* 1:29-31.

Deuteronomy 6

¹⁷ You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and His testimonies, and His statutes, which He has commanded you.

¹⁸ And you shall do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord: that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land which the Lord swore unto your fathers,

Deuteronomy 26

¹⁷ You have avouched the Lord this day to be your God, and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and to hearken unto His voice:

¹⁸ And the Lord has avouched you this day to be His peculiar people, as He has promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments;

¹⁹ And to make you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that you may be a holy people unto the Lord your God, as He has spoken.

10. The Slave Who Became Master

Present Truth, November 28, 1901

Exodus 5:1, 7:1, 11:3, 8

E. J. Waggoner

THE pages of the wildest romance do not contain any picture of so striking a change in the fortunes of a human being, as that presented in the simple, unpretentious Biblical story of Moses. This is but an illustration that the real far transcends the imaginary.

1 Corinthians 2

⁹ Eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.

¹⁰ But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.

The human mind cannot imagine anything to be compared with the real, every day occurrences with God. This is why a proper study of the Bible gives one a distaste for fictitious reading. The fanciful pales into insignificance beside the real.

Moses was born of slave parents. An entire people had been reduced to servitude, and the spirits of most had been crushed. They were as a matter of course despised, and the very name by which they were known was an expression of contempt: the word "Hebrew" meaning foreigner, alien, immigrant.

The Egyptians, on the other hand, were a haughty people, and their kings were designated merely by "The Ruler," the word Pharaoh meaning, prince, or king. The Israelites, therefore, were despised servants of rulers.

Isaiah 49

⁷ Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faith-

ful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose you.

At the time of greatest oppression Moses was born, and by a strange combination of circumstances was adopted into the royal family. For nearly forty years he enjoyed the luxury of the court, and then he cast in his lot with the despised slaves, and was compelled to flee for his life, and for forty years more he herded sheep in the wilderness. Then he saw God, and heard the Divine call, and went back to Egypt to face the proud Pharaoh on his throne, and to dictate terms to him. So Moses went before the king, and said to him,

Exodus 5

¹ Thus says Jehovah God of Israel, Let my people go.

What a bold thing to do it! Doubtless all the courtiers expected to hear the king order the audacious intruder to be taken out and executed; but he contented himself with the insolent reply,

² Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice, to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go.

Why did not Pharaoh, autocrat that he was, at once put an end to Moses? Here is the secret:

Exodus 7

¹ And the Lord said to Moses, See, I have made you a god to Pharaoh.

Moses was clothed with the power of God, and the proud Pharaoh recognized him as Master, in spite of himself.

Exodus 11

³ Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

How did Moses become so great? Here is the answer:

Luke 14

¹¹ Whoso exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles

himself shall be exalted.

Numbers 12

³ Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.

That is why he became greater than the proud Pharaoh. The experience of the One whom the Lord raised up, like unto Moses, is found in:

Philippians 2

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

⁹ Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name:

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

¹¹ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God declares that His servant...

Isaiah 52

¹³ ...shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high.

Moses was a greater man than Pharaoh; for God was with him. He was in reality the king of Egypt, or, rather, Lord of the king of Egypt. Well, why was this history of Moses and Pharaoh placed on record? It was for our sakes,

Romans 15

⁴ ...for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

In delivering His people Israel, to which God has now set His hand the second time, the Lord has promised to clothe all

His messengers with the same power. Jesus Christ says:

Revelation 2

²⁶ He that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

²⁷ ...even as I received of my Father.

Now read the words of the Lord,

Isaiah 49

⁷ ...the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose you.

⁸ Thus says the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you: and I will preserve you, and give you for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

⁹ That you may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.

This is a prophecy to be fulfilled in our days; in us if we will; and the assurance of it is that which took place thirty-five hundred years ago in Egypt. See further how God exalts His people. Moses said to Pharaoh:

Exodus 11

⁸ All these your servants shall come down unto me, and bow themselves unto me.

And that was actually done. So to those who know Jehovah, and who are content to be only His servants, He says:

Isaiah 45

¹⁴ The labor of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto you, and they shall be yours: they shall come over after you, in chains shall they come over, and they shall fall down unto you, they shall make supplication unto you saying, Surely, God is in you; and there is none else.

This is in the time when God's captive people are to be set free, but...

Isaiah 45

¹³ ...not for price nor reward;

—and the meek of the earth will be the rulers. God exalts His servants;

1 Samuel 2

⁸ He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.

This miracle, this wondrous transformation of a beggar and a slave into a king with power over all the earth, is being performed even now among men.

Proverbs 16

³² He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and He that rules His spirit than he that takes a city.

God's throne is in heaven, and...

Psalms 103

¹⁹ His kingdom rules over all.

Yet,

Luke 17

²¹ The kingdom of God is within you.

Therefore whoever has control over himself, over his own rash spirit and fierce passions, has the very same power that rules the universe.

The case of Moses is placed on record as an assurance, a positive proof, that a slave by birth may become lord over all. For every slave of sin there is the possibility of dominion over the whole earth.

This exaltation is a privilege of whomsoever will accept it,

and special reference is made to the poor and the despised.
Who is a candidate for royal power and authority?

11. Resisting the Truth (1888)

Signs of the Times, December 28, 1888

Exodus 5:1 to 7:8

E. J. Waggoner

1. When Moses and Aaron delivered their message to Pharaoh, what answer did they get?

Exodus 5

¹ And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

² And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.

2. Of what did Pharaoh accuse them?

⁴ And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do you, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens.

⁵ And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and you make them rest from their burdens.

3. What additional burden was placed on the Israelites in consequence?

⁶ And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,

⁷ You shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves.

⁸ And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, you shall lay upon them; you shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.

⁹ Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labor therein; and let them not regard vain words.

4. When Moses the second time repeated God's promise to the Israelites, how did they receive his words?

Exodus 6

⁹ And Moses spoke so unto the children of Israel; but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

5. How did this make Moses feel about going again before Pharaoh?

¹² And Moses spoke before the Lord, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?

6. What assurance did the Lord give him?

Exodus 7

¹ And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made you a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

7. What was meant by this?

² You shall speak all that I command you; and Aaron your brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.

Exodus 4

¹⁶ And he shall be your spokesman unto the people; and he shall be, even he shall be to you instead of a mouth, and you shall be to him instead of God.

8. What was Moses told to do when Pharaoh should ask for a miracle?

Exodus 7

⁹ When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a miracle for you: then you shall say unto Aaron, Take your rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.

9. When this miracle was performed, what did Pharaoh's sorcerers do?

¹⁰ And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded; and Aaron cast down his rod

before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

¹¹ Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

¹² For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents...

10. What manifestation of God's power followed this act of the magicians?

Exodus 7

¹² ...but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

11. What effect did the rejection of this evidence have upon Pharaoh?

Exodus 7 [RV]

¹³ And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had spoken.

12. What were Moses and Aaron told to do next?

¹⁹ And the Lord spoke unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take your rod, and stretch out your hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone.

13. What was the result?

²⁰ And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

²¹ And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

14. What destroyed the effect of this miracle upon Pharaoh?

Exodus 7

²² And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the Lord had said.

15. What plague was next threatened, if the king should refuse to let the people go?

Exodus 8

¹ And the Lord spoke unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus says the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

² And if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all your borders with frogs.

16. Was this done?

⁵ And the Lord spoke unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth your hand with your rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.

⁶ And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.

17. How severe was this plague?

³ And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into your house, and into your bedchamber, and upon your bed, and into the house of your servants, and upon your people, and into your ovens, and into your kneading-troughs:

⁴ And the frogs shall come up both on you, and upon your people, and upon all your servants.

⁶ And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.

18. What did the magicians do?

⁷ And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.

19. What request and promise did Pharaoh then make?

⁸ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, En-

treat the Lord, that He may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord.

20. Why did not his magicians and sorcerers remove the plague?

See note.

21. What is a magician?

“One skilled in magic; one who practices the black art; an enchanter, a necromancer; a sorcerer or sorceress.”—Webster. See also definition of “magic.”

22. What is sorcery?

“Divination by the assistance or supposed assistance of evil spirits; or the power of commanding evil spirits; magic; enchantment; witchcraft.”—Webster. See also definition of “witchcraft” and “enchantment.”

23. Whom did the heathen worship?

1 Corinthians 10

²⁰ But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that you should have fellowship with devils.

24. Then on whose side were Pharaoh and his magicians?

25. What does the Bible say is Satan’s sole work?

1 Peter 5

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.

Notes

If in our version the word “Jehovah” were allowed to appear wherever it does in the corresponding place in the Hebrew, the sense would often appear more clearly. “Jehovah” is the distinctive title of the one true God. Paul says,

1 Corinthians 8

⁵ ...there be gods many, and lords many;

⁶ But to us there is but one God.

He is the one who made all things, and who exists by His own power. This God, Pharaoh did not know. When Moses and Aaron said,

Exodus 5 [RV]

¹ Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, Let my people go,

–he rudely exclaimed,

² Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go.

If Moses had said, as our version indicates, “Thus says *the Lord*,” it would not have been distinctive, for the sun-god, which Pharaoh worshiped, corresponded to the Canaanitish Baal, which means “lord.”

Pharaoh knew many lords and gods, and one above all, the sun-god, which was known as “the lord;” he knew Ra, and Osiris, and Isis, and Phthah, and Set, but he did not know Jehovah, the only Lord. He might have known God, but, like the other heathen, he did not like to retain God in his knowledge.⁸² Still God gave him this opportunity to know and to recognize him; and when Pharaoh haughtily said, “I know not Jehovah,” the Lord brought judgments upon him until he was forced to confess His power.

Exodus 5

⁴ And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do you, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works?

The word “let” is used in its primitive sense of hindering, or causing to cease. That this is so, is shown by the next verse, where the king continues,

⁵ Behold, the people of the land now are many, and yet make

⁸² Romans 1:28.

them rest from their burdens.

Whatever opinion may be held as to the reason, this much is certain, that in consequence of the coming of Moses and Aaron, and what they had said, the Israelites had to some extent ceased from their work. This is still further shown by the fact that Pharaoh said of them,

Exodus 5

⁸ They be idle,

—and to them,

¹⁷ You are idle, you are idle.

It was because of this that the king increased their task, compelling them to make brick without straw. To the Jews Jesus once said,

John 12

³⁵ Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you.

Nothing is more evident than that when a person turns away from the light he goes into darkness. Light and darkness are opposite conditions, so that if a man is not in the light he is in the dark. That proposition needs no argument. It was on this principle that Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

Ample evidence of the superiority of God's power over that of Satan, as exhibited through the magicians, was given to Pharaoh, but when he refused to accept it, that very rejection was a hardening of his heart. The light which, if it were accepted, would acquaint him with God, was rejected, and by thus shutting himself farther away from God, hardness of heart and blindness of mind necessarily followed. For this, no one was to blame but Pharaoh himself. The *Revised Version* renders it thus:

Exodus 7 [RV]

⁹ And Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

The only reason that can be given why the magicians did not remove the plague of frogs, is that they could not. That they would gladly have done everything in their power to destroy the effect of the miracle upon the mind of Pharaoh, and to make him believe that the power that was with Moses was no greater than that with them, there is no reason to doubt.

It is most reasonable, also, to conclude that as the king had called the magicians to his assistance for the purpose of withstanding Moses, he would first call upon them to remove the plague. But they could not. The fact that Pharaoh was obliged to call upon Moses and Aaron to remove the plague, was an additional humiliation, and emphasized the fact that the power that was with them was greater than the power that was with the magicians.

12. Hardening Pharaoh's Heart

Signs of the Times, January 28, 1889

Exodus Exodus 7 to 10

E. J. Waggoner

1. When the Lord sent to Moses to Egypt, what did He say that He knew of Pharaoh?

Exodus 3 [margin]

¹⁹ And that I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, but by strong hand.

2. What did He say He would have to do before Pharaoh would relent?

²⁰ And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.

3. Then what was Pharaoh's natural disposition?

Stubborn and self-willed; hard and unyielding.

4. Afterward, what did the Lord tell Moses He would do to Pharaoh?

Exodus 7

³ And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.

5. What did He say that Pharaoh's stubbornness would give Him an opportunity to do?

⁴ But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth my armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

⁵ And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

6. What first tended to harden Pharaoh's heart?

¹⁰ And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did

so as the Lord had commanded; and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

¹¹ Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

¹² For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents; but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

¹³ And He hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

7. What again confirmed him in this stubbornness?

Exodus 7

²⁰ And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

²¹ And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

²² And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the Lord had said.

8. Through whose power did the magicians resist the truth, and strengthened the king's evil purpose?

9. What first caused Pharaoh's determination to weaken?

Exodus 8

⁸ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat the Lord, that He may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord.

10. When the Lord granted him this favor, what was the result?

¹² And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh; and Moses cried unto the Lord because of the frogs which He had brought against Pharaoh.

¹³ And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields.

¹⁴ And they gathered them together upon heaps; and the land stank.

¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

11. Did the next plague have any affect on the king?

Exodus 8

¹⁷ And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

¹⁸ And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.

¹⁹ Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

12. When the plague of flies came, how was he affected?

²⁴ And the Lord did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt; the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.

²⁵ And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go, sacrifice to your God in the land.

²⁶ And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God; lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?

²⁷ We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as He shall command us.

²⁸ And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away; entreat for me.

13. When favor was again shown him, what was the result?

Exodus 8

³⁰ And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and entreated the Lord.

³¹ And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one.

³² And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.

14. How was Pharaoh affected by the next two plagues?

Exodus 9

⁶ And the Lord did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died; but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.

⁷ And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

¹⁰ And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast.

¹¹ And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.

¹² And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had spoken unto Moses.

15. After Pharaoh had so often hardened his heart, what did the Lord do?

¹³ And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

¹⁴ For I will at this time send all my plagues upon your heart, and upon your servants, and upon your people; that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.

¹⁵ For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite you and your people with pestilence; and you shall be cut off

from the earth.

¹⁶ And in very deed for this cause have I raised you up, for to show in you my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

¹⁷ As yet, do you exalt yourself against my people, that you will not let them go?

¹⁸ Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as has not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now.

¹⁹ Send therefore now, and gather your cattle, and all that you have in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.

²⁰ He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses:

²¹ And he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field.

16. What was the seventh plague?

Exodus 9

²³ And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

²⁴ So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

²⁵ And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field.

17. How did this terrible plague affect the king?

²⁷ And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.

²⁸ Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.

18. Was his request granted?

Exodus 9

³³ And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands unto the Lord; and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.

19. What did this favor lead Pharaoh to manifest more?

³⁴ And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

³⁵ And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the Lord had spoken by Moses.

20. When the terrible plague of locusts was sent, what request, confession, and promise did the king make?

Exodus 10

¹⁶ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you.

¹⁷ Now therefore forgive, I pray you, my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that He may take away from me this death only.

21. Did the Lord grant his request?

¹⁹ And the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.

22. What did the Lord again do to Pharaoh, even by this act of kindness?

²⁰ But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.

23. In all this record, what especial thing is it that had the effect of hardening Pharaoh's heart?

The rejection of light from God. See notes.

24. With what Scripture is this in harmony?

Isaiah 26

¹⁰ Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.

25. What is it that makes wicked persons more settled in their determination to sin?

Ecclesiastes 8

¹¹ Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

26. After the sixth plague, what did the Lord say was the reason He had preserved Pharaoh for so long the time?

See note.

Exodus 9

¹⁵ For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite you and your people with pestilence; and you shall be cut off from the earth.

¹⁶ And in very deed for this cause have I raised you up, for to show in you my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

27. When God's judgments are in the land, for what purpose is it?

Isaiah 26

⁹ With my soul have I desired you in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek you early; for when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

Notes

2 Corinthians 4

³ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

⁴ In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Then God proceeded to harden his heart still more. Paul says of the heathen in general, who were wholly corrupt, that,

Romans 1 [margin]

²⁸ Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a mind void of judgment, to do those things that are not convenient.

So of those in the last days who willfully reject light, he says that:

2 Thessalonians 2

¹¹ For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

God always lets men have just what they are determined to have. If they hunger and thirst after righteousness, he will fill them with it; but if they fortify themselves in stubbornness, resist the strivings of the Spirit, and are bound to have their own evil way, then His Spirit ceases to strive with them, and He lets them have darkness to the full. Of those who hate knowledge, and despise God's reproof, He says:

Proverbs 1

³¹ Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

³² For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

The bearing of this lesson upon the doctrine of the future probation is obvious. In this life God gives to every man ample opportunity to know Him, and to accept the salvation. The true Light...

John 1

⁹ ...lights every man that comes into the world.

The rejection of this Light leaves the man in darkness. The light tends to soften and subdue his heart; the rejection of it

hardens his heart. After a man has deliberately rejected light, and hardened his heart, additional light and favor only harden his heart the more. So then if, after this life, God should grant man another probation, it would tend, not to his salvation, but to increase his wickedness, and would thus be useless.

So it is that if favor be shown to the wicked, his wickedness will not depart from him; and yet in the favor of God there is life, and it is His goodness that leads to repentance⁸³ all who do repent. The same thing which saves some destroys others, according to the way in which they receive it, just as the same sun which melts wax hardens clay.

⁸³ *Romans 2:4.*

13. Resisting the Truth (1889)

Signs of the Times, January 7, 1889

Exodus 8:12 to 9:11

E. J. Waggoner

1. Relate what we have already learned of the work of Pharaoh's magicians.
2. What have we learned that they could not do?
3. What was the second plague that was brought on the land of Egypt?
4. When plague was stayed, did Pharaoh keep this promise?

Exodus 8

¹² And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh; and Moses cried unto the Lord because of the frogs which He had brought against Pharaoh.

¹³ And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields.

¹⁴ And they gathered them together upon heaps; and the land stank.

¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

5. What was the next plague?

¹⁶ And the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out your rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

¹⁷ And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

6. Could the magicians repeat this miracle?

¹⁸ And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.

7. What were they forced to acknowledge to Pharaoh?

¹⁹ Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God.

8. In so saying, what did they virtually admit concerning their own work?

9. What does Paul say will be the character of men in the last days?

2 Timothy 3

¹ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

³ Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

⁴ Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

10. Among what people will this wickedness exist?

⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

11. What will this sort of people do?

⁶ For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

⁷ Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

12. How will they resist the truth?

⁸ Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth; men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

13. What other prophecy have we of miracles to be wrought for the purpose of deceiving?

Revelation 13

¹³ And he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

¹⁴ And deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

14. What did the Saviour say on this point?

Matthew 24

²⁴ For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

15. By what agency are these lying miracles wrought?

Revelation 16

¹⁴ For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

16. What name is given to those who in this age do the work which the ancient magicians and sorcerers did?

Spiritualist mediums.

17. Is there now any indication that the deceptions of Spiritualism will find a place among those who profess godliness?

See notes.

18. What does Paul say of those who shall resist the truth by their lying wonders?

2 Timothy 3

⁹ But they shall proceed no further; for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

19. How was the folly of Pharaoh's magicians made manifest?

Exodus 8

¹⁸ And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not; so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.

¹⁹ Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

Exodus 9

¹⁰ And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast.

¹¹ And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.

Notes

In the month of September, 1885, Monsignor Capel, the celebrated Roman Catholic propagandist, delivered a lecture in San Francisco, concerning Spiritualism, of which the *S. F. Chronicle*, of September 7, gave a report, in which it was said:

Monsignor Capel denied that he had expressed a disbelief in Spiritualism. He had simply left out of the category of possible supernatural manifestations all biological phenomena. Aside from these, Spiritualism was but a misrepresentation of Catholic teaching, and it had been in the world from the beginning.

He said, further, that to Catholics the spirit world was as clear as the light of a gas jet; that the dead were but disembodied spirits, with whom they were in daily communication, and to whom they prayed. Thus the great Roman Catholic Church is essentially at one with Spiritualism.

The *Sunday School Times*, of August 20, 1885, had a long editorial entitled, "What Our Dead Do for Us," in which the fol-

lowing occurred, among much more of the same nature:

Much of the best work of the world is done through the present, personal influence of the dead....As a practical fact, and as a great spiritual truth, our dead do for us as constantly and as variously as they could do for us if they were still here in the flesh; and they do for us very much that they could not do unless they were dead.

The *New York Christian Advocate*, of September 8, 1887, contained an article on the death of Dr. Daniel Curry, and which was said:

But he is not gone. We will not say "Good-bye" to him. We will keep him among us still. Reserve that seat in the front pew of the conference. Let the old place be kept sacred. He was not the man to leave his friends. In the thick of battle, in the time of danger or holy communion, in the solemn hour of crisis, he will be there. "Are they not ministering spirits?"

The *Christian Union* of November 3, 1887, contained a sermon preached by Dr. Henry M. Field (Presbyterian) at Cornell University, in which he said:

Oh, may the dead ever be with us, walking by our side, taking us by the hand, smoothing the cares from the troubled brow, and pointing us upward to the regions of everlasting light and peace.

Many similar passages could be quoted from representatives of all denominations. The folly of Pharaoh's magicians was made manifest by their inability to counterfeit all the miracles which Moses performed. So, says Paul, it will be with the last-day wonder-workers. Satan, through his agents, as well as in person, will...

Matthew 24

²⁴ ...show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

The miracles which in the past have been given as proof of

the power of God, and the signs of the coming of the Lord, will be counterfeited. But they will be cut short in their deceptive career, by mighty wonders which will strike terror to their hearts.

The mountains and islands will be moved out of their places,⁸⁴ the earth shall be turned “upside down,”⁸⁵ the heavens shall depart as a scroll when it is rolled together,⁸⁶ and as the deceivers vainly seek for the rocks to hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,⁸⁷ they will be forced to acknowledge that...

Exodus 8

¹⁹ This is the finger of God.

⁸⁴ *Revelation 6:14.*

⁸⁵ *Isaiah 24:1.*

⁸⁶ *Isaiah 34:4; Revelation 6:14.*

⁸⁷ *Revelation 6:16.*

14. God's Purpose in Dealing with Pharaoh

Signs of the Times, January 25, 1883

Thoughts on Review Lesson for February 3

Exodus 9 to 12

E. J. Waggoner

THOSE who are disposed to cavil, make a great deal of capital out of:

Exodus 9

¹⁵ For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite you and your people with pestilence; and you shall be cut off from the earth.

¹⁶ And in very deed for this cause have I raised you up, for to show in you my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

One who is not predisposed to find fault with the Bible, will have little difficulty with this passage as it stands; but the best critics, among whom is Dr. Clarke, tell us that our translation does not convey the idea of the original. As Dr. Clarke says, God did not bring a pestilence upon Egypt, although the first-born were slain; nor was Pharaoh cut off from the earth at that time. The true meaning is said to be expressed by these words:

“For now indeed had I stretched forth my hand and smitten you and your people with the pestilence, then had you been cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I made you to stand [allowed you to live until the present time], for to show in you my power,” etc.

This relieves the subject of all difficulty, and makes the passage harmonize with the context.

In verse 13, God tells Moses to command Pharaoh to let His people go. If he refuses, He says that He will send all His plagues upon him and upon his servants upon his people.

Verse 14. In order that he may not think lightly of the judg-

ments of God, or that He has already exhausted His power, God tells Pharaoh that if He had so ordered it, he would have been cut off from the earth. And then He assures him that it is only an act of mercy that his life has been spared.

God might have destroyed Pharaoh at the very outset, and delivered Israel at once; but that, to short-sighted man, would have appeared to be an act of unwarranted cruelty. Instead of this, He allowed Pharaoh to show out his real character, and so vindicated His course, and at the same time displayed His wonderful power.

The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

Exodus 9

¹² And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh and he hearkened not unto them.

With what avidity skeptics seize upon this passage!

“If the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, he was not to blame for what he did, and the Lord was arbitrary and cruel to punish him for what he could not help.”

Thus they will talk, and having once satisfied themselves that God is a hard taskmaster, and a cruel tyrant, they feel justified in refusing to serve Him. But before we jump at such a conclusion, let us see just how it happened that Pharaoh's heart was made hard.

Notice first the character of the king. He was ungrateful, as shown by the statement that he...

Exodus 1

⁸ ...knew not Joseph.

This does not mean that he was not familiar with Joseph's history, and what he had done for Egypt; but that he cared nothing for him. The fact that Joseph had saved all Egypt from starvation, did not seem to the king to be any reason why he should befriend Joseph's people. This was a nature upon

which kindness had no softening effect.

His treatment of the Israelites shows that he was selfish, cruel, and vindictive, and utterly regardless of human life. He had grown insolent and haughty, and when the demand was made upon him to let Israel go, he replied,

Exodus 5

² I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.

Then plagues were sent upon him. When the frogs covered the land, and the magician's could not remove them, he relented, and promised that if they were taken away, he would let the people go. He was taken at his word, but what was the result?

Exodus 8

¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them.

Again another plague was sent, but he remained stubborn. Then swarms of flies filled their houses, so that everything was corrupted. This induced the king to say,

²⁸ I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness.

So Moses entreated the Lord, and the flies were removed at the time appointed; but the result was the same as before. The record says:

³¹ And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one.

³² And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.

Yet again, after the cattle had been killed by the murrain, and boils, and hail; when the terrible storm of thunder and hail and fire had devastated the land, Pharaoh was alarmed. Sending for Moses and Aaron, he said,

Exodus 9

²⁷ I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.

²⁸ Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.

As before Moses set a time for the removal of the plague and the result is stated thus:

³⁴ And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

³⁵ And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go.

Now we can see just how it was that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. He did it by His manifestations of mercy. The king was very humble in the face of death, but as soon as the cause of fear was removed, he became stubborn. Had he not been so willful, the mercy of the Lord would have moved him to repentance; but he was one of those persons who think that an exhibition of kindness is a manifestation of weakness. Having nothing like mercy or kindness in his own nature, he was unable to appreciate it in others.

Theodoret very aptly says:

The sun by the action of the heat makes wax moist, and mud dry, pardoning the one while it softens the other, by the same operations producing exactly opposite results; thus from the long-suffering of God some derive benefit, and others harmed, some are softened while others are hardened.

Numerous cases, besides that of Pharaoh, might be cited to further illustrate this. The same words and actions of Christ that bound His disciples closer to Him and gave Him many devoted followers, hardened the hearts of the wicked priests, and moved them to kill Him. It will ever be found the case that when a man falls, he falls on the side of his natural incli-

nation.

A Lesson of Trust

The Israelites were commanded to gather of the manna...

Exodus 16

¹⁶ ...an omer for every man.

This was sufficient for the wants of one day, and as they were to...

⁴ ...go out and gather a certain rate every day,

—it would have been useless to take any more, even if it would have kept. But the people were not content to follow the Lord's direction; some gathered more than the required amount. They doubtless reasoned thus:

“It is true that this manna is promised every day, but there may come a time when it will fail, and it is no more than prudent to prepare for such a time, while we have abundance.”

By gathering more than the specified quantity, more than they could use during the day, they showed their lack of faith in God's promise. They thought that they could provide for themselves better than God could. But their planning prove to be useless, for...

¹⁸ When they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack.

Thus there was an equality. During their sojourn in the wilderness, God wished to have his people learn to trust Him. As we look back on this incident, the course of the Israelites seems foolish; but we will not have to search far in order to find its counterpart. Paul makes their case the text for a lesson in giving. He desires that there should be an equality, that all should give in the same proportion. Then he quotes,

2 Corinthians 8

¹⁵ He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

God has promised to care for each one of His children; to give them their bread day by day, if we gather millions, we can have no more than our daily sustenance, and if we are in the depths of poverty, God is able to provide for our daily wants.

Are we not, then, even more culpable than were the Israelites, if we refuse to return to God His rightful portion of our means? God is testing us just as He did them, but how many of us prove to be dull scholars. We have more faith in ourselves than we have in God.

The Murmurings of Israel

Now all this was extremely wicked. They were tempting God, and there can be no excuse for their course. But while we justly condemn their actions, let us see if we are not condemning ourselves. Human nature has not changed much since that time. We have received blessings innumerable from the hand of God. We can truly say with the psalmist that:

Psalm 23

⁶ ...goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life.

Israel had a standing manifestation of God's power and goodness in the manna, which was furnished fresh every day. But it is just as true in our case that the mercies of the Lord are...

Lamentations 3

²³ ...new every morning.

And yet we murmur and become discouraged at everything that crosses us. If discouragements come we, like the Israelites, are tempted to turn back, and imagine that we cannot gain the promised land. It is doubtful if we possess any more

faith than they did.

We can easily see how much better it would have been for the Israelites if they had been grateful to God for His favors, and had trusted Him in times of need. It is well that we are able to do this, for the apostle says,

1 Corinthians 10

¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

If we can see wherein they erred, let us see to it that we do not follow their course.

¹² Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

The Flight from Egypt—Its Memorial

It is claimed by many that the Sabbath commemorates the flight from Egypt. They argue thus, because in *Deuteronomy* 5:15 their deliverance from Egypt is noted as a thing for which the Israelites should be grateful, and an additional reason why they should remember His commandments.

But the fourth commandment itself shows what the Sabbath is intended to commemorate, and no hint of the flight from Egypt is given. That claim is so palpably absurd that it must disappear upon the slightest candid investigation. It may not, however, be amiss to notice *Exodus* 12:41-42, in this connection.

Exodus 12

⁴¹ And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.

⁴² It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.

The people fled in the night; and the Passover, which was the true memorial of their deliverance,⁸⁸ was celebrated in the night.

Exodus 12

⁶ And you shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

⁷ And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

⁸ And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

⁹ Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.

¹⁰ And you shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire.

Deuteronomy 16

⁶ But at the place which the Lord your God shall choose to place His name in, there you shall sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that you came forth out of Egypt.

God's memorials are always fitting and appropriate; when man attempts to improve upon God's plan, he always makes confusion.

⁸⁸ See *Exodus* 12:26-28.

15. The Blood on the Door

Present Truth, December 5, 1901

Exodus 12:1-17

E. J. Waggoner

IT WAS the last night of the stay of the children of Israel in the land of Egypt, God had borne along with the haughty stubbornness of Pharaoh and his people; and now He was about to...

Isaiah 28

²¹ ...do His work, His strange work, and bring to pass His act,
His strange act,

—the act of destruction, bringing to a climax all the plagues of His wrath. Ample warning had been given. God had at the very beginning sent this message to Pharaoh:

Exodus 4

²² Israel is my son, even my firstborn; and I say unto you, Let my son go, that he may serve me;

²³ And if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your son, even your firstborn.

Pharaoh had repeatedly refused to let Israel go, but God had delayed the threatened reprisals. The Lord is...

2 Peter 3

⁹ ...long-suffering to usward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;

¹⁵ And...the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.

Consequently we know that the long delay in bringing this last plague upon Egypt, which from the first had been set forth as the alternative, and which was the only punishment threatened, was because God would save Pharaoh and his people if possible.

But Pharaoh was one of those wicked ones whose wickedness only increases when favors are shown, and who regard the exhibition of mercy as weakness. Consequently there was

nothing to be done for him, except to leave him to eat of the fruit of his own way.

Yet in the midst of wrath God remembers mercy, and even at this stage none of the Egyptians need have perished, if they had only believed. Directions were given for the last meal which the Israelites were to eat in Egypt; for now God purposed to deliver them without asking Pharaoh to let them go. Indeed, the case was not to be reversed, and Pharaoh was to beg them to go.

A lamb was to be selected for each family, or if the family were too small to eat the whole of it, two families were to unite; for none was to be left. On the evening of the night fixed for their departure they were to slay it and prepare it. It was to be roasted, and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Exodus 12

¹¹ And thus shall you eat it: with your loins girded, and your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hands; and you shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's passover.

Before taking this meal, however, an important act was to be performed. The people were to take of the blood of the lamb, and sprinkle it...

⁷ ...on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses

—wherein they ate the lamb.

¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt and I will execute judgment: I am the Lord.

¹³ And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

All this was written for our learning, for we as well as they are to keep the Passover.

1 Corinthians 5

⁸ For our passover also has been sacrificed, even Christ; wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, and neither with leaven of malice, and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The Jews were required to put all leaven away from their houses, and to this day at the time of the passover they search their houses most carefully, to discover and clear away any possible trace of it. But leaven stands for malice and wickedness. We are exhorted to purge out the old leaven, that is, to put away all evil, that we may keep the passover in sincerity and truth.

How can this be done? The answer is found in:

Romans 3 [RV]

²³ All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;

²⁴ Being justified [made righteous] freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

²⁵ Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by His blood, to show His righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God;

²⁶ For the showing, I say, of His righteousness at this present season; that He might himself be just, and the justifier of him that has faith in Jesus.

Christ is ever slain, and ever lives; therefore the passover is to be continually kept. His blood cleanses from all sin—purges away all leaven of malice and wickedness. In that He shed His blood for us, and we have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins, by it, He gives us His life;

Deuteronomy 12

²³ ...for the blood is the life.

After the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt, this instruction was given them:

Deuteronomy 6

⁵ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

⁶ And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart:

⁷ And you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.

⁸ And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

This is what was indicated by the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb upon the door post. The lamb signified the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world; and the blood is the life. Putting the blood upon the entrance to the house, meant, therefore, the dwelling in Christ's life, which is the perfection of the law of God. We keep the passover by hiding in Christ, abiding in His love, which is living in His life. He has received the strokes due to sin, for all the plagues have fallen upon Him; yet He lives, and whoever lives in Him is safe from every plague—from sin and all its consequences.

Is the blood upon your door? Is your dwelling consecrated to the Lord, and sanctified by His presence?

16. The Blood of Sprinkling

Present Truth, November 23, 1899

Exodus 12:7-23.

E. J. Waggoner

THE longsuffering of God had waited on Pharaoh in vain, so far as he was concerned. Through many and grievous plagues God had preserved him, to show His power in him, that the name of God might be declared throughout all the earth. And truly the power of God was manifested, and manifested, as it always is, for salvation; but Pharaoh would not believe, and so it was ineffectual in his case.

Delay was no longer of any avail. Judgments were unheeded, and mercy was despised; and the Lord was about to send all His plagues upon the heart of Pharaoh, and to put him off from the earth. Yet one more chance would be given him. By one act every person, both of the children of Israel and of the Egyptians, might show their faith in God if they had any.

Directions were given concerning the preparation of a lamb. Each family was to have one, and to kill it in the evening. And so the order ran:

Exodus 12

⁷ They shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses wherein they shall eat it.

¹¹ ...it is the Lord's Passover.

¹² For I will pass through the land this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast...

¹³ And the blood shall be to you a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

The directions were very specific. Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and told them how to kill a lamb, and contin-

ued:

²² You shall take of a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning.

²³ For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

Here was perfect equality. There was no difference made between Jew and Gentile, because...

Romans 10

¹² ...the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.

If the Jew did not believe, he would suffer with the unbelieving Egyptians; and by the same rule if the Egyptians believed, he would be saved with the believing Jew. Faith is the distinguishing mark of the true Israelites.

What is all this to us? What interests have we in the history of that affair that took place nearly thirty-five hundred years ago? Just this:

Romans 15

⁴ Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

The lamb that was slain signified Christ, who is our Passover, and who is sacrificed for us.

1 Corinthians 5

⁷ For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

God's people are still in Egypt, and the Lord has set His hand again the second time to deliver them from the house of bondage.

Isaiah 11

¹⁵ And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with His mighty wind shall He shake His hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod.

¹⁶ And there shall be a highway for the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

The darkness that covered the land of Egypt was but a sign of the darkness that covers the earth, and the gross darkness that covers the people, when the Lord shall arise upon them, and His glory shall be seen upon them,⁸⁹ as the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings.⁹⁰ Therefore we come to...

Hebrews 12

²⁴ ...Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling.

We are not redeemed from our vain manner of life by...

1 Peter 1

¹⁸ ...corruptible things, as silver and gold,...

¹⁹ But by the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.

We have all sinned, and therefore sentence of death has been passed upon us,⁹¹ but we are justified freely by the grace of God,

Romans 3 [RV]

²⁴ ...through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

²⁵ Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to show His righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God.

⁸⁹ *Isaiah* 60:1-2.

⁹⁰ *Malachi* 4:2.

⁹¹ *Romans* 5:12.

The blood is the life,⁹² and this is what Christ poured out to us and for us on the cross.

Romans 5

⁹ Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

¹⁰ For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁵ He died for all,

—so that all, without exception, may appropriate the blood. And He lives for all, so that all may take shelter under His life. Faith takes hold of the sacrifice, made...

Hebrews 10

¹⁰ ...once for all,

—and appropriates it. Everywhere we may see it, for the drops of blood shed by Christ have fertilized the soil even of the sin-cursed earth, so that it brings forth bud, and flower, and fruit, the stalk and the ear and the full corn in the ear. But for that blood, which flows from the throne of God in a...

Revelation 22

¹ ...pure river of water of life, as clear as crystal,

—and distills to the earth in the dew and the rain, the earth would be but a desert—a chaotic mass. Christ himself has sprinkled the blood upon us; for,

Romans 5

¹⁸ As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

What have we then to do? Abide in the house! God is and has been...

⁹² *Deuteronomy 12:23.*

Psalm 90

¹ ...our dwelling place in all generations.

Live only by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for each one of us.⁹³

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁹ God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

Hence He has purchased us...

Acts 20

²⁸ ...with His own blood.

If we abide under the blood,—the life of God,—He must pass over us when He goes out to destroy, for,

2 Timothy 2

¹³ ...He cannot deny himself.

Psalm 91

¹ He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty,

—and be as secure as He is. Living by faith in Him, it is no longer we, but God living and working in us, so that He sees not us, but His own life. What a sure dwelling place!

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save me from its guilt and power.⁹⁴

⁹³ *Ephesians* 5:2.

⁹⁴ Augustus Toplady, Hymn: *Rock of Ages*, 1776.

17. The Passover

Present Truth, April 4, 1901

Exodus 12:13

E. J. Waggoner

Exodus 12

¹³ And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

THESSE words were spoken by the Lord to the children of Israel, on that memorable night in early spring, when He led them forth from the land of captivity and bondage. The blood of which He spoke was the blood of a slain lamb, which was to be sprinkled on the two side posts and on the upper door post of their houses.

That night the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt and smote the first-born in every house on which the blood had not been sprinkled, so that there was not a house where there was not mourning. But wherever the blood was to be seen, there was life and peace and joy.

There is nothing arbitrary in God's dealings with men, and it was not caprice that moved God to save those who performed the simple ceremony of sprinkling blood on their houses, and to destroy the others. There is no power in ceremonies. Those whose lives were spared, lived because they had a real protection from the plague, and those who were lost, were smitten because they were shelterless.

But since it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin, it is evidently impossible for the blood of a lamb to ward off death. The blood of those lambs of a year old had no more virtue than so much water; there was something far more efficacious present as a protection. What that was, we learn in:

1 Corinthians 5

⁷ Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

The blood is the life, and it is by the life of Christ that we are saved.

Romans 5

¹⁰ If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Romans 3 [margin]

²⁵ God has set Him forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the *passing over* of sins.

James 1

¹⁵ Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

Salvation from death is through salvation from sin; and the believing Israelites were saved from the plague of death because, through the mercy of God, their sins were not imputed to them, but were covered up by the life of the slain Lamb.

Romans 4

⁵ But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

⁶ Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputes righteousness without works,

⁷ Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

⁸ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

God said that the blood should be for a token upon the houses.

Exodus 12

¹³ And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

It was a sign, not of something to come hundreds of years in the future, but which already existed; for Christ is...

Revelation 13

⁸ ...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

His is the life that conquers death; when that life is accepted as a hiding-place, death has no power. That was a real thing to the Israelites. It was plainly to be seen that there was death in the land, and a marked difference was put between believers and unbelievers. And just as effective as the blood was against death, so powerful was it against sin.

Now all this was written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Hebrews 13

⁸ Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

We can have the real blood of Christ for our protection as well as the Israelites could; for it is not that which is seen, but that which is unseen, that saves.

The house is that in which one lives. The sprinkling of the blood upon the door, through which the people passed out and in, indicated that they were to be covered with the life. And so by it, and the fact that they were to remain in their houses, and not go out, teaches us that we must...

1 John 2

²⁸ ...abide in Him.

Just as surely as the Israelites in Egypt were saved, will the life of Christ now save from sin and death every soul that abides in it.

1 John 3

²⁴ He that keeps His commandments dwells in Him, and He in him.

We read,

Galatians 2

²⁰ I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ.

The story of the Passover was left on record to show us the reality of this experience. Just as the blood was seen on the houses, so the life of Christ is to be seen on us, and we are not to appear. So we come to God, not in our own name, but in the name and person of Christ. If we were to come in our own name, we should be ashamed, because of our sins; but...

1 John 3

⁵ ...in Him is no sin,

—so when we sink out of sight and allow Christ alone to appear, we dwell in safety. Therefore,

1 John 2

²⁸ Little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

18. The Departure from Egypt

Signs of the Times, February 4, 1889

Exodus 12 to 13:22

E. J. Waggoner

1. What was the last plague upon Egypt?

Exodus 12

¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord.

2. What were the Israelites required to do in order to escape it?

Keep the Passover. *Exodus* 12:1-11.

3. On what day of the month was the Passover?

Exodus 12

⁶ And you shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

4. On what day of the month was the Passover?

²⁹ And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.

5. When this great calamity came, what did Pharaoh do?

³⁰ And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

³¹ And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said.

³² Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also.

6. Of what word of the Lord was this a fulfillment?

Exodus 11

¹ And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.

7. How did the people of Egypt feel?

Exodus 12

³³ And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.

8. What did the Israelites receive from the Egyptians?

³⁵ And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment:

³⁶ And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

9. With what word of the Lord was this in harmony?

Exodus 3

²² But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourns in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and you shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and you shall spoil the Egyptians.

Genesis 15

¹³ And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

¹⁴ And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

10. Explain the seeming discrepancy between *Genesis* 15:13, and *Exodus* 12:40.

See Notes.

11. How large a company went out from Egypt?

Exodus 12

³⁷ And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.

12. What did Moses take with him?

Exodus 13

¹⁹ And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and you shall carry up my bones away hence with you.

See *Genesis* 50:24-25.

13. In exacting this promise, by what was Joseph actuated?

Hebrews 11

²² By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

14. What precautions did the Lord take against causing the Israelites to become discouraged?

Exodus 13

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:

¹⁸ But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.

15. What protection in guidance did He give them?

²¹ And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

²² He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

16. What confidence may God's people ever have?

Psalm 34

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.

Psalm 125

¹ They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.

² As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever.

17. Then what should ever be their song?

Isaiah 12

² Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.

18. What sustained Moses all through the contest with Pharaoh, and the departure from Egypt?

Hebrews 11

²⁷ By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.

²⁸ Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Notes

Genesis 15 says:

Genesis 15

¹³ Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

Exodus 12 says:

Exodus 12

⁴⁰ Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.

Mark that this latter text does not say that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt four hundred and thirty years; but that the sojourning of the children of Israel, “who dwelt in Egypt,” was so long. Their sojourning was not alone in Egypt, but in Canaan, as Paul says of Abraham:

Hebrews 11

⁹ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

And in harmony with this is the reading of this American Pentateuch, and the Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint, which are believed to exhibit the most correct copy of the five books of Moses. They read thus:

“Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, and of their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan, and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.”

This four hundred and thirty years of sojourning dates from the promise to Abraham; for Paul speaks of the giving of the law, which was immediately after the deliverance from Egypt, as four hundred and thirty years, the affliction was only four hundred years.⁹⁵ Therefore, the four hundred and thirty years began with the promise; and this was when Isaac was about five years old, for he was not born until twenty-five years after the promise.⁹⁶

So the affliction dates from the time when Ishmael mocked Isaac,⁹⁷ for Paul refers to this as the persecution of him that was born after the Spirit, by him that was born after the flesh.

⁹⁵ *Genesis* 15:13; *Acts* 7:6.

⁹⁶ Compare *Genesis* 12:1-4 and 21:5.

⁹⁷ *Genesis* 21:9-10.

19. A Marvelous Deliverance

Present Truth, December 12, 1901

Exodus 14:13 to 15:10

E. J. Waggoner

WHY is it that most people seem to think that the Old Testament narratives, such as that of Joseph and his brethren, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan, and others, are merely stories for children? The reason is that these things are looked upon as mythical, or at best, even if historically true, as events too far in the past to be of any practical importance at the present time. They forget that God does not tell stories to amuse His children, and that...

Romans 15

⁴ Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Among the faithful and true records of the past there is none more full of practical instruction and encouragement than that of the crossing of the Red Sea. The reason why it is of such importance for us to know this history, and to have all the details well fixed in our mind, is that God has set His hand the second time to gather the remnant of His people,⁹⁸ and He has told us that when He does this,

Isaiah 11

¹⁶ There shall be a highway for the remnant of His people, like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

If we truly believe God, our journey to the promised land will be just as full of marvelous deliverances as was that of God's people in the days of Moses; yes, and far more so: for God says that,

⁹⁸ *Isaiah 11:11.*

Jeremiah 23

⁷ The days will come...that they shall no more say, The Lord lives, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

⁸ But, The Lord lives, which brought up and led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries where I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

The deliverances which God will work for His people in these days will be so much greater than that of the children of Israel from Egypt, that the former event will be lost sight of.

We do not need to repeat the narrative; but every one, no matter how familiar with it, should read it again and again; for it is the best possible tonic for whoever reads it in faith. Let us set ourselves at once to study some of the lessons that it has for our comfort.

With Us in Difficult Times

In the first place we may learn that when we get into a tight place, surrounded by the enemy, it is no sign that God has forsaken us. The children of Israel thought that it was. They even declared that God had not had anything to do with them leaving Egypt, but that it was all a scheme of Moses to bring about their destruction.

How quick people are to judge by appearances. When there is a prosperous outlook, and everything goes on swimmingly, they rub their hands with satisfaction, sing hymns, and exclaim,

“How good the Lord is to us!”

But let a reverse come, let their way be suddenly blocked, and they at once conclude that they were mistaken, and that God was not leading them. Such human reasoning is very childish. If we always had God’s word in mind, we should not be guilty of it.

It was the Lord himself who led Israel into the narrow place between the sea and the mountain where it was so easy for the Egyptians to shut them in. It seemed a veritable trap, and so it was; but it was a trap for the enemies of God and His people. God knew that Pharaoh would say,

“They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in,”

—and would pursue them into the trap. As the whole army of Egypt, with all the chariots and horsemen that the country contained, came exultingly after the Israelites who were huddled together like a flock of sheep, their language was:

Exodus 15

⁹ I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

Ah,

Psalm 92

⁶ A brutish man knows not;

Neither does a fool understand this:

⁷ When the wicked spring as the grass,

And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish,

It is that they shall be destroyed for ever;

⁸ But You, O Lord, are on high for evermore.

⁹ For, lo, your enemies, O Lord,

For, lo, your enemies, shall perish;

All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.

Then let us lay to heart this lesson: that whenever it seems as though we were about to be overwhelmed, it is certain that we are about to have a most wonderful deliverance and a glorious victory. Then instead of murmuring in time of trial, that will be when we shall shout for joy.

Psalm 27

¹ The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

² When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

³ Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

⁴ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple.

⁵ For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock.

⁶ And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.

God led the Israelites into a trap, and their enemies rushed in after them; then God delivered His people from the trap, and left the enemies there. Thus the pursuers were really self-destructed.

Light Out of Darkness

Another lesson is set for us in the fiery, cloudy pillar. Our text reads:

Exodus 14

¹⁹ And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

²⁰ And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these.

But if you look in your Bibles you will see that the words “to them” and “to these” are in italics; they have been inserted by the translators. Without any additions, the Hebrew text reads:

“And the cloud was darkness, but it gave light the whole night.”

How much more striking this is! It reveals the presence of the same power that in the beginning...

2 Corinthians 4

⁶ ...commanded the light to shine out of darkness.

Psalm 139

¹¹ If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

¹² Yea, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You.

Who can fight against a Being who hides himself in the light, and to whom the darkness in which His enemies would hide, shines like noonday? and what is impossible to such a God?

1 John 1

⁵ God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all,

—neither is there any darkness to Him. Now it is possible for us to see light in His light,⁹⁹ and when we do this we shall find that:

1 John 2

⁸ ...[all] the darkness is past, and the true light now shines.

The Breath of the Lord

By what means was it that God delivered Israel from the Egyptians? It was by the very same means by which He made the heavens in the beginning.

Psalm 33

⁶ By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

It was by His breath. Read the following verses of Scripture, and let them tell the story:

⁹⁹ **Psalm 36** ⁹ For with You is the fountain of life: in your light shall we see light.

Exodus 14

²¹ And the Lord caused the sea to go by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land and the waters were divided.

²² And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall to them on the right hand, and on their left.

²³ And the Egyptians pursued and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

²⁷ ...and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

Exodus 15

¹⁰ You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

⁷ In the greatness of your excellency You have overthrown them that rose up against You: You sent forth your wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

⁸ And with the blast of your nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as a heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

The wind, whether it be the gentle zephyr or the mighty blast of the hurricane, is the breath of the Almighty, life-giving or death-dealing, according as it is directed. With a breath God created the heavens, and gave life to man; with a breath He delivered Israel from their enemies;

Isaiah 11

⁴ ...with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.

And with that same breath God is able and anxious today to free us from all the enemies that beset our souls for as He breathes upon us moment by moment, He says,

John 20

²² Receive the Holy Ghost.

20. Bread from Heaven

Present Truth, June 19, 1902

Exodus 16:1-15

E. J. Waggoner

Psalm 107

¹ O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures for ever.

² Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, who He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy;

³ And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south.

⁴ They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

⁵ Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

⁶ Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.

THAT is a description of a portion of the experience of the children of Israel in their journey from Egypt to Canaan, and it is written for the instruction and encouragement of God's redeemed people in all lands to the end of time. Read the whole story, in the 16th chapter of *Exodus*.

One of the first lessons for us to learn from it is that God gives according to our need, and not according to our actions. The people murmured in the wilderness, charging Moses and Aaron with having led them out to kill them, and thus denying God's leadership; yet God supplied them with food just as readily as though they had honored Him.

Psalm 103

¹⁰ He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

The next lesson that we should learn is the uselessness and the sinfulness of complaining when in trouble. Many hundred years later several thousand of the descendants of the same people were out in a desert place without any food. Jesus said

to Philip,

John 6

⁵ Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

⁶ And this He said to prove him: for He himself knew what He would do.

Even so it was when the people were in the desert without bread in the days of Moses. The same Lord was with them, and,

⁶ He himself knew what He would do.

God knew that there was no food in the wilderness, yet He had led them there; and this is the reason why:

Deuteronomy 8

² You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments, or no.

³ And He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live.

The most obvious reason for the giving of the manna, was to satisfy the hunger of the people. But we are told that God first...

³ ...suffered them to hunger.

He knew what He would do; He designed all the time to feed them out of His abundant storehouse; and His suffering them to hunger was for the purpose of preparing them for His gift, and causing them to appreciate it. So we may know that whenever God suffers us to get into distress, that is an evidence that He has something for us.

Why God Gives Food

But this is not all. God suffered the people to hunger, and then fed them with manna, in order that they might know that man does not live by bread only. That is, God wishes us to know that our daily food is to teach us of His salvation. This is plainly set forth in:

Psalm 78

²² They believed not in God, trusted not in His salvation:

²³ Though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven,

²⁴ And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.

²⁵ Man did eat angels' food.

Even though they had bread from heaven, they did not trust in God's salvation! That bread which came down from heaven was Christ's own self,—His body,—for Jesus said,

John 6

³³ The bread of God is He which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world.

³⁵ I am the bread of life.

The fathers...

1 Corinthians 10

³ ...did all eat the same spiritual meat;

⁴ And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

They drank from Christ, and they ate from Him; their life day by day was sustained by Him,—in fact, He was their life,—yet they trusted not in His salvation! Was it not strange?

Do you not see the real reason why God gives us food for the nourishment of our bodies? It is that we may know and remember our dependence upon Him. We eat in order to live; but it is...

Acts 17

²⁸ In Him that we live, and move, and have all our being.

God could, if He wished, keep us alive without food; but in that case we could not so readily recognize the fact that we are not self-existent nor self-sustained. Our daily bread—our life—not only comes from heaven, from the hand of God, but it brings to us the very life of God,—the life by which we are saved. The power of God, which saves every one that believes,¹⁰⁰ is seen...

Romans 1

²⁰ ...in the things that are made.

This truth is made very apparent in the miracle recorded in the 6th chapter of *John*, together with the talk that followed.

There were five thousand hungry men, besides women and children, and but five loaves of bread; yet as Jesus took the bread in His hands, and broke it, it multiplied, so that all were filled, and there was more bread at the close of the meal than at the beginning.

There the people could see with their own eyes that the bread that they ate came directly from Christ; and this is the truth which this miracle, as well as that of the manna, is designed to teach us concerning our daily bread.

Our daily bread contains the life of the Lord, and yet it is but representative of that life; for Christ came that we might have life, and that we...

John 10

¹⁰ ...might have it more abundantly.

The life that is contained in all the food and drink and air and sunlight on this earth is but a small fraction of the infinite life of the Great Creator and Father of all, which is at the service of all who will accept it. These visible media of His life

¹⁰⁰ *Romans* 1:16.

are designed to teach us our dependence on Him, and to introduce us to His inexhaustible storehouse of power.

A Sabbath Lesson

So giving the children of Israel manna God was proving them whether they would walk in His law or not. It was not merely to see if they would keep the Sabbath day. They could not very well help keeping that, outwardly, at least, when no manna fell on the seventh day, and twice the usual amount fell on the sixth day.

For forty years God made it plain which day of the week was the seventh day, and how sacredly He regarded it; and the same day, with the same sacredness, is the Sabbath of the Lord today; and if we do not keep it, we read the story of the manna in vain.

But, as already stated, it was not for the purpose of seeing if the Israelites would nominally keep the Sabbath, that the manna was given.

- It was to see if they would trust God implicitly; for that is true Sabbath-keeping.
- It was to see if they would accept His life as their own, and recognize and acknowledge day by day that they lived only by Him, and so allow Him to control their every act and thought.

That is the lesson He wishes us to learn from the record, as well as from the food which He daily gives us.

The Sabbath itself is given to make us know God is the Creator and Sanctifier. You would laugh at the idea of anybody saying in the wilderness when the manna was being given every week day, that he didn't see how he could keep the Sabbath, and that he should certainly lose his living if he did. The God who commanded the observance of the Sabbath was the God who was feeding them from His own table, and, so to speak, making it easier for them to keep the Sabbath than not

to.

Well, the same conditions obtain today. The same commandment is in force, and the same God lives to supply us with our daily bread. Do not think that the account of the giving of the manna was recorded merely for our amusement. It was that we might learn the lesson of trust in God. Dare you do it? or do you think that He cannot or will not do for you what He did for ancient Israel? Was the record written in vain, so far as you are concerned?

A Lesson of Unselfishness

The Apostle Paul refers to the gathering of the manna, to enforce the lesson of unselfish giving. When he was pleading for a liberal collection for the poor saints, he wrote:

2 Corinthians 8 [compare Exodus 16:16-18]

¹³ I mean not that other men be eased, and you be burdened:

¹⁴ But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance may also be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

¹⁵ As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

Some in reading the words,

“He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack,”

—have supposed that in some reckless manner the manna shrunk if one had gathered more than a certain quantity, and increased if he had not gathered enough; but the fact is that those who had more than they needed for the day divided with those who had an insufficient quantity. There was the same condition that existed after Pentecost, when all the believers had all things common, and none laid up for the future.

The lesson of the manna is not only that God gives bread, but that He gives it to us as we need it. We can trust Him to

provide for our wants, even as little children trust their parents.

The Lord feeds us from His own table, and naught of that which we have belongs to us. Therefore we are to consider that all of His children have the same right to the Lord's table that we have. If we find more "under our hand" than we need for the time, it is not to be hoarded up to spoil, but passed on to be used while it is fresh.

So as we live by faith in the...

Ephesians 4 [RV]

⁶ God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all,

–we will give day by day our daily bread, supplying all our need according to His riches and glory, and His kingdom will come, and His will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

21. Sojourning in a Strange Land

Signs of the Times, June 4, 1885

Lesson for the Pacific Coast – July 4

Genesis 15, 17; Exodus 19:3-6

E. J. Waggoner

1. What question did Abraham ask on one occasion when the Lord repeated the promise to him?

Genesis 15

⁸ And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

2. What did the Lord say in reply?

⁹ And He said unto him, Take me a heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

3. What did Abraham do?

¹⁰ And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another; but the birds he divided not.

¹¹ And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

4. What happened when the sun was going down?

¹² And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him.

5. In this vision, what did the Lord say to Abraham?

¹³ And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them...

6. How long were his seed to be strangers in a strange land?

¹³ ...and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

7. When the time was expired, what was to be done?

¹⁴ And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge:

and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

8. What was the name of the land which they were to have as their own?

Genesis 17

⁸ And I will give unto you, and to your seed after you, the land wherein you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

9. Why could Abraham not at once take possession of it?

Genesis 15

¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

10. When the Lord did at last deliver the Israelites from bondage, what did He say to them?

Exodus 19

³ And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

⁴ You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

⁵ Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is my:

⁶ And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel.

11. What did he say they should be?

Exodus 19

⁶ And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel.

12. In making this promise, what was the Lord doing?

Deuteronomy 7

⁶ For you are a holy people unto the Lord your God: the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself,

above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

⁷ The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people:

⁸ But because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, has the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

13. Then with what is *Exodus* 19:3-6 parallel?

14. What was the condition of the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

15. And what was the condition of this promise to the Jews?

Exodus 19

⁵ Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is my.

Notes

Genesis 15

¹³ And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

The student must not forget the idea that this refers solely to the bondage in Egypt, for Paul tells us¹⁰¹ that from the announcement of the promise to Abraham until the giving of the law at Sinai, was but four hundred and thirty years. This four hundred and thirty years is thus computed:

- From the giving of the promise until the birth of Isaac, twenty-five years (compare *Genesis* 12:1-4 with *Genesis* 25:5);
- From the birth of Isaac until the birth of Jacob, sixty years (*Genesis* 25:26);

¹⁰¹ *Galatians* 3:17.

- From the birth of Jacob and till the going down into Egypt, one hundred and thirty years (*Genesis* 47:8-9);

–making 215 years from the giving of the promise until the beginning of the sojourn in Egypt. And Josephus says¹⁰² that 215 years was the length of that sojourn. Thus the 430 years of *Galatians* 3:17 and *Exodus* 12:40-41 are accounted for.

The text under consideration,¹⁰³ however, is more difficult. It is evident from the text, and also its parallel in *Acts* 7:6, that the four hundred years' sojourn ends at the same time as the four hundred and thirty years' sojourn, viz., at the deliverance from Egypt. Then the four hundred years' of affliction¹⁰⁴ must have begun thirty years after the giving of the promise. Dr. Clarke and others say that the mocking Ishmael when Isaac was weaned,¹⁰⁵ called persecution by Paul in *Galatians* 4:29, marks the beginning of the four hundred years. Isaac was born twenty-five years after the promise, and the age of weaning is placed at about five years,¹⁰⁶ thus making the thirty years from the promise.

This is certainly not inconsistent with *Genesis* 15:13; for if Abraham's seed was to be afflicted four hundred years, we would expect that persecution to begin with Isaac. The only difficulty remaining is to show the harmony of these texts with *Exodus* 12:40-41, which speak of the children of Israel as sojourning four hundred and thirty years. But Dr. Horne¹⁰⁷ says that the text, according to the ancient Samaritan Pentateuch, should read thus:

“Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, and their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.”

¹⁰² *Antiquities*, chap. 15, 2.

¹⁰³ *Genesis* 15:13.

¹⁰⁴ *Genesis* 15:13.

¹⁰⁵ *Genesis* 21:1-10.

¹⁰⁶ See Clark on *Genesis* 21:8.

¹⁰⁷ *Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, part 1, chap. iii., see vi.

This rendering, which is confirmed by the Alexandrian manuscript of the Septuagint, makes perfect harmony.

From *Deuteronomy* 7:6-8 we learn that when the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt, and made the promise recorded in *Exodus* 19:3-6, it was simply in keeping with the promise made to their fathers. The fact that the conditions of the two promises were the same,¹⁰⁸ harmonizes with this statement.

¹⁰⁸ Compare *Genesis* 26:5 and *Exodus* 19:5.

22. The Promised Land

Signs of the Times, June 11, 1885

Lesson for the Pacific Coast – July 11

Exodus 19:3-6

E. J. Waggoner

1. When the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, what promise did He make them?

Exodus 19

³ And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

⁴ You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

⁵ Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is my:

⁶ And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel.

2. Of what promise was this a continuation?

Deuteronomy 7

⁶ For you are a holy people unto the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

⁷ The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people:

⁸ But because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, has the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

3. Into what land were they to be brought?

Genesis 17

⁸ And I will give unto you, and to your seed after you, the land wherein you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for

an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

4. Who led them into this land?

Joshua 1

¹ Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spoke unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

² Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

³ Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

⁴ From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

⁵ There shall not any man be able to stand before you all the days of your life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you.

⁶ Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shall you divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

¹¹ Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare victuals; for within three days you shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God gives you to possess it.

5. To whom did the Lord say He had sworn to give the land which Joshua was to divide among the people?

Joshua 1

⁶ Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shall you divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

6. Cite the passages in which the promise was made to the fathers.

- Genesis 12:1-3
- Genesis 13:14-17
- Genesis 15:1-16

- Genesis 17:1-8
- Genesis 22:15-18
- Genesis 26:1-5
- Genesis 28:10-15

7. Since the promise was made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in person, could the possession of the land by their descendants be a fulfillment of that promise?

It evidently could not.

8. In making the promise to Abraham, what had the Lord said his seed should possess?

Genesis 22

¹⁷ That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

9. Was this fulfilled when Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan?

Joshua 17

¹² Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

¹³ Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out.

10. What is Paul’s testimony on this point?

Hebrews 4

⁸ For if Jesus [margin, that is, Joshua] had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.

11. Where do we find that “other day” mentioned?

Psalms 118

²² The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

²³ This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice

and be glad in it.

12. What day was it of which David spoke?

2 Corinthians 6

² (For He said, I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured you: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

13. Since another day was spoken of, what does Paul concede?

Hebrews 4

⁹ There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.

14. Who is it that leads the people into the true rest?

Matthew 11

²⁸ Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.

15. And who are they who are Christ's?

Galatians 3

²⁹ And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

16. Then through whom is the promise to Abraham and his seed fulfilled?

23. The Two Covenants

Written for *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, 1899

Exodus 19:3-8; 24:4-8

E. J. Waggoner

1. When God was about to speak the law to Israel, of what did He tell Moses to remind them?

Exodus 19

³ Tell the children of Israel;

⁴ You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

2. What covenant did He propose to make with them?

⁵ Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is my:

⁶ And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel.

3. What is a covenant?

“A mutual agreement of two or more persons or parties, in writing and under seal, to do or to refrain from some act or thing; a contract.” -*Webster*

4. When Moses told the people what the Lord had proposed, what did they say?

⁷ And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do.

⁸ And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

5. In the covenant which the Lord proposed to make with Israel what did He say that they were to do?

⁵ Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant...

6. What was His covenant which they were to keep as their part of the mutual agreement or covenant between Him

and them?

Deuteronomy 4

¹³ And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone.

7. What relation did the ten commandments bear to the covenant made between God and the children of Israel?

As seen by the last text quoted, the ten commandments were the “covenant” to which the Lord referred, when in proposing a covenant with Israel, He said,

Exodus 19

⁵ If you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant...

The ten commandments were termed God’s covenant *before* the covenant was made with Israel. They were not an agreement made, but something which God commanded them to perform, and He promised them something, provided they would keep them.

Thus the ten commandments—God’s covenant—became the basis of the covenant made between Him and Israel. The ten commandments, in all their details, are “all these words,” concerning which the covenant was made (*Exodus 24:8*).

8. After God had spoken His law (the “covenant which He commanded,” *Exodus 20:3-17*), did He continue speaking to the people?

Deuteronomy 5

²² And He added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

9. What was the nature of the instruction afterward given to Moses (*Exodus 20:22* to close of *Exodus 23*)?

It was a practical application or explanation of the ten commandments, so that the people might be able better to understand what was involved in the keeping of them.

The reference to the altar—how it should be built, and how

approached—in *Exodus* 20:24-26, simply shows the care that God would have taken in His worship.

In *Exodus* 23:14-19 we have other commandments also concerning worship.

10. When Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and they promised to be obedient (*Exodus* 24:3), what did Moses then do, that there might be no misunderstanding?

Exodus 24

⁴ And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

⁷ And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people.

11. When the people had again heard the words of the Lord, and again promised obedience (verse 7), what was done to ratify the covenant which had thus been made?

⁸ And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words.

Hebrews 9

¹⁹ ...and sprinkled both the book and all the people,

²⁰ Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined unto you.

Note: We have here the complete account of the making of the first covenant. It consisted of a promise of obedience to the ten commandments, on the part of the children of Israel, and the statement by the Lord of what He would do for them provided they obeyed His voice.

12. Is the covenant made at Sinai the only covenant which God made with Israel?

Jeremiah 31

³¹ Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of

Judah:

³² Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says the Lord.

13. What comparison does God make between the two covenants?

Hebrews 8

⁶ But now has He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

14. In what respect was the first covenant faulty?

It must have been faulty in the very particulars wherein the second was better, namely, in the promises, as seen by last part of verse 6:

⁶ ...He [Christ] is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

15. What are the promises of the new covenant?

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

¹¹ And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

Jeremiah 31

³⁴ For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

16. Are these promises stated in the order of their fulfillment?

It is evident that in *Jeremiah* 31:33-34, where the promises of the new covenant are more fully stated than in *Hebrews* 8:10-11, those promises are not stated in the regular order of their

fulfillment; because forgiveness of sins is mentioned last, whereas it must necessarily precede the writing of the law in the heart.

The order is as follows:

1. Forgiveness of sins;
2. Putting the law in the inward parts, and writing it in the heart;
3. Remembering sin no more, or blotting out of sin; and
4. Translating the people to the heavenly Jerusalem, where all shall see and know the Lord.

See *Isaiah* 54:11-13; *Revelation* 21:2-4.

17. In the first covenant, to what was Israel's promise really equivalent?

In the first covenant the people promised to keep all the commandments of God, so as to be worthy of a place in His kingdom. This was a virtual promise to make themselves righteous; for God did not promise to help them. But Christ says,

John 15

⁵ Without me, you can do nothing.

And the prophet says,

Isaiah 64

⁶ All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

The only perfect righteousness is God's righteousness, and that can be obtained only through faith in Christ. See *Romans* 3:20-26. The only righteousness that will insure us an entrance into the kingdom of God, is...

Philippians 3

⁹ ...the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Of those who shall inherit the kingdom of God, the Lord says,

Isaiah 54

¹⁷ Their righteousness is of me;

And the prophet says of Christ, when He has taken His place as king over all the true Israel,

Jeremiah 23

⁶ This is His name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness.

18. Yet what must be done in order to have eternal life?

Matthew 19

¹⁷ If you will enter into life, keep the commandments.

See also *Revelation 22:14*.

19. Then how could ancient Israel have any chance for eternal life?

Hebrews 9

¹⁴ How much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

¹⁵ And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Note: The fact that Christ, as mediator of the second covenant, died for the remission of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, shows that there was no forgiveness by virtue of that first covenant.

20. How alone can the good works required by the law be manifested in the lives of men?

See *John 15:4-5; Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 13:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians 2:20*.

21. In order to have God make us “perfect in every good work to do His will,” what must be our position?

James 4

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God, resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.

Romans 6

¹³ Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

22. What is said of the law in the second, or new covenant?

Jeremiah 31

³³ I [the Lord] will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.

23. Since no such promise was made in the old covenant (see *Exodus* 19:5-8; 24:3-7), were not the promises of the new covenant much “better” than those of the old?

24. When and how was the second covenant ratified?

By the death of Christ:

Daniel 9

²⁷ And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.

Hebrews 9

¹⁶ For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

¹⁷ For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives.

25. Then how could the Israelites, or any people before the first advent, derive any benefit from it?

By faith in the promised Redeemer:

Hebrews 6

¹³ For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

¹⁶ For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for con-

firmation is to them an end of all strife.

¹⁷ Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

¹⁸ That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

¹⁹ Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil;

²⁰ Where the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

Romans 4

¹⁷ (As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations,) before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickens the dead, and calls those things which be not as though they were.

26. How and in whom was the covenant with Abraham confirmed?

In Christ:

Hebrews 6

¹³ For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by himself,

¹⁶ For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

¹⁷ Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

¹⁸ That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

¹⁹ Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil;

²⁰ Where the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

Galatians 3

¹⁷ And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and

thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

27. Is there anything in the second covenant that was not in the Abrahamic covenant?

Galatians 3

²⁹ And if you be Christ's, than are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

⁶ Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

⁷ Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed.

⁹ So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Note: None should allow themselves to be confused by the terms first covenant and second covenant. While the covenant made at Sinai is called "the first covenant," it is by no means the first covenant that God ever made with man. Long before that He made a covenant with Abraham, and He also made a covenant with Noah, and with Adam.

Neither must it be supposed that the first or old covenant existed for a period of time as the only covenant with the people before the promise of the second or new covenant could be shared. If that had been the case, then during that time there would have been no pardon for the people.

What is called the "second covenant" virtually existed before the covenant was made at Sinai; for the covenant with Abraham was confirmed in Christ (*Galatians 3:17*), and it is only through Christ that there is any value to what is known as the second covenant. There is no blessing that can be gained by virtue of the second covenant, that was not promised to Abraham. And we, with whom the second covenant is made, can share the inheritance which it promises, only by being children of Abraham. To be Christ's is the same as to be children of Abraham (*Galatians 3:29*); all who are of faith are the

children of Abraham, and share in his blessing (*Galatians* 3:7-9); and since no one can have anything except as children of Abraham, it follows that there is nothing in what is called the second covenant that was not in the covenant made with Abraham.

The second covenant existed in every feature long before the first, even from the days of Adam. It is called “second” because both its ratification by blood and its more minute statement, were after that of the covenant made at Sinai. More than this, it was the second covenant made with the Jewish people. The one from Sinai was the first made with that nation.

28. Then why was the covenant made at Sinai?

The Lord was just giving His law. The promise of the Israelites to keep it perfectly, and their failure; brought them face to face with the consequences of violating the law of God. The consciousness of guilt, and a sense of its consequences, would be much more forcibly impressed upon their minds than if they had not made the promise which they did.

And being thus brought face to face with their sin, and realizing its full enormity, they would be driven to the only source of help, ample provision for which had been made in the covenant with their father Abraham.

Thus it might be said that the first covenant was made in order to bring the second covenant (all the terms of which were the Abrahamic covenant) into bolder relief, and to secure its acceptance by the people.

Notes

When it is demonstrated that the first covenant—the Sinaitic covenant—contained no provisions for pardon of sins, some will at once say,

“But they did have pardon under that covenant.”

The trouble arises from a confusion of terms. It is not denied that under the old covenant, i.e., during the time when it was

specially in force, there was pardon of sins, but that pardon was not offered in the Old Covenant, and could not be secured by virtue of it. The pardon was secured by virtue of something else, as shown by *Hebrews* 9:15.

Not only was there the opportunity of finding free pardon of sins, and grace to help in time of need, during the time of the old covenant, but the same opportunity existed before that covenant was made, by virtue of God's covenant with Abraham, which differs in no respect from that made with Adam and Eve, except that we have the particulars given more in detail.

We see, then, that there was no necessity for provisions to be made in the Sinaitic covenant for forgiveness of sins. The plan of salvation was developed long before the gospel was preached to Abraham,¹⁰⁹ and was amply sufficient to save to the uttermost all who would accept it. The covenant at Sinai was made for the purpose of making the people see the necessity of accepting the gospel.

Hebrews 9:1 is a text that hinders many from seeing that all God's blessings to man are gained by virtue of the second covenant, and not by the first. That text reads:

Hebrews 9

¹ Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

This, together with the fact that when men complied with these ordinances of divine service, they were forgiven,¹¹⁰ seems to some conclusive evidence that the old covenant contained the gospel and its blessings. But forgiveness of sins was not secured by virtue of those offerings,

Hebrews 10

⁴ ...for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats

¹⁰⁹ *Galatians* 3:8.

¹¹⁰ *Leviticus* 4.

should take away sins.

Forgiveness was obtained only by virtue of the promised sacrifice of Christ,¹¹¹ the mediator of the new covenant, their faith in whom was shown by their offerings. So it was by virtue of the second or new covenant that pardon was secured to those who offered the sacrifices provided for in the ordinances of divine service connected with the old or first covenant.

Moreover, those “ordinances of divine service” formed no part of the first covenant. If they had, they must have been mentioned in the making of that covenant; but they were not. They were connected with it, but not a part of it. They were simply the means by which the people acknowledged the justice of their condemnation to death for the violation of the law which they had covenanted to keep, and their faith in the mediator of the new covenant.

In brief, then, God’s plan in the salvation of sinners, whether now or in the days of Moses, is:

1. The law sent home emphatically to the individual, to produce conviction of sin, and thus to drive the sinner to seek freedom;
2. Then the acceptance of Christ’s gracious invitation, which was extended long before, but which the sinner would not listen to; and lastly,
3. Having accepted Christ, and being justified by faith, the manifestation of the faith, through the ordinances of the gospel, and the living of a life of righteousness by faith in Christ.

¹¹¹ *Hebrews* 9:15.

24. Ten Commandments

Signs of the Times, May 26, 1887

Notes on the International Lesson, June 12

Exodus 20:1-11

E. J. Waggoner

THE lesson for this week covers the first four commandments. Our notes must be merely suggestive, as each one of the commandments furnishes ample material for an entire lesson.

Before entering upon the lesson proper, the student should read carefully the 19th chapter of *Exodus*, where we have an account of the circumstances attending the giving of the law. These were of the utmost grandeur and impressiveness.

The Lord came down upon Sinai amid fire and smoke,¹¹² accompanied by His angels,¹¹³ and not only the mountain but the earth shook when God spoke.¹¹⁴ The circumstances attending the giving of the law were calculated to impress the people with a sense of the power and majesty of God, and, consequently, of the sacredness of His law.

The Introduction

Exodus 20

¹ And God spoke all these words, saying,

² I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Here God identifies himself. He is the God that brought them forth from bondage. In giving His law, He makes himself known as their Redeemer. When He sent Moses to call them from bondage, He made himself known to them as...

Exodus 3

¹⁵ ...the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of

¹¹² *Exodus* 19:18; *Deuteronomy* 4:11-12.

¹¹³ *Deuteronomy* 33:2; *Psalms* 68:17.

¹¹⁴ *Exodus* 19:18; *Psalms* 68:7-8; *Hebrews* 12:25-26.

Jacob;

—and He also declared His name to be,

¹⁴ ...I AM THAT I AM.

This was a declaration that He is the living God, the self-existent One, the Creator of all things. So when from the mount God made himself known to the assembled multitude as the one who had brought them out of Egypt, it would recall the fact that He is the self-existent Creator, who has a right to make and enforce laws. It would also recall His power as manifested in their behalf.

The First Commandment

Exodus 20

³ You shall have no other gods before me.

This was placed at the head because it is the foundation of everything. We may say that all the rest of the law is summed up in this first commandment. For having no other gods before the true God, means sincere heart worship of Him, and perfect worship of God means obedience to all His requirements.

The first four commandments embody our duty to God, and the last six our duty to man. But the last six are secondary to the first four, since love to God is first. Love to God necessarily presupposes love to man;

1 John 4

²⁰ For he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

Paul says that...

1 Corinthians 8

⁵ ...there be gods many and lords many.

A god is an object of worship. Worship is reverence; one worships whatever his thoughts center upon. As everyone

must think, and must have some object toward which his thoughts and efforts are directed, so everyone must have some god. If it is not the living God, it is some god in his stead. Some trust in riches;¹¹⁵ such make money their god.

Job 31

²⁴ If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold,
You are my confidence;

²⁵ If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my
hand had gotten much;

²⁶ If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in
brightness;

²⁷ And my heart has been secretly enticed, or my mouth has
kissed my hand:

²⁸ This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for
I should have denied the God that is above.

In *Colossians* 3:5, also *Ephesians* 5:5, covetousness is declared to be idolatry. The covetous man's mind is absorbed in the contemplation of some earthly object, which shuts out thoughts of God. It is not the rich alone who become idolaters by trusting in uncertain riches instead of the living God, for a poor man may make gold his hope, and long for it to the exclusion of every other object of thought, and thus he is an idolater.

Others worship appetite and the baser passions. Paul speaks of some...

Philippians 3

¹⁹ ...whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and
whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

There are thousands in so-called Christian lands whose principal thought is,

“What shall we eat?”

¹¹⁵ **1 Timothy 6** ¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

or,

“What shall we drink?”

Thousands have let liquor deprive them of their hope of eternal life. Thousands who use the filthy weed tobacco, when they learn that God requires purity of flesh as well as of spirit,¹¹⁶ have said,

“Well, I can’t give up my tobacco.”

Thus they have made a god of a pipe, or a plug of tobacco. Is not such idolatry fully as debasing as the crocodile worship of the Egyptians? But we have not space to pursue this subject further. Suffice it to say that the first commandment forbids anything that is not done to the glory of God.

Second Commandment

Exodus 20

⁴ You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

⁵ You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

⁶ And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

This commandment does not, as many suppose, forbid the simple making of pictures or statuary. It does not forbid the use of postage-stamps or coins having the mark of some Government. No mechanical art could be carried on without making something that is like something else, and the commandment does not forbid this.

What the commandment does forbid is the making of any

¹¹⁶ **2 Corinthians 7** ¹ Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

image for the object of worship. The Catholic Church has omitted the second commandment from the list, claiming that it is the same as the first. But this is an error and is done simply that they may seem to have Bible authority for image worship. When Catholics are charged with worshiping images, as, for instance, images of Christ, they reply that they do not worship the image, but the One who is represented by it. That is just what is forbidden by the second commandment.

Ancient heathenism originated in the same way,—God was thought to be represented by certain images, while the people knew that the images themselves were not God. This was the case with the Israelites when they made the golden calf.¹¹⁷ But such worship necessarily soon degenerated into the worship of the images. Making a graven or molten image, and putting it in a secret place, was one of the things against which a curse was pronounced.

Deuteronomy 27

¹⁵ Cursed be the man that makes any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and puts it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.

The second commandment manifests God's love and mercy. This shows that the law of God is a law of love. God gave His law in love, as we read:

Deuteronomy 33

² The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of His saints; from His right hand went a fiery law for them.

³ Yea, He loved the people.

As it is a law of love, so obedience to it is the test of love on our part:

¹¹⁷ See also *Acts* 17:29.

1 John 5

³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

In the second commandment we have a refutation of the charge that the law was designed to be merely temporary. The iniquity of the fathers is, as a natural consequence, visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, but the mercy of God is to be shown unto thousands of generations of them that love God and keep His commandments.

Deuteronomy 7

⁹ Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations.

The world has not yet stood even half of a thousand generations, and so the commandments of God are still the test of loyalty to the Creator.

Third Commandment

Exodus 20

⁷ You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.

This commandment forbids not only what is called “profane swearing,” that is, the use of blasphemous oaths, but all irreverence. Substitutes for oaths which contain the name of God are condemned equally with the oaths themselves. By this commandment all “by-words” and unnecessary expletives, are forbidden.

This commandment may be violated even in worship. The unnecessary or vain use of titles belonging to Deity in prayer or exhortation, is taking the name of God in vain. Those who regard this commandment will not use the name of the Creator except when it is absolutely necessary, and then only

with great reverence. The repetition of profane expressions which others have used, is also a violation of the commandment. In *Psalms* 138 we read:

Psalms 138

² You have magnified your word above all your name.

Then irreverence for God's word, and disobedience of His commandments, are both violations of the third commandment. Perversion of Scripture, and the quoting of texts in jest or to give point to a joke, are gross violations of this commandment.

Still further, this commandment enjoins reverence for places of worship. The sanctuary of old was a sacred place where God's name was.

Deuteronomy 16

⁶ But at the place which the Lord your God shall choose to place His name in, there you shall sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that you came forth out of Egypt.

To act irreverently in the sanctuary is to dishonor God. When the children of Israel were in captivity, God promised that He would be to them...

Ezekiel 11

¹⁶ ...a little sanctuary.

This was equivalent to the promise recorded in:

Matthew 18

²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Now a place that is sacred because of God's presence, should be regarded with reverence; and irreverent conduct in such a place is showing disrespect to God; and disrespect to God is a violation of the third commandment, and of the first as well.

Fourth Commandment

Exodus 20

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

⁹ Six days shall you labor, and do all your work;

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates;

¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

On this commandment we have space for only a few points, whereas pages might be written. It is not because the commandment is obscure that so much might be written upon it, but because it is so comprehensive, and because so many people, either willfully or through wrong education, misinterpret its plain terms. We ask the student to note these points:

The Sabbath-day is the seventh day. Since the Sabbath is to be remembered, that is, it is of constant recurrence, it follows that “the seventh day” means the seventh day of a period of seven days. Hence it must mean the seventh day of the week. That this is so will be seen by comparing *Luke 23:54-56; 24:1*, where the Sabbath-day “according to the commandment” is the day before the first day of the week, and is, consequently, the seventh day of the week.

It is contended by some that the commandment does not enjoin rest on a specific seventh day, but on any day that has been preceded by six days of labor. This matter can be readily settled. In *Exodus 16* we have the account of the fall of the manna, where the terms “sixth day” and “seventh day” are employed. Now it is very evident that in this place the sixth day means the sixth day of the week, and the seventh day, the seventh day of the week. There is nobody who imagines that the Israelites were left to choose the day of their rest, or that the manna would keep over one day for one family or tribe,

and would spoil at the same time for another family or tribe who might not have had the same day of rest. Thus, since the terms “sixth day” and “seventh day” refer to the week in this instance, they certainly must mean the same thing in the fourth commandment.

Further; all admit that it is necessary that there should be uniformity in the observance of the Sabbath. If each one were to choose the day that pleased him, there would be confusion. But how could this uniformity be secured? Not by the dictum of any man, for there is no man whose authority all men would recognize. God alone has authority in matters pertaining to morals, and He alone could direct which day shall be observed as the Sabbath. This He has done.

Exodus 20

¹⁰ The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.

From the part of the commandment just quoted, it appears that the Sabbath—which is the name of the seventh day of the week—is the Lord’s day. In *Isaiah* 58:13 the Lord calls it His “holy day,” and in *Mark* 2:28 Christ declares himself to be Lord of the Sabbath. He was speaking to the Jews of the day which they observed; hence it is the seventh day of the week which is the Lord’s day.

This shows us the impropriety of calling the seventh day “the Jewish Sabbath.” There is not, and never was, anything Jewish about it; it is the Lord’s. But someone may say that it was given to the Jews, and they were required to keep it. So God made himself known to the Jews (*Exodus* 3:13-16), and declared himself to be their God; and they were required to worship Him. But we do not therefore call Jehovah the Jewish God. He is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews.

Romans 3

²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall *no flesh* be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

And since He is the God of the Gentiles, just the same as He is the God of the Jews, He requires the Gentiles to keep the same commandments that He imposes on the Jews. And He promises rich blessings to the Gentiles who shall keep His Sabbath.

Isaiah 56

⁶ Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one that keeps the sabbath from polluting it, and takes hold of my covenant;

⁷ Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for *all people*.

A Good Description

Signs of the Times, June 9, 1887

E. J. Waggoner

THE International Sunday-school lesson for June 12 is on the first four commandments, and it is interesting to note the different reasons which different lesson commentators give for keeping the first day of the week instead of the seventh day, as enjoined by the fourth commandment. Dr. Alexander McLaren, of Manchester, England, has an article in the *Sunday School Times*, in which he says:

We have not the Jewish Sabbath nor is it binding on us. But as men we ought to rest, and resting, to worship on one day of the week. The unwritten law of Christianity molding all outward forms by its own free spirit, gradually, and without premeditation, slid from the seventh to the first day, as it had clear right to do.

This is about the best statement of the case that we have yet seen. It is a truth that “we have not the Jewish Sabbath” and that it is not binding upon us, because the fourth command-

ment knows nothing of any such Sabbath. The Sabbath which we have, and which the fourth commandment enjoins upon us, is the Sabbath of the Lord, which is the seventh day of the week.

But what we wish to call especial attention to is the aptness with which the writer describes the change from the seventh day to the first. The law of God did not change, but “the unwritten law of Christianity,” which is another term for the natural inclinations of professed Christians, “gradually, and without premeditation, slid from the seventh to the first day.”

That’s just it; that sentence describes the case as well as a whole volume could. There was no commandment for the change, but the people gradually slid over onto the first day of the week. In so doing, they clearly slid away from the commandment, which they had no right to do. If they had heeded the commandment, as they ought to have done, they would not have slid; for Inspiration describes the righteous man thus:

Psalm 37

³¹ The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

When men let go of the commandments of God, they are sure to slide.

25. The Royal Law (June 1902)

Present Truth, June 26, 1902

Exodus 20:1-14

E. J. Waggoner

THE Apostle Peter in an Epistle that all Christians like to believe is addressed to them, and which we are sure does speak to us, because it contains living words, even...

1 Peter 1

²³ ...the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever,

—says:

1 Peter 2

² You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.

God's people are a royal people, because they are children of the Great King. God is the King of kings; He reigns over kings, and has no subject of lower rank than king. All His subjects are members of His own family; they are His own children; hence they are a kingly race, a royal people.

Now it is fitting that a royal people should have a royal law, and this God's people have. The Apostle James, writing to those who have...

James 2

¹ ...the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory,

—says,

⁸ If you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well.

This royal law, given by the King of kings, is what God's loyal and royal people are to keep. They are to fulfill it even as Christ fulfilled it. But this that is quoted by the Apostle James is but a portion of the law. By the words of Christ we find that it is but one-half of it; for we read the following question and

answer:

Matthew 22

³⁶ Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

³⁷ Jesus said unto him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.

³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.

³⁹ And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Since the words, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” are a royal law, and are but the second portion of one great law, we know that the whole is the royal law of God for His royal people. Our study this week pertains only to the first portion of the law; next week we shall consider the second branch.

God’s law cannot be too often read, and there are no other words equal to them which God speaks with His own voice amid such awful scenes as will never be paralleled until Christ comes in the clouds of heaven, to save His people, and therefore we print them here:

Exodus 20

¹ And God spoke all these words, saying,

² I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³ You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

⁵ You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

⁶ And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

⁷ You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain;

for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

⁹ Six days shall you labor, and do all your work:

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates:

¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Deuteronomy 5

²² These words the Lord spoke...in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice.

They are the first portion of what is emphatically the royal law. Many articles would not be sufficient to set forth all the details of these commandments, taking them one by one, for the commandment is...

Psalms 119

⁹⁶ ...exceeding broad,

—and we have half of the law before us; hence we can do but little more than merely refer to it. If anybody wishes to enquire particularly concerning any feature we shall be glad to answer; but let each one note these words of Christ:

John 7

¹⁷ If any man wills to do His [God's] will, he shall know of the teaching.

That the law of God is His will, is shown by the Apostle Paul in *Romans* 2:17-18, where he says that the one who knows the will of God is the one who is “instructed out of the law.” If anyone, therefore, is willing to keep God's law, he has the promise of Jesus Christ that he shall know all His teaching. Truly it is a royal road to learning.

Romans 7

¹⁴ The law is spiritual,

–and the Spirit is given us, to guide us into all truth.

John 16

¹³ Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come.

Here is what a great king of old said of this law:-

Psalm 19

⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

⁸ The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

⁹ The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

¹¹ Moreover by them is your servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward.

He also said,

Psalm 119

⁹⁷ O how love I your law! it is my meditation all the day.

Can each one who reads this say the same? Have you, like him, made haste to keep God's commandments? We have seen that those who keep this law are a royal people; and it is plain that those who do not are not of the royal family; for:

James 2

⁹ If you have respect of persons you commit sin, and are convinced of [by] the law as transgressors.

¹⁰ For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.

¹¹ Now if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you are become a transgressor of the law;

—and there is a vast difference between a transgressor of law and a king.

The apostle's reasoning applies as well to any other commandments as to those he mentioned. For example,

“He that said, You shall not kill, said also, You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Now if you do not kill, yet if you are profane or irreverent, you are convicted by the law as a transgressor.”

Or, again:

“He that said, You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, said also, Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Now if you do not swear, yet if you profane God's rest day, you are a transgressor of the royal law; you are acting contrary to the rules of God's family, and so disclaiming relationship with Him.”

Would it not be well to recall the exhortation,

2 Corinthians 13

⁵ Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves.

It is possible that some readers of these lines have unconsciously been trampling some portion of God's holy law under foot. Do not run any risk. Do not rest in uncertainty.

Luke 10

²⁶ What is written in the law? how do you read?

You cannot afford to have the slightest doubt in regard to this matter. If there is any deviation in your life from the plain letter of God's law, do not flatter yourself that you are obeying its Spirit. For while the letter kills, and the Spirit gives life, you must not think to find life in departure from the law of life. The Spirit is not opposed to the letter, or separate from, but resides in it, quickening it into life.

If you find that you are not keeping all of God's law just as

He commanded, do not think that you can do it yourself; and, above all, do not make the mistake of excusing your short-coming by saying that since you are not saved by works you are absolved all from any duty with respect to it. Our righteousness cannot save us; but our unrighteousness can destroy us. Only the righteousness—the right-doing, the command-ment-keeping,—of Christ can save us; but His obedience to the law must be in us, not apart from us. We are...

Romans 5

¹⁰ ...saved by His life

—in us, and His life was characterized by a perfect obedience to the law; and that same perfect obedience must be in us.

¹⁹ By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.

Notice it is not by the obedience of One that many are *allowed to do as they please, and to transgress the law*; but by Christ's obedience we are to be *made righteous*. Through Him the righteousness of the law is to be fulfilled in us.

Romans 8

³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

What more need we say? We have sinned, but God is ready to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness—to make us righteous.

Romans 3

²³ All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

²⁴ Being justified [made righteous] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

His promise is to send His Spirit to put His law in our inward parts, and to write it in our hearts, so that we can both remember it and do it.

Jeremiah 31

³³ But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Let us then yield to His Spirit, praying with new fervor and enlarged understanding,

Luke 11

² Your will be done, as in heaven, so one earth,

—even in me.

26. The Royal Law (July 1902)

Present Truth, July 3, 1902

Exodus 20:12-17

E. J. Waggoner

ALTHOUGH the law of God is summed up in two great commandments, there is no division in it.

Deuteronomy 6

⁴ The Lord our God is one Lord,

—and His law is one law. Just as there is one life, one mind controlling the two hands of the body with their ten fingers, so the ten commandments into which the two great commandments of the law are divided all together form one word, namely, love:

Galatians 5

¹⁴ For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Romans 13

¹⁰ Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Jesus named supreme and undivided love to God as the first and great commandment, and:

Matthew 22

³⁹ You shall love your neighbor as yourself,

—as the second, like unto it. The Apostle James does not make any invidious dissent when he called this second commandment...

James 2

⁸ ...the royal law.

On the contrary, it was to show that the second is equal to the first, being of the same nature. There is no ground in Scripture for the common supposition that “the second table,”

so-called, pertains only to our duty to man, while the first pertains to our duty to God. It is all the same God, and the last six commandments show our duty to God as clearly as do the first four. Whatever we do, we are to do as unto the Lord.

Colossians 3

²³ And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.

When Joseph was tempted to violate the seventh commandment, He said,

Genesis 39

⁹ How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

And when David, had been guilty of both murder and adultery, he said to God,

Psalms 51

⁴ Against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight.

Nothing but a sense of responsibility to God, and love for Him, can keep us in right relationship to our fellow-men. The first and great commandment is,

Luke 10

²⁷ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.

This includes the whole being, and all our powers and faculties. Therefore it evidently includes love to our neighbor. That is to say, after loving God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, we can have no love aside from this, wherewith to love our neighbor. Therefore love to our neighbor is part of our love to God, and is proof of it;

1 John 4

¹⁸ For he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God who he has not seen?

Let us now take a hasty glance at the commandments comprised in this week's lesson.

Fifth Commandment

Exodus 20

¹² Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God gives you.

This commandment makes it plain to us that the law pertains to eternity. When God spoke this law He was bringing Israel out of Egypt, in fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham, into the land which He had promised him. Now the promise to Abraham was that he should inherit the world through the righteousness of faith,¹¹⁸ and he looked not for an earthly, but for a heavenly country.

Hebrews 11

¹⁶ But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city.

Therefore we know that the land referred to in this commandment is the...

2 Peter 3

¹³ ...new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

This commandment, like each one of the others, is...

Psalms 119

⁹⁶ ...exceeding broad.

It includes every act of life. It does not mean merely that little children should be obedient to their parents, but it speaks to old men and youths as well, telling each one not to do a dishonorable thing, but so to act that honor will be reflected on his father and mother, even though they be dead.

¹¹⁸ **Romans 4** ¹³ For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

This fifth commandment, therefore, is equivalent to Christ's words to the young enquirer about the way to eternal life:

Matthew 19

¹⁷ If you will enter into life, keep the commandments.

Sixth Commandment

Exodus 20

¹³ You shall not kill.

Here again we have a commandment that touches every act of life. God is our life, and God is love, and...

Romans 13

¹⁰ Love works no ill to his neighbor.

The commandment is therefore not negative, but positive. It teaches us that we should lose no opportunity to do good to our fellow-men.

Galatians 6

¹⁰ As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

It teaches us also that we must regard our own life as a sacred gift from God, in fact, as a part of God's own life, and must therefore sacredly guard it. A man has no more right to kill himself than he has to kill his neighbor; and to do anything contrary to the principle of life is to sin against God,—to crucify the Son of God afresh.

Thus this commandment teaches temperance in eating and drinking, and the doing of everything to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10

³¹ Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Seventh Commandment

Exodus 20

¹⁴ You shall not commit adultery.

Whoever is faithful to God cannot be faithless to any creature; so the secret of keeping this commandment is loyalty to God. He makes a covenant with His people, as a husband to them:

Jeremiah 31

³¹ Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

³² Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says the Lord.

And Paul says that the body of sin, to which we were united, being dead, we are married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God.

Romans 7

⁴ Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Friendship with the world is enmity against God; and they who are friends of the world are adulteresses.

James 4 [RV]

⁴ You adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Eighth Commandment

Exodus 20

¹⁵ You shall not steal.

The Word of God says to all of us:

1 Corinthians 6

¹⁹ You are not your own.

We have been purchased with the life of Christ, and belong wholly to Him. Our life is not our own; none of the things that we possess are our own; all belong to God. When David fled from Saul, and came to the priest, he said to him,

1 Samuel 21

³ What is under your hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand.

We are simply God's stewards; that which we are accustomed to call our own is merely under our hand, for us to take care of it for the Master, and use it in His service. If therefore we use strength and money for our own selfish gratification, we are guilty of embezzlement—of theft.

Is it not evident that whoever looks upon things in this light can never rob his fellow-men? The fear, that is, the love of God, is the one thing that keeps men from evil.

Ninth Commandment

Exodus 20

¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

It is not necessary with this commandment either, to enter into subtle niceties, such as the Rabbis set forth, as to what does or does not constitute a violation of it.

Isaiah 43

¹⁰ You are my witnesses, says the Lord.

John 5

¹⁰ He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself;

—for believing Christ is receiving Him,¹¹⁹ and thus receiving God. Our sole business in life is to show forth the virtues of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

¹¹⁹ **John 1** ¹² But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.

1 Peter 2

⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.

We are in this world as representatives of God; for in the beginning God placed man on this earth as ruler for Him, to reveal Him to his fellow-men, and especially to the lower orders of creation. A man is a complete man only when God wholly controls him, and his body is but an instrument for the manifestation of the life of God.

He who denies the Lord, refusing to allow His life to control his body, misrepresents Him, and he is moreover a false witness against all human kind, and consequently emphatically a violator of the ninth commandment, in that while professing to be a man, he gives a false representation of what a true man is.

Christ is the Truth; and whoever continually confesses Christ in his flesh, cannot be false to any man. It must be remembered that no one who disbelieves the promises of God is a keeper of this commandment.

1 John 5

¹⁰ He that believes not God has made Him a liar; because he has not believed the record that God gave of His Son.

God's record is that in Christ we have the life that cleanses and saves from all sin. Whoever does not believe this, or does not accept it, which is the same thing, charges God with lying; but God cannot lie, and therefore whoever charges God with lying is himself a liar. Of what use is it to profess to be truthful to our fellow-men, when we are bearing false witness against God? An evil speaker shall not be established in the earth,¹²⁰ but:

¹²⁰ *Psalm* 140:11.

Proverbs 12

¹⁰ The lip of truth shall be established for ever.

Therefore,

2 Chronicles 20

²⁰ Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established.

Tenth Commandment

Exodus 20

¹⁷ You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

This is the last commandment, completing the circle of the law, which ends where it begins, for:

Colossians 3

⁵ ...covetousness...is idolatry.

Ephesians 5

⁵ ...a covetous man...is an idolater,

–because his longing for earthly possessions shows that he does not trust wholly in God. He is trusting...

1 Timothy 6

¹⁷ ...in uncertain riches, [instead of] in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

The tenth commandment embraces the whole, and indicates, more than any other, that:

Romans 7

¹⁴ ...the law is spiritual.

The Apostle Paul said,

⁷ I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, You shall not covet.

So whoever keeps this one commandment is sure to keep

the whole law. It may truly be said, therefore, that the whole law is summed up in the words,

Exodus 20

¹⁷ You shall not covet.

The one who really keeps this can say to God,

Psalms 73

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none on earth that I desire beside You.

Such a one loves God with such supreme, all-absorbing love that there is no room for any other love. This love to God is but the working of His “everlasting love”¹²¹ that draws us to Him, and makes us one with Him.

1 John 5

³ This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.

We are not made members of the Royal Family by keeping the law; but, being by the love of the Great King made members of His family, we as a matter of course keep the Royal Law.

¹²¹ *Jeremiah 31:3.*

27. God's Covenant with Israel

Signs of the Times, June 22, 1888

Notes on the International Lesson, July 1

Exodus 24:1-12

E. J. Waggoner

THERE are many covenants mentioned in the Bible, but there are two which stand out prominent, and sustain such a relation to each other that they are called the old covenant and the new. Our lesson has to do with the old covenant, but we shall refer to the new, since both concern the same people and the same thing.

The covenant is first introduced in the 19th chapter of *Exodus*, and we must study that in order properly to understand the passage covered by the lesson. The children of Israel had come into the wilderness of Sinai, and the Lord called to Moses from the mountain, saying:

Exodus 19

⁴ You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

⁵ Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is my:

⁶ And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel.

⁷ And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.

⁸ And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

This was really the first, or old covenant. It was simply a mutual agreement between God and the people, which is all that is usually understood by a covenant. So far as the covenant itself was concerned, the people entered into it here;

Exodus 24:1-8 simply records the ratification of the covenant. The reader will notice, however, in the above quotation, that although the people said,

“All that the Lord has spoken we will do,”

–the Lord had not yet told them anything to do, except to keep His covenant. Now ordinarily a covenant implies mutual obligation, but here we have a covenant mentioned which was the Lord’s special property, and which the children of Israel were to keep; and their promise to keep this covenant was their part of the covenant which God made with them. Thus we see that the first covenant with Israel was made concerning something else that is also called a covenant.

The student needs to watch closely here, lest he become confused. The simple facts are these: The “covenant” which the people were to “keep” was the ten commandments, which had not yet been given. It was not a covenant made with them, but God’s own covenant given to them. Moses refers to it as follows:

Deuteronomy 4

¹² And the Lord spoke unto you out of the midst of the fire; you heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only you heard a voice.

¹³ And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone.

Let the student bear in mind these points, and he will have no difficulty:

1. The ten commandments are God’s covenant.
2. God did not make this covenant with the children of Israel, but He commanded them to do it; they were to keep it.
3. This covenant is entirely different from a covenant in the ordinary sense of the term; for there was no agree-

ment about it; it was God's will which He commanded the people to do.

4. Notwithstanding the fact that it was the duty of the people to keep God's law,—His covenant which He commanded them to perform,—God made a covenant with them concerning it. Although He could rightly have required unconditional obedience of them, He condescended to enter into covenant relation with them; if they would promise on their part to keep His covenant,—the ten commandments,—as was their duty, He on His part agreed to grant them peculiar blessings. This mutual promise, this contract, was the covenant which God made with Israel.
5. Observe then that God's covenant lay behind the covenant which He made with Israel; it was the basis of that covenant, the thing concerning which that covenant was made, but was entirely distinct from that covenant.
6. And, lastly, remember that when they entered into the covenant with God, promising to do all that the Lord commanded, they had not heard God's covenant which He commanded them to perform. In short, they made a covenant, without knowing what it was which they were promising to do.

Three days after this the Lord spoke His law from Sinai,

Deuteronomy 5

²² ...out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice,

—which caused the earth to tremble. This was the covenant which He commanded the people to perform, and which they had already promised to keep as their part of the contract. And now that they had heard the words which they had before promised to do, it remained to be seen if they would stand by their agreement.

This ratification is a part of the subject of this present lesson, and was on this wise:

1. First, Moses repeated God's words to the people, and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the Lord has said will we do." *Exodus 24:3*.
2. Then Moses wrote all the words of the Lord in a book, and built an altar, and offered sacrifices. Verses 4-5.
3. Next he took the book and read all the words in the hearing of the people, and again they said, "All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient." Verse 7.
4. Finally he took the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled both the book and the people, saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words." Verse 8; *Hebrews 9:19-20*.

Thus was the covenant ratified; the people had emphatically and repeatedly promised to keep God's commandments, and He had promised to make of them a peculiar treasure to himself, above all people. This was the first covenant.

But this covenant was not kept by the people, and so one of two things was necessary: either God must cast off the people, which would have been their eternal ruin, or else a new covenant must be made. Accordingly we read:

Jeremiah 31

³¹ Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

³² Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says the Lord:

³³ But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

³⁴ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Notice that this covenant was made with the same people that the first one was,

³¹ ...with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.

Let this fact be firmly fixed in the mind. Many people imagine that the first covenant was made with the Jews and the second with the Gentiles. But this is a great error. God never made any covenant with the Gentiles, and never gave the Gentiles any promises. Paul says that to the Israelites pertain...

Romans 9

⁴ ...the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.

The Jews have everything. Then what is left for the Gentiles? Nothing whatever. Says the same apostle:

Ephesians 2

¹¹ Wherefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

¹² That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

But are the Gentiles shut out from salvation. Yes, as Gentiles. So long as they remain Gentiles, which is but another term for heathen, they have no part in the things of God. Thus being reconciled to God, they are...

¹⁹ ...no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,

–and their citizenship is in Heaven, from whence they look for the Saviour.

Philippians 3

²⁰ For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note further that the new covenant is made concerning the law of God. This time, says the Lord,

Jeremiah 31

³³ I will put my law in their hearts.

Then since the new covenant was made with the same people that the first was, and concerning the same thing, why was there any necessity for making it? Why could they not go along under the old one? Simply because the people had broken the first covenant, and there was in it no provision for any such thing.

The first covenant was unconditional. The people promised to keep the commandments, and God promised to make them a peculiar treasure unto himself. This was all. It will be readily seen that when the people violated their agreement, as they did almost immediately when they worshiped the golden calf, they had no more claim on the Lord, according to the covenant which they had entered into with Him.

They couldn't go on under that covenant any more, for no matter how perfectly they might abide by its terms in the future, the fact would remain that they had once broken it, and that was sufficient to forfeit all the blessings which God had promised. So, since the Lord did not wish to cast off His people, it became necessary to make...

Hebrews 8

⁶ ...a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

What were these better promises of the new covenant? Chief among them was the forgiveness of sins. It was in the

people that the first covenant was faulty for if the first covenant had not been faulty in this respect, there would have been no place for the second. There was in the first covenant no provision for forgiveness of sins. It was ratified by the blood of beasts, which could never take away sin.

But the second covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ which...

John 1

²⁹ ...takes away the sin of the world.

This covenant is made concerning the same law, but if people break it, they may by repentance obtain pardon, and so still remain in covenant relation with God. This is a wonderful exhibition of the mercy and love of God.

1. First He consents to make a contract with the people, concerning that which it is their duty to do; and then
2. He provides pardon for them when they have not only failed to do their duty, but have also violated their agreement to do their duty.

Surely love could go no further.

One thought more. Someone may wonder if God didn't know that the people would break that first covenant. We reply, Yes; He not only knew that they *would not* keep it, but He knew that they *could not* keep it. In fact, they had broken the commandments, concerning which the covenant was made, before the covenant was made. It was utterly impossible for the people to keep the commandments by their own unaided efforts, yet that is what they promised to do.

Then why did the Lord lead them to make such a promise? For the purpose of showing them their own weakness, and of directing their minds to the second covenant, which already existed, in effect, in the covenant made with Abraham. That covenant...

Galatians 3

¹⁷ ...was confirmed before of God in Christ,

–and the giving of the law, and the unconditional promise made by the people to keep that law, could not disannul it, that it should make of none effect the promises which it contained. It provided forgiveness for transgression of the law concerning which the covenant was made, and also help to keep the law.

And so when the Lord made a new covenant with Israel, He was simply directing their attention to the covenant made long before with Abraham. And the proof of this is found in the fact that all who are heirs of the promises, are children of Abraham.

28. Returning to Bondage

Signs of the Times, March 11, 1889

Exodus 24:12-18; 32

E. J. Waggoner

1. After the covenant between God and Israel had been ratified, what did the Lord said Moses?

Exodus 24

¹² And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there; and I will give you tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that you may teach them.

2. What covered the mount, and what was its appearance?

¹⁵ And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

¹⁶ And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

¹⁷ And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

3. How long was Moses in the mount?

¹⁸ And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and got him up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

4. Did he eat or drink during that time?

Deuteronomy 9

⁹ When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant which the Lord made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water.

5. When the Lord had finished talking with Moses, what did He give him?

Exodus 31

¹⁸ And He gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

6. What was on these tables of stone?

Deuteronomy 9

¹⁰ And the Lord delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the Lord spoke with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly.

7. Whose workmanship were the tables, and how were they filled?

Exodus 32

¹⁵ And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand; the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

¹⁶ And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

8. What did the people say and do when they saw how long Moses was gone?

¹ And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

² And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

³ And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

9. What did Aaron do with the gold?

⁴ And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf...

10. What did they call this golden calf?

⁴ ...And they said, These be your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

11. What does the psalmist say of this?

Psalms 106

¹⁹ They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.

²⁰ Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass.

12. Before they could do this, what did they forget?

²¹ They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt;

²² Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea.

13. How did they worship this image?

Exodus 32

⁶ And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

14. What must we conclude as to the nature of this “play”?

See Notes.

15. Why did the people happen to make a calf to worship instead of the image of a man?

See Notes.

16. What was the Egyptian calf-worship?

See Notes.

17. How extensive was sun-worship anciently? and what was the nature of it?

See Notes.

18. What did God think to do to the Israelites for their abom-

inable idolatry?

Exodus 32

⁹ And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

¹⁰ Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of you a great nation.

Deuteronomy 9

²⁰ And the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time.

19. With what words did Moses plead for them?

Exodus 32

¹¹ And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why does your wrath wax hot against your people, which You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

¹² Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against your people.

¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom You swore by your own self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

³¹ And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray You, out of your book which You have written.

20. Did the Lord grant his request?

¹⁴ And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.

³³ And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

³⁴ Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which

I have spoken unto you: behold, my Angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

21. What immediate punishment did the people receive?

Exodus 32

¹⁹ And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mount.

²⁰ And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

²⁶ Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

²⁷ And he said unto them, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.

²⁸ And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

³⁵ And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

Notes

In *Religions of the Ancient World*, p. 21, Prof. George Rawlinson says:

No part of the Egyptian religion was so much developed and so multiplex as their sun-worship. Besides Ra and Osiris, there were at least six other deities who had a distinctly solar character.

Concerning Osiris, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (art. "Egypt") says:

Abydos was the great seat of the worship of Osiris, which

spread all over Europe, establishing itself in a remarkable manner at Memphis. All the mysteries of the Egyptians, and their whole doctrine of the future state, attached themselves to this worship. Osiris was identified with the sun....Sun-worship was the primitive form of the Egyptian religion, perhaps even pre-Egyptian.

But while Osiris was the Egyptian sun-god, or the chief representation of the sun, he was chiefly represented by a sacred bull, called Apis. On this the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (art. "Apis") says:

According to the Greek writers, Apis was the image of Osiris, and worshiped because Osiris was supposed to have passed into a bull, and to have been soon after manifested by a succession of these animals. The hieroglyphics inscriptions identify the Apis with Osiris, adorned with horns or the head of a bull, and unite the two names as Hapi-Osor, or Apis-Osiris. According to this view the Apis was the incarnation of Osiris manifested in the shape of a bull.

From these quotations it is easy to see why the Israelites made a golden calf, instead of an image of something else. They made the god and became the form of worship with which they had been most familiar in Egypt. And when they did this, they were simply engaging in sun-worship, the form of idolatry which in all ages has been the most universal rival of the worship of Jehovah.

As to the nature of sun-worship, it will perhaps be sufficient to quote what the *Encyclopedia Britannica* says of Baal:

The Baal of the Syrians, Phoenicians, and heathen Hebrews is a much less elevated conception than the Babylonian Bel. He is properly the sun-god Baal Shamen, Baal (lord) of the heavens, the highest of the heavenly bodies, but still a mere power of nature, born like the other luminaries from the primitive chaos. As the sun-god, he is conceived as the male principle of life and reproduction in nature, and thus in some forms of his worship is the patron of the grossest sensuality,

and even of systematic prostitution. An example of this is found in the worship of Baal-Peor (*Numbers* 25), and in general in the Canaanitish high places, where Baal, the male principle, was worshiped in association with the unchaste goddess Ashera, the female principle of nature.

That is a mild statement of the case; and so when we read of the Israelites that:

Exodus 32

⁶ The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play,

—and learn that the word rendered “play” is the same as that rendered “mock” in *Genesis* 39:14, 17, we get a better idea of the heinousness of the sin of the Israelites.

When it is remembered that the Egyptian calf-worship was sun-worship, and that Sunday was “the wild solar holiday of all pagan times,”¹²² and has its name “because the day was anciently dedicated to the sun, or to its worship,”¹²³ the Heavendaring nature of the sin of the Israelites, just after they had heard God’s holy law, and especially the first, second, fourth, and seventh commandments, is most strikingly set before us. A more perfect insult to the God who had delivered them from Egyptian bondage, that they might serve Him, can hardly be imagined.

One more point should be noted, to show how completely, in intent, the Israelites went back to Egyptian bondage, by their worship of the golden calf. A preceding quotation has shown that Ra and Osiris were intimately associated as leading representatives of the sun of Ra. Professor Rawlinson, in *Religions of the Ancient World*, p. 20, says:

Ra was the Egyptian sun-god, and was especially worshiped at Heliopolis [city of the sun]. Obelisks, according to some, represented his rays, and were always, or usually,

¹²² *North British Review*, vol. 18, p. 409.

¹²³ Webster.

erected in his honor. Heliopolis was certainly one of the places which were thus adorned, for one of the few which still stand erect in Egypt is on the site of that city. The kings for the most part considered Ra their special patron and protector; nay, they went so far as to identify themselves with him, to use his titles as their own, and to adopt his name as the ordinary prefix to their own names and titles. This is believed by many to have been the origin of the word Pharaoh which was, it is thought, the Hebrew rendering of Ph' Ra — 'the sun.'

Thus the Israelites not only deliberately sunk themselves in the bondage of sin, but also more fully showed their willingness to return to bondage under Pharaoh, than when they sighed for the leeks and the onions of Egypt. Their deliverance from physical bondage was in order that they might be delivered from spiritual bondage, and was a representation of it; and when they had plunged into sin, they placed themselves in a worse bondage than any physical oppression could ever have been. Being overcome by the idolatry of Egypt, they virtually returned to the bondage of Egypt,

2 Peter 2

¹⁹ For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

29. Free-Will Offerings

Signs of the Times, March 25, 1889

Exodus 25, 35, 36

E. J. Waggoner

1. While Moses was in the mount, what did God tell him to say to the children of Israel?

Exodus 25

¹ And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering;

² Of every man that gives it willingly with his heart you shall take my offering.

2. Of what was their offering to consist?

³ And this is the offering which you shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,

⁴ And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair,

⁵ And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,

⁶ Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,

⁷ Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.

3. What were these offerings for?

⁸ And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

4. Who only were to bring an offering?

Exodus 35 [See Exodus 25:2]

⁵ Take from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold, and silver, and brass.

²¹ And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all His service, and for the holy garments.

5. What sort of things did they bring?

Exodus 35

²² And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the Lord.

²³ And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers' skins, brought them.

²⁴ Every one that offered an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering: and every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it.

6. How did they come to have so many valuable things?

Exodus 12

³⁵ And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment:

³⁶ And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

7. What did the women do?

Exodus 35

²⁵ And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen.

²⁶ And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair.

8. What kind of service was all this?

²⁹ The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

9. How are we exhorted to give?

2 Corinthians 9

⁷ Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him

give; not grudgingly, or of necessity...

10. What kind of a giver does God love?

2 Corinthians 9

⁷ ...for God loves a cheerful giver.

11. Cite another instance where the people offered willingly to the cause of God?

1 Chronicles 29

⁵ And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?

⁶ Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly,

⁷ And gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.

⁸ And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.

12. How was it that the people were enabled to give so willingly?

⁹ Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord; and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

13. Is there danger of coming to poverty through generous giving to the cause of God?

Proverbs 11

²⁴ The desire of the righteous is only good; but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

²⁵ There is that scatters, and yet increases; and there is that withholds more than is meet, but it tends to poverty.

14. What is God able to do?

2 Corinthians 9

⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that

you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.

¹¹ Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causes through us thanksgiving to God.

15. How is this?

Psalm 24

¹ The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

Psalm 50

¹⁰ For every beast of the forest is my, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

¹¹ I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are my.

¹² If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is my, and the fulness thereof.

Haggai 2

⁸ The silver is my, and the gold is my, says the Lord of hosts.

16. Then when people make offerings to God, whose property do they give?

1 Chronicles 29

¹⁴ But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of You, and of your own have we given You.

¹⁵ For we are strangers before You, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.

¹⁶ O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build You a house for your holy name comes of your hand, and is all your own.

17. What was the result when the people gave with a willing heart?

Exodus 36

⁴ And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made;

⁵ And they spoke unto Moses, saying, The people bring much

more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make.

18. What proclamation had to be made?

Exodus 36

⁶ And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.

⁷ So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

19. How many have known of such an instance in the history of the cause?

20. Is there in this record any lesson for us?

Notes

After the covenant with Israel had been made and ratified, the Lord called Moses up into the mount, where he remained forty days and nights in the presence of Divinity.

Exodus 24

⁸ And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words.

¹² And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give you tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that you may teach them.

¹⁸ And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and got up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

It was during this time that God gave him the instructions concerning the sanctuary, which are recorded in *Exodus* chapters 25 to 31. The beginning of this instruction pertained to the sanctuary to be built, showing how particular God was in that which pertained to His worship; and He concluded His

holy interview by giving the law, written on two tables of stone, graven there by the finger of God.

Exodus 31

¹⁸ And He gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

Exodus 32

¹⁵ And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

¹⁶ And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

The object of all worship, all services, all remedies, is to bring men into harmony with the holy law of God.

When Moses was absent, Aaron and Hur acted as his deputies, even as they were his chief assistants at the time of the battle with Amalek, recorded in *Exodus* 17:8-15. It was very fitting that these men should thus act. Aaron was of the tribe of Levi, in which was vested the priesthood. This tribe belonged to God.

Numbers 3

¹ These also are the generations of Aaron and Moses in the day that the Lord spoke with Moses in mount Sinai.

² And these are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

³ These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests which were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office.

⁴ And Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord, when they offered strange fire before the Lord, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father.

⁵ And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying,

⁶ Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him.

⁷ And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle.

⁸ And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.

⁹ And you shall give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel.

¹⁰ And you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death.

¹¹ And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying,

¹² And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that opens the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be my;

¹³ Because all the firstborn are my; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: my shall they be: I am the Lord.

Hur was probably the chief prince of the tribe of Judah. An eminent and good man evidently, as the Lord chose from his descendants a skillful man to build the most sacred vessels.

Exodus 31

¹ And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying,

² See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:

³ And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

⁴ To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

⁵ And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

Judah was the tribe from which was to come the royal line and our Saviour.

Genesis 49

¹⁰ The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.

Thus the supporters of Moses were the chief priest and the chief prince.

Of the offerings brought, there is some difference of opinion among scholars in regard to the meaning of some of the original terms. The brass of the Bible was doubtless copper, which was abundant in Palestine, or an alloy of copper and tin, forming bronze. As these materials were brought from Egypt, the brass here mentioned was doubtless bronze, which was common in Egypt.

The blue, purple, and scarlet were materials which could be spun and woven into cloth,¹²⁴ the color being put for the material. This material was doubtless cotton or wool.

Hebrews 9

¹⁹ For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and *scarlet wool*, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people.

Rams' skins dyed red are supposed by some to mean leather, colored and dressed like morocco. By others it is supposed to mean skins dressed with the wool on, either of a red color, or dyed red. "Badgers' skins" does not have reference to the skins of those animals. The *Bible Commentary*, edited by Canon Cook, says:

The [original] word bears a new resemblance to the Arabic *tuchash*, which appears to be a general name given to the seals, dugongs, and dolphins found in the Red Sea (Tristram), and according to some authorities, to the sharks and dog fish

¹²⁴ **Exodus 35** ²⁵ And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen.

(Fürst). The substance spoken of would thus appear to have been leather from the skins of marine animals, which was well adapted as a protection against the weather...The skins of the dolphin and the dugong are cut into sandals by the Modern Arabs, and this may explain *Ezekiel* 16:10.

“Shittim wood” was a kind of acacia, very hard and strong, and also light. The LXX. called it “wood that will not rot.”

The gold and silver were largely in the shape of jewels,¹²⁵ which the Egyptians had given them on that memorable morning after the slaying of Egypt’s first-born. Israel, in asking for these valuable things, only demanded their just wages. Consequently when they gave them to God to build a sanctuary for Him, they gave that which had cost them years of toil and sufferings. It was a willing sacrifice on their part. They felt as did David when he refused the gift of Araunah’s threshing-floor,

2 Samuel 24

²⁴ Neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which costs me nothing.

It is willing-heartedness that God loves. In fact, no other offering but that given with the whole heart is acceptable to God. First, He demands that the individual yield himself.

Proverbs 23

²⁶ Son, give me your heart,

–is the request which God makes. Those who do this, realizing that they are not their own, but...

1 Corinthians 6

²⁰ ...are bought with a price,

–will not give grudgingly. They will only regret that they

¹²⁵ **Exodus 35** ²² And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord.

could not give more. They will first give themselves:

2 Corinthians 8

¹ Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

² How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

³ For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

⁴ Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

⁵ And this they did, not as we hoped, but *first gave their own selves to the Lord*, and unto us by the will of God.

And in giving themselves, they give all.

What a contrast this is to the popular ways of raising means in vogue at the present time. What efforts are many times put forth to induce professed Christians and worldlings to give. What artifices are used to make them believe that they are getting in some way the worth of their money here, in fun or in suppers, in prizes won and bazaars, or in some other way.

All these ways are contrary to the spirit of divine benevolence. The people gave and gave willingly of their very best. So God gave His only begotten Son. That which is bestowed grudgingly upon the cause of God is not a gift. The Lord does not need it, and it is of no advantage to the one who thus bestows it.

In his second epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul makes the grace of Christ the grand spring of all Christian giving. Giving that is prompted by anything else is not Christian giving. As an incentive for them to give liberally, the apostle said:

2 Corinthians 8

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that,

though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich.

The plan of salvation begins and ends with a gift.

John 3

¹⁶ God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Titus 2

¹⁴ [Christ] gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

And when the work of redemption shall have been completed, the saints will share a glorious immortality as the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. This consideration should incite to prompt and cheerful giving. Indeed, it will lead to such giving on the part of every soul who feels the worth of the Saviour's love.

Surely it is a slight thing to give the temporal riches which come from God in the first place, and belong to Him, when He so freely gives to us eternal riches.

Ephesians 1 [also 2:7]

⁷ The riches of His grace,

–is an expression often used by the apostle Paul. But the grace of God is a gift, and consists wholly in giving; we are exhorted to be...

1 Peter 4

¹⁰ ...good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

The Spirit of willingness to give is a grace, and a manifestation of the grace of God.¹²⁶ A converted church must be a liberal church. A revival that does not increase the contributions of a church is not the right kind of a revival; for those who,

¹²⁶ See *2 Corinthians* 8:1-5.

like the brethren in Macedonia, first give themselves to the Lord, will, like them, abound in liberality, even in deep poverty.¹²⁷ This is further proved by the experience of the people in the time of Hezekiah.¹²⁸

The great lesson which God would teach men, and which man needs to learn, is that all belongs to God. From Him all came, to Him all belongs. He created them by His mighty power; they were redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus. He who recognizes this, and truly yields himself to God through Christ, has learned a great lesson.

All service for God will then be willing service; all our offerings will be willing offerings. Selfishness will be swallowed up in love. He will be happy, not because he thinks of self, but because he has forgotten self in his love for God and for souls for whom Christ died. He will not ask,

“How little can I do and be accepted?”

–but,

“How can I render back to God the least of all His mercies?”

¹²⁷ See *2 Corinthians* 8:1-5.

¹²⁸ See *2 Chronicles* 30 and 31, comparing especially chapter 30:18-20 and 31:4-11.

30. For His Name's Sake

Present Truth, July 10, 1902

Exodus 32:1-35

E. J. Waggoner

THE 23rd Psalm—the Shepherd Psalm—is one of the best-known portions of the Bible; yet, as is the case with all Scripture, few, if any, who repeat the familiar passages of this psalm over and over, comprehend the depth of meaning they are designed to convey. The words,

Psalm 23

³ He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake,

—are wonderfully illustrated in the dealing of God with the people who made and worshiped the golden calf while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the tables of the law which forbids such worship, and which the people had heard spoken but a few days before.

When we remember that God is the “Shepherd of Israel,”¹²⁹ and that He was leading His people...

Psalm 77

²⁰ ...like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron,

—through the Red Sea and the desert, we can, in reading the 32nd chapter of *Exodus*, especially verses 7-14, see how strikingly these words apply:

Psalm 23

¹ The Lord is my Shepherd;...

³ He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

A more flagrant insult than that which the Israelites offered to God can scarcely be imagined. He had delivered them from cruel bondage, and overthrown their oppressors in a manner

¹²⁹ *Psalm* 80:1.

that left no room for doubt that the Almighty God alone had accomplished it. The people themselves had done nothing to contribute to the wonderful deliverance, and could not have accomplished anything if they had tried; and the marvelous distinctions that are placed between the Israelites and the Egyptians in the matter of the plagues showed clearly that they did not happen “in the ordinary course of nature.” God had said to them,

Exodus 19

⁴ I bore you on eagle’s wings and brought you unto myself;

Isaiah 63

⁹ In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old.

Yet, in the face of all this, they said to Aaron,

Exodus 32

¹ Up, make us gods [literally, God] which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Mark how the people repudiated God. They gave Him no credit whatever for carrying them from bondage to freedom, from danger to safety; and, moreover, in the place of the God who bore them in His arms, they were content to have a god of their own making, which should go before them. So,

Psalms 106

¹⁹ They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molten image.

²⁰ Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass.

²¹ They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt;

²² Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea.

It must have been in bitter irony that Aaron said to them when the golden calf was made,

Exodus 32

⁴ These be your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

But the people in their blindness saw no incongruity in it; and when Aaron built an altar before it, and made a proclamation and said,

⁵ Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord,

⁶ ...they rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play.

Not the simple, innocent games of childhood, but the rude, coarse, boisterous, lascivious and indecent revelings of the heathen. In later times the Christians at Corinth, who had formerly been heathen, turned the Lord's Supper into a drunken revel, after their former heathen custom when worshiping their dumb idols;¹³⁰ and from this we get a glance at what the Israelites did before their idol.

It was a shameful performance in itself, and much more so when done in the name of Jehovah; for the calf was not another god before God, but the professed worship of God under the form of a beast. This was really a worse insult than direct repudiation of God.

Psalm 106

²³ Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His servant stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them.

How did Moses stand in the breach, and turn away the wrath of God from Israel? What arguments did he use? what plea did he make? Did he tell the Lord how good the people had been, and plead that this was a "first offense"? Did he

¹³⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:17-22.

promise on their behalf that if He would only spare them this time they would “never do it again”? No; for neither of those things would have been true. Here is the plea of Moses for the sinful people:

Exodus 32

¹¹ And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why does your wrath wax hot against your people, which You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

¹² Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against your people.

¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom You swore by your own self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

His oath, His covenant, and blood,
Support me in the whelming flood.¹³¹

When God made a promise, He confirmed it by an oath,¹³²
swearing by himself,¹³³

Hebrews 6

¹⁸ That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for a refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.

It was not for Abraham’s encouragement, but for ours, that God has sworn by himself, pledging His honor and His life for our salvation. His name is in Christ, and this is why we pray “in the name of Jesus,” for “the sake of Jesus,” or “for your name’s sake.” That ought to be with us something more than a mere form of speech. It is our recognition of the fact that we

¹³¹ Edward Mote, Hymn: *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*, 1834.

¹³² *Hebrews* 6:17.

¹³³ *Hebrews* 6:13.

shall obtain mercy from God as surely as He lives; that, having pledged His honor, God is under obligation, not to us, but to himself, to save us from our sins, if we are only willing that He should.

But a little while before the making of the golden calf the people had made a covenant; promising to obey the Lord.¹³⁴ But that covenant was not once mentioned as a ground for pardon. There was no pardon in it or because of it. Indeed, that covenant could have no effect except to tend to prejudice the case of the people; for the fact that they had broken their promise only aggravated their guilt.

But there was, even as there is yet, forgiveness in and through God's own promise, and in nothing else; and this promise had been made long before. The covenant made with Abraham is our plea in coming to God.

Here is a lesson for all time, which, if heeded, will save us from despair when we fall into sin. God's promise stands fast, and cannot be made of none effect by our sin, no matter how great it is, because it was given with special reference to that. We may always say, with Daniel,

Daniel 9

¹⁸ We do not present our supplications before You for our righteousnesses, but for your great mercies.

2 Timothy 2

¹³ Though we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny himself.

We may say,

I give up every plea beside—
Lord, I have sinned, but You have died.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ See *Exodus* 19:1-9; 24:3-8.

¹³⁵ Charles Wesley, Hymn: *Jesus, the Sinner's Friend*, 1739.

Hebrews 4

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

How boldly may we come? Moses gives us an example. We must plead God's own honor, not that there is danger that He will forget it, but in order to...

1 John 3

¹⁹ ...assure our hearts before Him;

—for when we say, “for your name's sake,” we at once see that God would never allow His name to be dishonored by breaking His word, and so we rest securely on His promise.

We find a similar case of boldness in approaching to God, in *Jeremiah* 14:7, 20-21. Israel had sinned worse than the heathen that had been cast out of the land before them, and the prophet said:

Jeremiah 14

⁷ O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for your name's sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against You.

²⁰ We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against You.

²¹ Do not abhor us, for your name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of your glory; remember, break not your covenant with us.

Think of a mere man daring to use such language to God! At first it seems presumptuous almost to insolence; but when we consider everything we see that it is not, but that, on the contrary, it is the strongest plea that humble faith could prompt.

We can do no greater honor to God than to believe that He will perform the mercy that He has promised, and boldly to claim anything for which His name stands pledged. It is the

violent that take the kingdom of heaven.¹³⁶ Let none therefore be disheartened because they have made shameful failures, but press close to the Lord's throne of grace and righteousness,

Ephesians 6

¹⁰ ...strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

¹³⁶ *Matthew 11:12.*

31. God's Name, the Sin-Bearer

Present Truth, December 4, 1902

Exodus 32:7-8

E. J. Waggoner

IN A time of great trouble and anxiety, when Israel had “corrupted themselves,”

Exodus 32

⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be your gods, O Israel, which have brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

And,

Psalms 106

²⁰ Thus, they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass.

The Lord descended in a cloud and stood with Moses, and declared His name. And this is the name that God proclaimed:

Exodus 34

⁶ The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

⁷ Keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, and transgressions, and sin.

Now the interesting and comforting thing about this is that the word here rendered “forgiving” is from the Hebrew word meaning “to lift up, to bear.” Thus God really declared himself to Moses as:

“The Lord God,...*bearing* the iniquity, and transgression and sin.”

The Lord on Mount Sinai was the same as beside the Jordan, namely,

John 1 [margin]

²⁹ ...the Lamb of God, which bears the sin of the world.

His name and nature is to bear sin, yours and my, the sin of all whole world; and He cannot do otherwise. Then let it remain there;

Take the name of Jesus with you.¹³⁷

And as truly as He has descended into the lower parts of the earth, will your sin be buried out of sight.

¹³⁷ Lydia O. Baxter, Hymn: *Take the Name of Jesus With You.*

32. Tempted to Plead

Present Truth, July 10, 1902

Original title: Back Page

Exodus 32:10-12

E. J. Waggoner

Exodus 32

¹⁰ Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.

THIS was what the Lord said to Moses when Israel had “sinned a great sin;” but Moses did not let Him alone; he only pleaded the more earnestly for them.

It is evident that Moses did not regard these words as a positive command, for if he had, he would have obeyed. On the contrary, he understood them to mean that as long as there was any plea to be made in their behalf God could not destroy them. What assurance this is to us, not simply as to our own salvation, but as to the salvation of others. If we plead God’s promise for them, He cannot cast away. So this incident is but an illustration of:

Isaiah 62

⁶ I have set watchmen upon my walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day nor night: you that are the Lord’s remembrancers, take no rest,

⁷ And give Him no rest, till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

It was a most tempting offer that God made to Moses, when He said of Israel:

Exodus 32

¹⁰ Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of you a great nation.

What an honor that would have been to Moses: to be actually the head, the father of a great nation,—to have a people

called by his name. Moreover, it would have relieved Moses of a great load of care and responsibility. How natural it would have been to seize upon the opportunity! But Moses had more regard for the honor of God, than for his own. He would rather that the people should be called by the Lord's name, than by his; and he remembered that God had promised to make a great nation of Abraham: and he would not allow any consideration of personal ease or honors to stand in the way of the fulfillment of God's covenant. That was the unselfish faithfulness of Christ.

But we must not forget that this was...

Romans 15

⁴ ...written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

We sometimes think that God is discouraged with us, and tired of our slowness and hardness of heart, and that He is about to cast us aside, if He has not already done so. We say that it would be easier for God to make entirely new men out of the original materials, than to make us new. Now this may be true; but we must remember that God does not necessarily always do the easiest thing, but that He always does the best thing. There is more glory to Him in restoring the soul of a sinner than in making a new man out of the dust of the ground; and since He has formed us for His glory, it is evident that is what He will do.

Isaiah 42

⁴ He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth.

Moses said to God, concerning the people in the wilderness:

Exodus 32

¹² Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?

Now we must not suppose that Moses put something into the Lord's mind that He had not already thought of, nor that Moses had more interest in the people than the Lord had. No; the unselfish solicitude of Moses for the salvation of the people was but a reflection of the love of God that had been shed abroad in his heart by the Spirit of God.

So instead of imagining that we must break down God's prejudices against us, and beg Him to deal favorably with us, we may be...

Philippians 1

⁶ ...confident of this very thing, that He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

To the prayer that God will sanctify us wholly, the assurance is,

1 Thessalonians 5

²⁴ Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it.

33. The Golden Calf

Signs of the Times, June 29, 1888

Notes on the International Lesson, July 8

Exodus 32:15-30

E. J. Waggoner

THE making and worshiping of the golden calf by the Israelites forms a basis for a most interesting study of the form of heathen worship which has drawn the greatest number of the human race from the worship of the true God. There was a peculiar significance in the making of the calf at that special time, which will appear as we proceed with the study.

The calf was a representation of the sacred bull called Apis, which the Egyptians worshiped, and with which the Jews had necessarily become very familiar in their long sojourn in Egypt. Concerning this god Apis, and what it signified, we find the following:

Apis, the bull worshiped by the ancient Egyptians, who regarded it as a symbol of Osiris, the god of the Nile, the husband of Isis, and the great divinity of Egypt.¹³⁸

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* (art. "Apis"), says:

According to the Greek writers Apis was the image of Osiris, and worshiped because Osiris was supposed to have passed into a bull, and to have been soon after manifested by a succession of these animals. The hieroglyphic inscriptions identify the Apis with Osiris, adorned with horns or the head of a bull, and unite the two names as Hapi-Osor, or Apis Osiris. According to this view the Apis was the incarnation of Osiris manifested in the shape of a bull.

Since Apis was considered as the visible manifestation of Osiris, we must learn what Osiris stood for, in order to understand the calf-worship of the Israelites. Again we quote from

¹³⁸ *Chamber's Encyclopedia*.

the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, art. “Egypt”:

Abydos was the great seat of the worship of Osiris, which spread all over Egypt, establishing itself in a remarkable manner at Memphis. All the mysteries of the Egyptians, and their whole doctrine of the future state, attach themselves to this worship. Osiris was identified with the sun....Sun-worship was the primitive form of Egyptian religion, perhaps even pre-Egyptian.

Rawlinson says:

Ra was the Egyptian sun-god, and was especially worshiped at Heliopolis. Obelisks, according to some, represented his rays, and were always, or usually, erected in his honor....The kings for the most part considered Ra their special patron and protector; nay, they went so far as to identify themselves with him, to use his titles as their own, and to adopt his name as the ordinary prefix to their own names and titles. This is believed by many to have been the origin of the word Pharaoh, which was, it is thought, the Hebrew rendering of Ph' Ra—‘the sun-god,’...Osiris was properly a form of Ra. He was the light of the lower world, the sun from the time that he sinks below the horizon in the west to the hour when he reappears above the eastern horizon in the morning. This physical idea was, however, at a later date modified, and Osiris was generally recognized as the perpetually presiding lord of the lower world, the king and the judge of Hades or Amenti. His worship was universal throughout Egypt, but his chief temples were at Abydos and Philae.¹³⁹

Again we quote from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

It was to Osiris that the prayers and offerings for the dead were made, and all sepulchral inscriptions, except those of the oldest period, are directly addressed to him. As Isis is a form of the female principle, Osiris, the sun and the Nile, was considered in one phase to be the male principle.

The three most famous of those more sacred animals which

¹³⁹ *American History*.

were worshiped as individuals, not as a class, were the bulls Apis and Mnevis, and the Mendesian goat. Of these, Apis and the Mendesian goat were connected with the worship of Osiris....It is very characteristic of the Egyptian religion that the reverence for Osiris should have taken this grossly material form.

The bull Apis, who bears in Egyptian the same name as the Nile, Hapi, was worshiped at Memphis....Apis was considered to be the living emblem of Osiris, and was thus connected with the sun and the Nile, and the chronological aspect of both explains his being also connected with the moon.

From these extracts it appears that the worship which the Israelites paid to the golden calf was really the Egyptian form of sun-worship—that form of idolatry which has always stood foremost as the antagonist of the true worship of God. It is indeed significant that just at the time when God manifested himself to the Israelites in a peculiar manner, and made known to them His Sabbath, they should have fallen back into the old sun-worship, whose chief festival day—the first day of the week—has always contended for supremacy with the day specially distinctive of the worship of the true God.

Note also that the sun-god Ra, Osiris, or Apis, was the patron god of the Egyptian kings, and stood for Egypt and its customs. So the worship of the calf signified that the Israelites, forgetful of the covenant that they had made with God, were sinking back to the level of Egyptian life. It was the very worst manifestation of the spirit which led them so often to long for the flesh-pots of Egypt. It is significant of the sensuality to which people naturally sink when they turn aside from the worship of the true God, who can be worshiped only in the beauty of holiness.

But we have not yet learned the full extent of the sin of the Israelites in the worship of the calf. The worship of Apis was accompanied with the grossest licentiousness, as is indicated by the ceremonies attendant upon the inauguration of a new

Apis. There were certain definite marks which must always be present in an animal that was to occupy that position. As soon as a suitable animal was found,

...he was led in triumphal procession to Nilopolis, at the time of the new moon, where he remained forty days, waited upon by nude women.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says:

When he had grown up he was conducted, at the time of the new moon, to a ship by the sacred scribes and prophets, and conducted to the Apeum at Memphis, where there were courts, places for him to walk in, and a drinking fountain. According to Diodorus, he was first led to Nilopolis, and kept there forty days, then shipped in a boat with a gilded cabin to Memphis, and he was there allowed to be seen for forty days only by women, who exposed themselves to him.

As to the significance of this, see the prohibitions recorded in *Exodus* 22:19; *Leviticus* 18:23; 20:16. The Scripture record indicates that the calf worship by the Israelites on this occasion was accompanied with all the license usual in heathen worship. We read:

Exodus 32

⁶ And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

The Hebrew word rendered “to play,” signifies playing with leaping, singing, and dancing. This dancing, especially among the Egyptians, was sensual and indecent. The word rendered “corrupted,” in the next verse, where it is said,

Deuteronomy 9

¹² Your people, which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves,

–is the same that is used in *Genesis* 6, where we read that the earth was corrupt,

Genesis 6

¹² ...for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

This explains the terrible anger of the Lord, and why He desired to consume the people at once.

We have occupied all our space in simply intimating the signification of the worship of the golden calf. It is a line of study that may be followed to a great length, and to great profit. In closing, we merely note that the grinding of the calf to powder was a fitting emblem of the weakness of all that are called gods, when brought before the God of Heaven and Earth.

34. A Way of Escape for Sinners

Present Truth, September 10, 1903

Exodus 32:26

E. J. Waggoner

2 Peter 3

⁹ [The Lord is] not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

WHEN Moses came down from the mount, and found Israel worshipping the golden calf as the god that brought them out of Egypt, he stood in the gate of the camp, and said,

Exodus 32

²⁶ Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me.

If only Israel had been swift to hear, they would have recognized in this call an opportunity to discard their sin and renounce it. The call was not,

“Whoever has not worshiped this golden calf, come to me.”

Whosoever would might come. If Israel had only risen as one man and said:

“We have sinned, but we want to be on the Lord's side. Just as we are, we come,”

—how differently that day would have ended. There would have been no need for the sons of Levi to draw the sword and smite their brethren. God's call is still to sinners,

“Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me.”

Naked, as Israel was then, caught red-handed in sin, with death overhanging their guilty heads, they may come to God and find immediate acceptance and full salvation.

35. God Standing With Man

Present Truth, December 25, 1902

Exodus 34:5

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN Moses went up Mount Sinai the second time, with the tables of stone in his hand, on which the law was to be written,

Exodus 34

⁵ The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there.

What a wonder! what condescension! The Lord of hosts, the mighty God, coming down to earth and standing by the side of a man! Who would not feel honored by such notice? And who would not feel overawed by the perfection of the Almighty?

Just that honor, however, is granted to every humble disciple, and, moreover, everyone must necessarily receive it; for we are exhorted to walk with God, and He must stand by our side before we can walk with Him. The Lord is no respecter of persons, and what He did for Moses, He does for all.

Psalm 121

⁵ The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade upon your right hand.

Psalm 16

⁸ Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Isaiah 41

¹⁰ Fear not; for I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God. I will strengthen you; yea, I will help you; yea, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness.

The first two verses of the 1st chapter of *Hebrews*, literally translated, tell us that God who in time past spoke unto the fathers “in the prophets,” now speaks to us “in the Son.” The revelation of God in Christ was simply the fullness of what

had previously been incompletely manifested in men, and it set the pattern of what will be when...

Ephesians 4

¹³ ...we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

He says to those who are brought before governors and kings, to testify for Him,

Matthew 10

²⁰ It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you.

How greatly we, the whole body of professed Christians, have failed to realize the lesson of the birth of Christ.

Isaiah 9

⁶ Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given.

And when we like Mary, say, and say continually,

Luke 1

³⁸ Be it unto me as You will,

–He will be formed in us, and we shall be...

Ephesians 3

¹⁹ ...filled with all the fullness of God.

There is no more vivid and striking illustration of the power in weakness, which is the characteristic of the Gospel, than that presented in *Revelation 5:5-6*. When no man in heaven or earth could open the sealed book, one of the elders said to John,

Revelation 5

⁵ Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda...has prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

In accordance with the elder's words,

⁶ [John] beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne...stood a

Lamb as it had been slain.

There was “the Lion of the tribe of Juda.” John looked for the conquering Lion, and he beheld a slain Lamb! A more striking contrast, and greater seeming contradiction, could not be imagined; yet the two are one and the same. In the slain Lamb which is the conquering Lion, we see how God ordained strength out of the most abject weakness,¹⁴⁰ and thus we have...

Hebrews 6

¹⁸ ...strong consolation.

¹⁴⁰ *Psalm 8:2.*

36. Light from the Word

Present Truth, December 4, 1902

Exodus 34:29

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN Moses came down from the mount, where he had been for forty days receiving commandments for the people, he did not know that...

Exodus 34

²⁹ ...the skin of his face shown while He talked with him.

The Hebrew is, literally, “in His talking with him.” It was in the talking that the light shone forth from the face of Moses, like the sun’s rays. In this we have a vivid illustration and demonstration of the truth expressed in:

Psalms 119

¹³⁰ The entrance of your words gives light.

Proverbs 6

²³ The commandment is a lamp; and the law is light.

The righteousness of God’s people is the keeping of the law:

Deuteronomy 6

²⁹ And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.

And thus it is that those who now hide the Word of light in their hearts will, when the Lord appears,

Matthew 13

⁴³ ...shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

37. Free Gifts for the Tabernacle

Signs of the Times, July 13, 1888

Notes on the International Lesson, July 21

Exodus 36:20-29

E. J. Waggoner

GIVING to the cause of God is a part of religion, and by no means as unimportant a part as many people suppose. It is a part of religion not because the Lord has need of the gifts, or because He can be propitiated by offerings, for God is not...

Acts 17

²⁵ ...worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything,

—but because men need to give for their own good. And from the earliest ages men were required to offer sacrifices to the Lord for this very reason.

As soon as man had fallen and the plan of salvation had been announced, sacrifices were required, that by the shedding of blood men might be enabled to realize something of the heinousness of sin; and that his faith in the promised Saviour might be kept in lively exercise.

The blood of the beast was to be associated in the minds of sinners with the blood of the Son of God. The death of the victim was to evidence to all that the penalty of sin was death. By the act of sacrifice the sinner acknowledged his guilt and manifested his faith, looking forward to the great and perfect sacrifice of the Son of God, which the offering of beasts prefigured. Without the atonement of the Son of God there could be no communication of blessing or salvation from God to man. God was jealous for the honor of His law.¹⁴¹

The offerings which form the subject of this lesson were,

¹⁴¹ Ellen White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume One, Chapter IV, "The Plan of Salvation."

however, of a different nature from the sacrifices offered because of sin; they were free-will offerings of material for the building of the tabernacle.

Great and expensive preparations were necessary. Precious and costly materials must be collected. But the Lord accepted only the free-will offerings. Devotion to the work of God and sacrifice from the heart were first required in preparing a place for God. And while the building of the sanctuary was going on, and the people were bringing their offerings unto Moses, and he was presenting them to the workmen, all the wise men who wrought in the work examined the gifts, and decided that the people had brought enough, and even more than they could use. And Moses proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, "Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing."

The repeated murmurings of the Israelites, and the visitations of God's wrath because of their transgressions, are recorded in sacred history for the benefit of God's people who should afterward live upon the earth; but more especially to prove a warning to those who should live near the close of time. Also their acts of devotion, their energy, and liberality, in bringing their free-will offerings to Moses, are recorded for the benefit of the people of God. Their example in preparing material for the tabernacle so cheerfully, is an example for all who truly love the worship of God. Those who prize the blessing of God's sacred presence, when preparing a building that He may meet with them, should manifest greater interest and zeal in the sacred work in proportion as they value their heavenly blessings higher than their earthly comforts. They should realize that they are preparing a house for God.

Many will expend much to erect comfortable and tasty buildings for themselves; but when they would prepare a place that they may receive the presence of the high and exalted One, they manifest a wonderful indifference, and have no particular interest as to the convenience, arrangement, and workmanship. Their offerings are not given cheerfully

from the heart, but are bestowed grudgingly; and they are continually studying in what manner the sacred building can be made to cost the least, and answer the purpose as a house of worship.

Some manifest more interest in building their barns, wherein to keep their cattle, than they do in building a place for the worship of God. Such value sacred privileges just in that proportion which their works show. And their prosperity and spiritual strength will be just according to their works. God will not cause His blessing to rest upon those who have so little estimate of the value of divine things. Unwilling and stinted offerings are not accepted of God. Those who manifest that earnestness to bring to the Lord acceptable offerings, of the very best they have, willingly, as the children of Israel brought their presents to Moses, will be blessed in that proportion that they have estimated the value of divine things.¹⁴²

God might have ordained that His worship should cost nothing; yea, He might even now fill the treasuries of His church full to overflowing without taking a dollar from anyone, but everybody knows what the result would be; the church would be shorn of her power, for she would forget the words of the Saviour,

John 15

⁵ Without me you can do nothing,

—and gold would become her god.

Matthew 16

²⁴ If any man will come after me, [said the Saviour,] let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

This denial means vastly more than merely abstaining from that which the world recognizes as sin—it means the giving up of legitimate comforts and enjoyments for the good of others; and following the Saviour means much more than simply

¹⁴² Ellen White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume One, Chapter XXI, “The Sanctuary.”

not doing evil—it means doing good. It is walking even as Christ walked; and His life was one not of self-pleasing, but of self-denial for the salvation of others. He left the courts of Heaven and even laid down His life for us; and can we hope to be His disciples while selfishly enjoying all that we can of this world, and planning only, like the men of the world,¹⁴³ to leave the rest of our substance to our children?

While we cannot say that a people's spirituality is always measured by their generosity, it is certainly true that their spirituality never rises above their generosity; always remembering, however, that the gift is measured not by its money value, but, as in the case of the poor widow,¹⁴⁴ by the motive which prompts the gift.

Those who give most from a sincere desire to advance the cause of truth, are blessed most; not because the gift of God can be purchased with money, but because having given their means they will also give their prayers; and in so doing what they can to water others, their own souls will be watered.

¹⁴³ **Psalm 17** ¹⁴ From men which are your hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly You fill with your hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.

¹⁴⁴ *Luke 21:2-4.*

38. The Tabernacle of Witness

Present Truth, July 17, 1902

Exodus 40:1-8

E. J. Waggoner

IN HIS talk before the Jewish council, when he was on trial for his life, Stephen said,

Acts 7

⁴⁴ Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

It is in the 25th chapter of *Exodus* that we find this given; and clearly the remainder of that book is devoted to the description of the tabernacle, its furniture, and the service pertaining to it.

The principal article in the tabernacle was the ark containing the tables of the law,—the ten commandments. It was called:

Exodus 25

²² ...the ark of the testimony,

—for the commandments are frequently called the testimonies of God. Testimony is witness, and the law is called the testimony, because it is a witness of God's presence.

Romans 13

¹⁰ Love is the fulfilling of the law,

—and,

1 John 4

⁸ God is love.

Therefore the law is God's life. So the tabernacle that contained the witness, or the testimony, was called:

Numbers 17

⁷ ...the tabernacle of witness.

It was from above the ark of the testimony, between the cherubim that were upon it, that God said He would meet with Moses and commune with him of all things that He would give him in commandment unto the children of Israel.

Exodus 25

²² And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment unto the children of Israel.

And it was there that the glory of God was specially manifested. In *Psalms* 80, we read:

Psalm 80

¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You that lead Joseph like a flock; You that dwell between the cherubim, shine forth.

And when Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, threatened to destroy Jerusalem, Hezekiah the king, in his extremity, went up into the house of the Lord, and spread Sennacherib's defiant and blasphemous letter before the Lord:

2 Kings 19

¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwell between the cherubims, You are the God, even You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; You have made heaven and earth.

¹⁶ Lord, bow down your ear and hear.

It is in *Exodus* 25:8 that we find the reason why the tabernacle was built. God told Moses to have the people bring offerings of gold, silver, and brass, fine linen, etc. and said,

Exodus 25

⁸ Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

In one sense this was a great honor; for, as Moses said,

Deuteronomy 4

⁷ What nation is there so great, that has God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?

Yet when we consider the matter further, the command to build the sanctuary, together with the statement of the reason why it was to be built, is one of the most sorrowful things to be found in the Scriptures.

“Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them!”

What a sad thing! that God’s people, whom He had delivered from bondage for the express purpose of dwelling not simply *among* them, but *in* them, had to have a house made with hands in order that His glory might be seen among them. Thus the Tabernacle was at once a witness of God’s presence and of the unfaithfulness of the children of Israel.

Acts 7

⁴⁸ The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands.

Isaiah 66

¹ Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

² For all these things has my hand made.

It is evident that the tabernacle built by Moses could not be the real dwelling-place of God, and every Jew ought to have been impressed by that truth every time he looked at it. Solomon knew it well, for at the dedication of the temple that he built, which was far larger and grander than the first tabernacle, he said,

1 Kings 8

²⁷ Will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built.

What then is God's dwelling-place? He himself indicated it when, after asking,

“Where is the place that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?”

He said,

Isaiah 66

² But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.

1 Corinthians 3

¹⁶ Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

¹⁷ If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

The human body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

1 Corinthians 6

¹⁹ What? know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own?

This is the true dwelling-place of God. When Jesus was asked for proof of His divine mission, He said,

John 2

¹⁹ Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up.

At that very time He was standing in the Jewish temple, and although He made no explanation, He expected the people to understand that...

²¹ He spoke of the temple of His body.

So evident is it that the human body, and no man-made building, is the temple of the Lord, that the Jews ought to have understood His meaning without any explanation. He was the temple indeed, because the law of God was within

His heart,¹⁴⁵ not in dead characters, but as the Spirit of Life, in the Living Stone. Therefore it is that:

Revelation 3

¹⁴ [He is] the faithful and true witness.

To us the Lord says,

Isaiah 43

¹⁰ You are my witnesses,...and my servant whom I have chosen.

¹² I have declared, and I have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore you are my witnesses, says the Lord, that I am God.

When the Lord is given full possession of His temple—His people—then they also, as well as Christ, are His witnesses to the world. When Moses erected the tabernacle,

Exodus 40

³⁴ Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Even so it was at the dedication of Solomon's temple: when Solomon had made an end of praying,

2 Chronicles 7

¹ ...the glory of the Lord filled the house.

² And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house.

That was a representation of how it should be with God's people, His real temple. Thus it was with Christ, for:

John 1

¹⁴ The Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁴⁵ *Psalm 40:8.*

The people saw the glory of the Lord upon the house,¹⁴⁶ at the dedication of the temple. The Lord says to His people,

Isaiah 60

¹ Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

² For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you.

And even as the Lord said,

Isaiah 56

⁷ My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people,

—so will it be with His true temple, His people, when their bodies are dedicated to Him. For He says,

Isaiah 60

³ The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Isaiah 55

⁵ And nations that knew you not shall run unto you, because of the Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you.

There are marvelous opportunities and privileges for men who will take them!

1 Corinthians 2

⁹ Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.

¹⁰ But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.

1 John 5

⁶ It is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

And when the Spirit fills men they have power to be taber-

¹⁴⁶ 2 Chronicles 7:3.

nacles of witness. There was no man in the tabernacle when the glory of God filled it; even so when Christ, the quickening Spirit, dwells in the heart by faith, and we are, according to the riches of His glory,

Ephesians 3

¹⁹ ...filled with all the fullness of God,

–self will disappear, and He that abides between the cherubim will shine forth.

Leviticus,
Numbers,
Deuteronomy

Other Resources to Consult:

The Everlasting Covenant (Waggoner)

1. God Requires Strict Obedience

Signs of the Times, June 9, 1887

Notes on the International Lesson, June 26

Leviticus 10:1-11; Exodus 35:20-29

E. J. Waggoner

Leviticus 10

¹ And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not.

² And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

³ Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spoke, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come near me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

⁴ And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp.

⁵ So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said.

⁶ And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest you die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord has kindled.

⁷ And you shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die; for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.

⁸ And the Lord spoke unto Aaron, saying,

⁹ Do not drink wine nor strong drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations:

¹⁰ And that you may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;

¹¹ And that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken unto them by the hand

of Moses.

THERE are two or three points in this portion of Scripture which the student should not fail to notice. The first and most important is that God is very particular, and will not countenance any deviation from directions which He has given. He had specified the kind of fire and incense that should be used in the sanctuary.

Exodus 30

⁹ You shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall you pour drink offering thereon.

He himself had kindled a fire on the altar when the first offering was made upon it, and no other was to be used. It might have seemed to Nadab and Abihu that there was no difference between the sacred fire and ordinary fire; but God had made them different, and it was their duty to recognize that difference.

It may seem to many that death was a severe penalty for so slight a deviation from the commandment of the Lord; such must remember that the fact that the death penalty was inflicted by the Lord himself, is sufficient evidence that the offense was not small. The Judge of all the earth will do right.¹⁴⁷

It must also be borne in mind that the heinousness of a sin is not determined so much by the actual quality of the deed itself, as by the spirit in which the deed is committed. Contempt for the Lord may be shown in the willful disobedience of a supposed minor precept, as well as by some act which would be generally recognized as a sin.

But the sin of Nadab and Abihu was not a small one. It was the result of lightly regarding the service of the Lord. They engaged in His service as carelessly as they would in some business of their own; and this showed that they had no real

¹⁴⁷ *Genesis* 18:25.

reverence for God.

The same reasoning that Nadab and Abihu may be supposed to have used is indulged in by thousands of people today in regard to the Sabbath. The fourth commandment says:

Exodus 20

⁸ Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.

⁹ Six days shall you labor, and do all your work:

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall not do any work.

And it gives as a reason for this, the fact that is stated in *Genesis 2:3*, that:

Genesis 2

³ God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it [made it holy]: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.

Yet in the face of this, there are people who say that there is no difference in days, and that one day is just as good as another; that since all days are alike, it makes no difference which day we observe as Sabbath, providing it is one day in seven.

But here is just the same difference that there was in the fire. The two kinds of fire no doubt looked just alike. But one was not holy and the other was. It was holy because God had made it so. So all days look alike; but they are not all alike, for God has made the seventh day holy.

Refusal to obey any commandment of the Lord, is evidence of a lack of respect for Him. In *Ezekiel 22* the Lord through the prophet says of the church,

Ezekiel 22

²⁶ Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my

Sabbath, and I am profaned among them.

Her hiding the eyes from the Lord's Sabbath is counted as the same sin that Nadab and Abihu committed. Moreover, the Lord says that he is profaned because the people have not put difference between the holy and the profane, but have violated his holy Sabbath. This is because God has magnified His word above all His name,¹⁴⁸ disregard of His word dishonors him; and for a man to treat the Lord with disrespect is as bad as to speak disrespectfully of Him.

Some may say that the Lord is not so particular now as He used to be, because He does not destroy people for making no difference between the day which He has sanctified, and common days. This illustrates what Solomon said:

Ecclesiastes 8

¹¹ Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

But God says,

Malachi 3

⁶ I am the Lord, I change not.

He is just as particular now as He ever was. But at no time in the history of the world has He executed summary punishment upon all transgressors. If He had, there would have been no people left on earth. Occasionally He has suddenly cut off some terribly presumptuous person, but those were only exceptional cases.

Acts 17

³¹ He has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness.

And He has reserved...

¹⁴⁸ **Psalm 138** ² I will worship toward your holy temple, and praise your name for your lovingkindness and for your truth: for You have magnified your word above all your name.

2 Peter 2

⁹ ...the unjust unto the day of Judgment to be punished.

The instances in which God has summarily cut off transgressors are simply reminders of how He regards disobedience to His plain requirements. Let us therefore not tempt the Lord, but on the contrary, seek earnestly to know what His will is, and then with diligence do all His commandments. Upon all such a blessing is pronounced.

The passage of Scripture upon which we are commenting is also a temperance lesson. After Nadab and Abihu were destroyed,

Leviticus 10

⁸ The Lord spoke unto Aaron, saying,

⁹ Do not drink wine nor strong drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations:

¹⁰ And that you may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean.

This seems to indicate that Nadab and Abihu had been drinking wine before they went into the sanctuary, and that this was the cause of their sin. From this we learn that God does not regard drunkenness as an excuse for crime. If a man commits a murder when he is crazed with liquor which he voluntarily drank, he is as guilty as though the crime were premeditated; because he, of his own accord, took that which he knew would deprive him of reason.

Whether or not Nadab and Abihu were thoroughly intoxicated, we cannot tell, but we know that their sensibilities were blunted. How many there are who engage in the work of the Lord with their mental faculties all deadened because of intemperance in eating or drinking. Such cannot appreciate the plain word of God.

And it is largely because of gross habits that people cannot

sense the importance of sacred things. Both their mental and their moral faculties are blunted, so that they can see no difference between things holy and things common. But people who cannot see the truth, because their own wrong habits have blunted their senses, are just as accountable for their disobedience as though they could see the truth and should willfully disobey it. To all the exhortation comes,

Ephesians 5

¹⁸ Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.

Attention is called to just one point taught by *Exodus* 35:26-29. That is that:

Exodus 35

²¹ ...every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing,

–brought an offering for the sanctuary. God had told Moses to take an offering only...

Exodus 25

² ...of every man that gives it willingly with his heart.

The result of this willing offering is given in *Exodus* 36:2-7. The people brought unto Moses...

Exodus 36

³ ...free offerings every morning,

–until the overseers of the work said to him,

⁵ The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make.

⁶ And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the ordering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.

⁷ For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

Such a thing as this is of rare occurrence, but it would not be if the people who profess to be God's would all give willingly and make free offerings. The cause of God would prosper, and all would be blessed.

We cannot help thinking that there were some in the camp of Israel who had not given anything when the proclamation went forth that no more offerings were needed. There are always some who do not intend to give anything. To such it would make no difference whether there was enough or not. Such ones would doubtless congratulate themselves on their prudence, since they had saved their means, and the cause was well supplied besides.

But there are always others who do intend to give, but not now. They cling to their means yet a little longer, but fully design to make a liberal donation at some future time. How disappointed such ones must have felt when they learned that their offerings were not needed.

So it will doubtless be in these last days. God's work will close without having been helped by many who designed to help sometime. Too late they will find that while the work of the Lord could get along without their help, they cannot get along without helping the work.

The lesson that we should learn is never to put off service of any kind for the Lord. Today is the call to everyone.

2. The Glory to Be Revealed

Present Truth, July 24, 1902

Leviticus 10:1-11

E. J. Waggoner

Isaiah 49

¹ Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, you people, from far; The Lord has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother has He made mention of my name.

² And He has made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand has He hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver has He hid me;

³ And said unto me, You are my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

Isaiah 40

³ Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

⁵ And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

Romans 8

¹⁸ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

THE practical application of the truth stated in these passages of Scripture is illustrated in the scripture referred to at the head of the study, which begins thus:

Leviticus 10

¹ And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not.

² And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

³ Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spoke, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come near me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

The tabernacle had been pitched, and service had begun in it, according to the directions given. The glory of the Lord had filled the place when it was consecrated to His service; and the people without saw the glory upon the house, shining forth from it. This we learned last week.¹⁴⁹ Then when the first offering was made on the altar,

Leviticus 9

²³ ...the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people.

²⁴ And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

No doubt nearly everybody who reads the account of the sin of Nadab and Abihu, and their death, thinks that the punishment was out of proportion to the offense. To offer strange fire seems so small a thing. A little closer study of the situation will show us how serious the matter was. Of course, even without any study, we ought to know that it was no light offense; for God is not arbitrary or unjust; the fact that the sin merited death shows that it was a grievous one; and this we should keep in mind.

An Example For Us

When we read the experiences of the children of Israel in the wilderness, we must remember that:

1 Corinthians 10

¹¹ All these things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

¹⁴⁹ See *Present Truth*, July 17, 1902, "[The Tabernacle of Witness](#)." Based on *Exodus* 11:1-8. It is article 38 in the section on "Exodus" in this collection.

Now let us enquire what we are to learn from the account of the sin and death of these two men. Here, in short, is the answer:

1 Corinthians 3

¹⁶ Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

¹⁷ If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

Psalm 11

⁴ The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men.

There is a temple of God in heaven;¹⁵⁰ but it is evident that the figure must be kept in the utmost sacredness, to correspond as closely as possible to the purity and holiness of things in the heavens. Hence the jealous care with which the sacredness of the tabernacle in the ark was guarded.

But we must not forget that the tabernacle was built only because the people would not allow Him to dwell in them, and fully to reveal His glory in them. Therefore we know that the human body is just as sacred in the eyes of God as the temple in heaven, and ought to be preserved from defilement as carefully as we can think would be fitting a place where the King of the universe is to dwell. Only God's life—the pure river of water of life that proceeds from the throne of God in heaven—should be allowed in it; whatever is foreign to that pure life of God, defiles His temple, and tends to destruction.

The meaning of the earthly sanctuary built by Moses has not been sufficiently considered. If all appreciated the truth that our bodies are God's temples, and, moreover, that when fully and constantly dedicated to Him the glory of the Lord is to be seen in and upon them as really as it was ever seen in

¹⁵⁰ **Revelation 11** ¹⁹ And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

and upon the house made with hands, what a transformation there would be in man. The very earth itself would be a new place. Life would be simple; the complex problems that vex statesmen and political and social economists, would solve themselves, or be removed; and health would take the place of disease. These things are not fancies, but sober reality. They are as true as God's Word.

Intemperance and Irreverence

But let us study our lesson a little further. What was it that led to the careless disregard of holy things, on the part of Nadab and Abihu? The thing is indicated in:

Leviticus 10

⁸ And the Lord spoke unto Aaron, saying,

⁹ Do not drink wine nor strong drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations:

¹⁰ And that you may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;

¹¹ And that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.

It was intemperance that led to the awful results recorded in our lesson. The minds of Nadab and Abihu were clouded by the spirit of wine, instead of enlightened by the Spirit of God, and they could not discern the difference between the sacred and profane. And thus, strictly speaking, intemperance was the sin for which they were destroyed. By intemperance they clouded the glory of God in the true temple of God,—their bodies,—and that led to the error in relation to the figurative sanctuary. They defiled the living temple, and that naturally resulted in debased service in the temporary structure.

And so we may bring our short study to a close with the text which points the lesson and suggests the way in which

the glory is to be revealed:

1 Corinthians 10

³ Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.

It is by strict temperance in eating and drinking, above all things else, that the true temple of God is to be kept holy, so that He may be glorified in us. Let no one say, then, that it is a matter of no importance what or how we eat and drink. It is of vital importance.

How many there are whose brains are stupefied, and whose minds are clouded, solely through wrong habits of eating. And they think that they are temperate, because they never drink intoxicating liquor; but they are mistaken; and their error is not a slight one. How important to keep the stream of life always running clear, so that the mind will be bright and active!

God's glory will be revealed, and it will consume and destroy everything that defiles. Shall it be revealed in our glorification, or in our destruction? Which shall it be?

3. The Lesson of the Cloud

Present Truth, July 31, 1902

Numbers 10:11-13, 29-36

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN the Lord led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, to conduct them to the land of Canaan,

Exodus 13

²¹ [He] went before them by day in a pillar a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

²² He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

Numbers 9

¹⁵ And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony; and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning.

¹⁶ So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.

¹⁷ And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents.

²⁰ And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed.

²¹ And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed.

²² Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed.

The Lord himself was in the cloud, and it was the symbol,

the evidence, of His presence. We read that when the Egyptians were pursuing the children of Israel into the midst of the Red Sea, that:

Exodus 14

²⁴ It came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians.

And Moses, recounting to the Israelites God's gracious dealings with them, said,

Deuteronomy 1

³² ...you did not believe the Lord your God,

³³ Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way you should go, and in a cloud by day.

The one great lesson for people in this world to learn, is the reality of things. The world is so taken up with the unreal, with fiction and mere play-acting, that they have almost lost the power to grasp the real. Even what is called "realism," is only a poor picture of things which, just because they are dramatized, people do not really believe actually exist. The material things which they handle are virtually unreal, because the end for which they use them is unsubstantial. Everything which has for its object this world only, is unreal, for:

1 John 2

¹⁷ ...the world passes away, and the lust thereof.

This spirit of the world has also seized professed Christians, so much so that the promises and the work of God are to the most of them unreal. They read the Bible too much as though its characters were the mystical inhabitants of the moon, instead of real flesh and blood. To many, the thrilling narratives of Scripture, even of the life and miracles of Christ, and especially of the experiences of ancient Israel, are, unconsciously to themselves, read as though they were pages of a novel. They are to them at best but a "true story," or "a story founded

on fact.” That is to say, we all of us too often fail to live in the events of the Bible history, and to realize that:

Romans 15

⁴ Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,

—and that the same God still lives to do the same things for His people,—that the experiences of God’s people in past ages may and should be the experiences of His people today.

We should know not only that the things which are recorded in the Bible are real occurrences, but that they are not unique, exceptional instances, but illustrations of God’s ordinary working. God does not produce “monstrosities.” The Bible records:

- the faith of Enoch and Abraham,
- the meekness of Moses,
- the patience of Job,
- the wisdom of Solomon,
- the strength of Samson,
- the miraculous things among ancient Israel and in the early church,

—to show the power that all God’s people ought to possess, for:

Romans 2

¹¹ There is no respect of persons with God.

Let us then consider our lesson—Israel led by a cloud—in this light. In the first place, it was a real cloud, just as much so as those we see floating in the sky, which send rain down to the earth. From it came forth...

Psalms 68

⁹ ...a plentiful rain,

—whereby God refreshed and strengthened His inheritance,

so that:

1 Corinthians 10

¹ ...all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

² And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

God in Every Cloud

Psalm 104

³ [The Lord] makes the clouds His chariot, and walks upon the wings of the wind;

Nahum 1

³ [He] has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.

Psalm 65

¹¹ [His] paths drop fatness.

This teaches us that God is still in the cloud; not merely in some particular cloud, but in every cloud that contains water to enrich the earth. The fatness which we gather from the earth comes to it from the clouds; and thus God rains down bread from heaven for us in these days as really as He did for Israel in the desert.

Now, as then, we are to discern the glory in the cloud that gives us bread; for the giving of manna, even as the turning of water into wine at Cana, was the manifestation of God's glory.

Exodus 16

⁶ Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt:

⁷ And in the morning, then you shall see the glory of the Lord.

And so it was, for in the morning they saw the manna which had rained down during the night.

Seeing God in the Cloud

The poet has written of:

The poor Indian, whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds, and hears Him in the wind.¹⁵¹

But that very thing shows that his mind is not so untutored as that of his civilized brother; for the highest wisdom to be found in the universe is the knowledge of God; and the ability to recognize Him in His works is the keenest perception.

Israel of old saw God's works for them for forty years, and yet did not learn His way; they saw the cloud day after day, in which God dwelt, and yet doubted and even denied that the Lord was among them. Even so it is today. Day by day and night by night we see clouds, yet do not know that God is near at hand, although the history of Israel is very minutely recorded, in order that we might know that God's way is in the cloud. God is still in the cloud, as surely as in the days of Israel in the wilderness.

Another evidence of this is afforded in the account of the transfiguration of Jesus. Peter, James, and John went up with Jesus into a mountain,

Mark 9

⁷ And there was a cloud that overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear Him.

Psalm 97

¹ The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

² Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation [foundation] of His throne.

Because the clouds are round about God's throne, which is established in righteousness,

¹⁵¹ Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, Epistle 1, 1732.

Isaiah 45

⁸ ...the skies pour down righteousness.

This is more than a mere exercise of the mind, a scholastic speculation;—it is God’s truth, the reality of which we are to demonstrate in our every day lives.

Romans 15

⁴ Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures *might have hope*.

We are to learn to extract comfort from tribulation, and not merely to be soothed while under it, to...

Romans 5

³ ...glory in tribulation.

Clouds and darkness are round about God, yet He dwells...

1 Timothy 6

¹⁶ ...in the light,

—even clothing himself with it.

Psalms 104

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with honor and majesty.

² Who cover yourself with light as with a garment: who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.

Glory dwells in the cloud, as was strikingly shown at the crossing of the Red Sea, when this same cloud was darkness and gloom to the Egyptians, and light and cheer to the Israelites.

Exodus 45 [RV]

²⁹ There was the cloud and the darkness, yet it gave light by night: and the one came not near the other all the night.

Light from the Cloud

The common saying that that “every cloud has a silver lin-

ing” does not tell all the truth. The truth is that every cloud is full of light, and the thickest, heaviest, darkest clouds contain the most light. Do you doubt it? Your own experience shall convince you. From what clouds do the lightnings come? Is it not from the thick, black, threatening thundercloud? It is now as in the beginning, when God...

2 Corinthians 4

⁶ ...commanded the light to shine out of darkness.

This also is for our learning. There will come a day when...

Jeremiah 4

²⁸ ...the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above be black,

—and terror will take possession of the inhabitants of the earth, and it will be as though God had forsaken and forgot the earth. But in that day the glory of the Lord shall be revealed as never before covering the heavens,

Matthew 24

²⁷ As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west;

³⁰ ...they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Let us learn to recognize His goings here, so that when that great and terrible day shall come we shall hail it with joy, saying,

Isaiah 25

⁹ Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

4. Afraid of Moses

Present Truth, June 20, 1895

Numbers 12:6-8

E. J. Waggoner

MANY people seem to have a special antipathy to Moses, and to anything that pertains to him. Let anything be quoted from the first books of the Bible, and they will cry out,

“O, that’s in the law of Moses!”

or,

“Moses wrote that.”

Well, what if he did? Does that diminish its value? Why not as well say when the Psalms are read,

“O, David wrote that!”

Or object to other prophecies because Isaiah or Jeremiah wrote them? Why is there not as much reason in objecting to things quoted from the epistles of the New Testament because they were written by Paul, or Peter, or James, or John? Was Moses inferior to these men? Was he less favored of God?

Hear what the Lord said:

Numbers 12

⁶ If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

⁷ My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house.

⁸ With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold.

Deuteronomy 34

¹⁰ And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.

Christ testified that to disbelieve Moses was to disbelieve in

Him.

John 5

⁴⁶ For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

⁴⁷ But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?

Moses wrote of Christ. He wrote of the sacrifice of Christ, of justification through faith in His blood, of the coming of the Lord, of the resurrection of the dead, of eternal life, and of the glorious reign of the saints in the kingdom of God. Let us beware, lest, in speaking disparagingly of Moses, we be found rejecting the Master, of whom he testified, and whose reproach he suffered.

5. How Moses Knew

Present Truth, March 22, 1894

Numbers 12:8

E. J. Waggoner

HOW did Moses learn about the creation? There was no man living when the heavens and earth were created, so he could not have learned the story from man.

Those who assume that he compiled the narrative from various existing documents, do not help the matter at all, for no man who lived before Moses had any better chance to learn about creation than he had. Even Adam had no more personal knowledge of the facts of creation than Moses had; for creation was complete when Adam first saw the light. He saw nothing of the process himself.

Then how did Moses know what to write? Did he imagine it? Not at all; he wrote just what he knew, because the Lord God told him. He who created the heavens and the earth...

Psalm 103

⁷ ...made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel,

—for the Lord spoke to him mouth to mouth.

Numbers 12

⁸ With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

This is the way the entire Bible was written,

2 Peter 1 [RV]

²¹ For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

Not an Allegory

Some people like to strike a happy mean between the idea

that the first chapters of *Genesis* are actual history, and the theory that they are pure fiction, by claiming that they are allegorical. Of all such it may be said,

Luke 23

³⁴ They know not what they do.

They do not realize that any view other than that those chapters describe actual occurrences is a denial of the whole Bible, and of the very Gospel.

The 3rd chapter of *Genesis* tells how sin came into the world, and contains the first promise of the Saviour who should die for the sin. To deny the literalness of that account is to deny the story of the cross.

Upon the 1st and 2nd chapters of *Genesis* the fourth commandment is based. If they were not literal history, the Sabbath would be gone. This indeed is why those chapters are discredited. But they who discredit the story of creation, and the Sabbath, do not realize that in so doing they are denying sanctification. God says,

Ezekiel 20

¹² I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.

Without the knowledge of creation and the Sabbath there can be no knowledge of perfect sanctification.

Psalms 119

¹⁶⁰ Your word is true from the beginning.

It is all...

2 Timothy 3

¹⁶ ...profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Creation and the Cross

The eternal power of God is clearly seen in the things that he has made.

Romans 1

²⁰ For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

Creation is the measure of God's power. Not that any one save God can measure it, because it is infinite; but the power manifested in creation is the same power that saves men from sin.

Romans 1

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

So that the Gospel is simply creative power applied to sinful men.

Ephesians 2

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

But the preaching of the cross is also the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1

¹⁷ For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

¹⁸ For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

²³ But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

²⁴ But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Christ crucified is the power and the wisdom of God, and so it is the Gospel. On the cross Christ shed His blood to reconcile us to God, in the forgiveness of our sins.

Colossians 1

¹⁴ In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

Romans 5

⁹ Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

¹⁰ For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

The blood is the life:

Leviticus 17

¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul.

¹⁴ For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, You shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eats it shall be cut off.

So that it is the taking of the life of Christ that reconciles us to God. But we have redemption through His blood, because in Him were all things created.

Colossians 1

¹⁴ In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins:

¹⁵ Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;

¹⁶ For in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether

thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him.

He is the source of the creation:

Revelation 3

¹⁴ And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

All created things sprang from His life. So that the power of the cross, by which we are saved, is the power by which the worlds were made. Thus it is that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, or a new creation. Only as we consider the power of God as manifested in creation, can we learn the wonderful power of the cross.

David said,

Psalms 92

⁴ For You, Lord, have made me glad through your work, I will triumph in the works of your hands.

And Paul wrote,

Galatians 6

¹⁴ God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And both of them gloried and triumphed in the same thing.

For a Time of Need

If we do not grasp that which we profess to believe, and lay hold upon it for deliverance from sin in time of temptation, it shows that we do not understand that thing about which we talk. Every word of God may be laid hold of in time of temptation, and it is deliverance. We are to lay hold of the life that is in the word; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free.

Romans 8

² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me

free from the law of sin and death.

We are to find life and godliness in every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

6. Unfaithful Witnesses

Present Truth, July 31, 1902

Numbers 13:1-32

E. J. Waggoner

DID you ever stop to consider how much, or rather, how little, of the Bible was written when David gave expression to his appreciation of the Scriptures? If not, it would be well to do so. It will not take too long to discover that when he wrote,

Psalm 19

⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;

or,

Psalm 119

⁹⁸ Through your commandments, You have made me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me.

⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers: for your testimonies are my meditation,

—there was very little of the Scriptures written except the five books of Moses. When you read the one 119th *Psalm* with this thought in mind, it will help you to appreciate those simple records as never before. You will then see more force to the words,

Romans 15

⁴ Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

All the law and the Gospel, and all the truths proclaimed by the later prophets is in those books.

In studying the report of the spies, do not be content with the meager references given in the lesson outline, as indicated at the head of this article. Read the whole of the 13th and 14th chapters of *Numbers*, and the 1st chapter of *Deuteronomy*, if

you would know even a small portion of the Gospel lesson that the event has for us. The Jews themselves did not learn the lesson, and we find Christians to this day going over the same ground.

We read in our lesson that,

Numbers 13

¹ The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying,

² Send men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: for every tribe of their fathers shall you send a man, every one a ruler among them.

³ And Moses by the commandment of the Lord sent them from the wilderness of Paran.

But we must not hastily conclude that Moses was the one who first proposed the plan. If we do, we shall certainly lose a large portion of the lesson. In recounting the experiences of the people to them, just before he was taken from them, Moses said:

Deuteronomy 1

²⁰ And I said unto you, You are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God does give unto us.

²¹ Behold, the Lord your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the Lord God of your fathers has said unto you; fear not, neither be discouraged.

²² And you came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.

²³ And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe.

So the spies went up, with these instructions:

Numbers 13

¹⁷ Get up this way southward, and go up into the mountain:

¹⁸ And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwell therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many;

¹⁹ And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good

or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds;

²⁰ And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not.

A Useless Expedition

A very wise and necessary precaution, some will say; but the fact is, it was a very foolish and useless expedition. There was no need to send spies to find out what the land was, and whether it was fat or lean. Before they left Egypt, and many times afterward, God told them that it was...

Exodus 3 [also vs. 17, 13:5, 33:3]

⁸ ...a good land and a large,...a land flowing with milk and honey.

Moreover, it was wholly unnecessary to send spies to find out by what way they must go up to the land, when the Lord himself went before them in a cloud by day, and fire by night, to search them out a place to pitch their tents in, and they could not journey except when and where that pillar went. Their searching was so much useless labor.

And what difference did it make what sort of cities the people dwelt in, or whether they dwelt in tents, when the Lord had promised to drive them out before the Israelites?

Psalms 44

³ For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arms save them.

A giant is no more than a pigmy to the Lord, and a walled city is no stronger against Him than a gauze curtain. To Him nothing is great, nothing is small.

See how it was when they actually entered the promised land. Jericho, one of the strongest cities, fell without a blow, or the loss of a man, because they had faith in God; or as when they trusted in their own strength they were repulsed with great loss from the little town of Ai. Numbers do not

matter with the Lord. As King Asa said to the Lord,

2 Chronicles 14

¹¹ It is nothing with You to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power.

1 Corinthians 1

²⁷ God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

²⁹ That no flesh should glory in His presence.

Evidence of Lack of Faith

Is it not evident from all these things that the sending of the spies was an evidence of lack of faith? The result demonstrated that it was; for ten out of the twelve...

Numbers 13

³² ...brought up an evil report of the land which they searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof.

This was in direct contradiction to the report God had given of the country, and contrary to the evidence which they brought back in their hands. They literally, “spread a slander” against land, and so against God, who had recommended it. And then the people, in spite of the repeated assurances from God that He would bring them into the land, declared that it was of no use to think of going further, and determined to go back into Egyptian bondage. But all this was the natural development of the unbelief that led them to send the spies in the first place.

The foolish wickedness of the ten spies in bringing an evil report of the land, the goodness of which was certified by the fruits that they had gathered, is often commented on; but we

must not overlook the fact that all the people bore the same unfaithful witness against God, when they sent to enquire into the truthfulness of what He had said about the land.

1 John 5

¹⁰ He that believes not God has made Him a liar.

Giving People Their Own Way

But why did the Lord tell them to send spies? For the same reason that he told Balaam to go with the messengers of Balak. He had told Balaam not to go; but Balaam was set on going, and so at last the Lord told him to go. Likewise the Lord directed Israel in the choice of a king, although He had expressly told them not to make one, for He was their king. Thus we see that when men are determined to do a thing, it is not only easy for them to find a good “reason” for doing it, but they can even get God to assent to it; and, still more, to give directions concerning it, although He has forbidden it.

From this we see how terrible a thing it is for men to choose their own way; for God always gives every man his own choice; but the result of not being content with God’s first choice for us is always disastrous.

How many there are who, with the plain, explicit commandment of the Lord before them concerning the Sabbath, will presume to ask the Lord if they shall keep it! We need not doubt in the least their statement that they have received an answer from the Lord, to the intent that they need not; but we may pity them, because they do not see that the commandment which they follow is one which they themselves have devised, and not the Lord’s commandment.

When people undertake to lead the Lord, they are sure to get into trouble. It is better to let the Lord lead us into difficulties, then to insist on going the easy way.

Not Children of Abraham

How different it was with Abraham. When God told him to go into the land which he was afterward to receive for an inheritance, he went forth,

Hebrews 11

⁸ ...not knowing where he went,

—and not asking. It was...

Luke 1

⁵⁵ ...to Abraham, and to his seed,

—that the promises were made; but the unbelief displayed in sending spies to search out the land which God said was good, and to which He had promised to lead them, show that these people were not really the seed of Abraham; and,

Hebrews 3

¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

It is not always best to try to know everything. God mercifully hides the difficulties that the future contains for us, in order that our spirits may not be alarmed or downcast by them. He would not have us needlessly disturbed by the long contemplation of them; He knows that He will remove them, or help us through them when the time comes, and so He says,

Matthew 6

³⁴ Sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof.

I know not what awaits me;
God kindly veils my eyes;
And o'er each step of my onward way
He makes new scenes to rise;
And every joy He sends me comes
A sweet and glad surprise.

One step I see before me;
'Tis all I need to see:

The light of heaven more brightly shines
When earth's illusions flee;
And sweetly through the silence comes
His loving, "Follow me."

So, on I go—not knowing,
I would not if I might;
I'd rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light;
I'd rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone by sight.¹⁵²

"Our doubts are traitors," and they always bring defeat wherever they are entertained. The children of Israel thought that they could not take possession of the land of Canaan, and they did not.

1 John 5

⁴ This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

¹⁵² Mary G. Brainard, Hymn: *He Knows*, 1869.

7. Each Man's Destiny Self-Decided

Present Truth, June 2, 1898

Numbers 13:1-32; 14:1-9

E. J. Waggoner

THE children of Israel, on their way from Egypt to Canaan, had gone as far as the desert of Paran, on the borders of the promised land, when the Lord said to Moses:

Numbers 13

¹ Send men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel;

² Of every tribe of their father shall you send a man, every-one a ruler among them.

Accordingly the twelve men were chosen, and Moses sent them away with this charge:

¹⁷ Get up this way southward, and go up into the mountain:

¹⁸ And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwell therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many;

¹⁹ And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strongholds;

²⁰ And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land.

So they set off, and searched the land for forty days.

²³ And they came unto the valley of Eschol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bore it upon a staff between two; and they brought also of the pomegranates, and of the figs.

²⁴ That place was called the valley of Eschol, because of the cluster which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

The word “Eschol” means “a cluster.” Some people, who make their own limited experience the standard by which the truthfulness or reasonableness of the Bible is judged, imagine that the account of the cluster of grapes so large that required

two men to carry it, is an exaggeration; but the Bible does not need any man's testimony to substantiate it.

Yet it may be of interest to some, as showing the wondrous fruitfulness of the earth in some places, even in these last days, to read that the writer of this has himself seen a single cluster of grapes weighing twenty-eight pounds. If the one that the spies cut was still larger even than that, one man alone would find it a very difficult task to carry it uninjured for several days.

Well, what was the result of the investigation?

²⁵ They returned from searching the land after forty days.

²⁶ And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

²⁷ And they told them, and said, We came unto the land where you sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

Thus far they were all agreed. One would suppose that the sight of such luscious fruit to people in a desert, and the knowledge that there was a country full of it within easy distance, and that the country had already been given them by the Owner thereof, would have so stirred them that nothing would restrain them from going at once to take possession. Alas! there was a "but" in the report of some of the twelve.

Having shown the desirability of the land, ten of the men added:

²⁸ Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

What of that? Those same people dwelt there four hundred years before, when Abraham was in the land, and the Lord had mentioned them all by name, and others beside them, in the promise to Abraham. In giving the land to Israel, the Lord had full knowledge of all its encumbrances. He had promised the ancestors of Israel that:

Psalm 105

¹¹ Unto you will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance:

¹² When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

¹³ When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people;

¹⁴ He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, He reprov'd kings for their sakes;

¹⁵ Saying, touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

The same God was as well able to protect a multitude as a few.

Moreover these very people had seen the power of God, not only over a mighty nation,—the Egyptians, whom He shook off in the Red Sea,—but over the winds and the sea. They had seen how all things in heaven and earth are subservient to His will. Yet now as soon as the ten spies mentioned the people of Canaan, whom God himself had expressly named in the gift,

Numbers 14

¹ All the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

² And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

Two men alone were faithful to God in the truth. Caleb and Joshua...

Numbers 13

³⁰ ...stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

Numbers 14

⁷ And they spoke unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

⁸ If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which flows with milk and honey.

⁹ Only rebel not against the Lord, neither fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.

Surely it would be a one-sided contest: the people of the land had no defence. True, they had cities with high walls; but,

Psalm 127

¹ Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain.

The Lord is more than all, for:

Isaiah 40

¹⁷ All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity.

Nevertheless the ten spies said:

Numbers 13

³¹ We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.

And so much were they overcome by their foolish and wicked fears that, although they had just told how good the land was,

³² They brought up an evil report of the land,...saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.

Well, we know the result. It was just as each one said. Those who said, “We are not able to go up,” did not go up. They could not, indeed,

Hebrews 3

¹⁹ ...because of unbelief.

But those who said, “We are well able to go up and possess it,” found nothing to hinder them. They did indeed find walled cities, but the walls fell down of themselves, before a finger was lifted against them. Those who expressed a wish to die in the wilderness, had their wish gratified; those who wished to possess the promised land, had it. Even so it is today.

Matthew 9

²⁹ According to your faith be it unto you.

God has blessed us with...

Ephesians 1

³ ...all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

2 Peter 1

³ His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.

In Christ,

Ephesians 1

¹¹ ...we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will.

Our weapons are...

2 Corinthians 10

⁵ ...mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds,

—while the principalities and powers with whom we are to fight have had their weapons taken away from them by the power of the Crucified One.

Colossians 2

¹⁵ And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it [His cross].

He is able to do...

Ephesians 3

²⁰ ...exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

–and that is:

Ephesians 1

¹⁹ ...His mighty power,

²⁰ Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places,

²¹ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.

It is impossible therefore for our faith to make too large demands upon God's love and power. We cannot exhaust His gifts. The word is,

1 Corinthians 3

²¹ All things are yours;

²² Whether...the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.

Revelation 21

⁷ He that overcomes shall inherit all things;

–and the victory has already been won for us. In Christ are all things, and He is...

Haggai 2

⁷ ...the desire of all nations.

Therefore we cannot desire a thing that is not ours already. Nay, our desires cannot begin to compass the things that God has given us; for:

1 Corinthians 2

⁹ Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.

¹⁰ But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.

Oh, then,

John 20

²² Receive the Holy Ghost,

–and,

²⁷ Be not faithless but believing,

–for,

Mark 9

²³ All things are possible to him that believes.

God can do but very little for a man who misinterprets divine blessings, and concludes that he is favored on account of some goodness in himself.

8. They Wanted To Be Sure

Present Truth, May 28, 1903

Numbers 13 & 14; Deuteronomy 1:19-36

E. J. Waggoner

WHO did? The Israelites in the wilderness. What was it that they wanted to be sure of? They wanted to be sure that the promised land was worth possessing, and they wanted to know the way to get to it, and whether they could conquer it or not.

And did they find out what they wanted to know? Yes; the spies came back and said it was a good land, fruitful, and flowing with milk and honey; but they also found out that they were not able to take possession of the land, and so they never did. After all their trouble and their long journey, what a pity to get nothing but disappointment!

Yet it is hardly correct to say that they got disappointment. They did not really believe that they ever could take the land, and so they had no reason to feel disappointed when the spies brought back word that it was impossible.

How do we know that they did not believe that they could take the land? Because if they had, they would never have sent the spies to explore it and bring them word. God had already told them all that they needed to know. He had said, before they left Egypt, that the land was a goodly land, flowing with milk and honey.¹⁵³

Moreover He had very plainly indicated the way by going before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Psalm 106

⁷ He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

¹⁵³ *Exodus* 3:8, 17.

And He had also assured them that He would fight for them as He did against the Egyptians, even sending out an army of hornets, so that it made no manner of difference what sort of people inhabited the land.¹⁵⁴

They had the word of God, but they did not feel sure until they had seen for themselves. They thought that they would make the word of God more sure, or at the least verify it, and the result was that they denied it utterly, and so lost all that it promised.

How much better it would have been for them if they had not tried to see with their own eyes, but had been content to see by the light of God's word. They did not need to know the way beforehand, and they would never have come face to face with the giants, and so they could always have been happy and at rest.

It is better to be ignorant of some things. It is better to be ignorant of difficulties that are beyond our power, and which God's power alone can remove. If we have the promise of being carried along a precipice or over a deep chasm by an Almighty arm, it is much better to rest in that arm, and keep our eyes shut, than to run the risk of becoming giddy and falling out, by peering over the edge to see how deep down it goes.

When God has plainly spoken, it is the height of folly to "investigate" to see if possibly it is not wrong. The everlasting arms are still outstretched, and,

Isaiah 30

¹⁵ In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

¹⁵⁴ *Exodus 23:28.*

9. They Are Bread For Us

Present Truth, March 26, 1903

Numbers 14:9

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN the spies returned to the camp of Israel with their evil report of the giants and the fenced cities walled up to heaven, the people wept in dismay. Two only of all the host had the faith to perceive the real situation:

Numbers 14

⁹ Fear not the people of the land, [said Caleb and Joshua,] for they are bread for us.

All that they have is ours, for God has given them into our hands; so the more and the stronger they are, the better will it be for us.

Threatening enemies, barriers apparently insurmountable, our own utter weakness and inability, all are bread for us—God's means of supplying us with strength and life.

10. The Sin of Moses

Signs of the Times, May 27, 1889

Numbers 20:1-24

E. J. Waggoner

1. When the Israelites came to Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, what took place?

Numbers 20

¹ Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.

2. From what did the people suffer?

² And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

3. What did they do and say?

³ And the people chided with Moses, and spoke, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!

4. What did they charge Moses with doing?

⁴ And why have you brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?

5. What did they say of the place where they then were?

⁵ And wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.

6. Whom did they blame for bringing them out of Egypt?

Moses (and Aaron). Verses 2-5.

7. Who had really brought them from Egypt?

Exodus 20

¹ And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

² You shall have no other gods before me.

8. Then to what was their murmurings equivalent?

To a denial that God had anything to do with their wonderful deliverance.

9. What does the psalmist say of them?

Psalms 106

²¹ They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt;

²² Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea.

10. While the sin of the Israelites was exceeding great, is it an uncommon one?

11. What did Moses and Aaron do in this extremity?

Numbers 20

⁶ And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces; and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them.

12. What directions did the Lord give them?

⁷ And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying,

⁸ Take the rod, and gather you the assembly together, you, and Aaron your brother, and speak you unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and you shall bring forth to them water out of the rock: so you shall give the congregation and their beasts drink.

13. When the people were gathered before the rock, what did Moses say?

¹⁰ And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together

before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, you rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?

14. What does the psalmist say of this occurrence?

Psalm 106

³² They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:

³³ Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips.

15. How did it go ill with Moses?

Numbers 20

¹² And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, Because you believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

16. In what particular did Moses and Aaron trespass against the Lord?

Deuteronomy 32

⁵¹ Because you trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because you sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel.

17. When Moses allowed the Israelites by their rebellious words to provoke his spirit, what position toward God did he also assume?

Numbers 20

²⁴ Aaron shall be gathered unto his people; for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because you rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.

Numbers 27

¹⁴ For you rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes; that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.

18. Do we have any intimation that the Lord in any degree excused Moses' sin because he labored under great provocation?
19. In this giving way to anger, of what grace did Moses show a lack?

1 Corinthians 13

⁴ Charity suffers long, and is kind; charity envies not; charity vaunts not itself, is not puffed up,

⁵ Does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil.

20. What evidence have we that, although Moses was prohibited from entering the promised land, he repented of this and was fully forgiven?

Deuteronomy 34

⁵ So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.

⁶ And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor; but no man knows of his sepulchre unto this day.

Jude

⁹ Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you.

Matthew 17

¹ And after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them;

² And His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. and, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him.

21. Then what must even the best of men say to the Lord?

Psalms 130

³ If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

⁴ But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.

Notes

The sin of Moses was a great one, even greater than that of the people; for he had all the light that they had, and more. It is true that the people were the cause of his fall, yet that did not in the least relieve him from responsibility. The real cause, after all, was in his own heart, otherwise nothing that the people could have done would have moved him.

The Lord cannot tolerate sin, no matter in whom it appears; yet He is...

Exodus 34

⁶ The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

⁷ Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

That Moses repented, and was abundantly pardoned, is shown by the fact that after his death he was raised and taken to Heaven and was commissioned to come on the message of love to Christ. From this we are warranted in concluding that if it had not been for this one sin he would not only have been permitted to enter the land of Canaan, but would, like Elijah, have been translated without seeing death.

11. Saved by a Look

Present Truth, August 14, 1902

Numbers 21:1-9

E. J. Waggoner

WE CANNOT begin at any better place than the time-honored “golden path” that has saved the souls of many besides Nicodemus:

John 3

¹⁴ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up;

¹⁵ That whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Then comes the second realization, which, by its comprehensiveness, gives point to the whole story, and makes it a personal assurance to each individual:

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

What about that serpent in the wilderness? Why was it lifted up? The story is brief; let us read it:

Numbers 21

⁴ And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

⁵ And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread.

⁶ And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

⁷ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against you; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ And the Lord said unto Moses, Make a fiery serpent, and

set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live.

⁹ And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

If you have read this, and you believe it, you understand the whole “plan of salvation” as well as any man can. It is just as simple, and just as incomprehensible, as that. By looking at the serpent of brass elevated on the pole, the stricken people were healed; even so by looking at Christ—and continuing to look—every wounded, sin-sick soul, no matter what the extent of the disease, will surely be made perfectly whole. By beholding we become changed,¹⁵⁵ and...

Hebrews 3

¹⁴ ...are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

Thus are we saved, because we absorb the nature, the life of the Saviour. When His life becomes our life, then it is certain that we must be saved from sin and death; because neither sin nor death could get any power over Him.

And herein lies the secret of the susceptibility of those Israelites in the wilderness to the poison of the fiery serpents, and of the healing of those who were saved. They dissociated themselves from God, as was indicated by their murmurings, and so their defense was lost.

Let us understand this case fully. Do not suppose for a moment that God created those serpents for the occasion, nor that He imported them for the express purpose of biting the Israelites. How do we know that this was not the case? Because we know God, and know that this is not His way of working.

¹⁵⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:18.

2 Peter 3

¹⁹ [He who] is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish,

—does not make or import snakes for the express purpose of killing people. No; be assured that the serpents were there before the Israelites were there; and if the people had only made the most High their habitation, they might have trodden upon the venomous reptiles with impunity.¹⁵⁶ It was only when they stepped out from under cover, that they were exposed to danger, and were susceptible to the poison.

Take the case of Paul as an instance in point. When he was shipwrecked on the island of Malta, and had gathered sticks and made a fire, a viper, driven forth by the heat, fastened itself on his hand, and...

Acts 27

⁵ ...he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

The animal was poisonous, and the natives, who knew its nature, expected to see Paul fall down dead; but no harm came to him. Why not? Not because he was a god, as they thought, but because he had the fullness of the life of God in him. As long as he was in absolutely perfect harmony with that life, he was immune.

But what good did the serpent of brass do? It did no good whatever. It was only “a piece of brass.”¹⁵⁷ But by looking at it, according to God’s commandment, the people showed their faith in God’s sacrifice—Christ—who bore the curse of the world. They had been bitten by serpents, and that brazen serpent on a pole represented the serpents (the cause of their distress) exterminated—hanged on a tree. That was an object lesson of Christ bearing sin, the curse of the world, on the cross.

¹⁵⁶ See *Psalm* 91:1-13.

¹⁵⁷ **2 Kings 18** ⁴ [Hezekiah] called it Nehushtan [that is, “a piece of brass”].

Isaiah 53

⁵ With His stripes we are healed.

It was their faith that made them whole;¹⁵⁸ and the same faith will heal us today from the deadliest wound that sin has made.

The faith of those wounded Jews who looked at the brazen serpent, did just what the touch of the poor woman, and multitudes of others, did for them when Christ was on earth. It brought His life into them; and that life drove out the poison from soul and body.

Before life, death must flee away. Receive the life, pure from the heart and throne of God, and you have the perfect remedy for sin and everything that comes in its train.

Dissatisfied with Good Things

It is worthwhile to give a little consideration to the specific sin of the Israelites. They tempted Christ.

1 Corinthians 10

⁹ Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

They denied His presence among them. Murmuring, then, is heathenism, idolatry, denial of God, and lays us liable to any cause of death that may be lurking about. On the contrary, whoever offers praise provides the way for the revelation of the salvation of God.

Psalm 50 [RV, margin]

²³ Whoso offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies me; and prepares a way that I may show him the salvation of God.

The people were discontented, dissatisfied. They were receiving fresh bread from heaven every morning, just such bread as the angels ate, yet they complained about it. They called it “vile.” The word rendered “light” in our common ver-

¹⁵⁸ *Matthew 9:22; Mark 5:34, 10:52; Luke 8:48, 17:19.*

sion, is the Hebrew word meaning cursed. They said that they couldn't relish it, they loathed it; literally, they were nauseated with it; and we have no reason to suppose that they did not tell the truth. They did loathe it; it did nauseate them; but it was not "vile" bread. In this they were wrong. It was the best bread ever given to man; it was...

Psalm 78 [margin]

²⁵ ...the bread of the mighty,

—even of the...

Psalm 103

²⁰ ...angels, that excel in strength.

The trouble was not in the bread, but in them. If they had eaten it in faith, discerning the Lord's body in it, they would have been strong and healthy, in spite of all the serpents or pestilence in the world. In their case we can see that a murmuring, dissatisfied heart, can change a blessing into a curse.

Here is a lesson for us. God provides food for us now. In the Lord's supper we see that the Lord's body is the true food. That is pure, incorruptible. Thus we learn that the food that we receive from heaven is very simple and pure. It is not composed of a mixture of a great number of ingredients; the best food requires but little preparation,—no addition of spices or condiments of any kind "to taste," as all the recipes have it.

"But," someone says, "our food must be palatable, or else it will not digest."

Of course it must, and that was just what the Israelites in the desert thought and they were right too. They couldn't, digest the manna; it made them sick. What then? Oh, they must have a change. Yes; a change was just what they needed; but the food did not need to be changed, it was the people that needed to be changed. And that is just what people need in these days. They need to be changed, so that they will be satisfied with good things.

When a person says of the simple food that God gives us so richly, and in such abundant variety, that it...

“...isn’t good without the addition of something else,”

–he is doing just what the children of Israel did. They said that the manna was not good. They did not relish it. But it was good. Moses ate it every day for forty years, and found no fault with it; and there was not a healthier man in the whole camp. The angels also eat it every day for centuries and ages.

Can you not see what those murmuring Israelites ought to have done? They should have disciplined their taste. They should have learned to eat what God gave them, knowing that it was good because He gave it to them. Everything that is good has a delicious taste to the well-ordered palate. Men can teach themselves to like even the most disgusting nauseating things, as tobacco; how much easier it should be to learn to like that which is wholesome and good.

This is not a trifling subject. Whoever can discipline and control his appetite can do anything. The discipline acquired from training the appetite to obey divinely instructed reason, is of invaluable aid in enabling one to control the entire being and keep it under; and he who can do that is sure of not being a castaway.

There is a measure of truth in the saying that...

“what is one man’s meat is another man’s poison,”

–but not in the sense in which it is generally understood. God made man, and He is never mistaken in His dealing with mankind; and the time that He provided one kind of food, and only one, for a whole nation, and that day after day for forty years, without variableness proves that when men have a perfect food, they need no variation from it. The nearer we come to the divine plan, the less need is there for continual change. The simpler one’s food, the less liable is one to become tired

of it.

But the point we wish to emphasize is that a man may bring himself into a condition where that which is life to others may be death to him. If our language cannot express all that is indicated by the vowel form of the Hebrew words, this would not be apparent to everybody in the simple reading of the narrative of *Numbers*. Let us see if a few words would not make it plain.

Without troubling the reader with forms which he may not understand, we will say that the Hebrew word for “brass” is the word meaning serpent, and this noun is identical with the verb meaning “to be burnt.” It was fitting therefore that the serpent should be of brass; for brass represented the serpent, and especially this particular kind of serpent. On the connection of brass with burning, see *Revelation* 1:15.

Still another: the word “fiery,” which describes the serpents, is from the Hebrew *aleph*—“burning.” The reader will no doubt at once connect this with the plural form, which is found in English in *Isaiah* 6:6, “seraphim.” Now this very word is used in *Numbers* 21:6; and in verse 8, where we read that:

Numbers 21

⁸ The Lord said unto Moses, Make a fiery serpent.

The two words “fiery serpent” are from the single Hebrew word “seraph.” Thus it was seraphim snakes that bit the people, and the Lord told Moses to make a seraph, and put it on a pole, that the people might look at it and be healed.

The seraphim are the creatures of fire that cover God’s throne; yet doubt can convert them into demons. Discontent turned one of those preservers into Satan, the destroyer; and it was discontent that made the children of Israel susceptible to the fiery darts.

God will purge the guilt of Jerusalem...

Isaiah 4

⁴ ...by the spirit of burning.

The effect that this will have upon the people will depend entirely upon themselves. If it finds them in a grumbling mood, stubborn and rebellious, it will consume them; but if it finds them lovingly loyal to God, it will preserve them, by burning away every corruptible thing, leaving them so that they can...

Isaiah 33

¹⁴ ...dwell with the devouring fire, [and] with everlasting burnings.

Hebrews 12

²⁹ Our God is a consuming fire,

–yet He is the Saviour. If we are satisfied with Him, and want nothing on earth besides Him, He will be our portion and our life to all eternity.

12. The Serpent's Bite Cured

Present Truth, November 1, 1900

Numbers 21:4-9

E. J. Waggoner

IN EVERYTHING that is written in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, there is a lesson of comfort and encouragement for us;

Romans 15

⁴ For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Moses wrote of Christ, and therefore whoever believes the writings of Moses, must believe in Christ; and whoever does not believe what Moses wrote cannot believe Christ.

John 5

⁴⁶ For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

⁴⁷ But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?

One of the most striking lessons in the writings of Moses is in connection with the erection of a brass image of a serpent; it has instruction and comfort far greater than are usually drawn from it. Everybody who has read the Bible at all is familiar with these words:

John 3

¹⁴ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up;

¹⁵ That whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

But not all find in them what the record of the incident is designed to convey to us. Let us study it for a time together. The story is found in *Numbers* 21:4-9, and should be read as a whole. The children of Israel in their march through the

desert,

Numbers 21

⁴ ...journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

⁵ And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread.

⁶ And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

⁷ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against you; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ And the Lord said unto Moses, Make a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looks upon it shall live.

⁹ And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

No Arbitrary Punishment

One of the first things to learn, and one which should be continually remembered, is that God does nothing arbitrarily.

Proverbs 5

²² His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be held with the cords of his sins.

The wicked “treasure up” unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath.¹⁵⁹ They shall...

Proverbs 1

³¹ ...eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices.

³² For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

¹⁵⁹ *Romans 2:5.*

Every punishment has a natural connection with some sin.

Romans 6

²³ The wages of sin is death,

–but,

1 Corinthians 15

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

Romans 5

¹² Sin came into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

James 1

¹⁵ When lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished [full grown], brings forth death.

These statements are universally true. The plagues which God is said to send upon men, are but the outward manifestation of the plague of sin in their own hearts. So we must know that it was sin in the hearts and lives of the Israelites, that gave the fiery serpents power over them. Just as in our daily life the disease germs that are everywhere present have no power over us if we are in normal condition, but are swallowed up, so that they find no opportunity to work destruction except in bodies that are already vitiated. So in the spiritual world. Jesus said,

John 14

³⁰ The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me.

Satan, the originator of sin, could find no response in Christ, no congenial soil, and therefore he could not kill Him. Christ voluntarily laid down His life, and in death conquered...

Hebrews 2

¹⁴ ...him that had the power of death.

He swallows up death in eternal life. That this is strictly applicable to the case of the Israelites, and that, if they had not

sinned, the fiery serpents could not have bitten them to death, may be seen first from the case of Paul on the island of Malta. He had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire,

Acts 28

³ ...and there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

The people of the island, knowing the venomous nature of the serpent, looked to see Paul fall down dead suddenly, but:

⁵ He shook the beast off into the fire, and felt no harm.

He was acknowledging and serving God, and the poison of the serpent found no chance of working. The same thing is seen in the account of the fiery serpents in the wilderness. After the people had fulfilled the word of the Lord, they were safe, although the serpents were still all around them; so we may know that if they had been abiding in God from the beginning the serpents in that region would have been harmless to them.

Losing the Power of Resistance

What was the condition that made it possible for the serpents to destroy the Israelites? The answer is given in:

1 Corinthians 10

⁹ Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Now the record in *Numbers* does not tell us that they tempted Christ, so that from that account alone we may not know what constitutes tempting Christ; but in *Exodus 17* we read that:

Exodus 17

⁷ They tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?

Their actions, as well as their words, showed that they did not recognize God's presence, and this was tempting Him.

Even so it was in the case before us. The people asked Moses why he had brought them up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. But Moses had not brought them up, for it was the Lord himself who went in the way before them, to search out a place for them to camp in, and who led them by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.

Deuteronomy 1

³² Yet in this thing you did not believe the Lord your God,

³³ Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way you should go, and in a cloud by day.

Moreover, He had not brought them out to allow them to die, but to give them life, for He was their life:

Deuteronomy 30

²⁰ That you may love the Lord your God, and that you may obey His voice, and that you may cleave unto Him: for He is your life, and the length of your days: that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

And they had bread, even bread from heaven, the very body of Christ.¹⁶⁰ When the Israelites said that they had no bread and no water, they really said that God was not among them. And their unbelief in the presence of God was really a rejection of Him, so that the effect on them was the same as though He were not present. By believing, we receive Christ, and with Him power; by unbelief we reject Him, and lose the power of His presence.

Where the Healing Virtue Lay

What virtue was there in the brazen serpent, to cure the bites of the living ones? None at all. When Moses lifted it up it was exactly what it was years afterward when the Jews superstitiously worshiped it, and Hezekiah destroyed it, calling it...

¹⁶⁰ *John* 6:32-48.

2 Kings 18

⁴ ...a piece of brass.

It was never more than a piece of brass, with no power to do anything, or to produce any effect; and that very fact demonstrated the presence of the Lord to heal those who believed in His presence. God told Moses to lift up the serpent, and told what would follow if the stricken ones looked upon it; and the healing that followed, which could not possibly be attributed to the piece of brass on the pole, was evidence of God's saving presence.

In the text in *John*, it is not meant that Christ is of no more virtue than the brazen serpent, but that just as surely as those who looked upon the serpent of brass, according to God's word, received life, so will those who look to Christ receive perfect healing.

All Have Been Bitten by the Serpent

Every one of us has been bitten by a fiery serpent, and the poison has got into our blood. In the 12th chapter of *Revelation*, we read of a fiery red dragon, which is...

Revelation 12

⁹ ...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan.

Sin is of the devil, and...

Romans 3

²³ ...all have sinned.

It is the poison that causes death. But a remedy has been provided in Christ, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith. The faith that is by Him is a shield,

Ephesians 6

¹⁶ ...wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Even though the poison has contaminated our whole lives, and every fibre of our beings, a look at Christ, not for a mo-

ment only, but continuously, will take all the burning sting from the wound, and give us...

Acts 3

¹⁶ ...perfect soundness.

1 Corinthians 15

⁵⁷ Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Healing for All

This provision has been made for all. Salvation is unlimited. If a serpent had bitten any man, no matter who, when he beheld, he lived. No matter what the condition of the sinner, though sin has made him almost a body of death, if He recognizes Christ, he shall receive new life; yea more, for Christ says,

John 11

²⁵ He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

Psalms 23

³ He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Psalms 103

⁴ [He] redeems [our] life from destruction,...

⁵ ...so that [our] youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Righteousness is a defence;

Psalms 91

⁴ [God's] truth [is a] shield and buckler.

The life of Christ, if allowed free course in us, to fill us to overflowing, is calculated to render us impervious to sin and all its results,—to every poisonous thing that is the result of the curse of sin. So since righteousness comes by faith, for:

Romans 10

¹⁰ With the heart man believes unto righteousness,

–we have the promise:

Mark 16

¹⁷ These signs shall follow *them that believe*: In my name shall they east out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

And this:

Psalms 91

¹³ You shall tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under foot.

¹⁴ Because he has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.

¹⁵ I will set him on high, because he has known my name.

¹⁶ He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him.

We read that in the new earth, when sin is removed, and there is no more curse,

Isaiah 11

⁸ The sucking child shall play on the hole of an asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

But,

2 Corinthians 5 [RV]

¹⁷ If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation,

–and he is redeemed from the curse,¹⁶¹ so that, although surrounded by the curse, he lives as free from its effects as though he were living in the new earth; and the life of Christ,

¹⁶¹ *Galatians* 3:13.

the perfect Man, is proof of the possibility of this. This freedom from sin and its accompanying curse, is the unspeakable gift¹⁶² of God in Christ.

Matthew 9

²⁹ According to your faith be it unto you.

¹⁶² 2 Corinthians 9:15.

13. Kept from Honor

Present Truth, February 22, 1894

Numbers 24

E. J. Waggoner

IN THE 24th chapter of *Numbers* there is a record which very clearly sets forth the nature and the value of earthly honor. Balak, king of the Moabites, had sent for Balaam the prophet to come and curse Israel; and Balaam had come, but instead of cursing Israel he blessed them. Several times the king attempted to get from the prophet's mouth a curse upon his enemies, but each time with exactly the opposite result; until finally, in a rage, he smote his hands together, and said to Balaam,

Numbers 24

¹¹ Flee you to your place; I thought to promote you unto great honor, but lo, the Lord has kept you back from honor.

This reveals the relation between worldly honor and the honor that comes from God: or rather it shows that there is no relation whatever between them. A prophet of God, yet kept "back from honor"! Losing that which Balak had to bestow, and therefore losing "honor"! Thus does the voice of the world always speak to the Christian, to persuade him to give up Christ and grasp as much as he can of earthly fame. Alas, that any are so foolish as to listen to it!

There was Balak, with all the nation over which he ruled, in mortal terror for themselves and their kingdom, because of the approaching host of the armies of Israel; the wicked king trembling for his very existence, with no flattering prospect of its long continuance, and yet offering to promote Balaam to "great honor"! What honor had such a one to bestow, and what thought had he for Balaam's welfare? Simply none at all. All he cared about was the welfare of himself,—to avert, if it were possible, the destruction which threatened himself and his kingdom. He could confer upon Balaam a momentary dis-

tion of honor or wealth in the eyes of men, and that was all. This was what he called “great honor”; and this is what the world designates “great honor” today.

The Lord had put Balaam in his position, and now a man offers to “promote” him above the promotion given him by the Lord! This is the “promotion” which the world has to give to its votaries in place of that which is offered by the God of heaven; nothing that is real, nothing that is lasting, nothing that satisfies, or brings happiness and peace to the soul, yet it judges a man very foolish who will not seek for it in place of seeking for the honor which comes from God.

The earth is plunging into the gulf of ruin, whirling swiftly across the threshold of eternity, separated by only a hand breadth from the hour of its dissolution; yet offering to promote men unto “great honor” if they will but devote all their time and their powers to its affairs. The honor it has to confer is just that which Balak had to bestow on Balaam.

Those who take earthly honor, cannot have that which comes from God; and those who seek that which God bestows, cannot have the honor of the world. The two will not mix or grow together. The world will not honor righteousness; God will not honor sin. No person ever yet had honor both from the world and from God at the same time.

Those whom God honors are those who honor Him.

1 Samuel 2

³⁰ Wherefore the Lord God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house, and the house of your father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord says, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

They are those who serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 12

²⁶ If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am,

there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.

And how can a man honor God? He cannot honor God as he would honor a fellow-mortal. God gives men all the honor He has, and man's only way of showing respect and honor to God is to believe His word.

Hebrews 11

⁶ Without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Galatians 5

⁶ Faith which works by love,

—this is the only actuating power by which a man can do service to God. Those who seek worldly honor cannot have faith.

John 5

¹⁴ How can you believe, [said the Saviour,] who receive honor one from another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?

It is useless to expect to know the will of God and understand His word while seeking honor from man; for no one can understand God's word until he first believes it. But relinquishing the honor of the world, he can then believe, and by faith receive the honor that God bestows, which is that of being made a son of God, and a brother of Jesus Christ, and an heir of all things.

1 John 3

¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.

² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

³ And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure.

Romans 8

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

Hebrews 2

¹¹ For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

How much better to be kept back from the worldly honor by God than to be kept back from infinite and eternal honor by the world!

14. A View of God's Power

Present Truth, June 3, 1897

Deuteronomy 3:24

E. J. Waggoner

MOSESES saw the power of God manifested in Egypt and at the Red Sea, at Sinai, and for forty years in the wilderness. No man ever saw more. But the more he saw, the more he realized how little he had seen. Just before his death he prayed,

Deuteronomy 3

²⁴ O Lord God, You have begun to show your servant your greatness, and your mighty hand.

There is a good lesson in this prayer for those who are inclined to limit God's power and distrust it, or to think by the little they have learned that they know most that is to be known. Moses knew enough to know that he had only begun to see the power and goodness of the Lord. And all...

Ephesians 1

¹⁹ ...the exceeding greatness of His power [is] toward us who believe.

15. Bible Study

Present Truth, August 29, 1895

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

E. J. Waggoner

IN *Deuteronomy* 6:5-9 we have directions as to our duty in regard to the Bible. We will quote it in full:

Deuteronomy 6

⁵ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

⁶ And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart;

⁷ And you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.

⁸ And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

⁹ And you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and on your gates.

This is a complete model for Bible study. It was not intended to be local, for the Jews merely, but is for all persons, in all time. Not that we are to wear phylacteries as the Jews did; this passage does not command that.

The first part explains the last. The Word of God is to be studied and meditated upon so much that it will have a controlling influence over every act that our hands perform. We should work so that all that we do will bear the impress of the Word. Thus it will be for a sign upon our hands. In like manner the forehead stands for the mind, which is to be stored with the truths of God's Word. They are ever to be before our eyes.

But notice especially the command to talk of the Word when we sit in the house, and when we walk by the way, and when we lie down, and when we rise up. How can this be

done? Must we carry a Bible with us continually? That would be very inconvenient, and almost impossible. We could not use it while we were at work, nor in the night. The previous expression explains the whole thing:

Deuteronomy 6

⁶ And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart.

That is the secret of Bible knowledge. The Bible must be studied so carefully that the words will be indelibly fixed in our mind and heart. Then we can meditate upon them wherever we are, or whatever we are doing.

16. One of the People

Present Truth, August 21, 1902

Deuteronomy 18:9-22

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN the three disciples were with Christ “in the holy mount” where He was transfigured before them, there came a voice out of the cloud, a voice from heaven, which said,

Matthew 17

⁵ This is my beloved Son...hear Him!¹⁶³

These words proved that Jesus was the one of whom the Lord spoke, when He said to Moses,

Deuteronomy 18

¹⁸ I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put my words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him.

¹⁹ And it shall come to pass, that whoever will not hearken unto my words which He shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

In the words, “a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you,” we have the hope of the Gospel—the hope which the Gospel holds out to mankind.

1 Timothy 2

⁵ ...the Man Christ Jesus,

—the one Mediator between God and man, was...

Hebrews 2

¹⁷ ...in all things...like unto His brethren,

—from among whom He was taken; and therefore we know that every man may, if he will, be in all things like unto Him. He was made like us, not that He might know what man is, but that we might see what man ought to be, and what we

¹⁶³ Compare *Matthew 17:5* and *2 Peter 1:17-18*.

may be.

Psalm 89

¹⁹ Then You spoke in vision to your saints, and said, I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people.

Who is this “One that is mighty”?

- It is the helpless Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger;
- It is the boy of twelve who got lost in the crowd;
- It is the faint and weary traveler by the wayside well;
- It is the “Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,”¹⁶⁴ offering up prayers and supplications with “strong crying and tears,”¹⁶⁵ asking for strength, because He said, “I can of my own self do nothing.”¹⁶⁶
- It is the man fainting beneath the heavy cross, and then stretched upon it;

—this is the Mighty One—the Man of the people. This mighty One was born of a woman, and was subject to all the infirmities and disabilities of other men, born of women. He is partaker of the same flesh and blood that all other men are, and is of himself as weak as the weakest of them; for no man can possibly be weaker than not to be able to do anything. Therefore since God is no respecter of persons,¹⁶⁷ we know that every person, every one of His brethren, may be a mighty one:

Ephesians 6

¹⁰ ...strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might;

Colossians 1

¹¹ Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious

¹⁶⁴ *Isaiah* 53:3.

¹⁶⁵ *Hebrews* 5:7.

¹⁶⁶ *John* 5:30.

¹⁶⁷ *Acts* 10:34.

power.

Jesus had no power on earth to resist and overcome sin, that we may not have. He had no advantage over us; when He came to this earth, He “emptied himself,”¹⁶⁸ and became wholly like those whom He would redeem. If it had been otherwise, He could not have been a perfect Saviour; for He saves us by His life,—His life in complete touch with ours. If there were a point where His life did not touch ours, just there He could do nothing for us; and since we must be saved as a whole or not at all, it is evident that if in a single point He failed in establishing a connection with us, He could not save us at all.

Hebrews 2

¹⁷ He [is] a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people,

—because He was...

¹⁷ ...in all things...like unto His brethren.

Acts 2

³² This Jesus has God raised up,...

³³ [And]...being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost,

—He sheds the same power upon His brethren. What He has attained to, all may gain through Him.

This is beautifully and forcibly set forth in the term frequently applied to Christ, namely, “the firstfruits.” He is the first-fruits of the harvest that is to be gathered at the end of the world. A sample sheaf has been selected, and by it the whole crop is to be tested. He is the first; in all things He has the pre-eminence, and always will have; yet to all eternity He will still be...

¹⁶⁸ *Philippians 2:7* [RV].

Psalm 89

¹⁹ ...One...of the people.

Christ was a Prophet like unto Moses, yet those who professed to believe Moses would not listen to Him.

John 9

²⁰ We know that God spoke unto Moses; but as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is, [they said.]

Thus is it today. Men are holding fast to a dead past, refusing to accept the living present. They know that the truth was proclaimed years ago, and there they take their stand, sure, as they think, of being safe. Looking backward, instead of forward and upward, they lose the light which shines now,—the same light that shone then, only brighter, as we get closer to it. And so we have the anomaly of men standing close to the light, and yet in far greater darkness than many who are far away.

Let us give heed lest even today that come upon us, which God spoke through the prophet so many long years ago:

Acts 13

⁴¹ Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

The Prophet still speaks: Hear Him.

17. The Ever-Present Word

Present Truth, September 4, 1902

Deuteronomy 30:11-20

E. J. Waggoner

THE experience of the Apostle Paul (that is, the experience of Saul of Tarsus before he became an apostle, and which, as an apostle, he so vividly portrayed) is the experience of thousands of others even until this day:

Romans 7

¹⁸ To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

²¹ I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

With this state of things many, unlike the apostle, are content, thinking that God will take the will for the deed, and satisfied that if they but cry out against sin, and always declare their desire to do right, that will be sufficient excuse for their conformity to the evil that dwells in their flesh.

But there is no excuse for sin, no matter how closely it is interwoven with one's flesh; for:

1 Peter 4

¹ Christ has suffered for us in the flesh,

1 Peter 3

¹⁸ ...the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,

1 Peter 4

¹ [And] he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

In the lesson before us, we learn how truly and how righteously it is that:

Romans 1

¹⁸ The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [down] the truth in unrighteousness;

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them;

²⁰ For ever since the creation of the world the invisible things of Him, even His everlasting power and Divinity, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,

–seen most clearly in men, the earthen vessels that bear about the living image of God,

²⁰ ...so that they are without excuse.

So come we to the teaching of...

Hebrews 11

⁷ ...the righteousness which is by faith,

–which sounds as clearly forth today as when Moses uttered it, to every soul that would either comfort or upbraid itself with the words,

Romans 7

¹⁸ How to perform that which is good I find not,

²¹ [But] I find a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

And here is the teaching:

Deuteronomy 30

¹¹ This commandment which I command you this day, it is not hidden from you, neither is it far off.

¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

¹³ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

¹⁴ But the Word is very nigh unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it.

The commandment, the word, is “very nigh unto you.” How near?

¹⁴ ...in your mouth, and in your heart.

Why is it so near?

¹⁴ ...that you may do it.

Is it not plain that these words are spoken to those who are yet in sin, seeking, no doubt, but not yet having found the way of righteousness? The word is near those who are not doing it, in order that they may do it.

Christ is the Word

What is this commandment, this word, which is so very nigh unto us, even in our mouth, and in our hearts? There can be but one answer:

John 1

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

⁴ In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.

⁹ That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.

¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,...full of grace and truth.

The same Word is still made flesh, and is yet dwelling among us, and in our mouth and in our heart, full of grace and truth, that we may do thereafter.

Christ is the Word, and He is with us—"God with us"¹⁶⁹—always, even unto the end of the world, in our mouth, and in our heart. This is the message of righteousness by faith to a sinful world. Hear it as it is given by the same apostle who be-moaned the ever-present sin in his flesh:

Romans 10

⁶ The righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above);

⁷ Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead).

¹⁶⁹ *Matthew 1:23.*

⁸ But what says it? The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart; that is, the Word of faith, which we preach;

⁹ That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

¹⁰ For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

It needs no argument to show that Paul quotes from Moses, and that the “word,” of which Moses spoke, was Christ. It is Christ that is very near, in our mouth and in our heart. It is true that there is a sense of nearness, a reality, to the saint, that the sinner knows nothing about; but the actual difference consists only in faith or the lack of faith. Christ is equally near to all, but all do not know it. To the most of mankind He is as if He were not; when faith comes, it lays hold upon that which is, and we see and know Him,

Ephesians 4 [RV]

⁶ ...who is over all, and through all, and in all.

How strange it is that people are slowest to believe that which is most evident. Men in general have a sort of belief in God as One far away, but they have no idea of His nearness, and it is difficult to make them believe that He is near. Now see how God puts it:

Jeremiah 23

²³ Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off?

He will not consider that anybody can doubt that He is a God near at hand; but He will have the doubters believe that He is far off as well,—that He is a great God, who fills all things.

Proof of God's Nearness

“But, how can I know for myself that He is near?”

—someone says. It is the easiest thing in the world. The

wonder is how anybody cannot help knowing it.

Romans 10

⁸ The Word [Christ] is near you, in your mouth.

Draw in a full breath, and hold it a few seconds; you often do it, but do it now consciously, voluntarily. Now breath out again. Try now to go two minutes, or even one minute, without breathing. Perhaps you could hold out a minute, but you find two minutes impossible. You must breath in spite of yourself. It would be an absolute impossibility for anybody to commit suicide by holding his breath. And think now, that the stream of life-giving breath is day and night flowing. You use it in speaking and singing, without thinking of it. It is God's own presence; it is the breath of the Almighty that gives you life. Your lungs are but the instruments for God's breath.

⁸ ...and in your heart.

Steadily, without ceasing day or night, your heart keeps up its activity. Not only so, but it, so to speak, regulates itself according to circumstances, beating fast when more blood is needed, and slowly when the system sinks to repose. It does it itself, they say. What! is the heart self-existent? if so it must be God! Oh, no; the heart is but a bundle of muscular fiber; but God, the ever-present, ever-active is there. The fact that we live is proof of His presence.

Acts 17

²⁸ In Him we live, and move, and have our being.

²⁷ He [is] not far from every one of us,

—was Paul's testimony to the heathen in Athens. And He is near to the weakest and most wicked, in order that they may serve Him if they will.

How To Obey God

Well, then, how is it that we can lay hold of this Divine power, so that it will show itself active in us, not merely in

giving life to our bodies, as it does to the beasts, but in holiness and righteousness? The answer has been given:

Romans 10

⁹ If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

But what is it to confess the Lord Jesus? It is to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,—in human flesh,—and therefore in your flesh. He is the Son of man, indissolubly joined to humanity. To confess is to acknowledge a thing that already exists. You confess Christ by recognizing His presence in your being, and by acknowledging it and His right and power to rule in you. This is the true and only real “confession of faith.” What then?

⁹ ...believe in your heart at God has raised Him from the dead.

Believe that it is the living and active Lord that is in you; that He dwells in every cell and fiber of your being with all the power of the resurrection. Is there not victory in that truth? You say rightly that in you, that is, in your flesh, dwells no good thing.¹⁷⁰ That is, the flesh itself is wholly corrupt, and all that can come from flesh itself is sin and death. But the Word of life is there, and He has...

John 17

² ...power over all flesh,

—as was fully demonstrated in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Proverbs 3

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

This is the way to serve and obey God. We simply recognize

¹⁷⁰ *Romans 7:18.*

and constantly acknowledge, and so come into harmony with, that which is,—with the almighty power that rules the universe. Try it, not hesitatingly or doubtingly, but in the same confidence in which you lie down to sleep or go about your work, assured that your breathing will continue, and you will find that He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,

Ephesians 3

²⁰ ...according to the power that works in us;

—and you will involuntarily give to Him the glory and the dominion. This is practical righteousness.

The Mystery of Godliness

And, that Word of God Incarnate,
Jesus Christ our Blessed Lord,
Wondrous Mystery of ages,
Son of Man, and Son of God;
He is with us now and ever.
Jesus, Saviour, still the same,
Closest Friend and truest Brother,
Love, His best and endless name.

18. Life and Death Opposite Terms

Signs of the Times, July 6, 1888

Deuteronomy 30:15-19

E. J. Waggoner

IN THE last words which Moses, at the command of the Lord, spoke to the children of Israel, he said:

Deuteronomy 30

¹⁵ See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil;

¹⁶ In that I command you this day to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God shall bless you in the land whither you go to possess it.

¹⁷ But if your heart turn away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

¹⁸ I denounce unto you this day, that you shall surely perish, and that you shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither you pass over Jordan to go to possess it.

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live.

In this text we have the most positive evidence that life and death are exactly opposite states. It should be unnecessary to quote anything to prove such a self-evident proposition, yet it is well known that in the face of the statement that:

Romans 6

²³ The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,

—many claim that the wicked, as well as the righteous, will have eternal life. If it be true that both righteous and wicked are to have everlasting life, then life and death must mean the same thing, for the Bible says that life is for the righteous and death is for the wicked.

We do not say that it is claimed that the wicked will have life under the same conditions as the righteous, but that they will have as long life as the righteous. But this we say is contradictory of Scripture. The Scripture promises life to the righteous, and death to the wicked. These terms are unqualified except as to duration,—both are eternal. Therefore, if it be claimed that the wicked will live eternally, it must be claimed that life and death are identical in meaning.

But the scripture just quoted shows that they are not identical. They are as widely separated as the antipodes. They are no more alike than are blessing and cursing.

Deuteronomy 30

¹⁵ See, [says the Lord,] I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil.

Who will claim that good and evil have anything in common? No one certainly who has any regard for God's word. Well, death and life are just as far apart as are good and evil. Life follows good, and death follows evil. Again the Lord says:

¹⁹ I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing;

Who will say that blessing and cursing are identical terms? There is no question but that they are as far apart as the east is from the west. But life is the blessing wherewith God blesses those who love Him, and the curse pronounced upon the disobedient is death.

Notice a clause in the last verse of *Deuteronomy 30*. After admonishing the people to cleave unto the Lord, Moses says:

²⁰ For He is your life, and the length of your days.

Question, If God is the life of His people, and the length of their days, what will become of those who do not cleave to the Lord? It must be that they will not have life nor length of days. This is what the Bible teaches. Paul says that those who...

2 Thessalonians 1

⁸ ...know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

⁹ ...shall be punished with everlasting destruction.

He says again that:

2 Timothy 1

¹⁰ [Christ] has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

—which leads to the conclusion that all who do not accept the gospel will know nothing of life and immortality. Again the apostle John says:

John 3

³⁶ He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.

So far will the unbeliever be from having life, that he shall not see life. And this is literally true. This life amounts to nothing, unless it is used as a preparation for eternal life. It is hard enough at the best. In childhood even, when the world seems brightest and when the spirit is buoyant, there are troubles as great as the child can endure. As age comes on, cares increase, and the words of the patriarch, that:

Job 5

⁷ Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward,

—are proved to be true. The life which we live in this earth is not real life. There is not a man who knows, even at his best, anything of the freshness and vigor of that life which will be felt by those who drink of the river of the water of life, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life.

One moment of that life will contain more of vigor and joyous energy than threescore and ten years of this present life. And so the man who rejects God and the gospel, and who consequently is punished with destruction, may truly be said

to have never seen life.

Christ is the life-giver. He came to earth and died for no other purpose than that men who were doomed to death might have life.

John 10

¹⁰ I am come, [said He,] that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

To say that we can have eternal life without Christ, is to rob Him of His highest honor. Who that loves Christ can refuse to worship Him as the giver of our life, as well as of all good things?

19. Renew Their Strength

Present Truth, December 15, 1904

Deuteronomy 33:25-27

E. J. Waggoner

Deuteronomy 33

²⁵ As your days, so shall your strength be.

²⁶ There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven in your help, and in his excellency upon the sky.

²⁷ The Eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

READ the context, and see how exactly it coincides with the text,

²⁵ As your days, so shall your strength be.

This is commonly quoted,

“As your day so shall your strength be,”

—and is taken to mean that whatever any day may bring, strength will be given to bear it. This it does mean, and more, too.

What it says, and what the Hebrew expresses still more plainly, is that as many as our days may be, while they last, strength will last. Strength is to increase with our days, when we continually rest in the everlasting Arms. This is in harmony with the assurance that:

Isaiah 40

³¹ They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

20. The Fountain of Eternal Youth

Present Truth, September 11, 1902

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

E. J. Waggoner

OUR lesson is called “The Death of Moses,” but there is this difference between the death of Moses and that of ordinary men: In general, when we hear of the death of a man we think of his weakness and feebleness; whereas a reference to the death of Moses invariably reminds us of his strength and youthfulness, even in old age.

Deuteronomy 34

⁷ Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

That is a wonderful record, and we may be assured that it was not written as a mere matter of curiosity; there is certainly a lesson in it, which we have been very slow to learn. Let us see if we cannot learn it.

In the first place, Moses was doubtless the most complete type of Christ to be found among the Old Testament characters. So complete was his character that he is the one man to whom Christ, although far greater, is likened. Thus:

Hebrews 3

¹ Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

² Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house.

Now that which makes anybody active and faithful in God’s service is life. The Word works in them that believe:

1 Thessalonians 2

¹³ For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth,

the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe.

And the active word is living:

Hebrews 4

¹² For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

It is life.

1 John 1

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.

It was life,—the life of God,—that is committed to all men, that Moses improved so fully that he was worthy to have Christ likened to him. It is by laying hold of eternal life that we...

1 Timothy 6

¹² ...fight the good fight of faith.

And this is simply to live, for:

Romans 1

¹⁷ The just shall live by faith.

Life itself is a fight against sin and death. We fight for life, and it is with life that we fight. Christ said:

John 5

²⁶ As the Father has life in himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in himself; and has given Him authority to execute judgment also.

Why has the Father given to the Son to have life in himself, and authority to execute judgment?

²⁷ ...because He is the Son of man.

But we are all sons of man, and therefore we know from Christ that the gift which God has graciously bestowed upon all men, to have in themselves, is life. Whosoever will lay hold of it, and keep it, is master of everything, even death itself.

Now what proof have we that Moses had this life, and consciously and understandingly laid hold of it? We have it in the work that he did, in the freshness and youthfulness of his old age, after forty years of the most wearing toil and care that any man ever had, and in these words of the Lord:

Deuteronomy 32

⁴⁹ Get up into this mountain Abarim, unto Mount Nebo,...and behold the land of Canaan,...

⁵⁰ And die in the mount wither you go up.

Here is a plain intimation that the life of Moses was in his own hands, and that he could keep it or lay it down at his will, even as Christ could, subject always, of course, to the command of God. This is the power that God wishes every man to have.

Moses did not commit suicide, neither did God kill him; yet he died in the full strength of manhood, with no trace of disease upon him. At the command of the Lord, because he had been unfaithful in a single instance, he laid his life down, just as he would compose himself to sleep.

A single failure to acknowledge and honor God before the people, on the part of a man in the position of Moses, meant much more than a failure in duty would on the part of an ordinary person; and for that reason Moses could not be the complete type of Christ, by taking the children of Israel into the promised land.

But God's refusal to allow him to do this, and His command to Moses to die, was not an arbitrary punishment; it grew out of the very nature of the case. Moses had broken the connection,—had turned aside the stream of life from its proper

channel,—and having denied it once, he was obliged to lay it down. It was but a temporary break; but the people had to learn that it is not a light thing to be out of harmony with God.

But let us from the case of Moses consider a little more closely some of the possibilities of life. God is no respecter of persons, and what He did for Moses we may be sure He will do for any who will use life as faithfully as Moses did. By using it faithfully I do not mean merely what is called “improving the time,” but recognizing God’s ways, and learning how He lives, so as to know how to conform to the laws of life.

Psalm 103

⁷ [God] made known His ways unto Moses.

In the same psalm that tells us this, it tells us to...

¹ ...bless His holy name,

² ...and forget not all His benefits;

³ Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases;

⁴ Who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

⁵ Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

Note that it is when our mouth is satisfied with good things that our youth is renewed like the eagle’s. Thus it was with Moses. Others complained of the simple food that God gave them,—bread from heaven;—but Moses did not. How can people be so blind to the influence of diet upon their life, when they know full well that they live by eating? God told the Israelites in the beginning of their sojourning in the wilderness:

Exodus 23

²⁵ You shall serve the Lord your God, and He shall bless your bread and your water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of you.

In Moses this was fulfilled, and so it might have been in all

the rest.

Do not misunderstand. The idea is not that the fountain of eternal youth is in eating and drinking. Far from it. But the truth intended to be conveyed is that God,

Jeremiah 2

¹³ ...the Fountain of living waters,

—with whom is...

Psalms 36

⁹ ...the Fountain of Life,

—is for that very reason the Fountain of the eternal youth, and that by learning His way of living, and adopting it,—living by perfect and intelligent faith in Him,—we can preserve in ourselves the youthfulness of the Ancient of days.

Our food and drink come from God, and are the visible means of the communication of God's life to us, but not the only means. By eating and drinking, as well as doing all of the things, to the glory of God, we not only get fresh life from Him, but we put no obstruction in the way of His life, and so by faith we get the "more abundant"¹⁷¹ life that is greater than all the visible things in the universe. To know God's ways, should be the one study of mankind.

It is not God's design that the lapse of years should bring infirmity and decrepitude. Age gives experience, and an experienced workman is more valuable than a beginner. What master would turn off a faithful workman just as he was completing his apprenticeship, and was most capable of doing the best work? That would not be wisdom; no man's business would prosper if he did that way. Even so God can ill afford to let His servants die. It is expensive business for Him.

¹⁷¹ **John 10** ¹⁰ I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Psalm 116

¹⁵ Costly in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

That is what the text really says.

If we know the possibilities of the life that God has given us, we shall, if we appreciate it, devote ourselves to lay hold of them; but if we do not realize...

Ephesians 1

¹⁸ ...the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

–we shall allow ourselves to be overcome, and shall be the prey of disease. It is in our power to do with as we will. God has not only given us service for life, but our service is life; it is the ministration of life. Should not the one who carries life to others be able himself to live by it? Is it reasonable, that the one who ministers life should himself be the prey of death?

Psalm 107

⁴³ Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord;

–and,

Psalm 30

⁵ ...in His favor [lovingkindness] is life,

Psalm 133

³ ...even life for evermore.

21. Laying Hold on Eternal Life

Present Truth, September 11, 1902

Original title: Back Page

Deuteronomy 34:7

E. J. Waggoner

OLD age does not necessarily depend on the number of years that one has lived. Moses at one hundred and twenty was younger than many men at forty.

Deuteronomy 34

⁷ His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

Why was this? What was the secret of his youthful old age? It was simply this: He was faithful in all God's house;¹⁷² and whoever fights the good fight of faith lays hold on eternal life.¹⁷³

Psalms 92

¹³ Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

¹⁴ They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;

¹⁵ To show that the Lord is upright; He is my Rock.

He is all for us that He was for Moses, if we will but learn His ways as He makes them known to us.

¹⁷² **Hebrews 3:** ⁵ And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.

¹⁷³ **1 Timothy 6:** ¹² Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Joshua,
Judges,
Ruth

1. The Charge to Joshua

Signs of the Times, February 1, 1883

Notes on Lesson for February 10

Joshua 1 to 10

E. J. Waggoner

THE number of times that the Lord tells Joshua to be strong and of a good courage is worthy of note. After telling him that He will be with him even as He was with Moses, and that He will not fail him, the Lord says,

Joshua 1

⁶ Be strong and of a good courage.

Then follows the assurance that he shall divide the land among the Israelites. In the next verse He says again,

⁷ Only be strong and very courageous.

Then follows an admonition to do according to all that was written in the law, and to meditate upon it day and night; and then exhortation is again given:

⁹ Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be dismayed.

The Lord does not desire that His people should give way to discouragement. The same exhortation that was addressed to those who were about to enter into the earthly Canaan, is applicable to the Israel of God, who are striving for an inheritance in the heavenly Canaan.

⁹ Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be dismayed.

Why not to be discouraged? Are we not weak? and is not our enemy powerful? Would it not be presumptuous in us to feel strong and confident? Yes; it would if we depended only on our own strength; but fortunately we have also the same promise that was made to Joshua. It is this:

⁹ ...for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

And He has also said,

⁵ I will not fail you, nor forsake you.

The Christian should ever realize this glorious truth:

Deuteronomy 33

²⁷ The eternal God is my refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Knowing this, how can he be discouraged? The apostle's exhortation is,

Ephesians 6

¹⁰ Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

Holy Things

It is sometimes claimed that there is no such thing as holy time; that is absurd to think that one day is really any better than another; that man can make any day a holy Sabbath by resting upon it. It would be interesting to hear such ones explain *Joshua* 5:15. The case is similar to that of Moses at the burning bush. Joshua had seen the man standing by Jericho, and had learned that he was the...

Joshua 5

¹⁴ ...captain of the host of the Lord.

¹⁵ And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose your shoe from off your foot; for the place whereon you stand is holy. And Joshua did so.

Now did the ground become holy because Joshua took off his shoes, or was it holy before? The answer is, It was holy before, for the Lord said so. Then it seems that there may be a difference between things of the same kind. There was no outward difference between the ground on which Joshua was standing and the ground in other places, yet there was a difference. One was holy, on account of the presence of the Lord, the other was not. The ground on which Joshua stood would

have remained holy even if he had not removed his shoes.

So it is with the Sabbath. The Lord has made it holy, and it will remain holy whether man regards it or not. The failure to discriminate between the holy and the profane is that which brings the judgments of God upon mankind.

The Defeat at Ai

In this case it was well shown how dependent the people were on God. When they trusted in themselves they failed. And what was the reason that God was not among them? Because there was sin among them.

And by this we can learn the necessity of the church being pure as a whole. There was only one man in the camp of Israel that had transgressed, yet God withheld His presence from them. So a single individual in the church may, by his wrong course, defeat all the labors of those who would make advance moves.

This also shows the necessity of maintaining strict church discipline. The sin of Achan was imputed to the entire camp, until the offender was searched out and punished. The record says,

Joshua 7

¹ But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan...took of the accursed thing.

Yet there is no evidence that anybody besides Achan was concerned in the theft, or knew of it. The Lord showed by this that he would have his people have a care for one another. We are each our brother's keeper. The Lord has said,

Leviticus 19

¹⁷ You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall in any wise rebuke your neighbor, and shall not suffer sin upon him.

When the church, then, searches out the erring one, and re-

bukes him, it is doing that which is absolutely necessary to its own existence. Just as a man cannot be said to be sound if one of his limbs is diseased, so the church is not pure unless each individual member is walking orderly. And each person should also consider how much responsibility attaches to his course. By a wrong course he may involve many others in his own ruin; so true it is that...

Romans 14

⁷ None of us lives to himself.

The Miracle at Gibeon

Joshua 10

¹² Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand still upon Gibeon; and you, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.

¹³ And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies...So the sun stood still in the midst of the heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.

Some, in their eagerness to overthrow the Sabbath of the Lord, have found in this occurrence a loss of time. But there was no time lost. It was simply a lengthening of the day. If such a miracle should occur on the Sabbath, it would simply lengthen the Sabbath. Two days were not combined in one, but it was one long day.

¹⁴ And there was no day like that before it or after it.

Skeptics find an abundance of food for caviling in this miracle, as, indeed, they may in any. But the Bible student need not be troubled about it. To say that it could not occur, is in reality to deny that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth; for if God made the planets it is certain that he can control them.

It is said that God instituted fixed laws by which they

should be governed. Very true; but did He put those laws out of His own power? The maker of a threshing machine designs that it shall work according to a certain plan; yet he can stop the machine without altering the plan.

One thing is certain: the universe did not create itself. Although the mind of man cannot conceive of its extent, nor fathom the laws by which it is governed, there must be a creator who is infinitely greater than the universe.

Isaiah 40

¹⁵ He takes up the isles as a very little thing.

It is evident that the Creator can do as He pleases with what He has created. If it is asked how it is possible that such a miracle could be performed without disarranging the whole planetary system, I would reply,

“I do not know; I cannot imagine; If I could, it would cease to be a miracle.”

The disbelief in miracles arises from the fact that men are too proud to acknowledge that there is anything which they cannot understand. He who believes only what he can comprehend and explain, will have a very short creed. It is no shame for man to confess that he cannot by searching find out God.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ **Job 11** ⁷ Can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection?

2. The Strength of the Law

Present Truth, September 25, 1902

International Sunday-School Lesson for October 5

Joshua 1:1-11

E. J. Waggoner

WITHOUT doubt this phrase conveys to most people the idea of something harsh and repellent, of stern justice, keen to detect errors, and quick to administer severe punishment. How little such ones know of the law of the Lord! For...

1 John 5

³ This is the love God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.

Since...

Romans 13

¹⁰ Love is the fulfilling of the law,

—it is evident that the law itself is love; and therefore the strength of the law is the strength of love. The law is life,—the life of God,—and God is love. The strength of law is therefore the strength of love of God.

This is made most beautifully clear and emphatic in the lesson before us. Moses was dead, and upon Joshua devolved the task of taking command of the hosts of Israel, and leading them into the promised land. It was a work that might well have staggered the boldest man, even to contemplate it. Moses, the grand old man of all history, was not an easy man to succeed. Notwithstanding all the murmurings of the children of Israel against him, they could not help acknowledging his wonderful ability. It would be most natural for them to make disparaging comparisons if a weaker man took his place; and a stronger man it would be impossible to find.

Joshua succeeded to the command just as the real work was beginning—that of driving out the inhabitants of Canaan, and

dividing their land among the Israelites. It may well be believed that his heart sank at the prospect, and this was the cause of the repeated commandment,

Joshua 1

⁶ Be strong, and of a good courage.¹⁷⁵

It is here that we see the kindly strength of the law.

God's Gift of Work is the Promise of Strength

The promise and the oath of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are referred to as the basis of hope and courage. Instead of saying,

“The task of possessing and dividing the land is so great that I cannot do it,”

Joshua could say,

“God has sworn that the land shall be possessed by us, therefore we are well able to possess it,”

—even as he had spoken forty years before. And he could further say,

“The Lord has given me the work of leading this people into the land, therefore I can do it.”

How natural it is to take counsel of our weakness instead of the promise of God. We say,

“Here is a vast amount of work to be done at once, and I cannot do it, because I am weak and ill;”

—whereas we should say,

“I am weak and ill, but I know that I shall be strong and well, because God has set a great work before me, which must be done at once.”

God never gives any man work which he cannot do. He

¹⁷⁵ See also *Deuteronomy* 31:7, 23; *Joshua* 1:9, 18.

does not trifle with His children. It may indeed be that we are not equal to the task; but...

2 Corinthians 3

⁵ ...our sufficiency is of God,

—who gives us the work in order that He may reveal to us and in us a new measure of His power, and develop qualities in us that we have hitherto lacked. So when a new and difficult task comes to us from the Lord, we are not to think of what we have hitherto been able to do, but of what God wills that we shall do.

The Word of Life

Deuteronomy 6 [Mark 12:29]

⁴ The Lord our God is one Lord,

—and all His commandments are one law. So the words,

Joshua 1

⁶ Be strong and of a good courage;

⁷ Only be strong and very courageous;

⁹ Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of a good courage,

—have the same force as the ten commandments given from Sinai. God said to Joshua, “Be strong;” and His words gave him strength. He speaks to us the great things of His law, and as we receive His commandments into our hearts and minds, the righteousness which they require comes with them.

A striking instance of this is seen in the case of Daniel, to whom similar words were spoken. A wonderful vision had been given him, and fear had seized his companions, and they had fled.

Daniel 10

⁸ Therefore I was left alone, and saw the great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained and no strength.

Then follows the account of the angel coming to him, and talking with him, and we read further:

Daniel 10

¹⁵ And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb.

¹⁶ And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth, and spoke, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength.

¹⁷ For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.

¹⁸ Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me.

To You is the Word of This Salvation Sent

The same strength may be ours; for God himself has laid His hand upon us, and says to us:

Isaiah 41

¹⁰ Fear not; for I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God; I will strengthen you; yea, I will help you; yea, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness.

Here are the same words that He spoke to Joshua; so we know that we may have the same strength that was given to him. We may not have as great a task as Joshua had, but we may be sure that, whatever the work, and however strong the enemies we have to contend with, whether within or without, strength amply sufficient will be given us. Our weakness is not once to be taken into consideration, but only God, who is the strength of our life. He even takes things that do not exist, to bring to nought things that are.

1 Corinthians 1

²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

²⁹ That no flesh should glory in His presence.

Take notice that the strength and prosperity that God gives do indeed come literally from His law. God said:

Joshua 1

⁸ This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.

Compare this with the 1st *Psalm*. The man whose delight is in law of the Lord, and who meditates in it day and night, has the assurance that he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water,—fresh and fruitful,—and that...

Psalm 1

³ ...whatsoever he does shall prosper.

Yes, there is power in the law of God,—the power of everlasting righteousness, the power of the living God.

John 12

⁵⁰ His commandment is life everlasting.

It gives physical as well as spiritual life.

Proverbs 4

²⁰ My son, attend to my words; incline your ear unto my sayings.

²¹ Let them not depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart.

²² For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

This is indicated in the words of Joshua; for the Hebrew word rendered “courage” has the meaning of strength, alertness. The passage might well be rendered,

“Be strong and alert;”

or,

“Be strong and swift-footed;”

or,

“Be strong and hardy.”

The man whose muscles are continually failing him when he wishes to use them, and whose nerves are all unstrung, cannot possibly be of good courage. Mind and body act and react on each other. The work that the Lord gives requires a clear head, steady nerves, and muscles trained to respond to every demand; and it was nothing less than this that God promised to Joshua, and that He promises to every one of us who will literally keep His law,—keep it in the mind and in the flesh.

Joshua 1

⁹ Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of a good courage.

Who can talk of weakness when God has said, “Be strong?” Such talk is nothing less than mutiny; it is rebellion. If He has said, “Be strong,”—and He has said it to everybody,—there is nothing to be said, except,

“Amen; so let it be.”

It is the word of creation. God said, Let this and that be;

Genesis 1

⁷ ...and it was so.¹⁷⁶

Our part is simply to receive the Word, and to study it, so that we may know how its life manifests itself.

Joshua 1

⁹ ...be not afraid, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God

¹⁷⁶ See also *Genesis* 1:9, 11, 15, 24, 30.

is with you whithersoever you go.

The same thing is still true.

Matthew 28

²⁰ Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

How many times we have repeated these words, and still have continued to be afraid, and have been dismayed at the prospect before us. Where then is our belief in God? Shall we not learn this lesson now?

There may be many who will be able to repeat every verse in this Sunday-school lesson; but no one will have learned it, unless he has learned not to be afraid, and how to be strong and well. Then he can say,

Psalm 27

¹ The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

³ Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

3. Always Something New; Always Trust

Present Truth, October 20, 1898

Joshua 3:4

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN after forty years' wandering in the wilderness the children of Israel were about to cross the Jordan and go into the promised land, Joshua gave them directions about following the ark, that they might know the way they should go; for, said he,

Joshua 3

⁴ ...you have not passed this way heretofore.

Thus it should always be with the people of God. A new experience should be theirs every day. For forty years the children of Israel had been wandering in the wilderness, crossing and recrossing their path, going forward and backward, and making no real advancement. They were always in the same territory.

It need not have been so. All the progress that they made in all those years they could have made in a few days, if they had believed the Lord and obeyed His Word. Immediately after they left Egypt, the word of the Lord to Moses was,

Exodus 14

¹⁵ Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.

Going back was not in God's plan for them. The work which He did for them that day, in dividing the Red Sea, so that they might go forward, was amply sufficient to show them the power by which they were to advance. They were always to be treading upon new ground, and consequently they would always need His guidance.

Where they failed was in assuming that after one or two experiences they had learned it all, and could manage for themselves; and this is where people are most likely to fail today.

Hebrews 11

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

The people had absolutely nothing to do with the capture of that city; invisible hands had thrown down its walls, without their lifting a finger; all they had had to do was to follow the Lord, and trust. Yet when the next city was to be taken, they thought that they knew all about how to do it. Ai was a much smaller city than Jericho, therefore they concluded that only a few of the people of Israel were needed to capture it. But they had not been that way before, and so as they trusted to themselves, they were defeated.

Proverbs 3

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding.

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Jeremiah 10

²³ The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps.

There is nothing so simple but that it needs the wisdom of God to understand it thoroughly; nothing so small but that God's own power is needed in order that it be done properly. Someone will say,

“I thought that we were to learn by experience, so that we could know how to do things right ourselves. What is the use of our experience, if we are never to apply it?”

Ah, the trouble is that we so often misapply it. We do not learn by experience. Take the experiences of the children of Israel. What do they teach us? Simply this, that when they trusted the Lord it went well with them, and that when they assumed that they knew how to do things themselves they made pitiable mistakes. That which all our experience should teach us is that...

Psalm 62

¹¹ ...power belongs unto God,

—and that we have real success only as we trust Him. We are to learn by experience to trust the Lord. The fact that we go on trusting in ourselves, trying to do things, and failing, shows that we do not profit by experience.

How often after having by the grace of God successfully resisted a temptation, and having gained a victory over some besetment, have we assumed that now we knew how to do it, and have met with shameful defeat the next time. There is no saint so skilled in the devices of Satan, and so experienced in gaining victories, that he can win one alone.

Though a man walk with God, as Enoch did, for three hundred years, he is no more able to walk alone the last day than he was the first. He is as absolutely dependent on the Lord for strength to resist at the close of that time as he was at the beginning.

The one lesson which God wishes men to learn is submission, and trust in Him. Only by His power are we kept. Never in time or in eternity can a saint of God stand or walk alone. The experienced Christian is not the one who tries to stand alone, but the one who has learned absolutely to trust God in every detail of life. The true overcomers are those who...

Philippians 3

³ ...have no confidence in the flesh.

So in Christian work, that is, work that has to do directly with others besides ourselves, why is it not more successful? There are thousands of earnest, zealous souls engaged in it; why are not greater results seen? One great reason is that the workers so often assume that experience has taught them how to do it. It is so easy and so natural to make this mistake. By the grace of God we have some measure of success. Straightway we think that now we have learned how the

work is done. We went forth at first in fear and trembling, but now success has given us confidence, not in God, but in ourselves. It is vain confidence.

Only when we realize that the work is God's, and not ours, can success attend us. Consider this: When we think that, having become familiar with a certain work, we are able to do it ourselves, and do not feel the need of such absolute dependence on God as at first, but lean more to our own understanding, is it not plain that now we are going round and round over the same ground? We are making no advancement, else we should feel the need of the Lord's guidance in the new territory.

Does not this explain the whole matter of the little success that attends so much of the work that is supposedly done for the Lord? We have forgotten that it is the Lord's work, and that only He can do it, and have also forgotten that His word is,

Exodus 14

¹⁵ Go forward!

The Lord has a large place, which He wishes to bring us into. It is nothing smaller than...

Ephesians 3

¹⁸ ...the breadth, and length, and depth, and height...

—of infinity. But we have not been this way heretofore; in this vast field we need a Guide constantly, and we may have one. So although you have gained a thousand victories, trust God for the thousand and first as much as you did for the first one.

If you have preached five thousand times, remember that you don't know how yet. In order that real work may be accomplished, the old preacher must go before the people with as great distrust in himself, and as much sense of absolute dependence on God, as he did the first time he ventured to open

his mouth.

It is always over new ways, and to fresh victories, that the Lord would lead us.

Isaiah 26

⁴ Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

4. A New Way

Present Truth, October 2, 1902

International Sunday-School Lesson for October 12

Joshua 3:9 to 4:7

E. J. Waggoner

WITH the story of the crossing of the Jordan, every reader of the Bible is familiar. But with the lessons to be learned from it there is far less acquaintance. Yet it was written, not purely to excite our wonder, nor to satisfy our curiosity, but for our learning.

If, through contemplation of the Scripture narratives, we lived far more with the events which they describe, we would experience the power of God in our daily lives to an extent far beyond what we now do. We must understand that the Bible is not the record of an age which is antiquated, and can never be paralleled, but of the acts of the living God, who is our God.

Psalm 114

¹ When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;

² Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.

³ The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back.

Or as picturesquely put in the Danish,

“Jordan turned, and ran back,”

—as if abashed at the presence of the Lord. The crossing of the Jordan is coupled with the crossing of the Red Sea, and is fully as wonderful an event.

There was an exhibition of sublime faith on the part of a vast host, and an example of how to meet obstacles that confront us in the way that the Lord has told us to go. It was the time of harvest, when...

Joshua 3

¹⁵ ...Jordan overflows all his banks,

–and the river was not fordable. The Lord could have timed Israel's arrival so that they would have found the water very low, and could have crossed with comparative ease. But God delights in difficulties, that is, in what to us are difficulties; for with Him there is no such thing. He deliberately chooses...

1 Corinthians 1

²⁷ ...the foolish things of the world to confound the wise;
and...the weak things of the world to confound the things
which are mighty;

²⁸ ...and things which are not, to bring to nought things that
are.

This is not for vain boasting, but in order to strengthen the faith of His people, and to induce men to trust in His salvation. If Israel had always gone forward in the power that took them through the sea and through Jordan, no enemy would ever have stood before them; and if we in this day would continually trust in God as the God who always does just such wonderful things, we should be invincible.

When the officers were preparing the people for the great movement that was to take them into the promised land, they said to them:

Joshua 3

³ When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then you shall remove from your place, and go after it.

⁴ Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that you may know the way by which you must go: for you have not passed this way heretofore.

That is the secret of Christian progress: always treading a new way, a path hitherto untrodden. We must never assume that past experience is sufficient to carry us through any work

without special, divine guidance, however familiar with the affair we may consider ourselves.

Jeremiah 10

²³ It is not in man that walks to direct his steps,

—no matter how often he has passed over a road.

Psalms 37

²³ The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,

—and only the Lord can keep him from falling in the plainest path. So each day's task, though it may be but the repetition of the same thing that we have done hundreds of times, must be met as an entirely new thing. In that way continual improvement may be made in our work; and that is what God would have. God promises to show us "new things;"¹⁷⁷ for the work that we best know how to do, He knows how to do far better; and therefore there is always the possibility for us to do far more and far better work than we ever yet have done.

Mark 10

²⁷ With God all things are possible,

—and therefore in Him even the impossible is possible for us. With our eyes fixed on God, we have but to step boldly into the raging flood that threatens to stop our progress, and God will make the way.

Psalms 18

³² It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect.

Did you ever stop to think that the apparent danger to the Israelites increased every minute that they were crossing the river? The water below them was running away to the sea; but to their right the wall of water was continually piling higher and higher, as that from above came down. We are so

¹⁷⁷ *Isaiah* 42:9; 48:6.

accustomed to think of the fact that they crossed over safely, that we never consider the danger that they were in while crossing.

“Ah, no;” you say, “they were not in, danger at all; for God was holding the waters back.”

True; and so He is always doing for His people. He measures all the waters of the seas in the hollow of His hand;¹⁷⁸ and this is told us as a reason for quiet confidence in Him at all times. The Israelites were really in as much danger in crossing the Jordan as the disciples were on the Sea of Galilee, or as we ever can be when we are in the path in which God is leading.

What we need to do is to dwell in the secret place of God, who inhabits eternity,¹⁷⁹ so that in the midst of present difficulties and threatening dangers, we look at them as already past. That is the secret of strength, and of victory. Our very temptations and dangers and difficulties are made the means of our deliverance, just as Noah and his family are said to have been...

1 Peter 3

²⁰ ...saved by water,

–which destroyed the earth.

A Way Through the Flesh

It is...

Hebrews 10

²⁰ By a new and living way,

–that we draw near to God, though the flesh seems to interpose an impassable barrier. Christ took our sinful flesh, which separates us from God, and veils Him from our sight, and consecrated a way through it, so that we are...

¹⁷⁸ *Isaiah* 40:12.

¹⁷⁹ *Isaiah* 57:15; *Psalms* 91:1.

Ephesians 2

¹³ ...made nigh by the blood of Christ.

No flesh is so corrupt, no inherited evil is so strong, that the Lord cannot make a way for us through it, straight to His throne. Yea, He has made a way: He has...

Romans 8

³ ...condemned sin in the flesh:

⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

With this knowledge we may give...

2 Corinthians 2

¹⁴ ...thanks unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place.

The greater the sin in the flesh, with which we have to contend, the more can the sweet fragrance of the knowledge of God be spread in the world, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

The strength which God displayed in making even the depths which obstructed their passage...

Isaiah 51

¹⁰ ...a way for the ransomed to pass over,

–is the measure of the strength which He gives to us day by day in our march to the promised land.

Isaiah 51

¹¹ Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be on their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

5. The Taking of a City

Present Truth, October 9, 1902

International Sunday-School Lesson for October 19

Subtitle: How to Win Victories

Joshua 6:8-20

E. J. Waggoner

Hebrews 11

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

WHO shall say that faith is not a real thing? Here is something tangible, something that we can see, something that appeals to the understanding of the man of the world. A city besieged, and the walls thrown down, is a work that everybody can comprehend. Here was a city that was closely shut up and guarded, so that none might go out or in. Its walls were very high and strong, and there were giants in it. Anybody can see that great force is needed to capture it, and to lay its walls low.

But it was done, and by what means? By faith! The children of Israel believed God, and did exactly as He said, and the walls fell flat. They did not have any of the modern implements of warfare, and did not do anything according to recognized military tactics; but they took a city, and that was the end to be accomplished. No other city ever fell so easily.

What did the Israelites have to do to take this strong city that opposed their progress into the promised land? Only to march and keep silent. Thirteen times they marched around the city, without a word. For six days in succession they left their camp, marched round the city once a day in silence, and returned to their quarters. On the seventh day they went round it seven times as before, the priests leading the way with the ark containing the law the symbol of God's presence.

There was ample opportunity for the Israelites to become discouraged and disgusted with such a seemingly fruitless

mode of warfare. It was a severe test to their faith, but they stood it bravely. And there was also opportunity for the inhabitants of Jericho to recover somewhat from their first surprise and terror at seeing these Hebrews, of whom they had heard so much, before their gates. The long lines of the vast host marching in mysterious silence might well cause them deep anxiety at first, which would naturally increase as the march was repeated. But as day after day passed, and no movement was made to attack, and the besiegers were as far off from taking the city as ever, their fear would give way to mockery at such childish methods of warfare.

But however much the people in the city might jeer at the seemingly useless tramp of the Israelites, the latter were never to utter a word in reply. They knew whom they had believed,—the invisible Leader who had conducted their fathers through the Red Sea and the wilderness,—and they were acting according to the words,

Psalm 46

¹⁰ Be still, and know that I am God.

In quietness and confidence was their strength.¹⁸⁰

The Climax

At last came the thirteenth round—the seventh march round on the seventh day. Not a stone had moved a hair's breadth in the walls, not even a bit of mortar had been chipped off; but God's time had come, and the power of faith was about to be demonstrated, as a lesson for all time.

Joshua 6

¹⁶ And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout, for the Lord has given you the city.

²⁰ So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the

¹⁸⁰ *Isaiah* 30:15.

sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

What is the lesson of hope that we are to learn from this thing that was written aforetime? It ought to be apparent to us; yet most of us have read the record from childhood, as though it were but a nursery tale, and have been none the better for it. We have had hard battles to fight, and spirits of our own to subdue, that meant victories greater than the taking of any ordinary city, and have often given up in despair, although the means of conquest were at our disposal. Shall we not begin at once to act as though we really believed the Bible, including the account of the fall of Jericho?

Our Battle

Our battle is against sin in our flesh; our task is to work righteousness. We read that...

Romans 10

¹⁰ ...with the heart man believes unto righteousness,

—and in the taking of Jericho we have an illustration and an assurance of the reality of it.

2 Corinthians 10

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;

⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

There is a power infinitely greater than man, all around us and in us; and the putting of ourselves into conscious touch with this power, and in harmony with it (which is faith), will make us invincible.

Matthew 17

²⁰ If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

What a pity that such mighty power is allowed to go to waste, so far as we are concerned, for lack of use!

Our Assistants

Angel hands cast down the walls of Jericho, when the signal was given; and the same angels are sent forth still to do service for those who shall be heirs of salvation.

Hebrews 1

¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Our instructions are:

1 Timothy 6

¹² Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.

Jesus Christ is one with us, in our flesh,

Hebrews 2

¹⁷ ...a merciful and faithful High Priest,...to make reconciliation for [our] sins,

–and to succor us when we are tried by mighty foes;¹⁸¹ and He delivers us by...

Hebrews 7

¹⁶ ...the power of an endless life.

Vain imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God are cast down by the power of the eternal Spirit; and every thought is brought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ. That means that we may have the perfect knowledge of God, which comes only by personal ex-

¹⁸¹ **Hebrews 2** ¹⁸ For in that He himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.

perience of His powerful presence in us; for to know God is life eternal.

John 17

³ And this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

Hebrews 11

⁶ He that comes to God must believe that He is.

To know the nature and character of God, and to believe that He is,—that He is everywhere present, filling all in all,—is the one thing essential to perfect victory over every enemy,—over the carnal mind and the lust of the flesh.

Our Victory

What must we do then?

Joshua 6

¹⁶ Shout; for the Lord has given you the [victory].

Do not waste time conferring with flesh and blood, or mourning over the strength of the enemy, or the many times that you have already been defeated. That is nothing to the purpose. Declare in the name of the Lord of hosts that you have the victory, and hold fast your confession.

Romans 10

¹⁰ With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Be fully assured that...

Hebrews 10

²³ He is faithful that promised,

—and that...

Ephesians 3

²⁰ ...the power that works in us,

—is able to overcome legions of devils in the flesh. Do not

say that you “cannot see how it is to be done.” You do not have to see. You cannot see how the seed grows into a plant; yet you know that it is done.

Mark 4

²⁶ So is the kingdom of God,

Luke 17

²¹ ...[which] is within you,

²⁶ ...as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

²⁷ And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how.

The farmer casts seed into the ground, in perfect confidence that the power that works in all creation will give him a crop. We are to trust that same power to work in us. If the children of Israel had refrained from shouting victory, because they could not see it, they would never have had it, although God had given it to them.

1 John 5 [RV]

⁴ This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith;

—and we are to insist that it is ours, even in the face of an advancing enemy.

Our Weakness No Hindrance

The whole trouble consists in being afraid (that is, provided we really want to overcome our sins), and in considering our own weakness as contrasted with strong temptations. But the battle is God’s, and not ours; and our confidence is to be in Him.

The life that we in live the flesh is to be lived by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us,¹⁸² and who is so completely our substitute that we can say,

¹⁸² *Galatians 2:20.*

“It is not I that lives any longer, but Christ lives in me.”

He is the victory, and our constant assertion that the victory is ours, in His name, is what gives us the constant experience of it.

If you have some habit that you know is opposing the manifestation of the fruits the Spirit in your life, stop and consider that...

1 Corinthians 6

¹⁹ ...you are not your own,

–but that you belong to the Lord; and then allow Him full liberty to take possession of His own. Then consider further that Jesus, even in sinful flesh, is without sin because He has...

John 17

² ...power over all flesh;

–and He has this power, in order to give eternal life and a its power to you.

John 17

² ...that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

³ And this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

Consider that no temptation, no lust, no envy, no poverty or distress, no inherited tendency, is too strong for Him. Think of yourself, then, as entirely out of the case, as dead, and Jesus Christ as having taken your place; and then think what the result would surely be. That is to...

Romans 6

¹¹ Reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When you have in all seriousness considered thus far, and the truth dawns upon your mind that it is so, then you will not be able to refrain from shouting the victory. You will

know that you have the victory over the enemy that is even that moment threatening you, and you will find that this resisting the devil,¹⁸³ steadfast in the faith,¹⁸⁴ causes him to flee from you. This is practical experience, that has been demonstrated in thousands of cases. It never fails.

Isaiah 26

⁴ Trust in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

¹⁸³ *James 4:7.*

¹⁸⁴ *1 Peter 5:9.*

6. Caleb's Inheritance

Signs of the Times, November 2, 1888

Notes on the International Lesson, November 11

Joshua 14:5-15

E. J. Waggoner

THE time had come for the division of the long-promised, long-sought inheritance of the children of Israel. And:

Joshua 14

⁵ As the Lord commanded Moses,...they divided the land.

Twelve men had been appointed by the Lord to apportion the possession to the different tribes, and among those appointed for this work was Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, the man of faith, who had brought back a good report of the land forty years before, and who had said in the face of opposition and unbelief:

Numbers 14

⁸ If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land.

When Israel had rejected his testimony, God had promised that, because of his spirit of courage and confidence, he should live, and inherit the land he had spied out. An opportunity was now afforded to remind Joshua of what the Lord had spoken concerning him, and yet Caleb did not act independently, as though he thought his former faithfulness was sufficient to entitle his rightful claim to his inheritance.

The chief men of the tribe of Judah presented themselves with Caleb before Joshua manifesting their interest in his behalf, and placing Caleb's action above the suspicion of being one of mere selfishness, and due to his position among the twelve who apportioned the land. There is a hint here of the character of Caleb, of his caution, his meekness, and his union with his brethren.

There was no boasting of his former action before rebellious

Israel, no coloring of the hard circumstances in which he had been placed when his brethren were about to stone him for his adherence to the right; but a simple, unvarnished statement of the facts of the case. And he said to Joshua,

Joshua 14

⁶ You know the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning you and me at Kadesh-barnea.

This was simply to recall to Joshua's mind the reason for the request which he was about to make. He then speaks of how he brought back word from the promised land, and had spoken to the people,

⁷ ...as it was in his heart.

When his brethren had...

⁸ ...made the heart of the people melt,

—by words of discouragement, he had...

⁸ ...wholly followed the Lord.

He had followed the leading of God's Spirit, and although the people had not appreciated his action, he had manifested himself before them as a son of God, and the Lord had honored him before his people by promising him an inheritance in the very land the had despaired of entering.

Not always is faith so immediately and signally commended as was Caleb's. And yet, while God had blessed him with the assurance of His favor, Caleb's faith was tried by more than forty years of waiting for the fulfillment of the promise. He now rehearsed the promise that Moses had made to him:

⁹ Surely the land whereon your feet have trodden shall be your inheritance, and your children's for ever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.

The people of God had come into the promised possession, and the portions were being assigned. Caleb was in the coun-

try of his inheritance. He had only to ask, and the right would be granted to him to go up and possess the place whereon his feet had trodden. What thoughts must have stirred him! What gratitude must have welled up in his heart! He had seen the...

Revelation 21

⁸ ...fearful, and unbelieving,

—a great host, fall in the wilderness, a prey to death as the result of their lack of faith in the God of Israel. But of himself he declares,

Joshua 14

¹⁰ And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, as he said... and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old.

¹¹ As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.

While he had seen that...

Proverbs 13 [RV]

¹⁵ ...the way of the transgressor is hard,

—he had realized that:

Isaiah 40

³¹ They that wait upon the Lord...renew their strength.

He had found that in keeping the commandments of the Lord there was...

Psalms 19

¹¹ ...great reward.

He who wholly follows the Lord, as did Caleb, will have it to say that:

Psalms 16

⁶ The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage.

After this introduction, Caleb was bold to proffer his re-

quest, for it was evident that he was simply asking his right as a servant of the Lord.

Joshua 14

¹² Now therefore give me this mountain whereof the Lord spoke in that day.

He then reminded Joshua of what had been said concerning Anakin, the race of giants that the spies had magnified before Israel, and...

¹² ...the cities great and fenced,

–that had seemed impregnable to the people of God forty years before; but the spirit of Caleb had not changed. He still had confidence in God, and he declared,

¹² ...if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord has said.

Forty years before, Caleb's faith had said,

Numbers 13

³⁰ Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able.

And now the Lord had brought him to the test. There are many whose faith seems of the genuine order until some trial is brought upon them, and then faith weakens and fails on the very border of their inheritance. Caleb's faith was not of this character. He was no more dismayed at the giants and the fenced cities when brought into actual contact with them, than when they were prospective enemies and hindrances.

Joshua 14

¹³ And Joshua blessed him.

He bade him Godspeed.

¹⁴ And Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb.

This man of faith is a representative of those who shall enter into the land of which Canaan is a type. Those whose fervent faith impels them to act upon His promises shall enter

into the heavenly Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, the eternal inheritance of the saints.

7. Fleeing for Refuge

Present Truth, October 10, 1895

Joshua 20; Numbers 35

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN the children of Israel settled in the land of Canaan, they set apart, according to the command of the Lord, six cities of refuge, to which any man who had unintentionally killed another might flee, and be safe from the pursuit of any who sought to kill him in return. Read the whole account in *Numbers* 35 and *Joshua* 20.

These cities were well known, and were so situated that they could be easily reached. Once within one of the cities, the slayer was absolutely safe; the rulers of the city were answerable for him as long as he remained there. But if he went outside the city walls during the life of the high priest, he was at the mercy of his enemy.

The story of the cities of refuge is one of the things written aforetime...

Romans 15

⁴ ...for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

We find ourselves continually beset by enemies. This is no figure of speech, but an actual fact. Everybody knows that he possesses evil habits and traits of character that are positive enemies to him, often destroying not only his happiness here, but his hope of the world to come. And what is worse, they are stronger than we, so that we cannot successfully fight against them.

From all these enemies, more dangerous than any earthly foes, we have a sure refuge.

Psalm 46

¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

David wrote,

Psalm 18

² The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

And every soul may say this as truly as David could.

The 7th *Psalm* is a vivid picture of fleeing for refuge from a fellow who is seeking to destroy. Instead of “put my trust,” in the first verse, read “take refuge,” as in the more literal rendering in the margin of the *Revised Version*:

Psalm 7 [RV]

¹ O Lord my God, in You do I take refuge: save me from all them that pursue me, and deliver me,

² Lest they tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

Of the safety of those who take refuge in God, we read:

Proverbs 18

¹⁰ The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it, and is safe.

Psalm 37 [RV]

³⁹ The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: He is their stronghold in the time of trouble.

⁴⁰ And the Lord helps them, and rescues them; He rescues them from the wicked, and saves them, because they have taken refuge in Him.

This refuge is real. The walls of Shechem and Hebron did not protect a refugee from his enemy so securely as God keeps those who flee to Him from the sins that beset them. True we cannot see Him with our natural eyes; but we have His Word, which He has exalted above all His name;¹⁸⁵ and

¹⁸⁵ **Psalm 138** ² I will worship toward your holy temple, and give thanks unto your name for your lovingkindness and for your truth: for You have magnified your word above all your name.

His Word is backed by His oath.

Hebrews 6

¹⁷ God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

¹⁸ That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

Try it. When the enemy presses upon you, lay hold upon the promises of God, and they will be to you a wall which no temptation can pierce. Satan himself in person cannot get through them to lay violent hands on one who is behind them. The God of heaven is infinitely more real, although invisible, than all the gods that can be seen; so His Word is a rock infinitely more real and more enduring than Gibraltar.

And this refuge will never fail. The men who fled to one of the cities of refuge found a welcome and would stay there till the death of the high priest. So we may be sure of a welcome, even though foully guilty, for the Lord says,

John 6

³⁷ Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out.

More than this, our High Priest will never die;

Revelation 1

¹⁸ [He is] alive for evermore.

So the soul that flees to Him for refuge, is for ever safe.

Deuteronomy 33

²⁷ The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Unshaken as the sacred hills,
And fixed as mountains stand.
Firm as a rock the soul shall rest
That trusts th' Almighty hand.

Not rock nor hills could guard so well
Fair Salem's happy ground
As those eternal arms of love
That every saint surround.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ Isaac Watts, *Psalm 125*, First Part.

8. A Place of Refuge

Present Truth, October 23, 1902

Joshua 20:1-9

E. J. Waggoner

THERE is an idea prevalent, that in the ancient days of Israel everyone was allowed to avenge his own wrongs. People read the words of Christ,

Matthew 5

³⁸ You have heard that it has been said by them of old time,
An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

³⁹ But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also,

—and think that in the days of Moses everyone took the law into his own hands, and if one were injured, he gave the other “as good as he sent.” Thus they think that it was a crude, barbarous age, and that justice rose no higher than private revenge.

That this is a mistaken idea may be learned from a reading of the entire chapter in which the directions referred to occur. There it is seen that they are given in instruction to the judges; and that the conditions were the same then as now, when there are statutes, with penalties annexed. It is simply the principle of the civil law, that whoever commits an offense must be made to suffer or to pay an equivalent, as nearly as that can be determined. In saying,

³⁹ Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

⁴⁰ And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also,

Christ was not bringing in any new principle, but merely stating the eternal truth,

Romans 12

¹⁹ Vengeance is my; I will repay, says the Lord.

The Christian law is, and always was,

James 1

²⁵ ...the perfect law of liberty.

Just as we must not do a thing because the law counsels us, but must in Christ exercise our glorious privilege of going far beyond what the words of the law can express, so we must refrain from demanding our legal “rights.” God is always on the side of the oppressed; and whoever commits His case wholly into God’s hands, has infinitely better defense, and greater redress, than if he sought the defense of human law.

The appointment of the cities of refuge, according to the command of the Lord, was in keeping with this. We read that the Lord spoke to Joshua saying:

Joshua 20

² Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for yourself cities of refuge, whereof I spoke unto you by the hand of Moses:

³ That the slayer that kills any person unawares and unwittingly, may flee there: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.

⁴ And when he that does flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that He may dwell among them.

⁵ And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbor unwittingly, and hated him not before-time.

⁶ And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come to his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.

We must not suppose that any friend of an accidentally slain man was privileged to kill the slayer wherever he found him outside of one of the cities of refuge. Far from it. The Lord never planned in any such way as that for the land to be filled with violence. God said that:

Genesis 9

⁶ Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,
and,

Numbers 35

³³ The land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.

But He never designed that this should be done except by the executioners appointed by law; and the cities of refuge were provided as a check on the law, guarding even a manslayer against hasty execution of it.

A beautiful and most comforting phase of the character of God is illustrated by the cities of refuge. They show us that:

Proverbs 17

¹⁰ The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe.

It teaches that:

Psalms 9

⁹ The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

¹⁰ And they that know your name will take refuge in You.

He is our...

Psalms 71

³ ...strong habitation, whereunto [we] may continually flee, for He has given commandment to save [us].

Who may take refuge in God? "The children of men," without respect of persons; for...

Acts 17

²⁸ In Him we live, and move, and have our being.

Psalm 36

⁷ How excellent is your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust [literally, “take refuge”] under the shadow of your wings.

God made a promise to Abraham, including all who believe, and confirmed it by an oath,

Hebrews 6

¹⁸ That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us:

¹⁹ Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil;

²⁰ Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec.

That is where the consolation lies. Christ is “high priest for ever”:

Hebrews 7

¹⁶ Made...after the power of an endless life.

The slayer was to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest; but our high priest is...

Revelation 1

¹⁸ ...alive for evermore.

Hebrews 7

²⁵ He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.

Thus God is...

Psalm 90

¹ ...our dwelling place in all generations.

Under the shadow of your throne

Your saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is your arm alone.
And our defense is sure.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Isaac Watts, *Psalm 90*, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," 1719.

9. Helping One Another

Signs of the Times, November 9, 1888

Notes on the International Lesson, November 18

Joshua 21:43-45; 22:1-9

E. J. Waggoner

BEFORE Israel had gone up to take possession of their inheritance, Joshua had seen an armed man standing with drawn sword in the pathway; and in answer to the question,

Joshua 5

¹³ Are you for us, or for our adversaries?

—he had answered,

¹⁴ As Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.

The conquest of Canaan was not to be wholly dependent upon the efforts of Israel or her captains, nor yet was it to be attained without their cooperation. The promised land was just before them, the wanderers were nearing their home; but their inheritance was still in the possession of the Canaanites. They still had to exercise faith and put forth effort in obedience to God's command. But as they advanced, an unseen host went before them, and the...

Isaiah 63

⁹ ...Angel of His presence,

—directed their steps. The people of God were co-warriors with Christ and His angels. And as human faith and effort united with divine power, Jordan parted, Jericho fell, and the Canaanites were vanquished.

Joshua 21

⁴³ And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.

In all their marches and battles, Israel was borne on, and buoyed up, by an unseen Deliverer. There was no place for

pride in their conquests, for it was evident that the Captain of the Lord's host wrought for them, and the shout of the song of Israel was one of praise to Him who gives the victory.

Joshua 21

⁴⁴ And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.

That it is profitable to serve God, was demonstrated in the experience of the Israelites. They had been delivered from the cruel bondage of Egypt; they had been fed with the...

Psalm 105

⁴⁰ ...bread of Heaven;

–they had been refreshed with water from the rock; they had been preserved from sickness, pavilioned beneath the cloudy, fiery pillar, delivered from their enemies, and given rest in the land of their inheritance.

Joshua 21

⁴⁵ There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.

1 Corinthians 10

¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Israel's experience is full of suggestion to the Christian. The follower of Christ has been delivered from the cruel bondage of...

1 Corinthians 8

⁵ ...gods many, and lords many.

While Canaan is a type of the rest that remains for the children of God, that will be fully realized in the soon-coming kingdom of our Lord, its conquest has also a spiritual significance in the life that now is. In the victory that must be

achieved in banishing the Canaanites of heart, divine power must accompany human effort. We must have the Captain of the Lord's host to go before us, that our enemies may be subdued and vanquished. We must render our faculties in an unswerving and consecrated service to our God, that there may be a complete government of God established in our hearts. Jesus has said,

Matthew 11

²⁸ Come unto me,...and I will give you rest.

He is the...

Joshua 5

¹⁵ ...Captain of the Lord's host,

—and He declares,

Psalms 81

⁹ There shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god.

Like Israel of old, we have not availed ourselves of our exalted privileges; we have been too easily satisfied with small attainments, with half conquests, and because of unsubdued enemies we have been led into idolatry and sin; but the desire of the Lord has been expressed in the words of the psalm:

¹³ Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!

¹⁴ I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.

¹⁶ He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied them.

Joshua 22

¹ Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh,

² And said unto them, You have kept all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you:

³ You have not left your brethren these many days unto this day.

These tribes had chosen their possession on the other side of Jordan, but, having attained their desire, they did not settle down to enjoy themselves, and leave their brethren to fight unaided in gaining their inheritance. Moses had declared that if they would indeed go armed for their brethren's sake until they too had acquired their possession, then they might return to their homes and be guiltless before the Lord. This is a very significant statement, inferring that those who are content to enjoy their possessions without thought or effort for others, are not held guiltless before God.

Leviticus 19

¹⁸ You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Galatians 6

² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

For about seven years the warriors of these tribes had fought the battles of their brethren, bearing their burdens, rejoicing in victories gained in their behalf. But God had given rest to Israel, and they are now to receive an honorable discharge from an honorable service. Joshua bids them "return," and get to their tents, and to the land of their possession.

Joshua 22

⁴ And now the Lord your God has given rest unto your brethren, as He promised them: therefore now return, and get unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side Jordan.

Their inheritance was separated from the inheritance of Israel, and Joshua realized their danger of becoming cold in the service of God, as they would be isolated from their brethren, and could participate in the privileges of the tabernacle only with great inconvenience. He exhorted them to...

Joshua 22

⁵ Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law,...to love the Lord your God,...to cleave unto Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away. One-half the tribe of Manasseh had been given a portion in Bashan.

⁸ And he spoke unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and...divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.

Their brethren had a share in the conflict both by actual service and by staying with the stuff, and they were to share in the spoil. Service to God is service to one another. There is no place for selfishness in the religion of Christ.

In every commandment that God has given denoting our duty to Him and to our fellow-men, there is nothing required but that which will ennoble the doer, benefit the world, and glorify the Creator. The humble worker who toils in obscurity, aiding the cause of God, is not forgotten before Him and will not be overlooked in the day when the spoils are divided, and the reward is given.

10. Who Can Serve God?

Present Truth, October 30, 1902

Joshua 24:14-25

E. J. Waggoner

THE question is not, “Who *will* serve God?” but, “Who *can* serve God?” That is a very important question. A failure to understand who can serve God, is the reason why many people continue in useless attempts to serve Him.

Joshua had recounted to all Israel the goodness of God to them and to their fathers, and concluded with these words:

Joshua 24

¹⁴ Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve the Lord.

¹⁵ And if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Then all the people answered, and said:

¹⁶ God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;

¹⁷ For the Lord our God, He it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way and wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

¹⁸ And the Lord drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites, which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord; for He is our God.

That was a good resolution. How shocked they must have been, therefore, when Joshua turned on them with the assertion:

Joshua 24

¹⁹ You cannot serve the Lord; for He is a holy God.

Only such as are holy can serve a holy God. That is plain enough if we but stop to think for a moment. To serve Him is to do His will; His will is holy; therefore whoever does His will must be holy. An unholy person certainly does not serve the Lord, and cannot as long as he remains unholy; for his unholy is most displeasing to God.

Are there then only a select few who can serve God? Yes; for all of God's people are "the elect," or the selected ones. Christ says to His disciples,

John 15

¹⁶ I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain;

—and the number of them is very small compared with the number of wicked. But this does not mean that only a few have the privilege of serving God if they will.

Revelation 22

¹⁷ Whosoever will...

—may take of the water of life freely; and the assurance is,

Romans 6

¹⁶ To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are.

Whoever fully yields himself, soul, body, and spirit, to God, is accepted by Him as His, and is made holy, so that he can serve Him. Christ has chosen us, that we should bear much fruit to the glory of God. But He says that the tree must be made good, before it can bring forth good fruit.

Matthew 12

³³ Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.

Luke 6

⁴³ A good tree brings not forth corrupt fruit; neither does a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

⁴⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil.

So when we are cleansed by the Lord we become...

Isaiah 61

³ ...trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

The law of God is the transcript of His character. Wherefore,

Romans 7

¹⁴ The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good.

To keep the law of God is to serve Him; but not everybody can keep the law. The latter part of the 7th chapter of *Romans* pictures the unsuccessful efforts of an unregenerate man to keep the law of God. Then comes the comforting assurance:

Romans 8

³ What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

So it is not a difficult matter to serve the Lord, after all. Then what about the statement that a good many people try to serve God, and fail? The answer is found in the form of the question: they simply *try to serve* God, which is something that God has never asked anybody to do; He asks us *actually to serve* Him. We must *do* His will, not *try to do* it; and to the end that we may really serve Him, He puts His laws into our mind, and writes them in our heart.

Hebrews 8

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

This is done for all who accept Him as their God, and who fully yield to Him.

John 12

⁵⁰ His commandment is life everlasting.

Therefore when His law is in our heart, it follows that it is our life; it controls our actions, instead of our attempting to put it into action. When we yield to righteousness as completely as we have to sin, we shall find that there is a greater power in righteousness than there is in sin; for:

1 John 4

⁴ ...greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.

But in order that we may experience the perfect working of this power we must not be partial in the law, choosing one portion and rejecting another. We must receive it all, and be willing for it all to have its effect in our lives. Thus, with God working in us...

Philippians 2

¹³ ...to will and to do of His good pleasure,

–we shall come to know the blessedness of the assurance,

Revelation 22

³ ...His servants shall serve Him:

⁴ And they shall see His face.

11. Choose You This Day

Present Truth, November 30, 1893

Joshua 24:15

E. J. Waggoner

Joshua 24

¹⁵ Choose you this day whom you will serve.

SO SPOKE Joshua to the children of Israel. They could choose themselves whether they would be servants of God or not, and the same power of choice lies with each of us. The secret of success lies in the use of the will. We can will to serve God, or we can will to serve the god of this world.

Romans 6

¹⁶ To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, [says Paul,] his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.

Every sin is prefaced by yielding on the part of the sinner; and every righteous act is also prefaced by yielding; but in the one case the yielding is to Satan, and in the other case to God. In the moment of temptation, when it seems that we must fall, we may yield ourselves to Him, and in that condition we will not yield ourselves to Satan, for we are controlled by the one to whom we yield ourselves.

And when you yield your will to God, you do not thereby lose your will, for God allies it with His own, which is a source of incalculable strength. And then you will know that:

Philippians 2

¹³ It is God which works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

12. Choosing

Present Truth, July 6, 1899

Joshua 24:15

E. J. Waggoner

MEN were created free moral agents, with the power and privilege of choice; and God calls upon them to choose between right and wrong, life and death.

Joshua 24

¹⁵ Choose you this day whom you will serve.

Deuteronomy 30

¹⁹ Choose life that both you and your seed may live.

There is nothing arbitrary about it—every one is left free to choose as he sees fit, but it makes a great difference what that choice is, for on it hang eternal consequences.

When Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage,¹⁸⁸ he made a choice that he afterward regretted; and even though he sought it with tears, there was no place found for repentance.¹⁸⁹

When the strife between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot became so great that a separation was necessary, Lot was given the first choice; and because the plain of Jordan was “well watered,” he chose that, and...

Genesis 13

¹² ...pitched his tent toward Sodom.

His choice was a selfish one, to satisfy present desires; and for a time it appeared outwardly that it was a wise one, so far as worldly success was concerned, but in the end it proved to be the very worst he could have made, as he lost all of his worldly possessions, and escaped from the doomed city only with his life.

¹⁸⁸ *Genesis* 25:29-34.

¹⁸⁹ *Hebrews* 12:17.

Not so with Moses. Although heir to the throne of Egypt, with every possible worldly prospect before him,

Hebrews 11

²⁴ He...refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Ah, there is the secret. It is to look beyond the present. The wise man said,

Ecclesiastes 11

⁹ Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

So many today are choosing this world, the pleasures and benefits that it can give, but the choice is a poor one, for all the world can give is only transitory and unsatisfactory. But he who chooses the world to come, like Mary,

Luke 10

⁴² ...has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away.

13. The Covenant Renewed

Signs of the Times, November 16, 1888

Notes on the International Lesson, November 25

Joshua 24:19-28

E. J. Waggoner

THE time of the events recorded in these verses was 1426 BC, or sixty five years after the making of the covenant and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. The covenant made at Sinai was an agreement between the Lord and the people relative to the law of God. The children of Israel had come into the wilderness of Sinai and the Lord called unto Moses from the mount, saying:

Exodus 19

⁴ You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

⁵ Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people...

⁸ And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do.

This was the covenant; but at this time the people had not yet heard the law; they had promised to keep a law of which they had as yet only an imperfect knowledge. Three days later, however, the Lord spoke His law in the audience of all the people, and again the people promised that they would obey.

Exodus 24

³ And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord has said will we do.

⁴ And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord,

—and the promise of the people in a book and read it to the whole congregation, and after the people had again promised

to obey (verse 7),

Hebrews 9

¹⁹ ...he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people,

Exodus 24

⁸ ...and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words.

Thus was the first covenant ratified: the people had repeatedly promised to keep the law of God, and God had promised that if they did so He would make them a peculiar treasure unto himself above all people.

But the people did not keep this solemn covenant. Their history during all these years was little but a history of backsliding; and now after they had entered upon the possession of the land promised unto their fathers, Joshua called upon them to put away their strange gods and serve the Lord.

Joshua 24

¹⁵ And, [said Joshua,] if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

¹⁶ And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;

¹⁸ ...therefore will we also serve the Lord; for He is our God.

¹⁹ And Joshua said unto the people, You cannot serve the Lord; for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

²¹ And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord.

We are not to suppose that Joshua intended to discourage the people and deter them from the service of the true God, but he did nevertheless state the truth when he said,

¹⁹ ...You cannot serve the Lord.

That is, they could not keep the covenant which they had made at Sinai. That covenant was an unconditional agreement on the part of the people to keep the law of God, but the people did not live up to their agreement; and it will be readily seen that when they broke the covenant, as they did almost immediately when they worshiped the golden calf, they had no more claim on the Lord, according to the covenant which they had entered into with Him. They could not go on under that covenant, for no matter how perfectly they might abide by its terms in the future, the fact would remain that they had once broken it, and that was sufficient to forfeit all the blessings which God had promised.

In fact, the old covenant was no longer of any service to them; they could repent of their sins and receive pardon, but not by virtue of the covenant made at Sinai. For forgiveness of sins they must look to Christ, or we might say to the second covenant, which, though called the “second” because it was ratified after the covenant at Sinai, was in point of fact the first covenant, for it was made with Abraham,¹⁹⁰ and was the covenant under which Abraham’s faith was counted unto him for righteousness.

Genesis 15

⁶ And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.

This Abrahamic covenant is the one...

Hebrews 8

⁶ ...established upon better promises,

—and chief among these “better promises” is the promise of

¹⁹⁰ **Galatians 3** ¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

the forgiveness of sins. It was in respect of the promises that the first covenant was faulty. If the first covenant had not been thus faulty, there would have been no place for the second. There was in the first covenant no provision for forgiveness of sins. It was ratified by the blood of beasts, which could never take away sin.

But the second or Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, which...

John 1

²⁹ ...takes away the sin of the world.

And though not ratified for nearly 1,500 years after the covenant at Sinai, it was...

Galatians 3

¹⁷ ...confirmed...of God in Christ,

–to Abraham by an oath.

Hebrews 6

¹³ For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by himself,

¹⁴ Saying, Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.

¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

¹⁶ For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

¹⁷ Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

¹⁸ That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

This covenant is made concerning the same law; but if people break it, they may by repentance obtain pardon, and so still remain in covenant relation with God. This is a wonderful exhibition of the mercy and love of God.

1. He consents to make a contract with the people concerning that which it is their duty to do; and then,
2. He provides pardon for them when they have not only failed to do their duty, but they also violated their agreement to do their duty.

Surely love could go no further. But some may wonder,

“Didn’t God know that the people would break that first covenant?”

We reply, Yes; He not only knew that they could not keep it, but in fact, they had broken the commandments, concerning which the covenant was made, before the covenant was made. It was utterly impossible for the people to keep the commandments by their own unaided efforts, yet that is what they promised to do.

Then why did the Lord lead them to make such a promise? For the purpose of showing them their own weakness, and of directing their minds to the second or Abrahamic covenant, which already existed. This covenant was a covenant concerning Christ, and provided forgiveness for transgression of the law concerning which the covenant was made, and also help to keep the law. And so, when the Lord made a new covenant with Israel, He was simply directing their attention to the covenant made long before with Abraham. And the proof of this is the fact that all who are heirs of the promises are children of Abraham.

Thus it appears that the words of Joshua were strictly true; they could not serve the Lord in the sense of keeping the covenant made at Sinai; they could serve Him only by availing themselves of the help promised in the second covenant, and becoming not only in name but in fact “children of Abraham,” by faith in Christ, the promised seed of Abraham.

Galatians 3

⁷ Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same

are the children of Abraham.

We would not be understood as teaching that it was impossible to serve God just as well in the days of Joshua as it is now, but that it was impossible to serve Him without the aid of divine grace, and that while that grace was not promised in the covenant made at Sinai, it was given to Abraham and to his spiritual seed both before and after the making of what is called the first or old covenant, and that it was always to be obtained through faith in the promised Saviour.

God's promise to Abraham that he should be a great nation and that in his Seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, was a promise of Christ; and Abraham so understood it, and it was that faith that was counted unto him for righteousness, and no man has ever been accounted righteous in any other way.

The idea that under the first covenant people were saved by keeping the law, and that now they are saved by faith without obedience, is contrary alike to reason and scripture. God has provided but one Saviour and but one plan of redemption, and in every age the conditions of salvation have been faith and obedience. Abraham was a man of faith, but his faith did not excuse him from obedience. Said the Lord to him:

Genesis 17

¹ I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect.

² And I will make my covenant between me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.

And in describing the people of God down in the last days, the seer of Patmos says:

Revelation 14

¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

As the conditions for covenant relation with God are the same as in the past, so the reasons for serving Him today are

identical with the reasons for choosing His service in the days of Joshua. No doubt the people had a deep realization of their obligations to God as they renewed their vows of loyalty to Him. The remembrance of:

- His longsuffering and tender mercy toward them,
- His care that had borne them as an eagle bears her young,
- His solicitude,
- His manifest providences in leading them,
 - in subduing their enemies,
 - in bringing them into the land flowing with milk and honey,
 - in making them the repository of His law, and
 - in revealing himself to them as the covenant-keeping God, the living God who could do exceeding abundantly above what they were able to ask or think,

—all this must have given fervency to their response in choosing Him who had only wrought them good. Perhaps, too, the thought of their backsliding, their indifference, their frequent rebellion and transgression, served to arouse them to a more intense determination to walk in the commandments of the Lord.

Joshua presented before them the awful consequences of forsaking Jehovah. To forsake Him and serve other gods means only despair and loss, both now and forever. The Lord describes the condition of those who leave His service in the pathetic words of the prophet,

Jeremiah 2

¹³ They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

And again He cries,

Ezekiel 33

¹¹ Turn you, turn you...for why will you die?

Isaiah 48

¹⁸ O that you had hearkened to my commandments! then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

We were created to serve God, not from constraint, but willingly. No service but that which springs from love is fulfilling the purpose of our creation. Nothing but this can be accounted as service. John writes,

Revelation 4

¹¹ You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created.

But it can be no pleasure to Him whose nature is love, to have the unwilling, grudging offering that is sometimes designated as service to God. In all the service of Christ to His Father His language was,

Psalms 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God; yea, your law is within my heart.

And this condition of true service is provided for in the new covenant.

Hebrews 8 [Jeremiah 31:33]

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

Romans 13

¹⁰ Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Love to God and love to fellow-men measures the infinite scope of the law that is exceeding broad, and that discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. In seeing something of the

depth of the commandment, we behold our own utter inability to keep it without divine aid; but our weakness has been provided for.

Romans 8

³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

While sin has brought us helpless and condemned before God, yet His grace, through the merits of the Lamb of God, and through the might of His spirit, has availed to cleanse and strengthen us, that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us,

¹ ...who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;

–for under the provision of the new covenant, the law is written in our minds and affections. The truly consecrated heart can say,

Matthew 11

³⁰ His yoke is easy, and His burden is light;

–for Christ, abiding in the soul, brings every thought into subjection, and the language of the Christian is like His:

Psalms 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God.

14. Israel Under Judges

Signs of the Times, November 23, 1888

Notes on the International Lesson, December 2

Judges 2:7-23

E. J. Waggoner

ONLY a generation had passed since the Israelites had vowed to devote themselves to the service of God. The inspired record declares that:

Judges 2

⁷ The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that He did for Israel.

¹⁰ ...and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel.

¹¹ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim.

The startling testimony of history declares that the people of whom Moses had inquired,

Deuteronomy 4

⁷ What nation is there so great, who has God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?

⁸ And what nation is there so great that has statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

—forsook the Lord to serve Baalim.

The only way that we can have any fair comprehension of the degradation this implies, is to compare the idolatry they had chosen to the sacred and glorious worship they had forsaken. The thought of such depths of debasement following such heights of exaltation fills us with horror and astonishment. It seems a thing incredible. The psalmist, speaking of the requirements of God's service, says,

Psalm 51

⁶ Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.

The children of Israel had been chosen to obedience. For a time they shone as lights in the midst of the perverse and crooked nations of the world, reflecting the divine image. The blessings of Heaven were for them. But they did evil and served Baal. They forsook their God.

Probably this was not done by a sudden departure. We know how apostasy comes:

1. First it is a conviction stifled, a duty neglected;
2. Then a glorifying of self and a worshiping and serving of the creature more than the Creator;
3. And then a sinking down into grosser and grosser sins till we are corrupted, full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.

Says the prophet of one who had forsaken God,

Isaiah 44

²⁰ A deceived heart has turned him aside.

They served Baalim. Language fails to describe the degradation, the utter vileness, of the idolatry chosen by the people of God as a substitute for the worship of the Holy One of Israel. The worship of Baal, or the sun, was the most abhorrent of all heathen worship. It was the lowest of all idolatry, with which was connected licentious rites of the most debasing character. It afforded an opportunity for the display of the carnal nature to the full.

That the worship of the sun was the most abominable form of heathenism, is evident from the words of the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel. While the prophet was with the captives in Babylon, he was taken in vision to Jerusalem, and shown the abominable deeds of the Jews who still remained in that city. He was first shown the...

Ezekiel 8

³ ...image of jealousy,

–at the door of the inner court of the temple, and the Lord said to him:

⁶ See what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn yet again, and you shall see greater abominations.

Then he was shown...

¹⁰ ...every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall...

–of the temple, and seventy elders offering incense, and was again told that he should see even greater abominations. Next he was brought to the door of the temple, and there saw the women...

¹⁴ ...weeping for Tammuz,

–the Babylonian Adonis, whose worship was conducted with the most lascivious rites, but was told that he should be shown greater abominations still. These last and greatest abominations are thus described:

¹⁶ And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshiped the sun toward the east.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, speaking of Baal, says:

As the sun-god he is conceived as the male principle of life and reproduction in nature, and thus in some forms of his worship is the patron of the grossest sensuality, and even of systematic prostitution. An example of this is found in the worship of Baal-Peor (*Numbers 25*), and in general in the

Canaanitish high places, where Baal, the male principle, was worshiped in association with the unchaste goddess Ashera, the female principle of nature.

Have we not marveled and inquired,

“How could these people go to such depths of debasement?”

Perhaps we have thought that such idolatry and defilement was a thing of the past, and belonged alone to those of earlier ages. Alas! that this is not true. These things were written for our admonition.

Jeremiah 17

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

Not man, certainly, for the Lord declares,

¹⁰ I the Lord search the heart.

Let the Spirit of God be grieved away, let circumstances remove their restraint, let it become popular to serve Baal, and who will be like Elijah and the seven thousand who withstood the tide of idolatry? Even now if you could penetrate into the secret chambers as did Ezekiel you would see many who bear the name of Christ worshiping before Baal and Ashteroth. Yes, even in the gates of the house dedicated to God, the idols of pride, lust, and selfishness are worshiped publicly. Says Paul:

2 Timothy 3

¹ In the last days perilous times shall come.

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves,...

⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

Even the professed church of Christ is to be defiled with the lovers of self, and these times are perilous times, for it is a time when Israel is sweeping off into the outgoing tide of idolatry, and only he will stand who is anchored to the eternal Rock.

Judges 2

¹² And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

Were the children of Israel so blinded that they could not read in the nations the direful effects of idolatry? Did they not behold the image of the earthly, the sensual, the devilish, in those who had corrupted themselves with the gods they had served? Their gods were simply the image of their own de-based and ever degrading nature. They bowed themselves down indeed, when they were making obeisance to such idols.

¹⁴ And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers...so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

¹⁵ Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil,...and they were greatly distressed.

Again and again it has been demonstrated that:

Proverbs 13

¹⁵ ...the way of the transgressors is hard.

Every transgressor experiences this bitter result, and yet the slave of Satan is deceived, beguiled again and again into the paths of sin. The children of Israel had been warned. God had set before them life and good, and death and evil, and they made their own choice. They sowed to the flesh, and of the flesh reaped corruption.

But God is long-suffering and plenteous in mercy. His heart of infinite love yearned for His rebellious children, and the next verse after the terrible description of their foul apostasy begins,

Judges 2

¹⁶ Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

And still they did not acknowledge His hand. Perhaps it seemed to them as an ordinary thing that they were plucked from the power of their enemies, for...

Judges 2

¹⁷ They would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods.

Again they tasted the bitter fruit of transgression, bringing anguish upon their souls. The Lord heard their groaning by reason of those that oppressed them, and again in the abundance of His pity He delivered them. Israel's course was like the fluctuation of the sea. They progressed to retrograde, and retrograded to return, but at last...

¹⁹ ...they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

The Lord had promised to drive out their enemies if they would walk in His ways, but now He declares,

²¹ I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died.

But, even in this stern and just sentence, runs a thread of divine compassion, for He adds,

²² That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein.

God could not give them up. Bad as they were, He saw in them the possibility of purity through the infinite merit of His grace. He would use the nations as scourges to chasten His people, that they might return to Him who could cleanse their sins, and redeem their lives from destruction.

It is thus He deals with us in this season of apostasy; but the day of His patience is fast hastening to its close. Says the prophet:

Isaiah 13

⁹ Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel both with wrath

and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

Now is the time to tear down the idols, for soon a selfish but bitter cry will sound from the fearful and unbelieving, from liar and idolater.

Jeremiah 8

²⁰ The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved.

15. A Wonderful Victory

Present Truth, November 20, 1902

International Sunday-School Lesson for November 30

Judges 7:1-8, 16-21

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN God led Israel out of Egypt He took them by way of the sea, and not to the land of the Philistines, lest the people should see war, and be disheartened.

Exodus 13

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.

When the Egyptians pursued them, and overtook them camping by the sea, He made a way of escape for them through the sea, and caused the sea to swallow up their enemies. The marvelous deliverance, together with the wonders wrought in Egypt, in order that they might be delivered, made it manifest that God was doing the work himself, and that human planning or skill had no place in it.

This miraculous deliverance was calculated to strike the inhabitants of Canaan, and of the land to which they had to pass to get to it, with such terror that the Israelites could possess the land without being molested. On the shore of the Red Sea, after the people had passed over, and the Egyptians had been overthrown, Moses sang this inspired song:

Exodus 15

¹⁴ The people shall hear, and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.

¹⁵ Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

¹⁶ Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of

your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which You have purchased.

¹⁷ You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for yourself to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

All these things go to show that the Lord did not intend that the Israelites should do any fighting whatever. Indeed, this was plainly stated by Moses, when the spies returned, bringing word that the cities were great and strong, and inhabited by giants. At that time he said unto them,

Deuteronomy 1

²⁹ Dread not, neither be afraid of them.

³⁰ The Lord your God which goes before you He shall fight for you, according to all that He did for you in Egypt before your eyes:

³¹ And in the wilderness, where you have seen how that the Lord your God bore you, as a man does bear his son.

Moreover, the Lord promised to send hornets before them, which should drive out the hostile inhabitants, to make room for them.

It is true that the children of Israel did do some hard fighting, but that was only because they did not believe the Lord, who went before them in the way, to search out a place for them to pitch their tents in, and to show them, by fire at night, and cloud by day, which way they should go. And their fighting was all to no purpose. It was wholly superfluous, and contributed nothing to the ultimate victory, and as we read in

Psalm 44

¹ We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work You did in their days, in the times of old.

² How You drove out the heathen with your hand, and planted them; how You afflicted the people, and cast them out.

³ For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your countenance, because You had a favor unto them.

After the children of Israel were settled in the land of Canaan, there were numerous instances of God's protecting care over them, showing that if they had only been steadfast in the faith which they exercised at times, He would have continued their victories until, according to His promise, the whole earth should be inhabited only by righteous people; for the victory of faith is righteousness.

A notable proof of this is seen in the victory gained over the Midianites, who were oppressing them. The story will repay careful study, as it shows something of how faith works.

Gideon had been chosen as the one through whom the deliverance should come. The Lord had given him the clearest evidence that he was to lead the people to victory, and this accounts for his confidence. The man who knows that he has received his commission from God, and that God is with him, can do all things. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said,

Judges 6

¹² The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor.

Then to Gideon's question why they were allowed to be so oppressed by the Midianites,

¹⁴ The Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this your might, and you shall save Israel from the Midianites: have not I sent you?

What was "this your might" of which the Lord spoke? It was not military skill, for he had none. At the time that the words were spoken, he was threshing his father's wheat, in an obscure place, to hide it from the Midianites, who were destroying all the sustenance of both man and beast. It is evi-

dent, therefore, that Gideon's might was his weakness and his obscurity; for his family was one of the poorest in the tribe of Manasseh, and he was the least in his father's house.

1 Corinthians 1

²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

²⁹ That no flesh should glory in His presence.

A weak man who has God with him is strong, even almighty. The weakest person, who knows that God is with him, is invincible.

All the preparations for the deliverance of Israel from the Midianites emphasized the fact that Divine power alone was to accomplish the work. Thirty-two thousand men had gathered at the call of Gideon; but the Lord said to him:

Judges 7

² The people that are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, My own hand has saved me.

³ Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him depart early from mount Gilead.

The result was that twenty-two thousand men immediately went home, leaving only ten thousand. This has a lesson for us. God wants people who are bold because of their confidence in Him. Among the first of those who will have their part in the lake of fire are...

Revelation 21

⁸ ...the fearful and unbelieving.

In the conflict with the hosts of Satan we are never to take our weakness into account, except to glory in it, before God.

Our weakness is our recommendation.

But ten thousand men were too many for the Lord's purpose, and so the number was reduced to three hundred, a most insignificant army with which to do battle with the host of the Midianites, if the event depended on human might.

God works according to method, however, and we are taught that victories of faith are not won by idleness and carelessness. Trust in God means alertness and the use of every faculty that He has given us. Mark how naturally the results came about through the simple and seemingly unnatural methods employed.

Acting under the Lord's guidance, Gideon divided his three hundred men into three bands of one hundred each. In each man's right hand was a trumpet, and in his left a flaming torch concealed in a pitcher. In the darkness of the night they came to the edge of the camp of the Midianites, and at the blast of Gideon's trumpet they all blew with their trumpets, and shouted,

Judges 7

²⁰ The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

At the same time they broke the pitchers which they carried, and allowed the torches to shine out. The terrible din awoke the Midianites, who saw the three hundred men with trumpets, clearly outlined against the darkness. But to their minds the three hundred were multiplied indefinitely, for they would naturally think that each man blowing a trumpet, with a lamp in his left hand, was the leader of a company which might number thousands. So they were seized with a panic,

²¹ ...and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

²² And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host.

Thus the victory was gained without a blow. But mark this:

It was gained by men who were fearless and confident. They were...

Ephesians 6

¹⁰ ...strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

They were not frightened because appearances were against them. With the Lord as their leader, they were not afraid to go against a mighty host, armed only with what might seem children's toys. And now remember that:

Romans 15

⁴ Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Always remember that:

2 Chronicles 20

¹⁵ ...the battle is not yours, but God's.

It is against Him that the hosts of sin are arrayed, and their assaults on us are really directed only against Him. But the Lord is mighty, and on the cross He has already spoiled all the principalities and powers¹⁹¹ with whom we have to contend, and our faith in Him is the victory that has overcome the world.

1 John 5

⁴ For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

Those who follow Him go forth,

Revelation 6

² ...conquering, and to conquer.

Victory is theirs to begin with. There is no weakness of the flesh, no temptation of the devil, which may not be overcome by everyone who knows and trusts the Lord; for even in death

¹⁹¹ *Colossians 2:14-15.*

itself,

Romans 8

³⁷ ...we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

1 Corinthians 15

⁵⁷ Thanks be unto God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

16. Comfort in Discouragement

Present Truth, March 29, 1900

Judges 7:9

E. J. Waggoner

GOD called Gideon to rid Israel of their foes, the Midianites and Amalekites. Gideon had received abundant proof that the Lord was with him. Yet when he came upon the brow of the hill, with only three hundred men, and looked down on the host in the valley below,

Judges 7

¹² ...like locusts for multitude,

—and knew that on the morrow he must meet them in conflict, he trembled. He knew that he and his handful of men were no match for that great army. True, God had said,

⁹ I have delivered it [the host] into your hand.

But he couldn't see how, and therefore it couldn't be. In the night season, while in this discouraged condition, the Lord appeared to him, and in substance said,

“I know you are discouraged—you do not believe what I have told you. Take your servant and go a little way down toward the enemy's camp, and there you will hear something that will give you courage.”¹⁹²

Gideon did as commanded, and there he heard one of the men relate a dream he had, which was interpreted by his companion to mean that into Gideon's hand...

¹⁴ ...has God delivered Midian and all the host.

This was enough. Immediately the two returned, and at once set about executing a plan of attack, given by Divine direction, and the result was that the enemy was routed, the foremost ones were slain, and the whole host was delivered

¹⁹² *Judges 7:10-11.*

into his hands.¹⁹³

How many times in the life of many Christians there come seasons of depression. Temptations press sore; reverses come; the purest motives are misconstrued; the most unselfish acts are criticized; and for the truth's sake, even their dearest friends forsake them. They know that up to this time the Lord has led them—they are sure of it—yet how hard to believe that He still is going before them. They think, as did Jacob,

Genesis 42

³⁶ All these things are against me,

—and perhaps murmur and complain. Then right in the midst of their bitterest sorrow and deepest grief, there comes a turn in affairs. The dark clouds roll away, the apparently insurmountable obstacles vanish, and what were looked upon as mountains of difficulty prove to be not mountains at all. And all this, though unexpected, comes in such a natural way, that it never occurs to them that it is God who has brought it all about.

When will Christians learn that in times of darkness they are to look up and not down? Though cast down, they are not forsaken. God's people are more precious in His sight than fine gold,¹⁹⁴ and He never willingly afflicts, even though He permits them to pass through the...

Isaiah 48

¹⁰ ...furnace of affliction.

Even here He suffers none to be tempted above that they are able to bear. Says the apostle:

Romans 8

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

¹⁹³ *Judges 7:22-25.*

¹⁹⁴ **Isaiah 13** ¹² I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.

Now anyone would undergo, without a murmur, the pain of the surgeon's knife, if he knew that it was the only means of saving his life. So when Christians, in their experience, actually know this truth, how easy it becomes to bear the severest trials; and not only to bear them, but even welcome them, for it is only through "much tribulation"¹⁹⁵ that anyone can be fitted for eternal life.

So hereafter can we not all say with the poet:

Let good or ill befall,
It must be good for me,
Secure of having Thee in all,
Of having all in Thee.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ **Acts 14** ²² We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

¹⁹⁶ Henry Francis Lyte, *My Spirit on Thy Care*, paraphrase of *Psalm 31*, 1834.

17. Meat from the Eater

Present Truth, March 26, 1903

Judges 14:14

E. J. Waggoner

HAVE we yet read the hidden meaning of Samson's riddle?

Judges 14

¹⁴ Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.

We know the story: A young lion came forth and roared against Samson. The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent it as though it had been a kid. Some time afterward passing the spot, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and found in it a swarm of bees and a honey-comb, with which he refreshed himself and his parents. The lion that roared against him was the means of providing him with a sweet repast.

1 Peter 5

⁸ Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.

But if we meet him in the strength of the Lord, we shall be more than conquerors, and get blessing and help from all his attacks. From the eater comes meat, from the strong, sweetness.

James 1

² My brethren count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations,

—even though you be in heaviness through them,¹⁹⁷ for:

Hebrews 12

¹¹ Though no chastening for the present seems to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.

¹⁹⁷ 1 Peter 1:6.

Not only are we ourselves fed and strengthened by our temptations, our tribulations, our difficulties, and our labors, but we thus receive a supply from which we can minister to the needs of others.

2 Corinthians 1

³ Blessed be God,...

⁴ Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Thus may our tribulation be to us as a passport by which we may in some degree enter into the joy of our Lord,

1 Peter 2

²⁴ ...by whose stripes we are healed.

18. An Israelite Indeed

Present Truth, November 27, 1902

International Sunday-school Lesson for December 7

Ruth 1:16-22

E. J. Waggoner

OF ALL the people who set themselves in opposition to the children of Israel on the way from Egypt to Canaan, there were none more diabolical than the people of Moab. It was Balak, king of Moab, who called Balaam, saying,

Numbers 22

⁵ Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me:

⁶ Come now therefore, I pray you, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me; peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land.

Although this purpose failed, and Balaam was constrained to bless when he opened his mouth to curse, the Lord assured the king of Moab,

Numbers 23

²³ Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.

Nevertheless the Moabites proved a snare and a curse to the children of Israel; for, acting on the advice of Balaam, the Moabites seduced the Israelites in the most flagrant and disgraceful heaven-defying sin.¹⁹⁸ Thus the curse did come upon Israel through Moab, after all, and many were destroyed.

The unscrupulous, lewd, and vicious character of the Moabites is plainly revealed in the narrative to which we have referred. It was, indeed, quite in keeping with their origin. That they were idolaters, appears from *Numbers* 25:1-2, where we are told that they called the Israelites unto the sacrifices of

¹⁹⁸ See *Numbers* 25, and 31:16.

their gods,

Numbers 25

² ...and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

From all this we see that the people of Moab were as distinct from Israel, and as much opposed to them, and unlike the people of God, as it was possible for any people to be.

It was to the country of this people that many years later, when Israel had long been dwelling in the land of Canaan, a man from Bethlehem came with his wife and two sons. Famine had driven them from their home, but even though there was bread among the Moabites, the man found among them the death which he feared in his native country, and his wife Naomi was left a widow with two sons. The sons married Moabitish women but soon died; and the mother, left with only her two daughters-in-law, determined to return to the land of Israel;

Ruth 1

⁶ ...for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread.

Both the daughters-in-law of Naomi started with her as she took her journey back to Canaan; but one of them, Orpah, was soon convinced that it was the wisest policy for her to remain among her own people.

¹⁴ And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.

Then Naomi said to Ruth,

¹⁵ Behold, your sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return after your sister-in-law.

And then the loving loyalty of Ruth shone out in the words so well known:

¹⁶ Intreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you; for where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I

will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

The story that follows is as romantic as could be imagined, but it is nevertheless a sober history. We do not need to dwell upon it in its details, for anybody can read it in a few minutes. What interests us mostly at present is the outcome. Ruth, who forsook her native country and its gods, to dwell among a people whom she had not known before, and to trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel,¹⁹⁹ married Boaz, a God-fearing man of Bethlehem, and bore a son,

Ruth 4

¹⁷ And they called his name Obed; and he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Thus in a few words we have the story of the progress from idolatry to the worship of the true God,—from a daughter of a Gentile race to a mother in Israel; and in this we have a complete revelation of who constitute Israel, and of how that people is built up. Even as it was the victory of faith that gave Jacob, the supplanter, the name Israel, so it is by faith that the house of Israel is built up.

Galatians 3

⁷ Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Matthew 1

¹ Jesus Christ [is] the Son of David,

Romans 1

³ ...according to the flesh.

And David, whose name stands for Israel since it is from him that the King comes who is to rule over the house of Jacob for ever,²⁰⁰ was directly descended from Ruth, the Moabitess. Not only may one by faith become a member of Is-

¹⁹⁹ *Ruth* 2:12.

²⁰⁰ See *Luke* 1:31-33.

rael, and a sharer in the blessings pronounced upon that people, but steadfast faith constitutes one a head of the nation. So we see that Israel is a people whose sole characteristic is faith, and the righteousness which springs from it.

Samuel to Solomon

1. Training for the Ministry

Present Truth, December 4, 1902

International Sunday-School Lesson for December 14

1 Samuel 3:1-14

E. J. Waggoner

The Model Religious Life

EVERY reader naturally exclaims at once, "That is the life of Christ, of course," and then as naturally begins, consciously or unconsciously, to put a wide gulf between himself and Christ, assuring himself that nobody can live such a life on this earth as Christ lived.

The life of Christ is indeed regarded by most people as a model to be set up on a pedestal, and looked at and admired from a distance, rather than to be lived every day. This is part of the legacy that we have received from the Church of Rome, which has represented Christ as so far removed from human sympathies that no human mortal can presume to come directly to Him, or expect to receive anything from Him except through the intercession of Mary or the glorified saints. This sentiment, so deeply embedded in the mind, is one of the last Papal fetters to be thrown off.

But Christ himself, who calls us to learn of Him, always identifies himself with us, by the term "Son of man," which He so much loved, and says,

Matthew 11

²⁹ I am meek and lowly in heart.

He is the living representative of God the Father, who says:

Isaiah 57

¹⁵ I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.

And He has also made the way very simple and plain for us, by setting specially before us as the model, not the man

skilled in meeting the sophistries of the scribes and doctors of the law, but the little child subject to its parents.

Matthew 18

² And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them,

³ And said, Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

What do we know of the life of Jesus? Only this:

Luke 2

⁵¹ And He went down with them [Joseph and Mary], and was subject unto them.

That is the whole, and it is enough. It shows the little child always ready to run errands or to render such household service as tender hands could perform; the child whose ear was quick to catch the first sound of the call to duty, and whose highest pleasure was found in being useful. That is the religion of childhood, and it is the religion for the mature man as well.

This was the religion of the child Samuel.

1 Samuel 2

¹⁸ Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child.

1 Samuel 3

¹ And the child Samuel ministered unto [served] the Lord before Eli.

What did he do? Just what a little child could do, and nothing more. He was not a priest, he could not enter into the holy place and offer incense. But he could wait on the priest. We read that after God had called him and spoken to him by night he...

¹⁵ ...lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord.

There we get a glimpse of him at his daily service. His work was to make himself generally useful, no matter how lowly the task; and in the faithful discharge of those humble duties he was ministering unto the Lord.

It is not what is done, but how it is done, that determines whether or not one is ministering unto the Lord. The person who slights his task, or performs it unwillingly, wishing that his work were something “more honorable,”—something that would attract more attention, or command greater pecuniary reward,—is not serving the Lord, no matter what nor where his work may be, even though it be in the temple itself. For that person is not a free man, but a slave; and God has no slaves in His employ. All God’s servants are free; they are kings. God is King of kings, and he has no one in His service or in His kingdom of lower rank than king. Therefore every one who is the servant of the Lord is master of his work, and never allows it or circumstances to master him.

Servants, no matter how menial their service, are to obey orders...

Ephesians 6

⁵ ...in singleness of heart, as unto Christ;

⁶ Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

⁷ With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.

Colossians 3

²² Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

²³ Whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.

This was the characteristic of Jesus, who said,

Psalm 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God,

—and He was doing God’s will just as much when He was assisting Mary in her household tasks, or Joseph in the carpenter’s shop, as when He was preaching to the multitudes, and healing the sick. The first was the preparation for the last.

Elisha was a prophet of the Lord, performing many wonderful miracles, yet for years he was but a servant, and...

2 Kings 3

¹¹ ...poured water on the hands of Elijah.

That was his “Training for the Ministry;” for how can one train for any calling better than in the exercise of that calling? and that lowly service, done willingly from the heart, was the true ministry. Elijah never served the Lord better than when he waited on Elijah.

So it was when Samuel was doing his childish tasks with a faithful, willing spirit, that he was called to the highest service that could be given to a man—that of bearing a message from God to the high priest of God. Yet the service was in reality no higher than the other.

What sweet simplicity is seen in the child Samuel! Prompt to answer every call, he rose from his bed without hesitation, time after time, to wait upon the aged Eli, who he supposed was needing assistance. Then, with the artlessness and graceful trust of childhood, he followed Eli’s instructions, and said, when he heard the voice,

1 Samuel 3

¹⁰ Speak, for your servant hears.

Yes, he heard, because he was alert to hear, like the...

Psalm 103

²⁰ ...angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

In that is summed up the perfect Christian life. How many there are who missed...

Philippians 3

¹⁴ ...the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,

–simply because they despise the day of small things.

Jeremiah 45

⁵ Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not;

–for,

Proverbs 11

² ...with the lowly is wisdom.

Oh, give me Samuel's ear!
The open ear, O Lord,
Alive and quick to hear
Each whisper of your word;
Like him to answer at your call,
And to obey You first of all.

Oh, give me Samuel's heart!
A lowly heart that waits
When in your house You are;
Or watches at your gates.
By day and night, a heart that still
Moves at the breathing of your will.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ James Drummond Burns, Hymn: *Hushed was the Evening Hymn*, 1874.

2. Meeting the Law

Present Truth, February 8, 1894

1 Samuel 4 to 6

E. J. Waggoner

WE READ in the book of *Samuel* that on account of the apostasy of Israel brought about by the wickedness of the sons of Eli, they were smitten before the Philistines in battle; and that, thinking to make themselves secure against another defeat, they sent to Shiloh and brought from thence the ark of the Lord into the midst of their camp. But they were defeated again by their enemies with great slaughter, and the ark of God was taken by the Philistines.

The Philistines were very glad to get possession of the ark, for they knew there was a supernatural power that attended it, and they supposed that, having possession of that sacred chest, they would also have possession of the power. So they took the ark and set it up in the temple of Dagon, thinking that with the power of the ark of the Lord united with the power of their god Dagon, they would make themselves invincible.

But the experiment did not work to their satisfaction. Dagon fell down on his face before the ark of the Lord and was mutilated to the extent of ruin; and the judgments of the Lord came upon the men of Ashdod, causing a great destruction, so that they soon became as anxious to get rid of the ark as they had been before to get it in their possession. So they sent it to Gath. And,

1 Samuel 5

⁹ ...the hand of the Lord was against the city with a very great destruction.

Next they sent it to Ekron, and...

¹¹ ...there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

Then the Philistines took measures to send the ark back again from whence it came, and they set it upon a cart drawn by two milch kine, and it came to Bethshemesh. And the men of Bethshemesh (who were Israelites) opened the sacred structure and looked into it, to get a view of the mysterious power that it contained. But terrible was the result; for the Lord...

1 Samuel 6

¹⁹ ...smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even He smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.

All these judgments were not arbitrary acts on the part of God, done to punish the Philistines for taking the ark of the Lord from the Hebrews, or the men of Bethshemesh for the sin of looking into it. They have a deeper significance than that. They teach us what is the inevitable result when the law of God is brought into contact with sinners.

The ark of the Lord contained the law of the Lord, written on the tables of stone with the finger of God. This was the potent fact which was the secret of the power that went with the ark. It was the power of the life and righteousness of God; for the law of God is nothing less than His life and righteousness. It was indeed a power very desirable to possess, but no less dangerous than it was desirable. For the sinner to reach out and attempt to take it would be like taking hold of a wire charged with the most powerful electric current. Death, quick and inevitable, would be the result.

And this is just what the Philistines, in their sinful ignorance, did. They took the ark, thinking to gain the power that went with it; but they only brought into their midst the holy and terrible law of the Lord. There could be but one result,—judgment and death upon the sinner.

The men of Bethshemesh, curious to see more about the

power that attended the ark, ventured to open it and look within; when lo, they stood face to face with the terrible law of God, as holy and righteous as himself! And the law spoke death to them; it could not be otherwise. And more than fifty thousand people perished! When the law of God meets the sinner face to face there is nothing for the latter but death.

Happily for us, God has not left sinners to meet His holy law in this way. The plan of salvation is nothing else but the means He has provided whereby sinners may meet the law and live. And that means is Jesus Christ. He stands between the law and the sinner, and in Him, the sinner can meet the law and not die.

In Christ, the sinner exchanges his sins for God's righteousness, which is the righteousness that the law demands. In Christ, also, the penalty for sin has been paid. Christ is the law freed of its terrors, and human flesh divested of its sin. We meet Him as sinners and lose our sin, and also meet the law without meeting its penalty. This idea is presented by Paul in his letter to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 10

¹⁹ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

²⁰ By a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;

²² Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

Entering into the "holiest," we enter into the presence of the law of God; and well might the sinner fear to enter there and stand face to face with the law which he has transgressed. But the apostle tells us we may enter in with "boldness" through the "new and living way," "His flesh." Jesus Christ is now our High Priest, mediating for us in that temple which John saw...

Revelation 11

¹⁹ ...opened in heaven,

—and wherein also was seen...

¹⁹ ...the ark of His testament.

In other words, our Saviour is now...

Hebrews 8

² A minister of the Sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

And in the great Judgment day, all who meet the law in Him will be accounted guiltless, and have life throughout the ages of eternity.

Far should it be from sinners to glory in possessing the law of God when it does not come to them in Christ. That was what the Israelites did when they sent and fetched the ark from Shiloh into their sinful camp. When the sacred structure appeared—the symbol of the power and protection of Jehovah—they raised a shout, as if they had won the victory; but when the battle was joined, they were smitten with great slaughter. With the law of God in their midst, it fared much worse with them than it did before.

But meeting the law in Christ, the law is a blessing; as it was to Obed-edom, of whom we read,

2 Samuel 6

¹¹ The ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months; and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.

3. An Earthly King Chosen

Signs of the Times, June 18, 1885

Lesson for the Pacific Coast – July 18

1 Samuel 8

E. J. Waggoner

1. Give two proofs that the partial possession of Canaan by the Israelites was not the fulfillment of the promise.
2. If the possession of the land had been complete, would that have been a complete fulfillment of the promise?

Romans 4

¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.

3. When the Lord brought them from Egypt, what did He promise to make of them?

Exodus 19

⁵ Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is my:

⁶ And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

4. How were they governed for many years after that time?

Acts 13

²⁰ After that He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

5. Who was the last of the judges?

1 Samuel 7

¹⁵ And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

¹⁷ And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the

Lord.

6. In his days what did the Israelites demand?

1 Samuel 8

⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

⁵ And said unto him, Behold, you are old, and your sons walk not in your ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

7. What did the Lord say they had done in making this demand?

⁷ And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

8. Then under whose immediate authority must they have been up to this time?

9. What did the Lord say that Samuel should do?

⁷ And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you: for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

⁹ Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

²² And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go you every man unto his city.

10. Who was chosen as their first king?

Acts 13

²¹ And afterward they desired a king; and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

1 Samuel 9

¹⁷ And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, Be-

hold the man whom I spoke to you of! this same shall reign over my people.

11. By whom was Saul chosen as king over Israel?

1 Samuel 9

¹⁵ Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,

¹⁶ Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man out of the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

12. Had the Lord utterly rejected His people because of their rejection of Him?

No; this is shown by the fact that He chose their king for them.

Notes

There is a seeming discrepancy between *Acts* 13:20 and *1 Kings* 6:1. The latter text says that Solomon began to build the temple in the four hundred and eightieth year after the exode, which would not allow all four hundred fifty years of government by judges. The explanation which seems the simplest is that which connects *Acts* 13:20 with the first part of the 17th verse of the same chapter, and regard the expression,

Acts 13

²⁰ ...about the space of four hundred and fifty years,

—as explanatory of the words,

²⁰ And after that...

Thus:

“The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers....and about the space of four hundred and fifty years after that He gave unto them judges, until Samuel the prophet.”

4. Rejection of Saul as King of Israel

Signs of the Times, June 25, 1885

Lesson for the Pacific Coast – July 25

1 Samuel 15:7-28

E. J. Waggoner

1. Who was the first king of Israel?

Acts 13

²¹ And afterward they desired a king; and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

2. By whom was he chosen?

Ibid.

3. How long did he reign?

Ibid.

4. On one occasion what message came from the Lord to Saul from Samuel?

1 Samuel 15

¹ Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint you to be king over his people, over Israel; now therefore hearken unto the voice of the words of the Lord.

² Thus says the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

³ Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

5. How did Saul carry out his instructions?

⁷ And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until you come to Shur, that is over against Egypt.

⁸ And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

⁹ But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed

utterly.

6. What excuse did Saul make for thus disobeying the command the Lord?

1 Samuel 15

²⁰ And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

²¹ But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord your God in Gilgal.

7. What did Samuel say the Lord values more than sacrifices?

²² And Samuel said, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

8. To what was Saul's stubbornness equivalent?

²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.

9. What had he rejected?

He had rejected the word of the Lord.

10. Since rebellion is equal to idolatry, had not Saul, in rejecting the word of the Lord, rejected the Lord himself?

Certainly the record shows that Saul was virtually an idolater, and thus as wicked as the Amalekites, whom he had been sent to destroy.

11. Because Saul had thus rejected the Lord, what had the Lord done?

²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.

²⁶ And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with you: for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.

12. What had He rent from Saul?

1 Samuel 15

²⁸ And Samuel said unto him, The Lord has rent the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, that is better than you.

13. To whom did Samuel say the kingdom was given?

ibid.

14. What important lesson may we learn from the narrative in this chapter?

From the narrative recorded in *1 Samuel* 15, we may learn how particular God is in his requirements, and how dangerous it is for us to presume to deviate from the plain letter of his commandments. Saul flattered himself that God would overlook his disobedience in preserving the best of the flocks of the Amalekites because, they were preserved for sacrifice. But God would not accept such a service. Had He accepted Saul's excuse, it would have been the equivalent to admitting that Saul knew what would honor the Lord better than the Lord himself knew, and that was not true.

When God tells us to do a thing in a certain way, we are to understand that to do just as He says, will honor Him more than anything else. We are not at liberty to presume that we can honor Him by different course; that would be setting ourselves above God, and consequently we would be idolaters. From this narrative we can see an illustration of:

Proverbs 28

⁹ He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

5. Importance of Obedience

Signs of the Times, June 2, 1887

Sabbath, June 18

1 Samuel 15; 2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 15

E. J. Waggoner

1. When the angels are sent to gather God's elect, whom will they take?

Psalm 50

⁵ Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

2. What does God regard more highly than sacrifice?

1 Samuel 15

²² And Samuel said, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

3. How is disobedience described?

²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.

4. When Samuel first came to Saul, how did the latter feel respecting what he had done?

¹³ And Samuel came to Saul; and Saul said unto him, Blessed be you of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord.

5. After Samuel reproved him, what did he say?

¹⁵ And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto Lord your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

6. How was Saul deceived?

He thought that by making a sacrifice to the Lord, He would

excuse him for not doing just as He had commanded.

7. Was there any way by which the people would benefit themselves pecuniarily by this disobedience?

They could use these cattle for sacrifice, and save their own for themselves.

1 Samuel 15

²¹ But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, and the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord your God in Gilgal.

8. What was the final result of Saul's course?

²⁸ And Samuel said unto him, The Lord has rent the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, that is better than you.

²⁹ And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent.

³⁵ And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the Lord repented that He had made Saul king over Israel.

9. In what manner was the ark to be conveyed from place to place?

Numbers 7

⁹ But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none; because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders.

10. By what means was it carried from the Philistines to Bethshemesh?

1 Samuel 6

¹⁰ And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home:

¹¹ And they laid the ark of the Lord upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods.

11. How were the men of Bethshemesh dealt with for looking into the ark?

¹⁹ And He smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even He smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.

12. What arrangements did David make for taking the ark from the house of Abinadab?

2 Samuel 6

³ And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

⁵ And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

13. Why was Uzzah smitten by the Lord?

1 Chronicles 13

⁹ And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled.

¹⁰ And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and He smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.

14. What was the real sin here committed?

1 Chronicles 15

¹³ For because you did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order.

15. When the ark was removed from the house of Obededom, in what manner was it carried?

¹⁴ So the priests and Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel.

¹⁵ And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded, according to the word of the Lord.

16. If God's miraculous care was over the ark when it was brought from the Philistines on a cart, why was He displeased when it was placed upon a new cart prepared expressly for that purpose by David?

See Notes.

17. What practical lesson can be learned from this?

Although men may have zeal and care for God's cause, the Lord will not accept that in the place of obedience.

Notes

It is a great mistake to presume that our property or anything we possess belongs to us to use upon our lusts. Whatever talents men possess, either natural or acquired, are loaned them of God, and those who are not faithful in that which has been loaned them will never receive the true riches which Christ has purchased for us; for if we have not been faithful in that which is another man's, none will give us that which is our own.

Nothing in this life belongs to us, but an inheritance to eternal life in the kingdom of God has been purchased for us by Christ. We were God's by creation, and after having lost the privilege of children by the fall, we have been purchased, or redeemed, by the blood of Christ. We have no right, therefore, to devote our powers or possessions to our own selfish interests. Every sacrifice made to the glory of God will meet its reward in the kingdom of God. Hence God will accept nothing but that obedience which proceeds from the heart.

Saul was a rash man, and his case fitly illustrates the course of many professed Christians at the present time. Although apparently conscientious, he was impetuous, and could not wait for God's providence when brought into straitened cir-

cumstances. He had never learned the important lesson of quiet trust in God, and in consequence, his entire life was one of fitfulness.

Saul had not a high and exalted sense of the excellence and terrible majesty of God. He had not a sacred regard for His appointed ordinances. With an impetuous spirit because Samuel did not appear at the appointed time, he rushed before God presumptuously, and undertook the sacred work of sacrifice. While equipped for war, he built the altar and officiated for himself and the people. This work was sacredly given to those appointed for the purpose. This act was a crime in Saul, and such an example would lead the people to have a low estimate of the religious ceremonies and ordinances sanctified and appointed of God, prefiguring the sinless offering of His dear Son. God would have His people have a holy regard and sacred reverence for the sacrificial work of the priests, which pointed to the sacrifice of His Son.²⁰²

God proved Saul by intrusting him with the important commission to execute His threatened wrath upon Amalek. But he disobeyed God, and spared the wicked, blasphemous king Agag, whom God had appointed unto death, and spared the best of the cattle. He destroyed utterly all the refuse that would not profit them. Saul thought it would add to his greatness to spare Agag, a noble monarch splendidly attired; and that to return from battle with him captive, with great spoil of oxen, sheep, and much cattle, would get to himself much renown, and cause the nations to fear him, and tremble before him. And the people united with him in this. They excused their sin among themselves in not destroying the cattle, because they could reserve them to sacrifice to God, and spare their own cattle to themselves.²⁰³

Samuel informed Saul that his rebellion was as the sin of witchcraft. That is, when one commences to travel in the path of rebellion, he yields himself to be controlled by an in-

²⁰² Ellen White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume One, p. 357-358.

²⁰³ Ellen White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume One, p. 362.

fluence that is in opposition to the will of God. Satan controls the rebellious mind. Those who are thus controlled lose a calm trust in God, and have less and less disposition to yield loving obedience to His will. Satan becomes more and more familiar with them, until they seem to have no power to cease to rebel. In this respect, rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

Saul's stubbornness in persisting before Samuel that he had obeyed God, was an iniquity and idolatry. His love to carry out his own will was more desirable to him than to obtain the favor of God, or the approbation of a clear conscience. And when his sin was opened clearly before him, and his wrong definitely pointed out, his pride of opinion, his excessive self-love, led him to justify himself in his wrong course, in defiance of the reproof of Samuel, and the word of the Lord by the mouth of his prophet. Such obstinacy in a known transgression, separated him forever from God.

He knew that he had gone contrary to God's express command; yet when reproved by God through Samuel, he would not humbly acknowledge his sin, but in a determined manner uttered a falsehood in self-justification. If he had humbly repented, and received the reproof, the Lord would have had mercy and forgiven Saul of his great sin. But the Lord left Saul for his stubbornly refusing to be corrected, and for uttering falsehoods to Samuel, his messenger. Samuel told Saul that, as he had rejected the word of the Lord, God had rejected him from being king.²⁰⁴

There is one thing noticeable in the case of Uzzah's being smitten before the Lord. It cannot be said that David did not have a proper sense of the sacredness of the ark. It seems that a new cart was especially prepared upon which to convey the ark. It probably had never been used for any other purpose. David also sang and gave praises before the ark with all his might.

But the sin committed was in the disregard of the law which said that the ark should be borne by the priests. Uzzah was a

²⁰⁴ Ellen White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume One, p. 365-366.

Levite but not a priest. All the circumstances seemed to be in harmony with the mind of God except this provision for carrying the ark upon a cart, instead of by the proper means, which would have avoided all danger, such as Uzzah apprehended from the stumbling of the oxen, and the shaking of the ark. This incident illustrates the grand truth that a conscientious zeal never can take the place of obedience in God's sight.

Another important truth is brought out by this circumstance, namely, that God does not hold people responsible when they do not have the light. God's miraculous providence was over the ark when it was first sent to Beth-Shemesh, although it was then drawn upon a cart; for the Philistines had no knowledge of how the ark should be carried. But to the people of Israel, God had made known the manner in which He was pleased to have it conveyed.

6. The Shepherd Boy

Present Truth, May 5, 1898

1 Samuel 16 (David's early life)

E. J. Waggoner

ALTHOUGH the Scriptures give a very full account of David's life, but little is told us of his early days. We know, however, that these were spent at Bethlehem, and he is first brought before us as a shepherd, minding his father's sheep.

Bethlehem was a small town, built on one of the highest hills in Palestine, about four miles to the south of Jerusalem. Its name signifies "The House of Bread," and was probably bestowed on it on account of the fertility of the surrounding country. Even at the present time, visitors to the place report that fruit trees and vineyards abound, and that the neighborhood of Bethlehem is not surpassed by any in Palestine for luxuriance and beauty.

It was an ancient city in David's time. The patriarch Jacob had sojourned there in his wanderings and it was near by that Rachel had died and was buried. The monument erected by Jacob to the memory of his beloved wife was still standing. It was in Bethlehem, too, that David's great grand-parents, Ruth and Boaz, had their homes; and it was there, a thousand years later, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was manifested in sinful flesh to save His people from their sins.

Micah 5

² But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel.

Jesse, David's father, was counted a very old man. He had eight sons, of whom David was the youngest, and two daughters, both of whom had children of their own. These, although David's nephews, were about the same age as himself. They

were doubtless among his youthful companions, and we can imagine how, as they minded their sheep together, or practiced with their slings, they would talk of what they hoped to do when they grew to be men.

It is not likely, however, that they anticipated becoming so famous as they afterwards did. One of them became a great king, and all grew up to be famous warriors. Joab, the great general and statesman, brave but crafty and unscrupulous; Abishai, the mighty men of valor; Asahel,

2 Samuel 2

¹⁸ ...as light of foot as a wild roe;

—and Amasa, who afterwards commanded the army of Absalom and was slain by Joab in treachery, were among these nephews of David. Then there was Elhanan who became one of the chief mighty men of Israel. He also lived at Bethlehem.

It must have been a cause of sadness to David in after life to know that so many of the playmates of his youth should destroy one another, and to find them siding with his enemies against him. It was an experience of this kind that made him write the 41st *Psalm*.

Psalm 41

⁹ Yea, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

David was not only a shepherd boy, able to run races with the fleet-footed Asahel, and to sling stones like Joab and the others, but was also a musician and a poet. As he listened to the voice of Nature, speaking all around him, and thought upon the Word of God, he sang psalms to his Maker, and made sweet music on the harp. He had carefully stored up the instruction received from his father Jesse, Samuel the prophet, and other good men, and had hidden the words of God in his heart that he might not sin against Him.

We do not know whether any of the Psalms contained in

the Bible were written by David at this time, but it is very likely that some of them were, and even if they were written in after years, we know that the thoughts in them came to him in those early shepherd days. It was then he had the blessed experience of which he sang in the 32nd *Psalm*:

Psalm 32

¹ Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

² Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

⁵ I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

The shepherd's work was not done at sunset. The sheep had to be guarded from the attacks of hungry wild beasts, or these would come and destroy the flock, so that David sometimes had to remain out at night, and watch the sheepfold. It was not always pleasant, but instead of complaining, he composed verses on the beauties of the star-lit heavens. The 8th *Psalm* was one of the songs he wrote on this subject.

Psalm 8

¹ O Lord our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth! who has set your glory above the heavens.

³ When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained;

⁴ What is man, that You are mindful of him?

David knew that although he was young and simple, the Lord could reveal in him the same glory that made the heavens beautiful, and so we find these words in the same psalm:

Psalm 8 [RV]

² Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings have You established strength.

When Jesus reminded the Jews of these words He said,

Matthew 21

¹⁶ Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have perfected praise;

—so that when God was doing this with David, He was “establishing strength” in him. That this was a real strength was seen in David’s case. More than once while he was guarding the sheep at night, fierce beasts came prowling round, and on one occasion a lion, emboldened by hunger, seized one of the lambs, and was dragging it away.

David might have thought of the great danger he would run by interfering with the lion, and perhaps reason that he could not hope to save the lamb, and his own life was more precious. But no, he had the true shepherd heart. He loved his sheep, and his only thought was that the lamb was in danger and must be rescued. Besides, God was his strength, and even though the lion was much stronger than himself, God was stronger still.

So he went in God’s strength to do his duty, taking only a shepherd’s staff. He overtook the lion and struck it until it dropped the lamb and turned on David. Then it was seen that God really girded him with strength,²⁰⁵ for in spite of its superior strength the lion was slain. Another time a bear attacked the fold, but David pursued it and fought it with the same result. He must have had this in mind when he wrote the 17th *Psalm*.

Psalm 17 [RV]

¹² He is like a lion that is greedy of prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.

¹³ Arise, O Lord. Confront him, cast him down: Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword;

¹⁴ From men, by your hand, O Lord.

In after years when crafty enemies were about him, trying to lure him into wrong paths that he might fall into evil and

²⁰⁵ *Psalm* 18:39.

be ruined, he remembered how the Lord had upheld him as he climbed from crag to crag of the limestone rocks of Bethlehem, making him sure-footed and keeping him from falling. So when he was at last delivered from the persecutions of Saul, he sang in the 18th *Psalm*:

Psalm 18

³³ He makes my feet like hind's feet: and sets me upon my high places.

³⁵ ...your right hand has held me up, and your gentleness has made me great.

³⁶ You have enlarged my steps under me, and my feet have not slipped.

David knew what it was to be tired and hungry and thirsty. In the hot summer days how he liked to lead the flock to the well which was by the gate of Bethlehem, where they could quench their thirst with the clear, cold water. Many years after, when the Philistines invaded the land, and had taken possession of Bethlehem, David and his men were in a fortress not far off. They ran short of water, and David could not help thinking of the cool, delicious draughts he used to get at the old well.

2 Samuel 23

¹⁵ And David longed and said, Oh that one would give me a drink of the water of the well Bethlehem, which is by the gate!

When some of his mighty men heard that, three of them went down to Bethlehem, broke through the Philistine host, drew water at the well and brought it back to David. He did not like to drink water that had been procured at such a risk, so he poured it out as an offering to the Lord. We learn from the incident, however, how highly he had learned to prize the well in his earlier life, and this helps us to appreciate more fully the words of the 63rd *Psalm*, which he wrote at the time just referred to:

Psalm 63

¹ O God, You are my God; early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You, in a dry and weary land, where no water is.

In all the experiences of his life the youthful shepherd learned to see the working of God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses also, had tended sheep, and as David studied the records of the past, he saw how all men were like sheep, and God was a great Shepherd, feeding and guiding His flock, and leading them to the fountain of the water of life. So he sang in the 95th *Psalm*:

Psalm 95 [RV]

⁶ O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker:

⁷ For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.

He knew how the very helplessness of the sheep appealed to his own heart, and how carefully he sought to lead them where the pasturage was best and the way was easiest. So the Lord was guiding him, only with infinitely greater love and wisdom, and the joyful realization of this thought found expression in the beautiful "Shepherd Psalm," which has gladdened the heart of every believer who has read it, and will continue to inspire rejoicing till we all enter the heavenly fold.

Psalm 23

¹ The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

So the shepherd boy was learning the ways of the Lord. By faithfulness in the discharge of the duties allotted to him, he was developing a character that God could use anywhere. One

who does everything to the glory of God, even if it be only minding sheep, is achieving true and lasting greatness, and as we follow the history of God's dealings with him, we shall see how...

Psalm 78

⁷⁰ He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds:

⁷¹ From following the ewes that give suck He brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance.

7. The Promise to David

Signs of the Times, July 2, 1885

Lesson for the Pacific Coast – August 1

1 Samuel 16; 2 Samuel 7

E. J. Waggoner

1. Relate the circumstances which led to the rejection of Saul as king of Israel.

See 1 Samuel 15.

2. Where is this narrative recorded?

Ibid.

3. When Samuel said that the Lord had taken the kingdom from Saul, to whom did he say it had been given?

1 Samuel 15

²⁸ And Samuel said unto him, The Lord has rent the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, that is better than you.

4. Who was the one whom the Lord chosen the place of Saul?

2 Samuel 12

⁷ And Nathan said to David, You are the man. Thus says the Lord God of Israel, I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul.

5. From what occupation was David taken to be made king?

2 Samuel 7

⁸ Now therefore so shall you say unto my servant David, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel.

6. Where do we have an account of the choosing and the anointing of David?

1 Samuel 16

¹ And the Lord said unto Samuel...Fill your horn with oil, and

go, I will send you to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

⁴ And Samuel did that which the Lord spoke...

⁵ ...And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

⁶ And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.

⁷ But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither has the Lord chosen this.

⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither has the Lord chosen this.

¹⁰ Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord has not chosen these.

¹¹ And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all your children? And he said, There remains yet the youngest, and, behold, he keeps the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

¹² And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.

¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

7. When the Lord placed David over His people, what did He do for him?

2 Samuel 7

⁸ Now therefore so shall you say unto my servant David, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:

⁹ And I was with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies out of your sight...

8. What did He make him?

2 Samuel 7

⁹ ...and have made you a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth.

9. What did the Lord say He would yet do for David?

¹¹ Also the Lord tells you that He will make you a house.

10. To whom did the Lord say he would establish the kingdom?

¹² And when your days be fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, which shall proceed out of your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

11. For how long a time did the Lord say that David's house and kingdom should be established?

¹⁷ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever.

8. Called to the Throne

Present Truth, May 12, 1898

1 Samuel 16

E. J. Waggoner

GREAT changes had taken place in Saul since he was anointed king of Israel. At first he was little in his own eyes, but by the time he had reigned two years his heart was so lifted up that he presumed to offer sacrifices, a work which God had appointed to the priests. He was wise in his own estimation, but the Lord told him that he had done foolishly and that the kingdom should be taken from him.

It was many years after this that Samuel was instructed to go down to Bethlehem and anoint a king among the sons of Jesse. He was afraid that the news of his errand would get to the ears of Saul who would seek to slay him. This shows how far Saul had gone in his evil ways. Like the heathen kings of other countries, he was seeking first to glorify himself and secure his own dignity. His power was given him that he might protect the weak and ensure justice to all, but it was perverted to his own selfish purposes.

If the king did evil, his subjects would feel free to do the same, and would excuse themselves by pointing to his example, and thus encouragement be given to wrong-doing. It is easy to see how Saul's wicked course would set the fashion among the leaders of the nation, and these in turn would influence others, until all Israel would be leavened. When all the people joined in making it easy for every one else to do wrong, every one was making it hard for themselves to do right.

It may have been because the degeneracy had spread as far as Bethlehem that, when the elders of that place saw the faithful old prophet, Samuel, coming into their city, they trembled, and said,

1 Samuel 16

⁴ Do you come peaceably?

Then Samuel proclaimed a sacrifice to the Lord and called Jesse and his sons to take part. All of them came except David, who was left in the field. Perhaps he was considered by the family too young for such things, and besides, there must be something important to bring Samuel to Bethlehem and, as a matter of course, it would relate to one of them.

When Samuel saw the oldest son, Eliab, he felt at once that this was the man to anoint,—just the right age and with an aspect and bearing worthy of a monarch,—and only awaited the Lord's command. But to his surprise the Lord said,

⁷ Look not on his countenance or the height of his stature, because I have refused him.

It was not mere inches that was needed in a king. Saul had enough of these and to spare, for he was head and shoulders above everybody else. But the fault was that his heart did not match the splendid proportions of his body, and so, while man, looking on the outward appearance, was thinking what a magnificent leader the king of Israel was, the Lord was continually troubled because He had to look down on the shriveled, darkened, miserable thing that did duty for a heart in Saul. There was no pleasure at all in contemplating it, and to make matters worse, the other hearts in Israel were getting like it, so the Lord was looking for a different kind to take its place, one like His own, and that was why Eliab would not do.

God does not care so much about our bodies being big if only our hearts are enlarged, and although we cannot by taking thought add one cubit to our stature, or the slightest increase to our own hearts, God can and will do it for those who let Him.

1 Kings 4

²⁹ God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding

much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore.

Psalm 119

³² I will run the way of your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart.

Abinadab passed next before Samuel, but he was not satisfactory, nor was any one of the seven sons who came to the sacrifice. After they had all passed by, little thinking that God was judging them, Samuel had to tell Jesse,

1 Samuel 16

¹⁰ The Lord has not chosen these.

Samuel was perplexed. The Lord had certainly sent him to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, and yet all had been refused. He wanted to know if there was not another son still. Yes, there was the youngest, minding the sheep.

¹¹ Send and fetch him, [said Samuel,] for we will not sit down till he come hither.

So they fetched him, wondering what the prophet could want with him, and as he came in at the door,

¹² ...ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance and goodly to look to...the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.

Then Samuel anointed him before his brethren, and he who, a few minutes before, was but a humble, unthought-of shepherd lad was now the divinely-chosen king of Israel.

It was a wonderful step and we might think him fortunate above all men, but this was nothing to a far more glorious transition which God wrought for him, and which every one of us may share as well. David tells something of it in the 40th *Psalm*.

Psalm 40

¹ I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me and heard my cry,

² He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

³ And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.

Hannah, Samuel's mother, in words which would be well known to David, had rejoiced in a similar experience.

1 Samuel 2

⁷ The Lord makes poor, and makes rich: He brings low, He also lifts up.

⁸ He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the needy from the dunghill, to make them sit with princes, and inherit the throne of glory.

So, too, can we be glad,

Colossians 1

¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

¹³ Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.

Since it was because of David's heart that he had been chosen king, let us look therein and see what we find.

Psalm 28

⁷ The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart has trusted in Him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoices; and with my song will I praise Him.

Again, in the 40th *Psalm* we read:

Psalm 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart.

These words were also spoken of Christ, but since David was a man after God's own heart, we would expect to find the same thing in both. This was not because David was better than anyone else, but because he gave his heart to the Lord.

He prayed,

Psalm 19

¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my Rock, and my Redeemer.

Psalm 51

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

The difference between David and Saul was that David let the Word and Spirit of God come freely into his heart and fill and control it, while Saul kept it to himself and would not let the light into it.

Psalm 10

¹¹ He says in his heart, God has forgotten: He hides His face; He will never see it.

Jeremiah 17

⁵ Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord.

We might wonder why David was not immediately proclaimed king and Saul driven from the throne, instead of having to wait so many years. The question troubled David sometimes, but he tells in the 73rd *Psalm* how his mind was set at rest. At first...

Psalm 73

² ...my steps had well nigh slipped.

³ For I was envious at the arrogant, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

¹³ Surely in vain have I cleanse my heart, and washed my hands in innocency.

But as David saw what would be the end of the wicked, and what their envied riches did for them, he realized that the only thing worth having was the saving blessing of God, and,

having this, he was willing to do without all else that God in love kept from him.

Psalm 73

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.

²⁸ It is good for me to draw near unto God: I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.

The delay in bringing David to the kingdom was good in many ways. Saul had opportunities for repentance, and Israel had time to learn that it was an evil thing and bitter, that they had chosen to be ruled by man rather than God. David also gained the needed experience and was taught, by his own sufferings, how important it was that...

2 Samuel 23

³ He that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

Nor did the advantage end there. The experiences then gained have passed down to succeeding ages a rich legacy of understanding of the character of God.

Psalm 89

¹ I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known your faithfulness to all generations.

9. Motives

Present Truth, September 21, 1893

1 Samuel 16:6-7

E. J. Waggoner

THIS is a subject which cannot be too carefully considered in connection with our Christian experience. Upon the character of our motives depends the result of the efforts put forth in the Christian life. Motives lie back of all deeds, and are the true index of the condition of the heart. And they are often a source of deception, not only to the friends and neighbors of an individual, but also to the individual himself.

God reads the motives of every heart, and by them measures the standing of each individual. When the prophet Samuel came to anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be king, and looked upon Eliab, the first-born, he said,

1 Samuel 16

⁶ Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.

⁷ But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

Men may deceive those around them by their outward appearance and life, and may even thereby deceive himself; but no one can in the slightest degree deceive God. And upon many a one who presents himself, as did Eliab, a confident candidate for Divine honor, God looked as He did upon the firstborn son of Jesse, and unheard by man repeats the sentence of condemnation.

Eliab was doubtless self-deceived; but in this respect he does not stand apart from the generality of mankind, the victim of a strange misfortune, for it is the natural condition of every man to be ignorant of the evil that is within him.

Jeremiah 17

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

Man cannot in his own wisdom know his heart, and the hidden motives that lie within it. God only can read the heart of man, and only upon the revelation made to him by God can man depend for a correct knowledge of what he is.

Jeremiah 17

¹⁰ I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Not all motives that prompt the performance of religious deeds are acceptable in the sight of God.

Hebrews 11

⁶ Without faith it is impossible to please God.

–and,

Romans 14

²³ Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

But much that passes for faith is not true faith. We are told what is the characteristic of true faith:

Galatians 5

⁶ For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love.

This is the motive which God approves, and which makes a deed acceptable to Him. Faith which works by love is that which avails in the service of God. All effort which proceeds from any other motive is thrown away. Without love it is equally...

Hebrews 11

⁶ ...impossible to please God,

–for love is greater than faith.

1 Corinthians 13

¹³ Now abides faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

And charity and love by which faith works, are one and the same thing. In the opening words of this 13th chapter of *1 Corinthians*, the effect of trying to serve God without charity (or love) and the possibility of deception upon this point, are strikingly set forth.

1 Corinthians 13

¹ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

² And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing.

Can a man, then, bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and give his body to be burned, and yet not have charity? Evidently, he can; or Paul would not have stated it as he did. The misguided fanatic or the deluded enthusiastic may outwardly go to the very extreme of self-denying labor for God, and yet be without that motive of love which would render his service acceptable. That love is the love of God, the love that comes from and has its origin in Him, and contains no human element in its composition. It is a love in which self is entirely lost.

Matthew 7

²¹ Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.

²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works?

²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity.

These have not been wanting in zeal, and outwardly they have made a very good showing in all respects, having “many wonderful works” to their credit, which have no doubt brought them great admiration and reverence from their fellow-men. But there was something wrong with their hearts. The right motive was not there,—the faith working by love, which takes no account of self. Their plea gave evidence of this fact.

Matthew 7

²² Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? have we not cast out devils? have we not done many wonderful works?

“We” is not the password into the gates of heaven; and “our wonderful works” are not good currency at the bank of Heaven, but only the basest counterfeit.

In that day, the righteous will base no claim upon themselves or anything they have done, or upon the great things accomplished by the religious organizations with which they have been connected. One thing alone will avail the candidate for a position at the right hand of God,—Jesus Christ and His righteousness, received and held by the faith which works by love.

1 Corinthians 13

⁸ Charity never fails.

It will continue as long as God continues; for God himself is love. When this love is in the heart God is in the heart, and eternal life can never be separated from Him. This is the one acceptable motive in all work that is done for His name.

10. The Champion of Israel

Present Truth, May 26, 1898

1 Samuel 16 & 17

E. J. Waggoner

NOT long after Samuel's visit to Bethlehem another messenger arrived for David, this time from the King. Saul was in distress and needed help. An evil spirit from the Lord was troubling him.

At his anointing the Spirit of God had come upon Saul, changing him into another man. Under its influence his way had been divinely directed, and so long as he yielded to it, his steps were ordered by the Lord. But he chose his own way, refusing counsel, and so the Spirit of the Lord was driven from him. Without it he was like a ship without a rudder, for...

Jeremiah 10

²³ ...it is not in man that walks to direct his steps,

—and would certainly make shipwreck of himself and the nation committed to his care.

To prevent this it was necessary that he should be deprived of his influence to some extent. The Lord did not leave him entirely alone, for that would have involved him in immediate ruin, but sent a spirit of evil, or sadness, upon him. Remorse and terror filled his mind, unfitting him for duty, and his state of mind soon became known among his servants.

They counseled him to send for a skillful player on the harp, who should dispel with cheering music his fits of melancholy. David's name was recommended before him as of one...

1 Samuel 16

¹⁸ ...cunning in playing,...and a comely person,

—and Saul, hoping for relief,

¹⁹ ...sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David your son, which is with the sheep.

So David passed from the cottage at Bethlehem to the court of the king at Gibeah. The lessons learned in communion with the God of nature, the views of His power manifested in the works of His hands, and the experience of His love in the daily round of shepherd life, had given David the needed preparation for his new duties.

His simple faith and love and trust in God would form just the influence that Saul needed to be brought in contact with. The stricken heart of the afflicted king found comfort in David's ministrations,

1 Samuel 16

²¹ ...and he loved him greatly.

²³ ...so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

Unhappily for him, the indecision which appeared in all his life kept him from retaining the blessing now granted.

Although armor-bearer to Saul, David still went to and fro between Bethlehem and the king's house, keeping the sheep in the intervals of his attendance on Saul. During one of his visits home, Israel was again invaded by the Philistines, and the forces of Israel met them a few miles from the border which separated the two countries. At his father's request, David set out for the camp, some fifteen miles distant, bearing provisions for his three oldest brothers, who were among the soldiers of Saul.

While David conversed with his brethren on the field of battle, a strange, imposing figure stalked into the open space between the two armies, and defied Israel to produce a man who could stand before him in single combat. His appearance struck terror to the hearts of Israel, and as he thundered out his challenge they fled before him.

Truly it needed a brave man to face this giant. Standing nearly twelve feet high, with a coat of mail that weighed a

hundred weight and a half, and armed with an enormous spear, the iron head of which alone weighed twenty pounds, there seem but little hope of finding a champion bold enough to meet him.

Yet greater things than this had been done in the history of Israel, many a time. It was only one generation ago that the ark of God, captive and undefended by human strength, had gone through the cities of the Philistines like a destroying army, compelling reverence at every stage, and finally returning in acknowledged triumph to its own country; its sole defense being that it bore the name of the Lord.

The Israelites seemed to have forgotten, so it was no wonder that the Philistines failed to remember, that the name of the Lord was a strong tower,²⁰⁶ for all who put their trust in Him.²⁰⁷ That was why one army gloried in the confidence which Goliath inspired in them, while the other, looking at his bulk, groaned in despair.

One person alone, probably the youngest and weakest in all the camp, remembered that the battle is the Lord's, and that His arm is not grown feeble.²⁰⁸ David came before Saul and announced his intention of going out against the Philistine. It was Saul's place to go, as leader of the people, but his trust was in his own strength, and now, in that hour of need, it failed him.

He attempted to set before David the perils of his undertaking, but David was not going in his own strength, and felt no doubt as to the issue of the conflict. Refusing Saul's armor, he took his sling and five smooth stones out of the brook and drew near to meet the Philistine.

Goliath seemed disgusted at the insolence of a mere youth in coming out to fight with himself, and boasted loudly of

²⁰⁶ *Proverbs* 18:10.

²⁰⁷ *1 Chronicles* 5:20.

²⁰⁸ *Isaiah* 59:1.

what he would do to his adversary, but David declared that:

1 Samuel 17

⁴⁷ All this assembly shall know that the Lord saves not with the sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands.

Said he,

⁴⁵ You come to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts.

It was a fearfully unequal contest. On one side was a man, bigger and stronger than all others; on the other the great and powerful Creator of heaven and earth, before whom all the nations are as a drop of a bucket. He might have gone forth against Goliath in terrible majesty, shaking the earth with thunder and smiting His antagonist with the lightning, but, being all-powerful, He was able to accomplish just as much with a smooth stone in the hand of a youth.

There was no reason why Saul, or anyone else in the army, should not have been used by the Lord to lay low the pride of the Philistines, except that they all had too much of it in their own hearts. They thought so much of themselves that the Lord was overlooked, and seemed too far off for any practical purpose. Yet God had called them that they should bear His name, and be His representatives, and in His name, they might have done what David did.

This experience is written for our learning that we may know in what our strength consists, and that we should learn not to fear difficulties or temptations on account of their great size and seeming strength. Our victory or defeat will depend entirely on whether we meet the enemy in the name of the Lord. Christ says,

John 14

¹³ Whatsoever you shall ask in my name that will I do.

It was now apparent to all Israel that David was most suited

to be their leader. In allowing another, young and inexperienced, to take the place of danger as the champion of Israel, Saul had confessed himself unfit for the post. David was no better in himself than anyone else, as he sadly proved in after years, but while he allowed God to work His will through him, great good would come to others thereby.

God alone could help the people, and only as David revealed God, would his life and reign be a blessing. He realized this when he wrote the 44th *Psalms*:

Psalm 44

⁴ You are my King, O God: command deliverance for Jacob.

⁵ Through You will we push down our adversaries; through your name will we tread them under that rise up against us.

⁶ For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.

⁷ But You have saved us from our adversaries, and have put them to shame that hate us.

⁸ In God have we made our boast all the day long, and we will give thanks unto your name for ever.

11. Passing the Love of Women

Present Truth, June 23, 1898

1 Samuel 16 to 20

E. J. Waggoner

WE WOULD naturally expect that a man after God's own heart would reveal in his life something of the love and tenderness which dwells in the Father's heart, and there was that in David which inspired strong affection in those who knew him. Even Saul...

1 Samuel 16

²¹ ...loved him greatly.

Michal, Saul's daughter, bestowed her affections on him, and of Jonathan, Saul's eldest son, it is written that he loved David as his own soul.

1 Samuel 18

¹ ...the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

The first time that David and Jonathan are mentioned together was after the return of the former from the slaying of Goliath. From that time Saul would no more allow David to return to his home at Bethlehem, but set him over the men of war.

³ Then Jonathan and David made a covenant...

⁴ And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

There was much in common between the two friends. The same spirit of fearless trust in God which had made David bold to take up the challenge of Goliath was likewise strong in Jonathan. Accompanied only by his armor-bearer he had once attacked a garrison of the Philistines, and the Lord had delivered them into his hand. Saul with six hundred men had not ventured to attack the enemy, but Jonathan said,

1 Samuel 14

⁶ It may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.

²³ So the Lord saved Israel that day.

Jonathan's disposition was a noble one. Even when he learned that the throne which should come to him, as Saul's eldest son, was promised to David, it did not lessen his love. The faith, by which he was victorious over the Philistines, proved him a true child of Abraham, and like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he desired...

Hebrews 11

¹⁶ ...a better country, that is, a heavenly.

His father sought the honor that comes from men only; and could not endure to hear the praises of David sounded louder than his own, or the thought that his kingdom was to be given to another better than he. But Jonathan, in generous, self-forgetful love, could strip off his own princely arms and raiment, and put them upon his friend. One who looks for an everlasting dominion, and who knows that God holds for him...

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁷ ...a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

–will not feel hurt and rebellious if others receive a larger portion of earthly honor than falls to himself. It may be that much of the good seen in David's after life was due to the influence of Jonathan's example.

The time soon came when Saul tried to take David's life, and spoke to his son about it, expecting his cooperation in the attempt but instead Jonathan warned David of the danger and succeeded for awhile in turning Saul from his evil purpose. Jonathan pleaded with his father not to sin against David,

1 Samuel 19

⁴ ...because he has not sinned against you...

⁵ For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: you saw it, and did rejoice: wherefore then will you sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

Although quieted for awhile Saul's jealous, unreasoning anger was again raised against David, and this time he concealed his intentions from Jonathan. But David learned of his peril and, meeting Jonathan, told him what Saul was doing. Jonathan would not believe that his father could be so treacherous, and it was not until Saul, in his anger at David's escape, cast his javelin at his son, that Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. He met with his friend for the last time, so far as we have any record,

1 Samuel 20

⁴¹ ...and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.

⁴² And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and you, and between my seed and your seed for ever.

So they parted, Jonathan returning to the city, David going forth to seek a refuge from the hatred of the king.

The next mention of Jonathan tells of his death on the battle-field at Gilboa, together with two of his brothers and his father. We may think it sad that Jonathan's life should not have been set in happier times, and that the closing years should have been embittered by his father's enmity against his dearest friend, but we may hope with confidence that he had learned like David the lesson of trust in God.

Psalms 37

⁵ Commit your way unto the Lord. Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass.

Even if the evil seemed to triumph, he knew the time was coming when...

Psalm 37

¹¹ The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

When David learned of the death of Jonathan he mourned greatly, saying,

2 Samuel 1

²³ Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

²⁶ I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant have you been unto me: your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

The Love of Christ

Great, however, as was the love of Jonathan for David, it was but a feeble representation of that which Christ bestows on us. So closely has He knit His soul with ours that...

Romans 8

³⁸ ...neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He puts upon us His own raiment,

Isaiah 61

¹⁰ ...for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.

He equips us with His own weapons and armor, bidding us,

Ephesians 6

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God,

¹⁷ And take...the sword of the Spirit.

He is the Son of a King and heir to the throne of the universe, but He left everything and...

2 Corinthians 8

⁹ ...became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich,

–and He calls whosoever will²⁰⁹ to sit down with Him on His throne.²¹⁰ Truly, His love to us is wonderful, passing the love of women.

Isaiah 49

¹⁵ Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.

¹⁶ Behold, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands.

Jeremiah 31

³ I have loved you with an everlasting love.

John 15

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Indeed,

Ephesians 3

¹⁹ To know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, [is to] be filled with all the fullness of God.

You didst leave Thy throne
And your kingly crown
 When You camest to earth for me;
But in Bethlehem's home
Was there found no room
 For Thy holy nativity.

You camest, O Lord,
With the living Word,
 That should set Thy people free;
But with mocking scorn,
And with crown of thorn,
 They bore Thee to Calvary.

Oh, come to my heart, Lord Jesus!

²⁰⁹ *Revelation 22:17.*

²¹⁰ *Revelation 3:21.*

Your cross is my only plea;
Oh, come to my heart, Lord Jesus, come!
There, is room in my heart for Thee.²¹¹

²¹¹ Emily E. S. Elliott, Hymn: *You Didst Leave Thy Throne*, 1864.

12. After My Own Heart

Present Truth, October 17, 1895

1 Samuel 16 to 26

E. J. Waggoner

Sometimes scoffers quote the words of the Lord,

Acts 13

²² I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart,

—in connection with David's great sin, in order to show that the God of the Bible is not the God of truth and righteousness, forgetting or not knowing that the words were spoken long before that event, with reference to David's general disposition, and that the sin of David was signally rebuked by the Lord, and acknowledged by David.

Let us, with that same statement about David in mind, study a few points in his character, in order that we may see with what sort of disposition God is pleased. In so doing we shall get profit to ourselves.

A King Tending Sheep

In the 16th chapter of *1 Samuel* we have the account of the first public appearance of David. The prophet Samuel had been directed by the Lord to go and anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be king in the place of Saul, whom He had rejected. Seven sons of Jesse passed before the prophet, but the Lord's choice was not among them.

1 Samuel 16

¹¹ And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all your children? And he said, There remains yet the youngest, and, behold, he keeps the sheep.

At Samuel's order, he was sent for, and as soon as he appeared, the Lord said,

¹² Arise, anoint him; for this is he.

Immediately,

¹³ ...the Spirit of the Lord came upon David.

What did David do then? Did he assume a lordly air, and demand to be treated as a king? Did he at once place himself before the public, proclaiming the fact that the Lord had chosen him king, and attempt to seize the authority, or demand at least to be consulted in regard to public affairs? Nothing of the kind; he made no claim whatever in his own behalf, simply because the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. If he had put himself forward, he would have shown himself unfit to lead the Lord's people.

Read onward in the chapter, and you will find that some time afterwards a musician was needed to play before Saul. Then someone recommended the son of Jesse, and Saul sent messengers, saying,

1 Samuel 16

¹⁹ Send me David your son, which is with the sheep.

So we see that David had returned to his sheep after he was anointed king, as though nothing had happened. An anointed king keeping sheep! How natural it would have been to persuade himself that he was wasting his talents, and that it was his duty to be leading men instead of sheep. But he did nothing of the kind, because he was a man according to God's heart, and the Lord is...

Matthew 11

²⁹ ...meek and lowly in heart.

Here we have a sample of the kind of men whom God uses in His work.

A King at Service

1 Samuel 16

²¹ And David came to Saul, and stood before him; and he loved him greatly; and he became his armor-bearer.

At last David is at court. It looks as though there was now more prospect that he might fill the position for which he had been anointed, than when he was tending sheep. But still he is only an armor-bearer, a servant. Now we shall expect to see him begin to work himself forward and push his claims to the allegiance of the people. Ah, that's because we don't know the Lord. David was a man according to God's own heart, and God's heart is love, and love...

1 Corinthians 13

⁴ ...vaunts not itself,

-and...

⁵ ...seeks not her own.

Instead of seizing upon the throne, which was his by Divine right,

1 Samuel 17

¹⁵ David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

The special object for which he was called to Saul seems to have been accomplished, and the anointed king returned contentedly to his father's sheep in the wilderness.

But he did not stay there. There was war, and three of his brothers were in Saul's army. The brothers, who had been passed by in the choice of a king, were in the army, where there was some chance of distinguishing themselves and becoming known, while David, the one chosen and anointed, was an unknown shepherd boy. At last he also was sent to the army, but only as a messenger to carry provisions, and to come again.

1 Samuel 17

¹⁷ And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for your brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to your brethren;

¹⁸ And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thou-

sand, and look how your brethren fare, and take their pledge.

Suppose that David had proudly refused to do such menial service. Why should he,—the anointed king,—act as an errand boy? Thousands of people with far less ability than he, and having no such evidence as he had that the Lord has called them to the work, have refused to do humble work that they thought was beneath them, and have complained bitterly that they were not elevated to the position to which they felt sure that God had called them. But then they were not chosen ones, according to God's heart.

If David had refused to perform that humble task, he would have missed the opportunity of doing a thing which brought his name before all Israel, and fastened the eyes of the nation upon him. We often miss a high place, because we think ourselves already too high to occupy a low place.

Goliath was slain, and David was in high favor.

1 Samuel 18

² And Saul took him that day, and would let him no more go home to his father's house.

⁵ And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

Here at last was a position more in keeping with his real calling; nevertheless he was only a servant. But,

Proverbs 31

³⁰ Favor is deceitful,

—and Saul's regard for David soon cooled. The people's regard for David aroused Saul's jealousy, and so,

1 Samuel 18

¹³ Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand.

Although called upon to step down to a lower position than

he had occupied, there was no complaint; but:

1 Samuel 18

¹⁴ David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him.

That was why David behaved so wisely; for Christ, when He was in the form of God,

Philippians 2 [RV]

⁶ ...counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God,

⁷ But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.

By his willingness to serve, David was demonstrating his fitness to reign.

A King in Hiding

Finally David was compelled to flee for his life from the presence of Saul. But why did he submit to such injustice? Why did he not stand his ground, and claim his rights? The throne was his by right, and the people respected and loved him. Why did he not assert his right to the throne, rally the people around him, and take possession of the place to which God had anointed him? The reason why is that:

1 Samuel 18

¹⁴ God was with him,

–and he was...

1 Samuel 13

¹⁴ ...a man after God's heart.

Christ was the manifestation of God to men, and He,

1 Peter 2

²³ When He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judges righteously.

Thus did David. Twice Saul was completely within his power, yet no advantage did he take of it. It was not because

David restrained himself, that he did not kill Saul, but because he had no desire to do so. This is shown by the fact that when at one time he had cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, his heart smote him even for that.²¹² The Lord had anointed David to be king, and David was determined to leave it wholly with the Lord to bring him to the throne.

It is easy for men to say that their case is in the Lord's hands, and at the same time to persuade themselves that God has left all the details to them. The pagan idea that:

“God helps those who help themselves,”

–has a large place in the creed of many Christians. So the friends of David tried to persuade him. When Saul was in the cave where David was, they said,

1 Samuel 24

⁴ Behold, the day of which the Lord said unto you, Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it shall seem good unto you.

But David was not to be persuaded to take the Lord's work out of His hands. God had said that David should be king, and it was the Lord's business to perform His own promise.

On another occasion David found Saul asleep.

1 Samuel 26

⁸ Then said Abishai to David, God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day; now therefore let me smite him, I pray you, and with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.

How many of us are there who could have resisted so specious an argument? How natural it would be to persuade ourselves that in refusing to act we should be neglecting the clearly-indicated will of God. But David knew the Lord better than that. He said:

²¹² 1 Samuel 24:5.

1 Samuel 26

¹⁰ As the Lord lives, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.

¹¹ The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed.

Hebrews 5

⁵ Christ glorified not himself to be made a High Priest.

Philippians 2

⁷ [He] made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant,...

⁸ And...humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

⁹ Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him.

He was the One in whom God was well pleased, and it was because of the same spirit in David that God exalted him.

Let us not forget that no one but a learner is fit to teach, and no one who is not always willing to serve can ever reign with the Lord. God calls us all to a place in His work; but it is that we may be instruments in His hands, and not He an instrument in our hands. There can be no real advancement except directly from God; for:

Matthew 23

¹² Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

13. The Fruit of Offended Dignity

Present Truth, October 17, 1895

1 Samuel 18

E. J. Waggoner

EVERY Bible reader is familiar with the story of the choosing of Saul as king over Israel, and of his fall and sad end. From a modest, gentle youth, who would allow no harm to be done to those who had mocked at his being chosen king, he degenerated into a hard, cruel, vindictive man, who had no scruples as to the means he used to seek to murder one whom he unjustly regarded as his enemy.

Not a man can be found to offer any apology for his persistent efforts to take David's life. Not only did he seek David's life, but his causeless hatred of David was so great that he slew those who even unconsciously aided David to escape from him, as well as those who worked in any way connected with them. The spirit of murder possessed him. Eighty-five innocent and defenseless priests, with their families, were slaughtered by Saul at one time, because one of their number had been hospitable to David.

What was the cause of this? What had they done to Saul, that so roused his enmity? Nothing whatever; he had been Saul's faithful servant, and Saul had loved him for his good qualities. One little thing led to this train of murders. When Saul and David were returning after David had slain Goliath, the women came out with instruments of music to celebrate the victory, and sang,

1 Samuel 18

⁷ Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

That was enough; envy and jealousy took possession of Saul;

⁹ And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

Hear what he said:

⁸ They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands.

Well, what of it? No fact was altered by what they said. David himself had laid no claim to any honor. If Saul had been more valorous than David, the song of a few women would not affect the fact; and if he had not, then the envy was so much the more causeless.

But self-love is an extremely sensitive plant. We naturally have an exaggerated sense of our own ability or importance. Then we are anxious to have others think better of us than we know ourselves to be; and if they should by any chance estimate us below our real value, that is fatal.

How often we see Saul's pettishness duplicated. One person is offended because another is preferred before him. Somebody is given a position which he thinks he ought to occupy.

"I'm as good as he is,"

or,

"I'm not treated fairly,"

—is said or thought, and bitter feeling is cherished against the favored one, who may be entirely innocent of any self-seeking.

Not just as surely as Saul sought to kill David, and murdered many innocent people in his mad attempt, just so surely is there murder in every man's heart when he becomes soured because somebody else is honored, and when he has a feeling of envy against one who occupies a place which he thinks he himself ought to have. Hear what the Word says:

James 3

¹⁴ If you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

¹⁵ This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

¹⁶ For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

There we have the truth of the matter. The man whose feelings are ruffled because he is named second, or has to accept an inferior place, has in his heart not only murder, but “every evil work.” And withal there is some discontent and dissatisfaction that does not cease even when the coveted honor is gained. Only wisdom’s ways are pleasantness;²¹³ and the word of wisdom is,

Romans 12

¹⁰ Be kindly affectioned to one another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.

²¹³ *Proverbs 3:17.*

14. How to Prosper

Present Truth, June 30, 1898

1 Samuel 18:5-30

E. J. Waggoner

1 Samuel 18

¹⁴ And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him.

WE READ of David, while at the court of Saul, that he “behaved himself wisely in all his ways,” or, as a marginal reading expresses it, “he prospered.” This was noticed by those with whom he associated,

⁵ ...and he was accepted in the sight of all the people.

If one would prosper he must behave wisely, but that is what people find it so difficult to do. We sometimes think that if we had only received a better education, or a superior training, or if our surroundings were not so unfavorable, we would not get along so badly as we do.

But remember that David had not been brought up among soldiers and statesmen. His training had been among the sheep, and it was a great change to be set over men of war; yet even with his youth and inexperience,

1 Samuel 18

³⁰ David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul: so that his name was much set by.

Psalms 119

⁹ Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?

No doubt this question came to David as he found himself surrounded with new and strong temptations, but he had learned the answer:

⁹ ...by taking heed thereto according to your Word.

¹¹ Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.

It was because David listened to the Word of God, and meditated upon it, that he did wisely and prospered so greatly. Perhaps he was thinking of his experience in Saul's house, among careless and wicked companions, and how God gave him prosperity, when he wrote the 1st *Psalm*.

Psalm 1

¹ Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the wicked,

Nor stands in the way of sinners,

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful.

² But his delight is in the law of the Lord;

And in His law does he meditate day and night.

³ And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water,

That brings forth its fruit in its season,

Whose leaf also shall not wither;

And whatsoever he does shall prosper.

⁴ The wicked are not so,

But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.

Moses had told Israel, hundreds of years before, that if they would keep the commandments of the Lord, the nations around them would say,

Deuteronomy 4

⁶ Surely this great nation is a wise, and understanding people.

There is a reason why men prosper when they receive the Word of God. The Word itself is bound to prosper. The Lord says of His Word that goes forth out of His mouth,

Isaiah 55

¹¹ ...it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

So that when we receive the Word of God into our own hearts, it will prosper there. It is sure to prosper wherever it is, and if we will not have it, it will prosper in others who will receive it. That is why God sends His Word to us, that it may

prosper in us, and thus we will prosper too. To Joshua the Lord said,

Joshua 1

⁸ This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.

When David's time came to die, he charged Solomon his son to walk in God's ways, to keep His commandments,

1 Kings 2

³ ...that you may prosper in all that you do, and wherever you turn yourself.

Many of the kings of Israel and Judah did not walk in the way of the Lord, and none of them prospered, but of King Hezekiah it is written that...

2 Kings 18

⁶ He clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses.

⁷ And the Lord was with him; and he prospered wherever he went forth.

Christ himself testified,

Psalms 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart;

—and so, of Him it is written,

Isaiah 53

¹⁰ ...the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

Psalms 45

⁴ And in your majesty ride on prosperously,

Because of truth and meekness and righteousness.

⁷ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness:

Therefore God, your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness above your fellows.

God gives men prosperity in His Word. If His Word dwells in us richly, it will be in all wisdom,²¹⁴ and we shall do wisely and prosper. We shall even have the wisdom and prosperity of God, which is more than mind can conceive.

Jeremiah 23

⁵ Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper...

⁶ ...and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In Christ we are made not only righteous, but wise and prosperous.

1 Corinthians 1

³⁰ But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Men sometimes think that they are more likely to prosper in this life by not paying any heed to the Word of God. Very likely when Saul was hunting David up and down the country, to take his life, others thought that it was Saul who was prospering and not David,

1 Samuel 18

²⁹ ...and Saul became David's enemy continually.

Let us lay hold of God's Word and trust only in that for wisdom and prosperity.

Psalms 37 [RV]

⁴ Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

⁵ Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.

²¹⁴ *Colossians 3:16.*

⁶ And He shall make your righteousness to go forth as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.

⁷ Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass.

⁸ ...fret not yourself, it tends only to evil-doing.

¹⁰ For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be...

¹¹ But the meek shall inherit the land; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

15. The Sure Mercies of David

Present Truth, December 30, 1897

Original title: The Throne of David. The Sure Mercies of David.

1 Samuel 22, 23

E. J. Waggoner

Psalm 89

¹ I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, with my mouth will I make known your faithfulness to all generations.

² For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.

³ I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,

⁴ Your seed will I establish for ever, and build up your throne to all generations.

THIS covenant with David was made after he became king, as we learn from the 7th chapter of *2 Samuel*; but it was in effect made long before.

When David was yet a shepherd lad, the Lord sent Samuel to anoint him king over Israel. The anointing was accomplished, and David was the chosen king. Yet for a long time there was no visible evidence of it. Instead of donning royal robes and taking his place at the head of the people, he retained his shepherd's frock and staff, and continued at the head of his father's flock.

Then came the time when he was called to court, but only as the servant of the king. But his position was far from enviable. Not only was he a servant, but he was hated, and his life was in constant danger. So this anointed king was obliged to flee for his life, and hide with a few friends in the caves of the mountains, living as best he could. The king with all his army hunted him like a partridge, so that he could not remain long in any place, but must continually flee, yet he did not lose courage.

A study of David's confidence in God during these wanderings is a most profitable employment. Let us note two or three instances.

The Slaughter of the Priests

Once in his flight from the wrath of Saul, who was bent on taking his life, David came to the high priest at Nob, and received food. One of Saul's ruffians, Doeg the Edomite was present, and went and told Saul that Ahimelech the high priest had inquired of the Lord for David, and had given him bread and the sword of Goliath.

This was enough for the mad monarch. He at once called to him the high priest, and all the priests that were with him, the entire family of priests, and although they were innocent of the slightest disloyalty, he ordered them, eighty-five in all, to be slaughtered simply because one of them had performed a kindness to David. This shows the bitterness of Saul's rage against David.

1 Samuel 22

²⁰ And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David.

²¹ And Abiathar showed David that Saul had slain the Lord's priests.

²² And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house.

²³ Abide with me, fear not: for he that seeks my life seeks your life: but with me you shall be in safeguard.

Such language would have been vain presumption if it had not been for the promise of God. As it was, it showed sublime confidence. David, an outlaw, who was so hated that not only those who showed him a kindness, but even the relatives of such ones, were ruthlessly slain, said to a refugee,

“Abide with us, fear not; the same one is seeking the lives

of us both; but you are safe with me.”

David in the Wilderness of Ziph

At another time, David in his flight from Saul took refuge in a cave in the wilderness of Ziph. But the Ziphites were treacherous, and, desiring to curry favor with Saul, they went to him, and betrayed David’s hiding-place. Not only did they tell Saul where David was, but they added:

1 Samuel 23

²⁰ Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king’s hand.

This pleased Saul wonderfully, but as he had often failed to seize David, just when he thought he had him fast, he determined not to be foiled this time. So he sent the Ziphites back with instructions to take particular note of all David’s hiding-places, and come again with information, and then, said he,

²³ I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.

This plan was carried out, and Saul and his men went to the place where David was, and...

²⁶ ...Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.

Just then, however, a messenger came to tell Saul that the Philistines had invaded the land, and so he was compelled to turn back, just as David seemed to be in his grasp. Thus the Lord delivered David; but before this deliverance appeared, just when the men of Ziph were leading Saul and his force to his hiding-place, when it seemed as though escape was impossible, David took his harp and sang this song of trust:

Psalm 54

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, A Psalm of David, when

the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Does not David hide himself with us?

¹ Save me, O God, by your name, and judge me by your strength.

² Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.

³ For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them.

⁴ Behold, God is my helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.

⁵ He shall reward evil unto my enemies: cut them off in your truth.

⁶ I will freely sacrifice unto You: I will praise your name, O Lord; for it is good.

⁷ For He has delivered me out of all trouble: my eye has seen His desire upon my enemies.

Note that David did not say,

“The Lord *will* deliver me,”

–but,

“The Lord *has* delivered me.”

How was that, since he was in a great danger at the time that the psalm was composed? Why, the Lord had done it by His promise. The promise to David was just the same to him as though he had already seen the deliverance. Yea, he had seen it, since faith makes one see as present reality the things that are yet to come.

David Fleeing From Absalom

We pass by many interesting incidents, and come to the time when David had been on the throne a long time, and his own son had rebelled against him. In the basest manner Absalom had treacherously turned the hearts of the people from David, and now had only one desire, and that was to take his father’s life.

Taken wholly by surprise by the strong conspiracy that had

secretly been formed against him, David was forced to flee from his palace, with but a few attendants. And so seemingly hopeless was his case that a miserable creature dared to curse him to his face, and throw stones at him, declaring that God was now punishing him for his sins as he deserved. While thus an outcast, he sang again, as we read in the 3rd *Psalm*:

Psalm 3

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

¹ Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.

² Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God.

³ But You, O Lord, are a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head.

⁴ I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill.

⁵ I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.

⁶ I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.

⁷ Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for You have smitten all my enemies upon the cheek bone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.

⁸ Salvation belongs unto the Lord; your blessing is upon your people.

David was not saved nor did he trust in God because of his own goodness, but because of God's mercy. David was a sinful man, as are all men; but his heart was tender, he acknowledged his sinfulness and God's righteousness, and believed God's promise. It is natural for men to think that God is unrighteous because they are; and the more they know themselves to be unrighteous, the more they think God to be the same. Thus it is: It is most common for one to say,

“I am so great a sinner, I dare not believe that God forgives my sins.”

But God has declared that His righteousness consists in the

forgiveness of sins.

1 John 1

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Therefore to say or to think that God cannot or will not forgive sins, is to charge Him with being unrighteous. Thus it is that sinners often make God out to be as bad as they are.

Not so with David; sinful as he was, he would insist that God was nevertheless righteous and faithful. God had promised him that he should be king, and not only that, but that his throne should stand for ever. But this promise was through Christ, for the throne of David was the throne of the Lord:

1 Chronicles 29

¹¹ Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head above all.

And the promise that he should sit on the throne and that it should be established for ever, was the promise of everlasting righteousness which God would freely give him through Christ.

Isaiah 60

²¹ Your people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

So David's confidence was in God's promise. God had said that he should be king, and no man or men could frustrate God's purpose. It was not for David's sake but for the Lord's own sake, to vindicate His kindness and faithfulness, that God preserved David, and in this David was confident.

The Same Fulfilled Unto Us

Acts 13

³² And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

³³ God has fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus again.

To every one the call is sent,

Isaiah 55

¹ Come to the waters! And he that has no money, come, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

The promise is,

Revelation 3

²¹ To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

Yea, He has...

Revelation 1

⁵ ...loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

⁶ And has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father.

1 Peter 2

⁹ You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

And the “Holy Spirit of promise”²¹⁵ is the anointing oil that assures us of this. Therefore the Lord says,

Isaiah 55

³ Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

²¹⁵ *Ephesians* 1:13.

As surely as David was delivered from his enemies, because God had made him a promise, just so surely shall we be delivered,

Hebrews 3

⁶ ...if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Therefore let us sing,

Luke 1

⁶⁸ Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people,

⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David;

⁷⁰ As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

⁷² To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant;

⁷³ The oath which He swore to our father Abraham,

⁷⁴ That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear,

⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.

16. Ancient Spiritualism. Saul and the Witch

Signs of the Times, December 11, 1884

1 Samuel 28

E. J. Waggoner

1. When on a certain occasion the Philistine host came against Israel, how was King Saul affected?

1 Samuel 28

⁴ And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.

⁵ And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

2. To whom did he seek for guidance?

⁷ Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that has a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that has a familiar spirit at Endor.

⁸ And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray you, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto you.

3. How had Saul previously treated such people?

³ And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

⁹ And the woman said unto him, Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

4. By what authority had he done so?

Exodus 22

¹⁸ You shall not suffer a witch to live.

Leviticus 20

²⁷ A man also or woman that has a familiar spirit, or that is a

wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.

5. Why had the Lord given such instruction concerning the diviners, consultants of familiar spirits, etc.?

Deuteronomy 18

¹⁰ There shall not be found among you any one that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

¹¹ Or a charmer, or a consultant with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

¹² For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord your God does drive them out from before you.

6. With what people were such abominations common?

⁹ When you are come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

¹⁴ For these nations, which you shall possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for you, the Lord your God has not suffered you so to do.

7. What had the Lord said it would be the result to those who should seek after such persons?

Leviticus 19

³¹ Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.

8. Since Saul had obeyed the Lord in putting away those who had familiar spirits, why did he now consult one?

1 Samuel 28

⁶ And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

9. When he went, for whom did he ask?

¹¹ Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto you? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.

10. Why did he not go directly to Samuel?

³ Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city.

11. What can you say concerning the part which the dead are able to act in earthly affairs?

Ecclesiastes 9

⁵ For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

⁶ Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

12. Give other Scripture testimony concerning the state of the dead.

13. Then could it indeed have been Samuel himself who carried on the subsequent conversation with Saul?

14. Was Saul at this time in favor with the Lord?

1 Samuel 28

⁶ And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

15. Why had the Lord rejected Saul?

1 Samuel 15

²² And Samuel said, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king

16. When people reject the word of the Lord, what are they left to believe?

2 Thessalonians 2

¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion,

that they should believe a lie:

¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

17. Then since Saul had rejected the word of the Lord, what must his supposed interview with Samuel have been?
18. Who is the author of the illusions and lies?

John 8

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

19. Whom did he then worship?

1 Corinthians 10

²⁰ The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that you should have fellowship with devils.

20. When the Israelites turned from the Lord, whom did they worship?

Deuteronomy 32

¹⁶ They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations they provoked Him to anger.

¹⁷ They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.

21. Then what sort of a spirit was it which Saul consulted?
22. How is the devil able to make himself appear?

2 Corinthians 11

¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

23. If he can appear as an angel light, would it not be easy for him to assume the appearance of persons who have died?
24. How could Saul have kept from being deceived?

Notes

The lesson this week is based on the account of Saul's visit to the witch of Endor, recorded in the *1 Samuel* 28. In order to keep the connection, the entire chapter should be carefully read. It may not be amiss to say that many good people suppose that Samuel did really come and talk with Saul, and thus they are strengthened in their belief of the conscious existence of the dead. We shall follow the subject in the order of the questions in the lesson, and see what we find.

The scene opens with the Philistine host prepared to fight against the Israelites. So great was the number of the Philistines, as compared with that of the Israelites, that Saul was very much alarmed. As it is forcibly expressed in the text,

1 Samuel 28

⁵ ...his heart greatly trembled.

When David was surrounded by enemies, he said to the Lord, in his prayer,

Psalms 56

³ What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.

But Saul was in a pitiable condition, for when he would seek the Lord, he received no answer. In his extremity he had his servants find a woman that had a familiar spirit, and, disguising himself, he went to her for information. It was necessary for him to disguise himself, else he could not have gained admittance to the witch's abode; for in time past,

1 Samuel 28

³ Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

This was in accordance with the command of God, and does not mean simply banishment, but death. Thus:

Exodus 22

¹⁸ You shall not suffer a witch to live.

Leviticus 20

²⁷ A man also or woman that has a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard shall surely be put to death.

In *Deuteronomy* 18:9-12 we learn that witchcraft, and consulting with familiar spirits, was very common among the heathen that inhabited Canaan and before it was conquered by the Israelites. Under direction from the Lord, Moses said to Israel:

Deuteronomy 18

⁹ When you are come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

¹⁰ There shall not be found among you any one that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

¹¹ Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

¹² For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord; and because of these abominations the Lord your God does drive them out from before you.

The woman at Endor was one who had, by some means, escaped the proscription.

In order to a perfect understanding of this incident, it is very necessary to know the relation that existed between Saul and the Lord. Why would not the Lord listen to Saul? The answer is founded *1 Samuel* 15. The Lord had given Saul a commission, and he had not fulfilled it. He deliberately disobeyed the Lord. And this was only one of a long series of disobedient acts. So the prophet Samuel announced the will of the Lord, in these words:

1 Samuel 15

²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.

From that time, we learn that Samuel came no more to see Saul. So we see that Saul's rejection by the Lord was due to the fact that he himself had first rejected the Lord.

When Saul came to the witch, he said,

1 Samuel 28

¹¹ Bring me up Samuel.

Why did he not seek directly to the prophet himself? Because:

³ Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city.

In response to this request the woman told him that she saw an old man, covered with a mantle, coming up out of the earth.

¹³ And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what did you see? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

¹⁴ And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man comes up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.

The reader will notice that in this case Saul did not seek the apparition at all, but "perceived that it was Samuel," from the woman's description. Notice, also, that the pious Samuel was called "up," and came up "out of the earth," instead of down from heaven. Saul knew nothing about the doctrine of the good going to Heaven at death, and the heathen, one of whom he was consulting, had all souls, good and bad alike, in the lower world—in Hades.

Now what reasons have we for saying that Samuel did not converse with Saul on that occasion, and was not there at all?

1. It is not reasonable to suppose that, if Samuel would not during his life-time listen to Saul, whom he loved,

when personally urged do so, he would come to him after death, at the solicitation of a despised heathen.

2. It is the height of absurdity to suppose that God, who had rejected Saul, and had refused to answer him in His own appointed way,—by dreams, by Urim, or by prophets,—would communicate with him through one whom He had said should be put to death as an abominable thing.
3. That which settles the matter beyond all controversy, is the word of inspiration:

Ecclesiastes 9

⁵ The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything.

⁶ Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished.

¹⁰ Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go.

Psalms 146

⁴ [Man's] breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Satan has the power of death; but the Lord alone has life. Satan can seize men, and shut them up in his prison house, the grave; but Satan cannot liberate them; Christ alone has the keys of the grave; He alone can set Satan's captives free. For these reasons, we say we know that Samuel had no more to do with the occurrence narrated in *1 Samuel 28*, than the stones under their feet.

“If Samuel was not there, who personated him so successfully as to deceive Saul?”

Satan, or one of his evil angels. And this also is susceptible of Bible proof. First, we learn that:

2 Corinthians 11

¹⁴ Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

It was as an angel light, his true form and character concealed, that he came with his temptations to Christ in the wilderness. Had he come as the chief of the powers of darkness, he could not have hoped to make any impression on the Saviour. He hoped to deceive Jesus into thinking that he was an angel sent with a message from heaven. The Lord, however, saw through the disguise at once. But the point is, if Satan may appear as an angel light, how much more may he not personate a human being? To successfully personate another is nothing more than many men are able to do.

Second, Saul had put himself on the devil's ground. Long before, he had first cast off, and then been cast off by the Lord. Now there is no neutral ground between the Lord and Satan. As soon as Saul was entirely out from under the influence of God, he passed under the influence of Satan. His frenzied attacks on the innocent David showed the influence under which he had fallen.

Then what more natural than that he, being under the influence of the devil, should go to the devil for help? A "familiar spirit" is:

A demon or evil spirit supposed to attend the call. -Webster.

"Witchcraft" is:

Intercourse with evil spirits.

See also the definition of "sorcery," and "enchantment." This was what the heathen practiced. Their worship was devil worship.

2 Corinthians 10

²⁰ But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils.

Whenever the Israelites forsook the Lord, they engaged in devil worship.

Deuteronomy 32

¹⁶ They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations they provoked Him to anger.

¹⁷ They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.

Psalm 106

³⁴ They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the Lord commanded them:

³⁵ But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.

³⁶ And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.

³⁷ Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils.

No wonder that they were an abomination to the Lord. Therefore, since Saul had voluntarily put himself under the devil's power, we are forced to conclude that the devil deceived him in this instance. Deceived him, indeed he did; for if space permitted, we could show that Saul did not die on the morrow, as was intimated to him.

“How could Saul have kept from being deceived?”

By heeding the word of the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 2

¹¹ ...strong delusion, that they should believe a lie,

–is not sent to men until they reject the truth. And in that case, how could it be otherwise? If a man does not believe the truth, what is there but lies for him to believe? Remember, also, that it is...

Hebrews 3

¹² ...an evil heart of unbelief

–that first leads men away from God, and under the devil's power. And now we will give a sure rule for detecting all evil spirits.

Isaiah 8

²⁰ To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Christ at once detected Satan's attempted imposture because he acted contrary to the written word. So when we hear of men who pretend to communicate with the dead, we may know that there is no light in them, because the Bible says,

Ecclesiastes 9

⁵ The dead know not anything.

If we strictly adhere to God's word, we cannot be deceived; if we cast any portion of it aside, we need not hope to stand.

17. A Devouring Fire

Present Truth, June 15, 1899

1 Chronicles 14:11

E. J. Waggoner

AFTER Saul was slain, the Philistines thought to do away also with David, who was anointed king in his stead; but when they attempted it, they were smitten; and in the record David says:

1 Chronicles 14

¹¹ God has broken in upon my enemies by my hand like the breaking forth of waters; therefore, they called the name of that place Baal-perazim,

—which means, literally, “breaking forth.” In *Isaiah* 28, this incident is made mention of by the prophet to show the manner of Christ’s coming.

Isaiah 28

²¹ For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim.

For many centuries God has been hidden from the children of men; yet not wholly, for He has revealed himself and His workings to the people in messages of salvation. But His hiding will not be for ever. There will come a time when He “shall rise up as in mount Perazim,” bursting upon an astonished world in all His glory.

Matthew 24

²⁷ As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

That will be His coming...

Hebrews 9

²⁸ ...the second time without sin unto salvation;

—when He will come...

2 Thessalonians 1

⁸ In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God.

But this vengeance is not against the individual, as such,

Romans 1

¹⁸ The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Men are destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming,²¹⁶—His glory that is about Him as a consuming fire,—because they are inseparably connected with ungodliness and unrighteousness. There are others who will...

Isaiah 33

¹⁴ ...dwell with everlasting burnings,

—and the reason that they can dwell there is because in them is no ungodliness nor unrighteousness. It is a comforting thought, that though...

Isaiah 13

¹³ ...the day of the Lord's fierce anger...

Matthew 24

³³ ...is near, even at the doors,

—yet we need not be of them who cry for the rocks and mountains to...

Revelation 6

¹⁶ ...Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Having made the Lord our refuge, and the Most High our habitation,²¹⁷ we can with joy look up and say,

Isaiah 25

⁹ Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be

²¹⁶ 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

²¹⁷ Psalm 91:9.

glad and rejoice in His salvation.

18. Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem

Signs of the Times, June 26, 1884

Notes on the International Lesson, July 13

2 Samuel 6:1-12

E. J. Waggoner

2 Samuel 6

¹ Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.

THE 6th chapter records two great victories gained by the army of David,—one over the Jebusites, and one over the Philistines. Now he once more assembles the chief of his men, but for another purpose. The ark of God was to be brought to the capital of the kingdom.

In order to understand this chapter, it is necessary to go back in the history of the Jews about a hundred years. In the 4th chapter of *1 Samuel* we have the account of a great battle between the Israelites and the Philistines, in which the Israelites were conquered, and the ark, on which they had depended for safety, was captured. At that time God showed the people that the mere possession of the tables of the law would afford them no protection when they were trampling upon the law itself; that to have the thing from which God was accustomed to manifest himself, was a vain thing unless He himself was enshrined in their hearts.

From this overthrow the Israelites did not recover for many years. The possession of the ark, however, proved disastrous to the Philistines, as we learn from *1 Samuel* 5 and 6. God showed them that the things pertaining to His worship must not be handled irreverently.

They were glad to purchase rest from the afflictions which He sent upon them, by returning the ark. When it arrived at Beth-shemesh, the men of that place were smitten, because they presumed to look into the sacred chest, and they sent to

the citizens of Kirjath-jearim, requesting them to come and get it. Here it remained until the time of the present lesson.

2 Samuel 6

² And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah,²¹⁸ to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts that dwells between the cherubims.

The margin of this verse gives the more literal rendering, and the one that makes sense:

“To bring up the ark of God, at which the name, even the name of the Lord of hosts, was called upon.”

² ...that dwells between the cherubim.

In *Exodus* 25:10-22, we have a full description of this ark, and the object for which it was used; there we find the statement that God would commune with the people from between the cherubim that were upon the mercy-seat—the cover of the ark.

³ And they set the ark of God upon a new cart.

This was contrary to the instructions given by the Lord: that the ark was to be borne by the staves;²¹⁹ the sons of Kohath were appointed to carry it and the other holy vessels, but even they were not to touch or look upon any of them.²²⁰ In no case was the ark to be placed upon a wagon.²²¹

⁵ And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

²¹⁸ The reader will notice, by the margin of *2 Samuel* 6:2, that “Baale of Judah,” from which David sent to bring the ark, is but another name for Kirjath-jearim.

²¹⁹ See *Exodus* 25:12-14.

²²⁰ See *Numbers* 4:4-15.

²²¹ See *Numbers* 7:7-9.

As Dr. Clarke says, this place should be corrected from the parallel passage in *1 Chronicles* 13:8. There it is said that they played *with all their might*, on harps, etc., and that makes good sense. The Hebrew letters of the two passages are nearly identical, which doubtless accounts for the difference. The Septuagint has in this place the reading as in *1 Chronicles* 13:8, “with might.”

2 Samuel 6

⁶ And when they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

⁷ And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

In this we have another illustration of how God, regards His work and worship. It may seem to some that Uzzah’s punishment was too severe for so small an act, but such judgment comes from setting up our standard instead of God’s. How do we know that Uzzah’s error was a small one? From the punishment that followed we would suppose that God regarded it as a great sin. Indeed, we must so regard it unless we are willing to admit that God was unjust.

God is just; the punishments which He inflicts are always proportionate to the sin committed; therefore Uzzah’s error must have been a grievous one. The whole proceeding was irregular, but Uzzah, in presuming to lay hands on the sacred ark; overstepped all bounds. Had not that swift punishment been meted out to him, the worship of God would have been degraded, as a common affair, and reverence for sacred things would have entirely died out among the people.

What was it that made that little box of wood and gold so sacred? Why was it to be approached with such awe and reverence, and only by persons duly set apart for that purpose? It was because it contained a copy of the law of God. That which

God declares to be His own righteousness—a transcript of His own character—was enclosed in that ark. That law is the foundation of the government of God; it is that by which the loyalty of all creatures is tested. When men lose their reverence for that, they lose their reverence for God's Government, and for God himself. It was on this account that God had given such specific directions concerning the ark.

How do we know what is right and what is wrong? It is evident that it is only by being told. And what warrant have we for calling any violation of one of God's commands a little sin? Do we not by so doing become judges of God?

The lesson to be learned from this circumstance is that to disregard any one of God's requirements is a heinous sin; that sin of any kind is exceedingly displeasing to God. Familiarity with sin hardens us; we learn to excuse it, and our standard is lowered to correspond with existing circumstances.

But God is sinless, and the more sin there is committed the more odious it becomes to Him. If we, then, desire to do what is right, and thus to please God, it is evident that we must in all cases accept the standard of right and wrong which God gives. Our feelings are no criterion whatever, for that which we look upon as trivial, may be regarded by God as a terrible sin.

It is by His law that God reveals His will. Two texts will prove this.

Psalm 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God; yea your law is within my heart.

Here we find that to have the law of God in the heart, is to cheerfully do all His will. Again Paul says:

Romans 2

¹⁷ Behold, you are called a Jew, and rest in the law, and make your boast of God,

¹⁸ And know His will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law.

Here we learn that those who know the will of God are those who are instructed out of the law. But God does not change; we have His word for this.²²² His will concerning men is just the same now as it ever was. This being the case, it follows that His law is always the same. And so it is. Christ said:

Luke 16

¹⁷ It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

And what has this to do with the lesson? Simply this: If God regarded it as so terrible an offense merely to touch the receptacle which contained His law, how much to look upon those who dare to trample upon the law itself? The pope of Rome has impiously presumed to change the law, especially that portion which enjoins the observance of the seventh day of the week, and millions of people have accepted his act. It is considered all right to labor upon the day which God sanctified, because “everybody does so.” But the Lord says:

Exodus 23

² You shall not follow a multitude to do evil.

We are to make God’s law, and not our feelings, or the practice of the multitude, our standard of right and wrong.

Ecclesiastes 8

¹¹ Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily [as in the case of Uzzah], therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

But judgment, though long delayed, is sure to come, and when it does, it will be according to righteousness, or, in other words, according to the law of God.

²²² **Malachi 3** ⁶ I am the Lord, I change not.

19. David's Purpose to Build the Temple

Signs of the Times, July 3, 1884

Notes on the International Lesson, July 20

2 Samuel 7:1-16

E. J. Waggoner

2 Samuel 7

¹ And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies.

AT WHAT TIME this was it is impossible to determine; probably not long after the events recorded in the preceding chapter.

² That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains.

This is the first mention of Nathan the prophet, who seems to have been David's constant adviser. He must have been considerably younger than David, for we read that he wrote a history of the acts of David, and that he did the same for Solomon's reign.²²³

It is not certain, however, from this latter passage, that he outlived Solomon, for it may be that the writings of the two writers referred to are supplementary. That he was a true prophet is evident from the plain rebuke which he administered to David, as recorded in the 12th chapter.

It may not be amiss to notice, in passing, the statements in *1 Chronicles 29:29* and *2 Chronicles 9:29*. None of these records by Nathan, Samuel, and Gad, Ahijah, and Iddo, are now extant. Nothing more is known of them than the brief mention in the above verses. Yet there is not the slightest doubt but

²²³ **1 Chronicles 29** ²⁹ Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer.

that they were just as much inspired as were any of the records that we have. Why they were allowed to be lost, we cannot tell, nor does it concern us. The simple fact is that much has been written by inspiration that has not been given to us.

In *Jeremiah* 36 we have an instance of a message directly from the Lord, which was not preserved for us. Of course these things were not of especial importance to us, else they would have been preserved. God has given us, in His word as committed to us, everything that is necessary to enable us to do His will; until we have put in practice all that we have received, it ill becomes us to find fault with Him for not giving us more of the same kind of instruction.

2 Samuel 7

³ And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in your heart; for the Lord is with you.

Nathan was a true prophet, and one who was intrusted with important messages from the Lord; yet on this occasion he gave advice that was directly contrary to the mind of the Lord. This does not show any evil intention on his part, but simply that prophets were not inspired at all times. David's plan was a laudable one, and reasoning from a human standpoint no objections to it could be seen. But Nathan did not know the mind of the Lord on this subject. If there was any blame attaching to him, it was simply in giving his own opinion before asking counsel of the Lord.

At all events we read of no rebuke administered; but that very night...

⁴ ...the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying,

⁵ Go and tell my servant David, thus says the Lord, Shall you build me a house for me to dwell in?

The words,

“Shall you build me a house?”

–are equivalent to:

“You shall not build me a house.”

Thus in *Psalms* 95:10, margin, we have the literal rendering:

“If they shall enter into my rest,”

–meaning,

Psalm 95

¹¹ ...they shall not enter into my rest.

From *1 Chronicles* 22:5-10, it is evident that much more was told to David than is here recorded. David there tells Solomon that the reason why he himself was not allowed to build a house of the Lord was that he had shed blood abundantly, and made great wars.

From the further statement that Solomon, to whom would be intrusted the work of building the temple, would be a man of peace, and that there should be rest and quietness in Israel all his days, we may suppose that it was not simply the wars that David had made, but also those which he was yet to make, that made it improper for him to build the Lord's house.

Besides the fact that David had shed much blood, the fact that the kingdom was not yet fully established, was an objection, because he would be liable to interruption in the work by enemies. To him it was given to conquer the enemies of Israel, and settle the affairs of the kingdom on a solid basis, so that his successor might prosecute the work undisturbed.

The readiness with which the prophet recalled his first advice, at the command of the Lord, is worthy of note. He did not let a false pride keep him from telling the Lord's message, even though he was compelled to contradict his previous advice.

As we look at the case, we can readily see how much better

it was for Nathan to do so than to the demur; for in the latter case he would suffer the additional qualification of having his counsel contradicted by some other prophet, and he himself perhaps degraded from his office. Yet we are not always able to reason so clearly in our own cases.

We should ever be thankful to God when He gives us an opportunity to correct our own mistakes, and should esteem it one of His greatest blessings that He points them out to us.

20. Promise Concerning the Kingdom of Israel

Signs of the Times, July 16, 1885

Lesson for the Pacific Coast – August 8

2 Samuel 7

E. J. Waggoner

1. Why was Saul rejected from being king of Israel?

1 Samuel 15

²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.

2. Who was chosen in his stead?

2 Samuel 7

⁸ Now therefore so shall you say unto my servant David, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel.

3. By whom was David chosen to be ruler?

4. Where do you find the record of his anointing?

1 Samuel 16:1-13.

5. Repeat the promise which the Lord made to David concerning his house and kingdom.

2 Samuel 7

¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever.

6. What promise did the Lord make at the same time concerning His people Israel?

¹⁰ Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime.

7. What did He say He would appoint for them?

Ibid.

8. Where should they dwell?

Ibid.

9. From what should they be free?

Ibid.

10. From *2 Samuel* 7:10, quoted above, what conclusion must we draw concerning the promises made to Abraham, and to the Israelites at Sinai?

We must conclude that those promises were not fulfilled in the possession of the land of Canaan by the Israelites. If they had been, we would not at this time find the Lord renewing the same promise, when they were already in the land that the Lord had given to them.

11. In what condition was the kingdom of Israel when the Lord made the promise recorded in *2 Samuel* 7:10?

2 Samuel 7

¹ And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies...

12. Then what must we conclude concerning that promise of rest and peace?

Since the Israelites were already dwelling in the land that the Lord had given them by Joshua, and were at peace with all around them, it follows that the promise of a land of their own, and of rest and peace, must refer to something in the future, something far greater than anything yet known. This can only be found in that perfect inheritance when...

Daniel 7

²⁷ The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

This will be the perfect rest that remains for the people of

God, for when...

Psalm 37

¹¹ The meek shall inherit the earth, [they] shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

13. Who was David's immediate successor?

1 Kings 1

³² And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king.

³³ The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon:

³⁴ And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon.

³⁵ Then you shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.

³⁶ And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen: the Lord God of my lord the king say so too.

³⁷ As the Lord has been with my lord the king, even so be He with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David.

³⁸ So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon.

³⁹ And Zadok the priest took a horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon.

14. What had the Lord said concerning him?

2 Samuel 7

¹² And when your days be fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, which shall proceed out of your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

21. Solomon: From Glory to Shame

Signs of the Times, October 30, 1884

Notes on the International Lesson, November 16

Original title: Notes on the International Lesson

1 Kings 11:4-13

A. T. Jones

In the present lesson our attention is turned:

- from Solomon in his uprightness, when he was the beloved of the Lord, to Solomon in his degradation, when “the Lord was angry with” him;
- from Solomon building a temple for Jehovah, which the Lord accepted and hallowed for His own name, to Solomon building temples for Ashtoreth, and Chemosh, and Molech, and for the gods of all his strange wives, the abominations of heathendom, which God abhorred;
- from Solomon worshiping the God of Heaven in such a height of purity and faith, and with such wondrous acceptance that it brought the very presence of Heaven down upon the earth, to Solomon in such depth of iniquity worshiping idols, and joining in the murderous and licentious rites of all the heathen nations round about;
- from Solomon in the fear of God, and from a deep sense of sin, burning sweet incense to the Lord, offering to Him the acceptable sacrifices of sheep and oxen, and praying to Him for forgiveness, for light, for strength, and for wisdom, to Solomon burning incense to devils, helping on the sacrifice to them of smiling babes and innocent children, and opening the gates of iniquity by which the whole land should be stained with innocent blood.

In short we are turned from the contemplation of “Solomon in all his glory,” to the contemplation of Solomon in all his shame.

1 Kings 11

¹ King Solomon loved many strange women.

It seems that at this time Solomon cared for nothing but to have his own way. Contrary to the express command of the Lord, in *Deuteronomy* 17:16, he multiplied horses to himself and he carried on with Egypt a regular traffic in horses and chariots, until he had for himself one thousand four hundred chariots, which with three horses for each chariot—two to work and one in reserve—would make four thousand two hundred horses; then he had twelve thousand horsemen—cavalry—besides.

But he did not conduct this trade for himself alone. He had horses and chariots brought out of Egypt for the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of Syria, and there can be hardly a doubt that this traffic in horses with the Hittites and the other nations led him into his sinful connection with these “strange women,” for seven hundred of his wives were “princesses,” the daughters of these heathen kings with whom he was trading in horses.

³ And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.

Had Solomon been obedient to the Lord, he would have been saved from all this, for *Deuteronomy* says:

Deuteronomy 17

¹⁸ And it shall be when he sits upon the throne of this kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book...

¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life.

In this which he was to write, and read for himself was contained particularly in the two foregoing verses forbidding the very thing which Solomon did.

¹⁶ He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses; for as much as the Lord has said unto you, You shall return no more that way.

¹⁷ Neither shall he multiply wives to himself that his heart

turn not away.

Solomon did send into Egypt, and multiplied horses unto himself; this led to the traffic with the heathen around him; this led him to the gathering to himself of the many strange women, and these led him to the final and fatal step, and his heart was turned away from his God.

1 Kings 11

⁴ When Solomon was old...

...the text says. Not old in years, for he was only about forty-nine, but the dissipation consequent upon having seven hundred wives, every one of them shamefully licentious, besides three hundred concubines, who could have certainly been no better,—all this made him “old” though only in the prime of his years.

⁴ ...his wives turned away his heart after other gods.

And what fearful gods they were! Devils, the psalmist calls them:

Psalm 106

³⁷ Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,

³⁸ And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.

And devils they were:

1 Kings 11

⁵ ...Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians.

The “queen of heaven” of *Jeremiah* 7:18 and 44:19, the *As-tarte* of the Greeks, the *Venus* of the Romans, and under different names worshiped by all of the ancient East, and though having different names, and yet was always worshiped in the same manner, and which is fully expressed in one word—*lasciviousness*.

- She was the female Baal, and corresponded to the moon as Baal did to the sun.
- She represented the female principle in generation as Baal did the male.
- She was always worshiped in connection with him, and the rites of her worship corresponded to that idea. Her priests were men dressed in women's clothes; her priestesses were harlots, and the only worship was prostitution.

1 Kings 11

⁵ ...and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

⁷ Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

Milcom of the fifth verse is identical with Molech of the seventh, and Molech of the Ammonites is the same as Chemosh of the Moabites, and both are the same as Baal of the Canaanites and other Eastern nations generally.

It is with Baal as with Ashtoreth above, although called by different names, he is the same god, and his worship the same among all the ancient nations. He represents the sun; and the worship of Baal, Molech, Chemosh, or by whatever name, was sun-worship.

The form of his worship is described in the words of the Bible about Ahaz:

2 Chronicles 28

² For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.

³ Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

Baalim in the text is the plural form of Baal, and signifies the images of Baal in connection with Ashtoreth, set up and

worshipped together. So we see that children born of the licentious worship of Ashtoreth, were burned in the fire in the worship of Baal. Not all of the children, of course, but such as they should choose to sacrifice.

The priests of Molech (Baal) ranked above the princes, and were next to the king, and sometimes even the king himself was a priest, as in the case of the father of the infamous Jezebel, who was himself a priest of Ashtoreth, and was also dedicated to Baal.

It was such daughters, of such men as these, from whom Solomon took his seven hundred wives. No wonder they turned away his heart from the Lord. No wonder that in cleaving to these in their impurity he did it at the expense of forsaking Jehovah, who will be worshiped in purity alone. No wonder that now we read in quick succession:

1 Kings 11

¹⁴ And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon.

²³ And God stirred up another adversary.

²⁶ And Jeroboam...even he lifted up his hand against the king.

No more can Solomon write as he did in his youth to Hiram:

1 Kings 5

⁴ But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent.

Adversaries on all sides, from the kings abroad and from his own subjects at home. Evil “occurrent” everywhere. From his own sowing of evil, springs and abundant harvest, and he has to begin the reaping. No more can he be called Solomon—peace—but rather Magor-misabib²²⁴—fear round about, for there is fear on every side, and God above all against him, to rend the kingdom from him as though no longer fit to rule over men.

²²⁴ *Jeremiah 20:3.*

And in closing we may quote the words used ages after by Nehemiah in correcting sins in Israel:

Nehemiah 13

²⁶ Among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless even he did outlandish women cause to sin.

Solomon's life is an example and a warning. In his youth an example of how good God is to all who seek Him in humility, and in entire dependence upon Him, an example of how...

Proverbs 10

²² The blessing of the Lord it makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.

In his latter days his life is a warning to all, of man's helplessness when he forsakes the path which the Lord has marked out for us to walk in. It shows that, however great a man's wisdom may be, or however grand may be his success, while serving the Lord in sincerity, all the wisdom that he had acquired will not keep him from becoming a fool, and that all the success that he had achieved will not prevent his making a miserable failure, when he ceases to serve the Lord. Therefore cling close to the word of God.

Job 28

²⁸ The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.

Psalms 111 [margin]

¹⁰ Good success have all they that do His commandments.

The words of David to Solomon are still the words of the Lord to every one of the children of men.

1 Chronicles 28

⁹ Know the God of your father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts: if you seek Him, He will be found of you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.

22. Introduction to Proverbs

Signs of the Times, November 6, 1884

Notes on the International Lesson, November 23

Proverbs 1:2-4, 5, 7, 10; 15:2; 16:31

A. T. Jones

SOLOMON was a very voluminous writer. He spoke three thousand proverbs, and a thousand and five songs. He spoke of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springs out of the wall.

From all his writings, however, we have preserved to us only the present book of *Proverbs*, containing about four hundred, one song of which seems to have been the chiefest of all,²²⁵ and the short book of *Ecclesiastes*. It seems that from all the three thousand proverbs these were selected as being the best, “excluding all that were local, personal, or simply humorous,” and retaining those only which fell in with the great moral and religious purpose of God in handing down His will to men.

Here the child is taken, and, as it were, introduced to Wisdom herself in all her beauty, who, if he will allow her, takes him by the hand and leads him through the treacherous paths of youth to manhood, and to an old age which is itself a crown of glory because found in the way of righteousness.

Proverbs 16

³¹ The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

Here is instruction not only for the child and the youth, but for husband and wife, for father and mother, for the farmer, the merchant, the rich, the poor, the high, and the low. It is Wisdom’s grand summary of instruction to the children of men.

The purpose of the *Proverbs* is stated:

²²⁵ *Song* 1:1.

Proverbs 1

² To know [give] wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;

³ To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

⁴ To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

“To give subtilty”—acuteness, nicety of distinction, i.e., the ability to distinguish the true from the false, to know the good, and to detect the bad; to see the right, and to discover any lurking tendency toward wrong.

“To the simple.”—On this we give the following from Dr. Clarke:

The word *simple*, from simplex, compounded of sine, without, and plica, a fold, signifies properly, plain and honest, one who has no bye-ends in view; who is what he appears to be;...but because honesty and plain dealing are so rare in the world, and none but the truly religious man will practice them, farther than the fear of the law obliges him, hence simple has sunk into a state of progressive deterioration.

First it signified, as above, without fold, unmixed, uncompounded; this was its radical meaning.

Secondly, as applied to men, it signified innocent, harmless, without disguise.

Thirdly, such persons were rather an unfashionable sort of people, it sunk in its meaning to homely, homespun, mean, ordinary.

And fourthly, as worldly men,...supposed that wisdom, wit, and understanding, were given to men that they might make the best of them in reference to the things of this life, the word sunk still lower in its meaning, and signified silly, foolish; and there, to the dishonor of our language and morals, it stands....And simplicity, that meant at first openness, plain dealing, downright honesty, is now degraded to weakness, silliness, foolishness. And they will continue thus degraded till downright honesty and plain dealing get again into vogue.

“To give subtlety to the simple” therefore signifies, to give, acuteness, tact, and nicety of distinction to the honest-hearted, the upright, the sincere.

Proverbs 1

⁵ A wise man will hear and will increase learning.

Solomon has himself given us the meaning of wise as here used:

Proverbs 15

² The tongue of the wise uses knowledge aright.

The right use of that which we have already learned not only creates a desire to learn more, but it imparts the ability to properly acquire and appreciate more. Such a man will indeed “increase learning;” he cannot help it; and every increase of such learning is an increase and strengthening of his wisdom.

Wisdom therefore is not shown in the amount that we know, but in the right use of that which we know, however little it may be.

Ecclesiastes 9

¹⁴ There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it.

¹⁵ Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city...

¹⁶ Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength...

¹⁸ Wisdom is better than weapons of war.

Proverbs 1

⁵ ...and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.

Literally, shall make himself a pilot. The cognate word is used thus in *Ezekiel 27:8*. That is, he may gain “the power to steer his course rightly on the dangerous sea of life.”

⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

“The fear of the Lord.”—Not the slavish fear arising from dread of punishment. But that filial “fear” which springs from respectful reverence, and a fear to offend lest we cause pain to the one whom we have in view; that fears to do contrary to the wish of the one whom we serve, lest we disappoint his expectations of us and forfeit his confidence.

“Is the beginning of knowledge.”—The man who fears the Lord has entered upon a course of knowledge and wisdom, which is limited only by eternity. However little he may have acquired of knowledge, as the world goes, if he have the fear of the Lord, he has eternity before him, in which to increase knowledge.

And though he have all the knowledge of all men of all the world, and have not the fear of the Lord, his little life is soon “rounded by a sleep,” and all has ceased, all his knowledge is ended. For when he arises from the dead, it is to woeful destruction, and all that he was is brought to naught. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

Proverbs 1

¹⁰ My son, if sinners entice you, consent not.

Or, as Dr. Clarke gives it, “will not,” that is have a “will not” for all forms of evil enticement. There is nothing that will strengthen and confirm us in our determination to do right, and at the same time weaken the seducer to wrong, like a firm, decided, “I will not.”

If one would entice you to take strong drink, meet it with, “I will not.” If they would entice you to chew or smoke tobacco, or to run with them in “ways that are dark and tricks that are vain,” give them a plain, “I will not.” They may sneer at, and make fun of you, yet in their hearts they will respect and honor you. The Lord says:

1 Samuel 2

³⁰ Them that honor me I will honor.

Proverbs 1

¹⁰ If sinners entice you, will you not.

23. True Wisdom

Signs of the Times, November 13, 1884

Notes on the International Lesson, November 30

Proverbs 8:1-17

A. T. Jones

THE subject of this lesson is “True Wisdom.” We have therefore thought it wise to allow Wisdom to tell her own story, and we have no hesitation in saying, and we are sure that all will agree, that it is the best set of Sunday-school notes that ever was written.

Proverbs 8

¹ Does not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?

² She stands in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.

³ She cries at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.

⁴ Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man.

⁵ O you simple, understand wisdom: and, you fools, be of an understanding heart.

⁶ Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.

⁷ For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

⁸ All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.

⁹ They are all plain to him that understands, and right to them that find knowledge.

¹⁰ Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.

¹¹ For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

¹² I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

¹³ The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

¹⁴ Counsel is my, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I

have strength.

¹⁵ By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.

¹⁶ By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.

¹⁷ I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

Wisdom Calls

Proverbs 1

²⁰ Wisdom cries without; she utters her voice in the streets:

²¹ She cries in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates; in the city she utters her words, saying,

²² How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

24. Christian Temperance

Signs of the Times, November 20, 1884

Notes on the International Lesson

Proverbs 23:29-35

A. T. Jones

Who has woe?

Isaiah 5

¹¹ Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine enflame them!

²² Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink;

²³ Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

Habakkuk 2

¹⁵ Woe unto him that gives his neighbor drink, that puts your bottle to him and makes him drunken also, that you may look on their nakedness!

WE SEE therefore that the woe of those who tarry long at the wine, is not confined to the trouble and sorrow that come in this life as the direct result of drunkenness, but that it reaches to the fearful punishment that destroys men for their and iniquity. Woe, woe, terrible, dreadful, and irremediable.

Now, God has opened a way of escape from it. Those who, through Christ, overcome, will be saved, but:

1 Corinthians 6

¹⁰ No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Proverbs 23

³¹ Look not upon the wine.

Here Solomon gives the true and only safeguard, Look not upon the wine. This is the true principle of temperance, and although it is expressed here in regard to wine, and although

the lesson today is touching strong drink, yet true temperance, Bible temperance, Christian temperance, does not consist in abstinence from strong drink alone. Therefore we shall treat the subject on the broad basis of Christian temperance.

Temperance is self control. Whenever, in any of his appetites or passions, a man loses control of himself, he is in-temperate. Says Paul:

1 Corinthians 9

²⁷ I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.

In other words, I, myself, am determined to be master of myself. The truly Christian temperance man is master of himself, and the servant of Christ. And it is only as a faithful servant of Christ that a man can be master of himself. Thus he becomes his own free man, and Christ's servant; a real manly man; then he...

...dare do all that becomes a man;
Who dares do more is none.²²⁶

In view of the actual meaning of the word, how few temperance people there are! How few who really and decidedly have control of themselves! Very few indeed there are who are not subject to some habit which must and will be satisfied at whatever cost.

Thousands are the slaves of strong drink. All that they have, all that they can get, goes to satisfy that which is insatiable. Every effort to appease it only increases its demands, and its power to exact them.

But where there are thousands thus the slaves of strong drink, there are hundreds of thousands who are the slaves of tobacco. Their children may be clothed in rags, and go bare-foot in the cold, they may even lack bread, but they never lacked tobacco. If they have no money with which to buy it,

²²⁶ Shakespeare, *Macbeth*.

they will go into debt for it, and if they cannot get credit, then they will even beg. Men who would think it a shame to beg for bread, are not ashamed to beg for tobacco. Such abject slaves are they. Have such persons control of themselves? No; tobacco controls them; this is their master and will be served.

Then there are thousands who are slaves to opium; thousands slaves to arsenic; thousands slaves to morphine; thousands slaves to absinthe; thousands slaves to hashish; and though not so great in degree, yet the same in kind, thousands are the slaves to beer, or the servants of tea, or of coffee.

“What!” some may exclaim, “is the use of tea or coffee intemperance?”

It is. In the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, article on “Drunkenness,” what do you suppose we find? The following:

In short, from tea to hashish, we have through hops, alcohol, tobacco, and opium, a sort of a graduated scale of intoxicants, which stimulate in small doses, and narcotize in larger. The physiological action of all these agents gradually shades into each other, all producing, or being capable of producing, consecutive paralysis of the various parts of the nervous system. Even tea cannot be regarded as altogether free from the last named effects. Tea-sots are well known to be affected by palpitation, and irregularities of the heart, as well as with more or less sleeplessness, and mental irritability, and muscular tremors, which in some culminate in paralysis, while positive intoxication has been known to be the result of the excessive use of strong tea.

And of coffee the same authority says:

It produces a feeling of buoyancy and exhilaration, comparable to a certain stage of alcoholic intoxication.

So the only difference between tea or coffee and alcohol drinks, is the degree of its effects, and not at all in the nature of the effects. All have the intoxicating quality, and as quoted,

from tea to hashish, it is only a graduated scale of intoxicants, through hops, alcohol, tobacco, and opium, each one shading into the other. All are relatives in the family of drunkenness, and the use of any one of them is intemperance. Sir Isaac Newton, when asked why he did not learn to use tobacco, replied,

“I will create to myself no necessities.”

In this sentence there is much of that philosophical insight which could see, in the falling of an apple, a lot of the universe.

In the economy of the human system there is no provision for either stimulants or narcotics. If ever there is a demand for these things, it has to be created. And more, such things as stimulants and narcotics (poisons) are the only ones for which the necessity can be created. It is impossible to form the habit of using any one particular kind of food.

Through the agency of the digestive process, each organ will take up its portion of that which is food, and by assimilation will renew itself, and thus vitality is maintained; in fact this is vitality. If a person be hungry, any kind of food will satisfy, whether it be fruit or vegetables, meat or bread.

It is not so with narcotics and stimulants. The appetite for these has to be created. And when it is created for any one of them, it is for that particular one, and nothing but that will satisfy the demand. If the appetite be for tea, then nothing but tea will satisfy. If it be for alcohol, nothing else will do, and so on through the list.

Then look not upon the wine, touch not tobacco, taste not any of all the list of intoxicants; create to yourself no necessity; be temperate (self-controlling) in all things; keep under your body, and bring it into subjection; the master of yourself, and thus your own free man.

Matthew 16

²⁴ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.

Revelation 3

²¹ To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

25. Wisdom Better Than Great Works

Signs of the Times, November 27, 1884

Notes on the International Lesson, December

Ecclesiastes 2:1-13

A. T. Jones

Ecclesiastes 2

⁴ I made me great works.

1 Kings 9

¹⁵ [Solomon built] Millo and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.

¹⁷ ...and Beth-horon the nether,

¹⁸ And Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land,

¹⁹ And all the cities of store that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

“**M**ILLO” was a strong fortification, or tower, that protected the city of Jerusalem on the north. It was renewed by Herod, and by him named Hippicus in honor of one of his friends; and as it stood completed by Herod, it was about one hundred feet high. It was made of white marble, each stone about thirty feet long by fifteen feet wide and seven and one-half thick.

“The wall of Jerusalem” began at Millo, or Hippicus, and extended clear around the city; upon it were sixty towers. As the city grew and spread beyond this wall, a second one was built in after years, and still another, so that at the final destruction of the city by the Romans, there were three very strong walls about it, the outer one having ninety towers, the middle one, forty, and the “old wall,” as before stated, having sixty, besides two other large towers corresponding to Hippicus, built also by Herod, and called respectively Phasaebes, and Mariamne.

“Hazor” was the principal city and stronghold of the whole of North Palestine. “Megiddo” was a fortified city which com-

manded one of the main passes from the north into the hill country. “Gezer” was also a fortified city that commanded the Mediterranean coast road of communication between Egypt and Jerusalem.

The two “Beth-horon’s,” “the upper,” and “the nether,” lay on the boundary line between the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin, and guarded a pass on the road from Gibeon to the Philistine plain. Through this pass was the main way of approach into the interior of the country Philistia on the west, and from Moab and Ammon on the East.

“Tadmor” (Palmyra) was built in an oasis in the desert of Hamath above Syria, “two days’ journey from the Euphrates, and six long days journey from Babylon.” This was built so that he might control the great caravan trade from the East. Even the ruins of Tadmor are a wonder and an astonishment, and what magnificence must have been displayed when it stood in its splendor.

Ecclesiastes 2

⁴ I builded me houses.

The chief one of these was one hundred and fifty feet long, seventy-five feet broad, and forty-five feet high, and was in three stories. It had a grand porch seventy-five feet long and forty-five broad, and all the pillars and beams and floors were of the finest cedar of Lebanon, and the pillars were so many and so costly, and those in the porch were so tall, that it was called:

1 Kings 7

² The house of the forest of Lebanon.

Close to this was:

Song 4

⁴ ...the tower of David built for an armory, [on the walls of which there hung] a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.

Then there was the great Judgment Hall, lined with cedar wood, where stood the ivory throne inlaid with gold, with its six steps, and two graven lions on each step, and also a lion at each arm; the seat a golden bull, and the back ending in a half-circle.

Then there was the house for Pharaoh's daughter, and houses for all his wives and concubines. Then there were the cloisters, and reception rooms, and the magnificent banquetting hall. These all were made with walls and foundations of white stone, many of them twelve, and many fifteen feet in length. All were supported with pillars and beams of cedar and fir, decked with gold and silver, and the roofs and walls ornamented with beautiful stones set with gold and silver, after the style of the temple.

Besides all these buildings in Jerusalem, he built a summer palace in Lebanon.

Ecclesiastes 2

⁴ ...I planted me vineyards:

⁵ I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits.

Literally,

“I made me paradises, beautiful parks for pleasure grounds.”

There was one of these, probably the principal one, about six miles from Jerusalem, at Etham. There he would go in stately progress out of the city in the morning, dressed in snow-white raiment, riding in his chariot of state, which was made of the finest cedar, decked with gold and silver and purple, carpeted with the costliest tapestry, worked by the daughters of Jerusalem.

A body-guard of sixty valiant men attended him, of the tallest and handsomest of the young men of Israel, arrayed in Tyrian purple, their long black hair, freshly sprinkled with

gold-dust every day, glittering in the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2

⁶ I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that brings forth trees.

These were necessary to keep his parks fresh and beautiful. There were three of them, all in the side of the valley of Etham. The upper pool was 380 feet long, 236 wide at the eastern end, and 229 at the western end, and 25 deep. Below this 160 feet was the middle pool, 423 feet long, 250 broad at the eastern end, and 160 at the western, and 39 feet deep. Below this 248 feet lay the lower pool, 582 feet long, 207 broad at the eastern end, and 148 at the western, and 50 feet deep.

Each pool therefore covered somewhat more than two acres. They were partly hewn out of the solid rock, and partly built of masonry. All were lined with cement, all had flights of steps from top to bottom, and all three were connected together by conduits, and by an aqueduct connected with Jerusalem, so that not only his “paradise” at Etham was watered by them, but from them also his palaces and gardens at the city were supplied.

Ecclesiastes 2

⁸ I gathered me also silver and gold.

1 Kings 10

²¹ And all King Solomon’s drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver; it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

²⁷ And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones.

He “had at sea a navy”²²⁷ that went to Ophir, and once in three years came the navy bringing gold, and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. The gold that came to Solomon in a year was about \$17,752,640. This with what David left to him,

²²⁷ 1 Kings 10:22.

\$2,904,000,000, amounted to \$2,921,752,640, or enough to have given nearly \$390 to each man, woman, and child in the whole kingdom. And all this was...

1 Kings 10

¹⁵ Besides that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffic of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country.

That is, all this was beside the regular customs duties and taxes from his own kingdom. His navy brought at one voyage from Ophir \$13,068,000;²²⁸ at another it brought \$12,196,800;²²⁹ the queen of Sheba gave him \$3,484,800;²³⁰ and Hiram also gave him \$3,484,800.²³¹ Surely gold was plenty.

After enjoying everything to the full, withholding not his...

Ecclesiastes 2

¹⁰ ...heart from any joy,

–then he could only look on all the works that his hands had wrought and exclaim,

¹¹ ...all was vanity and vexation of spirit!

The word translated “vanity” means “breath” or “light wind,” and its parallel is found in *Isaiah* 40:6 and *James* 1:10-11. All vanishes, all fades away, even life itself is but a vapor, appearing but...

James 4

¹⁴ ...for a little time and then vanishes away.

From verse twelve it seems that after he had seen all this greatness, and glory, and folly, he turns to the contemplation of himself and the time when he walked in “wisdom,” and compares it with the years of his “madness and folly,” and as

²²⁸ *2 Chronicles* 8:18.

²²⁹ *1 Kings* 9:28.

²³⁰ *1 Kings* 10:10.

²³¹ *1 Kings* 9:14.

his firm decision he leaves us this apple of gold in a picture of silver:²³²

Ecclesiastes 2

¹³ THEN I saw that wisdom excels folly AS FAR AS LIGHT EXCELS DARKNESS.

26. A Fool's Sacrifice

Present Truth, February 28, 1895

Ecclesiastes 5:1-2

E. J. Waggoner

THIS is a sacrifice of empty words. No defective sacrifice offered to God was acceptable, and vain words are wholly valueless. The Scripture admonishes us,

Ecclesiastes 5

¹ Keep your foot when you go to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools...

² Be not rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.

³ For a dream comes through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

⁴ When you vow a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools: pay that which you have vowed.

A fool vows that which he does not pay; he promises what he is not able to perform, and with this he satisfies his conscience. But God can be satisfied with nothing but reality.

²³² *Proverbs 25:11.*

27. Remember Now Your Creator

Signs of the Times, December 4, 1884

Notes on the International Lesson, December 21

Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

A. T. Jones

Ecclesiastes 12

¹ Remember now your Creator.

REMEMBER Him as Creator. “There are gods many and lords many,”²³³ but there is but one Creator, and He is the one living and true God. It is by this fact that in His own word He distinguishes himself from all other gods; as in:

Isaiah 40

¹⁸ To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness will you compare unto Him?

¹⁹ The workman melts a graven image, and the goldsmith spreads it over with gold, and casts silver chains.

²⁰ He that is so impoverished that he has no oblation chooses a tree that will not rot; he seeks unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.

²⁵ To whom then will you liken me, or shall I be equal? says the Holy One.

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number; He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one fails.

And again in Isaiah, 37th chapter, the king of Assyria wrote a letter to king Hezekiah, in which he said:

Isaiah 37

¹⁰ Let not your God, in whom you trust, deceive you, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

¹² Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar?

²³³ 1 Corinthians 8:5.

¹⁴ And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.

¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord, saying,

¹⁶ O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwells between the cherubim, You are the God, even You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; You have made heaven and earth.

¹⁷ Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear; open your eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which has sent to reproach the living God.

And in answer to that prayer,

Isaiah 37

³⁶ The angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand.

The fact that He is Creator is the primal reason given why all should worship Him; and why He should be worshiped.

Psalms 100

² Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing.

³ Know you that the Lord He is God; it is He that has made us and not we ourselves.

Revelation 14

⁷ Worship Him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

Revelation 4

¹¹ You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for [because] You have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created.

Job 12

¹⁰ In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.

Acts 17

²⁸ In Him we live and move and have our being.

Therefore,

Ecclesiastes 12

¹ Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth,

—and all your days. The fact that He performed the wonderful works of creation does not stand separated from Him and us. He not only made these wonderful works,

Psalms 111

⁴ He has made His wonderful works to be remembered.

The proper remembrance of Him as Creator can only be by remembering the creation. And He has not enjoined upon us the duty to remember Him without fully showing us how to do it. He has established an institution, the observance of which will ever keep in the mind the remembrance of the Creator—an institution by which, if properly observed, it is impossible to forget Him. That institution is the Sabbath of the Lord.

Exodus 20

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

⁹ Six days shall you labor, and do all your work:

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates:

¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Ezekiel 20

²⁰ And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.

It is by hallowing the Sabbath that it becomes a sign by which we know that He is the Lord. And it is thus a sign that He is the Lord, because...

Exodus 31

¹⁷ In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the

seventh day He rested.

By hallowed observance of the seventh day we remember the “wonderful works” of the creation, and thus remember the Creator. This is God’s own appointed way for us to remember Him. It is the truth that the hallowed observance of the seventh day, the works of creation, and the remembrance of the Creator are inseparably connected.

Matthew 19

⁶ What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man put asunder.

Again, the Lord’s appointed way of bringing things to remembrance is by memorials.

Numbers 5

¹⁵ ...for it is...an offering of memorial, bringing...to remembrance.

Of the passover the Lord said:

Exodus 12

¹³ And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ And this day shall be unto you for a memorial.

Numbers 16

³⁸ The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar;...and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel.

³⁹ ...and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar:

⁴⁰ To be a memorial unto the children of Israel.

Therefore when we read in the Bible of the Sabbath as a sign, we may lawfully read it as a memorial; thus:

Ezekiel 20

²⁰ And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a

memorial...that you may know that I am the Lord your God.

He desires that we shall ever have Him in remembrance; to that purpose He established a memorial; that memorial is the Sabbath, and:

Exodus 20

¹⁰ The seventh day is the Sabbath.

Psalms 135

¹³ Your name, O Lord, endures forever; and your memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations.

Ecclesiastes 12

¹ Remember now your Creator.

¹⁰ The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

¹¹ The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

The Lord is that one shepherd.

Psalms 23

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Psalms 100

³ We are the sheep of his pasture.

These words are the words of the Lord, and are therefore words of truth.

Ecclesiastes 12

¹² And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

¹³ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

In all the millions upon millions of books that have been or shall be made, there has not been a single principle of ethics set forth that is not contained in the ten commandments. And

although many books are valuable, and worthy of deep study, yet the sum of all that is said in the books, and the most worthy subject of all study, is the law of God. Study it, therefore, ever and always with the prayer of him of old,

Psalm 119

¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

Ecclesiastes 12

¹⁴ For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

The law of God being the rule of life, it must be the rule of judgment.

Romans 2

¹² As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

¹⁶ In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

They who shall stand in the Judgment are those whose...

Psalm 1

² ...delight is in the law of the Lord; and who meditate in His law day and night.

Oh, how carefully we must meditate herein, for it is a discerner of the very...

Hebrews 4

¹² ...thoughts and intents of the heart,

—and in that day the Lord...

1 Corinthians 4

⁵ ...will make manifest the counsels of the heart,

Ecclesiastes 12

¹⁴ ...with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

Oh, that we might realize how fearfully searching the Judgment will be! Then, too, we could realize the blessedness of that salvation, and the riches of that precious blood which blots out all our transgression, so that it is remembered no more forever.²³⁴

But realizing, faintly as we do, the awful importance of that event, we may pray with David:

Psalm 19

¹² Cleanse me from secret faults.

¹³ Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me...

¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

²³⁴ *Hebrews 10:17.*

Israel and Judah

Other Resources to Consult:

The Everlasting Covenant (Waggoner)

1. The Revolt of the Ten Tribes

Signs of the Times, June 25, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, July

1 Kings 12:6-17

A. T. Jones

WITH the beginning of the third quarter we enter again upon the study of the Old Testament. The close of the Old Testament lessons for last year, was at the end of Solomon's reign. We learned:

- How Solomon forsook his wisdom and plunged into the depths of folly;
- How that he loved "many strange women," women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites;
- How that he went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites;
- How that he built "high places" for Chemosh of Moab, and Molech of Ammon, and for all the gods of his strange wives; and
- How that for it the Lord stirred up adversaries on every hand which were adversaries all the days of Solomon.

And then to crown it all the Lord said unto Solomon,

1 Kings 11

¹¹ Forasmuch as this is done of you, and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely rend the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.

¹³ Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to your son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

By Solomon's sins, a fearful train of evils was laid. In his iniquities there was sown the seed from which sprang a most abundant harvest, which was reaped in long years, and even

ages, of suffering, of sorrow, and of bitterness. How little he thought, how little any one things, of this! Yet there is nothing surer, there is nothing more diligently inculcated by the word of God, than this one thing, that sin cannot be committed with impunity.

Galatians 6

⁷ Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

Job 4

⁸ Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

Nor is this confined to the immediate acts.

Jeremiah 17

¹⁰ I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Remember therefore that when wickedness is sown nothing but wickedness can spring from it, and the fruit that is borne, enters into the computation of the reward, whatever it may be. If the reward be the reward of the wicked, it will be the greater according to the fruit of the wickedness committed. And if by the mercy of God the sin is forgiven, and if, by patient continuance in well-doing, the reward of the righteous be obtained, yet the fullness of that reward will be diminished according as the fruit of wickedness shall abound.

Sin is a terrible reality.

Numbers 32

²³ And be sure your sin will find you out.

Nowadays it has become quite a common thing, even almost tacitly understood, that young men must sow their “wild oats.” Yes; and nearly all do so, but it were well to remember that, from the beginning of sin, never yet was there sown a particle of such “wild oats” that did not spring up and bear

fruit abundantly, all of which must be reaped, in one place or another, in sorrow and in dread. There is absolutely no escape, no wind will blast it, no mildew will smite it; it cannot be plucked up by the roots,—it must be reaped.

Exodus 20

⁵ Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

It is not in vain that God has written in the table of his law,

⁶ I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

In accordance with the word of the Lord to Solomon, the prophet Ahijah told Jeroboam that ten of the tribes should be given to him, and he should reign over them. Jeroboam was the son of Nebat of the tribe of Ephraim, and his mother's name was Zeruah, and was at this time a widow. As Solomon was building Millo, and repairing the walls of the city of David, he saw Jeroboam among the workmen, and...

1 Kings 11

²⁸ ...seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph [Ephraim].

As Jeroboam was going out of the city of Jerusalem one day, Ahijah met him and drew him aside into the field. Then Ahijah took his own outer garment, tore it into twelve pieces, and said to Jeroboam,

³¹ Take ten pieces; for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to you.

And although the Lord told him plainly that this should not

be done while Solomon lived, yet like a great many before his time he could not await the Lord's time and so he attempted to seize the kingdom before the time.

1 Kings 11

²⁶ ...he lifted up his hand against the king,

–and therefore Solomon sought to kill him.

⁴⁰ And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak, king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

Rehoboam succeeded Solomon on the throne of David, and of course expected to reign over all the tribes of Israel, and so went to Shechem to be acknowledged as king. But there was a hitch in the proceedings. Israel had sent word to Jeroboam in Egypt and called him up to Shechem, and it may well be supposed that with the ambitious schemes that he had in hand even while Solomon lived, that he would suffer nothing to be settled by which Rehoboam should rule over all.

But besides this, the people had a real grievance. In Solomon had been fulfilled, in a great measure, the prophecy of Samuel when the people chose a king in the first place.

1 Samuel 8

¹¹ He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

¹² And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

¹³ And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

¹⁴ And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

¹⁵ And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

¹⁶ And he will take your menservants, and your maidser-

vants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your sheep: and you shall be his servants.

All this had been done by Solomon; and all to support his heathen wives. The burdens of the people had really been made heavy, and now they asked relief from some of these. But of this, Samuel had also told them,

1 Samuel 8

¹⁸ And you shall cry out in that day because of your king which you shall have chosen; and the Lord will not hear you in that day.

And so when they ask Rehoboam to relieve them he only mocks them. He first consulted the old men who gave him wise counsel, but he had not sense enough to follow it, but instead turned to...

1 Kings 12

⁸ ... the young men that were grown up with him.

And a fine set of counselors these were! Let us see for a moment under what influences he and these young men had grown up. Rehoboam was the son of Solomon by Naamah an Ammonitess.²³⁵ And we read in *1 Kings* 11:18 that all these heathen women burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. These gods were Molech, and Ashtoreth, and Chemosh, and Baalim. These represented the male and the female principles of generation, and all the rites of their worship corresponded to that idea, and is expressed in the one word, lasciviousness. Their priests were men dressed in women's clothes; their priestesses were harlots, and their most acceptable worship was by prostitution, and burning the offspring in the fire.

Such were the influences amidst which these young men had grown up, and such was the training that they had, by

²³⁵ *1 Kings* 14:21.

which they should be fitted to become counselors in an emergency that involved one of the greatest kingdoms then in the world. How could the issue be anything else but fatal? And so it was. They said,

1 Kings 12

¹⁰ Thus shall you speak unto this people that spoke unto you.

Thus implying that it was an act of rebellion for them even to speak to him of their grievances. And he was to say to them,

¹⁰ ...My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.

¹¹ ...my father has chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

There could be but one result. The people answered the king, saying,

¹⁶ What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to your own house, David.

Thus comes, fast following, evil upon evil as the fearful fruit of the sins of Solomon. It was only for David's sake that all this did not happen in Solomon's own day. And even now, when it did come about, it was still for David's sake that there was a tribe left to Rehoboam at all.

1 Kings 11

¹² Notwithstanding in your days I will not do it for David your father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of your son.

¹³ Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to your son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

³² But he [Solomon's son] shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel.

Romans 11

²² Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God.

His mercy is upon children's children to such as fear Him, and in visiting iniquity, transgression, and sin, yet in wrath upon the disobedient, in mercy He remembers those who have been obedient.

Exodus 20

⁵ ...visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him,

⁶ And showing mercy unto thousands [of generations] of them who love Him, and keep His commandments.

Psalms 119

⁴⁷ And I will delight myself in your commandments, which I have loved.

2. The Kingdom Divided

Present Truth, June 23, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

1 Kings 12:4-25

E. J. Waggoner

IN THIS lesson we have the climax of the trouble for which the later years of reign had been preparing the way. For:

1 Kings 11

¹ King Solomon loved many strange women...

³ And he had seven hundred wives...

⁴ For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

¹¹ Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of you, and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely rend the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.

¹² Notwithstanding in your days I will not do it for David your father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of your son.

¹³ Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to your son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

It had been only a hundred and twenty years since Saul was anointed king, and yet the evil results of having a king, which the Lord pointed out to the people at the time, were already being severely felt. He had said,

1 Samuel 8

¹⁸ You shall cry out in that day because of your king which you shall have chosen you.

And so it was.

Real and False Kingly Power

When God created man in His image and said,

Genesis 1

²⁶ Let them have dominion,

–it was not an arbitrary power over the earth which was conferred upon him. He was to have dominion by virtue of that inherent power of the righteousness of the character which was given to him in making him in the image of God. And it was God’s plan that the earth should be ruled by the power of His own righteousness as revealed in and through man.

After man had fallen into sin, this purpose of God was not changed, although it became necessary to give His own Son to become the man, the second Adam, through whom all this should be accomplished.

Just in proportion, therefore, as men lived near to God, following in His ways and permitting Him to reveal His righteousness in them, so would they have dominion, so would they have stability of character, and thence would follow stability of government.

Just in proportion as they departed from God and refused to be obedient to His commandments, and thus permitted sin to have dominion over them, so would they lose their dominion, so would weakness of character assert itself, and thence would follow instability of government. This was the history of the people of God under all their rulers.

Apostasy and Distress

In his later years Solomon...

1 Kings 11

¹⁰ ...kept not that which the Lord commanded,

–but his heart was turned away...

¹⁰ ...after other gods.

Wealth, luxury, and self-indulgence worked out, as in num-

berless other royal cases, their bitter fruits. The material gifts of God's bounty were perverted to selfish ends. A policy of mere worldly expediency, instead of righteousness, led to alliances with heathen courts. These, in turn, involved increased expenditure, which was met by augmented taxation. Thus was the way prepared for discontent and revolt.

A Petition Disregarded

After the death of Solomon and the accession of Rehoboam, the people came to the new king and said:

1 Kings 12

⁴ Your father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make the grievous service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve you.

⁶ The king consulted with the old men,

—and they gave wise counsel, saying,

⁷ If you will be a servant unto this people this day, and will serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants for ever.

Then the king...

⁸ ...consulted with the young men that were grown up with him,

—and they recommended this reply:

¹⁰ My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.

The new king followed the counsel of the young men and threatened the people with heavier burdens than his father had imposed upon them.

The True and the False Principle of Government

The two replies well represent the difference between the principles of the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness.

⁷ If you will be a servant unto this people,

–said the old men, and this was the principle upon which God in Jesus Christ deals with the rebellious world.

Isaiah 42

¹ Behold my *Servant* whom I uphold.

Luke 22

²⁷ I am among you as he that *serves*.

Matthew 20

²⁷ Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your *servant*.

Thus does He who is King of kings and Lord of lords relate himself to those whom He would win as His loyal subjects. In marked contrast with this is that arbitrary spirit which would seek to crush under an iron heel every one who should raise a voice against oppression. The one would win by self-sacrifice; the other would drive by an increase of arbitrary power.

But instead of being terrified into submission by the threats uttered, the people were driven into open revolt:

1 Kings 12

¹⁶ What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to your own house, David.

When the tax gatherer came among them,

¹⁸ ...all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died.

¹⁹ So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

Thus by disunion and division was the way being prepared for the downfall of the nation and their captivity.

The Situation Today

He who considers the situation among the nations of the earth today cannot fail to see the working of the same influences which brought disaster to Solomon's kingdom. There are nations where the people are groaning under the burden

of debt and taxation, and yet their protests, not always wisely made (as in the recent riots in Italy), are met with a display of military power, and no hope is held out that the condition of affairs will be improved. The ruling powers have in many cases so far repudiated the principles of truth and righteousness that there is no sure foundation upon which to build any hope of future reform. The time is near when...

2 Peter 3

¹¹ ...all these things shall be dissolved,

—and the only hope of individuals will be that each one has built for himself upon the sure foundation, and...

1 Corinthians 3

¹¹ Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

3. Seek the Lord

Present Truth, September 25, 1902

2 Chronicles 12:14

E. J. Waggoner

THE futile life of one of the weakest kings of Judah²³⁶ is gathered up in this one striking sentence:

2 Chronicles 12

¹⁴ He did evil, because he did not fix his heart to seek the Lord.

That is to say, because he did not strongly resolve to do right, he did wrong; and that is a universal truth.

Yet there is a deeper truth than that in the words—because he did not set his heart to seek God, therefore he stumbled into the grip of every tempting evil. That is to say, the true way to overcome temptation is to fill the heart with God.

²³⁶ Rehoboam.

4. Idolatry Established

Signs of the Times, July 2, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, July 12

1 Kings 12:25-33

A. T. Jones

1 Kings 12

²⁵ Then Jeroboam built Shechem.

HE ENLARGED and fortified the city, and made it his capital. Shechem is one of the most noted places mentioned in the Bible. It was the first place at which Abraham stopped, when he departed out of Haran and came into the land of Canaan; there the Lord appeared to him and made him the promise of the land; and there he built his first altar in the land of Canaan.

Genesis 12

⁶ And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

⁷ And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto your seed will I give this land: and there he built an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.

When Jacob came out of Mesopotamia, on his journey back to his own land, he pitched his tent before the city, and...

Genesis 33

¹⁹ ...bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent.

In this “parcel” of ground at Shechem, the children of Israel buried the bones of Joseph, which they had brought out of Egypt.

Joshua 24

³² And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, they buried in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

On each side of it, on Mts. Gerizim and Ebal, stood all the people after crossing over Jordan, when the blessings upon the obedient, and the curses upon the disobedient, were pronounced.

Joshua 8

³³ And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.

Here all Israel assembled to make Rehoboam king; here they rebelled and chose Jeroboam; and thus it came that he made it his capital. It was near the town that the Saviour,

John 4

⁶ ...being wearied with his journey, sat thus,

—on Jacob’s well, when the woman of Samaria came to draw water.²³⁷ Shechem was thirty-four miles north of Jerusalem.

1 Kings 12

²⁶ And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David:

²⁷ If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem.

There probably was some truth in this observation. For, as all were to assemble in Jerusalem three times in the year especially, besides the many other important occasions of worship; and as the Levites that were in all the cities would have to go up from time to time to fill the order of their course in the temple service; the chief religious interest would be at Jerusalem, and therefore the interests of the whole nation would be centered there, and Jeroboam’s rule would be to a

²³⁷ See *John* 4:1-42.

certain extent only nominal.

Even if all this were so, it could only be for the best interests of the nation in every way. But that was nothing to Jeroboam. Like every other professional politician, his own personal interests must take precedence of everything, even to the usurpation of the prerogatives which God had reserved to himself.

1 Kings 12

²⁸ Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold.

These calves were the images of the Egyptian gods. Jeroboam had learned about them and their worship, during his sojourn in Egypt, when he fled from Solomon. The worship was of the same degraded nature as that of the gods of the Ammonites, Moabites, and Zidonians, with the exception of burning the children in the fire.

²⁹ And he set the one in Bethel.

It was, no doubt, an easy task to turn the people to Bethel instead of Jerusalem to worship, for there Abraham had built an altar and had worshiped, both before and after he went to Egypt:

Genesis 12

⁸ And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he built an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

Genesis 13

³ And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai;

⁴ Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

There the Lord appeared unto Jacob, and there Jacob set up

a pillar, and called it God's house;²³⁸ there Jacob built an altar when he returned with all his substance from the house of Laban, and there the Lord appeared to him again, and renewed to him the promise made to Abraham and Isaac.²³⁹ In the troubled times of the judges there was the ark of the covenant, and there the people came to inquire of the Lord;²⁴⁰ and there Samuel went in his circuit once a year to judge Israel.

So when Jeroboam built an altar there, and established a system of worship, idolatrous though it was, he could appeal to them upon all these sacred memories, as against Jerusalem, and especially when by the cry,

Exodus 32

⁴ These be your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt,

–he would palm off upon them the idols as simply representations of the God of their fathers.

1 Kings 12

²⁹ And the other he put in Dan.

Dan was already the place of an idolatrous worship by the tribe of Dan. When the tribe of Dan sought for an inheritance in the land, they first sent out five men, who, in their search, came to Laish, and found a place where there was...

Judges 18

¹⁰ ...no want of anything that is in the earth,

–and returned and told their brethren. Then the tribe sent 600 armed men to take the place. As they were on the way, they came to the house of Micah of Mount Ephraim, and there they found a graven image, and ephod, a teraphim, and a molten image, and a Levite whom Micah had hired as his priest in the worship of these his gods, and the Danites took

²³⁸ *Genesis* 28:10-22.

²³⁹ *Genesis* 35:6-15.

²⁴⁰ *Judges* 20:18-28.

priest, idols, and all, and carried them with them to Laish. They attacked and destroyed Laish, and there they built a new city and called it Dan, and established their idolatrous worship there, and maintained it till the captivity of the ten tribes.

It was easy enough, therefore, for Jeroboam to set up his golden calf at Dan, and to turn the people there to the worship of it, not only because the people were prone to idolatry, but because they were actually practicing it.

And so with one place of worship in the northern, and another in the southern, part of his kingdom, he could present very forcibly his next appeal:

1 Kings 12

²⁸ It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem.

Yes,

“It is too much for you to go to the place that the Lord himself appointed, and to worship Him as He has directed. It is too hard for you to obey the Lord, you can obey me, that will be much easier. It is too hard for you to travel away down to Jerusalem, here is a place to worship almost at your own doors as it were; this will be ever so much easier for you.

“These are your gods, anyhow, that brought you out of Egypt. You worship the same gods here that they worship at Jerusalem, only in a little different way; but then everybody cannot see alike; there is unity in diversity; we are all only branches of the same church; we are only different departments of the same army; the Lord is the one great Commander!”

Yes; Jeroboam could thus offer them ease, and that is the one thing desirable with many who pretend to worship the Lord. They will willingly worship if they can only do it in their own way. But such people don't worship the Lord, they worship themselves.

But was Jeroboam the last one who ever held out to the people such inducements? Hardly. We need not go very far to

find the same thing today. When the Sabbath of the Lord, and the coming of Christ, are now presented to the people, and their holy claims urged upon them, there are plenty of would-be leaders, who, like Jeroboam, will appeal to their love of ease.

“Oh,” say they, “it is not necessary for you to keep the Sabbath. Just think, you will lose your position, and your standing in society and in your church. And oh, worse than all, those people who keep the Sabbath, and are looking for the Lord, don’t have any church fairs, nor festivals, nor ‘mum’ socials, nor fish-ponds, nor grab-bags, nor sleeping-beauties, nor kissing-bees, nor gambling—why you cannot even put up your young ladies at public auction, and sell them to the highest bidder! And that is ‘too much for you,’ just stay where you are. We worship the same God that they do, only in a different way. Of course we don’t do as He has commanded, but all cannot see alike, you know.”

But in all this as in that of old,

1 Kings 12

³⁰ This thing became a sin.

It is not the service of God at all. All such are...

2 Timothy 3

⁴ ...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,

—and He commands,

⁵ ...from such turn away.

This is what was done by a great many in that time, for we read:

2 Chronicles 11

¹³ And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him [Rehoboam] out of all their coasts.

¹⁶ And after them, out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers.

1 Kings 12

³¹ And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

³² And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

³³ So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

1 Kings 14

¹⁶ And He [God] shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin.

And from that day forward neither Jeroboam, nor Israel, ever knew safety. What he and they supposed the easiest way proved the hardest possible way.

So it has ever been, and so will it ever be with every one who chooses his own way. Man's way leads direct to perdition; the Lord's way leads straight to paradise. Man's ways is the hardest way; the Lord's way is the easiest of all ways. Christ said,

Matthew 11

³⁰ My yoke is easy.

And the only easy way is to deny self, take up the cross and follow Him. There is no other.

5. Reformation Under Asa

Present Truth, September 22, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

2 Chronicles 14:2-12

E. J. Waggoner

ASA was the grandson of Rehoboam, in whose days, and through whose folly, Israel had been divided into two kingdoms. The division had been attended and followed by much ill-feeling, and during the reign of Ahijah, this had culminated in the battle of Mount Ephraim, in which Israel was defeated with heavy slaughter, although twice as strong in numbers as their opponents. No less than five hundred thousand of the chosen men of Israel were slain in this conflict.

2 Chronicles 13

¹⁸ Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers.

Removing the Idols

Israel was long in recovering from the severe defeat then sustained, and after Asa's accession to the throne there was a period of ten years of unbroken peace. The time was spent in clearing out of the kingdom of Judah the idolatrous relics of King Solomon's apostasy. The altars of the strange gods were taken away, and the images of the sun were destroyed out of all the cities of Judah. A royal proclamation was sent throughout the country, commanding the people to seek the Lord and obey His commandments.

Religious Legislation

There are many nowadays who think that because such proclamations as these are recorded in the Scriptures, it was right to issue them, and that it is still right to enforce matters of religion by the law of the land. But, although Asa was a reformer, he showed by this edict that he did not fully appreci-

ate the character of the worship which God requires of His people.

God's law is a law of love. By His loving-kindness He draws men to himself, and His commandments are given, not as rigid, autocratic requirements, but as a word of life, promising to all who hear and live the righteousness they set forth. Christ was the law of God in life and action, for...

Romans 13

¹⁰ ...love is the fulfilling of the law,

—and Christ was perfect love. Whoever would get correct ideas of the law of God will find them in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, who said,

Psalm 40

⁸ Your law is within my heart.

He came not to condemn but to save.

Galatians 3

²¹ If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

Romans 8

³ But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son...condemned sin in the flesh:

⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.

God's Word is strong enough in itself to accomplish the thing whereto He sends it, and if the Word prove weak through the flesh, the flesh does not improve matters by promulgating a supplementary law of its own. The only effect of this is to hide from view the efficiency of the Divine Word, and thereby diminish faith in it.

Ensuring Peace

Asa showed further that he did not appreciate what God wanted to be to His people, by the measures he took to secure

peace. In another proclamation to Judah, he admitted that because they had sought the Lord, He had given them rest on every side; yet, instead of exhorting them to continue to seek the Lord, and thus maintain their security, he ordered that they should build fortified cities,

2 Chronicles 14

⁷ ...and make about them walls, and towers, gates, and bars.

In the same spirit he increased his army, until it numbered nearly six hundred thousand men, all of them mighty men of valor.

The Way of Peace

It is true that when God blesses men, with peace or any other good, He uses means; but we ought not to look for the fulfillment of the divine purpose through means which He has not provided. The measures taken by Asa were such precautions as might well be adopted by the heathen who knew not God, but the Lord did not design that His people should be preserved in peace by increasing their armaments.

At the present time the world is largely of opinion that the nation best prepared for war stands the best chance of maintaining peace, and statesmen and politicians claim that it would be criminal neglect to allow their nation to fall behind in the headlong race for military pre-eminence.

But peace can only come in the knowledge that the Lord's protection is over us, for...

Psalms 127

¹ ...except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain.

If Judah had committed their ways unto the Lord, He would have seen that their peace was not disturbed.

Isaiah 26

³ You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on

You.

Proverbs 16

⁷ When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

The Ethiopian Invasion

This was soon demonstrated to Asa. A great king was advancing rapidly toward the border of Judah, conquering as he went, and threatening Asa's kingdom with the horrors of a barbarian invasion. The continual struggle between Egypt and Ethiopia had ended for the present in the subjugation of the former country, and Zerah, king of Ethiopia, had joined Egypt and the surrounding countries to his own. Now he was come forth, with more than a million warriors in his train, to lay waste the land of Palestine. Asa despaired of overthrowing this army with his own, Judah's numerous forces and fenced cities were seen to be of no avail in this tremendous crisis.

2 Chronicles 14

¹¹ And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with You to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on You, and in your name we go against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; let not man prevail against You.

A Needed Experience

God could have easily hindered the Ethiopian army from approaching Palestine and doubtless the faith of some waxed faint as they watched with growing apprehension the steady advance of the invading host. But the lesson was needed.

God would teach His people that their security did not consist in armies and fortifications, that it was indeed nothing to Him whether He were called to help those who were many, or those who had no power. To the extent that armies and walled cities obscured the need of His protecting presence, they were no gain at all, but a decided loss.

Asa's prayer showed that the danger which God had allowed to threaten the nation had taught him the intended lesson. It indicated complete dependence upon the Lord, and the Lord amply honored the trust reposed in Him.

2 Chronicles 14

¹² So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah.

Their overthrow was so complete that they could not recover themselves. Zerah's conquering career was checked, and he returned to the country of Ethiopia, abandoning his foreign conquests and devoting his attention to the restoration of his own shattered kingdom.

Lifting the Standard

Once more the knowledge of the true God had shone out, and His power been seen,

Psalms 74

¹² ...working salvation in the midst of the earth.

God would deepen the lesson in the hearts of His people, so as Asa was returning with rejoicing to Jerusalem, a prophet was sent to meet him, declaring that if they would continue to seek the Lord, He would certainly be found of them. They were therefore exhorted to be strong and fearless in the Lord, for their work would be plentifully rewarded.

Asa took courage from these promises and applied himself diligently to the work of exterminating every vestige of idolatry, not even tolerating it among his own relations, and all Judah joined him in the work with their whole heart. As the reformation spread, those in the kingdom of Israel who desired to worship the Lord in truth, left their homes,

2 Chronicles 15

⁹ ...for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.

God was drawing to himself all who would be drawn, and those in Israel who rejected this opportunity of uniting themselves with the worshipers of Jehovah, sank lower and lower in idolatry, until the time soon came when there were only seven thousand in all the land who had not bowed the knee to Baal.²⁴¹

A Foolish Policy

God was desirous that His people should keep in mind the victory over Zerah, but it faded from their memories, and when, after twenty-five years of peace, trouble again arose between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, Asa made appeal for assistance, not to Jehovah, but to the heathen king of Syria.

It seemed as though the arrangement worked satisfactorily. The immediate difficulty was averted, but in turning away from the Lord, Asa had turned away from that which alone made peace sure to his kingdom. The Lord sent word to him that he had done foolishly, and that from thenceforth he would have wars. The messenger asked,

2 Chronicles 16

⁸ Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims [Libyans] a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because you did rely on the Lord, He delivered them into your hand.

A Reliable God

The Lord likes to be relied upon. He makes great promises to those who will trust Him, declaring that they...

Isaiah 45

¹⁷ ...shall never be put to shame, nor confounded, world without end.

He is strong enough and willing enough to do for His people all that they need, but although He has given innumerable evidences of His power and love, it is rarely that He finds any

²⁴¹ *1 Kings 19:18; Romans 11:4.*

who care to trust Him.

2 Chronicles 16

⁹ The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him.

One who realizes his need, and determines to trust the Lord's promise to supply all his need, should never fear that he is going to be disappointed. The Lord has been searching the whole earth for just such a case, to give Him an opportunity of showing what He can do, and now, if the man will only continue to trust Him, the Lord will show himself strong in his behalf.

Taking the Name of God

God did not ask Asa to keep up a huge army, and thus take all possible precautions against his enemies. He asked simply that Asa would rely upon Him, and trust, not in horses and chariots, but in the living God. It did not offend Him that Asa should say,

2 Chronicles 14

¹¹ In your name we go against this multitude...let not man prevail against You,

—for He has identified himself to the full with our cause and interests, and to all who thus acknowledge their intimate relation with God, and claim the privileges which the relationship confers, the promise is given,

Exodus 20

⁷ You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

6. Jehoshaphat's Good Reign

Present Truth, September 29, 1898

Notes on the Sunday-School Lessons, October 9

2 Chronicles 17:1-10

E. J. Waggoner

JEHOSHAPHAT came to the throne of Judah at the age of thirty-five, at which time Ahab had been king of Israel three years. The reign of Jehoshaphat, like that of his father Asa, was a prosperous one, but while, like his father, Jehoshaphat acknowledged that the Lord was the strength of His people, he also followed the policy of Asa in increasing the number of his fighting men.

Although the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat, this did not seem to be considered sufficient, and so we find the armies of Judah reaching the enormous total of one million, one hundred and sixty thousand, without counting the garrisons which the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

Not by Might

It had been necessary to teach Asa that the national safety did not depend upon its armed hosts, and there were events in Jehoshaphat's life which showed that, with all his piety and steadfastness, he needed to learn the same lesson.

The possession of so large an army made him a desirable ally, and Ahab sought his assistance against the king of Syria. Ahab and Jezebel would know how to entrap the unworldly Jehoshaphat, if he should cease to seek the Lord humbly for wisdom and guidance, and they seem to have taken special pains to gain his goodwill.

2 Chronicles 18

² And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him, and persuaded him to

go up with him to Ramoth-gilead.

Jehoshaphat knew that Ahab was a wicked king, who had almost extinguished the worship of the true God, by favoring the idolaters and persecuting the servants of Jehovah, yet his answer to Ahab was,

2 Chronicles 18

³ I am as you are, and my people as your people; and we will be with you in the war.

The alliance between the two was strengthened by the marriage of Ahab's daughter to the eldest son of Jehoshaphat, a union which bore evil fruit.

Departing from God

Micaiah, a true prophet, gave a faithful warning as to the disastrous results that would follow the projected campaign, but the first steps had been taken in departing from the Lord, and it seemed easier to go forward than back. Jehoshaphat perhaps comforted himself with the thought that, supported by so large an army, he could not run much risk, but he had forfeited the protection of the Lord, and nothing else could avail him.

His new ally dexterously arranged, as he supposed, to divert all danger from himself to Jehoshaphat, and therein demonstrated at once to the latter how poor an exchange he had made in forsaking the Lord for such a friend. The principal onslaught of the Syrians was made upon Jehoshaphat, and his life was in peril till he...

2 Chronicles 18

³¹ ...cried out, and the Lord helped him; and God moved them to depart from him.

Turning to the Lord

As Jehoshaphat returned to his home in Jerusalem a sadder, and perhaps a wiser man, a prophet was sent to meet him

with the rebuke,

2 Chronicles 19

² Should you help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon you from before the Lord.

The vain-confidence which had prepared the way for the disaster was not confined to Jehoshaphat, for all the cities of Judah were permeated with the military spirit. It was therefore necessary that all should learn how...

Jeremiah 17

⁵ ...cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord.

The report came that a great multitude of the Moabites and Ammonites were gathered to battle against Judah.

2 Chronicles 20

³ And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

⁴ And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.

The Victory That Overcomes

Victory was certain then. Even with a large army, if that were all, success would have been extremely uncertain, but the turning to the Lord in faith was the overcoming.

Proverbs 21

³¹ The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord.

So the message was sent to praying Judah:

2 Chronicles 20

¹⁵ The battle is not yours but God's.

They had turned the matter over to Him, and He took it up promptly and gladly. To every soul before whom is the battle of life, against sin, God sends the message of comfort, that

the...

Isaiah 40

² ...warfare is accomplished.

Victory is achieved, and faith may take it from first to last.

2 Chronicles 20

¹⁷ You shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you.

The enemies of Judah were totally destroyed,

²⁹ And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel.

³⁰ So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.

Entering into Rest

It was not the fault of the Lord that His people did not have rest all the time. Jehoshaphat had it at the beginning of his reign, and the only thing that disturbed the rest was the army he raised to secure it. God had been always proclaiming rest, and to this day,

Hebrews 4

⁹ The rest remains for the people of God.

Rest, because...

³ ...the works are finished from the foundation of the world.

Peace, because the...

Isaiah 40

² ...warfare is accomplished.

Israel failed to enter in,

Hebrews 3

¹⁹ ...because of unbelief,

—and that is the only barrier between us and God's perfect

rest.

Hebrews 4

¹¹ Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest.

Exalting the Nation

Because Jehoshaphat did not learn perfectly every lesson given him, he was not therefore rejected. God blessed him to the fullest extent possible, and established the kingdom in his hand. Jehoshaphat provided for the more thorough teaching of the Word of God throughout his dominions by sending forth men of the tribe of Levi, who...

2 Chronicles 17

⁹ ...went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.

They had with them the book of the law of the Lord. In this work and in the prosperity that followed in its train, it was made manifest that:

Proverbs 14

³⁴ Righteousness exalts a nation.

They realized the truth of the words spoken by Moses,

Deuteronomy 4

⁶ This is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

As the Word of the Lord was diligently taught throughout the land, the fear of the Lord was made known to the surrounding peoples, and the Philistines and the Arabians were numbered among those who brought presents and tribute to Jehoshaphat.

7. Elijah the Tishbite

Signs of the Times, July 23, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, July 26

1 Kings 17:1-16

A. T. Jones

THE life of Elijah, up to the time of his translation, is the subject of the greater part of the lessons during the remaining part of the present quarter. It is well; for Elijah and his times form one of the most interesting subjects that can be studied by the people of the present day.

The very last words of the Old Testament are a prophecy concerning Elijah:

Malachi 4

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

⁶ And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

As they came down from the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples asked Jesus about this prophecy, as follows:

Matthew 17

⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

¹⁰ And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?

¹¹ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things.

¹² But I say unto you, That Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

¹³ Then the disciples understood that He spoke unto them of John the Baptist.

According to these words of Christ, therefore, this prophecy referred to John the Baptist, and *Luke* gives a fuller view of its

application to him:

Luke 1

¹³ But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elisabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

¹⁴ And you shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

¹⁵ For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

¹⁶ And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

¹⁷ And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

But this is not all that Elijah has to do with the work of the Lord Jesus. As this prophecy, fulfilled by John the Baptist referred to the times just preceding the first advent of the Saviour, so the times of Elijah, and Elijah himself, bear an important part in relation to the times just preceding the second advent of the Saviour and in connection with that advent itself.

In *Matthew* 17:1-5, *Luke* 9:28-35, and *Mark* 9:2-7, we have the account of the Saviour's transfiguration, and all three agree in recording the fact that Elijah and Moses were there talking with Him. Nor were they simply the spirits of these two men. Luke says plainly,

Luke 9

³⁰ There talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah:

³¹ Who appeared in glory...

They were two glorified men therefore. Now if we can learn what the transfiguration meant, then we can learn also what was the meaning of the appearance there of these two men.

We turn to *2 Peter*, and read:

2 Peter 1

¹⁶ For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

¹⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

¹⁸ And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.

Here the apostle is writing of the coming of the Lord in His everlasting kingdom (verse 11), and says, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables” when they made known “the power and coming” of the Lord. Why have they not followed fables, that is, “made-up stories”? Because they “were eyewitnesses of His majesty,” as He shall then appear. When were they eyewitnesses of his majesty? Answer:

¹⁸ When we were with Him in the holy mount,
—when the voice came from heaven, saying,

¹⁷ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

What did they see there?

Matthew 17

² [Jesus] was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

Mark 9

³ And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

Matthew 17

⁵ Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them.

Is this the way Jesus will appear when He comes?

Revelation 1

⁷ Behold He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him.

Matthew 24

³⁰ And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.

Luke 9

²⁶ He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.

How great will be that glory?

Isaiah 24

²³ Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.

Therefore according to Peter's words, these things are proof positive that when they saw the Lord Jesus transfigured—when they saw Him standing on the mount with the glittering glory of God about Him—they were then “eyewitnesses of His majesty” as He shall appear in His second advent to this world. But what will occur when Jesus comes in His glory?

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

It is plain, then, that when Jesus comes in glory, the righteous living will be “changed,” “caught up,” translated, as was Elijah, and therefore when Elijah stood in glory, with his glorified Lord, in the picture of the coming of the Lord, which Peter, James, and John saw, he stood there as the representative of those who shall be translated at the coming of the Lord, as he was translated in the days of old.

But this is not all. The experience through which Elijah passed just before his translation was also representative. His experience then is, in many points, an exact representation of

that through which those will have to pass who shall be translated as he was. This experience will be the subject of several of the following lessons, and therein we shall endeavor to make the subject plain. Again we say, the life of Elijah is one of the most important studies in which the people of the present day can be engaged.

The question may arise,

“Why was Moses there?”

It is foreign from the lesson, yet so intimately connected with the line of Scripture which we have pursued, that it might be well to explain this point. The answer to the question is that Moses was there as the representative of the righteous dead, as Elijah was the representative of the righteous living. For we have seen that when Jesus comes, the righteous dead are raised, as well as the righteous living translated.

Now as the Scriptures make absolutely no provision for reaching life beyond this world, except by a resurrection from the dead, or a translation, as were Enoch and Elijah; and as Moses had died, it follows that as he, a man, stood in glory, on the Mount of Transfiguration, he was there by virtue of a resurrection from the dead. There is Scripture that shows this. *Jude*, in the ninth verse, says:

Jude

⁹ Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses.

Now Paul says that the devil had the power of death.

Hebrews 2

¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

He says, also, as we have quoted above, that it is at the

voice of the archangel that the dead arise:

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

And we read in *John* 5:25 that it is the voice of the Son of God that will raise the dead:

John 5

²⁵ Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

Therefore the archangel of *Jude* 9 is the Son of God; as it is He alone who raises the dead. And as when one dies he goes into the power of the devil who has the power of death; when the Son of God went to raise Moses, the devil disputed His right. Mark, this is a dispute between the devil and the Son of God, about the “body of Moses.” And as the body of Moses stood in glory on the Mount with the Son of God, we know that when He said to the devil,

Jude

⁹ ...The Lord rebuke you,

—He took the body of Moses, in spite of the devil’s dispute. And thus Moses stood on the Mount of Transfiguration, the representative of the righteous dead; as Elijah stood there the representative of the righteous living; and the Lord Jesus above all, as the One whose voice shall call both dead and living from this world to himself in glory, when He comes in His glory.

8. Standing Before God

Present Truth, July 4, 1895

1 Kings 17:1

E. J. Waggoner

ELIJAH, we are told, was “a man subject to like passions as we are” (*James* 5:17); he was a mortal having the same nature that we have. But that which made Elijah what he was, and distinguished him from most other men that have lived on the earth, is indicated in the words of his message to King Ahab, which so suddenly introduced him into the Scripture narrative.

1 Kings 17

¹ And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab: As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

“Before whom I stand”—these are words that distinguished Elijah from the mass of his fellow-men. Elijah stood before the Lord, and therefore whatever he did was done before the Lord, and as in His presence.

It was true of other men, and is true of men today, that they stand before God; but Elijah recognized and realized the fact, while others did not, and his course differed from others accordingly. And that difference could not be slight; for would not our own course of life be vastly different if we were visibly standing and acting before the Lord?

Imagine the effect upon ourselves of coming into the actual presence of God, as concerns our thoughts, motives and actions. Every other presence would shrink into nothingness; its influence upon us would be gone; we would have no fear of it, or regard for its words. Our whole interest and anxiety would be concentrated upon the single thought of the will of God, and the relation of our lives to it.

Thus it was with Elijah; for his faith made real to him that which was actual truth, but was hidden from his natural senses, and thus it may, and should be with us; for being a man of like passions with us, we also may be like him in faith.

We stand, as truly as he did, before Him who is Lord of all. We act in His presence. And it will be to our infinite advantage if we but realize the fact, and confess it in our actions.

9. Elijah, the Prophet

Present Truth, June 30, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

1 Kings 17:1-16

E. J. Waggoner

IT WAS the work of Elijah, the Prophet, to be a witness for the true God and the power of His word at a time of general apostasy in Israel. Ahab was the king, and:

1 Kings 16

³³ [He] did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

When he was at the very height of his sinful course, Elijah came to him with this message:

1 Kings 17

¹ As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

From another scripture we learn that this is an illustration of the power of prayer:

James 5

¹⁷ Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

When the prophet said, “but according to my word,” it was not a self-assertive boasting of his own power; but in answer to his prayer of faith, the Lord had entrusted him with His own word of power to speak, and thus did it become his word.

Distinguishing Sign of the True God

The giving, or the withholding of rain is one of the ways by which the true God is made known as distinguished from false gods.

Jeremiah 14 [RV]

²² Are there any among the vanities of the heathen that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? are not You He, O Lord our God?

Acts 14

¹⁷ Nevertheless He left not himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

Thus did God, in His tender mercy, preach the Gospel of His mercy and His righteousness, and call the attention of all the people to himself as the only true God, through the prophet Elijah, when the people were being led away into idolatry through the wickedness of Ahab.

It is through the ministry of the rain that the Lord usually provides food for the people, for:

Isaiah 55

¹⁰ The rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater.

But when the necessities of the case render it desirable, the Lord can just as easily provide food in some other way; and so when He told Elijah to hide himself...

1 Kings 17

³ ...by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan,

–He said,

⁴ I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.

This method seems miraculous to us simply because it is a departure from God's usual methods, unless perchance we have failed to recognize the direct agency of God in providing us with daily food. He feeds us just as truly as He fed Elijah by the brook, but usually it is in cooperation with our efforts, for which He supplies the power, that the result is obtained.

Great Power Through Weak Instruments

The channels used through which to supply food to Elijah are suggestive of God's ability to use the most dependent instrumentalities with which to accomplish His purpose. The ravens cannot supply themselves with food:

Job 38

⁴¹ Who provides for the raven his food?

Psalms 147

⁹ He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.

Luke 12

³¹ They neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them.

So also the widow woman was by her very circumstances more dependent than the one whose husband might be expected to provide for the needs of the household. But by using such instrumentalities as these to feed the prophet Elijah, God is proclaiming the fact that:

1 Corinthians 1

²⁷ [He] has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things which are mighty,

—and shows His ability to accomplish His purpose. The prophet of God, through whose word the rain was stayed, and through whose word it came again, was himself thirsty and needy of water, and like any other man, he asked the favor of a drink. He said to the woman,

1 Kings 17

¹⁰ Fetch me, I pray you, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

In like manner, many years afterward,

Luke 24

¹⁹ ...a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all

the people,

–himself the giver of the water of life, said to a woman,

John 4

⁷ Give me to drink.

Thus do power and weakness touch each other, and thus is the power of God magnified through weakness.

Food from the Word

It was by the word of the Lord that there came to be meal in the barrel and oil in the cruse in the first place, for:

Psalm 104

¹⁴ He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that He may bring forth food out of the earth;

¹⁵ And wine that makes glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.

It is by the power of the same word, making the earth to bring forth the annual increase, that meal is kept in the world's barrel throughout the year, and that famines are averted. But people forget this because they see the grain growing in the fields, and so comparatively few receive it as the direct gift of God. They eat by sight rather than by faith.

In the case of the widow woman it was purely by faith, her faith in the word of the Lord to her through the prophet Elijah,

1 Kings 17

¹⁴ The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail.

Thus while the Lord was preaching the Gospel of His power and righteousness to His own people by withholding His usual blessings, on account of their departure from Him, He was by the same prophet proclaiming the same Gospel of His

power and righteousness among the heathen, and offering special blessings to be received through faith in His word.

The Saviour himself cited this experience of Elijah with the widow woman, when the unbelief of the people of His own city prompted the question,

Luke 4

²² Is not this Joseph's son?

²³ And He said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

Happy are those who, like the widow of Zarephath, receive the word of the Lord, the message of His own power to save, without stumbling at the messenger, and so learn to live by the word. For,

Luke 4

⁴ Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

10. The Famine in the Land

Signs of the Times, July 30, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, August 2

1 Kings 18:1-18

A. T. Jones

HAVING learned in last week's lesson that Elijah stood on the Mount of Transfiguration as the representative of those who shall be translated at the coming of the Lord, we turn now to a study of the times of Elijah just before his translation, and we shall find in them a representation of the times in the days just before the coming of the Lord and the translation of the righteous who shall then be alive.

That there will be a company of people alive on the earth, when the Lord comes, who will hail Him with joy and meet Him with gladness, is abundantly shown in the Scriptures. Paul says plainly,

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁵ This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [go before] them which are asleep [the dead].

¹⁶ ...the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them...and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Again he says,

1 Corinthians 15

⁵¹ We shall not all sleep [not all die], but we shall all be changed,

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump;...

⁵⁴ ...then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Where is that "saying" written?

Isaiah 25

⁸ He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will

wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord has spoken it.

⁹ And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

It is plain, therefore, that there will be some righteous on the earth when the Lord comes, but compared with the wicked they will be but few. When the Lord comes, He will take vengeance on the wicked as well as save the righteous.

2 Thessalonians 1

⁷ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels,

⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And in *Revelation 6* we read,

Revelation 6

¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

¹⁶ And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Matthew 24

¹² And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

¹³ But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Thus we see that the two classes, the righteous and the wicked, will be upon the earth when the Lord comes. The wheat and the tares...

Matthew 13

³⁰ ...both grow together until the harvest...

³⁹ ...the harvest is the end of the world.

We see by the words of the present lesson that, through the drought, the streams of water and the vegetation had so dried up that the beasts were likely to perish.

1 Kings 18

⁵ And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

⁶ So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

Now read what Joel says of the time that just precedes the day of the Lord:

Joel 1

¹⁵ Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

¹⁶ Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God?

¹⁷ The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.

¹⁸ How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.

¹⁹ O Lord, to You will I cry: for the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame has burned all the trees of the field.

²⁰ The beasts of the field cry also unto You: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

And in view of it he says:

Joel 2

¹ Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord comes, for it is nigh at hand.

Zephaniah says of that time:

Zephaniah 1

¹⁴ The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hastes greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord; the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

¹⁵ That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

¹⁶ And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord.

Zephaniah tells exactly why the terrors of this great day come so upon men. It is...

¹⁶ ...because they have sinned against the Lord.

This is what brought all the trouble in the days of Elijah. For when Ahab cried out to Elijah,

1 Kings 18

¹⁷ Are you he that troubles Israel?

Elijah replied,

¹⁸ I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed Baalim.

And it was because Elijah had held up before the people the commandments of God, and had insisted on obedience to them that he was now accused of troubling Israel; and it was Israel's persistent violation of the commandments that brought upon them all the trouble.

Here then, in the days of Elijah, was a controversy over the commandments of God. On one side was Jezebel wielding all the power of the state in behalf of the violation of the commandments; on the other side was Elijah and a few others maintaining the honor of God by strict adherence to the pre-

cepts of His law.

Now it is the truth that just before the Lord comes there is to be just such another controversy in regard to the commandments of God. The last message to men, that the Bible contains, is one that warns them against the transgression of the commandments, and calls them to...

Revelation 14

¹² ...keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

This message is found in *Revelation* 14:9-12, and reads as follows:

⁹ And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name.

¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

That this is the very last message to men is shown by the fact that, following in direct connection with this, the prophet says,

¹⁴ And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.

¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in your sickle, and reap; for the time is come for you to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe [the end of the world is come].

¹⁶ And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the

earth; and the earth was reaped.

These scriptures show that when the Lord comes in the clouds of heaven, it is to reap the harvest of the earth; that which will fit a people to be gathered as wheat into the garner of God, is the keeping of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus; and that by which men make themselves only to be accounted chaff to be burned in the fire, is the worship of the beast and his image.

This shows also, that to worship the beast and his image is to violate the commandments of God, and so incur His wrath; and that to keep the commandments of God is to excite to oppressiveness the power of the beast and his image.

Revelation 13

¹⁵ And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

We are here making no argument as to what is the beast, nor what is his image, nor what it will be to worship them. We simply draw a parallel between the events of the times of Elijah and those which immediately precede the coming of the Lord.

Nor do we here present any argument to show that the coming of the Lord is near; we simply show by the Scriptures that, whenever His coming shall be near, then, as in the days of Elijah, the commandments of God will be the one subject of controversy between those who will serve the Lord, and those who will not.

11. Elijah's Gospel and Ours

Present Truth, March 24, 1898

1 Kings 18:17-39

E. J. Waggoner

IN THE work of Elijah, the prophet of God, we have an instructive example of preaching the Gospel...

1 Corinthians 2

⁴ ...in demonstration of the Spirit and power.

In a time when Israel's king, Ahab,

1 Kings 16

³⁰ ...did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him,

—and had openly established the worship of Baal at the court, so that the influence of the royal family was tending to lead the people into idolatry, Elijah bore his testimony faithfully in behalf of the true God. His work reached its climax in the experience at Carmel, as set forth in *1 Kings* 18:17-39.

Elijah Sent to Ahab

After the years of drought, during which Elijah had been hidden from the king and miraculously fed by the Lord,

1 Kings 18

¹ The Word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go show yourself unto Ahab.

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, Are you he that troubles Israel?

¹⁸ And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed Baalim.

¹⁹ Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

²⁰ So Ahab sent unto all the children Israel, and gathered the

prophets together unto Mount Carmel.

²¹ And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long do you halt between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.

The Test

Then the test was arranged in accordance with the terms of which the prophets of Baal were to prepare a sacrifice, and then Elijah was to do the same,

1 Kings 18

²⁴ ...and the God that answers by fire, let Him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

So the plans were carried out, and although the prophets of Baal...

²⁶ ...called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon,...

²⁹ ...and...prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice,...there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Then Elijah...

³² ...built an altar in the name of the Lord,

–and offered a brief prayer recorded in verses 36-37, and:

³⁸ Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice...

³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord He is the God; the Lord He is the God.

The Question for Decision

The question to be decided then was,

“Who is the true God?”

And the Lord so revealed himself in the ministry of His servant, Elijah, that the people were given an opportunity to see the difference between the true and false, and to make an in-

telligent decision in the matter. This was the Gospel as preached by Elijah. He pointed out that the real essence of idolatry was in forsaking the commandments of the Lord, and then in his ministry he revealed...

Romans 1

¹⁶ ...the power of God unto salvation;

–that power which would be sufficient to keep the people from forsaking or breaking the commandments of the Lord.

The same question has been before the children of men since the days of Adam,

“Who is God?”

And in every generation men have said with Pharaoh,

Exodus 5

² Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?

But in all these years the Lord has had His faithful servants who were preaching His Gospel, declaring His Word to all the people, giving all an opportunity to choose between the true and false.

The Same Thing in Christ's Day

A departure from the true God reveals itself in different ways at different times in the development of...

...the great controversy between Christ and Satan.²⁴²

In Elijah's time it showed itself in making “a grove” and in the open worship of a false god under a distinct name; at the time of the first advent of our Lord it showed itself in substituting the authority of man, “the tradition of the elders,”²⁴³ in the place of the Word of God in matters of faith and practice. It was with reference to this very thing that Jesus said:

²⁴² Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 762; *The Great Controversy*, p. 518; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 358; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 685.

²⁴³ *Matthew* 15:2.

Mark 7

⁶ Well has Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

⁷ Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

⁸ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men.

To walk “according to the tradition of the elders,” when it is done knowingly, instead of according to the commandment of God, even though it is done by those who at the same time profess to be the children of God, is just as much a vain worship as to fall down before an image which is...

Jeremiah 10

⁸ ...a doctrine of vanities.

John the Baptist and Elijah

Inasmuch, therefore, as there was the same departure from God at a time when the first advent of our Lord was drawing near as there was in the days of Elijah, although it was manifested with a different outward form, it was necessary that the same Gospel should again be preached with the same power. And so the Lord had said, through the prophet Malachi:

Malachi 4

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

⁶ And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

In Elijah’s time they forsook the commandments of God and openly worshipped another God, under another name. In Christ’s time they had forsaken the commandments of God, even though professing great regard for them, and had substituted the “tradition of the elders” in their place. The principle of departing from God by forsaking His commandments was

the same. And so the needed Gospel message was sent by John the Baptist, of whom it was said:

Luke 1

¹⁶ And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God [just as Elijah did].

¹⁷ And he shall go before Him in the Spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

And in the course of His ministry, Christ said of John:

Matthew 11 [RV]

¹⁴ And if you are willing to receive him, this is Elijah, which is to come.

The Gospel in John's Day

In preaching the Gospel, the special message which was given to him to deliver, John the Baptist faithfully rebuked the people, even those who professed to be teachers of religion, for their departure from God; warned them against trusting in man for salvation;²⁴⁴ and urged them...

Acts 19

⁴ ...that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

In doing this He was simply declaring the message due at that time, which he had found in the prophet Isaiah,

Isaiah 40

⁹ ...Behold your God!

¹⁰ Behold, the Lord God will come.

Thus was fulfilled the command,

³ ...Prepare the way of the Lord...

⁵ And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.

²⁴⁴ *Matthew 3:7-10.*

The Apostasy and the Gospel in the Last Days

But now the second advent of our Lord draws nigh, and the present situation is thus described by the Scripture:

2 Timothy 3

¹ This know also that in the last days perilous time shall come.

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves,...

⁴ ...lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;

⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

By way of further description we also read:

1 Timothy 4

¹ Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of the devils.

The “falling away” has come, as foretold by the great apostle to the Gentiles, the “man of sin”²⁴⁵ has been revealed,

2 Thessalonians 2

⁴ Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

And as previous to the first advent of Christ a message went forth...

Luke 1

¹⁷ ...in the Spirit and power of Elijah,

–to those of whom Christ spoke as...

Matthew 22

²⁹ ...not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God,

–although they made a great deal of the “form of godliness,”²⁴⁶ so now in messages going forth, “the everlasting Gospel,” in fulfilment of the prophecy,

²⁴⁵ 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

²⁴⁶ 2 Timothy 3:5.

Revelation 14

⁶ ...to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,
⁷ Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him;
for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that
made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of
waters.

A careful reading of the 13th and 14th chapters of *Revelation* will show that it is describing a time when worship is being directed to some other than the true God,²⁴⁷ and just then “the everlasting Gospel” is preached “with a loud voice,” just as in the time of Elijah and of John the Baptist, urging the worship of the true God.

That the issue at stake now is the same as of old, is shown from the fact that those who receive this special message of “the everlasting Gospel” are described in verse 12 as follows:

¹² Here are they that keep the commandments of God.

1. In Elijah’s time they forsook the commandments of God and followed Baal;
2. In the time of John the Baptist they “reject the commandment of God”²⁴⁸ and follow the “tradition of the elders;”²⁴⁹
3. In our time there is “a form of godliness,” without the power, and the same putting of the authority of man in the place of the plain Word of God.

In all three cases God sends forth His Gospel message of warning, with a revealing of His power, in order that men may be “without excuse.”²⁵⁰

Jehovah, He is God

But there is a special force in the fact that the Gospel mes-

²⁴⁷ *Revelation* 13:4, 8, 12, 15; *Revelation* 14:9-10.

²⁴⁸ *Mark* 7:9.

²⁴⁹ *Mark* 7:5.

²⁵⁰ *Romans* 1:20.

sage now calls upon all men to...

Revelation 14

⁷ ...worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

This demands a recognition of God as the Creator all things, and the “worship” which He requires is the worship of obedience.

1 John 5

³ This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.

But which commandment reveals God as Creator? The fourth, in which He says,

Exodus 20

¹⁰ The seventh [not the first] day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God...

¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is [compare with *Revelation 14:7*], and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

God thus reveals himself as the Creator of all things, and commands us to...

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,

—because our only hope of salvation is in His creative power.

Ephesians 2

⁸ For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

Isaiah 45

¹⁸ For thus says the Lord that created the heavens; God him-

self that formed the earth and made it;...I am the Lord; and there is none else.

²⁰ Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.

²² Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.

He alone can save who can create, and that we may know Him as the Creator, and so know Him as...

Isaiah 45

¹⁵ ...God of Israel, the Saviour,

–He has given us His Sabbath.

Ezekiel 20

²⁰ And hallow my Sabbaths and they shall be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.

To know Him as the One who creates is to know Him as the One who sanctifies, and so the Lord says further:

¹² Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that does sanctify them.

The Sabbath the Sign

The Lord Jehovah's Sabbath is the seventh day of the week (Saturday) and not the first day of the week (Sunday). And the observance of the seventh day of the week (Saturday) is our recognition of the true God,

Ephesians 3

⁹ ...who created all things by Jesus Christ,

–and our acknowledgement of our dependence upon, and trust in Him for salvation. It is the outward sign of our having entered into His rest through faith, of our having...

Hebrews 4

¹⁰ ...ceased from our own works as God did from His.

The observance of Sunday as a sacred day, or as being of any significance in the religion of Jesus Christ, rests upon no Scriptural authority and is a forsaking of the commandment of God, and a following of the traditions of men, just as truly as was the worship of Baal in Elijah's time, or...

Mark 7

⁸ ...the washing of pots and cups

–by the Pharisees. But the Elijah message is also going forth, saying now as of old,

1 Kings 18

²¹ If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.

Matthew 7

²⁰ By their fruits you shall know them.

²¹ Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Oh, that each one who reads these lines would say as did Joshua of old:

Joshua 24

¹⁵ As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

12. The Lord or Baal?

Signs of the Times, August 6, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, August 9

1 Kings 18:19-29

A. T. Jones

BAAL was the chief god of the Phoenician and Canaanish nations. He was the sun-god, and in him the people worshiped the sun. His worship to some extent had found a place among the people of God before the time of Samuel,²⁵¹ but under the guidance of Samuel his worship was wholly forsaken by Israel, and they followed and...

1 Samuel 7

⁴ ...served the Lord only.

Two hundred years pass by, to the accession of Ahab, before Israel turns again to the worship of Baal. Ahab is introduced thus:

1 Kings 16

²⁹ And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years.

³⁰ And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him.

³¹ And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him.

³² And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

³³ And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

This very supremacy of wickedness reached by Ahab was

²⁵¹ Judges 2:10-13; 10:10.

through the alliance formed with Jezebel. Taking her to wife was considered by the Lord as worse than walking in the wicked ways of all before him. As stated above,

³¹ ...as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam...he took to wife Jezebel.

And when he had taken Jezebel for his wife, his queen, and put himself thus in her power, then he had literally sold himself to work evil. And thus the matter is summed up by the graphic writer of the Kings:

1 Kings 21

²⁵ But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal (“Baal with him”) priest of Baal and Astarte, and king of Tyre and Zidon. Tyre was the chief seat of the Baal-worship, and there was a magnificent temple devoted to his worship, and when Jezebel became the wife of Ahab she deliberately set herself to establish his licentious worship among all Israel.

The most of the people were idolaters already; but the calf-worship, established by Jeroboam, was in the name of the Lord. With him the calf-worship was more a political measure than anything else. He set up the calves to keep the people from going to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, through fear that if they should go there to worship, the kingdom would turn again to Rehoboam. So to prevent this apparent danger to his kingdom, he set up the calves, saying,

1 Kings 12

²⁸ Behold your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

This worship, idolatrous as it was, and bad as it was, had yet this merit, that it was at least in the name of Jehovah, and the people in their worship, mistaken though it was, still at least

pretended to worship the Lord.

But this was not enough for Jezebel. It was not enough that idolatry should abound; Baal must be the idol. Nor was it enough that one god should be worshiped; Baal—the sun—must be that one. It was not enough that some, or even most, of the people should worship the sun; they must all do it. So she set on foot a systematic attempt to absolutely suppress the true worship of the Lord, and by Baal to supplant the true God.

Nor was it enough for her that all should, if possible, be persuaded to adopt the service of Jezebel and Baal, they must be compelled, under penalty of death to do it. Accordingly she began to cut off all who clung to the worship of Jehovah. By these energetic measures she brought the condition of affairs to the point where there were only 7,000 out of all Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal; and these only escaped by taking refuge in dens and caves of the earth, and were so widely scattered that Elijah thought that he was the only one left alive.

Thus matters stood when the voice of the Lord came to Elijah saying,

1 Kings 18

¹ Go show yourself unto Ahab.

Elijah went and said to Ahab,

¹⁹ Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

Ahab did so,

²¹ And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long do you halt between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.

The question was not, whether they should worship God. The question was,

“Who is the true God?”

The question was not whether they should worship or not worship; all were ready and willing to worship. But the question was,

“Whom shall we worship?”

Would they have another god before Jehovah? or would they have Him and Him alone, according to His own commandments. The first commandment was the one that was involved in the controversy in the days of Elijah.

“Should God be worshiped? or should Baal?”

In last week’s lesson we learned that that people who shall be alive on the earth, and who when the Lord comes, shall be translated as Elijah was, will be brought to a like test as to whom they will worship. They will have to decide whether they will worship the beast and his image or whether they will worship God. The word of God says,

Revelation 14

⁹ If any man worship the beast and his image...

¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God...

¹² ...here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

And in *Revelation* 15:2, we learn that those who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus, get...

Revelation 15

² ...the victory over the beast and over his image, and...stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

Anyone who fairly studies the subject cannot fail to see that the following is the truth. The “beast” is the papal power. The “image to the beast” will be the United States Government

when the National Reform party shall have succeeded in forming here the union of Church and State for the purpose of compelling everybody to keep Sunday (the day of the sun) as Jezebel in the days of Elijah compelled the people to worship the image of the sun.

And as the Sunday institution was established by the papacy—the beast—and is set forth as the sign of her authority; so when, after the similitude of the papal church, the National Reform party unites, in this country, Church and State, for the express purpose of compelling all the people to keep Sunday—an institution of the beast, the papal church—then to keep that day will be to worship the beast and his image.

We say that *then* to keep Sunday will be to worship the beast and his image. Because absolutely the only authority for Sunday keeping is the Church of Rome, and when we yield obedience to any power that enforces that authority, we then become servants to that power, for,

Romans 6

¹⁶ Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey?

What then shall we do? The Bible tells. When the beast and his image are enforcing their own worship, the Lord says,

Revelation 14

¹² Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

True the National Reform party pretends that it is the ten commandments to which they are going to compel obedience. But not one of the ten commandments says a word about keeping Sunday. Oh, but the fourth commandment says,

Exodus 20

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;

—and they will have it that Sunday is the Sabbath. But that is not true; that same commandment which says, “Remember

the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” says also,

Exodus 20

¹⁰ The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.

The National Reform party and everybody else knows that Sunday is not the seventh day. Therefore when they seek to compel people to keep Sunday, that is not obedience to the commandment of God. And in opposition to that very thing the Lord sends His own word,

Revelation 14

¹² Here are they that keep the commandments of God, etc.

The time is coming, and now is, when the people shall hear the message of God,

⁷ Saying with a loud voice,...

⁹ ...If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation...

¹² ...Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

In obedience to that message from God, the test will be as strict as was that in the day of Elijah; and the question for decision will be:

- “If the Lord be God, follow Him;” but if the Church of Rome, then follow her.
- If the authority of God be binding, obey Him; but if the authority of the papal church be binding, then obey her.
- If the commandment of God should be kept, which says, “The seventh day is the Sabbath,” then keep it; but if the commandment of the Romish Church should be kept, which says we must observe Sunday “instead of the Sabbath,” then keep it.

And thus it must be decided whether we will “worship Him

that made the Heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters;" or whether we will "worship the beast and his image."

Thus we find another parallel in the experience of Elijah and of those who must be translated as was he. In the next lesson we shall see another.

13. Elijah on Carmel

Present Truth, July 7, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

1 Kings 18:30-39

E. J. Waggoner

AT THE close of the “many days”²⁵² (three years and one half)²⁵³ of drought, of which something was learned in the last lesson,

1 Kings 18

¹ ...the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show yourself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.

So the prophet and the king are brought face to face, and...

¹⁷ ...Ahab said unto him, Are you he that troubles Israel?

¹⁸ And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father’s house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed Baalim.

It is true that Elijah had said,

1 Kings 17

¹ There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word,

—and because the blessing of rain had been withheld, the people had suffered exceedingly,

1 Kings 18

² And there was a sore famine in Samaria.

But there was a cause back of all this, and that was that the true God had not been recognized as the giver of these blessings.

²⁵² 1 Kings 18:1.

²⁵³ James 5:17.

Why Judgments Come

When God is recognized, and is acknowledged to be what He is in fact, the Creator of all, and therefore,

Acts 10

³⁶ ...Lord of all,

–His commandments at once become the law of the life, and He is thus given His rightful place to rule in the hearts of men.

But Israel had departed from the true God, and the blessings which He intended as a means of turning every one of them away from their iniquities²⁵⁴ were being so abused that their continuance only served to confirm the people in their sins, and so they are withheld as a means of again calling the attention of the people to Jehovah, the true God, who alone could cause the rain to fall.

Thus does the Lord use every possible way, both by giving and by withholding blessings, in His efforts to reveal himself to men as the only true and living God.

A Decisive Test

But Elijah now proposed a test which shall settle the rival claims of Jehovah and Baalim. He requested Ahab to gather together...

1 Kings 18

¹⁹ ...all Israel unto mount Carmel,

–together with the prophets of Baalim and the prophets of the groves. This was done, and then:

²¹ Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long do you halt between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.

He then directed that the prophets of Baalim should prepare

²⁵⁴ Acts 3:36.

a sacrifice, and he would do the same, and...

1 Kings 18

²³ ...put no fire under,

²⁴ And call upon the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answers by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

So the prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice,

²⁶ ...and called on the name of Baal from morning even unto noon saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered.

²⁹ And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Then Elijah called all the people unto him,

³¹ And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob,...

³² And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord.

He then prepared his sacrifice, and three times he told the people to...

³³ Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood,

—and it was done. In his brief prayer he said,

³⁶ Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel...

³⁷ Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that you are the Lord God...

³⁸ Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God.

Whom Shall We Serve

The question to be settled in Elijah's time was not a new one then, neither is it out of date today. From the time of the first solicitation to sin in the garden of Eden, until the end of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the whole matter at issue is,

“Who is God?”

The inducement held out to depart from the commandment of the Lord in the first place was,

Genesis 3

⁵ You shall be as God,

–and Satan has sought ever since to inspire man with a sense of his own superiority, to fill him with his own spirit of disloyalty and rebellion, and to prevent him from acknowledging God as the rightful King over all the earth and from yielding loving obedience to Him as such.

Sometimes Satan has worked in one way and sometimes in another, but his purpose is always the same: to turn man away from the true God. In order that man should be able to make an intelligent choice and that he might be drawn to God by seeing Him as He is, the Lord has through a succession of faithful servants in every age revealed himself to the people, as He did through the ministry of Elijah.

The Spirit and Power of Elijah

The Old Testament scriptures closed with this prophecy:

Malachi 4

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,

–and this was fulfilled in John the Baptist, whose work was done...

Luke 1

¹⁷ ...in the spirit and power of Elijah,...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

But this work of preparing a people for the Lord's coming was not completed in the time of John the Baptist, and will not be completed until...

Hebrews 9

²⁸ He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

And as the fulfillment of the prophetic Word shows that...

Zephaniah 1

¹⁴ The great day of the Lord is near,

—so the Elijah message in all its old-time power ought to be given now:

1 Kings 18

²¹ If the Lord be God, follow Him.

History Repeated

But the work of John the Baptist was also in direct fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah,

Isaiah 40

³ The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord,...

⁹ ...Behold your God.

And the demand for this special message grew out of the fact that in the multitude of forms and ceremonies, and through following the traditions of men, the true character of God was being altogether hidden or misrepresented, and that righteousness which is...

...conformity of the heart and life to the revealed will of God,²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ Ellen White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume Two, p. 218.

–was lightly esteemed. So complete was this departure from God in John’s day, and so little was His true character known even by those who professed to be His chosen representatives, that when Jesus appeared among them,

Colossians 1

¹⁵ ...the image of the invisible God,

–they did not recognize Him, and John said,

John 1

²⁶ There stands one among you, whom you know not;

²⁹ Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

Prophecies were interpreted in harmony with their own ambitious desires for an earthly kingdom in which they should occupy the prominent places, and their religion degenerated into mere political scheming, a sort of “civic righteousness” or “Christian citizenship” affair, in which the Messiah could be made to serve their own selfish purposes.

The leaders of the people, while professing to be loyal to the true God, had in reality gone after other gods just as surely as had king Ahab in the days of Elijah. And to them the message came:

Matthew 3

² Repent...

⁹ And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father,

Mark 1

⁷ There comes one mightier than I after me...

John 1

³⁶ Behold the Lamb of God!

The Closing Call

It is one of the signs of the times...

2 Timothy 3

¹ ...that in the last days perilous times shall come.

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves,...

⁵ Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.

Forms and ceremonies, and “science falsely so called,”²⁵⁶ have been substituted for that true knowledge of God through which grace and peace are multiplied, the traditions of men have been followed instead of the Word of the living God, and so now that message is demanded which says,

Revelation 14

⁷ Fear God, and give glory to Him;...and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

The nothingness of man and the greatness of God, the inability of man to save himself and his consequent need of a mighty Saviour, man’s weakness and God’s power,

Isaiah 40

⁶ ...All flesh is grass,

⁹ ...Behold your God,

–this is the message which is now to go...

Revelation 14

⁶ ...to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

And thus will the way of the Lord be prepared. The lesson which was taught that day at Carmel is to be taught again,

Luke 1

¹⁷ ...in the spirit and power of Elijah,

–and the soul-stirring inquiry which was then made is to be repeated,

1 Kings 18

²¹ How long do you halt between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.

²⁵⁶ 1 Timothy 6:20.

And each one is answering the question by the choice which he is daily making, and soon the decree will go forth,

Revelation 22

¹¹ He that is unjust, let him be unjust still:...and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still.

Oh, that every one would say in his heart and in his life,

1 Kings 18

³⁹ The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God.

14. The Lord, He is the God

Signs of the Times, August 13, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, August 16

1 Kings 18:30-46

A. T. Jones

IT WILL be remembered that the lesson for last week was upon the scene of Elijah's calling all Israel to the point of decision between the Lord and Baal; how that all Israel, and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, came to him at Mount Carmel, and there the test was to be made, by which the people should decide as to whom they would follow. The prophets of Baal prophesied from morning till noon,

1 Kings 18

²⁶ But there was no voice nor any that answered.

Then they cried louder and...

²⁸ ...cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out upon them,

—till the time of the evening sacrifice (about three o'clock), but still,

²⁹ ...there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Then,

³⁰ Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near.

Then he repaired the altar of the Lord, that had been broken down, and...

³¹ ...took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob.

With these he built the altar of the Lord; then prepared his sacrifice and commanded water to be brought and poured upon the sacrifice and the altar until it ran over and down and

round about the altar and filled the trench that he had caused to be digged.

1 Kings 18

³⁶ And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.

³⁷ Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their heart back again.

³⁸ Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God.

In last week's lesson we also showed that just before the Lord comes the people will be brought to just such a test upon their obedience to the Lord, in keeping the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, against the decree of Church and State in favor of Sunday, as was Israel against the decree of the ancient Jezebel in favor of Baal; that every man must decide whether he will...

Revelation 14

⁹ ...worship the beast and his image,

–or whether he will...

⁷ ...worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

We called attention to the fact that there is now a party working for a union of Church and State, for the express purpose of compelling the people to keep Sunday; and that against this the Lord sends a message of warning, and also calls upon all men to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

When the people all gathered before Elijah, they seemed to be wavering. It seems that they could not make up their minds what they should do. Although the narrative is very brief, it is plain that the attention of all the people had been called to the conflict that was going on between Jezebel and the prophets of the Lord, between Baal and Jehovah. For,

1. Jezebel had cut off all the prophets of the Lord that she could find, and those who escaped were obliged to take refuge in caves, and there were 7,000 persons scattered throughout Israel who had not worshiped Baal. It is impossible that all this could have been carried on without the attention of all Israel being called to this great subject.
2. Ahab had made such a diligent search for Elijah that it was impossible that the subject of controversy could have been hidden, for when Obadiah finally met Elijah, he said:

1 Kings 18

¹⁰ There is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord [Ahab] has not sent to seek you: and when they said, He is not here; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found you not.

3. The prophets of Baal were working in the interest of Baal, throughout the nation of Israel; for when Elijah did show himself to Ahab and gave the challenge and told him to gather Israel and the prophets together, we read:

1 Kings 18

²⁰ So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel.

Of these there were four hundred and fifty, and of the prophets of Ashera, the female companion of Baal, there were four hundred.

From all these things it is plain that this thing...

Acts 26

²⁶ ...was not done in a corner;

–and we may safely conclude that the subject had been thoroughly discussed by all Israel. This is further shown by the very first words that Elijah spoke to the people, when they had assembled. Said he,

1 Kings 18

²¹ How long do you halt between two opinions?

It is plain therefore that the people were acquainted with the two views of the subject, although there was hesitancy in decidedly adopting either.

On the one side was Jehovah:

- who had brought their fathers out of Egypt;
- who had planted them in Canaan;
- who had been with Samuel, and Gideon, and Barak, and Jephtha;
- who had led the host of Israel round Jericho, and had thrown down its walls;
- who had caused the waters of Jordan to stand still while Israel passed over;
- who had led them through the wilderness, and had fed them with bread from heaven, even with angels' food;²⁵⁷
- the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel;
- the Creator of heaven and earth;
- the lover of a world of sinners.

On the other side was Baal, the embodiment of shame, with the wicked, licentious, cruel, shameful Jezebel as his grand patron, and the promoter of his worship.

Oh! how were it possible for there to be “two opinions”? How could it be that they would not only recognize “two

²⁵⁷ *Psalm* 78:25.

opinions,” but actually “halt”—hesitate—between them? Was it because they were worse than any other people that have ever been? Not at all. It was simply because they were human. Let us see for a moment what there was to draw them toward Baal.

1. First of all. Baal worship was fashionable, it was popular. Remember that Baal-worship was sun-worship. It was just as fashionable, just as popular, then to worship Baal as it now is to keep Sunday. The king, the queen, the court, the rich, the powerful, the mighty, all worshiped Baal; and after these all the middle classes, and all the common people, all, all were for Baal—except only seven thousand out of all the multitudes of Israel. There were a few scattered here and there throughout the nation who refused to accept anything as worthy of an opinion but that the Lord was God, and that his commandments were yea and amen and must be obeyed, and these were held as fanatics.
2. Then, too, a person could not prosper at all, unless he worshiped Baal. All the patronage and all the power of the kingdom with the queen at the head, was exerted in favor of Baal. So much so indeed was this, that it was even dangerous not to follow the way of Jezebel and Baal. It was at the risk of life itself that the faithful seven thousand and served the Lord.
3. More than this, when by all these considerations they were induced to forsake their duty to God and their respect for His commandments, the restraints of conscience and the law of God were loosed, for Baal demanded nothing of this kind. No self-denial was ever asked of the worshipers of Baal; no pleasure, be it what it would, was ever denied to the followers of Baal.
4. Then, it was just as fashionable to go to a feast in the house of Baal, as it now is to go to a festival in the house of the Lord.
5. Then it was just as honorable to bow the knee to Baal

in the house of Baal, as it now is to gamble in the house of the Lord.

6. Then it was just as entirely proper to offer the young women to the highest bidder, in the temple of Baal, as it now is to put them up and sell them at auction, or sell their kisses, to the highest bidder, in the house of the Lord.
7. And then, for the servant of the Lord to reprove those, was to make himself as unpopular, and as much of a troubler of Israel, as it now is to reprove these.
8. Then, it was counted just as stubborn fanaticism to acknowledge Jehovah in the first commandment, as it now is to acknowledge Jehovah in the fourth commandment.

And this fashionableness, and popularity, and worldly honor, and worldly advantage, and abundance of pleasures, were what caused the people then to halt between two opinions as to whether they would follow the Lord or follow Baal, just as it now causes people to halt between two opinions as to whether they will keep the Sabbath of the Lord, or keep the Sunday of the papal church.

1 Kings 18

²¹ How long do you halt between two opinions?

If the Bible says that...

Exodus 20

¹⁰ The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord,

—keep it, but if the Bible says that the first day of the week is the Sabbath of the Lord, then keep that. What matters it though four hundred and fifty prophets, with the second Jezebel²⁵⁸ at their head, all say that Sunday—the first day—is the Sabbath; until they point to a verse in the word of God that says plainly,

²⁵⁸ *Revelation 2:20.*

“The first day is the Sabbath of the Lord”

–until then, their word on that subject is no more to be taken as the truth than was the word of the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal that Baal was God.

There is no disguising the fact that this Sabbath question is fast gaining the lead of all public questions. The great multitude, as governments, and as nations, are rapidly wheeling into line in support of the claim that Sunday is the Sabbath and must be so kept under penalty of law. There are a few, a little company, who, in opposition to this, maintain that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, and must be so observed.

And this question, as to which day is the Sabbath, is not left for our decision, any more than the question as to who was the true God was left to theirs in the day of Elijah. The Lord himself has decided this question as well as that. And after the manner of Elijah we say to all: Write these two questions,

1. Is the seventh day the Sabbath?
2. Is the first day the Sabbath?

Then which ever one that the word of God in the Bible says is the Sabbath, let that day be the Sabbath. And that holy word answers, with no uncertain sound, to every man in the wide world,

Exodus 20

¹⁰ The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work.

Isaiah 58

¹³ If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words:

¹⁴ Then shall you delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause

you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

15. Elijah's Flight and Encouragement

Present Truth, July 14, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

1 Kings 19:1-6

E. J. Waggoner

IN ELIJAH'S conduct, after the triumph on Mount Carmel, is seen the manifestation of human weakness. He who had boldly faced an apostate nation, the wrath of the king and the malice of the priests of Baal, now flees for his life before the anger of Jezebel.

God had vindicated His own name in sending fire from heaven, and Elijah, as His faithful servant, had shared the glory which thereby came upon the worship of Jehovah. Israel, at his command, had risen against their false prophets and slain them all; yet to Elijah it seems that the cause is lost, evil had, triumphed, and death would be a welcome end.

In past lessons we have traced slightly the parallel between Elijah's times and these. Today a message is due, given in the spirit and power of Elijah, calling men to forsake Baal and return to the worship of the true God. Still, as then, God uses men as His instruments, and now, as ever, men are but dust. Circumstances are before us which will try us to the utmost, and will, unless we profit by the Scriptures which are written for our learning, desolate our souls and wring from us Elijah's cry,

1 Kings 19

⁴ It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life.

How then shall those who fear God, and serve Him, declare His message fearlessly as did Elijah, and yet escape the bitterness of his despair?

A Source of Failure

Does not his self-accusing plaint,

1 Kings 19

⁴ ...for I am not better than my fathers,

–suggest the cause of his sudden weakness? It seems so difficult for men to allow God to work through them without taking to themselves some credit for the power manifested. Those who feel their utter need of all things, and in whose weakness the strength of God is made perfect, are yet tempted, when a great work is done, to forget that all they have contributed to it was nothing and less than nothing; for:

Psalm 39

⁵ Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.

So they flatter themselves that they must be better than their fathers. The awakening from this delusion is a painful experience, but an absolutely necessary one. Together with the “spirit and power of Elijah”²⁵⁹ must go the spirit displayed in John the Baptist, to whom was committed the same work,

John 3

³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease.

So shall we be saved from painful and humiliating falls, and our continued usefulness be secured.

The food given to Elijah, by which he was sustained for forty days and forty nights on his journey to Horeb, showed that the strength in which he was to go was in no wise dependent upon himself, and its apparent insufficiency for so long a period might have prepared him for the lesson given at Horeb, that the power of God is not qualified or limited by outward appearances.

The Still, Small Voice

At last Elijah reached the mount of God,

1 Kings 19

⁹ And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, be-

²⁵⁹ *Luke 1:17.*

hold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said unto him, What are you doing here, Elijah?

¹⁰ And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and slain your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.

Surely it was a doleful state of things, and Elijah's words seem to imply that God might have bettered it if He would. Elijah had been very jealous for God, yet God had allowed Elijah's life to be threatened and endangered in His service. When he was gone the last worshiper of God would have perished; so far had matters drifted.

Then Elijah was told to stand on the mount before the Lord. He did so, and as a great and strong wind rent the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces, he fully expected to hear the message of Jehovah, delivered in tones of rolling thunder.

1 Kings 19

¹¹ But the Lord was not in the wind.

And now followed the crashing of an earthquake, and again, the hot fierce blast of a devouring fire, but in neither of these was the Lord revealed. Then in the quietness and calm that followed the passing of the fire was heard a still, small voice. And Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle and listened.

Again the same question as before was asked, and again he made the same reply. After telling Elijah to anoint fresh kings over Israel and Syria, and Elisha to be prophet in his own room, the still, small voice went on to say,

¹⁸ Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him.

Strength Made Perfect

What a glorious word was that; well worth coming the long

journey to hear. Seven thousand faithful souls! And Elijah thought there was but one discouraged witness, and they sought his life. So God had been working after all, and had not left the whole burden on Elijah's shoulders. Who would have thought it? No one had talked of great demonstrations of Divine power, creating excitement and swaying multitudes with mysterious, force. What had done the work? The still, small voice. Yet what infinite power there had been in the voice.

The message of the everlasting Gospel is to go to the world in these days with a loud cry, and those who hear it are to lift up the voice with strength; but it will not always be with the outward demonstration that suggests earthquake and roaring fire. When the Saviour of the world lay, wrapped in swaddling clothes, in a manger, when He toiled at the carpenter's bench, and above all, when He was nailed to the cross between thieves, forsaken of all men,

Isaiah 52

¹⁴ ...His visage marred more than any man,

—so far from being the Power and Wisdom of God, He seemed...

Psalms 22

⁶ ...a worm and no man; a reproach of men; and despised of the people.

⁷ All they that see me laugh me to scorn.

Yet in it all, He was declared to be the Son of God with power,

1 Corinthians 1

²⁵ Because...the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Just as Christ prayed,

Matthew 27

⁴⁶ My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?

—so the people of God in the last days mourn and lament

that...

Isaiah 49

¹⁴ The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.

But since Christ, for us, passed through that experience, we need never feel forsaken. He says to us,

Isaiah 49

¹⁶ Behold I have graven you upon the palms of my hands.

Another Parallel

When the message of the Gospel, given in the power of Elijah, brings the messengers face to face with the wrath of the dragon, and the powers of this world, the temptation of Elijah will come to us to make us feel that evil has triumphed, we alone are left to serve God, and they seek our lives to take them away.

Isaiah 26

¹⁷ Like as a woman with child, so have we been in your sight, O Lord.

¹⁸ We have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.

Then will the Lord comfort us, as He did Elijah with the news of the seven thousand.

¹⁸ Lift up your eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together and come to you.

¹² Behold, these shall come from far: and lo these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

²¹ Then shall you say in your heart, Who has begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?

The Lord answers this question by telling of His own working, and adds,

²³ And you shall know that I am the Lord: for they shall not

be ashamed that wait for me.

2 Corinthians 12

⁹ His strength is made perfect in weakness,

–but we so soon get tired of weakness. Christ was always dependent upon His Father for words and works, and even for will.

Power in Gentleness

He spoke with a still, small voice, but the power of God was in the voice. The power of God is very gentle. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that:

1 Thessalonians 1

⁵ Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.

Yet he says,

1 Thessalonians 2

⁷ We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children.

The remembrance of the gentleness of God's power will keep us from discouragement if we do not see the kind of power manifested that seems to our minds necessary for the furtherance of the Gospel, and the lament of Elijah, that we are no better than our fathers, and that it can profit the world nothing for us to live on any longer, will never rise to the lips of those who remember that God has chosen...

1 Corinthians 1

²⁸ ...the base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence.

16. What Are You Doing Here?

Signs of the Times, August 20, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, August 23

Original title: What Doest You Here?

1 Kings 19:1-18

A. T. Jones

AFTER the scene on Mount Carmel, which was the subject of last week's lesson, Ahab went and told Jezebel all that had been done, and how that the prophets of Baal had been slain.

1 Kings 19

² Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.

³ And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

⁵ And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.

⁶ And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

⁷ And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for you.

⁸ And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

Thus Elijah was compelled to flee for his life because of his faithfulness to the Lord and in the defense of His commandments. Remember, that with the exception of the rain of that same day, there had been no rain for three years and a half,

and all the vegetation had dried up, as was shown in the lesson of August 2.²⁶⁰ And into this waste, desolate wilderness Elijah was compelled to flee for his life, and when he had gone a whole day's journey,

1 Kings 19

⁴ He...came and sat down under a juniper tree, and requested for himself that he might die.

But what a singular reason it was that he gave for wanting the Lord to take away his life,

⁴ O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

Nowadays, in a great many, indeed in most instances it seems to be considered the very peak of perfection to be no better than our fathers were. Just as soon as the duty of keeping the Sabbath of the Lord is urged upon the people, then the plea arises,

“Our fathers, for generations back, all kept Sunday, and they were good people and accepted of the Lord, and if we are as good as they were we shall be all right; if they are saved we shall be; if I can be as good as they were that is all I want.”

Elijah reasoned not so. He had a better idea of the principles of righteousness, of duty, and of allegiance to God, than to offer any such beg-off as that. So has everybody a better idea of consistency than to reason so upon any subject of minor, or even common, importance.

No person refuses to ride in a palace car because our fathers had nothing better than a lumbering stage-coach. No person refuses to ride on a steamer because our fathers never saw one. So likewise it is with all advancement in science, art, and human knowledge. Instead of refusing it men take every advantage of it, and try by all means to profit by it.

²⁶⁰ See Article 10 in this section, “[The Famine in the Land.](#)”

And the man who makes a new discovery in the field of science, of philosophy, or of exploration of a continent, it matters not though his discovery upsets all the accepted theories of men, if his discovery bears the test of the truth in the field to which it belongs, men readily accept it, and the discoverer is honored, and rightly so, as a benefactor of his race in that he has enlarged the view, and added to the sum, of human knowledge.

Thus it is when the matter relates to things of this world. But when the subject is one that concerns the eternal destiny of men; when it is discovered by someone that in matters of faith and morals, men are wrong; then when the way of truth is pointed out, even though it bear every test of truth known to the Bible, that man is held up as a heretic, a propagandist, a troubler of Israel, an exciter of divisions among the people; then, a question upon which hang eternal interests, is calmly put aside with the observations that:

“Our fathers knew nothing of this, therefore it is of no interest to us; our fathers did not find it out, therefore it cannot be the truth; what matters it, though the Bible does say it is the truth, as it was not obeyed by our fathers, we need not obey it; if we are only as good as they, we shall be safe.”

But let all such know that our fathers, who were good, *did all that they knew*, and were accepted of the Lord, in it.

2 Corinthians 8

¹² For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not.

And unless we do *all that we know*, or *all that we may know*, we are not as good as they were. Therefore it is plain that we cannot be as good as our godly fathers were by simply doing what they did. To be accepted of the Lord they had to do all that they knew; to be accepted of the Lord, we likewise must do all that we know. And if in the advancing work of God in the world, points of truth, of which our fathers knew nothing,

shine forth from the word of God, we must accept them, walk in the light of them, and live according to them, to be accepted of the Lord in this our day as our fathers were in theirs.

John 12

³⁶ While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.

Proverbs 6

²³ And the law [of God] is light.

As Elijah, away in the wilderness alone, lay and slept under that juniper tree,

1 Kings 19

⁵ Behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.

⁶ And he looked, and, behold there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head.

Although the bitter Jezebel was seeking for his life, and though to escape her wrath, he has fled into the wilderness where he has neither food nor water, yet an angel visits him, and he has the blessed privilege of eating food from an angel's hand. Blessed privilege, even though it be only bread and water. Bread and water, in the desolation of the desert, from the hand of an angel, is infinitely better than the richest dainties, in the luxury of kings' palaces, from the hand of a Jezebel.

Elijah laid him down again and slept,

⁷ And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for you.

He did eat and drink and...

⁸ ...went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."

There the word of the Lord came to him, and He said unto

him,

1 Kings 19

⁹ What are you doing here, Elijah?

¹⁰ And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and slain your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

We have shown, in previous lessons, the contest that there is to be between the beast and his image and those who keep the commandments of God, just before the coming of the Lord. We have referred to the National Reform Party, and its work of forming a union of Church and State in the Government of the United States, for the sole purpose of compelling all people to keep Sunday, in violation of the commandment of God. We have shown that, in opposition to this, God sends a message calling upon all to...

Revelation 14

¹² ...keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

And when this union of Church and State is accomplished, that will be an image to the beast—the papal church. And from this history of all such unions, we may know what will be the inevitable result—persecution of dissenters. We are not left, however, to infer from what has been, what will be; the word of God tells us plainly what will be the result of such an action. The word says:

Revelation 13

¹⁵ And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

¹⁷ And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Then it will be with these who keep the commandments of

God, as it was with Elijah, the representative of these. The new Jezebel then swaying the power of the Government, will seek their lives, to take them away. Then these will have to flee, as Elijah did, and they, as he did, will find drought in all the land, and...

Joel 1

²⁰ ...the rivers of water dried up,

–and all the pastures of the wilderness dried up. Yes, and these too will find, amidst the desolation, as Elijah did, that...

Psalm 91

¹¹ He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.

These too, as Elijah did, will find even in the desolate wilderness that their...

Isaiah 33

¹⁶ ...place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: [that] bread shall be given them; [and their] waters shall be sure;

–that their eyes too, as his did,

¹⁷ ...shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.

And when found thus fleeing for their lives, if asked as was Elijah,

1 Kings 19

⁹ What are you doing here?

–they can reply as he did:

¹⁰ I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant,...and they seek my life, to take it away.

But even though the new Jezebel shall seek to take away the lives of those who keep the commandments of God, yet the holy prophet says,

Revelation 15

² I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

The Lord calls, now, for those who will be “very jealous for the Lord God of hosts.” He calls for those who will jealously regard His commandments, even at the expense of every earthly thing. He seeks now for those who will...

Revelation 14

¹² ...keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus,

–against all earthly powers. What are you doing here? Are you very jealous for the Lord God of hosts?

17. The Story of Naboth

Signs of the Times, August 20, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, August 30

1 Kings 21:4-19

A. T. Jones

AT JEZREEL, about twenty-five miles from Samaria, Ahab had a palace. Hard by this palace was a vineyard belonging to Naboth. And Ahab said to Naboth,

1 Kings 21

² Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give you for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to you, I will give you the worth of it in money.

³ And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you.

The Lord had given commandment that the land should not be sold forever.

Leviticus 25

²⁵ And in all the land of your possession you shall grant a redemption for the land.

Numbers 36

⁷ So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

Naboth simply proposed to obey the word of the Lord, and so told Ahab that he could not have his land. But even though the Lord had given no directions on the subject, it was clearly the right of Naboth to refuse to sell his land for the private purposes of the king. For if he had no right to refuse to sell, he had no rights at all in the matter, and was thus placed subject to the mere whim of the king. And if he was obliged to so yield to the wish of Ahab, even though Ahab had given him a better vineyard, what assurance was there that he would not

shortly have to give up that vineyard at the wish of the king, as he had given this at the first. Not only by the word of God, but by every principle of justice and right, Naboth was in the right and Ahab in the wrong.

Frederick the Great once wanted, for a part of his garden, an adjoining piece of ground upon which a wind-mill stood. He sent an agent to buy the ground and the mill. The miller sturdily refused to sell it. At last the agent said,

“Not at any price? Could not the king take it from you for nothing if he chose?”

The miller replied,

“Have we not the Kammergericht [the Imperial Chamber of Justice] at Berlin?”

That was as much as to say that, though Frederick wanted the grounds for his own private use, yet if he attempted to take them by force, the miller would appeal to him as king, and that, in justice to his subject, Frederick as king would not allow Frederick as a private person, to take the land against the wish of the owner. Frederick was wonderfully pleased at the answer of the lowly miller, and, “Have we not the Kammergericht at Berlin,” became a popular saying in Germany.

But Ahab was not a Frederick.

1 Kings 21

⁴ Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him...And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

Throughout Ahab's whole career he appears as capricious as a spoiled child, with yet this shortcoming that he had no force of character even in his caprices, but was always ready to be ruled by whatever influence affected him at the moment.

1. First he took to wife Jezebel, the very embodiment of

imperious infamy;

2. Then he allowed her to stir him up to commit more iniquity than all the kings of Israel before him;
3. Then, when because of his wickedness Elijah pronounced to him the judgment of the Lord, in drought upon the land for three years and a half, there was not nation or kingdom round about that he did not send to in search of Elijah; and when Elijah finally came to meet him and denounced him to his face, all he did was to simply go, in obedience to Elijah's command, to gather together all Israel and the prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel.
4. Then, when the contest had been decided at Mount Carmel, instead of firmly taking a stand on the side of the Lord, he simply went and told Jezebel all that had happened, and let her exert herself anew in behalf of Baal.
5. And now in this instance with Naboth, because he can't have that vineyard he must go to bed and refuse to eat anything!

Jezebel, however, had enough self-assertion for ten men, and a regiment of women. She can tell in a minute what to do—she will murder Naboth and his family so that there shall be no heirs, and take everything that he has. All this will she do and be merry about it.

1 Kings 21

⁷ I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

And she did. And then, as might be expected, just as soon as she came telling him that Naboth was dead, this weak, wicked, and wickedly weak king...

¹⁶ ...rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite to take possession of it.

¹⁷ And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

¹⁸ Arise, go down to meet Ahab...behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth wither he is gone down to possess it.

And there as Ahab stands with satisfaction contemplating his new possession, suddenly there strikes upon his ear a voice, as thunder out of clear sky, exclaiming,

1 Kings 21

¹⁹ Have you killed, and also taken possession?

Ahab cries out,

²⁰ Have you found me, O my enemy?

The stern reply is,

²⁰ ...I have found you; because you have sold yourself to work evil in the sight of the Lord.

¹⁹ In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your blood, even yours.

²³ The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

²⁴ Him that dies of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dies in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

It is very natural for those who have sold themselves to do evil to count as their enemies those who reprove them and point out their sins. But there is no escape. It may long be delayed, but, sooner or later,

Numbers 32

²³ Be sure your sin will find you out.

And it is vastly better for us to find out our sins, and put them away, than at last to have them find us out, when it is too late to put them away. Ahab's covetousness ended in murder and robbery.

Luke 12

¹⁵ Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

Exodus 20

¹⁷ You shall not covet.

Covetousness is the leading sin in the transgression of any commandment of the decalogue. Not one of the commandments can be broken but that covetousness leads in the transgression. Covetousness itself is idolatry:

Ephesians 5

⁵ For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Colossians 3

⁵ Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

And covetousness in all its forms is summed up in one word—selfishness. May we all remember the Saviour's warning,

Luke 12

¹⁵ Take heed, and beware of covetousness.

And may we, with David, ever pray,

Psalms 119

³⁶ Incline my heart unto your testimonies, and not to covetousness.

18. Naboth's Vineyard

Present Truth, July 21, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

1 Kings 21:4-16

E. J. Waggoner

Among the kings of Israel,

1 Kings 21

²⁵ There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

GOD had commanded Israel that they should not make marriages with the people of heathen nations, because these would turn them away from following Him and beguile them into the worship of false gods, but:

1 Kings 16

³⁰ Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him.

³¹ And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him.

It seemed a grievous sin, even in so depraved a nature as Ahab's, but it brought its own punishment. God had said that if Israel would join themselves to idolatrous nations and make marriages with them,

Joshua 23

¹³ ...they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land.

A Present Danger

The same warning is given now.

2 Corinthians 6

¹⁴ Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for

what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?
and what communion has light with darkness?

¹⁵ And what concord has Christ with Belial? or what part has he that believes with an infidel?

It is true that Ahab was not himself faithfully serving God, but, for this reason, it was all the more dangerous for him to become allied with a woman whose influence would certainly tend to still further separate him from the Lord. Many who have not fully surrendered themselves to God, though knowing His will, excuse their intention of joining themselves to unbelievers by saying that these are as good as themselves. While this may be true the terrible danger of their course is none the less real.

In a little while the glamour of romance will have worn away, the novelty of a new experience will cease to excite the mind, for no human love can satisfy the soul's deep need. There will be an intense desire for the pure, sweet, lasting comfort that Christ alone can give. Then too late comes the bitter awakening to the fact that what was intended to be a temple for the living God has been surrendered to idols.

To be faithful to God means then a lifelong struggle against opposing, ever-present influences, and many give up in discouragement.

Evil Influences

Since the time dealt with in our last lesson, God had given Ahab two wonderful deliverances from the hand of Benhadad, king of Syria. The Syrian army, although greatly out-numbering Israel, had been totally destroyed and Benhadad forced to sue for his life, which Ahab had weakly spared.

There is evidence in Ahab's history that he was not altogether indifferent to the word of the Lord and that, at least once, he showed real contrition for his wrong-doing. Without Jezebel he might have left undone some of the crimes which

have stained the record of his reign, but he was “stirred up” by the wicked ingenuity of his abandoned wife. He had heavily handicapped himself by his union with her, and he had to suffer the consequences,

Naboth's Integrity

Close by Ahab's palace in Jezreel was a garden of herbs owned by Naboth. Some plan of the king's for the improvement of his property made it seem desirable that this garden should be added to his grounds, and he approached Naboth with a proposition for its purchase or exchange. Naboth, unlike his corrupt neighbours, respected the commandment of the Lord, which had forbidden any man to permanently dispose of his inheritance, and firmly declined to entertain the king's suggestion.

Balked in this pet project, Ahab went home like a spoiled, peevish child, and fretted because he could not have his own way.

1 Kings 21

⁴ And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

Jezebel found him thus, giving rein to his ill-humour, and drew from him the story of his complaint. She laughed to scorn his dejection over the repulse of a rebellious subject and promised that she would give him the vineyard herself. Doubtless in Zidon, where she came from, they had a short way of dealing with men like Naboth, who presumed to set themselves against the wishes of a king.

Falsely Condemned

Her plans were soon executed, and found only too ready agents in the men of Naboth's city. These at her instigation brought false charges against him, and with deep-dyed hypocrisy condemned him to death on a charge of blaspheming God.

1 Kings 21

¹³ Then they carried him forth and stoned him with stones that he died.

His sons also were slain.

2 Kings 9

²⁶ Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, says the Lord...

The report was carried to Jezebel that Naboth had been removed, and she in turn conveyed it to Ahab, bidding him

1 Kings 21

¹⁵ Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, which he refused to give you for money: for Naboth is not alive but dead.

In the first blush of pleasure Ahab sets out to examine his new possession. He must have at least guessed that it had come to him by unjust means, but in the gratifying reflection that he could now carry out his plans unhindered, he gives himself no trouble as to how the transfer has been accomplished.

The Wages of Sin

But who is this menacing figure that stands before him in the garden? The sight of the man of God recalls...

- the long story of his past misdoing,
- the thirsty years of famine,
- the scene on Mount Carmel,
- the fire from heaven and the slaughter of the priests of Baal,
- his own hopeless struggle against the power of God,
- his recent crime, the very place in which he stands testifying to his guilt and crying, like the blood of Abel for vengeance on a murderer;

—all crowds upon his guilty conscience and fills him with a

dire foreboding of well-earned retribution. Before Elijah has spoken, the cowering king confesses his self-condemnation in the words,

1 Kings 21

²⁰ Have you found me, O my enemy!

Sharp and clear, like all Elijah's words, comes the sentence,

¹⁹ Thus says the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your blood.

²³ The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

Here, on the scene of their latest crimes the punishment is to come. The vineyard of Naboth is not taken from Ahab. He may take what pleasure he will in it now.

Jezebel was a heathen who professed no allegiance to God, but this in no wise exonerated her from the duty of rendering obedience to His law, or exempted her from the penalty of transgressing it. Men think that God has no claims upon them except such as they choose to acknowledge, but...

Romans 3

¹⁹ What things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Jezebel and Ahab thought to secure for themselves desired advantages by their sin, but in their case, as in all others, the only wages received for sin is death.

Reaping Corruption

Satan makes many things appear, in the eyes of men, of priceless value, if they be forbidden by the law of God, but when men have gained the thing desired, often at the cost of their own soul, they realize for how little they have sold themselves.

Like Cain, men become filled with a thirst for revenge that will not be satisfied without destroying the offending life, but

when the desire is gratified, the cold, impassive face of the dead turns the short-lived triumph into an abiding curse, heavier than they can bear. Amnon so greatly desired Tamar that he became sick with longing, but when he had satisfied his lust, he...

2 Samuel 13

¹⁵ ...hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her.

The soul of Judas was consumed with a passion for gain, but when he received the thirty pieces of silver, which had outweighed in his estimation the sacred claims of friendship and honor, there was no sacrifice he would not have made to cancel the fatal bargain. It was not silver that he had won, but the unblest end of a despairing suicide, the abhorrence of a universe.

Grace Abounding

The history of Ahab teaches that the way of the transgressor is hard,²⁶¹ that it may be made even harder by marriage with one who will confirm evil tendencies, that Satan's promises to those whom he deceives are never fulfilled, and we may also learn from Ahab's life that...

Psalm 118

¹ ...the mercy of the Lord endures for ever,

—for even after Naboth's murder, because Ahab humbled himself before God, the threatened evil did not come in his days. Surely,

Psalm 130

⁴ There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.

²⁶¹ *Proverbs 13:15.*

19. Elijah Translated

Signs of the Times, August 27, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, September 6

2 Kings 2:1-15

A. T. Jones

FROM Horeb, Elijah was directed to go by Damascus on his return to the land of Israel, and to anoint Hazael to be king of Syria, and Jehu to be king of Israel, and Elisha to be prophet in his room, and then it was, and not till then, that the Lord told him of the 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed to Baal. Then it was the Elijah knew that he was not alone in honoring God in the nation of Israel.

Elisha was found in the field plowing with twelve yoke of oxen. He asked permission to go and kiss his father and his mother; this was given, and he did so. Then he killed two of the oxen and made a feast for the people,

1 Kings 19

²¹ Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

That Elijah was to be translated was known not only to himself, but to Elisha, and also to the schools of the prophets. When Elijah said to Elisha,

2 Kings 2

² Tarry here, I pray you; for the Lord has sent me to Bethel,

—Elisha said,

² ...As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you;

—and this determination not to leave Elijah was because he knew that Elijah was to be taken away. When they were come to Bethel, the sons of the prophets said to Elisha,

³ Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from your head today? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold your

peace.

And when Elijah and Elisha had passed on and had come down to Jericho, there likewise the sons of the prophets said to Elisha,

2 Kings 2

⁵ Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from your head today?

And again he answered,

⁵ ...Yea, I know it; hold your peace.

And when they two had gone on down to Jordan, fifty of the sons of the prophets went and stood...

⁷ ...to view afar off.

It is useless to speculate upon the question of how they all knew it. We know that they did know it. And the fact of Elisha's knowing it is a sufficient reason for his determination not to leave Elijah. Nor need we suppose that this determination was the result of curiosity; but rather of a desire to be a partaker of the rich experience, and the immense help to his faith, that would be afforded by his walking by Elijah's side, even to his entering into Heaven, and by seeing, himself, as it were, the rending of the veil that separates us from the other world.

We know that this was so, because several years afterward, when the king of Syria had with...

2 Kings 6

¹⁴ ...horses, and chariots, and a great host,

—compassed about the city where Elisha was, Elisha's servant cried out,

¹⁵ Alas, my master! how shall we do?

The prophet replied,

2 Kings 6

¹⁶ Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray you, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

Elisha did not pray that his own eyes might be opened, but that the eyes of the young man might be opened, that he might see what Elisha already knew was there. As for himself, he had seen the heavenly horses and chariots take away Elijah, and he knew that they were ever ready to protect the servant of God. He did well to go with Elijah to the furthest possible step.

As these two men wet onward from Jericho, they presently...

2 Kings 2

⁷ ...stood by Jordan.

⁸ And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

⁹ And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for you, before I be taken away from you. And Elisha said, I pray you, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.

¹⁰ And he said, You have asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so unto you; but if not, it shall not be so.

¹¹ And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

¹² And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof! And he saw him no more.

Thus Elijah went bodily into heaven without seeing death.

His natural body was...

1 Corinthians 15

⁵² ...changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,

—into a spiritual body. His mortal body was made immortal. The same body that walked by Elisha's side, and the same hands upon which Elisha had poured water, were changed from the natural to the spiritual, from mortal to immortal. That same body went to Heaven; that same body stood on the mount of transfiguration; and today that same body stands in the presence of God in Heaven. Those same lips that denounced sin and called the people to obedience to the commandments of God, are today singing the songs of Zion, in Zion the beautiful city of God. Paul says,

⁴⁴ There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

In this, however, he does not speak of two bodies, but he speaks of two conditions of the same body. Man has a natural body now; and if he ever reaches another world, it will be by the change of this natural body into a spiritual body either by translation or by a resurrection. It is all a hoax about there being a spiritual body inside of the natural body, and that the natural body is cast off and the spiritual body flies away. It is all a hoax that at death the spirit leaves the natural body and goes into a spiritual body.

Elijah did not leave his body in this world when he went to Heaven; nor did Jesus leave His body when He went to Heaven. Elijah did not obtain a spiritual body by dying, but by translation. Neither do those who die obtain a spiritual body by dying, but by a resurrection from the dead. And these two ways—by translation and by resurrection—are the only ways that God has appointed by which men may ever reach another world.

It was in writing of the resurrection of the righteous dead, that Paul referred to the spiritual body. He says,

1 Corinthians 15

⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

⁴⁵ And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

⁴⁶ Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

⁴⁷ The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from Heaven.

⁴⁸ As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

- We have shown that Elijah stood on the mount of transfiguration as the representative of those who shall be translated at the coming of the Lord.
- We have shown that in their leading points, the times and the experience of Elijah just before his translation were representative of the times and the experiences of those in the last days who shall be translated at the coming of Christ.
- We have seen that as there was great drought in the land then, so there is to be just before the Lord comes.
- We have seen that as there was a controversy over the commandments of God in the time of Elijah, so there is to be in the last days.
- We have seen that as there was persecution of those who kept the commandments then, so there is to be, just before the coming of the Lord, persecution of those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.
- We have seen that as the test was then whether they would worship the Lord or Baal, so in the last days it will be whether men will worship the beast and his image, or whether they will worship Him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of wa-

ters.

- We have seen that as then the test of obedience to God was involved in keeping the first commandment, so now it turns upon showing allegiance to God by keep the fourth commandment.

And now as Elijah's experience in this world ends with his translation, and his being carried up into heaven by the heavenly chariots, so also ends the experience, in this world, of those who in the last days keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus must be kept against the most determined opposition of all the powers of earth. And of those who will do this, it is said,

Revelation 15

² I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

Of this same company it is said in another place,

Revelation 14

⁴ These were redeemed from among men.

Elijah was redeemed from among men. It cannot be said of those who shall be raised from the dead, that they were redeemed from among men. They will be redeemed from death;²⁶² they will be redeemed from among the dead. But this company of those who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus, who get the victory over the beast and his image, who stand on the sea of glass, in the presence of the great white throne,²⁶³ who have the harps of God, these being redeemed from among men as was Elijah, will be translated as was he.

²⁶² *Hosea* 13:14.

²⁶³ *Revelation* 4:6.

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.

Isaiah 66

¹⁵ For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire.

Oh, joy! oh, delight! should we go without dying.
No sickness, no sorrow, no dread, and no crying.
Caught up through the air with our Lord into glory,
When Jesus receives "His own."²⁶⁴

And now as we, for the present, take our leave of Elijah, we pray that each one who has read these sketches of his experience, may be as faithful and uncompromising in his allegiance to God and his commandments, in this our day, as was Elijah in his; that each one may be as jealous for the Lord God of hosts as was he; and then there is no shadow of question but that when the Lord and His holy angels shall come with fire and with His chariots, all such shall be not only where Elijah is, but where the Lord Jesus himself is. They shall see the King in His beauty,²⁶⁵ they shall behold the King of glory.

Deuteronomy 4

⁹ Take heed to yourself, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life: but teach them your sons, and your sons' sons;

¹⁰ ...Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

²⁶⁴ H. L. Turner, Hymn: *Christ Returneth*, 1878.

²⁶⁵ *Isaiah* 33:17.

20. Elijah's Spirit on Elisha

Present Truth, July 28, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

2 Kings 2:6-15

E. J. Waggoner

ONLY two instances are recorded of men who have passed from mortality to immortality without going through the grave. They are Enoch and Elijah. Others have gone to heaven, but they have been raised from the tomb, among them being Moses²⁶⁶ and the saints which arose from their graves at the resurrection of Christ,²⁶⁷ the multitude of captives whom He led with Him,

Ephesians 4

⁸ ...when He ascended up on high.

Translation of the Saints

We have noted in the work of Elijah several points of similarity with the message which is to prepare the world in these days for the second coming of Christ. The call is to be given in the spirit and power of Elijah, but the likeness does not end there. Those who...

Luke 1

¹⁷ ...make ready a people prepared for the Lord

—will be on this earth,

2 Thessalonians 1

⁷ ...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

²⁶⁶ *Jude 9, Matthew 17:3.*

²⁶⁷ *Matthew 27:52-53.*

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

In *Revelation* 14:1-5, we read of 114,000 who were redeemed from among men. These are the ones “prepared for the Lord,” on whom the seal of the living God is placed,²⁶⁸ who...

Revelation 14

⁵ ...are without fault before the throne of God.

Thus the people in whom the message of Elijah is fulfilled will share his experience in being translated without seeing death.

In the Presence of God

It was revealed to Elijah that he was to be taken up into heaven by a whirlwind, and the fact became known also to Elisha and the sons of the prophets. How Elijah’s heart must have thrilled with rapture at the thought that the last day of earth had dawned, and ere its close he should see the face of Him in whose presence he had lived. God was to him the living God,

1 Kings 17 [also 1 Kings 18:15]

¹ ...before whom I stand,

—and this consciousness of His presence had been the source of all Elijah’s power, and the preparation for his translation. Enoch, also, who was translated, had walked with God. Concerning Jesus, the Scripture says,

Acts 2

²⁵ I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

²⁶ Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

²⁷ Because You will not leave my soul in hell...

²⁸ You shall make me full of joy with your countenance.

²⁶⁸ *Revelation* 7:2.

So, too, those who meet the Lord at His appearing are made ready. The message of preparation, given in *Isaiah* 40 is to:

Isaiah 40

⁹ Behold your God.

The studies which are followed every week in the *Present Truth* call on us to behold God, and point to the revelation of Him that is made in all His works. To receive this message and to behold God is to know that we are always in His presence, and the acknowledgment of this fact, that...

Acts 17

²⁸ ...in Him we live and move and have our being,

–will prepare us to meet Him in peace at His appearing.

A Double Portion

Elisha desired a double portion of the spirit of Elijah, and this he might have if he should see the angels that bore Elijah from the earth. The fact that he did so was evidence that his eyes were opened, that there was done for him the work that he asked God to do for the young man at Dothan, who beheld...

2 Kings 6

¹⁷ ...the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

The very seeing of spiritual things was the receiving of the Spirit, for it is...

Isaiah 11

² ...the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,...of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord,

–and of...

Ephesians 1

¹⁷ ...revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Elisha's request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit was

not dictated by any desire to outshine his predecessor in exploits and fame. Had there been any thought of this, he would not have received his petition. The man who prays for the Spirit with any thought of self-exaltation knows not for what he is asking.

Elisha knew that he was called to succeed Elijah. He knew the work was infinitely beyond his strength. He was anxious that it should still be carried out aright, and he felt that if Elijah needed so much of the Spirit of God, his own need was doubly great.

Some regard the outpouring of the Spirit as not absolutely necessary to the Christian life, but as being a very distinguishing addition. Such need to learn that at their best state they are...

Psalm 39

⁵ ...altogether vanity,

–and then they will seek for the Spirit as the very essence and beginning of the Divine life.

A Hard Thing

Elijah could say nothing as to whether this request for a double portion of his spirit would be granted. It was not under his control, he was subject to it. He warned Elisha, however, that he was not asking for something that was all ease and prosperity.

To some it might seem that Elijah's lot was one to be coveted, awing kings by his word, bringing rain and fire from heaven at his call, and enjoying communion with the Creator, but he himself knew the other, inner side of a prophet's life. He whose eyes were opened to behold God could feel, as others could not, the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Like Moses and Paul, he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart.

Romans 9

³ For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren.

To the nation it seemed a light thing to go on carelessly in wrong-doing, putting on one side the tender entreaties of a loving Father, but to Elijah's enlightened understanding, the sight of their willful ingratitude brought something of the anguish that wrung the Infinite Heart. To those who receive the Spirit of God there comes a new, appalling sense of the guilt of turning from the Lord, and despising the riches of His grace.

Ask and Receive

No one can tell the motives that are in the heart of another, but God looks on the heart. He knew that Elisha's desire for a double portion of the Spirit was that the Divine life might be abundantly revealed, and so, though the request was a great one, it was granted.

There is no promise in the Scripture more plain or more emphasized than that relating to the bestowal of the Spirit. God is most anxious to give it to us, far more so than the most earnest seeker is to receive it. If men would submit to the teaching of the Spirit they would learn that often, when they felt especially tried and discouraged, the Spirit was working to convince them of sin that it might also bring the comfort of righteousness.

2 Kings 2

¹¹ And it came to pass as they still went on and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder.

As Elijah's mantle fell from him, Elisha took it for his own, and it was a sign that the spirit of Elijah rested upon him. That God was with him was seen in the parting of the Jordan at his word.

No Respect of Persons

God is no respecter of persons.

James 5

¹⁷ Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are,

–and whatever God did for him, He will gladly repeat to others. Moses was honored above many, but it was not a special honor for him alone. To his successor, and to us, the promise was given,

Joshua 1

⁵ As I was with Moses, so will I be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you.

Elijah's history gives encouragement to all. Although but a man, God wrought great things through him, so that he was more to Israel than the chariots and horsemen thereof. Who now will come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty,²⁶⁹ receive the spirit and power of Elijah,²⁷⁰ stand faithfully for truth, count not his life dear²⁷¹ for the excellency of the knowledge²⁷² of the living God, and have the privilege of being...

Revelation 14

⁴ ...redeemed from among men [to] follow the Lamb whithereover He goes?

²⁶⁹ *Judges 5:23.*

²⁷⁰ *Luke 1:17.*

²⁷¹ *Acts 20:24.*

²⁷² *Philippians 3:8.*

21. The Secret of Freshness

Present Truth, July 5, 1900

2 Kings 4:6

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN the poor widow cried to the prophet Elisha for help in her poverty, as her creditor had come to take her life—her two sons—in payment of a debt, the man of God found that she had a pot of oil at home, and told her to get all the empty vessels she could find or borrow, and to go home and shut the door upon herself and her two sons, and to pour out oil into all the empty vessels. And she did so.

2 Kings 4

⁶ And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

If she had only had more empty vessels, she might have had more oil. Even so with the grace of God. It will flow in as long as there is a place for it, because it is inexhaustible. But here is a problem: when He fills us full, so that through the Spirit by faith we are...

Ephesians 3

¹⁹ ...filled with all the fullness of God,

—how are we to keep the stream flowing, so as constantly to have a fresh supply? The answer is this: We must always remember that we are...

Colossians 2

¹⁰ ...made full in Him,

—and that in ourselves we are but emptiness. So we may every day and every hour present our empty lives to the Lord, for Him to fill them, and we may never be without our vessel full of grace and truth, and never lack an empty one in which to receive a fresh supply.

22. The Shunammite's Son (1885)

Signs of the Times, September 3, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, September 13

2 Kings 4:18-37

A. T. Jones

AS SOON as Elijah had been taken away from him, Elisha took up the mantle that had fallen from the translated prophet, and went back and stood by Jordan, and, as Elijah had done as they two went over, he smote the water with the mantle, and the waters separated, and Elisha passed over.

He then came back to Jericho, and the men of the city called his attention to its pleasant situation, but the water was bitter and the ground barren. Elisha took salt and cast it into the spring, and said,

2 Kings 2

²¹ Thus says the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.

²² So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha.

Shortly afterward, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel, and the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, went against him, and came out into the wilderness where there was no water; and according to the word of Elisha,

2 Kings 3

²⁰ ...there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water,

—and this with “neither wind nor rain.” Verse 17.

Next there came to him a woman whose husband had died in debt, and the creditor had come to take her two sons for bondmen to pay the debt, and all they had was a single pot of oil. Elisha told her to go and borrow empty vessels from all her neighbors, and then pour into these from her one pot of oil till they were all full, then go and sell the oil, pay the debt,

and she and her sons live of the rest. Then the next account of him is that given in our lesson.

2 Kings 4

⁸ It fell on a day that Elisha passed to Shunem.

Shunem was a city of the tribe of Issachar,²⁷³ about five miles south of Mount Tabor, about three miles from Jezreel, and in full view of the point on Mount Carmel where Elijah stood when the great decision was made between the Lord and Baal. It was at Shunem where the Philistines had pitched, when Saul saw them from Mount Gilboa, and his heart failed him, and he went and had a spiritualist medium at Endor hold a seance for him.²⁷⁴

At Shunem Elisha found “a great woman,” a good woman too, as events proved;

⁸ ...and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

⁹ And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, which passes by us continually.

¹⁰ Let us make a little chamber, I pray you, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be, when he comes to us, that he shall turn in thither.

And this kindness to Elisha was not forgotten by him, nor by the Lord.

Hebrews 6

¹⁰ For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Matthew 10

⁴¹ He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous

²⁷³ *Joshua* 19:18.

²⁷⁴ *1 Samuel* 28:4.

man's reward.

⁴² And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

The Lord wants people to use hospitality. It is one of the qualifications demanded in one who shall be chosen to be elder of the church.

1 Timothy 3

² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, *given to hospitality*, apt to teach.

The Lord wants it to be genuine hospitality too. He says,

1 Peter 4

⁹ Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

When we see people coming to our house, we say,

“I should like to know what they are coming here for. I just wish they would stay away;”

—and then, when they reach the house, say,

“How do you do? I am so glad to see you! Sit right down. Why, I haven't seen you for so long. Oh! you must stay to dinner. I can't think of your going before dinner,” &c., &c.

Then we rustle around and get a big dinner, and have a grand time gossiping about everybody in the neighborhood, and finally the visitors go away, and then we say,

“There, I am glad they are gone, and now I hope they will stay away,” &c., &c.

And we call that hospitality! But it is no such thing. Hospitality, to be real hospitality, must be “without grudging,” must be from the heart, before people come, while they are with us, and after they are gone. Nor are we to be forgetful to entertain strangers.

Hebrews 13

² Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

This Shunammite was genuinely hospitable. She thought, and planned, and executed, to make her guest comfortable, and specially because he was a “man of God.” And she was richly rewarded for it.

1. First, by being blessed was the whole history of the nation shows, the highest aspiration of every wife among the children of Israel—the boon of embracing a son in hope of the coming Messiah.
2. And second, the wonderful blessing of having him restored to her even from the dead.

Thus the Lord, in His loving-kindness, remembered and blessed the acts of kindness that had been shown to His servant.

But the Lord’s mercy and goodness is not limited to our acts. Once David sat in his house thinking. Presently he spoke, and said to Nathan the prophet,

2 Samuel 7

² See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains.

That same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan to go and tell David that...

¹¹ The Lord telleth you that He will make you a house.

¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you: your throne shall be established forever.

David was not allowed to build a house for the Lord. But because he *thought* of it, because his mind had a care for the work and worship of God, God took note of the *thought* and blessed it with a reward that embraces eternity. Oh that there were more men like David! Oh that there were more women like this Shunammite, to take thought and care for the work,

the worship, and the service of God! What blessings would be upon such! What grace would be to the children of men!

Colossians 3

² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

2 Kings 4

¹⁸ And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

¹⁹ And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

²⁰ And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

It is supposed that the child's disease was sunstroke, followed by brain fever.

²¹ And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.

²² And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray you, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

²³ And he said, Wherefore will you go to him today? it is neither new moon, nor Sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.

The new moon, the beginning of the month, was a solemn feast, day,²⁷⁵ and the Sabbath was the day of weekly convocation. It would be natural for her to wish to go to the man of God on these days, but as it was neither, her husband is surprised, and yet she has such faith that the child shall be restored, that she will not allow her husband to suffer the grief of knowing that his only child is dead. And when Elisha asks her if it is well with herself, with her husband, and with her child, her answer is,

²⁶ It is well.

Thus may say everyone who believes in God. Has death taken away your child? God has said,

²⁷⁵ *Psalm 81:3.*

Jeremiah 31

¹⁶ Your children shall come again to their own border.

¹⁷ They shall come again from the land of the enemy.

Death is the enemy, and God has promised to destroy it, and bring back those who are held in its strong grasp. There is One who has all power in Heaven and in earth. He lives, and was dead; and is alive forevermore, and has the keys of hell (the grave) and of death.²⁷⁶ And trusting in Him, even though the child be dead, we can truly say, "It is well." For when He shall call, the child shall live, never to die any more.

2 Kings 4

²⁴ Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not your riding for me, except I bid you.

It seems strange that people would use an animal for riding that has to be followed by a person on foot to whip it up all the time. But in the East, to this day, the people do just that thing. A late traveler thus tells of the donkey boys in Damascus:

"These persecutors run after the animals, shouting and goading them for hours together; they keep the donkey in a gallop always, yet never get tired themselves nor fall behind."

²⁷⁶ *Revelation* 1:18.

23. The Shunammite's Son (1898)

Present Truth, August 4, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

2 Kings 4:25-37

E. J. Waggoner

WHILE journeying from place to place, Elisha had frequent occasion to pass through the town of Shunem, where he received much hospitality at the hands of one of the prominent residents. The Shunammite woman is spoken of as being "great,"²⁷⁷ and the narrative shows that her husband possessed servants, land and cattle in plenty, but when Elisha first made her acquaintance she was without the blessing counted chief of all among the women of Israel, the possession of a son.

Instead, however, of giving way to bitterness and repining, she seems to have set herself to the work of helping others. Seeing that Elisha was a man of God, she proposed to her husband that they should build him a room in their house, and furnish it, so that he might regard it as his own home, whenever he should pass that way.

You Have Done It Unto Me

Elisha was much touched by this unusual evidence of kindly consideration, and God, regarding the attention and honor as paid unto himself, moved the prophet to declare unto his hostess that her own darling wish was granted, and that she should at last embrace a son.

Anyone would be glad to entertain a stranger if they believed him to be a prophet, who would reward them with the bestowal of some much-desired blessing, but the opportunity of doing what the Shunammite woman did is offered to all even now. Christ says,

²⁷⁷ 2 Kings 4:8.

Matthew 18

⁵ Whose shall receive a little child in my name receives me.

Matthew 10

⁴² Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Hebrews 3

³ Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

The Child's Death

2 Kings 4

¹⁸ And when the child was grown, it tell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

¹⁹ And he said unto his father, My head, my head.

Under the fierce blaze of an Eastern sun, it is not unusual for a person to receive severe injuries to the brain, which quickly prove fatal. The little child was taken to his mother, and...

²⁰ ...sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

Without saying anything of the child's death to her husband, the mother went up to Elisha's room with the body, laid it on the prophet's bed, and went out. She then asked her husband to let a servant go with her to Mount Carmel,

²² ...that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

Expressing some surprise at this sudden idea, her husband consented, and she set out, urging the servant to make all speed and slack not his driving on her account.

The Mother's Faith

Why should she thus hasten to the prophet, without telling a soul that her child was dead? What meant that assuring answer to her husband's question,

²³ It shall be well,

–when the fast-stiffening body of their only child lay cold and still in the room upstairs?

God had given her the child. It had not come as other parents received their children, for this, like Isaac, was a child of promise. It may be that the mother's heart had dwelt much on the similarity of circumstances, and had loved to think of her son as a second Isaac, destined to an honorable place in the work of God.

Now the resemblance was more complete, for the trial of Abraham had come to her. Isaac's life was spared at the last moment. Her son's had been taken, but still Abraham, knowing not the turn events would take, had accounted that God was able to raise up Isaac from the dead, and this was the faith that sustained her now.

The Gifts of God Without Repentance

God had given her this son in acknowledgment of her kindness to His servant, but a gift, taken away again, was no gift, and she believed that what God had given her He would not take back, and none other could. Therefore she goes to the prophet, strong in her confidence in God's love and justice, that it will confirm her in the possession of the son whom death has for the moment taken away.

Surely the Shunammite woman is among the great cloud of witnesses to the power of faith, of whom we read in the 11th chapter of *Hebrews*.

Hebrews 11

³⁵ Women received their dead raised to life again.

Elisha saw her coming afar off and told Gehazi, his servant, to run to meet her, and enquire after the welfare of herself and her family. He did so, but she had no word for him, beyond what she had said to others:

2 Kings 4

²⁶ It is well.

She came to Elisha, and poured out the pent-up torrent of her mother's heart in the words,

2 Kings 4

²⁸ Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

She appeals to the power that gave her a son. That can restore him to her. Elisha is its channel to her, and she refuses to leave him, even to go with Gehazi to the body of her child. Elisha yields and follows with her to her home.

An Old Testament Judas

Gehazi is Elisha's servant. He is to him what Elisha was to Elijah, and has doubtless been selected for his superior qualifications, to be Elisha's successor, when death shall take away his master. He may have been well-adapted by natural abilities for the place, but is now making evident most clearly his unfitness to be to Israel a prophet of the living God.

He has a high opinion of the dignity of the position, for when the Shunammite woman casts herself at the feet of Elisha, he attempts to thrust her away. He takes no note of her agony of distress, but thinks only of maintaining the propriety of approach to an office which will be his one day to exercise. Like Judas he failed to learn the character of his high calling, and, like Judas, he finally fell.

Doubtless it is with considerable elation that Gehazi bears the prophet's staff to the body of the dead child. The miracle he is about to perform will considerably elevate him in the popular respect, and increase his already high standing in the schools of the prophets. He forgets that the rod of Moses, the mantle of Elijah, and the staff of Elisha are but symbols. The power is of God, and not in the staff, or the man who wields it. He lays it, as instructed, on the mouth of the child, but

there is no response, and he returns to Elisha to report, with chagrin, that the attempt has been a failure,

2 Kings 4

³¹ The child is not awaked.

The check and disappointment might have taught Gehazi a heart-searching lesson, but it did not, and shortly after we find him lying to Naaman and his master for the sake of gain. The deceit is revealed to Elisha, the judgment of God is sent upon the covetous imposter, and he who might have been an honored successor of his master, goes from Elisha's presence a leper white as snow.

Restored to Life

³² And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

³⁴ And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

Elisha's proceeding seems strange until we reflect upon the circumstances. He had been closely concerned in the child from the beginning. It was by his mouth that the promise of its birth had been given. He would be greatly interested in the coming of the little one, in noting its growth from time to time as he sojourned at the Shunammite's home, and doubtless his sympathy and cooperation were strongly enlisted in the mother's efforts to bring up her child in the knowledge of the living God.

This continual and intimate association with the little child cannot have failed to unite the two in the closest mutual affection, and Elisha's first impulse on beholding the body, would be to clasp the poor little dead form to his heart, with the intense desire, born of deep strong love, that he might wake it to life again, and find it responsive to his caress.

Gehazi's indifferent soul could be content with laying a staff on the mouth of the child, but this in no wise represented the tender interest of the Divine Father over His sleeping children. The vitalizing touch of Christ's own hand, and His tears over the grave of Lazarus, like Elisha's close embrace, were far more expressive of the attitude of God's heart of love, not only over the Shunammite's son, but over all those who sleep in the grave till the resurrection.

Psalm 116

¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

Elisha's amiable, approachable disposition may be judged from the way in which the sons of the prophets brought all their little troubles to him. And the way in which God wrought miracles to remove those troubles, shows that

Psalm 138

⁶ He has respect unto the lowly,

—and that Elisha's spirit revealed His own. Elisha's prayer was heard. Life returned into the little body, and the child was given to his waiting mother. Her thankfulness and joy seemed too great for words.

2 Kings 4

³⁷ Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

Death an Enemy

If it were true, as is generally taught, that the soul goes to heaven at death, it would have been an evidence of great selfishness on the mother's part to desire that her son might be recalled from scenes of bliss. Evidently she did not take this view, nor did Elisha, nor did the Lord who restored the child. When children come back to life again, it is not from the glory of heaven, but from...

Jeremiah 31

¹⁶ ...the land of the enemy.

Death is an enemy, the last enemy that shall be destroyed. It is not a blessing to man, for it only comes as the consequence of sin, and any teaching that minimises the evil of death, calling it the “gate of life,”²⁷⁸ to that extent obscures the evil of sin, in its nature and effect.

A New Life

Doubtless in after life the Shunammite woman would impress upon her child that his life must be always yielded to God, as being doubly the Lord's. Not only was he a child of promise, but when his life had once been lost, it was restored again. His was not an ordinary life, for he had been raised from the dead.

But this is a consideration which should influence all of us. Paul tells us to...

Romans 6

¹³ ...yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead,...

⁴ ...that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Men say sometimes that if they could only have a new life, they would gladly yield up everything. Nothing else than this does the Lord offer to all. Whoever confesses his sins to God may know that those sins were the crucifixion of Christ. But since...

Acts 17

²⁸ ...in Him we live and move and have our being,

²⁷⁸ Attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux. Isaac Watts made a similar statement popular in the hymn “Christ’s presence makes death easy,” from *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1707-1709), Book II, Number 31, which has the line, “Death is the gate of endless joy.”

-if He is crucified, we are too. So whoever is baptized into Jesus Christ, taking His name, thereby confesses his belief, that he is baptized into His death.

Romans 6

³ Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?

Now if we be dead with Christ, and He is raised from the dead, it is equally clear that we must live with Him.

⁴ Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection:

⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.

⁸ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him:

⁹ Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him.

¹⁰ For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God.

¹¹ Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Therefore, whoever confesses his sins to Christ may know that he has new life indeed, even the life of Christ.

1 John 3

¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death unto life.

24. Naaman the Syrian

Signs of the Times, September 10, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, September 20

2 Kings 5:1-16

A. T. Jones

SYRIA lay to the north of Palestine. It was bounded on the east by the Euphrates and the Desert of Palmyrene; on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, Phoenicia, and Cilicia; and on the north by Cappadocia. It was about the size of Scotland. Haran, the place where Abraham stopped on his way to Canaan,²⁷⁹ was in Syria. Haran was the city of Nahor; Nahor was Bethuel's father;

Genesis 25

²⁰ ...Bethuel the Syrian...

—was Rebecca's and Laban's father, Isaac married Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian,²⁸⁰ the sister to Laban the Syrian; and when Jacob, Rebecca's son, fled from the fury of Esau, his mother told him,

Genesis 27

⁴³ Flee to Laban my brother to Haran.

Hosea 12

¹² And Jacob fled into the country of Syria.

After Israel had come into the land of Canaan, among the idols that they served, were the gods of Syria.

Judges 10

⁶ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and *the gods of Syria*, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord, and served not Him.

²⁷⁹ *Genesis* 11:31.

²⁸⁰ *Genesis* 22:20-23.

David defeated the Syrians of Damascus, slaying 22,000 of them, and put garrisons in Syria of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David.

2 Samuel 8

⁵ And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men.

⁶ Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went.

When Absalom had killed his brother Amnon, he fled to Geshur in Syria and stayed there three years.

2 Samuel 13

³⁸ So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years.

2 Samuel 15

⁸ For your servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the Lord shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.

Solomon brought horses and chariots out of Egypt for the kings of Syria.

1 Kings 10

²⁹ And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means.

Asa, of Judah, sent a present of silver and gold by which he induced a king of Syria to break his league with Baasha of Israel, and to help Asa.

1 Kings 15

¹⁶ And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

¹⁷ And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to

Asa king of Judah.

¹⁸ Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants: and king Asa sent them to Ben-hadad, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,

¹⁹ There is a league between me and you, and between my father and your father: behold, I have sent unto you a present of silver and gold; come and break your league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

²⁰ So Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of the hosts which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-beth-maachah, and all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali.

²¹ And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building of Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah.

²² Then king Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none was exempted: and they took away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had builded; and king Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah.

Elijah was directed to anoint Hazael king over Syria.

1 Kings 19

¹⁵ And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when you come, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.

Benhadad, king of Syria, came up with thirty-two kings and besieged Samaria. But two hundred and thirty-two princes of the provinces led a sortie out of Samaria, and the Syrians fled, and Benhadad escaped on a horse. The next year he came again, and the children of Israel went against the Syrians, and pitched before them,

1 Kings 20

²⁷ ...like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country.

The battle was joined and of the Syrians 100,000 footmen fell in the battle. Benhadad first fled to Aphek, and then surrendered to the king of Israel.²⁸¹ Three years afterward there was war again with Syria in which Ahab, of Israel, was killed.²⁸²

The next mention of Syria is, two years afterward, in our lesson. Naaman was captain of the host of the king of Syria,

2 Kings 5

¹ ...a great man with his master, and honorable,...also a mighty man in valor, but he was a leper.

² And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

³ And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

⁴ And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.

⁵ And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

⁶ And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto you, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may recover him of his leprosy.

⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall come again to you, and you shall be clean.

¹¹ But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better

²⁸¹ 1 Kings 20.

²⁸² 1 Kings 22.

than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

Naaman had his own ideas of how things should be done, and if he could not have it that way, he would not have it done at all. He was not the last person of that kind. Many people present their petition to the Lord, and they have their minds all made up about how it will be answered, and then if they do not receive it that way, they do not recognize that the Lord has answered their prayer at all.

And there is often actual harm done by would-be revivalists in giving instruction, especially in regard to conversion. Many are brought to see their great need of salvation, of conversion, and honestly and earnestly inquire the way; and then the revivalist will perhaps undertake to tell them how they may know when they are converted, when they are accepted of God. They are told that they will feel a certain way, that they must obtain a certain kind of feeling, etc., etc., and the poor souls are left to look long and wait for that particular feeling, so they are set to follow a will-o'-the-wisp instead of the word of God.

This is all wrong. No man can tell another how that other will feel when he is converted. More: no converted person can make an unconverted person to understand how he himself felt when he was converted. The conversion of a soul is by the power of God through his Holy Spirit, and it...

Philippians 4

⁷ ...passes all understanding.

The converted soul understands it, in a measure, but he cannot make another to understand it in any measure, and for any one to undertake to tell the seeker for salvation just how he will feel, or just what to expect, is only to mislead, and perhaps plunge into despair a soul for whom Christ died.

What then shall we tell the seeker to do? Tell him what

Christ tells to all. Tell him:

Luke 11

⁹ Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

¹⁰ For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

¹³ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

Tell the people that, and it will be all right, because it is the word of Him who saves sinners. We may tell also that we know that it is true, because we asked of Him the Holy Spirit and He gave it; we sought the Lord, and we did find Him; we knocked and He did open unto us; and we know it. Tell this, and when they seek Him they will find Him; and then they will know it, and not till then can they know it.

Oh, never set a human example before a soul seeking salvation. Point him to Christ. There He is. He waits to be gracious. Seek, and you shall find Him, and then, oh the peace, the joy in the Holy Ghost, none can know but him who receives it.

Psalm 27

⁸ When you said, Seek my face; my heart said unto you, Your face, Lord, will I seek.

Thank Heaven for the religion of Christ—a religion that converts the soul.

2 Kings 5

¹² [Naaman] turned and went away in a rage.

¹³ And his servants came near, and spoke unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? how much rather than, when he says to you, Wash, and be clean.

How reasonable! And Naaman was won by it. Would that all men were as ready to act upon the suggestion as was Naaman the Syrian. If men were bidden do some great thing by

which the terrible leprosy of sin might be taken away, would they not do it? How much more then when a Fountain is open to all for sin and uncleanness,²⁸³ free to all, and He says, “Wash, and be clean.”

2 Kings 5

¹⁴ Then he went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

But until he had dipped himself the seventh time, he was not clean. If he had gone away after the sixth time, he would still have been a leper as before. This is the very lesson that is taught by the Saviour in that place where he tells us to seek and we shall find.

Luke 11

⁵ And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

⁶ For a friend of my in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

⁷ And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give you.

⁸ I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

⁹ And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

It is earnestness, importunity. Not that he would teach that the Lord is hard to be entreated, but that we should be importunate, even as Jacob of old,

²⁸³ **Zechariah 13** ¹ In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

Genesis 32

²⁶ I will not let You go, except You bless me.

How much more when there is no place else to go. There was no water but that of Jordan to cleanse Naaman. There is no fountain but that of Calvary to cleanse the sinner.

Romans 3

²³ [We] all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

–and we all must be cleansed by the precious blood of Christ.

What can wash away my stain?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Robert Lowry, Hymn: *What Can Wash Away My Sin?* (1876).

25. Naaman Healed

Present Truth, August 11, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

2 Kings 5:1-14

E. J. Waggoner

NAAMAN was a great man, honored by his master, the king of Syria, and a mighty man of valor, to whom his country owed its high position,

2 Kings 5

¹ ...but he was a leper.

All the outward dignity and honor counted for nothing beside this. Thousands of soldiers obeyed the lightest word of Naaman, but he himself was in the grip of a foul disease, that was slowly but surely consuming his life.

In his household was a little maid, taken by force from her home in Israel during some Syrian raid. She, although a captive and with sorrows enough of her own, was touched with the sight of Naaman's misery, and felt the gloom of the shadow that it cast over his home.

³ She said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for He would recover him of his leprosy.

Revealed to Babes

Was not this a marvelous knowledge of the Lord? To this child were revealed the things that were hidden from the wise and prudent, so that she had a truer conception of God than many who boasted of knowing Him.

Naaman was an enemy of Israel; his military skill and prowess had been directed against their nation. Surely it was a matter of rejoicing that so formidable a foe was rendered powerless by his leprosy. Who would think of recommending his case to the favorable consideration of the God of Israel?

Yet the little maid was sure that God so pitied the suffering, was so truly a God of love, that if this enemy of Israel should go before Him in his need, relying on the Divine mercy, he would not be sent away disappointed.

No one could be so well acquainted with the Lord as this little child without revealing in her life the power and goodness of God, for it is...

2 Peter 1

³ ...through the knowledge of Him [that there come to us] all the things that pertain to life and godliness.

Therefore it was that the utterance of her faith carried conviction to the heart of Naaman. He realized that this was not some childish tale of wonder, but that there was the power of God in it, and he determined to obtain the healing so confidently promised to him.

Weak Things

There is to be a great work done in the world in these last days. The Gospel of the kingdom is to be preached in all the world for a witness before the end come, and is to be carried before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. Who is sufficient for so great a work?

1 Corinthians 1

²⁷ God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

He is able to use children in His work, and through them, He can do great things, even making them His witnesses before kings, as the little Israelitish maiden was used to make known the true God to the famous Naaman.

Only let the children receive and treasure the knowledge of God, and let all receive the kingdom of God as little children, and through them God will reveal himself to many who, surrounded by earthly pomp and grandeur, and counted fortu-

nate and happy by their friends, yet mourn in secret over the plague of their own hearts, and long for deliverance from the leprosy of sin.

A Fatal Disease

For sin is the loathsome disease that has fastened itself upon the lives of all. We may try to forget it, and persuade ourselves that we shall grow out of it, but all the while it is tightening its hold upon us, it is eating away our life, marring and disfiguring us.

In spite of our efforts to overcome it we find that we cannot shake it off, it has become a part of us, and as the horror of its continual presence overwhelms us, we feel that we too have become like the lepers of old, unclean. Our cry is,

Romans 7

²⁴ O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?

But Naaman was made free from his leprosy. So there is hope that we may be made whole. How was he cleansed?

Wash and Be Clean

First of all, Naaman went to the King of Israel with great sums of money, and changes of raiment, and with a letter of introduction from the King of Syria to the King of Israel. But none of this did him any good. Wealth and splendor and kingly rank were of no avail against the leprosy. Elisha heard that Naaman was come to the king seeking to be cured, and he sent word,

2 Kings 5

⁸ Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

And the prophet sent out a messenger to him to tell him to

wash in Jordan seven times, and he should be clean. Then Naaman did just what we would have done in his place. He got offended because things did not happen according to the way he had arranged in his own mind as he came along in his chariot. It was to be something like this:

The prophet would come out of his dwelling a venerable and majestic figure, raise his eyes to heaven, and solemnly call upon the name of his God, then pass his hand over the leprous places, and Naaman would find himself suddenly healed. Then Naaman would say graciously,

“Don’t go yet, behold here are ten magnificent suits of raiment, ten talents of silver, and no less than six thousand pieces of gold. I give them to you. You can do as you like with them.”

Then while the prophet would stand open-mouthed at this exhibition of princely generosity, Naaman would mount and drive off, well pleased with himself and satisfied that he had done the thing handsomely.

But now this exasperating old man had not even come outside the door. It was outrageous treatment for one in his position. Naaman was not going to stand it. He should go back to Syria at once. The idea of telling him to bathe in the muddy Jordan! Weren’t Abana and Pharpar just as good, and a great deal cleaner, too? Why not wash in them and be clean?

2 Kings 5

¹² So he turned and went away in a rage.

Good Counsel

It was well for Naaman then that he was not one of those haughty characters that it is unsafe to speak to when they are offended. He had listened to the story of his wife’s little slave-girl, and had come all this way on the strength of it. His servants must have loved him and earnestly desired his recovery, for they ventured to reason with his fuming indignation. Said

they,

2 Kings 5

¹³ If the prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? how much rather then, when he says to you, Wash, and be clean?

The reasoning was sound, and Naaman saw the force of it. In a humbled frame of mind he set himself to carry out the simple conditions on which his healing was promised.

¹⁴ Then he went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

He returned to Elisha converted from his idolatry, a sincere worshiper of the true God, and doubtless recognizing that Elisha's seemingly abrupt treatment of him in the first place had been directed by Divine wisdom, and had taught him the needed lesson.

Whiter Than Snow

What God did for Naaman He does for those who are afflicted with the leprosy of sin. He gives a new life, which is free from sin.

1 John 1

⁹ If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

2 Corinthians 5

²¹ For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

¹⁸ And all things are of God.

He whose sins are borne by...

John 1

²⁹ ...the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world,

–is made whiter than snow,²⁸⁵ and his flesh becomes like the flesh of a little child, for he is born again.

Why Are Not All Healed?

But,

Luke 4

²⁷ Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

Why was this? Was not God able or willing to heal more than one leper, and if not, why did He not choose to heal one of the lepers of Israel?

Remember that Naaman was not compelled to be healed. He went to Israel to find healing, and went on to the Jordan, because he desired the healing so much, and believed the word that was spoken to him. Any other leper in Israel or Syria might have been healed in the same way.

Today God's arm is not shortened, and His mercy and salvation are free. You, who read these lines, are you cleansed from the leprosy of sin, so that your flesh has come again as the flesh of a little child? If not, why not?

Others have found healing and cleansing from sin in receiving the life of God. Will you be among them, or among the many who, like the lepers in Israel in Elisha's day, were not healed, although the living God was among them to heal and save, so that even heathen, like Naaman, found Him and proved His power.

Psalm 103

² Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:

³ Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your dis-

²⁸⁵ *Psalm 51:7.*

eases.

26. Man's Way and God's Way

Present Truth, January 18, 1894

2 Kings 5:8-13

E. J. Waggoner

THE case of Naaman, the Syrian, affords a good illustration of that natural perversity of the human heart which prevents many people from realizing the blessing of God.

Naaman was captain of the armies of Syria, and a great man, but was a leper. In this respect he was like many who live today. Sin is a leprosy no less real than the loathsome disease which afflicted the body of Naaman. It is the leprosy of the soul. Of how many may it be said, as it was of Naaman,

“Great, but a leper!”

His leprosy was a complete offset to his greatness. The king of Syria heard that there was a power in Israel to heal disease above that possessed by man, and sent Naaman to the king of Israel to be healed of his malady. And Elisha the prophet sent to the king, and said,

2 Kings 5

⁸ Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall come again to you, and you shall be clean.

¹¹ But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

Naaman had the plan by which the Lord was to heal him all laid out in his own mind, and because the Lord did not purpose to manifest His power in that way, he went away in a rage. And so it is with people today. They want the Lord to

work for them, but they have the plan by which He is to work all arranged in their own minds, and they ask the Lord to work and then watch to see some manifestation of the nature which they have marked out. They want God to work for them in their way. And when something comes from the Lord which is not in their way at all, although perhaps a direct answer to their prayers, they turn away and will not have it. Naaman said:

2 Kings 5

¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean?

If he was to be cleansed by washing, he knew a better way of doing it than the Lord had proposed! And just so with us. Our own way seems a great deal better in our eyes than God's way. But God says His ways are as much higher than our ways as the heavens are higher than the earth.²⁸⁶

But Naaman's servants came to him, and said,

¹³ My father, if the prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? how much rather then when he says to you, Wash, and be clean?

Men are continually seeking to be cleansed of their soul leprosy by doing some great thing. This is the way it should be by the wisdom of man. It is a fundamental idea of all false religions. By doing some great thing,—going on some weary pilgrimage, enduring long fasts and other bodily afflictions, saying so many thousand prayers, or in some other way exercising his powers of mind or body to their utmost limit—he can so commend himself to God that he will receive from Him what he desires. But when man has done something that he thinks is great, then the glory is his own and not the Lord's; and as God cannot work for the glory of man, his elaborate and laborious plan can only utterly fail.

²⁸⁶ *Isaiah 55:9.*

God's plan, God's message, is, "Wash, and be clean." It is so simple that all can do it,—so simple that the glory of the result must all be given to God. There is a fountain open for sin and uncleanness, and the most leprous soul that will wash in that fountain will be cleansed. The word of the Lord is,

Isaiah 1

¹⁸ Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be read like crimson, they shall be as wool.

To wash in that fountain is to believe the word of the Lord.

1 John 1

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Who can be simple enough to believe God? Naaman believed and washed in Jordan, and was cleansed. So will all be cleansed who are willing to give up their own way, and take God's way instead.

27. Elisha at Dothan

Present Truth, August 18, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

2 Kings 6:8-18

E. J. Waggoner

IN THIS lesson is seen the powerlessness of men to do ought against those who are under the Divine protection. It has been a source of encouragement in innumerable instances in the past, and will continue to be so until the last enemy of God's people is destroyed. It is not recorded that we may envy Elisha for the remarkable way in which his life was safeguarded, but that we may know for ourselves the nature and efficiency of the protection on which we may rely.

The Syrians had resumed their policy of harassing Israel by repeated forays, and seemed desirous of capturing the king. More than once they laid an ambush for him, but in some way he became aware of the danger and managed to avoid their encampment. The king of Syria began to suspect treachery in his own ranks, as one plot failed after another, and reproached his servants with their unfaithfulness to him in warning Jehoram.

One of them replied that the discovery of the ambuscades was due to no defection on their part, but to the presence of Elisha the prophet in the ranks of Israel. He was repeating to the king of Israel the words uttered in Benhadad's chamber.

God's Vigilance

Who could hope to circumvent such a foe as this? No deep-laid schemes could be relied upon, for the utmost cunning of the Syrians could not surprise a man who knew their thoughts. Yet this is the advantage enjoyed by those who array themselves under the banner of the cross.

Many fear the power of Satan because he has gained dominion so largely over their minds, but this does not render his

position an impregnable one. It is true that he often lies in wait for us, and when we least look for it, some sudden temptation is sprung upon us which too often finds us unprepared for resistance; but whoever commits the keeping of his soul to a faithful Creator²⁸⁷ may rest in the confidence that God cannot be surprised, or found off His guard.

Psalm 121

⁴ Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

Isaiah 27

³ I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.

Psalm 139

² You know my downsitting and my uprising, You understand my thoughts afar off.

Although our sinful thoughts may spring upon us unawares, they are not unknown to God. He knows all about them afar off.

Psalm 90

⁸ You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

1 Corinthians 10

¹³ God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape.

None need feel that the odds are against them in their quest of...

Matthew 6

³³ ...the kingdom of God and His righteousness,

—for it is as true now as it was in Elisha’s day that the advantages are all with the servants of God.

²⁸⁷ 1 Peter 4:19.

No Power Against the Lord

The king of Syria might be expected to recognize that he could not hope to capture an enemy who knew his most secret plans, but having learned that Elisha was at Dothan, he sent thither...

2 Kings 6

¹⁴ ...horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

It was an imposing expedition for the capture of one man, but its very size and strength only emphasized its inability to do anything at all against Elisha.

It is not a matter for discouragement when difficulties come thick and fast around us, but rather for rejoicing, because then the victory of faith will be so much the greater and more manifest;

1 Samuel 14

⁶ ...for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.

Elisha's servant saw the host compassing the city, when he went forth in the early morning, and his heart was filled with dismay. Returning to his master he cried,

2 Kings 6

¹⁵ ...Alas, my master! how shall we do?

Elisha was not alarmed,

¹⁶ And he answered, Fear not: For they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

Ministering Spirits

In the course of earthly history it has often seemed that the truth was in a minority. Witnessing alone for God, men have faced angry multitudes, who thirsted for their blood, and to human eyes it seemed a contest of one against many, with all

the power and influence on the side of the crowd.

But it has not been so in reality. Angels, that excel in strength,²⁸⁸ never forsake the side of those who trust in God. Amid snares and perils, their ministry preserves and guides those who shall be heirs of salvation.²⁸⁹

Psalm 34

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.

At Elisha's request the Lord opened the eyes of the young man,

2 Kings 6

¹⁷ ...and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

They were not sent there to be shown to the young man, but were there before, as Elisha's bodyguard. The only difference was that the servant's eyes were opened, so that now he saw how matters stood.

Invisible Beings

We may learn from this incident why it is that men do not see angels. Abraham saw and talked with them, so did Jacob, and so did many others. They have not become extinct, or diminished in number or power, nor are they less present about us. The reason we do not see them is that our eyes are closed. The difficulty is in ourselves.

If we would accept their service, and submit ourselves to their influence, we would quickly learn how irresistible was their power, and how comforting their fellowship. Their sympathies are keenly enlisted in our behalf, and their greatest desire is to use their strength in our defense against the powers of evil. But while men array themselves determinedly

²⁸⁸ *Psalm* 103:20.

²⁸⁹ *Hebrews* 1:14.

against these ministers of blessing, it is not to be wondered at that they are so seldom seen.

To Elisha the presence of the living God was a reality, and, continually beholding God, his eyes were opened. When we learn to see God in all places where He is revealed, when...

Psalm 4

⁶ [He] lifts up the light of His countenance upon us,

—and is always before our face that we should not be moved,²⁹⁰ when...

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁸ We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen,

—our own eyes will be anointed with eyesalve and we shall see much that is now hidden from our vision.

Isaiah 35

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

⁶ Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.

Leading the Blind

Elisha's next request was that the Lord would smite the Syrians with blindness. This was done, and they were led helplessly into Samaria, which suggests another reason why blindness in part has come upon men, so that they cannot discern spiritual things. Had sinful man been still allowed the privilege of beholding the angels and spiritual beings, he might have proved as intractable as Satan and his fallen hosts. One who is blind will sometimes submit to be led, just as Benhadad's army followed meekly the leading of Elisha. The Lord says,

Isaiah 42

⁶ I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will

²⁹⁰ *Psalm 16:8.*

lead them in paths that they have not known.

The mercy of the Lord is over all His works²⁹¹ and endures for ever,²⁹² and it will yet be seen that:

Psalm 25

¹⁰ All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.

It is only that He may make His mercy known to men, that their eyes are now blinded, and when they submit to God, and acknowledge Him in all their ways, He will speedily direct their paths²⁹³ into the visible, unbroken, everlasting communion of...

Ephesians 3

¹⁵ ...the whole family in heaven and earth.

²⁹¹ *Psalm* 145:9.

²⁹² *Psalm* 136:1.

²⁹³ *Proverbs* 3:5-6.

28. Conquered by Kindness

Present Truth, July 11, 1901

2 Kings 6:12-23

E. J. Waggoner

ELISHA was a prophet of the God of Israel. The king of Syria fought against Israel, but God showed his servant Elisha all the plans of the king of Syria, and he told them to the king of Israel. So the king was able to escape from his enemy, and did not fall into the traps that were laid for him.

When this had happened many times, the king of Syria thought there must surely be a traitor among his servants who told the king of Israel his plans, and he asked them to show him who it was. Then one of the servants said:

2 Kings 6

¹² None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bed chamber.

Then the king said,

¹³ Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him.

And it was told him that he was in Dothan. So he sent a great host, with horses and chariots, to take Elisha captive. When Elisha's servant saw the hosts of Syria, he was very much afraid, but Elisha was not, for he knew that God was with him. He prayed that God would open his servant's eyes, and then the young man saw that there were horses and chariots of fire all round about Elisha.

Then Elisha prayed that God would smite the army of the king of Syria with blindness. So God smote them with blindness. Then Elisha said to them,

¹⁹ Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.

But he led them to Samaria where the king of Israel's army was. Then the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw that they

were in the midst of their enemies. Now it was their turn to be frightened, and no doubt they were, for they thought that they were caught in a trap, and would surely all be slain. The king of Israel thought so too, and he said to Elisha,

2 Kings 6

²¹ My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?

–as though he were eager to begin. But Elisha knew a better way of conquering his enemies than by killing them. He knew God’s way, and he had read the words of the wise King Solomon:

Romans 12 [Proverbs 25:21-22]

²⁰ If your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head.

When he prayed that God would smite them with blindness, it was only that he might have the opportunity to do them good. So Elisha said to the king of Israel,

2 Kings 6

²² You shall not smite them...set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.

And he prepared great provision for them, and when they had eaten and drank, he sent them away, and they went to their master. We may be sure that the king of Syria was very much surprised to hear that they had been so mildly and kindly treated. Elisha’s kindness quite conquered the enemies of Israel, and there was no more trouble with them, for we are told that:

²³ ...the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

29. The Famine in Samaria

Signs of the Times, October 1, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, October 11

2 Kings 7:1-17

A. T. Jones

BEN-HADAD had gathered together a great host and had besieged Samaria till the famine had become terrible. So scarce had grown the food that an ass' head sold for eighty pieces of silver (about \$44²⁹⁴), and at last women were found who had eaten a child. When the king heard of this, he determined to kill Elisha, but when he came to where Elisha was, then Elisha said:

2 Kings 7

¹ Then Elisha said, Hear the word of the Lord; Thus says the Lord, Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

² Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, you shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat thereof.

³ And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?

⁴ If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

When men were found to be lepers the law was that:

Leviticus 13

⁴⁵ The leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.

²⁹⁴ Editor's note: \$44 in 1885 is equivalent to about \$1163 in 2020.

⁴⁶ All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.

The famine being so great in the city, these men of course could obtain no food from there, and as they were about to perish any way, they concluded that nothing greater than that could befall them even though the Syrians should get them; but if the Syrians should happen to favor them, and give them food, their lives would be saved. So they determined to go.

2 Kings 7

⁵ And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there.

⁶ For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.

⁷ Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.

It is easy for the Lord to spread terror among men. Several such instances are given in the Bible. Gideon will be remembered, with his three hundred men with their pitchers and torches, and how that, all of a sudden, the breaking of the pitchers and the glare of the torches put the 135,000 Midianites to flight in terror.²⁹⁵ And,

2 Chronicles 20

¹⁰ ...the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir,

—came up against Judah when Jehoshaphat was king. The children of Judah were all gathered together in the wilderness of Tekoah, and Jehoshaphat...

²¹ ...appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise

²⁹⁵ *Judges 7.*

the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for His mercy endures for ever.

²² And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

²³ For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

It is not alone in the Bible, nor alone in Bible times that such things have occurred. The Lord has done just as remarkable things for His people in later ages as He did in those ancient times.

After the Papacy had put to death John Huss and Jerome of Prague, it set about to extirpate all the heretics of Bohemia. For this purpose crusade after crusade was set afoot, only to be defeated in disgrace. At last in 1427 AD, the pope had succeeded in gathering together an army of nearly 200,000 men.

Led by three electors of the Empire, by many princes and counts, and the legate-a-latere of the pope,²⁹⁶

—this great host invaded Bohemia, entering it in June.

The Bohemians marched to meet their invaders. They were now within sight of them and the two armies were separated only by the river that flows past Meiss. The crusaders were in greatly superior force, but instead of dashing across the stream, and closing in battle with the Hussites, whom they had come so far to meet, they stood gazing in silence at those warriors hardened by constant exposure, and begrimed with the smoke and dust of battle, and seemed to realize the pictures of terror which report had made familiar to their imaginations long before they came in contact with the reality. It was only for a few moments that the invaders contemplated

²⁹⁶ J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, Book Third, Chapter 17, "Brilliant Successes of the Hussites."

the Hussite ranks. A sudden panic fell upon them; they turned and fled in the utmost confusion.²⁹⁷

Four years afterward another army was raised for the invasion of Bohemia, to destroy the followers of the doctrines preached by Huss, and for which he had been cruelly and treacherously burned at the stake. This time—the fifth of these crusades—130,000 men swept into Bohemia.

On the 1st of August, 1431, the crusaders crossed the Bohemian frontier, penetrating through the great forest which covered the country on the Bavarian side. They were brilliantly led, as concerned rank, for at their head marched quite a host of princes, spiritual and temporal...The feelings of the Hussites as day by day they received tidings of the numbers, equipments, and near approach of the host, we can well imagine. Clouds as terrible had ere this darkened their sky, but they had seen an omnipotent Hand suddenly disperse them...They reflected, however, that victory did not always declare on the side of the largest battalion, and, lifting their eyes to heaven, they calmly awaited the approach of the foe. The invading host advanced, “chanting triumph before victory,” says Lenfant, and arriving at Tochan, it halted there a week...Forming in three columns, the invaders moved forward. Procopius fell back on their approach...His design was to lure the enemy father into the country, and fall upon him on all sides. On the morning of the 14th of August, the Bohemians marched to meet the foe...

The enemy were encamped near the town of Reisenberg. The Hussites were not yet in sight, but the sound of their approach struck upon the ear of the Germans. The rumble of their wagons, and the war-hymn chanted by the whole army as it marched bravely forward to battle, were distinctly heard. Cardinal Cesarini had a companion climbed a little hill to view the impending conflict...The cardinal and his friend had gazed only a few minutes when they were startled by a strange and sudden movement in the host. As if smitten by some invisible power, it appeared all at once to break up and

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

scatter. The soldiers threw away their armor and fled, on this way, another that; and the wagoners, emptying their vehicles of their load, set off across the plain at full gallop...The army had been seized with a mysterious panic. That panic extended to the officers equally with the soldiers. The duke of Bavaria was one of the first to flee. He left behind his carriage, in the hope that its spoil might tempt the enemy and delay their pursuit. Behind him, also in inglorious flight, came the elector of Brandenburg; and following close on the elector were others of less note, chased from the field by this unseen terror. The army followed, if that could be styled an army which so lately had been a marshaled and bannered host, but was not only a rabble rout, fleeing when no man pursued.

The cardinal succeeded in rallying a few of the flying soldiers.

They stood then ground only till the Bohemians were within a short distance of them, and that strange terror fell upon them, and the stampede became so perfectly uncontrollable, that the legate himself was borne away in the current of bewildered and hurrying men. He left behind him his hat, his cross, his bell, and the pope's bull proclaiming the crusade—that same crusade which had come to so ridiculous a termination.

This was now the second time the strange phenomenon of panic had been repeated in the Hussite wars. The Germans are naturally brave; they have proved their valor on a hundred fields...There is here the touch of a divine finger—the infusion of a preternatural terror. So great was the stupefaction with which the crusaders were smitten, that many of them instead of continuing their flight into their own country, wandered back into Bohemia; while others of them, who reached their homes in Nuremburg, did not know their native city when they entered it, and began to beg for lodgings as if they were among strangers.²⁹⁸

It is impossible to read this narrative and not see in it a per-

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

fect likeness to the panic of the Syrians in this lesson. Rome and the Emperor Sigismund had treacherously burnt the saintly Huss, and the scholarly Jerome, and now sought to destroy their innocent brethren, and God wrought for His people here as veritably as ever He did in the world. God's wondrous workings for His children are not all confined to the times in which the Bible was written. He is the same Mighty One still. There is still a God in Israel.

Yes, and still there are men as unbelieving as that "lord" upon whose hand the king of Israel leaned when Elisha said that "tomorrow about this time" there should be such plenty in the gates of starving Samaria. Still there are such ready to say,

2 Kings 7

² If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?

But yet for all the unbelief of men, the fact remains that God leads, and works for, His people. And yet for all the unbelief of men, every part of the word of God will be fulfilled as literally as was the word of Elisha that day.

The four lepers went and called to the watchman of Samaria, and told the city, by him, that the Syrians had fled and left everything; then a company was sent out to learn whether it were really true, and they returned and confirmed the word; then the whole city poured out and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 20

²⁰ Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe His prophets, so shall you prosper.

30. Jehu's Zeal

Signs of the Times, October 15, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, October 18

2 Kings 10:15-31

A. T. Jones

THE real title of the subject of this lesson, as given in the "International Lessons," is "Jehu's False Zeal." But we know not by what right the lesson committee insert the word "false." And we think it is contrary to the intention of the inspired record. For we read distinctly in verse 30:

2 Kings 10

³⁰ And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because you have done well in executing that which is right in my eyes, and have done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.

This was said to Jehu by the Lord, after Jehu had done what is recorded in the lesson. And when the Lord says to Jehu,

"You have done well in executing that which is right in my eyes, and have done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart;"

—and when because of this the Lord pronounces a reward upon Jehu and upon his house for four generations, upon the throne of Israel; in view of all this we think it a very questionable piece of wisdom for the lesson committee to brand it as "Jehu's *false* zeal." When the Lord says that Jehu did "well;" that he did "right;" that he did according to what was in His heart concerning Ahab; then for the lesson committee to charge it up as "false zeal," is certainly, to say the least, not very far removed from charging the Lord himself with a "false zeal." We think when the Lord pronounces so plainly as this upon the merit of an action, it is best for men to confine themselves to the record.

The time had fully come when judgment must be executed upon the bloody house of Ahab. When that “still small voice”²⁹⁹ came to Elijah as he stood at the mouth of the cave in Horeb, the Lord said unto him,

1 Kings 19

¹⁵ Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when you come, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria:

¹⁶ And Jehu the son of Nimshi shall you anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shall you anoint to be prophet in your room.

¹⁷ And it shall come to pass, that him that escapes the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.

And again Elisha sent a young man of the children of the prophets directly to Jehu with this message:

2 Kings 9

⁶ Thus says the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed you king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel.

⁷ And you shall smite the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets; and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel.

⁸ For the whole house of Ahab shall perish...

According to this word, Hazael was now king of Syria, and Joram, the son of Ahab, had made war against Hazael and...

2 Kings 8

²⁸ ...the Syrians wounded Joram.

²⁹ And king Joram went back to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria.

Then it was that Elisha sent the young men to anoint Jehu king, that he might, according to the word of Elijah, slay him that had escaped from the sword of Hazael. And if he had escaped the sword of Jehu, then it would have remained for El-

²⁹⁹ 1 Kings 19:12.

isha to slay him. The house of Ahab was devoted to destruction, and their judgment could no longer be delayed. And as Jehu came, driving...

2 Kings 9

²⁰ ...furiously,

²¹ Joram said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite.

There was that fatal field of Naboth—the monument of the united iniquities of Ahab and Jezebel. And when, on that fatal day, after the innocent blood of Naboth and his sons had been poured out, Ahab went down to take possession of the portion of Naboth, Jehu followed him in a chariot, and was there when Elijah pronounced the fearful doom of Ahab and Jezebel with all their house, and now Jehu comes to execute the judgment that day pronounced.

²² And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?

²³ And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah.

²⁴ And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.

²⁵ Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and you rode together after Ahab his father, the Lord laid this burden upon him;

²⁶ Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, says the Lord; and I will requite you in this plat³⁰⁰, says the Lord.

When Jehu came to Jezreel,

³⁰⁰ Plat = a plot of land.

2 Kings 9

³⁰ Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.

She must once more assert herself, and as Jehu entered in at the gate she cried out,

³¹ Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?

But it was her last effort. The chamberlains of her palace pitched her out through the window, and so perished Jezebel. But Jehu's work was not done yet. The house and the prophets, and the priests, and the worship of Baal, which Jezebel had introduced, still remained.

2 Kings 10

¹⁸ And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much.

So he proclaimed a solemn assembly for Baal.

²¹ And Jehu sent through all Israel: and all the worshipers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that came not...and the house of Baal was full from one end to another.

They were all destroyed.

²⁶ And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them.

²⁷ And they broke down the image of Baal, and broke down the house of Baal, and made it a draught house unto this day.

²⁸ Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.

Thus sin brings its fearful penalty. Warning after warning, reproof after reproof, entreaty after entreaty, had come to the house of Ahab, but all to no avail. And,

Proverbs 29

¹ He that being often reprov'd hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Proverbs 1

²³ Turn at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

There is another point in this lesson worthy of consideration. It is the part taken by Jehonadab, the son of Rechab. As Jehu was on his way from Jezreel to Samaria, he came upon Jehonadab and saluted him. In the midst of all the corruption and iniquity of Israel, Jehonadab had taken special precaution to keep his family pure. He had pledged them particularly that they should drink no wine, neither they nor their sons forever, etc.³⁰¹ Jehu said to him,

2 Kings 10

¹⁵ Is your heart right, as my heart is with your heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is.

Said Jehu,

¹⁵ If it be, give me your hand. And he gave him his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot.

¹⁶ And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord. So they made him ride in his chariot.

And it appears that Jehonadab acted in concert with Jehu in all that followed. For he went with Jehu through the crowd of Baal-worshippers in the house of Baal, to search and see that there were no worshippers of the Lord there. This again is against the idea of Jehu's zeal being a "false zeal."

In this narrative of Jehu in his chariot, riding in his zeal to perform the righteous judgment of the Lord upon the adversaries of Jehovah in the land of Israel, we are reminded of a Greater than Jehu, who at the last is to visit the judgments of the Lord upon all of the ungodly.

Isaiah 66

¹⁵ Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His re-

³⁰¹ *Jeremiah 35.*

buke with flames of fire.

¹⁶ For by fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many.

Isaiah 59

¹⁷ For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

¹⁸ According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; to the islands He will repay recompense.

And when thus He comes in His glory, then to every one whose heart is right as His heart is with the right, He will say,

“Give me your hand,”

–and all such will He take up in His chariot, and make them ride in His chariot. God is righteous. He loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and to...

Hebrews 1

⁸ ...the Son He says, Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom.

⁹ You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above your fellows.

And to all of the children of men who love righteousness and hate iniquity, the Son of God says,

Revelation 3

²¹ To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

31. The Nature of Jehu's Zeal

Signs of the Times, February 8, 1883

2 Kings 10:16-31

E. J. Waggoner

THERE is much in the character of Jehu to admire. He was active and energetic, one who never let the work in hand lag. He was a driving, go-ahead man; one who in these days would doubtless be called, if engaged in trade, a successful businessman.

When he was commissioned by the Lord to execute His judgment on the house of Ahab, he lost no time. Jehoram and Jezebel were quickly dispatched, together with all the sons and relatives of Ahab. As he was engaged in the work of the extermination, he met Jehonadab, to whom he said,

2 Kings 10

¹⁶ Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord.

He knew that he was following the commandment of the Lord, and he seemed to take pride in it. He wanted others to see that he was not afraid to stand up for the truth, even though it was unpopular. So after slaying the remnant of Ahab's followers, he gathered the priests of Baal and destroyed them, and, so the record says,

²⁸ ...destroyed Baal out of Israel.

All this was very praiseworthy. The Lord commended him for it, in these words:

³⁰ Because you have done well in executing that which is right in my eyes, and have done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.

But unfortunately Jehu's zeal stopped too soon, or, rather, it was not of the right kind. We read:

³¹ But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God

of Israel with all his heart; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.

His zeal for the Lord did not lead him to shun sin himself. He could rebuke and punish sin in others, but could not avoid it himself. When there was vigorous work to be done, when people could see, he was zealous; but when it came to the matter of walking in the law of the Lord with all his heart, with none but God to see, his zeal was gone.

How many there are like him. They can talk the truth glibly, and are ever ready to defend it. No matter how unpopular the truth is, they are not ashamed to uphold, and are ready to denounce those who differ. But as to living out the truth in their daily lives, at home and abroad, in private as well as in public, they are lacking. They seem to think that they can make up for personal sins by a vigorous denunciation of the sins of others.

But God has not two sets of workmen: one to watch and another to pray; or one to preach and another to work. One good quality will not make up for the absence of another. All must be combined in the same individual. He only is a man of God, who is...

2 Timothy 3

¹⁷ ...perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

32. The Temple Repaired (1885)

Signs of the Times, October 8, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, October 25

2 Kings 12:1-15

A. T. Jones

THE subject of this lesson is, “The Temple Repaired,” but before we notice that, we shall have to inquire how it became necessary that the temple should be repaired.

Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and this carried into the kingdom of Judah all the corruptions of the house of Israel; for, says the record,

2 Kings 8 [RV]

¹⁸ He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife.

The Arabians came and slew all of Jehoram’s sons except Ahaziah, the youngest; Jehoram died; and Ahaziah went down to see Joram of Israel just at the time when Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, and Jehu slew him with the princes of the house of Ahab. And even while he lived,

2 Chronicles 22

³ ...his mother was his counselor to do wickedly.

When Athaliah learned that Ahaziah was dead,

¹⁰ ...she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah.

But Jehoshabeath, the sister of Ahaziah, was the wife of Jehoiada the priest, and she secured Joash, who was about a year old, and fled with him to the temple, where she hid him and his nurse, and there he was kept under the care of Jehoiada the priest, six years. This left Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, in authority in the kingdom of Judah.

She, being the true daughter of her mother, forced the wor-

ship of Baal upon the people of Judah as her mother had forced it upon Israel. She built a house for Baal, and robbed the house of the Lord of its ornaments and decorations and wealth, to furnish the house of Baal.

When Joash was seven years old, Jehoiada laid plans to proclaim him king.

2 Chronicles 23

¹⁰ And he set all the people, every man having his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the temple to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about.

¹¹ Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king.

¹² Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the Lord:

¹³ And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of music, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, Treason.

Then Athaliah was slain,

¹⁶ And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the Lord's people.

¹⁷ Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and broke it down, and broke his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.

Thus Baal was destroyed out of Judah also. Then under the guidance and wise counsel of Jehoiada, Joash carried forward the good work of reformation, and gave orders that the temple that had been rifled by Athaliah should be repaired.

But, although the people were willing and gave of their means for the purpose, it seems that the priests, to whom was given the charge, were unfaithful; for the donations continued twenty-three years, yet nothing was done for the house of the Lord. It appears that the priests who had charge of the matter had gone so far as to even keep for themselves the means dedicated to the house of the Lord.

2 Kings 12

⁷ Then king Jehoiash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the other priests, and said unto them, Why do you not repair the breaches of the house? now therefore receive no more money of your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house.

⁸ And the priests consented to receive no more money of the people, neither to repair the breaches of the house.

Then,

⁹ Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one comes into the house of the Lord: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord.

¹⁰ And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the house of the Lord.

¹¹ And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the Lord: and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the Lord.

¹² And to masons, and hewers of stone, and to buy timber and hewed stone to repair the breaches of the house of the Lord, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it.

This time they found honest men to do the business—so strictly honest, indeed, that it was not necessary to reckon with them, for we read,

¹⁵ They reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they

delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully.

We cannot be any too careful with the house of the Lord. The Lord himself has great care for the place of His worship, and we are doing His will when we have a care for it. Once as David sat in his house, Nathan was sitting by, and David spoke to him, saying,

2 Samuel 7

² See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains.

That very night the Lord appeared to Nathan, and told him to go and tell David that he should not build the house himself, but that his son should build it, and also to say to David,

¹¹ Also the Lord tells you that He will make you a house.

¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you: your throne shall be established forever.

Thus we see that a thought of David's, concerning the house of the Lord, is rewarded with eternal glory. There is a thought that bears fruit to all eternity.

At another time the house of the Lord was desolate, and the people regarded it carelessly, although they themselves dwelt in good houses. And at the same time they made excuses that they could not build the house because they were not doing well financially. Their crops failed; their money seemed to slip away unawares; and their clothing did not wear as well as it ought. But the very thing which they made an excuse for not building the house was the result of their not building it. Then the Lord said,

Haggai 1

⁷ Consider your ways.

⁸ Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the Lord.

⁹ You looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when

you brought it home, I blew upon it. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that is waste, and you run every man unto his own house.

Again we say, the Lord has a care for the place of His worship, and He not only wants His people to have a care for it, but He richly rewards such care. But such a care as He regards is not that kind in which the place of His worship is fitted up for theatricals, operatic airs, feasts, and festivals.

33. The Temple Repaired (1898)

Present Truth, October 6, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, October 16

2 Chronicles 24:4-13

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN Jehoshaphat died, Jehoram, his son, reigned in his stead. He had been associated with his father on the throne for four years, and his reign extended over another four. As Jezebel had been a curse to the kingdom of Israel, so her daughter, Athaliah, the wife of Jehoram, was a curse to Judah. Under her influence Jehoram became like Ahab,

2 Chronicles 21

⁶ ...and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord.

His first proceeding, after his father's death, was to slay all his brethren,

⁴ ...and divers also of the princes of Israel.

The Way of Transgression

This precautionary measure did not, however, strengthen his hold upon the kingdom. Nations which had given allegiance to his father now broke away. The Philistines and the Arabians, who had acknowledged that God was with Judah and had brought presents and tribute to Jehoshaphat, now turned against Jehoram as he departed from the Lord,

¹⁷ And they came up into Judah, and broke into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives.

Only the youngest son was left. Two years after the beginning of his sole reign, Jehoram was smitten with an incurable disease, and after another two years of horrible suffering, he died, and was buried without royal honors.

²⁰ He...departed without being desired.

An Evil Taint

The youngest son of Jehoram was named Ahaziah. He was the only one who had been spared by the Arabians. At the age of forty-two he came to the throne, but only reigned one year. His life also was overshadowed by his mother's fatal influence, and to her he owed its early termination, for while visiting his relative the king of Israel, Jehu slew him in obedience to the command of the Lord to utterly destroy the seed of Ahab and Jezebel.³⁰²

Another Jezebel

As soon as Athaliah learned that her only son was dead, she slew all his sons and took the kingdom herself. One, however, of Ahaziah's children, the newborn Joash, was concealed by his aunt, the wife of Jehoiada the priest.³⁰³ Under their care he was preserved for six years, and at the end of that time Jehoiada was able to organize a movement which set Joash on the throne and slew Athaliah.

2 Chronicles 23

²¹ And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

Sowing and Reaping

The influence of this one wicked woman had been powerful for evil. Had Judah been faithful to God, the people might have withstood Athaliah's attempt to introduce and establish the worship of Baal, but, the spirit which viewed with indifference a union between the servant of God and a worshiper of idols, was well adapted to foster and strengthen a false religion, which appealed to desires for sensual indulgence, and gave its devotees unbridled license to follow the dictates of their corrupted hearts.

³⁰² 2 Chronicles 22:1-9; 2 Kings 9:7-10.

³⁰³ 2 Chronicles 22:10-12.

Nothing Small

It does not do to think lightly of sin. The fault for which we excuse ourselves may be a slight one, but it is a seed which can develop to undreamed-of proportions.

To Jehoshaphat it may have seemed unlikely that any harm would come of his permitting a friendship between his son and the youthful daughter of Ahab. Doubtless Jehoram, which means “Jehovah is high,” had been carefully trained by his pious father, and instructed in the knowledge of the true God, and Jehoshaphat could not think that these defensive barriers would fail to protect his son against Athaliah’s tendencies towards idolatry.

Yet within two years from his own death, the temple of God had been broken up to furnish material for the house of Baal, all the things dedicated to God’s service had been bestowed upon Baalim, and Jehoram, the son of a godly father, had slain his own brethren and his father’s friends.

2 Chronicles 21

¹¹ Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto.

His career is a solemn warning to parents to make no compromise with sin, in their dealings with their children, and to guard them as long as possible from all willing contact with evil, however fascinating and comparatively harmless it may now appear to be.

Restoring the Temple

In the days of Joash, in consequence of the depredations committed by Athaliah, the temple was in great need of restoration, and the king was minded to repair it. He accordingly instructed the priests and the Levites to go out into the cities of Judah and gather money from the people for this purpose.

The temple had been an asylum for Joash during the first six years of his life, while hidden from Athaliah, and he desired to see it rescued from its dilapidated condition. He commanded that the business should receive immediate attention, and that the work of repair should be hastened forward.

After some years, however, it was found that the work was not making much progress and the king sent for his uncle, Jehoiada the priest, to inquire into the delay.

A Contribution Box

A new plan was then decided upon.

2 Chronicles 24

⁸ At the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the Lord.

Then proclamation was made that all the people should come to the temple, and bring the offering that Moses had directed, for the service of the tabernacle.

¹⁰ And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest.

When the box was filled, the priests opened it and counted the money, then replaced the chest.

¹¹ Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance.

With the funds collected in this way the builders were paid.

¹³ So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them.

How to Give

The scriptural rule for giving is,

Romans 12

⁸ He that gives, let him do it with simplicity.

2 Corinthians 9

⁷ God loves it cheerful giver.

He does not value an offering that is given with reluctance, and counted a matter of hardship.

Malachi 2

¹³ This have you done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that He regards not the offering any more, or receives it with goodwill at your hands.

Even though a man bestow all his goods to feed the poor, except love prompt the gift, it is a worthless, unprofitable offering. When the thought in giving is to attract attention to the generosity of the giver; and cause him to be well spoken of, God does not count the offering as made to himself. Such a payment is neither offered nor accepted as a free gift. It is a business transaction. The donor desires to purchase so much of standing, influence and fame, and gives what he thinks will acquire the desired advantages.

Matthew 6

² They have their reward.

There is nothing further for them.

As the World Gives

It is rare to find a body now, professing to be the servants of God, which is content to rely upon the simplicity of giving. Bazaars and entertainments are needed to extract money from the pockets of those who are...

2 Timothy 3

⁴ ...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

Such efforts are not always successful in raising the desired funds, but when they are, it is not the love of God that has provided the means. An equivalent has been received by the

purchasers of amusement.

Matthew 6

² They have their reward.

How much better is God's way. Every gift, given with simplicity and grateful acknowledgment to God, is another link to connect us with Him.

²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

God knows how to acknowledge to every cheerful giver the receipt of his offering, and does it in a way that, in itself, is worth more than the gift.

The charge of robbery is made by God against all who withhold from Him the tithes and offerings which are His due, but to all who render these cheerfully a glorious promise is given:

Malachi 3

¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

34. The Death of Elisha (1885)

Signs of the Times, October 22, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, November 1

2 Kings 13:14-25

A. T. Jones

AFTER the anointing of Jehu as king of Israel, nothing more is said of Elisha till this record of his last sickness and death—a period of about forty-five years; this covered the whole of the reign of Jehu and his son Jehoahaz, and part of the reign of Joash, the grandson of Jehu.

Hazael reigned in Syria all this time, and continued to commit depredations in all the coasts of Israel.³⁰⁴ He even made an incursion into the kingdom of Judah, took Gath, and...

2 Kings 12

¹⁷ ...set his face to go up to Jerusalem.

Then Joash of Judah...

¹⁸ ...took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and in the king's house, and sent it to Hazael, king of Syria: and he went away from Jerusalem.

Hazael had so persistently oppressed Israel that finally there was left...

2 Kings 13

⁷ ...of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.

This was the condition of affairs at the time of our lesson.

¹⁴ Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died.

³⁰⁴ 2 Kings 10:32; 13:22.

And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

Now that Joash is about to lose Elisha from his kingdom forever, he comes to weep over him, and to remember the day when Elisha alone was more than a match for all the armed hosts of Syria. He now begins to realize what a protection Elisha was, and what a power the kingdom is now about to lose. If he had remembered this sooner, he would not have been brought so low. If he had never forgotten it, Israel would have flourished instead of being oppressed.

It is ever so. We appreciate our blessings when they are gone. Then, too we act without them as we should have acted when they were with us. But if we would only learn to appreciate our blessings while we have them, then we should not have to do without them; for by the advantage of these, we should but be advanced to other and greater ones.

But for even this parting token of regard, Elisha, in kindness, shows the king a token of good from the Lord.

2 Kings 13

¹⁵ And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows.

¹⁶ And he said to the king of Israel, Put your hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.

¹⁷ And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you shall smite the Syrians in Aphek, till you have consumed them.

¹⁸ And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.

¹⁹ And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, You should have smitten five or six times; then had you smitten Syria till you had consumed it: whereas now you shall smite

Syria but thrice.

Hazael was succeeded by his son Ben-hadad.

2 Kings 13

²⁵ And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.

And Syria never invaded Israel any more.

²⁰ And Elisha died, and they buried him.

And that is the obituary of Elisha,

¹⁹ ..the man of God.

The Bible writers are remarkable for the brevity of the obituaries. It would be well if their way were followed more fully at the present day.

²⁰ And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.

The Moabites were the descendants of Moab, the son of one of the daughters of Lot, by her father, after the destruction of Sodom. Their country lay to the east of the Dead Sea.

²¹ And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulcher of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

It is idle to conjecture upon why the Lord wrought this miracle. He has not told us why it was. He has recorded the fact, and that is all we can say about it.

With the death of Elisha closes the lessons in the Kings, for this year. But the kingdom of Israel continued only about a hundred years longer, until even the Lord could no longer bear with them, and then He cast them out of His presence. In

today's lesson, verse 23, we read that for all the sins of the successive kings, yet:

²³ The Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast He them from His presence as yet.

Finally, however, they had so literally...

2 Kings 17

¹⁷ ...sold themselves to do evil,

–that the Lord...

¹⁸ ...removed them out of His sight,

–and rejected all the seed of Israel, and they were carried captive into Assyria, and never returned to their own land.

35. The Death of Elisha (1898)

Present Truth, August 25, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

2 Kings 13:14-25

E. J. Waggoner

SOME sixty-five years had passed since Elisha entered the service of Elijah, when he fell sick...

2 Kings 13

¹⁴ ...of his sickness whereof he died.

There was yet much wickedness in the land, and the ancient sin of Jeroboam still bore its evil fruit, but in many respects the closing circumstances of Elisha's life present a brighter picture than could have been seen in Israel at the beginning of his work.

- The zealous purging of Jehu,
- The oppression of Hazael, king of Syria, and
- The faithful, enduring testimony of Elisha's influence,

—had not been without affect. The royal attitude toward Elijah had been one of eager, relentless persecution. He had been accounted a hateful enemy,

1 Kings 18

¹⁷ ...he that troubles Israel.

But on Elisha's death-bed, the king of Israel came to mourn the loss of one who had been a bulwark to the State, more efficient for defense than all its panoply of military strength.

2 Kings 13

¹⁴ And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

Faithful Work

One especially pleasing feature in the history of the sister

country of Judah deserves notice. It bears witness to a revival of the spirit that had of old exalted the nation, recalling the few occasions on which they had consecrated themselves to God with unreserved devotion. It was in connection with the restoration of the temple and, telling of the way in which the funds were handled, the record says,

2 Kings 12

¹⁵ Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully.

Elisha's Blessing

At the time Elijah was instructed to anoint Elisha to be prophet in his own room, the sentence of judgment went forth, against Israel:

1 Kings 19

¹⁷ It shall come to pass, that him that escapes the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapes the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.

Now that Elisha was about to leave the people he loved, for whom his long life had been spent, he desired to see this sentence lifted from them. The destruction was accomplished; Jehu had done his part and passed away, Hazael's reign was near its close, and Elisha himself was on his dying bed. He wished to leave a blessing and not a curse behind him, as Moses...

Deuteronomy 33

¹ ...blessed the children of Israel before his death,

—and as Christ longed to bless His own who...

John 1

¹¹ ...received Him not,

—when He beheld the city and wept over it. It was not yet too late for Israel and Judah to turn from their wickedness

and fill the high position destined for them.

2 Kings 13

²³ The Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither did He cast them from His presence as yet.

Elisha hoped that they had learned the lesson which their afflictions had been designed to teach, and that he might leave for them a last message of blessing and comfort in the promise of perfect deliverance from their enemies.

A Sign of Weakness

At his direction the king of Israel aimed an arrow through the open window toward the stronghold of their Syrian foes. This was a declaration of war, and since God, by the prophet, directed the flight of the arrow, it showed that His hand was against their enemies.

Elisha then told the king to take the arrows and smite upon the ground with them. He did so thrice and stopped. This revealed to Elisha that only thrice would it be possible for the Lord to lead the armies of Israel to victory, and he was wroth with the king, and told him that if he had smitten five or six times, he should have smitten Syria till he had consumed it.

The sign was of the Lord. It simply indicated the future, but did not control it, and Elisha's wrath was against the spirit of indifference and backsliding that was so easily contented, when it might have had all that was to be desired. Elisha knew from this that the reformation in Israel was only a partial and transitory one, and that there was no prospect of a complete deliverance from the bondage of sin, and all the other forms of slavery thus entailed, because in their hearts the people...

Jeremiah 5

³¹ ...loved to have it so.

Willing Bondage

It seems surprising indeed that a people could be found, so enslaved in heart as not to desire freedom when they might easily have it, but to this day men are displaying the same lack of appreciation of their privileges. God wants to set us free. The Son came at infinite sacrifice to make us...

John 8

³⁶ ...free indeed,

–and sometimes, when the way of transgression becomes especially hard, and the intolerable degradation of spiritual bondage makes the iron enter into our souls, we do rejoice at the offer of freedom, and, for a while, exchange...

Isaiah 61

³ ...the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Yet, too often, we fail to realize how great a salvation is provided for us in the gift of Christ, and are so easily satisfied. As the sense of condemnation is taken away, it is felt that all is well, and that there is no danger of further subjection. Satan awaits his opportunity and ere long, instead of going on from strength to strength, we find ourselves again led captive. Why should we not smite again and again until our enemies be utterly consumed?

Limiting God

It is the Lord who fights for us,³⁰⁵ but we are...

2 Corinthians 6

¹ ...workers together with Him.

He is willing and anxious to show himself strong in our behalf,³⁰⁶ and to work in us more than we can ask or think³⁰⁷ of freedom and power and deliverance, but He does not thrust

³⁰⁵ *Joshua* 23:10.

³⁰⁶ *2 Chronicles* 16:9.

³⁰⁷ *Ephesians* 3:20.

himself upon us unbidden. He desires that we shall seek His help, and meet the tempter in His strength. He is able to do all things, but His people ask so little at His hands. They let go the arm of the Lord too soon. He only finds occasional admittance to their hearts and has no opportunity allowed to show what He can do for those who trust Him. His rightful place is in the heart, but He is made to stand without, knocking and pleading for permission to come in.

Jeremiah 14

⁸ O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why should You be as a stranger in the land, and as a way-faring man that turns aside to tarry for a night?

⁹ Why should You be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save?

The Lord reproached His people of old because...

Psalm 78

⁴¹ They...limited the Holy One of Israel.

If we would cease to limit Him with our unbelief, and our disposition to sit down and go no further whenever we receive a blessing, He would speedily make bare His holy arm in the sight of the nations, and all the ends of the earth would see the salvation of God.

Hosea 6

³ Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

That which prevents our having this experience in its fullness is set out in the following verse, in which the Lord expresses himself as...

Jeremiah 14

⁹ ...a man astonished [or bewildered], a mighty man that cannot save.

Hosea 6

⁴ O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do unto you? for your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away.

Paul says,

Philippians 3

¹³ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

A Wonderful Miracle

One more miracle is recorded in relation with Elisha, and it took place after his death. A band of Moabite invaders, burying one of their company, were surprised and hastily cast the body into the sepulchre of Elisha.

2 Kings 13

²¹ And when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

The narrative is very brief and we are not told why God wrought this miracle, but it must have been a striking lesson to Israel. As Elisha's presence was withdrawn and clouds were once more gathering round the nation, it would remind them that the power by which he spoke and lived was not diminished, and that while his body was fast turning to dust and was withdrawn from their eyes, the God in whose presence Elisha stood and walked, was still among them, able to use that which was weak, and even that which was not,³⁰⁸ to accomplish His great designs.

We should fill all the hours with the sweetest things,
If we had but a day;
We should drink alone at the purest springs

³⁰⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:28.

On our upward way;
We should love with a lifetime's love in an hour,
If the day were but one;
If what we remember and what we forget
Went out with the sun.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ Mary Lowe Dickinson.

36. Captivity of the Ten Tribes

Present Truth, September 8, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

2 Kings 17:9-18

E. J. Waggoner

THE kingdom of Israel had failed to learn the lesson that God desired to teach it, that He was the giver of all the good they enjoyed. Their great desire had been to get away from the Lord, and now, in a measure, their wish was about to be granted.

Nearly eight hundred years had passed since they came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, to be to God a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, a peculiar treasure to Him above all people. He had given them the land of Canaan, casting out the inhabitants thereof, because of the nameless abominations with which they polluted it, but Israel had fallen so low that the same evils were now found among them.

The prophets had testified faithfully against their sins, and called them to return to the worship of the true God; they had declared His forgiving love, but the message fell upon indifferent ears and hardened hearts.

Hosea 11

³ They knew not that I healed them.

Trust in the Lord

When the king of Assyria began to fasten his yoke upon the kingdom of Israel, exacting tribute from them, instead of seeking the Lord for deliverance, appeal was made to Egypt, the very kingdom from which God had once delivered them with great power and with a stretched out arm. Israel knew well that Jehovah had crushed the pride of Egypt, yet they leaned upon the broken reed.³¹⁰

³¹⁰ **Isaiah 36** ⁶ Lo, you trust in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh

Hosea 7 [RV]

¹¹ Ephraim is like a silly dove, without understanding: they call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria.

The payment of tribute to Assyria was withheld for awhile in hope of help from Egypt, but the rising was quickly suppressed, and the Assyrian king sent Hoshea, king of Israel, to prison.³¹¹

A Record of Transgression

The scripture which contains the day's lesson is one long list of the iniquities of Israel, telling how they walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before them, and how they did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord, setting up idols on every high hill and under every green tree. The Lord had spoken to them,

2 Kings 17

¹³ ...by all the prophets, and by all the seers,

–reminding them of His dealings with their fathers, and exhorting them to turn from their wickedness and live.

¹⁴ Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God.

¹⁵ And they rejected His statutes, and His covenant that He made with their fathers; and they followed vanity, and became vain.

All the abominations of the heathen were reproduced in their history; they worshipped all the host of heaven, with the degrading rites that the heathen taught them.

¹⁷ And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger.

king of Egypt to all that trust in him.

³¹¹ 2 Kings 17:4.

Grey Hairs

To the people it appeared that they were having a good time. Restraints were cast off, and all did what their hearts prompted them to do, but the course of sin was quickly run, and they were about to reap the fruit of their doings.

Hosea 7

⁹ Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knows it not: yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows not.

So men often promise to themselves a long career of sinful pleasure, and say,

Luke 12

¹⁹ Soul, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry, for you have much goods laid up for many years,

—when even then the sin has worked its own destruction. The Lord was not pleased to see the evil plight into which Israel's contempt for His counsel had plunged the nation. He said to them,

Hosea 13

⁹ O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in me is your help.

¹⁰ I will be your King: where is any other that may save you?

Hosea 14

¹ O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.

² Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.

⁴ I will hear their backsliding, I will love them freely: for my anger is turned away from him.

The mercy of the Lord endures for ever, and even when the dark clouds of doom were about to burst over the guilty nation, the Lord stood by them, as ready as ever to heal their backsliding, and love them freely.

A Final Call

In yet another way the Lord sought to save Israel, and to help them to return. Just at that time the king of Judah was carrying on a thorough reformation in his kingdom, and in calling the people of Judah to return to the Lord with all the heart, he kindly sent messengers throughout all Israel with earnest invitations to them to seek the Lord also. They were assured from the Lord that if they would turn to Him with all the heart, they would not only remain in the land, but those who had been carried captive would find compassion with their captors, and would come again unto their own land.³¹²

This message from the king of Judah to the people of Israel was carried by the posts throughout all Israel and Judah,

...but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun [“a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun”] humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.³¹³ And all that did so humble themselves and turn to the Lord, *escaped captivity or slaughter.* For “then the king of Assyria came up *throughout all the land,*” destroying the cities; making captives of the people; and leaving the country desolate. At last he came “up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them...in the cities of the Medes.”³¹⁴

The Lost Ten Tribes

Some claim that the kingdom of Israel, which they refer to as the Lost Ten Tribes, will yet come to light as one or more of the great nations of modern history. It is true that the whole house of Israel will be saved, and will become one nation, under one King, but...

³¹² A. T. Jones, *Empires of the Bible*, p. 241.

³¹³ *2 Chronicles* 30:5-11.

³¹⁴ *Empires of the Bible*, p. 242, emphasis original.

Romans 9

⁶ ...they are not all Israel which are of Israel.

All were saved out of the ten tribes that would be saved, and the rest judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life. Full opportunity was given to return to the land of Israel to all who desired to do so, when Judah ended her captivity in Babylon, and all others became in destiny what they had long been in heart, like the heathen round about them. The Israel of God is made up of those who take hold of His covenant³¹⁵ by faith in Christ, and

Galatians 3

²⁹ If you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

³¹⁵ *Isaiah 56:4.*

37. Hezekiah's Good Reign

Signs of the Times, November 12, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, November 22

2 Kings 18:1-12

A. T. Jones

2 Kings 18

³ And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did.

HEZEKIAH was one of the best kings that ever reigned in Judah, while Ahaz, his father, was one of the worst. There was a conspiracy formed by Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah king of Israel, against Ahaz king of Judah. They proposed to destroy Ahaz and set up Ashariah the son of Tabaël as king of Judah. The Lord sent Isaiah to Ahaz to say,

Isaiah 7

⁷ Thus says the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

Then Ahaz, instead of trusting the Lord,

2 Kings 16

⁷ ...sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyrian, saying, I am your servant and your son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me.

⁸ And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.

⁹ And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

¹⁰ And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.

¹¹ And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that

king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made it before the coming of king Ahaz from Damascus.

¹² And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.

2 Chronicles 28

²³ For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.

In following this worship of the gods of Syria, he shut up the house of the Lord,

²⁵ And in every city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods.

Then too after he had put himself into the hands of the king of Assyria, he had to rob the house of the Lord to satisfy his demands.

2 Kings 16

¹⁷ [He] cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.

¹⁸ And the covert for the Sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the Lord for the king of Assyria.

2 Chronicles 28

²⁰ And Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.

Thus it was that when Hezekiah came to the throne there was urgent necessity for a reformation. He accordingly immediately set about it.

2 Chronicles 29

³ He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them.

Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and had them sanctify themselves, and sanctify and cleanse the house of the Lord. It took eight days to clean out all the rubbish and uncleanness that they found in the temple. Then Hezekiah gathered the rams, lambs, and bullocks for the burnt offering, and all the different orders of musicians to sing in the worship of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 29

³⁶ And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people; for the thing was done suddenly.

Next,

2 Chronicles 30

¹ Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel.

¹⁰ So the posts passed from city to city, through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.

¹¹ Nevertheless, divers of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.

¹⁸ ...even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun.

This was the Lord's last call to the people of the ten tribes. Those who thus humbled themselves and joined with Judah in the worship of God were delivered from the captivity inflicted by Sargon shortly afterward. The Lord knew the iniquities that were multiplying in Israel. He knew that their destruction could not long be delayed. As a nation, they were even now beyond recovery.

But in His mercy and pity He sends one more gracious invitation to whosoever would return to His service and His worship. Still He longs for Ephraim to return. Still He pleads with Israel to repent. And then when they have gone with a perpetual backsliding, He cries out,

Hosea 11

⁸ How shall I give you up, Ephraim? how shall I set you as Zeboim? my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

But Ephraim was...

Hosea 7

¹¹ ...like a silly dove.

Hosea 12

¹⁴ Ephraim provoked Him to anger most bitterly,

–till even mercy compelled to cast them out of His sight.

2 Kings 17

²³ So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

When Hezekiah had brought back the people to the worship of God,

2 Chronicles 30

²⁶ So that there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem,

–then,

2 Chronicles 31

¹ ...all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah, and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned, every man to his possession, into their own cities.

Then it was that Hezekiah broke...

2 Kings 18 [margin]

⁴ ...in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it a piece of brass.

2 Kings 18

⁷ And he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

His rebellion, however, did not, in the end, amount to much in his favor. Perhaps he would have fared better if he had maintained his rebellion upon its own merits, and trusted in the Lord to help him. But he not only rebelled, but he meddled with that which did not concern him at all, and so vitiated the righteousness of his own rebellion, and brought upon him a reverse, and the oppression of the king of Assyria. In short, the story is as follows:

The people of Ekron rebelled against the king of Assyria also. But their king—Padi—“was inspired by friendship and zeal for Assyria” (so says Sennacherib himself), and resisted their rebellion. Then they took Padi, and gave him up, “bound in chains of iron, to Hezekiah of Judah.” They then joined with Egypt against Assyria. Sennacherib defeated the allied forces, and then went to Ekron. What he did there we will let him tell in his own words:

I deposed the rulers and dignitaries who had revolted, and killed them; I hung their bodies on crosses on the walls of the city. I sold for slaves all the men of the city who had committed violence and crimes. As for those who had not committed crimes or faults, and had not despised their masters, I pardoned them. I brought Padi, their king, out of Jerusalem and restored him to the throne of his royalty.

Then, as Hezekiah, by keeping Padi a prisoner for them, was made partaker in their rebellion, Sennacherib went up to punish him. Of this Sennacherib says:

But Hezekiah king of Judah did not submit. There were forty-four walled towns, and an infinite number of villages, that I fought against, humbling their pride and braving their anger. By means of fire, massacre, battles, and siege operations, I took them; I occupied them; I brought out 200,150 persons, great and small, men and women; horses, asses,

mules, camels, oxen, and sheep, without number; and carried them off as booty. As for himself, I shut him up in Jerusalem, the city of his power, like a bird in its cage. I invested and blockaded the fortresses round it; those who came out of the great gate of the city, were seized and made prisoners. I separated the cities I had plundered from his country; and gave them to Mitenti king of Ashdod, to Padi king of Ekron, to Ishmabaal king of Gaza. Then the fear of my majesty terrified this Hezekiah of Judah. He sent away the watchmen and guards whom he had assembled for the defense of Jerusalem.

Then it was that Hezekiah did as the Bible says:

2 Kings 18

¹⁴ And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which you put on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

Of this Sennacherib says:

He sent messengers to me at Nineveh, the seat of my sovereignty, with thirty talents of sold, and eight hundred talents of silver, metals, rubies, pearls, great carbuncles, seats covered with skins, thrones ornamented with leather, amber, seal skins, sandal wood, and ebony, the contents of his treasury....He sent an ambassador to present this tribute and to make his submission.³¹⁶

That was a dear piece of business for poor Hezekiah. He had far better have let the Ekronites conduct their own rebellion, and send their king somewhere else. It would have been much better if he had attended to his own business, and let this business of these others alone. By doing as he did, he not only brought upon himself this evil, but he debarred himself from the help of the Lord. He could not ask the Lord to help him.

³¹⁶ Le Normant's *Ancient History of the East*, Book 4, chap. 3, sec. 3, par. 9-11. Rawlinson's *Seven Great Monarchies*, Second Mon., chap. 9, par. 166, 167.

All that he could do, in his distress, was to confess to the king of Assyria,

2 Kings 18

¹⁴ I have offended; return from me: that which you put on me will I bear.

It is far different from this the next time this same king of Assyria comes into the land, and sends an insulting letter, demanding a further surrender. Then in his innocency he could go and spread the letter before the Lord, and ask Him to look upon it and see, and bow down His ear and hear all that Sennacherib had spoken. Then, too, the Lord answered; and the king of Assyria's army was smitten by the angel, and he returned with shame of face to his own country. Let every one remember that injunction of the Scriptures,

1 Peter 4

¹⁵ Let none of you suffer...as a busybody in other men's matters.

Keep yourself clear of such things, and then if distress comes, in innocency you can present your petition to the Lord, and can trust in Him to help, and He will hear, and deliver.

38. Hezekiah's Weakness and Strength

Present Truth, December 12, 1895

2 Kings 18:14-16; 2 Chronicles 32:7-8

E. J. Waggoner

THERE is an interesting contrast in the history of Hezekiah's conflict with Sennacherib, the ruler of Assyria. It shows how weak a man is when in the wrong, and how strong when in the right.

The Ekronites had rebelled against Assyria, and Hezekiah had made himself a partner in the revolt. Therefore Sennacherib, after punishing Ekron, came against Judah.

2 Kings 18

¹⁴ And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which you put on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

¹⁵ And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house.

¹⁶ At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

The next invasion of Judah by Sennacherib ended far differently. Doubtless the proud Assyrian expected that the same humiliating submission might be exacted a second time. But this time Hezekiah said to the people:

2 Chronicles 32

⁷ Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him; with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles.

⁸ And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

What made the difference? Before, Hezekiah was in the wrong, and now he was in the right; and all the strength of the right was his. Assyria represented the greatest power on earth, but all the pride of the arm of flesh was humbled in a night by one angel, who smote the thousands gathered about Jerusalem. More power was with Hezekiah than with Assyria.

The Lord lives today, and it is a blessed truth that the humblest and weakest man or woman who is in the right with God is stronger than the combined strength of all the world. And the world is powerless to coerce into sin. It is the sin within that makes one weak in the day of trial, not the forces without.

39. Hezekiah's Great Passover

Present Truth, October 27, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, November 6

2 Chronicles 30:1-13

E. J. Waggoner

AT THE time of Hezekiah's accession to the throne, the worship of God had fallen into sad decay in the land of Judah. The king's father, Ahaz, during a reign of sixteen years, had gradually made up his mind that there was no profit in serving Jehovah or maintaining His worship. The treasures of the temple had been used to purchase the alliance of heathen kings,

2 Chronicles 28

²¹ For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the Lord, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not.

The reign of Ahaz was filled with disaster, but although the prophets Micah, Hosea, and Isaiah, proclaimed faithfully the cause of the evils, and exhorted the people to return to the Lord, to find in quietness and confidence the needed strength, they would not hearken.³¹⁷ Instead they leaned upon those who smote them, for Ahaz said,

²³ Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.

At last Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut them in pieces, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

Re-Opening the Temple

As a consequence, when Hezekiah was made king, at the

³¹⁷ **Isaiah 30** ¹⁵ For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength: and you would not.

age of twenty-five, the house of God was in a deplorable condition. Before he had been on the throne a month he opened the doors of the temple and repaired them. Although the father of Hezekiah had been an infidel, his mother was the daughter of a prophet, and to her training of him was doubtless due the stand he took on the side of the Lord.

He gathered the priests and Levites together, and exhorted them to sanctify themselves, and then cleanse the temple, removing all the filth that had accumulated. In eight days this work was accomplished, and sin-offerings were made on behalf of all the people.

By His prophets God gave directions concerning the order of the proceedings. As the people joined in the solemn service of confession and re-consecration of themselves and the temple to God, their hearts were filled with gladness and thanksgiving.

2 Chronicles 29

³⁶ And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.

A Short Work

It was a marvelous change. A month before the worship of God had seemed dead and forgotten, Now it had revived and all the congregation was rejoicing in the Lord. No man would have dared to predict such a reformation, and if anyone had proposed it, the general expectation would have been that it would take a long time to accomplish.

But God's arm was not shortened. All through the years of the reign of Ahaz one disaster after another had fallen upon the nation, and its enemies had triumphed over it, because Judah had not leaned upon the strong arm of their ever-present Deliverer. Now the first recognition of His presence was meeting with such a response of spiritual power and blessing that their hearts were filled with rejoicing.

The barren years of the past might all have been as full of blessing as this week was proving, and it was not God's fault that they had been so different. We may learn from this that when we come to God sinful and unworthy, His temple polluted and abandoned to filth,

1 Corinthians 3

¹⁷ ...which temple you are,

—our past lives but a record of idolatry and abominable deeds, God does not turn away from us. He gladly takes such people and prepares them suddenly.

Unfaithful Shepherds

There is one feature of the history which demands attention, because it is ever present in a work of reform. At the preparation of the burnt offerings, not all the priests had sanctified themselves,

2 Chronicles 29

³⁴ ...for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests.

In Christ's day, the question was asked,

John 7

⁴⁸ Have any of the rulers or of the Pharsees believed on Him?

And there were many who did not dare to confess Him for fear of being put out of the synagogue. It was not until many days after Christ's ascension that we read,

Acts 6

⁷ A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

So in Hezekiah's reformation it was not until all the people had come in, even from the provinces of apostate Israel, that the priests and Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves.

2 Chronicles 30

¹⁵ Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the Lord.

Yet, in spite of the truth which is repeated so often in the Scriptures, that God alone is the head of every man,³¹⁸ and that no one is to be conscience for another, we find men today asking what the ministers and church leaders believe. When an old truth shines anew from the sacred Word, men who profess to be God's servants, excuse themselves from accepting or obeying it, because the ministers have not done so. Many who learn that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, ask,

“Why do not the ministers preach it then?”

If the people had waited for the priests, Judah would never have seen the reformation, and those who wait now for others to obey before they receive the word, may wait for ever. When God prepared the hearts of the people they waited for no man, and the thing was done suddenly. So the prophets of Hezekiah's day tell us that the remnant of Jacob, in the last days, shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord,

Micah 5

⁷ ...that tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men.

Hosea 10

¹³ You have eaten the fruit of lies: because you did trust in your way, in the multitude of your mighty men.

Observing the Passover

While the people were assembled at the re-dedication services, it was decided among them that the Passover should be observed. The proper time for this was the first month, but rather than wait a whole year for the privilege, they agreed,

³¹⁸ *1 Corinthians 11:3.*

and the Lord approved their decision, that the Passover should be kept in the second month. Letters were sent throughout Judah and Israel calling all the people to Jerusalem to join in the service.

The promise was given, perhaps through Isaiah, that if the people would yield themselves unto the Lord, and come once more to His sanctuary, the fierceness of His wrath should be turned away from them, and those of them that had already been carried away captive should return to the land. Even then, on the very eve of Israel's captivity and dispersion, Jehovah's love for them was as strong as ever. He was still ready to do for them all the good things that were promised to the obedient, if they would turn to Him with all their hearts.

2 Chronicles 30

¹⁰ So the posts passed from city to city...but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.

¹¹ Nevertheless divers...humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.

Rejoicing in the Lord

All Judah joined with one heart in the celebration of the Passover, and a great company assembled at Jerusalem. They broke down all the idolatrous altars in Jerusalem and cast them into the brook Kidron. Many of the people were ignorant of the cleansing that God had prescribed for those who should eat the Passover,

¹⁸ ...yet did they eat the Passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one

¹⁹ That prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.

²⁰ And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.

So there was great gladness among all the people, and they

made the air ring with their songs of praise,

2 Chronicles 30

²¹ ...singing with loud instruments unto the Lord.

The Levites taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and the people had such a joyful time together, that it was unanimously decided to keep another seven days in the same way.

²⁶ So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.

²⁷ ...and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to God's holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven.

Praise is Comely

Psalm 65

¹ Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion!

Psalm 147

¹ Praise the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.

God inhabits the praises of Israel, but too often, instead of building Him a glorious habitation of praise and thanksgiving, His people cause Him to dwell in a silent, deserted house, in sad need of cleansing and repair.

God loves to be praised by His children, not for the sake of being praised, but because He delights to fill their mouth with laughter and their tongue with singing over the great things He has done for them.

Psalm 4

⁷ He puts gladness in men's hearts, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

When men praise God with their whole heart it means that they are waking up to some appreciation of His everlasting love for them by proving it in their own lives. When Israel could be persuaded for awhile to fix their eyes on the Lord, it

always let in a flood of rejoicing.

If it were not that we are equally blameworthy, we would wonder that men could ever be so foolish as to drop back again into the chilly darkness of despair. Yet they did, and their history is written for us that we should not...

Hebrews 4

¹¹ ...fall after the same example of unbelief.

40. The Assyrian Invasion

Present Truth, November 3, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, November 13

2 Kings 19:20-22, 28-37

E. J. Waggoner

It is written of Hezekiah that...

2 Kings 18

⁶ He clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him;

⁵ ...so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

Yet this unswerving devotion did not procure for him immunity from foreign invasion. The attacks made on him, however, by the empire of Assyria, were not necessarily misfortunes. It is no hardship to sustain an assault which can be easily repulsed, and since Hezekiah, in the hour of need, always sought help from the Lord, he was never left without defense.

It is evident from the history that Jerusalem was more than once threatened by Assyria during Hezekiah's reign, but there is no record of its falling into the hand of the Invader, although the other fenced cities of Judah were taken.

The Object of Affliction

It was necessary for the sake of Assyria that that heathen people should receive the knowledge of the true God. The promise had been given to Israel:

Deuteronomy 28

¹⁰ All people of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of you.

The fulfillment of this promise depended upon their hearkening diligently to the voice of the Lord. The angels in heaven do this, and for that reason they excel in strength, and the commandments of the Lord are fulfilled in them.³¹⁹ The

³¹⁹ **Psalm 103** ²⁰ Bless the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

same attitude would have made Israel strong in the Lord and obedient to His voice. It would not have been necessary for them to go about calling attention to the fact that they were called by the name of the Lord. Everybody would see this for themselves.

A man does not set his name to a cheque or document without being sure that he can meet the obligation that he is incurring, and in sending forth Israel under His own name the Lord had regard to what was due to the Name; He made every provision to ensure that they should live all to the Name, and that no one should think less highly of it because it was borne by mortal men.

Isaiah 43

¹² This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.

²¹ You are my witnesses, says the Lord, that I am God.

Witnessing to Truth

Isaiah 4

³ Hear and your soul shall live.

Had Israel only hearkened to God's word to them, continually declaring His Name in His character, they would have lived the life that belonged to the Name; and Assyria, and all the other heathen nations, though they had never seen Jehovah, would know all about Him through Israel. His people would have been His witnesses that He was God.

For the lack of this witness, all the nations had made gods for themselves, and the Assyrians, having conquered all who met them in battle, concluded that their own gods were better and stronger than all others. Thus it became important to bring their false god, which was supposed to be greater than all other false gods, into conflict with the only true God; that it might be seen that there was but one true God, and that in learning this truth, the heathen might find life.

John 17

³ For this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God.

Since Assyria had gained pre-eminence over all other nations, and was watched by them all, the result of the conflict between the gods of Assyria and the God of Judah could not fail to become known to all the nations.

A Blessing For All People

It was by no means necessary, however, that the land of Judah should be invaded by the heathen, and that the knowledge of the true God should be proclaimed by means of siege and famine. There was a much better and easier way. The seed of Abraham was to be a blessing to all the families of the earth, and had they accepted the responsibility which the knowledge of a Saviour brought, to make the glad tidings known to all people, the same power which occasionally wrought marvelous deliverances for them in their own land, would have always attended their missionary labors in other lands,

Romans 15

¹⁸ ...to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

¹⁹ Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.

An Uncertain Sound

God had exalted Assyria to be chief over the nations, giving into their hands all other kingdoms. In consequence of this no nation had been able to stand before them in battle. This continued success had filled them with pride, and they attributed their victories to their own strength. It became necessary therefore that they should learn their weakness, and know that all power was of God.

The occasion for the lesson was furnished by Sennacherib's invasion of Judah. He demanded that the city should submit

to him, and warned them that their God was not able to deliver them from his hand. For this delusion on his part, Judah was partly to blame. He knew that they were relying to some extent on the king of Egypt, and, measuring his own strength with that of their ally, he felt confident of his own superiority. Naturally, he would feel that if the God of Judah was all powerful they would not trouble themselves about earthly alliances.

Hearing that the king of Egypt was coming against him, he went off to crush Tirhakah, and wrote to Hezekiah warning him to trust no god that promised deliverance from Assyria's conquering army.

The Strength of Israel

Hezekiah knew what to do with the taunting message of Sennacherib, in which he boasted that he had overthrown all the nations, in spite of their gods, and said,

2 Kings 19

¹⁰ Let not your God in whom you trust deceive you.

He took the letter up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord. It was a matter that concerned the Lord, for it declared that He was impotent as were the false gods. Hezekiah prayed,

¹⁹ Now, therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech you, save us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, even You only.

The Lord was not slow to take up the case. He had put His name upon Israel, remembering that they were dust, and had no power in themselves to preserve its honor; for His purpose was that He and His people should be so closely identified, His strength being made perfect in their weakness, that the one Name would serve for both.

Just as soon as they were willing to identify themselves

with Him, so far from counting it presumption on their part, or throwing in their teeth the accusation that they only remembered Him when they got into insurmountable difficulties, He at once identifies himself with them, and lo, they are as absolutely safe from Assyrian invaders as though they sat beside Him on the throne of universal dominion.

The Lord's Derision

Now they are delivered from all their fears. They are authorised to laugh in contemptuous, derision at the empty power of Sennacherib. Isaiah brought from God the message,

2 Kings 19

²⁰ That which you have prayed...I have heard.

Concerning the king of Assyria, the word was given,

²¹ The virgin the daughter of Zion has despised you, and laughed you to scorn!

His rage was not against Judah but against God, and because he, being nothing, had presumed to exalt his voice against God, he was to be taught his weakness.

²⁸ I will turn you back by the way by which you came.

Doubtless the message was conveyed in some way to Sennacherib, and with it would go the startling intelligence that the words of Jehovah were already made good, for:

³⁵ It came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand.

Among these would be Rabshakeh, whose insolent, overbearing spirit had made him a instrument to bear the scornful message of his master, for we read that the angel smote...

2 Chronicles 32

²¹ ...all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with

shame of face to his own land.

An Impressive Lesson

Numerous inscriptions have been discovered in the land of Assyria, and much additional information has been gleaned therefrom concerning the life of Sennacherib, but, so far as is known at present, the “shame of face” in which he returned from Jerusalem was sufficiently deep to prevent his leaving behind him any record of this particular expedition.

He reigned for twenty years after his return, but did not again attempt to invade the land of Judah. It must have been known throughout his wide dominions that there was one God at least before whom “the great king”³²⁰ had to confess himself powerless. A last testimony to the futility of serving idols was borne by his death, for it was while engaged in worshipping in the house of his god that two of his sons slew him with the sword.

Yours is the Power

Romans 13

¹ There is no power but of God.

Therefore the servant of God is not to fear any of his enemies.

Isaiah 8

¹³ Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.

All power in heaven and earth is given to Christ, and whoever bears His name need not fear the malice of the hosts of darkness. We may take for our encouragement God’s words to Sennacherib, and laugh to scorn the efforts of Satan to destroy us, so long as we remember that we are without strength, but that God is the strength of our life, and He is mighty to save. Therefore,

³²⁰ *2 Kings* 18:19, 28.

Philippians 4

⁴ Rejoice...always, and...

Philippians 1

²⁸ Be in nothing terrified by your adversaries,

–even though the temptations that assail you have a long record of past successes. The continual remembrance that God alone has power will keep us continually rejoicing over the fact that our adversaries have none. When we believe the Word of God we can laugh them all to scorn.

Psalms 34

² My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

41. Hezekiah's Prayer Answered

Signs of the Times, November 19, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, November 29

2 Kings 20:1-17; Isaiah 38:9-19

A. T. Jones

AFTER Hezekiah's punishment, and his confession and submission to Sennacherib, as related in last week's lesson,³²¹ he fell sick of the malady which forms the subject of this lesson.

2 Kings 20 [also Isaiah 38:1]

¹ In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amos came to him, and said unto him, Thus says the Lord. Set your house in order; for you shall die, and not live.

This message is somewhat different from that which would be given in the majority of cases nowadays to as good a man as Hezekiah. Now, the word of comfort would be, in most instances, in substance about this:

“You are now to leave this world and go to Heaven. We speak of it as death, but in reality there is no death. ‘Death is but the gate to endless joy,’ and you will soon be happy in Heaven; and by this you will know what true life is; it is then you will really begin to live, etc., etc.”

But such is not the message of God to any dying person. “You shall die, and not live,” is the word of God. And therefore when a person dies, and he does not live. A person cannot be dead and alive at the same time. If he is dead, he is dead, and not alive; and he will not be alive until the resurrection:

- if righteous, till the resurrection of the just;
- if unrighteous, till the resurrection of the unjust.

And so Hezekiah understood it. He seems to have had no

³²¹ See article 37 in this section, *Signs of the Times*, November 12, 1885, “Hezekiah's Good Reign.”

idea that he was going to Heaven when he died; if he had, he certainly showed very little appreciation of the blessedness of it, by weeping, as he did,

2 Kings 20 [margin]

³ ...with a great weeping.

But we have his own word on this subject:

Isaiah 38

⁹ The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:

¹⁰ I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years.

¹¹ I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living...

¹⁴ Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove...

¹⁸ For the grave cannot praise You, death cannot celebrate You: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for your truth.

¹⁹ The living, the living, he shall praise You, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known your truth.

Thus spoke Hezekiah. And it was because, if he should die, he would go to the grave—to a place and condition in which he could neither see nor praise the Lord,—it was because of this that he “wept sore.” It was because of this that he desired not yet to die. Then came the word of the Lord to him by Isaiah:

2 Kings 20

⁵ I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears;...

⁶ And I will add unto your days fifteen years...

⁷ And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.

It is right to pray for the sick, indeed the Lord has given specific directions to do so; but He has not directed us to disregard appliances. On the contrary, in this place He gives just as specific directions to use appliances as He does in the other

place to pray for the sick.

Notice, too, that it was after His distinct promise to heal Hezekiah and to add unto his days fifteen years, that He ordered them to take a bunch of figs and lay on the boil; but it was not till after they had applied the figs that he recovered. Prayer and faith and works, or, in other words, common sense, go together in the intelligent service of the Lord; while that kind of faith-cure, that is now becoming too prevalent, that proposes to cure all manner of diseases without either appliances or common sense, is nothing but spiritual quackery, and is strikingly akin to presumption. It certainly is not intelligent faith.

2 Kings 20

⁹ And Isaiah said, This sign shall you have of the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing that He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?

¹⁰ And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.

¹¹ And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord: and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

It is hard to understand how Hezekiah should think it any more of “a light thing” for the shadow to go down than for it to go back. To us it would seem to be just as easy to do the one as to do the other; for certainly no power but that of God could do either, and it is just as easy for Almighty power to do one thing as it is to do another.

Whatever Hezekiah may have thought about this, we can find excuse for him; but we can find literally no excuse for those modern would-be wise “divines” who attempt to tell just how this thing was done. They attempt to explain by natural causes, not only this miracle, but other such recorded events, especially in the Old Testament. If these were the result of what we know as natural causes; if these things were in ac-

cordance with what is termed and known as natural law, then there was no miracle about them.

And to talk, as some do, of these things as being too “violent interferences with the order of nature,”³²² is simply to talk nonsense. What is the order of nature? Who established the order of nature? Is not God above nature? Is not the order of nature simply the ordinances which God established? Assuredly so. Then is He bound, as we are, to act strictly according to these laws? If so, then there is no such thing as a miracle. And every attempt to explain by natural causes any of the miracles recorded in the Bible, is just so much of an effort to reduce them to the level of the natural, and to rob them of their sublime dignity as miracles, and is therefore simply unbelief, however much faith may be professed.

Shortly after Hezekiah’s recovery, Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon, sent messengers with letters and a present unto Hezekiah, because he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick and had recovered; and he also sent these messengers...

2 Chronicles 32

³¹ ...to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land.

Merodach-baladan was at first king of a small country at the head of the Persian Gulf; but he spread his authority northward, and took Babylon and began to reign there about 721 BC—the same year in which Sargon became king of Assyria. Sargon went down to recover Babylon. He did so; and took Merodach-baladan prisoner, and carried him into Assyria; but he escaped from prison, returned to Babylon, re-established his authority there, and maintained it a few years, until Sennacherib once more recovered Babylon to Assyria. Merodach-baladan then fled to an island in the Persian Gulf, where he

³²² Editor’s note: This phrase is found in George Bernard Shaw’s, *Back to Methuselah*, Preface (1921). However, it predates him. I found it in at least one periodical from 1872, so it may have been a more common phrase among skeptics of the late 1800’s.

died; and Sennacherib, to prevent further revolt of the rebellious city, determined, as he says himself, “to overthrow it even more than was done by the deluge,” and so left it a heap of ruins, with the Euphrates running over it.

It was during Merodach-baladan’s second reign in Babylon, and between Sennacherib’s first and second invasions of Judea, that this embassy came from Babylon to Hezekiah. We saw in last week’s lesson how Hezekiah, by receiving the king of Ekron, had brought Sennacherib upon him; and how that, by his submission and the payment of a large tribute, Sennacherib had turned back. The matter of the second invasion appears to be about as follows:

Ambassadors were sent, either by Hezekiah or by an influential faction, to solicit the alliance of Egypt against Assyria.³²³ Sennacherib learned of it,³²⁴ and came out to Lachish, and so placed himself between Hezekiah and his forces, and the king of Egypt and his forces. From Lachish he sent Rabshakeh and Rabsaria and Tartan up to Jerusalem to demand the submission of Hezekiah, upon the condition that he should remain in his own land until Sennacherib got ready to come and carry all away captive.³²⁵ Hezekiah refused to hear him, and forbade any of the people to answer him, and sent a company to Isaiah to ask whether the Lord would not hear the words of Rab-shakeh.³²⁶ Then Rab-shakeh returned to Sennacherib at Libnah,

2 Kings 19

⁸ ...for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

Then Sennacherib heard that Tirhakah king of Ethiopia had come out to fight against him. Then he sent messengers with a letter to Hezekiah. Hezekiah took this letter up into the tem-

³²³ *Isaiah* 30:1-7; 31:1-5.

³²⁴ *2 Kings* 18:19-21.

³²⁵ *2 Kings* 18:31-35.

³²⁶ *2 Kings* 18:36-37; 19:1-5.

ple and spread it before the Lord, and prayed him to see and hear all the words of Sennacherib.³²⁷

2 Kings 19

³⁵ And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand.

So it is a mistake to suppose that Sennacherib's army was encamped against Jerusalem when it was smitten by the angel. And this is exactly what Isaiah had said:

2 Kings 19

³² Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.

Accordingly, we find that the whole narrative goes to show that Sennacherib was away below Libnah, going to fight with Tirhakah, when his army was smitten. And Sennacherib...

2 Chronicles 32

²¹ ...returned with shame of face to his own land.

Thus once more Jehovah showed himself to His people and to the heathen as above all gods; and showed himself ready and willing to deliver His people from the oppressor, when they put their trust implicitly in Him. He is the same mighty God, the same tender Father, to His people today as He was of old.

James 1

¹⁷ With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

But men's sins have parted between them and Him, and when they shall return, as He in mercy is now calling upon them to do, to faithful obedience to all His law, once more He will show himself valiant...

³²⁷ 2 Kings 19:6-16.

2 Chronicles 16

⁹ ...in the behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward Him.

Psalm 89

¹⁵ Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound.

Psalm 144

¹⁵ Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.

42. Hezekiah's Sickness

Signs of the Times, October 5, 1888

Isaiah 38:1-18

E. J. Waggoner

THE case of Hezekiah affords an excellent test of the doctrine expressed by the popular hymn, that:

Death is the gate to endless joy.³²⁸

Isaiah 38

¹ In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus says the Lord, Set your house in order: for you shall die, and not live.

There was no doubt but that he was doomed to die. And how did he receive the news? We are told that...

³ ...Hezekiah wept sore.

He loved life more than death. But perhaps there was something in his past life that was wrong, and the thought of this caused him to fear. Let us see.

² Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord,

³ And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in your sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

He was a very good man; and besides this, the Lord granted him time to set his house in order, and to make any preparation that he might desire. This privilege is not accorded to everyone. And yet Hezekiah did not want to die; did not want to go (according to the popular idea) to be with the One whom he loved and had served so faithfully. We will let him tell in

³²⁸ Isaac Watts, Hymn 31, "Christ's presence makes death easy," or "Why should we start, and fear to die."

his own words why he did not want to die. After he had recovered, he deliberately wrote as follows:

Isaiah 38

¹⁰ I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years.

So instead of his years being lengthened out to all eternity, they would have been cut off. Then he would not have gone to Heaven, but to the grave. But would he not have gone to Paradise, there to praise God? Hear his words again:

¹⁸ For the grave cannot praise You, death cannot celebrate You: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for your truth.

This was at least one reason why Hezekiah did not want to die. He wanted to continue praising the Lord, and he knew that he could not if he died. We will not now consider whether or not he might have honored the Lord more by dying than by living. Had he died at that time he would have avoided at least one sin; but the point is that he could no more have uttered praise to God.

But the objector will say,

“All this is spoken of his body; of course its functions would have ceased, and it would have decayed; but his soul would have gone to God.”

Well, then, we will listen to him once more:

¹⁷ Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but You have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for You have cast all my sins behind your back.

So it appears that neither his body nor his soul would have gone to Heaven if he had died, although he was a good man. This case alone is sufficient to disprove the doctrine that the good go to their reward at death.

But it may still be urged that Hezekiah lived in the old dis-

pensation, before Christ, and that “life and immortality”³²⁹ had not then been brought to light; that he did not understand the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and that his words are not to be taken as authority. We readily admit that he did not understand the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, as held by the majority nowadays, but will not admit that his words are not authority. Hear what Paul says of the Old Testament writings:

2 Timothy 3

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, etc.

Then we may go to the Old Testament to learn doctrine; and in this case we learn a very important doctrinal lesson. These words of Hezekiah stand unrebuked and uncontradicted, as a part of divine revelation. We will then accept them as such, believing that they, with the rest of the Scripture, are necessary in order to make us wise unto salvation.

³²⁹ 2 Timothy 1:10.

43. What Is In Your Heart?

Present Truth, July 27, 1899

2 Chronicles 32:25-31

E. J. Waggoner

Hezekiah king of Judah was a good man, who...

2 Chronicles 29

² ...did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.

He could remind the Lord that he had walked before Him in truth and with a perfect heart, and done that which was good in His sight, and God did not correct him.

Isaiah 38

³ Remember now, O Lord, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in your sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

Nevertheless at one time Hezekiah acted very foolishly and wickedly. God had wondrously healed him, and had given him a sign in the heavens, which could not but be known in all the earth; yet when messengers from Babylon came to inquire about it, Hezekiah, instead of using the opportunity to lead them to God, vainly showed them all his treasures, like a child exhibiting his toys. We read that:

2 Chronicles 32

²⁵ [He] rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up.

Pride goes before destruction, and in this instance we see how it prepares the way for it; for the vain-glorious exhibition of the treasures of the kingdom only aroused the cupidity of the Babylonians, and resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem.

But how could Hezekiah, who had always lived a humble, godly life, turn so suddenly to folly, and to sin against God? The answer is:

2 Chronicles 32

³¹ In the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

We see, therefore, that all this folly was in Hezekiah's heart, unknown to him, even while he was serving God in truth and uprightness. The hearts of all men are alike. All have the same nature.

Mark 7

²¹ From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

²² Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness.

These things are in the heart, not of a few men only, but of all mankind. No one need say that none of these things are in his heart, for they are all there, even though they have not all appeared openly.

Jeremiah 17

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

¹⁰ I the Lord search the heart.

Was not Hezekiah a converted man? was he not a Christian? Certainly he was. The history of his life shows that. Yet all this evil was present, waiting the time when it could reveal itself. In the flesh of no man dwells there any good thing.³³⁰ It is only when we walk in the light as God is in the light, that:

1 John 1

⁷ ...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

The life-blood must continually flow through us, to cleanse away the impurity. Only in the Lord have we righteousness and strength; there is none in us. If we allow Him to leave us

³³⁰ *Romans 7:18.*

for a moment, some of the wickedness of the flesh will manifest itself.

Many are trusting in themselves, and congratulating themselves upon their own supposed righteousness. They are ready enough with their condemnation of others, forgetting that much of their own seeming goodness is simply lack of opportunity or of special temptation to do wrong.

Forgetting to give God the glory, they will surely some time be allowed to exhibit the weakness of their lives. If from such a fall they learn, as did Peter, to trust in the Lord, then even that will contribute to their salvation. None of us have any reason to boast over another.

1 Corinthians 15

¹⁰ By the grace of God I am what I am.

1 Corinthians 4

⁷ Who makes you to differ from another? and what have you that you did not receive? now if you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?

We have no occasion to boast of any goodness that appears in us, since it is all of God; but we have much reason to be ashamed of any sin, because grace from God is given us in sufficient measure to overcome all sin. Although sin, like a beast of prey, always crouches at the door, with its desire toward us, we may rule over it;³³¹ but this can be only when we recognize that the sin of all the world is ours, and in humility trust in the Lord.

Even though God should for a little moment leave us, He will gather us with great mercies.

Isaiah 54

⁷ For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you.

⁸ In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment; but

³³¹ *Genesis 4:7.*

with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer.

But this history of Hezekiah was recorded in order that we might know what is in our hearts without its being necessary for God to leave us. Even while we are serving God in truth and righteousness, we may and should know that we stand only by the power of God's hand.

1 Corinthians 10

¹² Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Jude

²⁴ Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

²⁵ To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

44. Manasseh's Sin and Repentance

Present Truth, November 10, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, November 20

2 Chronicles 33:9-16

E. J. Waggoner

MANASSEH was the son of Hezekiah. He became king at the age of twelve and reigned fifty-five years. Hezekiah by his piety and steadfastness had been a blessing to the nation, so that since the time of Solomon there had been nothing like his day in the history of Judah.³³² His son,

2 Kings 21

⁹ ...Manasseh, seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel.

We are not told how it was that the son of Hezekiah proved so different from himself, but we may learn from the circumstances that prosperity is not always good. When Hezekiah was anointed king, the house of God was deserted and out of repair, and the kingdom was harassed on every side, while Manasseh found himself on the throne of a powerful state, with well-filled treasuries and storehouses. Youth is seldom fitted to exercise power, because it has not learned that in reality the ruler is the servant of the governed. When power is used only to minister to self-exaltation and self-indulgence it is a curse.

False Friends

There is never any lack of evil counselors and flatterers to fill the mind of a king with false notions of his relations to his people, and Manasseh was misled by these. The Lord spoke to him also by His prophets, but he would not hear them.

Hezekiah had employed men to copy out some of the proverbs of Solomon, and among these wise sayings were several which related to the office of a king. They are found in

³³² 2 Chronicles 30:26.

the 25th to the 29th chapters of *Proverbs*. One of the proverbs reads,

Proverbs 25

⁵ Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

This may explain why Manasseh's throne was not established. He listened rather to counsels that favored his own inclinations than to the faithful warnings uttered by servants of God.

Led Captive by Satan

Manasseh stopped at nothing in his departure from the Lord, and his case is a warning to those who think that because they have been brought up respectably they can refuse to serve God, and yet never become so abandoned as others who have sunk to the depths of shame and degradation.

Manasseh had a good father and godly training, but turning from the Lord, he went altogether to the bad. He built again the high places which his father had broken down, and reared altars for the worship of the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. As if this was not enough,

2 Chronicles 33

⁷ ...he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God.

He caused his children to be sacrificed unto devils, in obedience to the cruel dictates of heathenism. He dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards. The evils for which the Amorites had been cast out were reproduced in Manasseh.

2 Kings 21

¹⁶ Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another.

Perilous Times

In these last days the prophecies tell us that before Christ

comes, it will be as it was in the days of Noah, when...

Genesis 6

¹¹ ...the earth was filled with violence,

⁵ ...and every imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts was only evil continually.

Some may think that it would take a very long time to undo all the work of civilisation, and bring the world to such a depth of depravity, but we see in the case of Manasseh that it did not take very long to descend from an exceptionally high standard to one that went beyond the excesses of the unspeakable Amorites.

All the good there is in the world is due to the Spirit of God. Men do not recognize this fact, and attribute all signs of good to themselves, but the Spirit strives with them, and though it is seldom allowed to appear as a positive power, its negative influence is always at work, smothering to some extent the manifestations of the carnal heart. As the world finally hardens itself against the work of the Spirit, it will quickly be seen how little restraining power there is in the boasted growth of civilisation.

2 Timothy 3

¹ This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

¹² All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

¹³ But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

A Broken Staff

There was only one hope of saving Manasseh. He had rejected the true God for false ones. He must be left to make practical trial of their value. The captains of the host of the king of Assyria came, conquered him, bound him in chains and carried him away to Babylon. This must have brought forcibly to his mind the uselessness of serving idols.

Hezekiah had met the armies of that same nation in the strength of Jehovah and one of His angels had laid them low. Manasseh had served his false gods diligently, had even sacrifice his children to them, but now in his distress they did nothing for him. It must have come home to him then that all these years he had been following nothing. He had exchanged the truth of God for a lie. What insanity of folly!

Promises to the Penitent

Man's extremity is God's opportunity. In captivity, bemoaning his fate, Manasseh was more accessible to the Spirit of God. There were no flatterers at hand now to fill his ears with vanity. God loved Manasseh still, and His Spirit came, not to fill his mind with the terrors of a vain remorse, but to whisper thoughts of comfort, and forgiveness.

2 Chronicles 33

¹² And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.

Perhaps he remembered reading, in the book of *Deuteronomy*, the promise of God that if, when the curse had fallen on any for disobedience, they should call His words to mind and return unto Him, the Lord would turn their captivity.

Deuteronomy 30

⁴ If any of your be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord your God gather you, and from thence will He fetch you.

The history of Manasseh is recorded that no one should despair. From the height of opportunity and privilege, he fell to the depths of deserved ruin; yet from those depths his plea for mercy was heard at the throne of grace. And God was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.

Manasseh's repentance was sincere, and during the rest of his long reign we read of no relapse on his part. The people also returned to the worship of God, although they sacrificed still in the high places.

A Royal Love

The greatness of God's love is seen in His treatment of the repentant sinner. He does not say,

“You are forgiven, but I can never trust you again.”

There is no humiliation attached to His forgiveness, for with it He bestows the love that casts out fear. He not only forgives the sin but remembers it no more. He restores the years that the locust has eaten:

Joel 2

²⁵ And I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

He says of Israel,

Zechariah 10

⁶ I will bring them again to place them and they shall be as though I had not cast them off.

Manasseh not only received forgiveness but was restored to more honor than he had before. So to Nehuchaduezzar, when he learned that the heavens do rule, was given greater honor than that which before had lifted up his heart in vanity.

Daniel 4

³⁶ For the glory of my kingdom, my honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

The Lord does not fill His kingdom with shame-faced, amnestied criminals, but with a royal nation, a holy priesthood,

Revelation 1

⁶ ...kings and priests unto God.

Psalm 68

¹⁸ You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive:
You have received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also,
that the Lord God might dwell among them.

Abundant Pardon

None should feel discouraged because they find themselves in evil case, and have certain evidence that their own sinfulness and folly has brought them there. Satan tries to persuade such that it is useless to expect help from God, when it is the very rejection of His counsel that has brought them into distress. God brings people into such places for the very purpose of helping them, and because there is no other way of getting them to accept His help.

Psalm 107

¹⁷ Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are, afflicted.

¹⁹ Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble...

Does He reply,

“You should not have been such fools. If you had obeyed me you would not have got into trouble. Now you must bear the consequences.”?

No.

¹⁹ ...and He saves them out of their distresses.

²⁰ He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

²¹ Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.

Israel would not listen to the voice of God, so by means of the things that fascinated them, He allured them into the wilderness. There, in distress, He spoke comfortably to them. It was not for the sake of punishing Israel that they were al-

lured into the wilderness, but that God might give them their vineyards from thence.

Hosea 2

¹⁴ Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

¹⁵ And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

So Manasseh went into the wilderness, and received his kingdom from thence. Knowing from whom He received it, and acknowledging the Giver, he was established in the possession of it as he never had been before.

45. Josiah and the Book of the Law

Signs of the Times, December 24, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, January 3

2 Kings 22:1-13

A. T. Jones

IN THIS lesson we return to the kings of Judah. After the good king Hezekiah died, his son Manasseh reigned.

2 Kings 21

² And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.

³ For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them.

⁶ And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger.

⁹ ...and Manasseh seduced them [the children of Judah] to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel.

¹⁶ Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.

Then because of all this great evil, the Lord said by His prophets:

¹² Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever hears of it, both his ears shall tingle.

¹³ And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab; and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipes a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.

2 Chronicles 33

¹⁰ And the Lord spoke to Manasseh, and to his people; but

they would not hearken.

¹¹ Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria [Esarhaddon], which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

He was released, however, after a while, and at his death his son Amon reigned.

2 Kings 21

²⁰ And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did.

²³ And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and slew the king in his own house.

²⁴ And the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

Thus it was that young Josiah—only eight years of age—came to the throne. And he found the land full of iniquity and abominable idolatry:

- altars reared to Baal;
- images of Ashtoreth in the high places;
- places of worship for horrid Moloch;
- horses and chariots dedicated to the sun;
- priests of Baal, and of all the idols, burning incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the planets, and to all the host of heaven;
- the house of God shut up;
- the worship of the Lord forsaken, and the book of the law forgotten;

—this had been the condition of affairs for nearly fifty years. In the eighth year of his reign he began actively the work of reformation—to break down the altars; to break in pieces the images; and to burn the chariots of the sun. Thus he did throughout all Judah.

2 Chronicles 34

⁶ And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about.

While these things were going on, the Levites were at the same time gathering money from all the people,

⁹ ...of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin; and they returned to Jerusalem.

¹⁰ And they put it in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the Lord, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the Lord, to repair and amend the house.

2 Kings 22

³ And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the Lord, saying,

⁴ Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people.

⁸ And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

⁹ And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again...

¹⁰ And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest has delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

¹¹ And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

¹² And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,

¹³ Go you, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the

words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

These messengers went immediately to Huldah the prophetess, who...

2 Kings 22

¹⁴ ...dwelt in Jerusalem in the college,

—and when Josiah received the answer from the Lord, he gathered all the people together,

2 Kings 23

² ...small and great: and...read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord.

³ And the king...made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments,...with all their heart and with all their soul. And all the people stood to the covenant.

²⁵ And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

Josiah did a grand work, and it is a grand commendation of the Lord that he received because of it. But this was not written for his sake alone. Those who tremble at the word of the Lord, and turn from their transgressions, as did King Josiah, the Lord will accept and commend as readily as He did him.

This reformation by Josiah is only an illustration of the power of the word of God. When Luther found a Bible chained in the library of his monastery, its precious word touched his heart, and by it caused a revolution in all Europe. When Wesley began to obey that word...

²⁵ ...with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might,

—the power of the word could not be kept back, but it fairly turned England and America “upside down.” So it will be ever.

Only let a few men, or even a solitary man, walk in the way of the commandments of God, with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their might, and they can move nations.

Hebrews 4

¹² For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The work of reformation is not yet done. The noble duty of covenanting to walk after the Lord and to keep His commandments, did not cease with this act of Josiah, nor with Luther, nor with Wesley. Even now the Lord sends a message to all people, saying with a loud voice,

Revelation 14

¹² Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Even now iniquity and idolatry, prevail as really as in the days of Josiah, Luther, or Wesley. And now it is the duty of those who fear God to covenant to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments and testimonies and His statutes, with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their might, to perform the words of this covenant that are written in the book.

As it was in the days of Josiah, that the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth and the honor of the sun, had supplanted the worship and honor of Jehovah, even so now the worship of the beast (the papacy), and his image (the so-called National Reform), and the honor of the “venerable day of the sun” are fast supplanting the worship and honor of Jehovah. Even now, as of old, the Lord cries out,

Malachi 1

⁶ If I be a Father, where is my honor? if I be a Master, where is my fear?

Men who make their boast of the law, through breaking the law are dishonoring God.

Romans 2

²³ You that make your boast of the law, through breaking the law do you dishonor God?

Isaiah 58

¹³ If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words:

¹⁴ Then shall you delight yourself in the Lord.

1 Samuel 2

³⁰ Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

46. The Book of the Law Found

Present Truth, November 24, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, December 4

2 Kings 22:8-20

E. J. Waggoner

AFTER the death of Manasseh, his son Amon reigned for two years. He was only twenty-two years old, but he walked in all the evil of his father's earlier life. A conspiracy was organized against Amon which resulted in his murder, but the people of the land slew the conspirators, and put Josiah, the son of Amon, on the throne at the age of eight years. He reigned for thirty-one years, and was one of the best kings that Judah ever had.

2 Kings 22

² He...walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

This disposition became especially marked in him when he was sixteen years old, and during the rest of his life it was steadfastly maintained.

2 Kings 23

²⁵ And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

A Discovered Treasure

In his eighteenth year, Josiah instructed Hilkiah, the high priest, who was father to Jeremiah the prophet, to apply the temple contributions to restoration of the sacred building. This work was put in hand and, in the course of it, an important discovery was made. The book of the law, which God had directed should be kept with the ark of the covenant, was brought to light. Hilkiah showed the book to Shaphan, the scribe, who read it himself, and then took it to Josiah.

2 Kings 22

¹⁰ And Shaphan read it before the king.

A Grievous Famine

It is impossible for us to conceive now the feelings with which this recovered treasure would be regarded. The Word of God is so easy of access that men have come to regard it as a common thing, and often show it scant reverence. But no greater calamity could befall the world than to be deprived of the Bible. Because we are so accustomed to it, and to enjoying the results of its influence, we seldom think how everything that makes life worth living, yea, even life itself, we owe to this Word. The prophet Amos tells how the loss of the Word will affect men:

Amos 8

¹¹ Behold, the days come, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

¹² And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

¹³ In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.

Choosing Darkness

The Lord is not to blame for such a famine. Men will not endure sound doctrine,

2 Timothy 4

³ [Men] will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Having rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and chosen pleasing error rather than sanctifying truth, they have only themselves to blame when...

Matthew 24

²⁴ ...false Christs, and false prophets...

–ensnare their souls. Rejecting the Word that would save them, there is no other way of escape.

A Modern Inconsistency

Occasionally some fragment of ancient manuscript is brought to light, purporting to bear some mutilated portion of the “Sayings of Jesus,” but it is strange that while these discoveries cause great excitement, men can calmly ignore the authentic sayings that all possess in the Scriptures. The high estimation in which the fragments are held should be much more bestowed on the Word which God’s goodness has preserved for us in such perfect form.

When we remember that it is the Word of the Creator of the universe to us, bringing infinite treasures of wisdom and knowledge, manifesting unsearchable love in an everlasting salvation, we will honor the precious revelation by implicit confidence and unquestioning obedience.

Slow to Anger

When the book of the law was read before Josiah, he rent his clothes. He knew that the nation had pursued a course very different from the one commanded by God in the discovered document, and had justly incurred the judgments therein denounced against the disobedient.

Josiah sent messengers to enquire of the Lord by Huldah the prophetess, whether the evils of which Moses wrote were indeed to fall upon Judah. The answer was returned that the Lord would certainly fulfill His word, but in that reply evidence was given that the judgments of God were only directed against the stubbornly impenitent. To Josiah, because his heart was tender and he had humbled himself before the Lord, the promise was given that his eyes should not see the evil, but that he should end his days in peace.

The same heart-felt repentance on the part of others would have secured the same degree of favor. It was because the people would not be turned from their own ways that the judgment could not be averted. The Lord was trying to purify His people by suffering, but they were so joined to their sins that the people were melted entirely away before they would allow themselves to be separated from their iniquities.

Jeremiah 6

²⁸ They are all grievous revolters,...they are all corrupters.

²⁹ The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melts in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away.

Ready to Forgive

The compassionate Judge of all the earth, who had inspired Abraham's pleading for the cities of the plain, and himself wept over Jerusalem, was not at this time less desirous of finding some reason to spare the guilty nation. Before the city was finally destroyed He proclaimed,

Jeremiah 5

¹ Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, if there be any that executes judgment, that seeks the truth; and I will pardon it.

Long after Josiah enquired of the Lord, a promise was given that if the people would fear God and give glory to Him, by keeping the Sabbath which He had sanctified, the city should stand for ever.³³³ So in the last days, the test of the fourth commandment reveals who will follow the Lord and be saved, and who will choose his own way and be destroyed.

A Transient Reformation

For a time after the discovery of the Book of the Law, the people returned to the Lord. Many of those who were left in

³³³ *Jeremiah 17:20-27.*

the cities of Israel joined Judah in observing the Passover. Never before since the days of Samuel had there been such a gathering. It was in his time that Israel rejected the Lord from being King over them, and the evil effects of kingly rule upon the nation may be judged from the fact that the sacred historian has to go back before the time of the kings to find a parallel to the Passover which was kept in Josiah's eighteenth year.

Before the Passover, there was a thorough destruction of all idols throughout the land. In the country of Israel, where the fast decaying power of Assyria no longer bore sway, the altars set up by Jeroboam were now destroyed. In Bethel for three hundred and fifty years there had been preserved the prophecy uttered in Jeroboam's day, that a king named Josiah should defile the altar and offer upon it the dead bodies of its priests.

1 Kings 13

² And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus says the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon you shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon you, and men's bones shall be burnt upon you.

Josiah saw the tomb of the prophet who had uttered this prediction, and gave orders for its preservation, after the prophecy had been repeated to him by the men of the city.

Josiah's Death

The iniquity of Assyria was now filled up, and the mighty empire was tottering to the fall which its pride had provoked. Egypt, Babylon and Media, were encompassing it with their armies, and Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, came through the land of Judah to attack the Assyrian stronghold, Carchemish. It was in God's plan that the king of Egypt should do this, and when Josiah thought to arrest the progress of his army, Pharaoh-Necho sent him a warning message from God, say-

ing that he was not come against Josiah, and had no desire to meet him in battle,

2 Chronicles 35

²¹ ...for God commanded me to make haste: forbear yourself from meddling with God, who is with me, that He destroy you not.

Notwithstanding this warning, Josiah persisted in his attempt to stop the king of Egypt, and was fatally wounded in the battle that followed. There was great lamentation at his death in all Judah and Jerusalem. Yet he was taken away from the evil to come, and the words of Christ to the weeping women of Judea were indeed applicable to those whom Josiah left behind him:

Luke 23

²⁸ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

47. The Faithful Rechabites

Signs of the Times, January 7, 1886

Notes on the International Lesson, January 17

Jeremiah 35:12-19

A. T. Jones

THE Rechabites were of the people of the Kenites, and of the house of Rechab. The Kenites were the descendants of Moses's father-in-law. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, Moses's father-in-law came with Moses's wife and his two sons to visit him in the wilderness, shortly after they had left Egypt. After remaining a while with Moses he departed, and...

Exodus 18

²⁷ ...went his way into his own land.

But,

Numbers 10

²⁹ Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses's father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel.

³⁰ And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to my own land, and to my kindred.

³¹ And he said, Leave us not, I pray you; forasmuch as you know how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and you may be to us instead of eyes.

³² And it shall be, if you go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto you.

By this Moses prevailed on Hobab to go with them; for when we come down to the book of *Judges*, we read:

Judges 1

¹⁶ And the children of the Kenite, Moses's father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah

into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

In *1 Chronicles 2:55*, we have the first mention of Rechab, the father of the Rechabites.

1 Chronicles 2

⁵⁵ And the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez; the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and Suchathites. These are the Kenites that came of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab.

The next mention we have of any of the house of Rechab, is in *2 Kings 10*. When Jehu was on his way to execute judgment on the house of Ahab,

2 Kings 10

¹⁵ ...he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him: and he saluted him, and said to him, Is your heart right, as my heart is with your heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me your hand. And he gave him his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot.

²³ And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be here with you none of the servants of the Lord, but the worshippers of Baal only.

After this there is no more mention of any of the house of Rechab till this time which is the subject of the lesson for to-day,—a period of about two hundred and seventy-seven years. But here we find that this Jehonadab who accompanied Jehu was the one who had given the directions which the Rechabites had observed all these years, which the Lord adopts as the meaning of teaching an important lesson to his people.

The date of the events connected with this lesson is about 607 BC. Jehoiakim was king of Judah, having been made king by Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt. About 610, Necho had gone out against the king of Assyria; but he went no farther than the River Euphrates, being delayed there by the siege of Car-

chemish.

As he was on his way toward the Euphrates, Josiah, king of Judah, went out to stay him. Necho tried to persuade him to let him pass unmolested, as he was not the one against whom Necho was going. Josiah would not listen, but persisted in his resistance to Necho, and a battle was brought on, in which Josiah was killed, and thus perished the last good king, and the last stay, of the nation of Judah.

2 Chronicles 35

²⁵ And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah.

By the death of Josiah, the nation of Judah fell into the power of Pharaoh-Necho, and when the people of the land made Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, king in his father's stead, he was suffered to reign only three months, when...

2 Kings 23

³³ Pharaoh-nechoh put him in bands at Riblah,

—and made Eliakim, another son of Josiah's, king, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. Shortly after he began to reign, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Carchemish, and defeated Pharaoh-Necho's army, and drove him back to his own country.

2 Kings 24

⁷ And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the River Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt.

At this time, wickedness was rife in Jerusalem, and Jehoiakim showed no disposition to check it.

2 Kings 23

³⁷ He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.

And when the Lord sent him a message direct by the hand of Jeremiah, when Jehudi had read to him...

Jeremiah 36

²³ ...three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.

Then the Lord said to him,

³⁰ He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

It was to this man, and to a people who were scarcely better than he, to whom the Lord sent the lesson that forms the subject of our lesson today.

When Nebuchadnezzar had come over the Euphrates against Pharaoh-Necho, the Rechabites had bundled up their tents and equipage, and had gone into Jerusalem for fear of the Chaldean army. The Lord told Jeremiah to go to the house of the Rechabites, and bring them into the house of the Lord, and set wine before them to drink. Jeremiah did so.

Jeremiah 35

⁶ But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, You shall drink no wine, neither you, nor your sons for ever:

⁷ Neither shall you build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days you shall dwell in tents...

⁸ Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he has charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters;

¹⁰ ...and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.

¹² Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying,

¹³ Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will you not receive instruction to hearken to my words? says the Lord.

¹⁴ The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto

this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but you hearkened not unto me.

¹⁶ Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people has not hearkened unto me:

¹⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.

This lesson is of just as much importance to us as it was to the men of Jerusalem; because Paul in writing specially of this time says that the people's ears will be turned away from the truth, and turned unto fables—made-up stories, the sayings of men, the traditions of our fathers. And in view of this it was that he gave that solemn charge to the ministry:

2 Timothy 4

¹ I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom;

² Preach the word.

There is a disposition in man to follow the precepts and example of men, rather than to obey the word of God. For the reason, no doubt, that the precepts of men are not so straight as are those of God; for not all the precepts of men are as righteous as this one of Jonadab, that his people should drink no wine.

- The precepts of Mahomet are obeyed by thousands where there is one to obey the precepts of Christ.
- The doctrines of the papacy are honored likewise by thousands where there is one who will follow faithfully the word of God.

48. Trying to Destroy God's Word

Present Truth, December 1, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, December 11

Jeremiah 36:20-32

E. J. Waggoner

JEHOIAKIM was the son of Josiah. The people of the land had made his younger brother, Jehoahaz, king before him, but Jehoahaz had only reigned three months when the king of Egypt, under whose dominion Judah had fallen by the defeat of Josiah at Megiddo, annulled the choice of the people, and placed Jehoiakim on the throne. Jehoahaz was taken captive into Egypt, where he died. Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign,

2 Kings 23

³⁷ And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done.

Publishing the Prophecy

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the Lord commanded Jeremiah to write in a roll of a book all the prophecies that had been given through him, from the beginning of his work. This was done, Jeremiah dictating the words to Baruch the scribe, who was then directed to stand at the gate of the temple and read them in the hearing of all the people.

Standing in this audience, when the roll was read to the assembly on the fasting day, was Michaiah, the grandson of that Shaphan who read to King Josiah the book of the law which was discovered by Hilkiah the priest during the cleansing of the temple. Michaiah went to the scribe's chamber in the king's house, and reported to the princes assembled there the startling character of the words that Baruch was reading in the ears of the people.

Burning the Roll

The princes sent for Baruch and, at their request, he sat down and read the roll to them. They cautioned him and Jeremiah to hide themselves and let no man know their whereabouts. Then the princes went in to the king, leaving the roll in the scribe's chamber, and told him of the words that God had sent. The king commanded that the roll itself be brought to him.

Jeremiah 36

²² Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month [which would correspond to our November 1]: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him.

²³ And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.

Three of the princes begged the king not to destroy the roll, but he would not hear them. He would have been glad to serve Jeremiah and Baruch in the same way, and he ordered their immediate arrest,

²⁶ ...but the Lord hid them.

Treasuring Up Wrath

The conduct of Jehoiakim is in strong contrast to that of his father Josiah. The latter, when God's judgments against the disobedience of Judah were made known to him, humbled himself and by sincere penitence and confession, averted from himself the coming doom. Jehoiakim was stirred to fury by the Word of the Lord and, instead of recognizing the justice of the sentence and turning from his evil course, wilfully defied the righteous anger of God and burned His message.

By humbling himself, and turning at God's reproof, Jehoiakim might have yet been saved, but he cut himself off from the source of forgiveness and life, and while the roll it-

self was written out again in even fuller detail, there was added to it God's sentence against the rebellious king:

Jeremiah 36

³⁰ He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

³¹ And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity.

In fulfillment of the first part of this judgment, his son, after a brief but wicked reign of three months, was carried to Babylon, where he spent thirty-seven years in captivity.

Honoring God

The principle upon which God has ever dealt with men was laid down to Eli, and is often repeated in the scriptures.

1 Samuel 2

³⁰ Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

This is not because God is like men, who will bestow respect where there is a likelihood of their getting at least as much back. God does not seek honor from men because He likes flattery, or finds it difficult to get honor among those who know Him better. He is not satisfied when men merely draw near Him with their lips, but desires that the heart may be yielded to Him, in confiding recognition of His love, in order that He may do marvelous things for those who trust Him.

Psalms 50 [RV]

²³ Whose offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies me; and prepares a way that I may show him the salvation of God.

The greater the conception men have of the glory and power of God, the more they can rejoice; for God, who spared not His own Son, keeps nothing for himself. Those who believe Him to be the Almighty can sing for joy because of..

Ephesians 1

¹⁹ ...the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.

Isaiah 30

¹⁸ Therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you...blessed are all they that wait for Him.

Infidelity

Infidelity does not always take the form of burning the Scriptures. There are other ways of rejecting the Word of God.

Those of our readers who have been following, during the past few months, the studies contained in the *Present Truth*, on "God's Saving Power in the Things that are Made,"³³⁴ will understand clearly why it is that Satan has been making such a special onslaught upon those parts of the Bible which deal with the record of creation. He knows what is involved in a right understanding of this question, and hence his efforts have been steadily directed towards creating false ideas of man's inherent power, and his real relation to his Creator.

To hide the truth from men, and at the same time develop in them that spirit of independence of God which will most surely render them subject to his own evil influence, he has led men to set their own ideas above the Word of God, and judge the inspiration of the Bible by their own imaginations.

But it is not only the avowed infidel who has been thus deceived. The satanic temptations are more subtle than men think, and many who hold in theory to the full inspiration of the Bible, have yet been insensibly influenced by the prevailing spirit of unbelief.

What is Man?

God's Word declares that man in himself is nothing more

³³⁴ These articles have been collected into the book, *The Everlasting Gospel: God's Saving Power in the Things That Are Made*, by E. J. Waggoner.

than dust. God's own life animating the dust produces a living soul,³³⁵ but only as God's Spirit is in man is he capable of any of the manifestations of life. This Spirit of God is the only life there is. By it all creation exists.

Psalm 104

²⁹ You hide your face, they are troubled: You take away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

³⁰ You send forth your spirit, they are created.

The words "breath" and "spirit" here used are identical in the original. That which causes the dust to hold together and form the body of a man is the life of the Creator.

Colossians 1 [RV]

¹⁷ In Him all things hold together.

Death is simply the undoing of this connection between God's life and the dust.

Ecclesiastes 12

⁷ Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Many refuse to believe that it is in God they...

Acts 17

²⁸ ...live and move, and have [their] being,

–but their unbelief cannot make the Word of God untrue.

A Test

There is a real test which every one may apply for himself, by which he may know if he really believes the inspired Word of God, or if he has been deceived by Satan and has been unwittingly drawn into unbelief, only different in degree from the rampant infidelity which made Jehoiakim burn the roll that rebuked his wicked course.

If we believe God's record of our creation we will know that

³³⁵ *Genesis 2:7.*

we are only dust and that all the life we have is God's life. Since it is absurd that dust should presume to direct or control the Divine life,³³⁶ he who believes the Bible will in all his ways acknowledge the Lord and allow Him to direct. He will not lean to his own understanding, but will trust in the Lord with all his heart.³³⁷

The man who trusts in himself at all is trusting in vanity,³³⁸ a vain or empty thing. If he seems to be something when he is nothing,³³⁹ he is a lie.

Psalm 62

⁹ Men of low degree are vanity,...

But all men are alike, so that if a man thinks he is a little better than any other man, he too is only vanity.

⁹ ...and men of high degree are a lie.

It does not matter how high the degree. It may not be very much, or it may look down upon every one else in the world. However high it is, it is to that extent a lie. This is infidelity. No lie is of the truth, and the man who cherishes his own lie cannot receive God's truth.

Men of High Degree

Even among professing Christians this lie of "high degree" is found. Some will say that there are certain lines of work which they feel competent to undertake, certain temptations which they can easily meet, and because of this they feel of higher degree than others who can only make a lesser boast. Jesus, the Son of man, who was "the truth," in whom there was no lie, said,

³³⁶ **Jeremiah 10** ²³ O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps.

³³⁷ *Proverbs* 3:5-6.

³³⁸ *Job* 15:31.

³³⁹ *Galatians* 6:3.

John 5

³⁰ I can of my own self do nothing.

He knew that God dwelt in Him and did the works and spoke the words.³⁴⁰ It is the spirit of self-exaltation, of high degree, that hinders faith. The man who knows himself to be vanity will listen humbly to the words of life spoken by his Creator, and will not presume to criticize them.

Isaiah 66

² To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.

John 5

⁴⁴ How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?

Jehoiakim thought himself of high degree, and looked upon other men as instruments of his vainglorious ambition. He built his house by unrighteousness, using his neighbor's service without wages, to make for himself a wide house and large chambers,³⁴¹ and his eyes and his heart were filled with covetousness and oppression.³⁴² Seeking honor for himself he could not believe the voice of the Lord, and this is the secret of his burning the roll.

But it was seen by all that his high degree was only a lie, for before his death the word of the Lord spoke concerning him:

Jeremiah 22

¹⁹ He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

³⁴⁰ *John* 14:10.

³⁴¹ *Jeremiah* 22:13-14.

³⁴² *Jeremiah* 22:17.

49. The Captivity of Judah (1886)

Signs of the Times, January 14, 1886

Notes on the International Lesson, January 24

2 Kings 27:1-12

A. T. Jones

THE lesson drawn by Jeremiah from the obedience of the faithful Rechabites, was unheeded by the king and people of Judah and Jerusalem. Jehoiakim died, after a reign of eleven years, and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead; but his reign contained only three months, and Nebuchadnezzar came again to Jerusalem and besieged it.

2 Kings 24

¹² And Jehoiachim the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers.

The king of Babylon, at that time, took the treasures of the house of the Lord, and all the golden vessels of the temple; and all, with king Jehoiachin, and all his family, and all the mighty of the land, and the craftsmen and siths, carried he captive to Babylon, leaving only...

¹⁴ ...the poorest sort of people

—in the land. Jehoiachin was kept in prison at Babylon till the death of Nebuchadnezzar, a period of thirty-seven years. Then Evil-merodach became king of Babylon, and took Jehoiachin out of prison, and...

2 Kings 25

²⁸ ...spoke kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon.

Thus he remained all the days of his life.³⁴³ When Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin prisoner, he chose Mattaniah, another son of Josiah, and made him king, and changed his

³⁴³ See 2 Kings 24:8-16; 25:27-30.

name to Zedekiah. The reason that the name was changed was this: When Nebuchadnezzar chose Mattaniah to be king, Mattaniah entered into a solemn covenant; gave his hand, and took an oath before God that he would be a faithful subject, in all things, to the king of Babylon. Then it was, and upon this covenant and this oath, that Nebuchadnezzar changed the name, and gave him that of Zedekiah, that is,

“The judgment of Jehovah;”

–thus placing upon him a constant reminder of his obligation before God, and that, if he violated his oath, he would incur the judgment of God. If Zedekiah had kept this covenant, the kingdom would even then have stood; for the Lord had said to Zedekiah,

Jeremiah 27

¹² Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live.

Jeremiah 17

¹ But the sin of Judah [was] written with a pen of iron and with a point of a diamond: it [was] graven upon the tables of their hearts, and upon the horns of their altars,

–and Zedekiah only...

Zechariah 1

¹⁵ ...helped forward the affliction.

He broke his covenant; he violated his oath; he rebelled against his king; and he sent...

Ezekiel 17

¹⁵ ...ambassadors into Egypt that they might give him horses and much people.

Then came upon him the judgment that was implied in his oath, and in his acceptance of the name Zedekiah—the judgment of Jehovah. For said the Lord,

¹⁵ Shall he prosper? shall he escape that does such things? or

shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?

¹⁶ As I live, says the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwells that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he broke, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

¹⁸ Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and has done all these things, he shall not escape.

¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord God; As I live, surely my oath that he has despised, and my covenant that he has broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.

From that day forward there was but one message for Zedekiah, and that was,

“This city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon.”³⁴⁴

Jeremiah was in the city all the time with his message from the Lord. Always, he was telling the people that the city would be given up; and when Nebuchadnezzar came and laid siege to the city, the prophet declared that he that remained in the city should die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence;

Jeremiah 21

⁹ ...but he that goes out, and falls to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

Yet the people refused to believe the prophet of God, and steadily resisted the siege. Then at Zedekiah's request Pharaoh sent an army out of Egypt to draw away the king of Babylon. This gave Zedekiah renewed confidence, and he sent to ask Jeremiah for a word from the Lord, and he got it. The Lord said:

Jeremiah 37

⁹ Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart.

³⁴⁴ See *Jeremiah* 21:10; 32:24-25; 38:3, 18.

¹⁰ For though you had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

The Chaldean army suspended the siege to go and meet the Egyptian army, and then Jeremiah started out of the city to go into the land of Benjamin; and when he was passing the gate of Benjamin, the captain of the ward arrested him, and accused him of going over to the Chaldeans; for which...

Jeremiah 37

¹⁵ ...the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison,

—in a dungeon in the house of Jonathan the scribe. While he was there Zedekiah again sent and had him brought secretly to the king's house, and asked if there was any word from the Lord.

¹⁷ And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said He, you shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.

Then Jeremiah asked the king not to allow him to be committed again to the dungeon, which was granted, and orders were given that he should remain in the court of the prison, and have a piece of bread daily as long as there was any in the city.³⁴⁵

Next, the princes came to Zedekiah and said:

Jeremiah 38

⁴ We beseech you, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakens the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeks not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

⁵ Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you.

⁶ Then they took Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of

³⁴⁵ *Jeremiah 37:11-21.*

Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

The Babylonian army soon returned and renewed the siege of Jerusalem, and in the 11th year of Zedekiah,

2 Kings 25

³ And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land.

⁴ And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain.

⁵ And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him.

⁶ So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him.

⁷ And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

⁸ And in the fifth month, the seventh day of the month,... came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem:

⁹ And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house he burnt with fire.

¹⁰ [And he] broke down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

And all the remnant of the people did Nebuzar-adan carry away to Babylon; and all the vessels of gold, of silver, and of brass; and the two great pillars of brass which Solomon had made; and the brazen sea and the bases;

¹⁶ ...the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

And so was completed the captivity of Judah. A few of the very poor of the land were left...

¹² ...to be vine dressers and husbandmen.

And over these the king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, governor, but he was murdered soon afterward, and then all the remainder arose and fled to Egypt for fear of the king of the Chaldees;³⁴⁶ and thus the land was left desolate,

2 Chronicles 36

²¹ ...to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.

³⁴⁶ 2 Kings 25:22-26.

50. The Captivity of Judah (1898)

Present Truth, December 8, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, December 18

Jeremiah 52:1-11

E. J. Waggoner

ZEDEKIAH was the last king of Judah. He was a son of Josiah and was made king by Nebuchadnezzar in the place of Jehoiakim's son, the latter being taken captive to Babylon after a reign of three months and ten days.

Zedekiah was made to swear by the Lord that he would be faithful to Nebuchadnezzar, but he violated his oath. He sought help from Egypt to throw off the Babylonian yoke, but although Egypt came to his assistance, its interference did not save him. He, like his fathers, rejected the one hope of deliverance in turning away from the Lord, and none other could help him.

2 Chronicles 36

¹⁵ The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling-place:

¹⁶ But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy.

A Mark on the Forehead

It was not only their fathers who had transgressed the commandments of the Lord and provoked Him to anger. Right down to the time when the city was taken the wicked practices of the nation, both rulers and governed, were continued.

The condition of the city in those days was typical of the state of things that will exist when earth's guilty career finally closes. The prophet Ezekiel was shown the wickedness that was being practiced in the city, and even in the temple itself. He saw also that a mark was put upon the foreheads of those

who lamented over the abominations that were done in the midst of Jerusalem, and a destroying angel was commanded to exterminate all who had not the mark.³⁴⁷ In the last days the winds of strife and destruction are held until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads.³⁴⁸

The Seal of God

A seal is not put lightly to anything. When the servants of God are sealed with His seal, it means that He accepts them as His own act and deed. They are...

Ephesians 2

¹⁰ ...His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.

There is no thread of human invention in the garment of righteousness with which they are clothed. They know that they are sufficient for nothing of themselves,³⁴⁹ but that Christ is made to them...

1 Corinthians 1

³⁰ ...wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

They have submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, and are...

Colossians 2

¹⁰ ...complete in Him.

Jesus beholds in them not a vestige of the filthy rags of human self-righteousness, but the travail of His own soul and is satisfied.³⁵⁰ In them He sees the work that He designed to do for men, and He is willing that these shall be known everywhere as the proofs of His saving power. He is willing to be judged by these results and He puts His own seal upon them.

³⁴⁷ *Ezekiel* 8:9-18; 9:1-11.

³⁴⁸ *Revelation* 7:1-8.

³⁴⁹ *2 Corinthians* 3:5.

³⁵⁰ *Isaiah* 53:11.

So in *Revelation* 14 we read of the same people that they have the Father's name in their foreheads. They stand before the universe as illustrations of what that Name means in its fullness. They...

Revelation 14

¹² ...keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

They have learned that God's Word brings the power, without which men have in vain tried to obey it. His commandments are known to them as life everlasting, and Christ dwells in them, so that they have the faith of Jesus. They are His perfect representatives and, being filled with the Holy Spirit, are His witnesses to the ends of the earth. They have the testimony of Jesus.³⁵¹

Hated by the Wicked

The dragon, which is Satan, is wroth with these witnesses, and stirs up men against them. So, during the siege of Jerusalem, the anger of those whom he rebuked consigned Jeremiah to a prison, where he lay until he was taken from it by the victorious Babylonians. Into their hearts God put a desire to show the prophet kindness, and he was permitted by them to go wherever he would.

Zedekiah had sent often to Jeremiah to know what the Lord had to say, but although even to him counsel was given that would have saved his life, he feared to obey it. His guilty conscience made him a coward, and he dared not take the advice to go forth from the city and submit to Nebuchadnezzar. So he stayed where he was until a breach was made in the defences of Jerusalem, and then he stole forth by night and tried to flee from the country.

2 Kings 25

⁵ And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho.

³⁵¹ *Revelation* 12:17.

Destruction of the City

Zedekiah was brought before the King of Babylon at Riblah, who passed judgment upon him for violating his oath. The last scene his eyes were permitted to gaze upon was the slaughter of his own sons, then he was blinded, bound with chains of brass, and carried a miserable captive to Babylon. Shortly after, the temple, the king's palace, and every house of prominence in Jerusalem, were burned with fire, and all the people, except the poorest classes, were removed to Babylon. Many of the principal men also were slain.³⁵²

Thus went out in darkness, for a time, the history of that nation which God had chosen to be a peculiar people to himself above all nations. God is ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy, but if the mercy be not accepted, He will by no means clear the guilty.

Lamentations 1

⁸ Jerusalem has grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honored her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness.

No Respect of Persons

The destruction of Jerusalem came because of its wickedness. Those who were grieved over these things were spared from the destruction. One instance is given us showing this. An Ethiopian eunuch, Ebed-Melech by name, when he knew that Jeremiah was put into the dungeon, and was like to die there of starvation, went in to the king and pleaded that he might be taken out. His request was granted, and Jeremiah was put in the court of the prison. After Jerusalem was taken the Lord sent a message to this man by Jeremiah, saying,

Jeremiah 39

¹⁷ You shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid.

³⁵² 2 Kings 25:8-21.

¹⁸ For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword, but your life shall be for a prey unto you: because you have put your trust in me, says the Lord.

Rejecting God

Israel rejected the Lord from being King over them when they desired Samuel to make them a king that they might be like the heathen around them. Their desire had been granted. They had kings and these had made them like the rest of the heathen. From henceforth there was to be no king until He should come whose right it is to reign over His people. The word of the Lord was sent to Zedekiah:

Ezekiel 21

²⁵ And you, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end,

²⁶ Thus says the Lord God; Remove the diadem and take off the crown...

²⁷ ...it shall be no more until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.

The people of God have no earthly head until Christ shall come in the glory of His kingdom. If any church professing the service of Christ has put itself under the control of a man, it has fallen into the same error that proved so disastrous to Israel of old, and like them will end in becoming like the surrounding heathen, if not worse.

Ezra,
Nehemiah,
&
Esther

Other Resources to Consult:

Restoration from Babylon (Jones)

1. Coming Out of Babylon

Present Truth, August 17, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Ezra 1:1-11

E. J. Waggoner

TWO years after the fall of Babylon, Cyrus became ruler over the Persian empire. His accession marked the beginning of a great movement, which had been outlined in prophecy long before Cyrus himself was born. In the Divine plan, which gives to every man, small and great, his life work, Cyrus had been assigned his task. It was to rebuild the city and temple of Jerusalem, and to let the exiles of Israel go free from their captivity in Babylon.³⁵³

The prophet Isaiah had named Cyrus as the one who should do this work, even before the captivity had commenced. Daniel, who was prime minister to Cyrus, understood the prophetic writings which foretold that, at the end of seventy years, Israel should return to their own land,³⁵⁴ and he would have opportunity to show the king that which was foretold of him. Cyrus obeyed the word, and in his first year issued a proclamation, to every part of his kingdom, declaring that:

Ezra 1

² The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem.

The proclamation went on to invite the people of Jehovah to return to Jerusalem and engage in the work of rebuilding the temple.

It is evident from the record that the influence of Daniel's godly life had not been lost on the people whom he helped to govern. It had won for him and the truth he represented

³⁵³ *Isaiah* 46:28; 45:13.

³⁵⁴ *Daniel* 9:2.

warm friends in every part of the kingdom. This was seen when Cyrus called upon his subjects to further the restoration by rendering the needed assistance to all who desired to return to Jerusalem, and to furnish the travelers with gold and silver, and goods and beasts,

Ezra 1

⁴ ...beside the freewill offering for the house of God.

The proclamations which had been sent out by Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, declaring the power and greatness of Jehovah, as manifested in Daniel's behalf, had spread the knowledge of God. Now when the call was made on the people to help...

⁵ ...them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord,

—we read that:

⁶ All they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

When God requires a work to be done, He provides the means. While He was raising the spirit of His people to go up to Jerusalem to build a house for Him, He was also at work on the hearts of the people about them, raising the necessary funds. There is a lesson in this for Christian workers. If we yield ourselves to do God's will, and be sure that it is indeed His work that we undertake, we may rest in the assurance that God will supply all our need.

Cyrus also brought out from his treasure-house, five thousand four hundred vessels of gold and silver, which had been originally taken from the temple at Jerusalem. It was not a light thing for a king thus to strip his treasure-house, and the hearty way in which all took hold of the matter showed that a real work had been done for king and people.

The departure from Babylon recalls to mind the exodus from Egypt fifteen hundred years before. But how different were the circumstances! Then, the movement had been carried out in the face of Pharaoh's opposition, and against the strength of Egypt. Now Cyrus was heartily supporting Israel's journey to Jerusalem, and the resources of its empire were placed at their command.

Yet only a handful of people, comparatively, went up to Jerusalem, numbering some fifty thousand. The remainder preferred to stay where they were and to merge themselves and their interests with the world around them, rather than face the hardship and uncertainty involved in a return to the ruins of Jerusalem.

When Israel first came out of Egypt, they were not really delivered from the house of bondage because their hearts were still there. This was why they did not enter into rest. They were still in bondage, and most of them died without entering into rest. It is little profit to have the body come out of Egypt and leave the heart in.

In bringing His people out of the captivity of Babylon, the Lord desired to give them a perfect freedom, of soul as well as body. So all were left to come out or to stay in. None could be really set free, so long as the very thing that caused them to go into captivity was allowed to enslave their hearts. God was doing a deeper and more lasting work than merely to strike fetters of iron from the limbs of His people. So we are not to judge of the success of this work by the few that then heard the call and came out.

As we read the prophecies of *Isaiah*, concerning the work of Cyrus, we can see that these go on to speak of the work of Jesus, of whom Cyrus was a type. It is Christ who alone can build God's eternal city, and let go His captives, for only He can set men free from the bondage of sin. He is the Good Shepherd who shall perform of God's pleasure.

Isaiah 44

²⁸ He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, You shall be built; and to the temple, Your foundation shall be laid.

In the departure from Babylon, in the days of Cyrus, we see the beginning of a work which is not yet completed, and which will not cease until God's people are all set free from every species of spiritual bondage. In the closing call of the Gospel, we find God's last appeal to His people to come out of Babylon.

Revelation 18

⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.

But although Christ is the real deliverer, we may have a part in His work, just as Cyrus had. God is no respecter of persons, and to us, if we will receive it, He gives the commission to set the captives free and break every yoke.

Isaiah 48 [RV, margin]

¹⁴ He whom the Lord loves shall perform His pleasure on Babylon. And His arm shall be on the Chaldeans.

¹⁵ I, even I, have spoken, yea, I have called him; I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

If we will allow God to speak and live through us the same irresistible power which wrought through Cyrus, and made the lofty walls and brazen gates of Babylon an ineffectual defense against his attacks, will work through us to the casting down of strongholds, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.³⁵⁵ The promise given to Cyrus is just as much for us,

Isaiah 45

² I will go before you and make the rugged places plain; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars

³⁵⁵ 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

of iron; and I will give you the treasures of darkness.

The souls of men, Satan's treasure, shall be wrested from him by those who fight the good fight of faith.

The kingdom of Babylon bears rule over all the earth, and the work of restoration will not be completed until God's true people are gathered from every tribe and kindred, and people and nation. The work to be done for these is set forth in the 49th chapter of *Isaiah*. The Lord says, speaking to His servant,

Isaiah 49 [RV]

⁸ I will preserve you, and give you for a covenant of the people...to make them inherit the desolate heritages;

⁹ Saying to them that are bound, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves...

¹¹ And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

¹² Lo, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

The land of Sinim is China. That country, like many another, seems walled in by impenetrable prejudices, but it must be remembered by those who take up the work commenced by Cyrus, that they have the same promise that was made to him:

Isaiah 45

² I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.

But those who desire to have a part in the grand consummation of the Gospel work, and to claim these promises, must live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. When a man rejects any part of God's Word, he does not really believe even that part which he thinks he is accepting. Every word of God is infinite, and any particular scripture, before it can be appreciated and understood, must be taken with every other word given to man.

No man can set others free who is bound himself. The first

thing for one who would deliver others from Babylon, which is the kingdom of Satan, is to come out of it himself. And no man can come out alone. Whoever is content to leave a single soul in its bondage, shows that he himself is not free from the selfishness which is its vital principle.

The vessels of the house of God were also taken to Babylon, by Nebuchadnezzar, just as the ark had been taken by the Philistines centuries before. As the ark, when placed in the house of Dagon vindicated the majesty of Jehovah above false gods, so when Belshazzar brought forth the vessels of God's house, wherein he and his lords might drink wine to the gods of silver, iron and stone, that very hour the fingers of a man's hand traced his death sentence on his palace wall.

Cyrus restored the vessels to those who returned to Jerusalem, but the sacred things which those vessels represented, remained in Babylon, for we read of their removal at a future time, when all the nations shall see the Lord's arm made bear, and behold his salvation.

Isaiah 52

¹¹ Depart, depart, go out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go out of the midst of her; be clean, you that bear the vessels of the Lord.

God's people are His holy vessels,³⁵⁶ and until they recognize this, and acknowledge Him in all their ways, counting themselves dead indeed, they are still in Babylon. When the Lord gets entire control of human beings, He can do what He pleases in a way that other human beings cannot fail to understand, and thus He can...

¹⁰ ...make bare His holy arm in the sight of all the nations.

The things of God are foolishness to the natural man, but when the Word of God is made flesh, and translated into every day life, even the flesh can see its working. So we see that

³⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:17.

those who would have a part in God's great worldwide work must first be clean themselves. This the Word will do for them, when they let it.

John 15

³ Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Ephesians 5

²⁶ That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

²⁷ That He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

There is one important fact which must not be overlooked in this connection. Israel went into captivity because of their Sabbath-breaking. Jeremiah states this,³⁵⁷ and the same thing is repeated in *2 Chronicles* 3:6; 20:21, where the reason is given why the captivity was just seventy years in length. It was because the land, and therefore, of course, the people, had not kept the Sabbath.

Now this being so, it is evident that no one can escape from the real spiritual bondage of Babylon unless he has ceased to commit the sin of Sabbath-breaking, and it is equally clear that all who come out of Babylon, at the call of God, will come out as Sabbath-keepers. They will not observe the false Sabbath,—the Sunday,—which owes its origin to the king of Babylon,—Satan,—but will keep the true Lord's day, the Sabbath of the Lord their God. They will bear the sign of God, which is only placed upon those who are His own handiwork, having ceased from their own works and entered into rest. This rest remains for all, ever since God ceased from His own works, and entered into rest on the seventh day.³⁵⁸

Babylon from the beginning has stood for man's works di-

³⁵⁷ *Jeremiah* 17:19-27.

³⁵⁸ *Hebrews* 4:9-10.

rected against God, and its mark is the most presumptuous of them all, an attempt to substitute a man-made Sabbath for God's own rest day. The Sabbath, on the other hand, calls men to show faith in a living God, by ceasing from their own works. The Sabbath can only be kept by faith, and those who thus keep it share God's works, and bear the seal of the living God.

We see, therefore, that since in these days God is calling His people out of Babylon, He must also of necessity call them to observe the Sabbath according to His commandment, and thus show their faith in the sufficiency of His power to make them righteous and sustain their life.

Yet because this calls for the exercise of faith, many who claim to live by faith, draw back on the ground that they would lose their living if they should keep the seventh day Sabbath. But they miss the point altogether. God is not calling them to starve, but to come out of Babylon. In Ezra's rest time, doubtless many thought that they would starve if they should leave their home and business in Babylon, yet we do not read of any starving because they obeyed the call. On the contrary, they were immediately made stewards of great wealth for the cause of God,

Ezra 1

⁶ ...vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things.

Much more will this be the case in the final departure from Babylon.

Isaiah 60

⁵ The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you, the wealth of the nations shall come unto you.

Then it was only Cyrus who helped the movement, but at its consummation we read,

Isaiah 49

²³ Kings shall be your nursing fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers; they shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, and lick the dust of your feet.

Isaiah 48

²⁰ Go forth of Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans; with a voice of singing declare, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say, The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob.

²¹ And they thirsted not when He led them through the deserts: He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: He clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

2. The Second Temple

Signs of the Times, February 11, 1886

Notes on the International Lesson, February 21

Ezra 1:1-4; 3:8-13

A. T. Jones

THE glorious kingdom of Babylon had fallen, and the kingdom of the Medes and Persians had taken its place. The captivity of Babylon that was laid upon Judah was now to be broken. The great Nebuchadnezzar had carried away all the people of the land, except a few of the very poorest, to Babylon,

2 Chronicles 36

²⁰ ...where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:

²¹ To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.

One hundred and six years before they were carried to Babylon, Isaiah had not only said that they should be carried away, but had also said that they should return, and that the temple and Jerusalem should be rebuilt. One hundred and seventy-four years before the feast of Belshazzar and the fall of Babylon, Isaiah had written of both, and of Cyrus in his capture of the city. Thus he called Cyrus by name more than a hundred years before he was born. Then it was that the prophet wrote:

Isaiah 44

²⁸ That says of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, You shall be built; and to the temple, your foundation shall be laid.

Isaiah 45

¹ Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will

loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

¹³ He shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, says the Lord.

Although Isaiah had prophesied the captivity, he had not said how long it should be. Jeremiah told that it should be seventy years. In the year 606 BC, the first captivity was made, when among those taken was Daniel. Then, exactly when the seventy years ended—536 BC—Cyrus issues his proclamation for the return of the captives to their own land, to build the temple of the Lord. And this is a copy of the proclamation:

Ezra 1

¹ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

² Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has the Lord God of heaven given me; and He has charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

³ Who is there among you of all His people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.

⁴ And whosoever remains in any place where he sojourns, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

“The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus.” How did the Lord do this? By His angels. In *Daniel* 10, we read of a time in the third year of Cyrus, when Daniel was greatly concerned about something in connection with the cause of God, and he fasted and mourned and prayed,

Daniel 10

² ...three full weeks.

At the end of the three weeks, as he was by the River Tigris, a glorious angel stood before him and said,

Daniel 10

¹² Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that you did set your heart to understand, and to chasten yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I am come for your words.

If, then, Daniel's words were heard the first day, what could have delayed the angel "three full weeks"? He tells:

¹³ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days;

—exactly the length of time Daniel had been seeking the knowledge which the angel was to give him. That is, the king of Persia was to have some part in the answer to Daniel's prayers; and the angel had to go to the court of Cyrus, and, by exerting his holy influence there, to bring about the events through which Daniel's prayer could be answered. And when the angel was to leave Daniel, he said,

²⁰ Now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia.

Read the 10th chapter of *Daniel* entire. Cyrus, however, was not the first king of the Medo-Persian power after the fall of Babylon. In *Daniel* 5, it is said,

Daniel 5

³⁰ In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

And in *Daniel* 11, the same angel of the 10th chapter says,

Daniel 11

¹ Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I stood to confirm and to strengthen him.

Darius reigned two years, when he died, and Cyrus succeeded to the kingdom; and as the angel stood with Darius

the Mede, and with Cyrus in his third year, to influence him so that Daniel's prayer could be answered, it is certain that it was by the influence of His holy angel that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to let go the captive people of God.

Ezra 1

² He has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem.

How did Cyrus learn that God had charged him to do this? Daniel was in the court of the kingdom of Babylon during the whole of the captivity; and when Babylon had fallen, and Darius the Mede had taken the kingdom, he says:

Daniel 9

¹ In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

² In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

Then when Cyrus came to the throne in 536 BC, at the expiration of the seventy years, it is certain that Daniel showed him the word of God by Isaiah saying:

Isaiah 45

¹ Thus says the Lord to Cyrus whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him,

¹³ He shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives.

Thus Cyrus knew that God had charged him to build him a house. In answer to the proclamation made by Cyrus, there were 42,360 people, besides their servants and their maids that numbered 7,337, and 200 singing men and singing women—49,897 in the whole company—who returned to Jerusalem. Joshua the son of Jozadak was high priest and Zerubbabel was appointed governor. When they reached Jerusalem, they immediately set up...

Ezra 3

² ...the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon.

⁶ From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

Then the chief of the fathers...

Ezra 2

⁶⁸ ...offered freely for the house of God, to set it upon his place.

⁶⁹ They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work.

The amount of these gifts was about \$500,000, an average of ten dollars for each person—man, woman, child, servant, and maid—in the whole company. But the merit of the service was that they gave it “freely” and of “their ability,” and the blessing of the Lord, in abundance, came upon both their gifts and them.

2 Corinthians 8

¹² For God loves a cheerful giver,

—and,

2 Corinthians 9

⁷ If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not.

We do not wonder that...

Ezra 3

¹⁰ When the builders laid the foundation of the temple,...

¹¹ ...the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

They had given freely of their ability, and they had a right to rejoice. When the first temple was to be built, the people offered willingly.

1 Chronicles 29

⁹ Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord; and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

If there were more, and more cheerful, more willing, giving to the cause of God, there would be more genuine rejoicing in God and in His truth. Try it.

Acts 20

³⁵ It is more blessed to give than to receive.

2 Corinthians 9

⁷ God does love a cheerful giver.

3. Rebuilding the Temple

Present Truth, August 24, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Ezra 3:10; 4:5

E. J. Waggoner

AT THE return of the Jews to Babylon, each family went to its own city and dwelt there. In the seventh month of the year however,

Ezra 3

¹ ...the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem,

—and an altar was erected on which they might offer their burnt offerings. At that time the foundation of the temple was not laid, but steps were taken to prepare the necessary material, and, seven months later, the builders commenced operations, under the oversight of the priests and Levites.

When the foundation stones were laid, there was great rejoicing among the people. Musical instruments were brought, and songs of praise and thanksgiving arose to God,

¹¹ ...because He is good, for His mercy endures for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout.

It was indeed an occasion for thanksgiving that God had not cast off His people, but had again delivered them out of the hand of their enemies. Another chance was being given to Israel to be unto God a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, exalted high above all other peoples as the children of the Most High,

Deuteronomy 4

⁶ ...a wise and understanding nation.

We may learn a lesson from Israel's joy on this occasion. To outward appearance their situation was not an enviable one. Hostile nations were all around them, and they themselves

were poor and few in number. How came they to be shouting for joy? It was the blessing of the Lord that brought the rejoicing, and they had opened the way for the blessing to come by their liberality in contributing to the erection of the temple. Although Cyrus had undertaken to meet the expenses, the people desired to have their part in the work, and they offered freely for the house of God according to their ability:

Ezra 2

⁶⁸ And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the Lord which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place:

⁶⁹ They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests' garments.

The times of greatest rejoicing in Israel's history had been the occasions when they gave freely of their substance to the work of God.

The Gospel calls upon men to show liberality of spirit, not because its object is to impoverish its recipients, but because God gives everything freely. We are called to be channels of the manifold grace of God, and we never can give it away as fast as God will pour it into us. The only reason why men lack is because they refuse to be channels to others. God tells why some are cursed. It is because they rob Him of His own.

Malachi 3

⁸ Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, Wherein have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings.

⁹ You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed me, even this whole nation.

¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

So if we would find comfort in adversity, and joy in tribula-

tion, let us open our hearts as Israel did, and remember God's claims on us, and bless the poor and the needy.

Isaiah 58

⁶ Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? when you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?

⁸ Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your reward.

⁹ Then shall you call, and the Lord shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

¹⁰ And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noonday:

¹¹ And the Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Yet while many shouted aloud for joy, there were some among the people,

Ezra 3

¹² ...ancient men, that had seen the first house,

—who wept with a loud voice as they thought of the old-time splendor of the temple. Their lamentation was so loud...

¹³ ...that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people.

The old men may have been wrong in allowing themselves to cast a cloud of discouragement over the day's rejoicings,

but it may be too, that the younger generation needed to be reminded of the evil that had befallen their backsliding fathers. The Lord deals tenderly with all, and He declared later by His prophets to those who lovingly recalled the glories of the earlier temple,

Haggai 2

³ Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

⁴ Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work: for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts:

⁵ According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so my spirit remains among you: fear not.

⁶ For thus says the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

⁷ And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts.

⁸ The silver is my, and the gold is my, says the Lord of hosts.

⁹ The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, says the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, says the Lord of hosts.

The Desire of all nations should come and fill it with His glory. The discontented were warned by another prophet not to despise the day of small things.

Zechariah 4

⁹ For who has despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

Satan was determined to thwart, if he could, the re-establishment of God's people in their own land. He had rejoiced to

see Jerusalem laid low and its people go into captivity. His feelings are expressed in the rejoicing of Tyre.

Ezekiel 26

² Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste.

Satan himself was the king of Tyrus as plainly appears from *Ezekiel* 28:11-19, and so expected to have complete control over the earth, now that he had gained the victory over the one nation which withstood him. But in the captivity of His people, God's strength had been made perfect in weakness, and He had won for himself a glorious name. Now that Satan saw Israel returning to Jerusalem, he set himself once more to the work of their destruction.

The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity built the temple of the God of Israel, and they came to offer their services. They claimed to worship the true God, and said that they had sacrificed unto Him since the days that Esar-haddon, king of Assyria, had brought them to the cities of Samaria. But the superstitious character of their perverted worship can be seen from the record in:

2 Kings 17

²⁴ And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

⁴¹ So these nations *feared the Lord, and served their graven images*, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

The Lord had warned Israel not to enter into relations with the surrounding peoples, because they had made the land unclean, from one end to the other, with the filthiness of their abominations.

Ezra 9

¹¹ The land, unto which you go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness.

¹² Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that you may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever.

Zerubbabel and the rest of the fathers of Israel acted on this instruction and refused to allow the people of the land to cooperate with them. Then these showed their true colors, by opposing the work all they could, hiring counselors at the Persian court to frustrate the purpose of Israel, and writing complaints to the king.

Satan's most deadly devices often come in the guise of offers of friendly assistance. But if we hold fast to the Word of God, and make no move that He does not command, it will not be long before the cloven hoof of the tempter will show itself, as it did on this occasion.

It will be noticed that when Israel repulsed the offer of their would-be allies, they rested their position on the commission given to them by Cyrus. We might wonder that they did not take higher ground, but it was true that they were as much the servants of Cyrus as ever. They recognized this. Ezra in his prayer, recorded in the 9th chapter, said,

Ezra 9 [RV]

⁹ For we are bondmen; yet our God has not forsaken us in our bondage, but has extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia.

—and Nehemiah confessed also,

Nehemiah 9

³⁶ Behold, we are servants this day, and as for the land that

You gave unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold we are servants in it.

³⁷ And it yields much increase unto the kings whom You have set over us because of our sins: also they have power over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.

In all this God's infinite patience and long-suffering stand out. Since His people would not serve Him in prosperity, He goes with them into poverty and servitude.

Isaiah 63

⁹ In all their affliction He was afflicted.

Psalms 78

⁶¹ [He] delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the adversary's hand.

He desired to have a throne among a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, but He had to be content with an enslaved, backsliding and despised people. Yet, for all this, He did not forsake them.

No matter how low we fall, we may know that God has not cast us off, and that even in the depths of sin and misery, He is able to make known...

Ephesians 1

¹⁹ ...the exceeding greatness of His power toward those who believe.

So let no one think that God cannot do a great work for such as him, for He has chosen to hamper himself with every possible phase of human weakness in order that He may display to men how strong He is to save. The base and despised are His elect.

1 Corinthians 1

²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

²⁹ That no flesh should glory in His presence.

There is one most important feature about this period of Bible history with which every Christian should be acquainted. The time of...

Daniel 9

²⁵ ...the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem,

—marks the commencement of a prophetic period, revealed to Daniel,³⁵⁹ which gives the time of Christ's first advent. Seventy weeks are mentioned, divided into three portions,—seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week. In prophecy, a day stands for a year, so that the full term here brought view is one of 490 years.

Now it is important to fix the date of the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, for from this point the years must be reckoned. Without going into details, it is clear that the command was not fully given until the twentieth year of Artaxerxes,³⁶⁰ which was 457 BC. The Scripture³⁶¹ shows that the decree of Artaxerxes must be included in the commandment. Therefore in 457 BC, the 490 years began. In seven weeks, or 49 years, the city of Jerusalem was rebuilt. Another sixty-two weeks equal 434 days, or 434 years, and Messiah appeared on the same in 27 AD. In the midst of the last week, after three and a half year's ministry, He was...

²⁶ ...cut off, but not for himself,

³⁵⁹ *Daniel 9:24-27.*

³⁶⁰ *See Ezra 7.*

³⁶¹ *Ezra 6:14.*

—and in another three and a half years, the period closed with the stoning of Stephen and the preaching of the Gospel in every direction.

We saw, in the last lesson, that the restoration of the temple under Cyrus was but the beginning of a great work which Christ was to do for His holy temple, the church. To Daniel was revealed the time when Christ would come,

Daniel 9

²⁴ ...to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.

In a previous vision he had seen how long the sanctuary of God should be defiled and trodden under foot. It was to be for 2,300 days, or years.³⁶² Both of the periods we have mentioned refer to the same subject, and both begin at the same time, 457 BC. The 2,300 years, therefore, ended in 1844. Then began the work of the cleansing of the sanctuary.

What took place in 1844? Great light began to shine into the hearts of many at that time from the prophetic Word, and many rejoiced in the discovery that the coming of the Lord was nigh. They saw the importance of being sanctified through the truth, and living by every word of God.

At this very time, the three angels' messages of *Revelation* 14, which are to be proclaimed just before the second coming of Christ,³⁶³ began to be studied and understood, and one of those declare, that Babylon is fallen, and all must come out of her. As we saw last week, these who come out of Babylon must be observers of God's Sabbath, and in that very year of 1844, light came on the Sabbath truth, and many began the observance of the seventh day.

From that time to this, the Word of God has been opening more and more, and its purifying power has been working on

³⁶² *Daniel* 8:14.

³⁶³ *Revelation* 14:7-16.

men's hearts, to make them meet temples for the Spirit of God, cleansing the sanctuary. It is true that men have been slow of heart to believe, but because God has waited to be gracious for so many years, let no reader conclude that it was a mistake to believe that the end of all things is at hand. Let him rather...

2 Peter 3

¹⁵ ...account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation,

—and see that he cause no delay himself by refusing to walk in the light that comes to him. Meantime, the message of the everlasting Gospel with its final appeal to men, is encircling the earth, and it will not be long before the Israel of God will be gathered from all places where they have been driven.³⁶⁴

Remember that when the Jews left Babylon in the days of Cyrus, they were a feeble and despised people, yet the arm of their God was not shortened, and although they were confronted with hardship and contempt, yet their lot was more to be desired than that of any people on the earth.

So now, although the wealthy and the learned turn away from God's call to come out of Babylon, rest in His power, and be sanctified through His truth, so that only the humble and despised are connected with the message, it will be better to share the reproach of Christ than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.³⁶⁵

Revelation 14

⁷ Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come.

³⁶⁴ *Jeremiah* 29:14, 40:12.

³⁶⁵ *Hebrews* 11:25.

4. A Lesson from Ezra

Signs of the Times, February 15, 1883

Ezra 8:21-23

E. J. Waggoner

IN THE action of Ezra as he was about to go up to Jerusalem to rebuild the city, there is a lesson for those who at the present time are asking the aid of civil authority in favor of Sunday observance.

He had received permission from the king to go up to Jerusalem, and had gathered together a company of his people for that purpose. But the country to which they were to pass was hostile, and they were not men of war, and could not defend themselves. The king was well-disposed toward them, and would no doubt have given them a guard of soldiers if they had desired it. But Ezra would not ask help from the king; for, said he:

Ezra 8

²² I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and the horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him.

Ezra knew that if he should ask for assistance, the king would think that the Lord was not with them, or else that they were afraid to trust Him. So he proclaimed a fast, that they might afflict themselves before God, to seek of Him the right way.

²¹ Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

And the result is summed up in these words:

²³ So we fasted and besought our God for this: and He was

intreated of us.

If Ezra had not been convinced that he was doing the work of the Lord, he would not have trusted in the Lord, but would have asked the assistance of the king. In every instance where people ask for human protection in matters pertaining to religion, it is because there is a belief in their hearts that the Lord is not with them. If there was Bible evidence of the sacredness of Sunday, would its friends ask for a human law in its favor? Never.

God has intrusted His truth to men, for them to disseminate, but He has never authorized them to use carnal weapons in its behalf. The commission is to “teach all nations”;³⁶⁶ but it is not said that the disciples must *force* all nations to believe. If anything is really of God, all man has to do is to observe it, and teach it, calling on the Lord for help, and the Spirit of God will convict men of sin.

If the advocates of Sunday observance really believe that it is of God, let them teach it with all diligence, asking God to guide them. If it is of God, He will not let it suffer, but will vindicate His truth.

But when they ask the aid of politicians,—worldly men,—these men will help them from worldly considerations, and not as a matter of religion. They will not believe that God is in the movement; but they will identify themselves with it, because they will expect to derive personal advantage from it. And this is the only consideration that will move politicians and men of the world; so that if the movement really were of God, it would be dishonored by such advocacy.

God is able to take care of His own truth and people, without the aid of weak and sinful man.

³⁶⁶ *Matthew* 28:19.

5. Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem

Present Truth, October 12, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Subtitle: A Lesson of Truth in God

Ezra 8:21-32

E. J. Waggoner

FOR seventy years the city of Jerusalem, with its temple, had lain desolate, in fulfillment of the word of the Lord by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah. This desolation was a striking evidence of the result of Sabbath-breaking, and also by contrast of the blessings which true Sabbath-keeping ensures; for if the Israelites had been faithful in the observance of the Sabbath, the city would have stood for ever.

Jeremiah 17

²⁴ And it shall come to pass, if you diligently hearken unto me, says the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein;

²⁵ Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever.

No enemy could have done anything against it. As it was, Jerusalem fell, not because of the superior force of the enemies that besieged it, but by its own weight, since it had rejected the Arm that was its defense and support.

But although Israel had rejected God, He had not cast off His people. Even before the fall of Jerusalem, God had foretold its restoration, and had named the man who should fulfill His pleasure in that respect. Soon after the beginning of the captivity this message came:

Jeremiah 29

¹⁰ Thus says 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.

¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

It was God himself who gave Jerusalem into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon,³⁶⁷ and He did it as the very best thing that could be done for its people. In allowing calamity to come upon them, God had only thoughts of good for them. There are no accidents in the history of this world.

Ephesians 1

¹¹ [God] works all things after the counsel of His own will.

Men imagine that they are the makers of history, and that by their counsels and their skill they make and unmake kingdoms; but the truth is that:

Daniel 4 [also v. 32]

²⁵ The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will.

Daniel 2

²¹ He removes kings, and sets up kings.

Not the smallest and seemingly most insignificant thing takes place without His knowledge and consent.

Matthew 10

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

The nations may chafe and rage under God's rule, desiring to break the power of His Government, but God will only laugh at their vain struggles.³⁶⁸ They may hate the righteous, and plot their destruction; but they can have no power except what is given them from heaven.³⁶⁹ It is therefore to God, and

³⁶⁷ *Daniel* 1:1-2; *Jeremiah* 27:1-7.

³⁶⁸ *Psalms* 2:1-4.

³⁶⁹ *John* 19:9-10.

not to any human power, that the people of God are to look for help and protection.

Many years before his birth, and while the temple at Jerusalem was standing in all its splendor, and the city was glorying in its independence, God had named Cyrus, King of Persia, as the one whom He would use as His instrument in the restoration of the city Jerusalem and its temple after the destruction.³⁷⁰ Accordingly,

Ezra 1

¹ In the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, King of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

² Thus says Cyrus, King of Persia, The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

³ Who is there among you of all His people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God), which is in Jerusalem.

Cyrus himself recognized that in this act he was but the agent of the King of kings.

For a time the work went forward rapidly; but soon the enemies of Israel began to interfere. First they asked to be allowed to help in the work, but this was not allowed.³⁷¹ The favor of the enemies of the Gospel is worse than their open opposition. Unconverted men in the church are a thousand-fold more dangerous to its prosperity than they could possibly be if fighting it from without.

Unfortunately the builders of the temple did not hold fast the beginning of their confidence, but allowed their adver-

³⁷⁰ See *Isaiah* 44:24-28; 45:1-4.

³⁷¹ *Ezra* 4:1-3.

saries to weaken their hands. The Jews had a direct decree from King Cyrus, to restore the city and temple, and this decree could not be changed even by the king himself.³⁷² Moreover, they did not receive any contrary decree from the king to whom their adversaries wrote false reports. These adversaries simply received permission to command the Jews to cease work, and the Jews yielded to their power.³⁷³

That the work of building might have gone on in spite of this opposition, is evident from the fact that in the second year of Darius, under the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, the Jews again began to build, without any further royal decree. The word of the Lord, which had been their warrant in the first place, was sufficient authority. Again their enemies sought to restrain them, and would doubtless have been as successful as before, if the Jews had not been emboldened by the prophets of God.

Ezra 5

⁵ The eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius.

Then search was made, and the original decree was found, in consequence of which Darius issued a decree to the adversaries of the Jews to...

Ezra 6

⁷ Let the work of the house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.

⁸ Moreover I make a decree that you shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of the house of God; that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given to these men that they be not hindered.

Thus the wrath of man was made to praise God, and it was

³⁷² See *Daniel* 6:8, 9, 13, 16.

³⁷³ *Ezra* 4:7-24.

demonstrated that all efforts against the truth can result only in its advancement. From this time the work of restoration went forward, although of course the minds of the evil-disposed ones were not at all changed.

In the seventh year of Artaxerxes, Ezra, a scribe of the law, was commissioned by the king to go up and complete the work, and was given full power and unlimited command of all necessary funds. It is worthy of remark, however, that in every decree made by the kings of Persia, the God of heaven was especially named as the One whose orders they were carrying out. We have read the decree of Cyrus. Darius, in commanding the adversaries to abstain from hindering the work, referred to God in almost every sentence, and said in closing:

Ezra 6

¹² And the God that has caused His name to dwell there, destroy all kings and people that shall put to their hand to alter it to destroy the house of God which is at Jerusalem.

So likewise Artaxerxes said in his letter to Ezra,

Ezra 7

²³ Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven; for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?

And so Ezra, accompanied by a great company of Jews, found himself on the way to Jerusalem. The river Ahava was appointed as the rallying place, and there he halted for three days to view the people.

But there still were many enemies who, although forbidden to interfere with the work of building, would gladly steal upon the company of men, women, and children, and cut them off and plunder their camp. This they could do without their identity being known, and thus they could as effectually hinder the work as before. So we come to the words which contain the substance of this lesson. These are the words of

Ezra:

Ezra 8

²¹ Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

²² For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him.

²³ So we fasted and besought our God for this: and He was entreated of us.

What a grand thing it would be if there were more of that same shame now in the leaders of the church. Then, instead of Governments thinking that they are the supporters and protectors of religion, they would know that the ambassadors of Christ are clothed with power infinitely greater than theirs. Every request made by the church and its leaders for Government protection to missionaries, or for any kind of support is a denial of their claim that they are servants of the God who is above all. That which God himself stirred the king up to do, Ezra would accept as coming from God; but he would not ask armed protection. He knew that...

Psalm 118

⁹ It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

And he was not disappointed. The account ends thus:

Ezra 8

³¹ Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.

Psalm 34

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear

Him, and delivers them.

Notice that the hand of God was upon them, and thus they were delivered. It is common to suppose that the hand of God upon one means some punishment, but we may see that it means deliverance. Therefore whoever can say with the full assurance of faith:

Psalm 139

³ You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, You know it all together.

⁵ You have beset me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me,

—can also say,

Psalm 118

⁶ The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

6. Nehemiah's Prayer

Signs of the Times, February 18, 1886

Notes on the International Lesson, February 28

Nehemiah 1:1-11

A. T. Jones

NEHEMIAH was cup-bearer to Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia who reigned 461-425 BC. It was in the twentieth year (444 BC) of Artaxerxes Longimanus, that Hanani and...

Nehemiah 1

² ...certain men of Judah,

—came to Susa, the winter palace of the kings of Persia, and Nehemiah inquired of them...

² ...concerning the Jews that had escaped which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

And they said,

³ The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

It was now fully ninety years since the laying of the foundation of the temple, as recorded in last week's lesson;³⁷⁴ and although the temple had been finished some time, yet the walls still remained in ruins as they had been left by Nebuchadnezzar.

As was learned in the lesson of last week, about 50,000 people returned to Jerusalem under the decree of Cyrus in 536 BC. They had no sooner got the temple under way than serious opposition arose. The people who had been sent into

³⁷⁴ See the 2nd article in this section, "The Second Temple," *Signs of the Times*, February 11, 1886.

Samaria by Sargon³⁷⁵ and Esar-haddon,³⁷⁶ kings of Assyria, and who had thus inhabited the land of Israel since the captivity of the ten tribes, came and proposed to help the Jews in building the temple. But as these were really heathen, though pretending in a manner to fear Jehovah,

Ezra 4

³ Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them. You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel.

It would be an immense benefit to both the church and the world, if this spirit were found in the work of the church at the present day, instead of so many fairs, festivals, grab-bags, fish-ponds, ring-cakes, raffles, and gambling enterprises generally, by which the world is inveighed into the support of the church. True, the opposition of the world would be greater, but so would the devotion of the church.

When these people found they could have no part in the building, they employed every possible means to hinder it. They hired accusers against them at the court of Cyrus, but to no purpose; and as soon as Cyrus was dead, and Cambyses reigned,³⁷⁷ they wrote to him...

⁶ ...an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

But their accusation was of no avail with Cambyses, and so the work went on in spite of their opposition. But Cambyses was no sooner dead, than they renewed their efforts and wrote a letter to his successor, Smerdis;³⁷⁸ and he, being an enemy to the religion of Cyrus and Cambyses, was glad of an opportunity to oppose a work which they had favored, and so

³⁷⁵ *2 Kings* 17:24-33.

³⁷⁶ *Ezra* 4:2, 9, 10.

³⁷⁷ Cambyses, 529-522 BC, is the Ahasuerus of *Ezra* 4:6.

³⁷⁸ The Artaxerxes of *Ezra* 4:7-23.

he issued a decree that the work should stop. And the Samaritans hurried up to Jerusalem, and made the Jews...

Ezra 4

²³ ...cease by force and power.

The reign of Smerdis only continued from the spring of 522 BC to the end of the year, January 1, 521 BC. Darius Hystaspes³⁷⁹ came to the throne of Persia, and in the beginning of his second year Haggai and Zechariah the prophets stirred up the people to carry forward the work, and the building began again.

The work had no sooner began again than the Samaritans renewed their opposition, and wrote a letter to Darius; but as they were different men from those who had written the other letters, they gave a very fair account of the matter, as they had received it from the Jews. They told him that the Jews claimed to be working under authority of a decree of Cyrus, and asked him to look among the records and see whether there was any such decree.³⁸⁰ Darius did so, and found the original decree; whereupon he made a decree commanding the Samaritans to not only let the Jews alone, but to give them expenses from the king's tribute to help in building, and animals for burnt offerings and wheat, salt, wine, and oil.³⁸¹ And so,

Ezra 6

¹⁵ The house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

After this, for sixty years we have nothing further in regard to affairs in Jerusalem.

In the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, 457 BC, he issued a decree under which Ezra led up from Babylon about

³⁷⁹ *Ezra* 4:24.

³⁸⁰ *Ezra* 5.

³⁸¹ *Ezra* 6:8-10.

7,000 people. But though Ezra and his company went up there to help build the city and the wall,³⁸² yet the people had so intermarried with the nations around them, in taking strange wives from among them, that all Ezra's time was occupied in reforming these things, and re-establishing and regulating the worship of God and the service of the house of God, and in bringing back the people to obedience to the word of God.

And on this account the building of the wall was neglected for thirteen years longer, till the time of Nehemiah, as given in the lesson of today. Nehemiah received letters from Artaxerxes Longimanus to the governors beyond the Euphrates, and so departed and came to Jerusalem. But,

Nehemiah 2

¹⁰ When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

When Nehemiah had been there three days, he arose in the night and viewed the ruins of the wall round about the city; then he called upon all the people, and said,

¹⁷ Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

¹⁸ ...And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

The work was apportioned among the people and the priests, and every one built over against his own house.

Nehemiah 6

¹⁵ So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in the fifty and two days.

If each one would, over against his own house, build up the wall of Christian character, the troubles in the church would all cease, and the work of God would prosper.

³⁸² *Ezra* 9:9.

Nehemiah remained there twelve years as governor, at his own charges; and at his table were supported...

Nehemiah 5

¹⁷ ...a hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came to [him] from among the heathen...

¹⁸ ...yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people.

¹⁵ But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bore rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.

Nehemiah is one of the most entirely unselfish men mentioned in the Bible. He sought the good of the people always, in every thing acting always in the fear of God.

7. Reading the Law

Signs of the Times, February 25, 1886

Notes on the International Lesson, March 7

Nehemiah 8:1-12

A. T. Jones

WHEN Nehemiah had finished the walls of Jerusalem, and had set up the gates, the enemies of the Jews were still active, as they had been from the beginning—even as Daniel had prophesied nearly a hundred years before that the walls should be built,

Daniel 9

²⁵ ...even in troublous times,

—and watchmen were set upon the wall, all around,

Nehemiah 7

³ ...every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house.

Although the wall was finished and the gates set up,

⁴ The city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not built.

But before going any further in the matter of building particularly, he began a further reformation in the lives and worship of the people. So he says:

⁵ And my God put it into my heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy.

Nehemiah 8

¹ And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spoke unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

² And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

³ And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

The words of the book, though written by Moses, were really the words of God; and it was right that the ears of all the people should be attentive to the words that were read to them. Inattention to the reading of the word of God is disrespectful to its Author. If some one of the rulers of this world were to send a communication to us personally, there would be close attention given to the reading of it. The Bible is the communication which the Majesty of the universe sends to us; it is the word of our best Friend; in it He teaches us to profit, telling us the way which we should go to reach happiness and peace at all times. Would that all people today to whom the word is read, were as attentive as were these people at Jerusalem when Ezra read.

Isaiah 48

¹⁷ Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord your God which teaches you to profit, which leads you by the way that you should go.

¹⁸ O that you had hearkened to my commandments! then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

Nehemiah 8

⁴ And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose...

⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

⁶ And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

It is right for all the people to have part in the worship. It is right for the people to listen attentively to the reading of the

word; it is right for them to join in thought in the prayer of the one who leads; and it is right for them to respond to the words of the prayer by saying, "Amen." This is the rule of the New Testament as well as of the Old.

Paul prohibits speaking in the church in an unknown tongue without an interpreter, because the unlearned could not say "Amen" to what was said, seeing he could not understand what was said. Therefore if he who speaks or prays is to do it in language that can be understood, so that those who hear can say "Amen" to it, why do not those who hear say "Amen" to it? If it be the speaker's part to speak in language to be understood so that the hearers may say "Amen," it is equally the part of the hearers to say "Amen" when they do understand.

But there is so much coldness, formality, listlessness, and inattention, in the services of the church that this duty is almost entirely neglected. This ought not so to be. Such was the preaching on the occasion of which we write; for says the scripture:

Nehemiah 8

⁸ So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

This is the only kind of preaching that is strictly genuine. The Bible is God's word to the people. The minister is to take that word, and, by the aid of the Spirit of God, to put it into the mind and hearts of the people, and it can be done only by reading in the book in the law of God distinctly, and giving the sense, and causing them to understand the reading.

It cannot be done by taking a single verse, or sentence, or perhaps a single word, from the Bible, and then talking about something else for thirty or forty minutes. In other words, it cannot be done as D. L. Moody says that some men do: Take the text from the Bible, and go all over Christendom for the sermon.

Under the solemn charge:

2 Timothy 4

¹ ...before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom,

–the command of God is,

² Preach the word.

Again:

Jeremiah 23

²⁸ The prophet that has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.

²⁹ Is not my word like as a fire? says the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

The word of man is chaff; the word of God is wheat. Give the people the word of God—the wheat—and they will have bread; they will have that upon which they can feed. Give them the words of men, and they have chaff indeed.

Christ said:

John 6

⁶³ The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life;

–and,

Matthew 4

⁴ By every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God,

–shall man live. And when He sends forth men to preach, the commission is:

Matthew 28

¹⁹ Go therefore, and teach all nations,...

²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

It is true, that if the word of God be preached faithfully there will be many points wherein the people will be found to be doing wrong; many things will be found held contrary to the word of God; and things even which our fathers did not do, shall we have to do, as it happened at the time of which this lesson tells.

- It will be found that the coming of the Lord is near, and that we must prepare to meet Him while living.
- It will be found that future life depends on the resurrection of the dead, and not on the immortality of the soul.
- It will be found that future life is obtained through the Son of God alone; that he that has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life.
- It will be found that the seventh day, and not the first day of the week, is the Sabbath of the Lord, and that we must keep it so, or our action will not be Sabbath-keeping at all.

And when we find out these things, and many others in which we have thought and done wrong, we must be like this people of old, honest enough with God and ourselves to turn from our ways and thoughts and conform to those of the word of God.³⁸³ Then it will be with us as was said to them,

Nehemiah 8

¹⁰ The joy of the Lord is your strength.

³⁸³ See *Nehemiah* 8:13-17.

8. Public Reading of the Scriptures

Present Truth, November 9, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Nehemiah 8:1-12

E. J. Waggoner

Nehemiah 8

¹ And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spoke unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

² And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

³ And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law....

⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up;

⁶ And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

⁷ Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.

⁸ So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

⁹ And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

¹⁰ Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord; nei-

ther be sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

¹¹ So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be grieved.

¹² And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

Willing Hearers

WHAT a difference between that congregation and the ordinary, congregation in these days! The people came together as one man in the street, or rather, “broad place,”—a public square,—and asked to have the Word of God read to them. Who would not like to teach such a people?

In these days congregations have to be almost drummed together; but it may be that the fault lies no more in the people than in the one who stands before them. It is a fact, however, that there is less interest in matters of religion than in almost anything else. Where could you find a congregation of men and women in any so-called “Christian land,” who would stand from early morning, as soon as it was light, until mid-day, to hear the Word of God read and expounded? That is what the people did in the time of Ezra.

Nowadays an hour’s service is regarded as outrageously long, if it be a religious meeting. If it be a gathering for pleasure, time is not regarded. People can stand a great deal of that which they like. An entertainment of some light nature may last hours, and people will take no note of the lapse of time. It is nothing for a speaker in a political campaign to make an address an hour and a half or two hours long, and people will stand and listen. Yet the very same ones,—professed Christians, too,—would regard a Bible study of an hour as a great imposition.

Attentive Hearers

The literal rendering of the Hebrew, without the addition of

the word “attentive,” is even more emphatic than the way we have it.

“The ears of the people were unto the book of the law.”

They had no ears for anything else. Nothing could turn away their ears from hearing the law. They were not present as a sort of complement to the speaker, as though they were doing him a personal favor in attending; but they had asked to hear the law, and that was what they intended to hear. They heard something worth listening to, and that, together with their interest in that which is good, explains their long standing to hear.

Reverent Hearers

When Ezra opened the book of the law, all the people stood up. It was the living Word of God, that they were about to hear, and they regarded themselves in the presence of God. It was God himself who was about to speak to them, and it was fitting that they should assume a reverent attitude before Him.

When Ezra addressed the Lord, leading them in worship, they all bowed down with their faces to the ground. It had been a long time since they had the privilege of listening to the Word of God, and they were eager for it. The greater facilities the people have for obtaining and learning the Word of God, the less they regard it. In lands where the Bible is not so plentiful, those who know of it prize it more highly.

Responsive Hearers

All the people said, “Amen, amen,” when Ezra read and prayed. It was not a dumb congregation. Worshipers are usually altogether too dignified. It is considered out of place for anyone in the pews to utter a sound. There is no precedent in the Bible for any such thing as one man monopolising all the time, while the people have no opportunity to speak for themselves. The perfection of Christian worship will never be

reached until the people in the pews feel just as much at liberty to speak as the man on the platform.

Let no one fear confusion. There is no pleasure in talking to people who do not care to listen, so that if they are dissatisfied, and wish to object, they might as well do so as to sit quietly and have words fall on closed ears. Indeed it would be to the advantage of the people, and of the speaker as well, if his sole object is to teach, if everybody felt free to express his dissent from what is presented, or at least his failure to grasp any part of the subject. That would give the teacher the opportunity to make things clearer, for he would know just where the difficulties were in the minds of his hearers.

If public services were conducted on the plan of question and answer, the results would in general be far more satisfactory. The desire to hear, on the part of people who came voluntarily, and the sense of what courtesy demands in any assembly, small or large, would in general prevent any disturbance or unseemly expression of dissent.

But that which we had specially in mind, and that which is suggested by the text, is response by way of assent. The people said, "Amen, amen." The Word found a place in their hearts, and they gave expression to their agreement. There is nothing more encouraging to a speaker than such expressions. It is not that he cares for it personally, but it lets him know that he is not laboring in vain; that the people are really listening, and not dozing, or thinking of something else, and that they are being benefited.

Spontaneous Response

Formality is the curse of religion. The church recognized the fact that the people should respond, and has therefore arranged for it, specifying just what the congregation ought to say, and when to say it. When the heart is touched, and the feelings are stirred, there is no need of instructions as to how

and when to give expression to the responsive chord; and if the heart is not in it, it is only mockery.

There is nowadays a great deal of discussion over ritualism, but there is in reality as much ritualism in Nonconformist congregations as in the High Church, although of a different kind, and not prescribed by law. When the Holy Spirit is given control, formality will disappear like a cloud before the sun, and every Word of the Lord will meet with a hearty response by both voice and action.

The Sense Given

The instructors read in the book of the law distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused people to understand. Take notice that the people got the sense, because the Word was read distinctly. It was not simply that the Word was read slowly, but it was read in such a way that just what was in it appeared. The readers did not put a construction upon it, but allowed the sense of the passage to stand forth.

Psalm 119 [RV]

¹³⁰ The opening of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Proverbs 2

⁶ The Lord gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

The Law of Moses

Compare verse 1 with verse 8. There is a too common idea that “the law of Moses” is something entirely distinct from the law of God. There is an unreasoning and unreasonable prejudice against Moses, that does not obtain with reference to any other Bible writer. If something be cited from the first five books of the Bible, the reply will often be,

“Oh, that’s in the law of Moses,”

—as though that ended the matter. People who will not dis-

count the words of Isaiah or Jeremiah or Paul or Peter, will treat the words of Moses as of no account. There is no reason for this, unless it be that in the writings of Moses fundamental truths are found.

No other man has been so highly honored by the Lord. No other writer has had such direct commendation by the Lord. The law of Moses is the law of God, just as truly as the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel are the Word of God. Moses did not make any laws, and it is altogether a mistake to call him the lawgiver of Israel. He spoke and wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, just as the other holy men of old did.³⁸⁴ Whoever despises the writings of Moses, despises the Lord Jesus.

John 5

⁴⁶ For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

⁴⁷ But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?

The Joy of the Lord

The people wept when they heard the words of the law.

Romans 3

²⁰ By the law is the knowledge of sin.

It is natural enough for people to weep when they hear the law which convicts them of sin; but God makes it known to them in order that they may rejoice. The law is not against the promises of God.

Galatians 3

²¹ Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

The first office of the Comforter is to convict of sin.

³⁸⁴ 2 Peter 1:21.

John 16

⁸ And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

The Word of life is declared unto us in order that our joy may be full.

1 John 1

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

² (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

³ That which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

⁴ And these things we write unto you, that your joy may be full.

⁵ This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

The joy of the Lord is righteousness, victory. The joy that was set before Christ, enabled Him to endure the cross.

Hebrews 12

² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

It was not merely joy that He hoped to get in the future, but present joy, the joy of victory, that sustained Him. That, and that only, which will enable us to hold out against the temptations of the flesh, is the joy of the life of Christ, given to us freely; it causes all the pleasures of sin to sink into insignificance. When we receive the Word into our mouth and into our heart, there will necessarily be joy; not a momentary

ebullition³⁸⁵ of feeling, but a joy that is eternal.

Jeremiah 15

¹⁶ Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.

When the word of the Lord came to the children of Israel to forsake Egypt, they obeyed; but at the waters of Marah, and at many other places, it is easy to see that while they were bodily out of Egypt, their hearts were still there. The Lord has called us as Christians to come out from the world and be separate. Nominally we have obeyed this call; but with many, the hearts are still where they were.

Just as surely as the longing of the Israelites for the leeks and onions and flesh-pots of Egypt was the cause of their destruction in the wilderness, so now unless all is surrendered—unless we forsake everything, cut loose from every earthly entanglement, and place ourselves and all that we are, body, soul and spirit, on God’s side, we shall miss the promised land.

³⁸⁵ Ebullition – a sudden outburst of emotion.

9. Keeping the Sabbath

Present Truth, November 23, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Nehemiah 13:15-22

E. J. Waggoner

Nehemiah 13

¹⁵ In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals.

¹⁶ There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

¹⁷ Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that you do, and profane the Sabbath day?

¹⁸ Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet you bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath.

¹⁹ And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath; and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the Sabbath day.

²⁰ So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice.

²¹ Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why do you lodge about the wall? if you do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the Sabbath.

²² And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day.

THIS lesson is called “Keeping the Sabbath,” but it should rather be called “Breaking the Sabbath,” for that is what it is all about.

In order to understand the acts of Nehemiah, it is necessary

to put ourselves in his place. Therefore we must consider the Jewish State, and note the difference between it and nations generally. The great mistake that most people make in reading this account, is in supposing that his action is a model for rulers in these days. Let us see why it is not.

In the first place, Israel was not a nation in the ordinary sense of the term. When Balaam tried to curse Israel, God made him bless them, so that we know that whatever he said was directed by the Spirit of the Lord. Looking at Israel, he said,

Numbers 23

⁹ Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

Then what did Israel constitute? Simply,

Ephesians 2

¹⁹ ...the household of God,

—the church. It was never God's design that His people should be governed as other people are, but that He should be their sole ruler. If they had lived by faith in God, as Abraham did, there would never have been any need for judges or any sort of officers of the law. All these things came in solely as a result of that lack of faith which rejected God as ruler.

The family is the one institution which God has designed. The head of every family was to be the priest for the family, and each family, including all the dependents, would form a congregation, or what in modern language is erroneously called a church. That this family plan was to be perpetuated, is seen in the promise to Abraham,

Genesis 12

³ In you shall all families of the earth be blessed.

In harmony with this plan God was bringing Israel out of Egypt—a great collection of families constituting God's great

family, which was to be added to as others accepted the faith. That the family is still the unit of God's government, and that His people all form one family, is seen by the fact that we come into the kingdom of God only by a new birth.

John 3

³ Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

God's subjects are all His children, and His kingdom consist solely of His family.

Ephesians 3

¹⁵ The whole family in heaven and earth is named...

—from Christ, who has been placed over it as Head. God is the...

Ephesians 4

⁶ ...Father of all.

When the children of Israel called for a king, like other people, God said that it was a rejection of Him.

1 Samuel 8

⁷ And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you: for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

They wanted a king, that they might be like the nations, or, literally, like the heathen around them.

⁵ ...now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

All the nations were heathen, and in fact the formation of nations is in itself heathenism,—the rejection of God as ruler. Although the people rejected the Lord, He did not reject them. He still claimed them as His children. He reserved the right to select their king, and the family idea was still maintained as far as possible.

We must remember that it was religion, and that alone, that made the people of Israel. The name itself signified victory over sin, the victory of faith. There were no different “denominations” in the kingdom, as in England, for instance, for the entire nation was simply the church of God, although they had deviated from God’s plan for them.

At the time which our lesson covers, Nehemiah was at the head of this family government. Israel had returned from the Babylonian captivity, wither they had been taken because they kept not the Sabbath.

2 Chronicles 36

¹⁴ Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which He had hallowed in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on his people, and on His dwelling place:

¹⁶ But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy.

¹⁷ Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: He gave them all into his hand.

¹⁸ And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon.

¹⁹ And they burnt the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.

²⁰ And them that had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:

²¹ To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she

lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.

Now that the seventy years of captivity were at an end, and the people were in their own land again, it was a terrible thing to begin at once to do that which had before brought such calamities upon them. It is not to be wondered at that Nehemiah was greatly aroused over it.

Remembering that the whole people were really one family, for Jacob was the father of all, we read the commandment concerning the Sabbath:

Exodus 20

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

⁹ Six days shall you labor, and do all your work;

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates:

¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

There is no question that every man has the right to demand that the Sabbath shall not be profaned in his house, either by servants or visitors. It is his duty to do this. It is his duty to see that tradesmen do not deliver goods on that day. He has no right to enter into the homes of others and say how they shall do on the Sabbath, but he himself must keep the Sabbath, and that means that he must not allow the Sabbath to be profaned on his premises.

Nehemiah was, under God, the leader of this family. He was the leader of the church. As such it was his province to exhort all the members of the family, and to warn strangers that they must not come upon the premises for the purpose of doing business on the Sabbath day. But this no more gives the rulers of ordinary governments the right to legislate concerning Sabbath-keeping, than it gives them the right to say whether

or not men shall be Christians. The two cases are not at all parallel.

It must not be lost sight of that it was the Sabbath, and not Sunday, that was in question here. It was the seventh day of the week, the day before the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday. The people in those days had no more thought of the first day of the week as the Sabbath, than they had of the fourth. It was not until long after the crucifixion and ascension of Christ, that Sunday began gradually, without any precept or authority, to take the place of the Sabbath of the Lord.

Remember that God does not change. His ways are equal.

Ezekiel 18

²⁵ Yet you say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?

²⁹ Yet the house of Israel says, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

He once punished Israel severely for violating the Sabbath—the seventh day of the week. This is well known. Now can anybody say that there would be equal dealing if He should now look upon labor on that day as a lawful thing, and should punish men for laboring on a day on which He then allowed and commanded them to labor? If God did so, how could He judge the world?

No; depend upon it, God does not change, and not one jot or tittle of His law has changed. The same day is now the Sabbath that was the Sabbath in the days of Nehemiah, and so it will be to all eternity. Do you think it is not a light thing to disregard God's commandments? If so, read:

Isaiah 42

²⁴ Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, He against whom we have sinned? for they

would not walk in His ways, neither were they obedient unto His law.

²⁵ Therefore He has poured upon him the fury of His anger, and the strength of battle: and it has set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

10. Esther's Petition

Signs of the Times, March 4, 1886

Notes on the International Lesson, March 14

Esther 4:10-17; 5:1-8

A. T. Jones

IN the connected story of the Bible, the place of the book of Esther is between the 6th and 7th chapters of Ezra, between Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia; for the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther was Xerxes, king of Persia.

The Hebrew Ahashverosh is the natural equivalent of the old persian Khshayarsha, the true name of the monarch called by the Greeks Xerxes, as now read in his inscriptions.³⁸⁶

His reign was from 486-465 BC. His father, Darius Hystaspes, had left him the empire extended to its widest limit; and his reign marks the period of the greatest glory of the Persian Empire, and the beginning of its decline. In *Daniel* 11:2 is a prophecy spoken in the third year of Cyrus, 534 BC, saying:

Daniel 11

² Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all; and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.

It was in fulfillment of this prophecy that Xerxes invaded Greece, 480 BC, with the largest army ever known, when, in resisting it, the three hundred Spartans under Leonidas immortalized themselves at Thermopyle. It was in preparation for this invasion of Greece, that he gathered all the princes and governors of his empire to Susa, as recorded in *Esther* 1:3-9.

³⁸⁶ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article: Ahasuerus.

Esther 1

³ In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him.

He called the governors and princes of the provinces to his capital to deliberate upon the invasion of Greece, and to levy the tribute and the forces that should be furnished by each province for the purpose. The royal entertainment continued six months. But it was no later than the seventh day of the feast when the king in his drunkenness commanded his chamberlains...

¹¹ To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty...

¹² But the queen Vashti refused to come.

Then the king in council decided to put her away, and to publish a decree in the language of every people,

²² ...that every man should bear rule in his own house.

Then in his sixth year he led his army into Greece, suffered a terrible defeat at Salamis, and at Plataea, and, like Sennacherib of old, returned with shame of face into his own land. And there he, for the rest of his days, sought to occupy himself in the exercise of arms of a very different nature from those with which he had been occupied in the invasion of Greece. Then,

Esther 2

¹ ...he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

It would seem that he remembered Vashti with the wish to call her to his side again; but the “decree” of the Persians and Medes had been published against her, and it was impossible to alter or reverse that; so he was compelled to do without Vashti, and seek another in her place, and the choice fell upon Esther, the adopted daughter of her cousin Mordecai.

Esther 2

¹⁷ And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Shortly after this, two of the king's chamberlains had laid a plot to assassinate him, and Mordecai learned of it. He told Esther who brought it to the king; the matter was discovered; the two men were hanged, and there was a record made of the whole matter in the chronicles of the kingdom. Next Xerxes promoted Haman the Agagite to the chief place,

Esther 3

¹ ...above all the princes that were with him.

When the king promoted him, Haman exalted himself; and when all bowed and revered him as he passed except Mordecai, it soon created a stir; for Mordecai...

⁴ ...had told them that he was a Jew.

Being a Jew who feared and worshiped God, he could neither bow nor reverence any one but God.

⁵ ...then Haman was full of wrath.

⁶ And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had showed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom.

Haman therefore succeeded in obtaining a decree for the destruction of...

⁸ ...a certain people,

–whose laws were...

⁸ ...diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws.

So the decree was published throughout the realm.

¹⁵ ...And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city

Shushan was perplexed.

Esther 4

¹ When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

² And came even before the king's gate...

⁴ So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her...and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him; and he received it not.

Then she sent her chamberlain,

⁵ ...to know what it was, and why it was;

—and Mordecai told him all about it, and sent word to her to go to the king and...

⁸ ...make request before him for her people.

But it was death for any one to go to the king without being called, unless the king should hold out the royal scepter; and as Esther had not been called for thirty days, it was a great risk indeed for her to go into the presence of the capricious king without being called.

But Mordecai told her that if the Jews were indeed destroyed, she would not escape any more than any of the rest of the Jews. He also told her a truth in which is embodied the principle that underlies all of God's calling and work.

¹⁴ If you altogether hold your peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but you and your father's house shall be destroyed: and who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

God's purposes in the affairs of men will surely be accomplished. They will be accomplished by the instrumentality of men. And when He calls anybody to His work, whether directly or by putting him in a position of responsibility or in-

fluence by which men have a right to expect of him help in crises; if that person fails, then enlargement and deliverance will arise from another place, and he will be left in the place which he was weakly chosen, and the cause of God will advance without him.

We owe to God and to His cause all our influence of position, all our responsibility of place, wherever it may be; and when a crisis comes, we are, like the fair queen Esther, to show our faithfulness, trusting in God for the result. It was for just such a time as this that she was brought to that place, and now if she should fail in her responsibility, she would show herself entirely unworthy of the place.

And so it is ever. God's gifts are not for nothing. He expects them to be used for His glory, and...

1 Samuel 2

³⁰ ...them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed,

—is His word to all. Esther nobly fulfilled her calling; she found favor in the eyes of God and the king; and by her, deliverance arose for her nation and people.

Haman, expecting to be honored above all by the king, pronounces the sentence of what he himself shall do in honor of Mordecai, whom he abhors; having erected a gallows upon which Mordecai shall be hanged, he himself is hanged upon it; having devoted to destruction Mordecai and his people, the evil which he intended came upon himself and upon his house.

Psalms
&
Proverbs

**No articles for Psalms and Proverbs in this collection.
Instead, consult these other resources:**

Gleanings from the Psalms (Waggoner)
Reflections on Proverbs (Waggoner)

Isaiah,
Jeremiah
&
Ezekiel

Other Resources to Consult:

Prophetic Lights (Waggoner & Jones)
The Everlasting Covenant (Waggoner)
The Gospel of Isaiah (Waggoner)

Also, some of the articles
based on chapters from Jeremiah
were put near the end of the section “Israel and Judah”.

1. The Sinful Nation

Signs of the Times, November 26, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, December 6

Isaiah 1:1-18

A. T. Jones

ISAIAH means “Salvation of Jehovah,” and he has been called the “evangelical prophet.” He wrote more about Christ and the Christian dispensation than did any other prophet. He prophesied in...

Isaiah 1

¹ ...the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

If he began to prophesy in the last year of Uzziah, about 758 BC, and continued to the end of Hezekiah’s reign, about 698 BC, this would give sixty years of service as a prophet. We do not certainly know that he lived throughout the reign of Hezekiah, but we know that he lived through the most of it, so that he prophesied, at the very least, nearly sixty years. It would thus appear that he was quite young when he was chosen of God to prophesy.

It would seem from *Isaiah* 6:7 that it was in the year that Uzziah died that he began to prophesy; for there he records a vision of..

Isaiah 6

¹ ...the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up,

—and he exclaims,

⁵ Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

Then one of the seraphim flew unto him,

⁶ ...having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

⁷ And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.

⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me.

This must have been Isaiah's first vision, and the time when he was chosen to the prophetic work; for it was at this time that his sins were forgiven. And when he first sees the Lord, he exclaims, as we have read,

Isaiah 6

⁵ Woe is me! for I am undone.

But when the seraph has touched his lips with the hallowed fire, and told him his sin is cleansed, his iniquity taken away, then he is ready to be a messenger of the Lord; and as soon as he hears the voice asking who shall be sent, he cries,

⁸ Here am I; send me.

⁹ And he said, Go.

Thus the Lord would have no one go to speak for Him, nor in His name, till his iniquity has been taken away and his sin purged. Then, and not till then, can we bear the message of the Lord.

In this very first vision he spoke of Christ, and of the people in the day when Christ was upon the earth. John tells us so. In recording the words and works of the Saviour, he says,

John 12

³⁷ But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him.

And these very ones who did not believe on Christ, in them was fulfilled the very saying of Isaiah as recorded in *Isaiah* 6:9-10. Compare *John* 12:38-41 and *Isaiah* 6:1-13. Then says John,

⁴¹ These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory and spoke

of Him.

We see also by this that in the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah not only spoke of this people, but he also spoke of Christ, and he then saw Christ.

- That majestic one whom Isaiah saw sitting upon that throne high and lifted up;
- That one whose train filled the temple in Heaven;
- That one in the presence of whose glory the bright seraphim shaded their faces;
- That one of whom these seraphim said, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory,”

–that was Christ our Lord and Saviour. That was He who speaks in righteousness, He who is indeed...

Isaiah 63

¹ ...mighty to save.

We have no prophecy which Isaiah refers definitely to the reign of Jotham, nor any message sent directly to Jotham as there is to Ahaz and Hezekiah. In chapters 7, 8, and 9 are prophecies in the reign of Ahaz. Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, had formed a confederacy to take Jerusalem and Judah, and kill Ahaz and make the son of Tabeal, a creature of their own, king in Jerusalem. But the Lord sent a word to Ahaz and his people,

Isaiah 7

⁷ Thus says the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

And in that message to Ahaz and his people Isaiah uttered his prophecy of Immanuel:

Isaiah 7

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name

Immanuel.

Matthew 1 [RV]

²³ ...which is, being interpreted, God with us.

At the same time he prophesied of that child which should be called,

Isaiah 9

⁶ ...Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Luke 1

³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David:

³³ And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

And at the same time he prophesied of the second coming of the Saviour, the reform on the law of God, and the working of Spiritualism just before Christ comes in His glory.

Isaiah 8

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

¹⁷ And I will wait upon the Lord, that hides His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him.

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwells in mount Zion.

¹⁹ And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

²⁰ To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

²¹ And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry:

and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward.

2 Thessalonians 2

⁹ Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.

And in the lesson for today, his word is a prophecy which Paul applied to the people in his day.

Isaiah 1

⁹ Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Romans 9

²⁹ And as Isaiah said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah.

Romans 11

⁵ Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

These are but a few instances in illustration of Peter's word about the prophets:

1 Peter 1

¹² Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

In reading the prophets, we are always to bear in mind that they have written many things to us, as well as some things to those of their own day. And when, in today's lesson, we read,

Isaiah 1

⁴ Ah, sinful nation,

—He means the people of today—not the people who make

no profession of His name, but the people upon whom His name is called. To those of today, He says,

Isaiah 1

² I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

To what purpose are sacrifices, and offerings, and the calling of assemblies, when the law of God is despised and rejected? So in another place this same prophet says:

Isaiah 58

¹ Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

² Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God.

To what purpose are fastings and prayers, when the ordinance of God is forsaken?

Proverbs 28

⁹ He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

Therefore, today He says to the people of today:

Isaiah 1

¹⁶ Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil;

¹⁷ Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Ezekiel 18

³² Turn yourselves and live.

Hearken to the word of God and obey. Jesus said to His disciples,

John 15

³ Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Paul says that,

Ephesians 5

²⁵ Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it;

²⁶ That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

²⁷ That He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Peter says:

1 Peter 1

²² You have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.

The only way in which to “learn to do well,” is by strict obedience to the word of God, through the Spirit. And the only way to obtain the Holy Spirit is by confession, and the forsaking of sin.

Proverbs 28

¹³ He that covers his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall find mercy.

Isaiah 1

¹⁸ Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Romans 3

²⁴ Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

²⁵ Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

Isaiah 1

¹⁹ If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land:

²⁰ But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

Hebrews 5

⁹ [Christ is] the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.

1 Samuel 15

²² Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

2. The Purpose of Sacrifices

Present Truth, January 26, 1899

Original title: Back Page

Isaiah 1:11

E. J. Waggoner

Isaiah 1

¹¹ To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says the Lord.

GOD had a purpose in the sacrifices which He commanded Israel to offer. The sacrifices themselves were not the end desired. They were only a means.

Hebrews 10

¹ For the law having a shadow of good things to come,...can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

² For then would they not have ceased to be offered; because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

The fault of Israel was that they did not proceed from the shadow to the substance. The reason of their rejection of Christ, when He came among them in the flesh, was that they had not recognized Him in the sacrifices, commanded by God, which prefigured His work. Had they learned what the sacrifices were designed to teach them, they would have received the Saviour gladly when He appeared.

Acts 13

²⁷ For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they know Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him.

The eyes of Israel were blinded in the reading of the Old Testament. They thought that they were God's people, because they were so much better than the surrounding heathen, and that in offering sacrifices they were rendering the

worship which God desired.

But God did not wish them to stay for ever among the shadows. He wanted them to come to the substance and know by experience the fullness and power of the salvation from sin which was in Christ. Since the shadows in themselves were worthless, it did no good to multiply them. No number of shadows, however great will suffice to make one substance.

Hebrews 10

⁴ For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.

So the Lord asks,

Isaiah 1

¹¹ To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices?

The object at which the Lord aimed was the taking away of sin, and the bringing in of righteousness, not only to cleanse the sinner and make him whiter than snow, but to keep him so.

Psalms 11

⁶ Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;...burnt offering and sin offering You have not required.

Amos 5

²² Though you offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will, not accept them...

²⁴ But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

The same question is addressed to us,

“To what purpose is the multitude of your prayers and religions observances?”

Are these the end of our Christian experience? Are we, any more than was Israel, come to the substance of Christ's work for us, or do we, as they, have to offer continually, year after year, sacrifices that never take away sin? Are we delivered

from the power of sin any more than were they?

Matthew 1

²¹ You shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.

Hebrews 10

⁵ Wherefore when He came into the world, He said, Sacrifice and offering You would not, but a body have You prepared me:

⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come...to do your will, O God.

¹⁰ By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

In proportion as Christ's sacrifice was more effectual than the blood of bulls and goats for the taking away of sin, so should the deliverance from sin of those who receive Christ differ from the experience of those who offered slain beasts.

¹¹ Every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

¹² But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

All that is needed to be done to keep men from falling and to present them faultless before the presence of God with exceeding joy,³⁸⁷ has been already completed in the sacrifice of Christ. Those who receive Him for all that He is may prove now...

Ephesians 1

¹⁹ ...the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.

This is the object of God in giving His Son to us. Until He is received as a perfect Saviour from sin, He is not known in His real character. His name is Jesus because He saves from sin,³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ *Jude* 1:24.

³⁸⁸ *Matthew* 1:21.

and no one can know Jesus who does not know a Saviour from sin. Until we thus know Him, even if professing faith in Him, we are only among the shadows of good things to come.

In giving Christ to us, God gives us deliverance from all the power of evil, and if we neglect to receive so great salvation, all our prayers and religious observances will be to no purpose. They will be no more acceptable to God than were the sacrifices offered by ancient Israel.

But now that the reality of Christ's work for us is made known, we may leave the shadows of good things to come, and enjoy the good things themselves.

Hebrews 10

¹⁹ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

²⁰ By a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;

²² Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

3. Reasoning Together

Present Truth, January 12, 1893

Isaiah 1:18

E. J. Waggoner

Isaiah 1

¹⁸ Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

WHAT a wonderful promise! It seems too much to be true, but it is truth. Think of it! A man that is thoroughly defiled by sin, made as pure as the snow fresh from heaven. That is the wonder of the universe. How is it accomplished? Well, it is in a way that no man would ever have thought of.

1 Timothy 1

¹⁵ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

1 John 3

⁴ Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.

⁵ And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.

1 John 1

⁷ If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 3

²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

²⁴ Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

²⁵ Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission

of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

Romans 4

⁵ But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

The sum of all this is that the sinner is saved from sin by receiving the righteousness of God in Christ. He is redeemed, cleansed by the blood of Christ. But the blood of Christ is the life of Christ.

Leviticus 17

¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul.

When Christ shed His blood for man, He poured out His life for sinful man. Whoever acknowledges that he has sinned, and takes Christ by faith, receives His life into his soul. Then,

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁷ ...he is a new creature,

Galatians 2

²⁰ ...and the life that he lives, he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him.

That man has simply exchanged lives with the Son of God. Being crucified with Christ, he gives his old life to Christ, and thus it, with its sins, is nailed to the cross. But since he is crucified with Christ, he must also be made alive with Christ, for:

Romans 6

⁵ If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.

But only Christ has the power to live after giving up His life; therefore the new life that the redeemed ones live is the life of Christ. Thus he has exchanged lives with Christ. All this is contrary to human reason.

1 Corinthians 1

¹⁸ The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness...

²³ We preach Christ crucified, and to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;

²⁴ But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Man would say,

“Do right, and then you will be right.”

That seems to the human mind to be the only reasonable way. But God says,

“Let me make you right, and then you will do right.”

John 3

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

¹⁵ That whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

The children of Israel had sinned in the wilderness,

Numbers 21

⁶ And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

Then the people confessed their sins and begged that the serpents might be removed from them.

⁸ And the Lord said unto Moses, Make a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live.

⁹ And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

It would be strange if there were not some among the people who refused to look. They would “reason” in this way:

“It is all nonsense to think that looking at that brazen ser-

pent can heal a snake bite. If we would climb the pole, and rub the wounded against a serpent, there might be some virtue in that; but just looking can never be of any use, and I am not going to make a fool of myself.”

That is just the way that men reason about the Lord. It seems to them foolishness that a man can be made perfectly righteous by simply looking at Christ. No; if they are ever to be made righteous they are confident that it must be by some more promising means than that. They will not risk their salvation upon a look. They can trust their own efforts, but to lie passively and look seems to them too presumptuous.

The truth is that the facts of the Gospel cannot be reasoned out by man. They are altogether above and beyond the reach of human reason. Man left to his own reason will reason himself into hedonism every time.³⁸⁹

“But doesn’t God tell us to reason together?” some will ask.

Yes; and here is where so many pervert the text with which we started. They use their reason as a basis for faith, forgetting that faith must be the instructor of reason. God does not tell us to apply our reason to the task of figuring out a way of salvation but says,

Isaiah 1

¹⁸ Come now, and let us reason together.

Who does the “us” include? Why, ourselves and the Lord, of course. The trouble is that so many read that call, and then they proceed forthwith to begin to reason alone, leaving the Lord out altogether. Then they come to fatal conclusions. We are to reason together with the Lord. Well, it is only reasonable that in reasoning with the Lord we should defer to Him, and let His reason direct.

³⁸⁹ See *Romans* 1:20-25.

Isaiah 55

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

1 Corinthians 1

²⁵ [Even] the foolishness of God is wiser than men.

So it is not with our mind that we are to reason about the things of God, but with the mind of the Lord. First we are to submit to the Lord,³⁹⁰ that He may put in us the mind that was in Christ,³⁹¹ and then we shall see clearly, for we shall be walking in the light as He is in the light.³⁹² Then it is that:

1 John 1

⁷ ...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

That which seems foolishness when looked at from a human point of view, is very reasonable when seen with the mind of God; for as...

1 John 4

¹⁶ God is love,

—and as...

Micah 7

¹⁸ [He] delights in mercy,

—it is the most natural thing for God to save sinners. But it is none the less wonderful, for the smallest of God's ways affords matter for the never-ending wonder of man.

³⁹⁰ *James* 4:7.

³⁹¹ *1 Corinthians* 2:16.

³⁹² *1 John* 1:7.

4. Reasoning with God

Present Truth, October 4, 1894

Isaiah 1:18

E. J. Waggoner

IT IS a very common thing for men to reason with God. Though He does not stand personally and visibly before them and talk with them, they have His spoken word, to which many feel free to make objections, or excuse themselves from performing its requirements. It is just the same as if they stood face to face with the Creator and presumed to enter into an argument with Him.

This is not the kind of reasoning that the Lord desires. He has said,

Isaiah 1

¹⁸ Come now, and let us reason together,

—but He does not ask us to tell Him anything that He does not know, or attempt to prove Him to be in the wrong. To do that would be to unseat Him from His throne. But He says,

Isaiah 43

²⁶ Put me in remembrance, let us plead together.

He wishes men to remind Him of His promises; not because He has forgotten them, but because He longs for an opportunity to fulfill them. He pleads with men to comply with the conditions upon which His promises are made, in order that by fulfilling them He may demonstrate to men His power and love toward them.

If they will do this, He will remember instantly the things that He has sworn to perform. He holds out to them the greatest of inducements by saying,

Isaiah 1

¹⁸ Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as

wool.

To reason properly with the Lord is simply to give Him an opportunity of doing for us this wonderful work. The result will be most convincing, as regards all the points that can possibly be at issue.

5. Isaiah Called to Service

Present Truth, October 13, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, October 23

Isaiah 6:1-13

E. J. Waggoner

THE prophet Isaiah began to see visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem in days of king Uzziah, and his work continued for some sixty years. It was in the last year of Uzziah's life that Isaiah saw the vision which is the subject of the present lesson.

Uzziah was the grandson of Joash. The latter, like his father; died a violent death, as did also his own son Amaziah. Both Amaziah and his son and successor, Uzziah, began to reign in the fear of God, but as the Lord prospered them, their hearts were lifted up. Amaziah worshipped false gods, and Uzziah became so full of pride and self-importance that he even forced his way into the sanctuary with the intention of burning incense. For this he was smitten with leprosy, and obliged to surrender the kingdom to his son Jotham.

Cleansing From Sin

In Isaiah's vision there was revealed to him the Lord upon His throne, exalted high, surrounded by angels and worshipped by the seraphim. As these declared the holiness of the Lord, a sense of his own sinfulness overwhelmed the prophet and he cried,

Isaiah 6

⁵ Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.

But God never makes known His holiness with the object of inducing despair in men. High and lifted up as He is, His holiness and power are equalled by His love for men, and He bids them...

Psalm 30

⁴ Sing unto the Lord, all you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.

In His love He bestows His holiness freely upon sinful men, hence the infinite measure of His holiness only makes known the fulness of His unspeakable gift. In quick response to the prophet's sense of need, an angel flies to him with a live coal from off the altar, and as it was laid upon Isaiah's mouth, the comforting assurance was given,

Isaiah 6

⁷ Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.

A Throne of Grace

The blasphemous pride of King Uzziah in presumptuously approaching that altar had merited and found swift and awful punishment; but for Isaiah's humble confession of guilt it had no terrors. The sinful and helpless, who can only plead their sad necessity, may come with boldness to the throne of grace, and find there plenteous redemption. The broken and contrite heart may be despised among men, but it is honored in heaven. God has respect unto the lowly. His answer to every confession of wrongdoing is, as it was to Isaiah,

⁷ Your iniquity is taken away.

Whom Shall We Send?

Then follows the next step. Isaiah dwelt among an unclean people. God cared for them as much as He did for Isaiah. Who should go forth and tell them of the cleansing that was so freely given, and so easily obtained? The angels could not do it, for they did not know the defilement and the burden of sin. The messengers must be chosen among men redeemed, and Isaiah, who knew both the disease and the healing, offered himself for the work, saying,

Isaiah 6

⁸ Here am I; send me.

A Warning Message

Just as quickly as the cleansing of sin followed upon the confession of it, did the commission to declare the Gospel follow upon the offer of service.

⁹ And He said, Go,...

The words of the message were put into his mouth. It reads like a message full of discouragement at first sight.

⁹ ...tell this people, Hear indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but perceive not.

The cause also was to be made known.

Acts 28 [Isaiah 6:10]

²⁷ For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and bear with their ears, and understand with their heart,...

Although the words hardly seem like a message of good tidings, they were so in reality for all who would hear, since they made known the flimsy character of the barrier that kept the people from forgiveness and healing. If only Judah would use their senses, hear with their ears, see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, the result would be that they...

²⁷ ...should be converted, and I should heal them.

The Glory of the Lord

God did not require great things of His people that they might be saved. If He had asked them to hear without ears, or see without eyes, they might have complained that His conditions were hard, but these faculties had already been given and God simply asked that they should be used.

It was necessary to use their members for the maintenance

of their physical life. Food grew around them in abundance, but they needed to see it and gather it with their hands before it could give them life. So all about them, as the seraphs sang, the whole earth was full of the glory of God, or the fulness of the whole earth was His glory.³⁹³

Had their ears been open to hear what God said to them, by His servants and His works, their eyes been willing to see in the wonders of nature the living presence and continual working of their Creator, they would have gladly recognised in every ministration of earth and sea and air, supplying their wants, that they were made partakers of the Divine life, and thus have been turned from idols to serve the living God.

Like the Beasts that Perish

The same lesson is for us today. The difficulty that hindered Judah then, prevented their children from acknowledging the Messiah, and Paul told the Jews at Rome that the Holy Ghost had spoken truth by Isaiah, when it declared the real nature of the obstacle that kept them from being saved.

Fuller than the beasts that perish, men receive the life of God through the channels by which it is conveyed, caring only for the food and raiment after which the heathen seek, and forgetting that these are added to a far more precious gift, the righteousness of God.

Matthew 6

³¹ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

In the life of God that is bestowed so freely upon men,

³⁹³ See *Isaiah* 6:3, margin of *Revised Version*.

Acts 14

¹⁷ ...filling their hearts with food and gladness,

–are given...

2 Peter 1

³ ...all things that pertain unto life and godliness.

But it is true of the multitudes now as it was in the time of Isaiah:

Isaiah 1

³ The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, my people do not consider.

How Long?

The Divine ambition is to see men happy. God's rejoicing is in the welfare of His children, and He desires that men shall acknowledge His love in the abundance of His gifts. If they will not do so, before He allows himself to be finally rejected, and the way of death irrevocably chosen by His creatures, He gives opportunity to learn the value of His gifts by their withdrawal. Some, when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, will learn righteousness:

Isaiah 26

⁹ ...when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

And so, although God does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men,³⁹⁴ this is often the only chance of saving them. It was so with Judah. To Isaiah's question, how long it should be before the people should be willing to see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and thus be healed, the reply was given,

Isaiah 6

¹¹ Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.

³⁹⁴ *Lamentations* 3:33.

Yet the promise was given that a remnant should return, and that like a tree which has life in its trunk, even though all outer sign of life, in leaves and branches, has disappeared, the holy seed should be the substance of the nation. This seed was not holy by its own merits but would consist of all who should submit themselves to the righteousness of God, and not attempt, in ignorance of God and His righteousness, to establish their own righteousness.³⁹⁵

The Gospel of Isaiah

Isaiah had marvellous revelations of God's character. His writings present so much of the work of Christ that they are often spoken of, and truly so, as:

“The Gospel according to Isaiah.”

For this reason, many who are counted wise and learned, but who know not the Scriptures nor the power of God, have declared it impossible that a man living so many hundred years before Christ, could have been so enlightened on the subject of the Saviour's work and teaching. To all such the warning of Isaiah comes, that they should open their eyes and ears, and learn to discern, where they see now only common things and human power, the glory of God filling all the earth. This glory of God, whom the seraphim acclaimed as,

Isaiah 6

³ Holy, holy, holy!

–when seen and received by faith, works in the beholder the fulfillment of the Divine command,

1 Peter 1 [Leviticus 11:44-45]

¹⁶ Be holy, for I am holy.

³⁹⁵ *Romans* 10:3.

6. God's Glory His Gospel

Present Truth, March 1, 1894

Isaiah 6:3

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN Isaiah saw the Lord on the throne, high and lifted up, surrounded by the seraphim, he heard those beings crying one to another,

Isaiah 6

³ Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.

These words were spoken hundreds of years ago. Are they true now, and is the earth now full of the glory of the Lord? Most certainly; all the while the word has been,

Isaiah 60

¹ Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

The whole earth is full of the glory of God. He has revealed it in every blade of grass, and every flower, and everything that He has made.

Habakkuk 3

³ His glory covers the heavens, and the earth is full of His praise.

The plant springing up and yielding its fruit, is showing forth the glory of God; for when in Cana of Galilee Christ accelerated the process, and, instead of waiting six months for the rain to come down and be taken up into the vine and converted into the juice of the grape, changed the water into wine by the power of the same word which sends the rain and is the life of the plant, it was written that this beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee,

John 2

¹¹ ...and manifested forth His glory.

Power and Glory

The power of God is the glory of God. He showed His mighty power in the resurrection of Christ from the dead; but:

Romans 6

⁴ Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father.

The power of God is also shown in the things that He has made, and the Gospel, which is this power manifested unto salvation, is...

1 Timothy 1

¹¹ ...the glorious Gospel of God.

The Gospel is glory; it is also power. And the whole earth is full of it. The earth preaches no set sermons. It does not begin with firstly, secondly, thirdly, and deliver an artistic address. What does the earth do? It receives the light from God, and manifests it forth. It simply receives the gifts that God sends upon it, and glorifies God in returning the fruits of the life. That is the Gospel.

Romans 1

¹⁶ The Gospel...is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believes,

¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.

Why All Do Not Glorify God

Someone may ask,

“Then why am I not as much to the praise of God as the heavens?”

Simply because you do not desire to be. We are all exactly what we wish to be. It is a fact that:

Psalm 145

¹⁶ [God] satisfies the desire of every living thing.

The trouble with some is that they do not want to be satisfied. If you really want to know the Lord, nothing in the world can hinder; because the Lord wants you to know Him. There is no use in standing off, and saying,

“We want to know the Lord, and want to serve Him,”

—when for many years He has been seeking for us, and knocking for us to open the door and let Him in, and has been speaking to us in every way He could. He has spoken to eyes, and ears, into every sense we have; for there is not a thing in heaven or earth that does not proclaim the power and the glory of God.

Therefore as soon as we are willing to believe that the Lord is better than we are, that He is more at peace and rest than we are, we shall have Him; for we shall then be willing to give up our ways, and our poverty, and our unrest and disquietude, and have the peace and rest of God, and the riches and righteousness which He has given to us.

But this is a giving up of all there is of self. To give up our ways means to confess that we do not know as much as we thought we did, and that is hard. It is a difficult thing to say that we are mistaken, and that we have no wisdom, or might, or anything that is good and worth having. This hurts; but it is only saying that the Lord is greater than we are, and that we are willing that His life in us shall manifest forth His glory, that we also may be...

Ephesians 1

⁶ To the praise of the glory of His grace.

7. The Live Coal from God's Altar

Present Truth, June 3, 1897

Isaiah 6:5-9

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN Isaiah saw the vision of the Lord in His temple, “high and lifted up,” he cried,

Isaiah 6

⁵ Woe is me! for I am undone.

He saw his own poverty and nakedness as never before. The Lord wanted someone to go with the message to sinners; but he was...

⁵ ...a man of unclean lips.

Then flew a seraph to him, with a live coal from off the altar of the Lord, and touched his mouth, saying,

⁷ Lo, this has touched your lips and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.

Isaiah believed the words, and when he heard the call,

⁸ Who will go?...

—he answered,

⁸ ...Here am I; send me.

And the commission came,

⁹ Go.

Jeremiah 23

²⁹ Is not my word like as a fire? says the Lord.

John 15

³ Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

It was with the living word of God that the prophet's lips were touched. As he believed the word it was his cleansing,

and he was ready to go to sinners with it. The very word which the Spirit uses to convict of sin has power in it to burn away the sin. Thank God for it, and believe it, and hold the life to the Word for constant correction and cleansing. When it is a burning coal direct from God's altar to your lips, you may daily say,

“Here Lord, send me,”

–and the Lord's answer will be,

“Go.”

But He sends us to speak only His words.

Jeremiah 23

²⁸ He that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully.

What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.

²⁹ Is not my word like as a fire?

8. Christ's Coming Foretold

Present Truth, December 14, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Isaiah 9:2-7

E. J. Waggoner

WHO can ever become weary of the grand words of the evangelical prophet of Israel? What a richness, a luxuriance, there is in them, and what rhythm? How easy it is to remember them! They fasten themselves in our memory, never to be effaced. There are but few of them in this lesson, but they are wonderfully comprehensive. Let us read them.

Isaiah 9 [RV]

² The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.

³ You have multiplied the nation, You have increased their joy: they joy before You according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

⁴ For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, You have broken as in the day of Midian.

⁵ For all the armor of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be even for bursting, for fuel of fire.

⁶ For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this.

The lesson begins with darkness, and ends with light. The preceding chapter closes with the statement that upon the earth there shall be...

Isaiah 8

²² ...trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish.

Isaiah 60

² Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you.

Christ is the light of the world; there is no life but from Him, and His light is the light of righteousness, for He is...

Malachi 4

² ...the Sun of righteousness.

That the prophecy in our lesson refers to the first advent of Christ, is made plain by comparing the first two verses with *Matthew 4:15-17*. It was when...

1 John 1

¹ ...the Word of life

—was manifested, that the light came into the world.

John 1

⁴ In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.

But God did not leave the world in darkness for four thousand years. Far from it.

Genesis 1

¹ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

² And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

³ And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.

The Word of life—the light of men—was...

1 John 1

¹ ...from the beginning.

It was the eternal life, shining for the salvation of all men. And men saw the light—and rejoiced in it—in the far-away

olden time. Abraham saw it, and was glad.³⁹⁶ When the light shone forth out of the darkness in the beginning,

Genesis 1

⁴ God saw the light, that it was good.

From that time it has been bringing good news. Thus long has...

2 Corinthians 4

⁴ ...the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ,

–been in the world.

Psalms 4

⁶ There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us.

From...

2 Corinthians 4

⁶ ...the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,

–has all the good come, that has ever been known on this earth.

Psalms 80

³ Turn us again, O God, and cause your face to shine: and we shall be saved.

Psalms 67

¹² God be merciful to us and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us;

¹³ That your way may be known upon earth, your saving health among all nations.

Psalms 89

¹⁵ Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord in the light of your countenance.

¹⁶ In your name shall they rejoice all the day: and in your righteousness shall they be exalted.

³⁹⁶ *John* 8:5, 8.

Thus sang the Psalmist hundreds of years before Jesus walked in...

Matthew 4

¹⁵ ...Galilee of the Gentiles.

Ah, the light that shines forth from Jesus of Nazareth was enlightening the earth ages before the glory of God shone round the shepherds of Bethlehem, and the angel said, in fulfillment of the words of Isaiah,

Luke 2

¹¹ Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour...

John 1

⁵ And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.

There is healing in the wings of the Sun of righteousness. He makes people feel whole,

John 7

²³ ...every whit whole.

To those that...

Matthew 4

¹⁶ ...sat in the shadow of death, light has sprung up.

The light of life scatters the shadows of death.

Psalm 4

⁶ The light of His countenance...

—has in it...

Psalm 67

² ...saving health.

Let “the joyful sound”³⁹⁷ ring out over all the earth, that He who heals the sick, gives sight to the blind, cleanses the lepers, raises the dead, brings the captives out of the dark prison

³⁹⁷ *Psalm* 89:15.

house, and binds up the broken-hearted, has come to earth, and that His healing presence has never departed. Then why are not all healed and set at liberty? Oh,

Luke 4

²⁷ Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

Yet the light shone for all. It still shines. From those who take the veil off their hearts, the shadow of death will flee away before the life-giving beams of the Sun of righteousness.

Isaiah 9

³ And they shall joy according to the joy in harvest.

Psalms 97

¹¹ Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

The sowing-time is the promise of the harvest. What though the corn of wheat falls into the earth and dies, and the storms of long, dark winter nights howl above it? The promise is sure:

John 12

²⁴ If it die, it brings forth much fruit.

Therefore he who sees with the eye of faith may rejoice as much amid the blasts of winter as when the golden light of autumn reveals the glory of the ripened sheaves. So although the rod of the oppressor is grievous, and...

1 Peter 1

⁶ ...for a season,...you are in heaviness through manifold temptations,

⁷ The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

⁸ Whom having not seen, you love; in whom though now you

see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;

⁹ Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Rich men now oppress the poor; the just are condemned and killed; but the joy of the coming harvest is reflected in their faces, and for very joy they do not resist; but take all patiently.

James 5

⁷ Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

⁸ Be you also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh.

Matthew 13

³⁹ The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

⁴⁰ As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

⁴¹ The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

⁴² And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

⁴³ Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear.

All the armor of the armed man—the furious oppressor—shall be only for a...

Isaiah 9

⁵ ...burning, for fuel of fire.

Whereby may we know this? By this:

⁶ For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.

The first coming of Christ had in it the power and the glory and the joy of the second advent. That little Babe wrapped in

swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger, is...

1 Corinthians 1

²⁴ ...the power of God.

A “tender plant”³⁹⁸ it was, weak as any other babe that ever was born, yet Herod trembled, and raged against it in vain;

²⁵ ...for the weakness of God is stronger than men.

That Child shall yet cause all the kingdoms of this world to totter and fall and crumble into pieces that cannot be found, while...

Isaiah 9

⁷ ...of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.

Often during His short revelation on this earth did the “Holy Child Jesus”³⁹⁹ show forth His power and glory. Once was it seen that nothing less than...

2 Peter 1

¹⁶ ...the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,

–were veiled by the flesh of the Carpenter of Nazareth, and the three disciples in the holy mount were...

¹⁶ ...eye-witnesses of His majesty.

For the light that encircled Him then was not light that shone upon Him, but light that shone from Him;

John 1

¹⁴ ...the glory as of the only begotten of the Father

–was always visible to those who could recognize it in the form of..

¹⁴ ...grace and truth.

So we see that the mighty power that will be revealed in the

³⁹⁸ *Isaiah* 53:2.

³⁹⁹ *Acts* 4:27, 30.

shaking heavens and earth at the second coming of Christ, will be but the power of Christ's coming in the flesh. It is the same "power of the Highest"⁴⁰⁰ that overshadowed Mary, enabling her to bring forth the "holy thing"⁴⁰¹ that was called the Son of God; and it is the same...

Ephesians 3

²⁰ ...power that works in us,

—even now, to form Christ in us the hope of glory. There is not so much difference between the first and the second advent of Christ, as people are wont to think. The prophets, as in the instance before us, often mentioned them together as one. The second is but the further unfolding of the first. No man believes in the first, who does not also believe in the second.

He who was, is the One who is, and who is to come.⁴⁰² He is not divided; we must take the whole of Him or nothing. If we do not accept Him as the One who is coming again to take visible possession of His own inheritance, then we do not fully realize His power as our present sovereign Lord.

Never in eternity will there be any more power manifested in Jesus than was necessary to bring Him to birth in Bethlehem of Judea, and to raise Him from the dead. And that is the power by which He now dwells in every living heart. The power of His coming to Judgment, is the power of His humble birth, and the power of the cross. Only by the cross are repentant sinners saved, and reprobate sinners destroyed.

Therefore lift up your heads and rejoice. The time of tribulation is the time to...

Romans 5

¹¹ ...joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

⁴⁰⁰ *Luke 1:35.*

⁴⁰¹ *Luke 1:35.*

⁴⁰² *Revelation 1:8.*

The oppressor may be as cruel and fierce as ever;

1 Peter 5

⁸ ...your adversary the devil,

–may be as active as ever; there may be visible oppression; but Christ has promised...

Isaiah 61

¹ ...liberty to the captives,

–and the liberty is ours. The power by which He will at the last...

Isaiah 64

¹ ...rend the heavens, [and] come down,

–is the same power by which He now rides on a cherub and flies on the wings of the wind to the help of His afflicted, tempted ones.⁴⁰³

Then why not now rejoice over the conquered foe. Do you expect to be glad when the Lord comes to claim His own? You will not unless you rejoice now, even while surrounded with trials. The crown will be given only to those who...

2 Timothy 4

⁸ ...love His appearing;

–and none love His appearing who do not know the power of it in His blessed presence.

John 16

²¹ A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

Therefore,

Philippians 4

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice;

⁴⁰³ *Psalm 8:1-10.*

-for,

Isaiah 9

⁶ Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.

Psalm 98

⁸ Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together

⁹ Before the Lord; for He comes to judge the earth.

9. Messiah's Kingdom Foretold

Present Truth, October 20, 1898

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, October 30

Isaiah 11:1-10

E. J. Waggoner

IT IS noteworthy that very many of the illustrations used by Isaiah, to represent the truths taught by him, are drawn from the vegetable world. He speaks a great deal of the kingdom of God, and of that kingdom Christ himself said that it is...

Mark 4

²⁶ ...as if a man should cast seed into the ground.

In the present lesson the Saviour is likened to a rod coming forth from the stem of Jesse, and a branch growing out of his roots. There had been a good many vicissitudes in the history of Jesse's descendants, when Isaiah wrote, and the future contained a great many more. It seemed sometimes, so far as any hope of spiritual life was concerned, that Jesse's was a dry, withered root, but out of this unpromising soil, Christ was to grow up...

Isaiah 53

² ...as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.

The Word Made Flesh

Isaiah 40

⁶ All flesh is grass,

—and Christ was made in all things like unto His brethren. He had no more strength than the grass of the field, for He declared that of himself He could do nothing. It was the Word of the Lord that caused the grass to grow and gave it life. The grass is simply the visible manifestation of the Word by which it lives. Hence the various forms of the grass show forth the beauty and glory of the Lord.

Many will not allow that it can be true of them that they are merely grass. They point with pride to their achievements, to the acquirements which mark them as superior to others, and claim that these give proof of an independent intelligence.

Christ made no such claim for himself. He sought not His own will. The Father gave Him commandment what He should speak, and showed Him all things that He should do. He simply took the humble place of the grass of the field, which exists only because of the Word of life, and reveals, not itself, but the working of that Word, in the Word made grass. Christ was the Word made flesh, and all flesh is grass.

Led by the Spirit

Because Christ did not lean to His own understanding, but trusted in the Lord with all His heart, the Lord directed His every step. Because He submitted to the guidance of the Spirit, it had free course in Him and was revealed in its fullness in His life. It was everything to Him, and so it imparted to Him freely everything that it was.

It was not given by measure, and being unhindered by Him in its manifestations, all its characteristics were revealed in His life as:

Isaiah 11

² ...wisdom and understanding,...counsel and might,...knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

The Spirit made Him...

³ ...of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord,

—and He allowed it to influence His mind and form His judgment on all matters that demanded attention. He did not rely upon the inadequate means of information supplied by His human eyes and ears, but trusted in the infallible guidance of the Spirit. So His judgment and reproof was given in righteousness and equity.

Isaiah 11

³ ...and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears:

⁴ But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.

John 1

¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

A Witness to the People

Christ came to earth to make known what inconceivable riches had been bestowed by God upon men in the gift of His life. The life was communicated by the Spirit, but men saw no particular value in the gift, and felt indifferent as to whether it was given or not.

What it would do for helpless men was seen in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Springing, like His brethren in the flesh, from a dry root, which only conveyed its inheritance of sin and death, He triumphed over both by receiving the life from above. The whole of His victorious life was a witness to men of what God had done for them.

His sinlessness did not separate Him from the unworthy, for such a High Priest became us, but showed the power of the salvation that was theirs by free gift. So He said,

Isaiah 61

¹ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings...

-to men, that they too might be, like himself,

³ ...trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.

Out of Weakness Made Strong

It may seem at first sight humiliating to be told that:

Isaiah 40

⁶ All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the field,

–so that man is absolutely dependent upon the Lord, but those who receive this truth find in it unending strength and rejoicing. They learn that in being made dependent on His life God does not doom them to a beggarly existence, and their hearts are comforted,

Colossians 2

² ...being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

³ In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

A Glorious Rest

As men learn to trust in the Lord for all things, and put no confidence in the flesh, God's strength is made perfect in their weakness, and they are made...

Ephesians 6

¹⁰ ...strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

Thus the power of God is seen and declared among men, and the root of Jesse...

Isaiah 11

¹⁰ ...shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious.

As the tumults of earth agitate human minds, and...

Luke 21

²⁶ Men's hearts fail them for fear, looking after those things that are coming on the earth,

–God's people trust calmly in Him, in whom there is everlasting strength, and perfect peace.

Isaiah 26

³ You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You.

⁴ Trust in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

When trials and clouds are thickest and darkest, His rest is most glorious, and made known to the Gentiles as most worth their acceptance.

Abundance of Peace

Isaiah 11

⁶ The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

⁷ And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸ And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

The picture of perfect peace presented in this lesson is but a demonstration of what the Spirit of God can do, in reconciling the most contrary natures. The wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the calf and the young lion, can all live together in amity and peace, because the rule of God, interrupted by man's rebellion, is fully restored in all things.

The law of God, which is the life of God, is made again the universal law of being, and there shall be no evil or destruction, because:

⁹ ...the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

In the everlasting inheritance of God's redeemed,

Psalm 37

¹¹ The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight them-

selves in the abundance of peace,
–for only they shall possess the earth.

Matthew 5

⁵ Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The earnest of that inheritance is given now in the Holy Spirit to believers,⁴⁰⁴ and since the inheritance is all that it is by virtue of the power of the Spirit, it follows that whosoever receives the Spirit knows thereby the power of the world to come.⁴⁰⁵

This is the power which is made known to those who confess themselves to be only grass, and find a glorious rest in the knowledge that:

Philippians 2

¹³ It is God which works in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ephesians* 1:13-14.

⁴⁰⁵ *Hebrews* 6:4-5.

10. The Stability of Righteousness

Present Truth, April 24, 1902

Isaiah 28:15-18

E. J. Waggoner

IT IS a common saying that “nothing is settled until it is settled right.” That is a truth that is stated at length in the following scripture:

Isaiah 28

¹⁵ Because you have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

¹⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believes shall not make haste.

¹⁷ Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

¹⁸ And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then you shall be trodden down by it.

Nothing can stand except that which is built upon the foundation of truth and righteousness; every other structure that is built for a refuge will fall down, and will involve in its destruction all have taken refuge in it. The living God, the God of truth, is the only sure refuge, and His truth is a shield and buckler to every one who accepts it and hides in it alone.

This suggests another phase of the same truth, and that is, that whenever a thing is settled right it is absolutely settled. This is stated in the following scripture:

Isaiah 32

¹⁶ Judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

¹⁷ And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

¹⁸ And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.

Righteousness is the sure and everlasting foundation. Whoever is right, and knows that he is right because he is building solely on God's Word, can rest in quiet, no matter how much people may rage against him.

- He may be misrepresented, and his motives maligned, or even his life threatened but none of these things will move him.
- He does not need to vindicate the truth, for it is its own authority; and
- He doesn't need to defend himself, for the truth is his defense.

What a condition of perfect rest in peace this is!

Psalm 119

¹⁶⁵ Great peace have they which love Your law; and nothing shall offend them [or, "cause them to stumble"].

11. Gentleness and Firmness

Present Truth, August 21, 1902

Original title: Back Page

Isaiah 30:15

E. J. Waggoner

GENTLENESS and courteous grace are not incompatible with firmness. Moses, the meekest man,⁴⁰⁶ was one of the firmest and most immovable.

Daniel very politely and meekly requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself with the king's dainties: but he had...

Daniel 1

⁸ ...purposed in his heart

—that he would not. He did not think that it was necessary, however, to bluster, and to use strong language, in order to impress the one in charge; it is only the weak man that does that; the strong man is quiet simply because he is strong.

Isaiah 30

¹⁵ In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

⁴⁰⁶ *Numbers* 12:3.

12. The Power that Keeps

Present Truth, January 4, 1894

Isaiah 40:15, 26-29

E. J. Waggoner

IN THAT wonderful chapter, the 40th of *Isaiah*, we have a most vivid representation of the power of God, and the greatness of His creation. Take, for instance, the fifteenth verse:

Isaiah 40

¹⁵ Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing.

More literal and more forcible is the rendering in the margin of the *Revised Version*,

“The isles are as the fine dust that is lifted up.”

That is, the islands are no greater to God than the fine dust is to us; more than this, they are no greater to God than the dust, because with God there is no such thing as comparison; nothing is hard for Him.

Psalms 139

¹² Darkness and light are both alike to Him;

—great and small have no difference between them in His sight. The greatest thing in our eyes is as easy for Him as that which seems to us easy. What an idea of the immensity of the universe is given by that expression,

¹⁵ Behold, the isles are as the fine dust that is lifted up.

All the islands of the sea are no greater, in comparison to the universe of God, than the fine dust that every breeze lifts up is to the whole earth. Truly,

Psalms 95

³ The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

⁴ In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also.

⁵ The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land.

⁶ O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

⁷ For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.

But this is not all. Our minds are directed to another evidence of His greatness.

Isaiah 40

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these, that brings out their host by number: He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power, not one fails.

With the natural eye innumerable stars can be seen; the telescope reveals innumerable others, but even the most powerful telescope reveals only an exceedingly small fraction of the number of stars. Photography, however, enlarges our ideas. By exposing plates for several hours, the light is accumulated so that stars too distant to be discovered even by the telescope, record their existence. In a photograph of a very small section of the heavens in which no stars could be seen, many thousands were revealed. If our camera were placed on the most distant of the stars, we doubtless should have the same thing repeated.

Millions upon millions in number are the stars of heaven; yet God calls them all by name, because He made them; and the word of His power keeps them from falling.⁴⁰⁷ They hang upon His word. Well might the psalmist exclaim,

Psalms 104

²⁴ O Lord, how manifold are your works! in wisdom have You made them all.

⁴⁰⁷ *Hebrews* 1:3.

All this shows the power of God; for the Lord by the Apostle Paul assures us that ever since the creation of the world, the invisible things of God, namely, His eternal power and Divinity, are clearly seen through the things that He has made.⁴⁰⁸ It is because He is great in power that none of the host of heaven fall from their places. They do not collide, because His hand guides them in their various orbits.

With this view of the power and wisdom of God, how forcible are the words that follow:

Isaiah 40

²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed away from my God?

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increases strength.

No one need fear that he is in danger of being forgotten by the God to whom the names of the infinite number of worlds are as familiar as the names of children are to their parents. The stars are God's flock, which He guards and we are His flock also. That is one point of encouragement. The other is that all this power is for the use of the man who is in need. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The power by which God is able to keep the soul from falling, is the power by which He keeps the host of heaven in their proper places.

Psalms 33

⁶ By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

By that same word they are kept.⁴⁰⁹ And this is the word of

⁴⁰⁸ *Romans 1:20.*

⁴⁰⁹ *See 2 Peter 3:5-7.*

the Gospel which is preached unto us.⁴¹⁰ Therefore we may know that all the power of the universe is pledged for the redemption of those who believe God. The existence of the universe depends upon the fulfillment of God's promises to us; for the same word that brings the promises to us, is the word that upholds all things; and if that word were broken, everything would return to chaos, and vanish from existence.

And this comfort is for the poorest and the weakest and most sinful; for God's word would be broken just as surely if it failed to the least, as if it failed with the greatest. So the existence of the stars in the heavens is a pledge to even the weakest soul, that God has not forgotten His promises, and that every prayer of faith will be answered.

Thus it is that God's people in the last days, when troubles thicken, and wicked men and persecutors become more rampant, are directed to...

Luke 21

²⁸ Look up.

Strength comes from looking up. Therefore,

1 Peter 1

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

⁴ To an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, preserved in heaven for you,

⁵ Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

⁴¹⁰ 1 Peter 1:25.

13. Christ Not Discouraged

Present Truth, August 29, 1895

Isaiah 42:1-4

E. J. Waggoner

Isaiah 42

¹ Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

² He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.

³ A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench; He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

⁴ He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth.

THIS is the work of Christ. What a world of comfort and encouragement there is in the statement of it, especially in the last verse. His work is to set judgment, or righteousness, in the earth. Righteousness can be set in the earth only by putting it into the hearts of men.

Christ's work is to take poor, weak, sinful men, and make righteous beings of them; to clothe them with the righteousness of God. Very poor material He has to work with, and no one knows this better than He. But He shall not fail or be discouraged in this work. He knows how difficult the task is; but knowing man's sinfulness and hardness of heart, He is not discouraged.

Then what occasion is there for being discouraged? If He is not discouraged with His task, need we be? Shall not we gather courage from His courage? We may be of good courage, for He has overcome the world, and in Him we shall do valiantly.

14. Prisoners and Freemen

Signs of the Times, January 13, 1887

Isaiah 49:8-9

E. J. Waggoner

“Who is addressed in *Isaiah* 49:8-9? Who are the prisoners, and when and from what are they to be freed?”

The verses referred to read thus:

Isaiah 49

⁸ Thus says the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you; and I will preserve you, and give you for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

⁹ That you may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

By reading the preceding verses in connection with these, we readily learn who is addressed.

⁵ And now, says the Lord that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him.

⁶ And He said, It is a light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

These passages show unmistakably that Christ is the one addressed. Compare verse 6 with:

Luke 2

²⁹ Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word:

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all people;

³² A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.

The 8th verse itself shows that Christ is addressed, in the

words,

Isaiah 49

⁸ I will preserve You, and give You for a covenant of the people.

Compare this with:

Isaiah 55

⁴ Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

⁵ Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not, and nations that knew you not shall run unto you because of the Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you.

The “day of salvation” is the entire time during which God’s mercy to man is manifest in the gospel. In this day—this acceptable time—Christ is heard in behalf of the people, and is given for the objects mentioned in verses 8 and 9.

Opening the Prison

One of these objects is the opening of the prison, and saying to the prisoners, “Go forth.” It might appear to some, from the words that immediately follow (verse 10), that this has reference to the opening of the graves at the last day; but from almost identical language used elsewhere in prophecy, and applied by our Lord himself, we are obliged to place the opening of the prison within the “day of salvation.”

Isaiah 61

¹ The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

² To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

When our Lord went into the synagogue at Nazareth and read this much of the prophecy, He closed the book, and said

to the people:

Luke 4

²¹ This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

The fact that He said this, and that He refrained from reading the next clause,—“and the day of vengeance of our God,”—shows that all that He read is fulfilled in the day of grace. But the dead are not raised until the day of mercy is past. Therefore the “opening of the prison to them that are bound” must be during the “day of salvation.”

What is the Bondage?

Then we have to inquire, Who are bound, and what is their bondage? The following verses will set us in the way of the correction answer:

John 8

³³ They [the wicked Jews] answered Him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how say you, You shall be made free?

³⁴ Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin.

³⁵ And the servant abides not in the house forever; but the Son abides ever.

³⁶ If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

From these words we learn that sin is a bondage, and that it is from this bondage that Christ sets men free. To further show that sin is a bondage we need only to refer to the following verses, out of a multitude that might be quoted:

Romans 7

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

2 Peter 2

¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of

the same is he brought in bondage.

Again, we know that Christ's special work is to save people from sin:

Matthew 1

²¹ And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.

1 Timothy 1

¹⁵ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Titus 2

¹³ Looking for...our Saviour Jesus Christ;

¹⁴ Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Both these points, namely, that sin brings men into bondage, and that Christ releases them from this prison, are brought out in the following passage:

1 Peter 3

¹⁸ For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

¹⁹ By which [i.e., by the Spirit] also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

²⁰ Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.

Christ, by the Spirit, went and preached unto the spirits in prison; this was in the days of Noah, while the long-suffering of God waited. God's long-suffering waited one hundred and twenty years, and during this time His Spirit was striving with the wicked antediluvians.

Genesis 6

³ And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with

man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

Those wicked men were in the bondage of sin; Christ was ready and anxious to give them freedom,—the same freedom that Noah had, namely, the righteousness which is by faith,—but they refused to be made free, and were therefore destroyed.

The Condemnation of the Law

Still further: We have seen that men are bound in prison because of sin. Said Paul,

Romans 7

¹⁴ The law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Now,

1 John 3

⁴ ...sin is the transgression of the law.

And therefore it is the transgressed law that shuts men up in prison. David said,

Psalms 119

⁴⁵ I will walk at liberty; for I seek your precepts.

But when he turned aside from the commandments he was at once bound as a criminal. This bondage in which the transgressed law holds its victims until they accept freedom in Christ, is most forcibly indicated by Paul in the following words:

Galatians 3

²² But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

²³ But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

It is well known that human law casts its violators into prison. The sheriff who arrests the criminal, the judge who

sentences him, and the jailer who locks him up, are only the agents of the law. The massive bolts and prison walls simply represent the outraged law. Now notice the parallel in the case of a transgressor of divine law. Having willfully sinned, he is justly accounted guilty of a violation of the whole law:

James 2

¹⁰ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

For a time he is unconscious of his bondage. Said Paul,

Romans 7

⁹ I was alive without the law once.

The office of the Spirit is to make men conscious of this bondage:

John 16

⁸ And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

It does this by bringing the word home to their hearts, for the Bible is the Spirit's sword. Some, it is true, resist the influence of the Spirit, and never become conscious of their need until it is too late. But we will consider the case of one upon whom the Spirit works effectually.

As the truth is impressed upon his heart, his prison walls seem to contract about him. Whereas before he thought he had unlimited freedom, he now finds that he is in a narrow cell, the walls of which are the ten commandments. He resolves that he will be free, and starts out in one direction. But he has taken the name of the Lord in vain, and the third commandment says,

“You can't get out here.”

He turns in another direction, but he has borne false witness, and the ninth commandment presents an effectual barrier to his escape in that direction. Whichever way he turns, a

commandment, stronger than any earthly prison wall, drives him back. He is shut in on every side.

Freedom Through Christ

But Christ is the door that ever stands open. Toward this door the enclosing walls seem to drive him, and he is shut up to it as the only avenue of escape. At last he escapes through this door, and becomes in Christ a free man. In Christ he is as though he had never sinned, and in Him he is,

2 Corinthians 5

²¹ ...made the righteousness of God.

That is, he becomes a commandment-keeper, and therefore continually walks at liberty. He has now only to...

Galatians 5

¹ Stand fast in the liberty wherewith God has made him free.

One more point. Christ is the...

Micah 4

⁸ ...tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion.

Now turn to the exhortation of the prophet:

Zechariah 9

¹¹ As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.

¹² Turn to the strong hold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.

The blood of the covenant is still offered before the throne of God, and is powerful enough to set every prisoner free. Therefore we are all prisoners of hope. We may all be free if we will. No matter how high our sins may seem to be piled up against us, backed by the law of God, we need not despair, for:

1 John 1

⁷ ...the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin;

and,

Romans 5

²⁰ Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound.

15. The Suffering Saviour

Signs of the Times, December 3, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, December 13

Isaiah 53:1-12

A. T. Jones

THIS prophecy really begins with verse 13 of the preceding chapter.

Isaiah 52

¹³ Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

Altogether, it is a most vivid description of the life, sufferings, and death of Christ the Saviour. The Lord showed by His prophets, not only that the Saviour should come, but the time when He should come, the place where He should be born, and here, by Isaiah, the leading particulars and characteristics of His career while in this world.

In verse 14 of the preceding chapter we read of the effects upon Him of His fast in the wilderness:

¹⁴ His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.

Men may talk of men's fasting forty days, and count it as detracting from the merit of that fast of our Saviour; but the fact still remains that the condition to which our Saviour was reduced by his forty days' fast was lower than that which was ever reached by any man that was ever in this world, who lived after it.

¹⁴ His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.

Isaiah 53

¹ Who has believed our report?

Although the Lord had by His prophets foreshown the coming, and the manner of the coming, of the Saviour, yet there

were few, very few, to receive Him at His coming.

John 1

¹¹ He came unto His own, and His own received him not.

With what profound and reverent interest should the elders of Israel have been studying the place, the time, the circumstances, of the greatest event in the world's history,—the coming of the Son of God to accomplish the redemption of man! Oh, why were not the people watching and waiting that they might be among the first to welcome the world's Redeemer? But lo, at Bethlehem two weary travelers from the hills of Nazareth traverse the whole length of the narrow street to the eastern extremity of the town, vainly seeking a place of rest and shelter for the night. No doors open to receive them. In a wretched hovel prepared for cattle, they at last find refuge, and there the Saviour of the world is born....

An angel visits the earth to see who are prepared to welcome Jesus. But he can discern no tokens of expectancy. He hears no voice of praise and triumph that the period of Messiah's coming is at hand. The angel hovers for a time over the chosen city and the temple where the divine presence was manifested for ages; but even here is the same indifference. The priests, in their pomp and pride, are offering polluted sacrifices in the temple. The Pharisees are with loud voices addressing the people, or making boastful prayers at the corners of the streets. There is no evidence that Christ is expected, and no preparation for the Prince of life.

In amazement the celestial messenger is about to return to Heaven with the shameful tidings, when he discovers a group of shepherds who are watching their flocks by night, and, as they gaze into the starry heavens, are contemplating the prophecy of a Messiah to come to earth, and longing for the advent of the world's Redeemer. Here is a company that are prepared to receive the heavenly message. And suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared, declaring the good tidings of great joy. Celestial glory flooded all the plain, an innumerable company of angels was revealed, and as if the joy were too great for one messenger to bring from Heaven, a multitude of voices broke forth in the anthem which all the nations of the

saved shall one day sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.”⁴¹¹

We shall not attempt any annotation on any of that part of the lesson from verse 2 to verse 10. In these verses Inspiration himself, out of the depths of divine, pitying love, has described the sufferings, the afflictions, and the sorrows of the Holy One, who died for the children of men, and to attempt an “exposition” would be but to mar the beauty and the blessed symmetry of the description. We will, however, transcribe these verses, and whoever reads them, we ask him to read them over slowly, thoughtfully, three times.

Isaiah 53

² For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

³ He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to His own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth.

⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken.

⁴¹¹ Ellen White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume Four (1884), Chapter XII “God Honors the Humble,” p. 197-198.

⁹ And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when you shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

Isaiah 53

¹¹ He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.

That is, he shall see the fruits of His suffering, and shall be satisfied. Satisfied?

- Could He not be satisfied with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was?⁴¹²
- Could he not be satisfied with His place upon that throne “high and lifted up,”⁴¹³ where Isaiah saw Him?
- Could He not be satisfied with the worshipful song of the seraphim crying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory”⁴¹⁴?

Was not all this enough to satisfy Him? No, not while man was lost in this world of sin.

Hebrews 12

² For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame.

And when He shall have gathered to himself all of the fruits of His sufferings, from “sacrificing Abel” to the last one, then He “shall be satisfied;” then His joy will be full; then will be fulfilled His saying,

Hebrews 2

¹² I will declare your name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto You.

⁴¹² *John* 17:5.

⁴¹³ *Isaiah* 6:1.

⁴¹⁴ *Isaiah* 6:3.

And again:

Zephaniah 3

¹⁷ The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.

Do you want to share that joy, as well as add to it? Gather souls to Christ. increase the fruits of His suffering by bringing souls to His salvation, and you will increase His joy; then it will be said to you,

Matthew 25

²¹ Enter into the joy of your Lord.

Oh, you suffering, afflicted, sorrowing Saviour! If I can add one ray of gladness to that fair brow that was pierced with the cruel thorns, I shall be satisfied. If I can add one beam of satisfaction to that visage that was so married more than any man, I shall be delighted. If I can add one thrill of joy to that great heart of love that was broken with the ingratitude of men, my joy shall be full.

Isaiah 53

¹² Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.

Satan is the strong one who has spoiled the human race. He brought sin into the world, and death by sin, and has shut up man in his prison-house—the grave. And Jesus, in talking of Satan and his house and his power, said:

Matthew 12

²⁹ How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

Satan had the power of death.⁴¹⁵ Christ died and went into the grave, and came forth exclaiming:

⁴¹⁵ *Hebrews 2:14.*

Revelation 1

¹⁸ I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen; and have the keys [the power] of hell [the grave] and of death.

Now He will bring forth all who have gone down to the grave trusting in Him. And when He went into the land of the enemy, and returned a conqueror, He brought forth some spoils to grace His triumph, and soon will bring all.

Matthew 27

⁵² And many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

⁵³ And came out of the graves after His resurrection.

Colossians 2

¹⁵ And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

And,

Ephesians 4 [margin]

⁸ When He ascended up on high, He led a multitude of captives.

In this text, *Colossians 2:15*, Paul uses the figure of a Roman triumph. When a Roman commander had gone into an enemy's country, and had seized the power, when he returned he brought captives and spoils to immense value to his capital city; and then he was awarded a triumph, wherein he should be exalted on high, and following in his train were all the captives and spoils which he had taken.

So when Christ went into Satan's country, and, as we have seen, seized the power, when He returned He brought a multitude of captives, who graced His triumph as He returned to His glorious city.

But that was only the beginning, that was but a foretaste; soon He comes to gather all His saints together unto Him; then when the righteous dead arise, and the righteous living

are changed, and caught up to meet Him in the air;⁴¹⁶ then when He returns with all His ransomed throng there will be a triumph indeed. And He deserves it.

Isaiah 53

¹² Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

⁴¹⁶ *1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.*

16. All We Like Sheep

Present Truth, April 2, 1896

Original title: Front Page

Isaiah 53:6

E. J. Waggoner

Isaiah 53

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

WE HAVE turned every one to his own way, because we regarded our way as better than the Lord's way. The fact shows that we have regarded our own judgment as better than the Lord's judgment. Thus we find it to be a fact that every man naturally thinks himself above and better than the Lord. So,

2 Thessalonians 2

³ ...that man of sin,...the son of perdition,

⁴ Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped,

—is simply the full development of human nature. Our turning to our own way is therefore a direct insult to the Lord.

Isaiah 53

³ He is despised and rejected of men...

By what men is He despised? By all men—by us; for:

³ ...we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

We ourselves have done this. The insults that were heaped on Christ in Herod's judgment hall; the crown of thorns; the spitting and the blows in the face; and the cross itself, are all chargeable to us.

⁶ The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.

When we remember this, we may begin to appreciate the

wonderful goodness and forbearance and love of the Lord in giving himself for us. Forgetting all the insults that we have heaped upon Him, His hand is stretched out still, and His gentle voice pleads,

Matthew 11

²⁸ Come unto me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

But how shall we come to Him? We all like sheep have gone astray; we have wandered far away from the fold; how shall we know how and where to find Him? Well, in the first place, we must settle it that we cannot come, except as lost sheep. Christ came to save the lost, and He accepts us in our lost condition.

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that You bidd'st me come to Thee,—
O, Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, You will receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe;
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.⁴¹⁷

Yet still the despairing cry is uttered,

“Oh that I knew where I might find Him!”

Our minds may at once be set at rest concerning that.

Acts 17

²⁷ He is not far from every one of us.

He does not stand in His comfortable home, and call us, but He seeks us until He finds us.

Revelation 3

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.

⁴¹⁷ Charlotte Elliott, Hymn: *Just as I Am* (1835).

We have not to hunt for Him; He comes to us, and we have only to accept the salvation that He brings us. For let it never be forgotten that in Him is all fullness. He is not only the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep, but He is the door into the fold, and the fold itself. So, no matter how far away we have wandered, the very moment we yield to the call which He utters close beside us, we are at home. The Shepherd and the fold come to find the sheep; and from lost wanderers, we find ourselves at once in our Father's house. What a blessed encouragement that Jesus has brought heaven itself down to earth for us.

Ephesians 2

⁴ God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us,

⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ (by grace you are saved;)

⁶ And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

17. The Gracious Invitation

Signs of the Times, December 10, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, December 20

Isaiah 55:1-11

A. T. Jones

Isaiah 55

¹ Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

THIS is an invitation to the thirsty of all lands to come to the Fountain of living waters. And no one anywhere who thirsts for this water—no one who desires righteousness—will ever be turned away empty.

Matthew 5

⁶ Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

John 4

¹⁴ Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Isaiah, too, gives the song that all these may sing:

Isaiah 12

¹ And in that day you shall say, O Lord, I will praise you: though You were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.

² Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.

³ Therefore with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation.

This gracious invitation is to all people,—“Ho, every one,”—

Titus 2

¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

Revelation 22

¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Isaiah 55

¹ ...without money and without price.

Romans 3

²⁴ Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

²⁵ Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

Abraham is the “father of the faithful,”⁴¹⁸ and he received that title because he believed God. When God told Abraham to look toward heaven and “tell the stars” if he were able to number them, and that so many—innumerable—should his seed be, Abraham believed it.

Genesis 15

⁶ And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.

Romans 4

²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

²⁴ But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

²⁵ Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

As the Lord said to Abraham, as the number of the stars, “so shall your seed be;” so He says to every man, of his sins,

Isaiah 1

¹⁸ Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

⁴¹⁸ **Romans 4** ¹¹ ...that he [Abraham] might be the father of all them that believe.

Psalm 68

¹³ Though you have lien among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.

And as Abraham believed God in that, so much we believe God in this. And as in that Abraham's belief was counted to him for righteousness, so in this our belief is counted to us for righteousness. So Abraham became the father of the faithful.

Galatians 3

²⁹ And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Isaiah 55

² Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread?

It may not be exactly the thought that was in the mind of the prophet; but we would take occasion to remark upon this, that multitudes of people, and those who suppose themselves Christian people too, not only spend their money for that which is not bread, but spend it for that which is worse than no bread.

Tobacco, for instance—why do you spend your money for that? It simply creates an appetite that destroys the will and makes an idolater of him that uses it.

Why do you spend your money for gold and jewels, rings and ear-rings, and to keep pace with all the foibles and fashion and the ways of the world? It is simply to foster pride, and the desire to please the world rather than to please God.

1 John 2

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And it is...

2 Corinthians 4

⁴ ...the god of this world, which blinds the minds of them that believe not.

Shall the Lord be your God? or shall the god of this world be your god? Why do you spend...

Isaiah 55

² ...your labor for that which satisfies not?

John 6

²⁷ Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.

Spend your money for that which will spread among men the love and glory of Christ. Labor to show forth the virtues of God, and the graces of the Spirit of Christ. Labor to adorn the doctrine of God, and not your own person. And then when He who searches the heart, shall reward every man...

Jeremiah 32

¹⁹ ...according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings,

–you will find that you have labored for “that meat which endures unto everlasting life.” Then it will be seen that you have labored for that upon which you can feed to all eternity, and for that which “satisfies” indeed.

Psalms 91

¹⁶ With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

Isaiah 55

⁶ Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.

This plainly suggests a time when the Lord may not be found even though He be sought for, and when He will not be

near even though He be called upon. Men may talk eloquently about the gospel continuing forever; about the world becoming converted; and all such imaginary things. But the angel of God...

Revelation 10

⁶ ...swore by Him that lives forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that...

⁷ ...the mystery of God should be finished.

The mystery of God is the gospel of Christ; it is the work of Christ in this salvation of men.

1 Timothy 3

¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Christ declared repeatedly that this world will end, and that it will end in wickedness, such as was in the days of Noah, and which had to be swept from the earth by the furious flood. In all the Bible the end of the world is spoken of in no other way than as ending in wickedness. And the doctrine of the conversion of the world is only an invention of Satan to blind the eyes of the children of men, that they may not see the dangers and duties of the last days, as they are portrayed in the faithful word. There is to be a...

Isaiah 61

² ...day of vengeance of our God,

—and that day of vengeance begins when...

2 Corinthians 6

² ...the day of salvation,...

Isaiah 61

² ...the acceptable year of the Lord,

-ends.

Psalm 75

⁸ In the hand of the Lord there is a cup,...

Psalm 116

¹³ ...cup of salvation,...

Psalm 75

⁸ ...and He pours out of the same...

-to all who will accept the gracious invitation. But when the dregs of that cup are reached, then these are poured...

Revelation 14

¹⁰ ...into the cup of His indignation,

-and

Psalm 75

⁸ ...all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.

All who will not willingly and freely drink of the “cup of salvation,” will be compelled to drink deeply of the “cup of indignation.”⁴¹⁹

Jeremiah 25

²⁸ And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at your hand to drink, then shall you say unto them, Thus says the Lord of hosts, You shall certainly drink.

Then will be the time spoken of in *Proverbs* 1:24-33, when the Lord may not be found, neither will He hear:

Proverbs 1

²⁴ Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

²⁵ But you have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof;

²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes;

⁴¹⁹ See also *Revelation* 15:1; 16:1-21; *Jeremiah* 25:15-33.

²⁷ When your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish comes upon you.

²⁸ Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me;

²⁹ For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord:

³⁰ They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

Isaiah 55

⁶ Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon Him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Ezekiel 33

¹¹ As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die?

Micah 7

¹⁸ For the Lord delights in mercy.

The wicked man is to forsake his ways and learn the way of God. He is to forsake his thoughts, and learn the thoughts of God. These he must learn by the Spirit of God, which the Lord gives to those who will forsake their sins, and ask Him to guide them into the way of His thoughts; for,

Psalms 92

⁵ His thoughts are very deep.

1 Corinthians 2

¹⁰ But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.

¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God.

¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

¹⁴ But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

There is no way right but the Lord's way, and to find that way we must first forsake our own way. There are no right thoughts but the Lord's thoughts, and to find those thoughts we must first forsake our own thoughts.

Isaiah 55

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

18. Height of Mercy

Signs of the Times, June 23, 1890

Notes on the International Lesson, June 29

Isaiah 55:8-13

E. J. Waggoner

THIS being the close of the quarter, the choice is given of reviewing or of substituting a lesson on temperance or on missions. The scripture suggested for one of the substituted lessons is *Isaiah* 55:8-13, and on this a few comments will be made. The text reads thus:

Isaiah 55

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

¹¹ So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

¹² For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

The text quoted begins with “for,” indicating that it is a conclusion from something preceding. The sixth and seventh verses contain an exhortation:

⁶ Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near:

⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Then naturally follows the statement,

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,...

The unrighteous man is to forsake his thoughts, because they are not the thoughts of God. From this we learn the wonderful fact that men must think the thoughts of God, in order to please Him. What are the thoughts of God? It is evident that we must be able to determine this, to some extent at least, or else we should not know whether or not to forsake the thoughts that we have, as not being His thoughts.

Since the Bible is the word of God, it is plain that it must express His thought. In it we find what He thinks of different actions of men. But that which is most specifically the thought of God is His law, the ten commandments. This is His revealed will, comprehending in itself all that is drawn out in detail in the various books of the Bible.

The law of God is a law of love. It was given as love.

Deuteronomy 33

² And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went a fiery law for them.

³ Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in your hand: and they sat down at your feet; every one shall receive of your words.

The object of it is love.

1 Timothy 1

⁵ Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.

Love is the fulfilling of it.

Romans 13

¹⁰ Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The keeping of the commandments is the only complete manifestation of the love of God.

1 John 5

³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.

And it is in vain that anybody makes a profession of love to God, while he does not keep His commandments.

John 14

¹⁵ If you love me, keep my commandments.

Luke 6

⁴⁶ And why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

From these Scripture facts we may know that when the apostle Paul says that...

1 Corinthians 13

⁵ Love thinks no evil,

—he means that perfect obedience to the law of God consists in being free from evil thoughts. This must necessarily follow, because the law of God is the thoughts of God.

These thoughts are as much higher than the thoughts of the natural man as the heaven is higher than the earth. Therefore when a man fully turns to the Lord, his thoughts must be elevated as much as from earth to heaven.

And this one point shows the exceeding greatness of God's law, and how far short of it all men come. Men in their self-righteousness may boast, like the Pharisee, over those whom they regard as great sinners, but their boasting is vain, for, while there are indeed degrees of sin, the difference in the guilt of different men, when compared with that heavenly

standard, the law of God, is only as the difference in the height of different trees on earth compared with the distance of earth from the farthest star.

The statement that as the heavens are high above the earth so are God's thoughts higher than our thoughts, may remind us that the heavens themselves may enable us to think God's thoughts after Him. As the law of God is an expression of God's thoughts as to morals, so the material universe is an expression of God's thoughts in concrete form.

Psalm 19

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork.

In them we see what great thoughts God had to mind when he planned the universe. They show His eternal power and godhead, and thus are an aid in lifting our thoughts to the level of God's, in the realm of morals. Surely it is impossible for a person to gaze upon the heavens thoughtfully, and with reverent recognition of their Creator, and at the same time to harbor evil thoughts.

But there is comfort as well as instruction in the fact that God's thoughts are as much higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. It is in connection with the statement that God will "abundantly pardon" those who turn to Him. Now of His thoughts toward us we read:

Jeremiah 29

¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

His thoughts toward us are thoughts of peace, and they are as much higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. This agrees with the statement in:

Psalm 36

⁵ Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and your faithfulness

reaches unto the clouds.

Also:

Psalm 108

⁴ For your mercy is great above the heavens; and your truth reaches unto the clouds.

And:

Psalm 103

¹¹ For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.

It would be well sometimes if doubting souls could think of their own good traits in contrast with those of God. I do not mean for them to think how evil they are, but to rate at a fair value any good qualities they may possess, and then, holding to that valuation, think in how infinitely greater degree those same good qualities exist in God.

For instance, take the quality of mercy; let a man think how he would receive one who, having injured him, comes to him with tears in his eyes, making a humble confession, and asking pardon. There are few who would even wait for the penitent one to finish his confession before assuring him of full pardon. His thoughts toward him would be all kindness; but God's thoughts are as much higher than ours as heaven is higher than earth. God is as much more merciful than man as He is greater. Whoever will institute such a comparison as this, will become ashamed of his own thoughts.

That which should be of special encouragement in the line of missionary effort is the statement that God's word will accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto He sends it. This does not mean that it will result in the conversion of the whole world. The word of God has been as powerful in every age of the world as it is now, or as it ever will be; yet in no age of the world, not even when the word was incarnate, have even a large minority of people acknowl-

edged God.

It is true, however, that even then it accomplished God's purpose. It gathered out of the multitude a people for His name, and left the remainder without excuse. Of one thing we may be sure, that the word will prosper. Therefore consecrated effort to spread abroad a knowledge of the word will not be in vain.

Ecclesiastes 11

⁶ In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand; for you know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

It is certain that either this effort or that will prosper, and there is a possibility that both may yield abundant returns. And the few from every age, who have heeded the word of God, will at last form a great multitude whom no man can number, who...

Matthew 8

¹¹ ...shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God,

Isaiah 35

¹⁰ [When] the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads,

—and the whole earth shall resound with the praises of God.

19. Hope in Lamentations

Present Truth, September 18, 1902

Original title: Back Page

Lamentations 3:24-26

E. J. Waggoner

Lamentations 3

²⁴ The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore will I hope in Him.

²⁵ The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.

²⁶ It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

THIS is from the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*; if we are Christians indeed, knowing the Lord, we shall make all our lamentations in the same way.

20. The New Heart

Present Truth, July 27, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Ezekiel 36:25-36

E. J. Waggoner

IN ORDER that we may get the most possible benefit from this study, we will quote the portion of Scripture that it covers, beginning one verse back. It reads thus:

Ezekiel 36

²⁴ I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

²⁵ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

²⁶ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them.

²⁸ And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

²⁹ I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.

³⁰ And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that you shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

³¹ Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

³² Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

³³ Thus says the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be built.

³⁴ And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.

³⁵ And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.

³⁶ Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that which was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.

There are some gracious promises in this lesson that can be appreciated by everybody; but the full benefit of it cannot be obtained without some knowledge of what has gone before. It is always a difficult matter to take a text out of its connection and to treat it as it deserves. A very brief outline of the conditions under which this scripture was written, and of God's purpose concerning Israel, will be of value both in this lesson and in the two that follow.

God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt in fulfillment of the promise made in the covenant with Abraham.⁴²⁰ That covenant was confirmed in Christ⁴²¹ and could be fulfilled only through His death and resurrection. In the inspired thanksgiving of Zacharias, the father of John the forerunner of Christ, we learn that Israel's being saved from their enemies, and from the hand of all that hated them was in performance of the promise of God to the fathers, and His covenant with Abraham, and their deliverance from their enemies was in order that they might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.⁴²²

Their life, moreover, was to be everlasting, because the covenant made with Abraham was an everlasting covenant, and the promise was that he and his seed should have the land for an everlasting possession, which would involve their

⁴²⁰ See *Exodus* 6:2-8.

⁴²¹ *Galatians* 3:16-17.

⁴²² *Luke* 1:71-75.

living for ever.⁴²³

When the promise was made to Abraham, he was distinctly told that he should die before the land could be possessed,⁴²⁴ and Stephen tells us that he had not so much of the land as to set his foot on, although God had promised it to him.

Now since no word of God can fail, it necessarily follows that the inheritance which God promised to Abraham and his seed was only such an inheritance as can be obtained through the resurrection from the dead. This appears in the words of Paul when he stood before Agrippa:

Acts 16

⁶ Now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers unto which promise our twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come.

⁷ For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

⁸ Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

Every promise, therefore, to place Israel in their own land, involves the resurrection of the dead. The nature of the true Israel must also be borne in mind.

Romans 9

⁶ They are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

⁷ Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall your seed be called.

⁸ That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

The children of promise are counted for the seed, because the word was...

⁷ ...in Isaac shall your seed be called.

⁴²³ *Genesis 17:6-8.*

⁴²⁴ *Genesis 15:1-16.*

Isaac was the child of promise, and he was born after the Spirit;⁴²⁵ therefore as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.⁴²⁶

Galatians 3

²⁹ And if you be Christ's then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Only Christians indeed, therefore, those who are born of the Spirit, and who walk after the Spirit, are children of Abraham, and Israelites indeed. They are those in whom there is no guile.⁴²⁷

Romans 2

²⁸ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

²⁹ But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

The children of Israel might have received the fullness of the promise soon after they left Egypt, for God was leading them to the Mountain of His inheritance, the place which He had made for them to dwell in, even the Sanctuary which His hands have established;⁴²⁸ and this is in the heavens,⁴²⁹ in the New Jerusalem which is above,

Galatians 4

²⁶ ...the mother of us all.

But they did not believe, and therefore they could not enter in.⁴³⁰ Ever since their failure, the promise has been left to us.⁴³¹ David was king over all Israel in the land of promise, yet

⁴²⁵ *Galatians* 4:22-29.

⁴²⁶ *Romans* 8:14-17.

⁴²⁷ *John* 1:47.

⁴²⁸ *Exodus* 15:17.

⁴²⁹ *Hebrews* 8:1-2.

⁴³⁰ *Hebrews* 3:18-19.

⁴³¹ *Hebrews* 4:1.

when he sat in his house,

2 Samuel 7

¹ ...and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies,

God said to him,

¹⁰ I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more as beforetime.

And when David was delivering the kingdom over to Solomon, at the time when it was greatest, he said, in the presence and on behalf of all the princes and rulers of Israel:

1 Chronicles 29

¹⁵ We are strangers before You, and sojourners, as were all our fathers.

It is only by taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name, through the Gospel, that God builds up the house of David.⁴³² Christ is the One by whom the kingdom is to be restored to Israel, for:

Luke 1

³² The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David:

³³ And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

Ezekiel prophesied at the time of the captivity of Israel. Long before the time when the scripture that we are studying was written, he had said to Zedekiah, whose name was a reminder of his rebellion against God,

Ezekiel 21

²⁵ You profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end,

²⁶ Thus says the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off

⁴³² Acts 15:14-18.

the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low,
and abase him that is high.

²⁷ I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no
more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.

When the kingdom passed from Zedekiah to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, three overturnings or revolutions were foretold, which should give the dominion successively to Medo-Persia, Grecia, and Rome: then there should be no more world revolutions until the coming of Christ, who will destroy all the kingdoms of the earth, and scatter them like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, so that no place will be found for them, and will then reign for ever over an earth made new.⁴³³

We know, therefore, that the promises in this vision pertain to the work and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Certain it is that since the days of Ezekiel the Jewish people have never had a place of their own, so that the promise has not yet been fulfilled. It was not fulfilled by the return of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, and can be fulfilled only in Christ and His coming.

With this explanation, there need not much be said on the text before us, since it is straightforward reading. God promises to take His people from among the heathen, and bring them into their own land. The land which belongs to the people of God is no part of...

Galatians 1

⁴ ...this present evil world,

–from which they are delivered by the death of Christ, but the country for which faithful Abraham looked,

Hebrews 11

¹⁶ ...that is, a heavenly.

In gathering them from among the heathen, to bring them

⁴³³ See *Daniel* 2:44-45; *2 Peter* 3:10-13.

into their own land, God sprinkles clean water, even the pure water of life, upon His people, to cleanse them from all their iniquities.

1 John 1

⁷ The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses, us from all sin,

–and the Spirit and the water and the blood agree in one.⁴³⁴

The clean water with which God sprinkles His people as He gathers them is the blood of Christ. This cleansing is a thorough one, and since the filthiness which we have contracted among the heathen permeates us completely our cleansing involves an entirely new creation. God has to give us a new heart, which means a new life,

Proverbs 4

²³ ...for out of the heart are the issues of life.

2 Corinthians 5 [RV]

¹⁷ If any man be in Christ there is a new creation.

He promises to put His Spirit in us, so that we shall walk in His statutes, and keep His commandments; for the law is spiritual. Then, says God,

Ezekiel 36

²⁸ ...you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Compare this with the promise of the new covenant,⁴³⁵ and the promise to Abraham.⁴³⁶ The heathen will see the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and his Seed, for they will all come up and surround the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, after it comes down from God out of heaven.⁴³⁷

The people of God, redeemed from all their enemies, even from the last and greatest enemy, death, will go forth from the New Jerusalem over the renewed earth, and build cities and

⁴³⁴ 1 John 5:8.

⁴³⁵ Jeremiah 31:33-34.

⁴³⁶ Exodus 6:6-8.

⁴³⁷ Revelation 20:7-9.

inhabit them, and plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.⁴³⁸

It is true that before they go forth the wicked will be destroyed in the fire that renews the earth; but the heathen will nevertheless know that the Lord builds the waste and desolate and ruined cities, for they will see the proof of it in the New Jerusalem, which will stand upon the site of the old city, only greatly enlarged.⁴³⁹

Ezekiel 36

³² Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God.

This is humiliating, and may well cause us to be ashamed and confounded, but is wonderfully encouraging. The reason why so many people become discouraged, and doubt the possibility of their salvation, is that they think that it is their own worthiness that must be taken into account.

“I am too unworthy for the Lord to take notice of me.”

“I am so sinful that the Lord surely will not receive me.”

These are common expressions. Now comes the most comforting assurance that our unworthiness has nothing to do with the case. It is not for our sakes, but for His own sake, that the Lord forgives our sins.

Isaiah 43

²⁵ I even I am He that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins.

So we can say with all boldness and assurance:

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that You bidd'st me come to Thee;
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁸ *Isaiah* 65:17-23.

⁴³⁹ *Zechariah* 14:1-9; *Isaiah* 49:18-22.

⁴⁴⁰ Charlotte Elliott, Hymn: *Just as I Am* (1835).

21. The Necessity of a New Heart

Present Truth, August 24, 1893

Ezekiel 36:26-28

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN the Lord would cleanse His people,—those who professed to be serving Him,—from all their idols and their filthiness,⁴⁴¹ He said to them,

Ezekiel 36

²⁶ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them.

²⁸ And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

This is the only way that any person can be brought into a condition where he can walk in the statutes of God, and keep His judgments. He must experience a change of heart. The same thing is declared in the 31st chapter of *Jeremiah*.

Jeremiah 31

³¹ Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

³² Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt...

³³ But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The Israelites had the law of God written upon tables of stone and preserved in the sacred ark. They had heard the law spoken from the summit of Mt. Sinai by the voice of God, and

⁴⁴¹ *Ezekiel* 36:25.

had heard it repeated by Moses; but they did not have it written upon their hearts, and the result was they did not keep it. The record of their lives is a record of transgression, of worshipping idols, and other iniquitous practices by which they violated the Divine statutes and judgments. They intended to keep them, and professed to be keeping them; perhaps even persuaded themselves that they were keeping them; but they were not.

The conditions under which they tried to serve God made the keeping of His law an impossibility to them. Not that these conditions were imposed upon them; they were simply the conditions of every man in his natural state. The law of God was not written in their hearts. They were hardened through unbelief, so that their hearts would not receive the impress of the principles of God's great moral code.

A change of heart is the great requisite felt by the repentant sinner as he turns to God.

Psalm 51

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Thus David prayed after he had gone in the way of the carnal heart and grievously sinned against God; and his prayer is echoed by every repentant soul. The clean heart for which he prayed is one upon which is written the principles of righteousness.

All who are truly converted have these principles upon their hearts, the agency by which they are written being the Spirit of God. Thus Paul writes to the church at Corinth:

2 Corinthians 3

³ You are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.

As the heart is, so is the life; for...

Matthew 12

³⁴ Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

It was the apostle's trust that the Corinthian brethren would in their lives be an epistle unto their fellow-men, wherein would be read the virtues of Christ and the power of God unto the salvation of believers. All persons who have the Divine law written in their hearts will be the epistles of Christ.

The Jews among whom Christ walked when upon the earth had the law of God everywhere about them, but in the one place where its living principles were most needed it was absent. It was held up before them in their synagogues; they wore it in letters upon their garments; they had it in their minds, so that they could repeat it from memory; but they were constant and flagrant violators of its requirements.

Matthew 23

²⁵ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

This was the stern denunciation upon them from the lips of Jesus.

²⁵ ...you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

No one ever made a greater outward show of piety and reverence for God than did the Pharisees, yet all that did not save them from the most terrible condemnation. Neither will it avail anymore for the most respectable professor of Christianity today, who has not experienced the needed change of heart.

All along from their day to ours, the devil has led men to try to be servants of God without undergoing this change; and it has been one of his most successful devices. He has led men to think that if they kept the law of God often before their eyes and upon their lips, they would be living about as

God would have them. So they have surrounded themselves with pictures of the Saviour and the names connected with His ministry, and with images of himself and His mother and the apostles and “saints,” they have wore crucifixes upon their breast—as the Pharisees wore the law upon their phylacteries—and in every way by their surroundings and outward practices endeavoured to convince themselves and others that they were the true servants of God.

But however well they succeeded in deceiving themselves and their fellow-men, they did not in the least deceive God. His eye read their hearts, and He knew who were His and who were mere pious hypocrites, like the scribes and Pharisees. He knew whether they were His subjects at heart, or whether forms and ceremonies and imposing houses of worship and pictures and images served only to hide the secret iniquity of hearts that were still carnal. Jesus said,

Luke 17

²¹ The kingdom of God is within you.

It is Christ dwelling in the heart by faith;⁴⁴² it is God dwelling with the spirit that is humble and contrite.⁴⁴³ We may have the precepts of God upon the walls of our churches and our homes, and upon the tablets of our memories, and sounding often in our ears—and all this is proper and well; but if they be not written upon our hearts we are but subjects of the kingdom of darkness.

John 3

³ Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

⁴⁴² *Ephesians* 3:17.

⁴⁴³ *Isaiah* 57:15.

22. The Gathering of Israel: Ezekiel's Great Vision

Present Truth, August 3, 1899

Subtitle: The Resurrection, and the Restoration of Israel

Ezekiel 37:1-14

E. J. Waggoner

Ezekiel 37

¹ The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

² And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.

³ And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, You know.

⁴ Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O you dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

⁵ Thus says the Lord God unto these bones: behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live:

⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

⁸ And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.

⁹ Then He said unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus says the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

¹¹ Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. [Revised

Version: "We are clean cut off.]"

¹² Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus says the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

¹³ And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

¹⁴ And shall put my spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall you know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, says the Lord.

THE most cursory reading of this chapter is sufficient to show that it deals with the resurrection of the dead. It is a most literal description of that event. Someone will say that it is a representation of the restoration of the Jews to their own land. That is exactly the truth, for that is what the text itself says; but it also tells us that the restoration is to be effected by the resurrection.

In the eleventh verse the children of Israel are represented as saying that they are clean out off. Death cuts man off from the face of the earth, and is apparently the destruction of his hope; for the promise is that the children of Abraham shall inherit the earth, yet they die without having any share in it. Accordingly the scoffers say,

2 Peter 3

⁴ Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

But,

Proverbs 14

³² The righteous has hope in his death.

The Apostle Paul writes:

1 Thessalonians 4

¹³ I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning

them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first,...

The promise of the land to Abraham included, and was based upon, the resurrection, and Abraham so understood it, else he could not have died in faith, not having received the promise.

The children whom Herod slew in order to kill the infant Jesus represent all the dead children of Israel. Rachel, the wife of Jacob, is represented as weeping for her children; but all the children of Israel are her children just as much as were the innocent babes who were slaughtered by the tyrant. Now read what is said of the death of her children:

Jeremiah 31

¹⁵ Thus says the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

¹⁶ Thus says the Lord; Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

¹⁷ And there is hope in your end, says the Lord, that your children shall come again to their own border.

1 Corinthians 15

²⁶ The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Those who are dead are in the land of the enemy, but God has promised that they shall come from that land, and shall

return “to their own border.” So we see that the return of the children of Israel to their own border, to their own land, is by the resurrection of the dead. That is the hope of Israel. The Apostle Paul was seized and bound by the unbelieving Jews because he preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and he said,

Acts 28

²⁰ For the hope of Israel am I bound with this chain,

—and to another congregation of the Jews he said,

Acts 23

⁶ Of the hope and resurrection of the dead am I called in question.

There is therefore no hope for Israel except in the resurrection at the coming of the Lord; but that hope is a...

1 Peter 1

³ ...lively hope, [to which we are] begotten...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Christ’s resurrection is the surety of the general resurrection. And from this we may learn that every righteous person is counted as Israel, and will be included in the restoration; for it is by the resurrection of the dead, through Christ, that Israel are restored, and what Christ does for one He does for all. There are no people who have some special interest in the death and resurrection of Christ, that others do not have. Since it is by the resurrection of Jesus that the children of Israel are restored to their own land, it follows that everybody who sleeps in Jesus, and is raised from the dead through Him, is an Israelite, waiting to be redeemed from exile in the enemy’s land.

Hebrews 11

⁹ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

¹⁰ For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose

builder and maker is God.

¹² Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Now we know that they did not inherit the promise; for God, in making to Abraham the promise of an innumerable seed and an everlasting inheritance in the land wherein he was a stranger, said to him:

Genesis 15

¹³ Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

¹⁴ And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

¹⁵ And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.

¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

David said,

Psalms 39

¹² I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.

And he repeated this statement when at the height of his power he handed the kingdom over to Solomon.

1 Chronicles 29

¹⁵ For we are strangers before You, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.

All the faithful are alike waiting the return of the Lord, and the resurrection, as the consummation of their hopes. It was by faith in the resurrection of the dead that Abraham offered

Isaac.

Hebrews 11

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

¹⁸ Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed be called:

¹⁹ Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

The prophet says that as he prophesied according to the command of the Lord,

Ezekiel 37

⁷ ...there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

In the *Revised Version* we find “earthquake” in the place of “shaking,” and the margin gives “thundering” in the place of “noise.” This agrees exactly with the description of the resurrection at the coming of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

When Christ died upon the cross,

Matthew 27

⁵¹ ...the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

⁵² And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

⁵³ And came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Three days afterward,

Matthew 28

² There was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

So we see that the resurrection of the dead is accompanied by an earthquake.

It is by the breath of God that men live.

Genesis 2

⁷ The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Acts 17

²⁵ He gives to all life, and breath, and all things.

Job 12

¹⁰ In [His] hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.

Job said:

Job 27

³ All the while my breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils;

⁴ My lips shall not speak wickedness.

If He thought only of himself; if He gathered and kept to himself His Spirit and His breath; all flesh would perish together, and man would turn again unto dust.⁴⁴⁴ He takes away the breath of man and beast, and they die, and return to their dust; but He sends forth His Spirit, and they are created, and He renews the face of the earth.

Accordingly God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the wind, and say,

Ezekiel 37

⁹ Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

From this we see that the wind that plays upon our cheeks, and that refreshes us as we draw full inspirations into our lungs, is the breath of God. Surely it is so, because we breathe

⁴⁴⁴ See *Job* 24:14-15.

the air, and yet we have the breath of God in our nostrils. Our breath is the same as Adam's. Adam's breath the second moment that he lived, and the third, and the fourth, and so on, was exactly the same as the first moment.

Moreover, neither Adam nor any of his descendants has ever had any power over the breath, either to start it or stop it.⁴⁴⁵ It comes involuntarily. For a minute, by a great effort, we may hold our breath, and then it will come in spite of us. No man could commit suicide by voluntarily refusing to breathe. The breath comes arbitrarily while we are asleep and entirely unconscious.

Therefore it is plain that not only did God breathe the breath of life into Adam's nostrils in the beginning, but that He continued doing so, and has performed the same operation for every man that has ever lived, every moment of his life.

How near God is to us! So near that we can feel His breath in our faces; so near that He is face to face with us, breathing into our nostrils. How real it is that:

Acts 17

²⁷ He is not far from every one of us.

And He is just as near us when we fall asleep in death; for all the righteous ones...

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁴ ...sleep in Jesus,

—and the same breath that keeps us in life now will revive the dead from their sleep in the grave.

John 5

²⁸ The hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice,

²⁹ And shall come forth.

And this resurrection from the dead is but the same process

⁴⁴⁵ *Ecclesiastes* 8:8.

by which those who are dead in trespasses and sins are now quickened, and made to pass from death to life. Therefore we may know that if we believe God the life of righteousness will be just as easy as breathing, for that is what will give it to us.

Romans 1

¹⁷ The just shall live by faith,

–but every man, whether just or otherwise, lives by breathing; therefore that which makes a man righteous is the fact that he breathes by faith. Our hope in Christ and His resurrection rests in the fact that God has surrounded the earth with an atmosphere of grace.

23. The River of Salvation

Present Truth, August 10, 1899

Ezekiel 47:1-12

E. J. Waggoner

PROBABLY the last chapters of the book of *Ezekiel* are less understood than any other equal portion of the Bible, and they are doubtless the most difficult part of the book. Referring to the 40th chapter, where the trying portion begins, we find that the prophet was in the visions of God brought...

Ezekiel 40

² ...into the land of Israel, and set upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.

This was in the 14th year after the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Now the Lord had already said through Ezekiel⁴⁴⁶ that when Zedekiah ceased to reign, the kingdom of Israel should be no more,

Ezekiel 21

²⁷ ...until He come whose right it is.

Therefore we must conclude that the description of the city and temple which is given in the last chapters of *Ezekiel* is not a portrayal of something that was for the Jews in their state as one of the nations of earth, but that it refers to the new earth, and is something that will be the portion of all who are saved.

It is true that there are difficult passages in the description, which seem irreconcilable with this presentation, but we must remember that a difficulty is not an argument against the truth. In the writings of the Apostle Paul there are...

2 Peter 3

¹⁶ ...some things hard to be understood,

—but that is no fault of the writings themselves. It is our dullness and slowness of comprehension, that makes the

⁴⁴⁶ *Ezekiel* 21:25-27.

Scriptures difficult.

The only way to understand difficult passages of the Bible is to hold fast to certain firmly-established principles. The plain facts of the Gospel are always the same, and must never be lost sight of. It must also be remembered that the whole Bible is given for the purpose of revealing God to men, and that this is done only through the cross; so that wherever we read, we may be sure that there is something that concerns the great work of salvation. Nothing is placed in the Bible merely to satisfy curiosity, or as a mere matter of history.

Romans 15

⁴ Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

In this chapter of *Ezekiel*, therefore, we may be sure that there is something to give us hope. Holding fast to the truth that we know, we shall gradually come to an understanding of those things that are at present obscure. After reading *Ezekiel* 40:2 read:

Psalms 48

¹ Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness.

² Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

It was to this place that God was leading the children of Israel when He took them from Egypt.

Exodus 15

¹⁷ You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for yourself to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

It is this place which Ezekiel saw, and which he has described for us with so much minuteness that our minds are overwhelmed. Of the place which Ezekiel saw, God said to

him:

Ezekiel 43

⁷ Son of man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever.

It is when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and there is a new heaven and a new earth, that the voice from heaven says,

Revelation 21

³ Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

So we may be assured that what we read of in *Ezekiel* pertains to the new earth state. It may be urged that in the course of this description we read of the offering of sacrifices, which is not consistent with the idea that it refers to the new earth state. That is a difficult thing to understand, it is true; but no more so than other statements. For instance, take *Jeremiah* 33:14-18, which undoubtedly refers to the redeemed state. There we read:

Jeremiah 33

¹⁴ Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

¹⁵ In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

¹⁶ In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.

¹⁷ For thus says the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel;

¹⁸ Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.

It is after Christ sits as a Refiner and Purifier of silver, and purifies the sons of Levi,

Malachi 3

³ ...that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

⁴ Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years.

Verses 1 and 2 show that the time referred to is the last days. We must therefore rest content for the present with the fact that there are some things in this connection that we cannot understand, and not let them deprive us of the good of that which is plain, and evidently parallel to other scriptures concerning which there is no chance for a misunderstanding.

The River of Life

And now we can consider the portion of Scripture that is assigned for the lesson, which, however, after we have settled the application of the last part of Ezekiel, as already done, is so plain as to need no comment. The prophet was brought to the door of the house, where he saw the...

Ezekiel 47

¹ ...waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward; for the forefront of the house stood toward the east.

It was...

Genesis 2

⁸ ...eastward in Eden...

—that the Lord planted a garden, and after He had driven man out of the garden,

Genesis 3

²⁴ ...He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword,

—the symbol of His presence. The tabernacle built by Moses,

which was a picture of the temple in heaven, was always pitched facing the east, and the temple of Solomon faced the east. We know also that...

Revelation 22

¹ ...out of the throne of God and of the Lamb [there proceeds] a pure river of water of life.

It is this river, therefore, that we have presented before us in this lesson.

How wide is that river? We may ask that question, because in this lesson the measurements are given, and it is always allowable to ask anything of which the Bible speaks. All we can learn, however, is that it is very wide; for we find from the measurements made by the angel who showed the house to Ezekiel, that the river deepened gradually from the shore for six thousand cubits, or more than a mile, where the water was deep enough to swim in, that is, a man could no longer wade. We may know then that the river of God is of a size commensurate with the greatness of the God from whose throne it flows.

Ezekiel 47

¹² And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine [or “for healing”].

All that is necessary in order to understand the reference here is to read:

Revelation 22

² On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The two passages of Scripture are identical. The tree mentioned by Ezekiel is the tree of life, or, rather, the trees of life, for it is many trees in one, extending along the banks of the river indefinitely. The river is the river of life, for...

Ezekiel 47

⁹ ...every thing shall live whither the river comes.

That river is a real stream, and is flowing today. It is the life of God sent out into all the universe, and wherever it comes there is life even in spite of the death that rests upon this earth.

How little we know of the infinite variety of forms which the life of God can assume. We breathe in the air, we eat it in our food, we drink it in the pure water, we are cheered and strengthened by it as it comes to us in the sunshine, and in many other ways it refreshes us. There are many things that contribute to our existence here, but they are all forms of the one life. All proceed from God, who is our life.

From that river of God, which is full even to overflowing, we drink day by day, since it is from it that the earth is refreshed and made to bring forth fruit.

Psalm 65

⁹ You visit the earth, and water it: You greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water: You prepare them corn, when You have so provided for it.

¹⁰ You water the ridges thereof abundantly: You settle the furrows thereof: You make it soft with showers: You bless the springing thereof.

Every shower that falls upon the earth is but the overflowing of the river of life, which nevertheless never runs dry. From that river we drink, and since it is the life of God, which is righteousness, if we would but recognize God in His gifts, living by faith, we should drink in righteousness every time we quench our thirst.

Only God can supply the desires of mankind.

Psalm 145

¹⁶ You open your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Our hunger and thirst are but cravings for a renewal of the life which comes alone from God; and the drinking of the children of Israel from the rock in the desert, which Rock was Christ,⁴⁴⁷ and the feeding of the five thousand in the wilderness, are demonstrations to us that when we eat and drink we are taking from Christ himself.

So it is God that we are unconsciously longing for when we feel the pangs of hunger and thirst. He satisfies our longings by giving us himself; and if we would remember this, every meal that we eat, and every draught of water that we drink, would be to us healing both of body and soul, even as though we were standing by the throne, looking into the unveiled face of God, and eating and drinking from the tree and the water at life.

⁴⁴⁷ *Exodus 17:5-6; 1 Corinthians 10:4.*

Daniel

Other Resources to Consult:

Prophetic Lights (Waggoner & Jones)

Studies in the Book of Daniel (Jones)

The Prophetic Word – Fragments, Vol. 11 (Waggoner / Jones)

1. Daniel in Babylon (1886)

Signs of the Times, January 21, 1886

Notes on the International Lesson, January 31

Daniel 1:8-21

A. T. Jones

DANIEL was in Babylon in fulfillment of prophecy. More than a hundred years before this, a king of Babylon—Merodach-baladan—had sent an embassy to Jerusalem to congratulate King Hezekiah on his recovery from his sickness, and to inquire about the going backward of the shadow on the sun-dial of Ahaz. Hezekiah was so elated over such a notice of himself that he showed them all his treasures:

2 Kings 20

¹³ ...there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.

Then came Isaiah and said to Hezekiah:

¹⁷ Behold, the days come, that all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the Lord.

¹⁸ And of your sons that shall issue from you, which you shall beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

Accordingly, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up and besieged Jerusalem, and took it.

Daniel 1

³ And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

⁴ Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

We know not how many there were chosen to be thus taught; we only know the names of four who were of the company selected to be taught the learning of the Chaldeans; and we would never have known the names of even these four, if they had not had the courage to stand upon principle and firm conviction of truth and duty.

They were to study three years, and then pass an examination for places in the king's favor, and it was to be at the king's expense.

Daniel 1

⁵ The king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank.

⁸ But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.

It is evident that Daniel was the one who led out in this, and that the other three decided to stand by him. It was Daniel that purposed in his heart that he would not do as was expected by the king, nor as all the students, but his three brethren, were willing to do.

At this time Babylon was in the height of its glory. It contained between two and three million inhabitants, and all the Babylonian plain was teeming with population. Wealth and magnificence, with their inseparable accompaniments—luxury and intemperance—reigned on every hand, and this too, in heathen manners. It was in the midst of such scenes and such influences, that Daniel was placed when only a mere boy. But boy though he was, he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself by conformity in any way with any of their customs, nor allow himself to be defiled with any of the evil influences that were around him.

He refused the king's meat and wine, and asked the he might be given pulse to eat and water to drink. In the *Revised Version*, margin, we have "herbs" as the alternative reading for

“pulse;” and “herbs” conveys the correct idea. It was what would be now called a vegetarian diet, the diet that was originally prescribed for man;⁴⁴⁸ and those who, even in this day, conform most closely to it, are in every way the better for it. It was not altogether a miracle, that their countenances were found...

Daniel 1

¹⁵ ...fairer and fatter...than all the children which did eat of the portion of the king's meat.

True, it must have been miraculous that so marked a result was seen in so short a time—only ten days; but that result would not have been seen at all if they had not adopted the diet.

God works by means which He himself has appointed; and the closer men conform to the Lord's appointed ways, the more wondrously will He work in their behalf. If the church of God today would adopt the principles of Daniel, their power and efficiency would be increased manifold.

Daniel was set there to study the learning of the Chaldeans, that he might successfully pass the appointed examination, and stand in the presence of the king. To accomplish this in the best way, he adopted a vegetarian diet. Those who did so with him were approved of God, and succeeded so well that they were ten times better than all the wise men in the realm.

We are set in the school of Christ to study the word of God, that we may successfully pass the appointed examination and stand in the presence of the King of kings. If such a course would accomplish such results in the study of heathen learning, why would it not accomplish much more in the study of the wisdom of God, as given in His sacred word? Without hesitation we say that it would.

But where are the Daniels of today? Where are they today,

⁴⁴⁸ *Genesis* 1:29.

even in the church, who will put themselves upon a strict regimen that they may have clearness and strength of mind to discern the precious wisdom of God. The clearer the brain, the clearer the thoughts; the purer the blood, the clearer the brain; the purer the food, the purer the blood; therefore the purer the food that we eat, the better will be our power to think, and the more clearly we can discern the truth on any point. How many ten thousands are singings,

“Dare to be a Daniel!”

But alas! how many tens can be found who do really dare to be Daniels?

It is said of these four Hebrews, that by this course their countenances were “fairer” than all the others. In this lesson is a proved prescription which we commend to all young ladies who wish to have a fair complexion. It is better than all the paints and powders in Christendom. We once heard the question asked Dr. Simms, in a large audience,

“What is the best means of preserving a fair, beautiful complexion?”

He answered,

“Avoid tea, coffee, pork, oysters, fish, etc. Use a vegetarian diet.”

That is the truth, and it is a truth that is taught in this lesson from the 1st chapter of *Daniel*. This very lesson in *Daniel* 1:8-21, is of the first importance to all people in this our day. We say indeed, in every sense,

“Dare to be a Daniel.”

The following by Dr. Geo. P. Hayes, in *Half Hours with the Lessons*, is exactly to the point:

When Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself with the king’s meat, it was purely a question of principle....It

seemed utterly foolish. King Nebuchadnezzar and Melzar both believed that the popular opinion of the day was all right in saying that wine and fat meat were necessary for a clear complexion and a quick brain.

The same false notion is widely held now about lager beer and tonics. Is it true? Ask the health records....Gout, liver complaint, and the hundred-faced dyspepsias are Nature's protest against mince-pies, fruit-cakes, brandy-puddings, and gluttony...You may not wish to obey Nature's health-laws, but you cannot defy them and escape.

Just now the papers are reviving the discussion of the value of the Mosaic law on food, as a law of health. The health and brain-power of the Jews would teach the Gentiles a lesson, if the Gentiles were not so heedless. Many will doubt this statement and stick to Melzar's notion, that if they restrict themselves to Daniel's diet they will soon become "worse-liking" than others which are "of their set." Well, why not take Daniel's way of settling it? Just try it.

2. Daniel in Babylon (1899)

Present Truth, June 29, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Subtitle: Faithfulness to God, and Its Results

Daniel 1:8-21

E. J. Waggoner

Historical Background

IN ORDER to enter fully into this lesson, we must understand the circumstances. The situation is this: Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had besieged Jerusalem, and had taken it.

Daniel 1

² The Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God.

2 Kings 24

³ Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of His sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did;

⁴ And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood.

After naming over various nations, including Judah, God said:

Jeremiah 27

⁶ Now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given unto him also to serve him.

Nebuchadnezzar therefore had the same right to rule that any of the kings of Judah ever had. Because of their sins, the people of Israel had been given over to the king of Babylon. Their captivity was only the outward manifestation of the bondage of sin, into which they had voluntarily gone.

2 Chronicles 36

¹⁴ Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, trans-

gressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which He had hallowed in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place:

¹⁶ But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy.

¹⁷ Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: He gave them all into his hand.

¹⁸ And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon.

¹⁹ And they burnt the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.

²⁰ And them that had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:

²¹ To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

A Royal School

Nebuchadnezzar was a broad-minded man, and one who was zealous for the welfare of his kingdom. He could recognize merit wherever he saw it, and had a disposition to make use of it. Accordingly he gave orders that the most promising of the captives of Judah should be trained in the royal schools, to be fitted for responsible places in the kingdom. The chosen ones were...

Daniel 1 [RV]

³ ...of the seed royal, and of the nobles;

⁴ Youths in whom was no blemish, but well-favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability to stand in the king's palace.

These were to be taught...

Daniel 1

⁴ ...the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans.

⁵ And the king appointed for them a daily portion of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank, and that they should be nourished three years; that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These four seemed to be special friends and companions, with Daniel as the leader among them.

From the record it is plain that the captives were obliged to pass an examination before they could have the benefit of this training; for otherwise it could not be known whether or not they had an understanding in science. At the time when this lesson begins, they had passed their examination and were ready to enter upon their three years' course of training.

But Daniel was not yet ready to go on with the work. Everything was not as it should be, and although he was a captive in Babylon, he was God's free man. All was not to his liking, and therefore it was wrong, because his liking was God's will. He liked only that which God liked. What was the trouble?

He was not satisfied with the food. That is not so uncommon a thing. There are many young men who find fault with the food that is furnished them both at home and at school. But it is a rare thing to find a student making the complaint that Daniel made. He did not complain that he did not have enough to eat, or that he was used to much better fare at

home, and could not live on such a diet; nothing of the kind. His complaint was that the food was, too fine. Verse 8 literally translated is:

Daniel 1

⁸ But Daniel set (it) upon his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's delicacies.

He wanted plain food. Surely Daniel was a remarkable character. This incident at the beginning of his career stamps him as such.

There was nothing captious⁴⁴⁹ about Daniel. Although he had a fixed purpose in his heart as to what he would do, he did not make a scene. He did not parade his scruples, and protest that he would not violate them even for the king. People who have a fixed purpose, and one that is based upon a good foundation, do not need to bluster. People who do that, do it to make up for their lack of stability, and usually they give way when pressure is brought to bear upon them. Moreover, by their very course they make it sure that severe pressure will be brought to bear upon them.

Christian Courtesy

But Daniel's purpose was too deep for bluster. He did not intend to eat the food that the king had appointed for him, yet he courteously asked the steward who had charge of their food to give them something else.

Proverbs 16

⁷ When a man's way, please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Daniel's ways and purposes pleased the Lord, and therefore He had...

⁴⁴⁹ Captious: marked by an often ill-natured inclination to stress faults and raise objections.

Daniel 1 [RV]

⁹ ...made Daniel to find favor and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs,

—who was disposed to grant any request that Daniel might make, but who feared to do anything contrary to the king's commandment. He could not conceive how anyone could keep in health and strength if deprived of the rich variety provided by the king; and so radical a change as Daniel proposed would, he feared, make the young men so thin and weak that they could not carry out the work assigned them, and so the king's anger would be aroused.

But Daniel combined the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove, He did not argue the matter with the officer, but proposed a practical test. He said:

Daniel 1

¹² Prove your servants, I beseech you, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

¹³ Then let our countenances be looked upon before you, and the countenance of the youths that eat of the king's meat: and as you see, deal with your servants.

No objection could be made to so reasonable a request as that. All the king desired was that the youths should have such attention as would keep them in the best condition for study and work. Ten days could not make a great deal of difference, and if at the end of that time the experiment proved a failure, then the young men could soon pick up again under the king's generous provision. Still, the fact that the experiment was made, shows the hold that Daniel had on the king's officers.

God Honors a Simple Diet

What was the result?

¹⁵ At the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat of the

king's meat.

¹⁶ So the steward took away their meat (delicate food), and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse.

Now the question arises,

“Why was this written?”

The answer is that it was...

Romans 15

⁴ ...written for our learning.

And what can we learn from it? This, that a very simple diet is the best for man. That this is the chief reason why this incident is recorded, it very evident.

Some may say that the lesson we should learn is that God honors those who are moved by principle. That lesson is very prominent, but it only enforces the other, for the principle for which Daniel was standing was that of plainness in diet. Daniel was not making a sacrifice in abstaining from the king's delicate food; he did not desire it, because he knew that it was not good for him, and he had been trained to prefer that which was best for him. The result showed that the simplest fare is the best for practical purposes.

Some may think that God wrought a miracle in behalf of the four Hebrews who chose the simple food. It may be that He did, but if so that only makes more emphatic the fact that a simple diet, with little variety, is the best for hard work, especially for mental labor. God would not work a miracle to enforce a wrong idea, therefore we have the testimony of the Lord in favor of simple food. The dealing of God with the children of Israel in the wilderness, when He fed them on manna, is a standing testimony. Daniel had read that history to profit.

The test of the value of food is what it will do for man. Food is for the purpose of renewing strength.

Ecclesiastes 10

¹⁷ Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, and your princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!

People cannot always determine the goodness of any food by its taste, because almost everybody has a perverted taste. God, however, designs that food shall please the taste, and has given us the sense of taste, so that we may derive pleasure from eating. But the very best food will taste insipid to a perverted palate, and therefore we need to educate our taste.

Whatever will keep the body in the best health, and give muscular strength, and mental vigor, and will also enable one to endure privation, is the best food, and we should accustom ourselves to enjoy it. When the palate has been trained for a while in the right way, rich and fancy dishes and flesh meats will be distasteful, and simple but wholesome food will be eaten with a hearty relish.

The poor man, with simple fare, is not to be pitied. The rich, or any others, for that matter, who are slaves to an appetite that demands rich food, and who do not know the pleasure of perfect health and of abstinence, are the ones to be pitied. But there was a further result of Daniel's choice.

Daniel 1 [RV]

¹⁷ As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

¹⁸ And at the end of the days which the king had appointed for bringing them in, the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁹ And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they stood before the king.

²⁰ And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

Surely that was a result worth even making a sacrifice for; but as we have seen, Daniel had not made a sacrifice; he had been eating and enjoying that which was good. It is not a sacrifice to be in a state of constant enjoyment.

Was this a miracle? Most certainly, but only such a miracle as may be wrought at any time and for anybody. The attainment of wisdom is a miracle,

Proverbs 2

⁶ For the Lord gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

Daniel and his companions had given themselves fully into the hands of the Lord, and He in turn gave them himself. God is willing and anxious to give every man wisdom and understanding. God's desire for men is expressed in the inspired words of the Apostle Paul, when he prayed,

Philippians 1

⁹ ...that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.

And also,

Colossians 1

⁹ ...that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

¹⁰ That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

The trouble with the most of us is that we throw obstacles in the way of this result. We clog our systems with unwholesome food, and with too great a quantity, thus reversing the proper order of things; for whereas food ought to be only a support to the body, we impose on the body the task of trying to dispose of food that is utterly useless to it. Thus instead of eating to live, we actually live to eat.

It is very evident that while we are in that state, the Holy

Spirit of God cannot control us, and enlighten us. How can we expect God to give us clear perception, and strength of intellect, when we deliberately do that which benumbs the sensibilities? It is like putting our hands into the fire, and expecting that God will keep our fingers from being burned.

The Source of Wisdom

Whence did Daniel and his fellows get their wisdom? Read the record, and see. God gave it to them. The amount of wisdom that God can give a man of what is called “ordinary ability” is not dreamed of, because He is so seldom given the opportunity to demonstrate it.

Those Hebrew youths were at school in Babylon, with the wisest men of the kingdom for instructors; but they did not derive their knowledge from those wise men. How do we know? From this fact, that at the end of three years they knew ten times more than all the wise men in the king’s realm, and that of course included the men who were over the school which Daniel attended. They placed themselves in harmony with God’s law, and He filled them. Thus they experienced what the psalmist said:

Psalm 119

⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers; for your testimonies are my meditation.

¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the ancients; because I keep your precepts.

Here is something that ought to claim the earnest attention of everybody. In these days the idea that men can learn more from God and His Word than from man is almost unheard of. This is no disparagement upon anything that anybody knows. Whatever wisdom any man has, whatever he really knows, is good, because it comes from God, from whom every good and perfect gift comes. And men may help their fellow-men in the way of knowledge.

Nevertheless the fact remains that no one is a teacher like unto God.

Job 36

²² Behold, God exalts by His power: who teaches like Him?

In obedience to all the commandments of God, and perfect submission to the perfect life of God, there are unlimited possibilities of wisdom.

Job 28

²⁸ The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

And this is not fanciful, visionary, intangible, wisdom. It is such wisdom as can be recognized as wisdom even by those who do not know the secret of it.

Deuteronomy 4

⁵ Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land whither you go to possess it.

⁶ Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and shall say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

See this verified in the case of Solomon.

2 Chronicles 1

⁷ In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give you.

⁸ And Solomon said unto God, You have showed great mercy unto David my father, and have made me to reign in his stead.

⁹ Now, O Lord God, let your promise unto David my father be established: for You have made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.

¹⁰ Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this your people, that is so great?

¹¹ And God said to Solomon, Because this was in your heart,

and you have not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of your enemies, neither yet have asked long life; but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge my people, over whom I have made you king:

¹² Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto you; and I will give you riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before you, neither shall there any after you have the like.

2 Chronicles 9

¹ And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bore spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

² And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not.

³ And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built,

⁴ And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cupbearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her.

⁵ And she said to the king, It was a true report which I heard in my own land of your acts, and of your wisdom:

⁶ Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and my eyes had seen it: and, behold, the one half of the greatness of your wisdom was not told me: for you exceed the fame that I heard.

But this wisdom does not come from God without any effort on the part of the man. In *Proverbs* 2:1-9 we may read the experience of Solomon, and find the royal road to learning.

Proverbs 2

¹ My son, if you will receive my words, and hide my commandments with you;

² So that you incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding;

³ Yea, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding;

⁴ If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures;

⁵ Then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

⁶ For the Lord gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

⁷ He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous: He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

⁸ He keeps the paths of judgment, and preserves the way of His saints.

⁹ Then shall you understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

This chapter [*Daniel 1*] was not written for no purpose. We have no right to read it as an idle tale, as merely a curious item of history. It stands there to teach us the way of knowledge, yet how few of us think of it! It is a constant witness against our foolishness.

If we do not have knowledge, how can we excuse ourselves with that record before us? The God who is no respecter of persons⁴⁵⁰ will give us understanding, as well as He did to those youths, if we but place ourselves unreservedly in His hands, to do His will.

John 7

¹⁷ If any man wills to do His will, he shall know.

This story ought to be committed to memory, and meditated upon daily. Shall we not give ourselves to the acquirement of true wisdom?

A Witness for God

Two or three other lessons ought to be noted while we have the chapter before us. Daniel was a captive in Babylon, with the rest of the Jews, yet he was a pious youth. The Jews were

⁴⁵⁰ *Acts 10:34.*

sent into captivity because of their sins, yet Daniel is one of the few men without a shadow of wrong-doing charged against them in the Bible. Thus we see that good people may be brought into trouble in this life through the evil-doing of others.

But the fact that good men are brought into difficulties through the sins of others is no ground for complaint. A righteous man cannot be made a captive, even though he be bound with chains. Daniel in Babylon was a free man. When God allows His servants to suffer hardships through the evil-doing of others, it is always for a good purpose.

God had work for Daniel in Babylon, as He always has for His servants, wherever they are. Compare the case of Joseph in Egypt. Daniel was free from the Babylonian spirit, which was pride and the exaltation of self above God, and therefore he was free in Babylon. Jesus said,

John 8

³¹ If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed;

³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

³⁶ If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

There is never any need for one to compromise his principles. Surely Daniel was in as close a place as anyone ever can be. Many think that if they are guests of some great man, courtesy demands that they should drink his wine, and partake of his dainty meats. So they will lay aside their principles for fear of giving offense. Perhaps they will go so far as to state that they do not believe in eating and drinking such things, but that they will do so “just on this occasion,” thereby making the case worse than if they said nothing.

But Daniel was not merely a guest, free to go away if he chose; he was a captive, subject to the orders of an absolute

monarch, whose word was law, and who could with an inclination of the head send one who displeased him to execution. If ever a youth had cause for compromising his principles, Daniel had; but he did not. He knew what was right, and what would please God: and that was what he purposed to do, no matter what the consequences might be.

Because of this loyalty to truth and right, God made the way clear for him. When God sends or allows one of His servants to get into a difficult place, where the truth is not regarded, it is in order that He may have a witness for the truth in that place.

Firmness of character, and loyalty to principle are esteemed even by the world. Daniel's course was such that he could not fail to be noted, and his prominence was only the advancement of truth. The fact that he made the request that he did, would call attention to him, and when it was seen that there was sound wisdom in his choice, the truth was exalted.

The man who is recreant to the trust that God has placed in him in a critical time, is of no use. He is passed by as one of the common herd. And the man who feebly makes known what he calls his principles, but puts them aside "on this occasion," brings contempt on himself, and causes his associates to think that there is no power in truth.

May the God of Daniel make us all as faithful as he was! This He will do if we are willing that He should, and have enough confidence in Him.

3. The Mystery of God

Present Truth, August 3, 1899

Daniel 2:9-19

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN Nebuchadnezzar dreamed and it passed from him so that he could not recall it, he demanded of the magicians, the astrologers, and soothsayers to declare to him the dream with the interpretation. But to them it was a secret that none could reveal, according to their own confession,

Daniel 2

¹¹ ...except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.

Because they were unable to do this, the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men should be slain, because, as he said,

⁹ ...you have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me.

Then the captain of the king's guard brought Daniel and his companions to put them to death, as they were counted among the wise men. But Daniel confidently told him that if he would give him a little time he would make known the dream with the interpretation. Then with his companions he sought mercies of the God of heaven concerning the matter, and the simple record is,

¹⁹ Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision.

This secret that they desired to know was the secret of God. He only could reveal it, and they knew it. But their experience is simply the experience of finding out the Gospel secret. The knowledge of this secret is to every individual just as much a matter of life and death, as was the knowledge of the king's secret to the wise men of Babylon. And just as only God could make known to Daniel and his fellows the secret they desired, so a knowledge of the Gospel can be revealed only by Him.

In the Gospel the word used to represent this secret is “mystery.” Christ said,

Mark 4

¹¹ Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God,

Romans 16

²⁵ ...the mystery which was kept secret since the world began.

This secret, according to the apostle is:

1 Timothy 3

¹⁶ God manifest in the flesh,

–or,

Colossians 1

²⁷ Christ in you the hope of glory.

He is then the...

1 Timothy 3

¹⁶ ...mystery of godliness;

–and anyone who knows what it is to have Jesus Christ dwelling within him, knows the Gospel secret, and in no other way can he know it. And yet it is a mystery after all. No one can explain it or reason it out, because the deep things of God are beyond human reason. It must simply be accepted as a fact.

There is something more to this secret than simply the abstract knowledge of it. To him who knows it, it is a...

John 4

¹⁴ ...well of water springing up into everlasting life,

–not alone to himself, but to others also. Christ will in him be manifest in the flesh,⁴⁵¹ and the works that the Master did

⁴⁵¹ 2 Corinthians 4:11.

for those around Him, he will do.⁴⁵² In his everyday life, the Saviour will be lifted up, and thus others will be, drawn to Him.

John 12

³² And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

⁴⁵² *John* 14:12.

4. God With Us

Present Truth, November 26, 1896

Daniel 2:11, 20

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN the Chaldeans protested to the king Nebuchadnezzar that he required too much of them, in demanding that they should declare his dream, they said that only the gods could tell such a thing,

Daniel 2

¹¹ ...whose dwelling is not with flesh.

But Daniel knew the true God, whose dwelling is with flesh, and he obtained the desired answer for the king. It is not enough to assent to the fact that Divinity is in the heavens. What we must know is that God is near at hand to help, and that...

²⁰ ...wisdom and might are His,

—as Daniel said. His name is...

Matthew 1

²³ ...Emmanuel...God with us.

If any lack wisdom—and who does not?—He will supply it, and as for strength, He will strengthen...

Ephesians 1

¹⁹ ...according to the working of His mighty power.

5. The Fiery Furnace

Signs of the Times, January 28, 1886

Notes on the International Lesson, February 7

Daniel 3:16-28

A. T. Jones

AT the end of the three years' schooling of the Hebrew children, referred to in last weeks' lesson,⁴⁵³ they were required to undergo an examination upon what they had learned. The king himself conducted the examination.

Daniel 1

¹⁹ And among them all was found none like Daniel, Haniah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they stood before the king.

²⁰ And in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

Shortly afterward, king Nebuchadnezzar had his dream of the great image, in which was represented the course of empires from his day to the end of the world. The dream made a deep impression on his mind, but he could not possibly recall what he had seen. He was so exercised in mind over it, in trying to recall it, that he could not sleep, and he finally called for the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans, that they might tell him what he had dreamed.

Daniel and his three brethren, however, were not brought in among these, probably on account of their youth. None of all these that came could tell the king anything at all about what he wanted to know, by which he discovered their imposture, and commanded that they should be killed.

Although Daniel and his brethren were by some means overlooked in the call to gather the wise men before the king, they were not missed when the officers went to execute the

⁴⁵³ See the first article in this section, "[Daniel in Babylon \(1886\)](#)," *Signs of the Times*, January 21, 1886.

decree of death upon all such. They were found, and were about to be taken to execution when Daniel asked to be taken to the king. His request was granted, and he asked time and he would tell all the king's matter. Then God showed the thing to Daniel in a night vision, and so the whole matter with its meaning was shown to the king.

Daniel 2

⁴⁸ Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

⁴⁹ Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

These events occurred in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, about 603 BC. The event which is the subject of the lesson for today was about twenty-three years afterward. During this time, Nebuchadnezzar had made an expedition into Egypt and laid it waste. There he had opportunity to see a colossal image which had been set up by Rameses II, the...

Exodus 1

⁸ ...king...who knew not Joseph.

This image with its pedestal was 115 feet high, and weighed 1,200 tons. It is supposed that it was in imitation of this image, that Nebuchadnezzar erected his, in his ambition to excel in things great all surrounding kingdoms.⁴⁵⁴

When Nebuchadnezzar had set up his image, he...

Daniel 3

² ...sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image.

⁴⁵⁴ See *Christian at Work*, July 9, 1885, page 651.

When they had all come, and all was ready,

Daniel 3

⁴ Then a herald cried aloud...

–the command that when the sound of all the music was heard, all the assembly should fall down and worship the great image. Of course Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, being principal officers, were there; and also of course they refused to obey the king’s command.

It was told the king immediately, and he called them up and asked them about it. Thinking that perhaps it was inadvertence, and that they had not intentionally disobeyed, he asked them,

¹⁴ Is it true [margin: “is it of purpose”; Hebrew: “is it a laid plan”] O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

Then he repeated his command to them direct, and he received a direct answer in which he learned that it was “of purpose,” that it was because of a “laid plan,” that they refused to worship the image which he had set up.

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter.

¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand O king.

¹⁸ But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods nor worship the golden image which you have set up.

They were immediately bound, and were plunged into the midst of the furnace, with it already heated seven times hotter than it was usual to heat it. But they were no sooner fallen into the furnace than Nebuchadnezzar was almost petrified with astonishment. He cried to his counselors,

Daniel 3

²⁴ Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

²⁵ [But] he answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Then they were called forth. Thus God delivered those who trusted in Him. And thus He vindicated the principle that, we are bound to resist the laws of men, when they are against the law or word of God. Daniel's deliverance from the lion's den, and the deliverance of the apostles from prison more than once, are only additional assertions of the principle that,

Acts 5

²⁰ We ought to obey God rather than men.

This lesson is of vital importance to every Sunday-school scholar in this Union. For the National Reform Party has set itself to make an image to the papal power, and to compel all men, under pains and penalties, to worship both the papal power and its image, and this in direct violation of the plain commandment of God.

And each one who lives the natural course of life, will be called upon, and that soon, to decide for himself whether he will...

Revelation 14

⁷ ...worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters;

—or whether he will renounce allegiance to God and worship the papal power and the National Reform image to it in the United States. The commandment of God says,

Exodus 20

¹⁰ The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work.

In defiance of this commandment, and upon the sole au-

thority of the Catholic Church, the National Reformers are going to enact a law by which they can compel everybody to keep Sunday. But,

Revelation 14

⁹ ...If any man worship the beast and his image,

¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation...

¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

6. The Trial and the Victory

Present Truth, June 1, 1899

Daniel 3:16-18

E. J. Waggoner

WHEN three Hebrew children were brought face to face with the fiery furnace, their reply to the king was,

Daniel 3

¹⁶ We are not careful to answer you in this matter.

¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace...

¹⁸ But if not, be it known unto you, O king, we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.

Here is presented the principle that is to be followed by every one who would be loyal to God. We do not know whether God will deliver us from the trial, or in the trial, or whether the victory to the world will be apparent at all or not. No matter what the results, we are to stand faithful to principle. Victory will come some time, and we can afford to wait.

Trials are not pleasant; they are furnaces of affliction, and by them the child of God is purified. They are the means of perfecting character. But the hardest of all trials to bear is that where the world sees only defeat. When Christ was brought to the test of the cross, who of His followers thought that for Him it was a victory that day? There was but one who believed He was King, and that was the thief upon the cross by His side.

Luke 23

⁴² Remember me when You come into your kingdom.

And yet there was no day in all the earthly experience of Christ when He was more of a victor than He was that day. By faith the Christian can see victory where the world sees only defeat. The earth belongs to the meek:

Matthew 5

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

But they are not yet in possession of it, and present appearances do not indicate that they ever will be, but time will prove it.

2 Peter 3

⁹ God is not slack concerning His promises.

His eternal purpose and the principles of the Gospel are bound to prevail. The question with each of us should be whether when they triumph,—and triumph gloriously they will,—we shall be there to triumph with them.

7. A Case of Conscience

Present Truth, May 4, 1893

Daniel 3:1-17

E. J. Waggoner

IT OCCURRED nearly twenty-six hundred years ago, in the province of Babylon. The circumstances were the following: On account of the disobedience of the great mass of the children of Israel, the Lord had suffered the whole nation to be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and many of the people had been taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. This Nebuchadnezzar was a heathen king, and so some time after the conquest of Babylon,

Daniel 3

¹ [He] made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

² Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

When all these officers of the kingdom were gathered together before the image,

⁴ A herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

⁵ That at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up:

⁶ And whoso falls not down and worships, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

The people knew that the king was in earnest, and so whatever their private scruples might have been against worshipping the image, they concealed them, and in appearance, at least, did homage to the golden image.

Who that believes that the civil government has a right to make laws concerning matters of religion, dare say that they did wrong? Would they not be met with the statement that it is necessary to the peace and good order of the State that there should be uniformity in matters of religion? And if this is so, who but the chief ruler of the State can prescribe the forms of religion?

Doubtless there were some who would suggest that they ought not to bow down to the image, but they could speedily be silenced, by the inquiry,

“Who are you, that you should set yourself up to know more than all the wise men of this nation, and the king himself?”

Some might even recall a commandment to the effect that none shall bow down to graven or molten images, but they would be met with the statement,

“If it were wrong, do you suppose that all the nation would be doing it? Hasn’t it been the custom of almost the whole world for centuries to worship images? Don’t all our religious teachers say that it is right? Don’t you suppose that they know more about these things than we common people do?”

Who could meet such an argument as that? And then others would say to the doubtful ones:

“You don’t have to worship the image, in your heart; you need not feel any reverence for it, but you can bow down before it in obedience to the king’s command. If you refuse, you will be cast into the fiery furnace, and your family will be deprived of your support. What is the use of virtually committing suicide?”

And thus the scruples of all would be silenced. But not of all, for there were three men in the vast assembly who did not bow down to the image. At that time certain Chaldeans came

before the king, and, after repeating the decree, said,

Daniel 3

¹² There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded you: they serve not your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.

What made the offense of these men the more odious, and magnified the contempt in which they held the king's decree, was the fact that they were foreigners. Such disobedience of a direct law could not be tolerated, and least of all in such men. So,

¹³ Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.

¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said unto them, Is it true ["is it of purpose"] O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, you do not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

And then in the kindness of his heart, he offered them another chance to redeem themselves. He would not at once carry into effect the decree that they should be burned. But if on the second sounding of the music they did not bow down, then there should be no alternative, but they must be cast into the furnace.

Then what did those men do? Did they begin to apologize for their mistake, and promise obedience in the future? Did they plead that they had been very quiet in their disobedience to the law, so that no one could take offense at their disregard of the image? Not they. Listen to their brave words:

¹⁶ O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter.

¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

¹⁸ But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.

The consequence was that they were thrown into the furnace, which for their especial benefit was heated seven times hotter than usual. But before we notice the result, let us see what power these men were disregarding. If ever there was a king who ruled by Divine right, that king was Nebuchadnezzar. Hear what the Lord himself said through His prophet:

Jeremiah 27

⁴ Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall you say unto your masters:

⁵ I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my stretched out arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

⁶ And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

⁷ And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son.

These three Jews knew this, for they were associated with Daniel on a previous occasion, when he received the interpretation to a dream which the king had, in which he said,

Daniel 2

³⁷ You, O king, are a king of kings; for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

³⁸ And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven has He given into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all.

God himself, therefore, had given Nebuchadnezzar the right to rule. Moreover, He had commanded the Jews themselves to serve Nebuchadnezzar. The prophet Jeremiah, who remained in Jerusalem, in a letter which he wrote to his captive fellow-countrymen, at the command of the Lord, had said to them,

Jeremiah 29

⁷ Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall you have peace.

Surely then God must have been very angry with these three Jews for thus refusing to obey the king's dream? Not by any means! Although the fire was so hot that it slew the men who threw the three Jews into the furnace, the Hebrews themselves were not affected by it in the least. The fire simply destroyed the bands which held them, and they walked at liberty in the midst of the furnace, and the Lord himself came down and walked with them, to show His approval of their act. See the whole story in the 3rd chapter of *Daniel*. The point of this simple story is that, while...

Romans 13

¹ ...the powers that be are ordained of God,...there is no power but of God,

Psalms 62

¹¹ [And] power belongs unto God,

—God has never ordained any power to be above Him. This He could not do, for...

2 Timothy 2

¹³ He cannot deny himself.

He has never constituted any authority to contravene His authority. We learn that while we are to seek the peace of whatever country we may dwell in, and are to pray for kings and for all that are in authority, the peace of any country is not found in disobedience to God, no matter what may be the laws of that country. While we are to be subject to the powers that be, it is to be for the Lord's sake.

No man on earth is warranted in resisting authority. On the contrary we are charged not to resist evil, that is, we are not to oppose force with force. But as we have learned from this

story, submission and subjection to the powers that he does not consist in obeying laws that are contrary to God's laws. In the case before us, the king gave all their choice:

- They might worship his image, or
- They might go into the burning fiery furnace.

The most of the people showed their subjection by worshipping the image; but the three Hebrews showed their subjection by refusing to worship the image, and going into the furnace. They did not resist the power. They did not try to raise an insurrection. They served God by disobeying the king, and showed their regard for the king's authority by calmly accepting the alternative which he granted them.

The commandments of the Lord are very plain. A child may understand them.

John 7

¹⁷ If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.

All that is needed is a willing mind. It is self-interest that clouds the mind to the precepts of the Lord. But he who has no intention or desire but to do the will of the Lord, will not be confused as to his duty by conflicting human laws, but will say as did the apostles at a later time,

Acts 5

²⁹ We ought to obey God rather than man.

Only the man who is conscientiously resolute in serving God, can be rightly subject to the powers of earth.

8. In the Fiery Furnace

Present Truth, July 6, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Daniel 3:14-28

E. J. Waggoner

IT SEEMED like a great thing for four young men, captives, to presume to know more about what was best for them than all the king's wise men, and a very bold thing for them to mark out a course for themselves, entirely different from the one that had been planned for them; but in the chapter before us we have a test of faith and loyalty that was much stronger.

It was, however, only the natural sequence of the first test. If these young men had not been true to principle in the first instance, they would not have stood in this trying time. The germ of all their faithfulness was in that question of eating and drinking. If any man will but eat and drink just as he ought to, and in the fear of God, he will not fail in anything else.

Nebuchadnezzar the king had made an image of gold, exceeding great and high, and set it up in the plain of Dura, where he assembled all the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, and the treasurers, the counselors, and the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, in fact, all the great men in his kingdom, which meant all the great men of the whole world, for that was the extent of his kingdom.⁴⁵⁵

Daniel's three companions were there, for the king had set them over the affairs of the province of Babylon.⁴⁵⁶ Where Daniel himself was, we are not told, as he does not appear at all in this affair; but we may be sure that he was not present, for if he had been there he would have stood for the truth as sturdily as did his companions. This we know from his record.

⁴⁵⁵ See *Daniel* 2:37-38.

⁴⁵⁶ *Daniel* 2:49.

When all were assembled, the herald cried aloud,

Daniel 3

⁴ To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages,

⁵ That at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.

⁶ And whoso falls not down and worships shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace.

You may be sure that the people in general needed no second bidding, after that decree was announced.

⁷ At that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

It was a gorgeous spectacle, and one calculated to dazzle the senses. Then the music must have been most ravishing and enchanting; people would almost involuntarily be bewitched by its charm into falling down and worshiping. It was so easy and natural to follow the crowd of great men, even if there had not been hanging over their heads that fearful threat to the disobedient.

But there were three men in that vast company who dared be peculiar, and who were not afraid to do differently from all the rest of the world. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, for so had Daniel's three companions been named by the king, stood upright while all the rest fell prostrate.

You may be sure that they did not like to be peculiar, that they did not stand up merely for the sake of attracting attention to themselves. It was very dangerous at that time for one to attract attention to himself. Brave men are never foolhardy. These men were not acting from a spirit of bravado, but from principle. They were not obstinate, but they could not do dif-

ferently, because they knew the commandment of the God of heaven,

Exodus 20

³ You shall have no other gods before me,

—and,

⁴ You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

⁵ You shall not bow down yourself to them nor serve them.

This command is from the King of kings, and takes precedence of any command made by any king on earth. Disregard of Nebuchadnezzar's decree was therefore not disobedience, but the most perfect obedience. Both the king and his Hebrew captives were subjects of the King of the universe, and the fact that the king was disloyal did not absolve them from their duty.

The king, however, had forgotten his obligation to his Maker, and assumed that he was absolute ruler over the souls as well as over the bodies of men. Accordingly he was in a great rage and fury when the word was brought to him that three men, and captive Jews at that, had dared ignore his commandment.

Yet there were noble traits in Nebuchadnezzar's character, and even in his idolatrous pride and the rage of offended dignity, he would not act hastily. So he generously offered the Hebrews another trial. He might, according to the decree, have sent them at once to execution; but he did not. He would overlook this act of defiance to his authority if at the second sounding of the musical instruments they would fall down and worship the image. It is quite likely that the king also thought that there must have been some misunderstanding; for he could scarcely conceive that any one would deliberately disregard his decree, when such awful consequences of dis-

obedience were staring them in the face.

But there was no misunderstanding. The three men had not acted without full knowledge of what they were doing, and they told the king that they did not need another trial. They could answer him now as well as later, that they would not worship his image. Listen to their bold language:

Daniel 3

¹⁶ O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter.

¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

¹⁸ But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.

There was no doubt nor hesitancy in their answer. They were very prompt and bold, but calm and deliberate. They had confidence in God's power to deliver them; but even if He should not see fit to save them from the furnace of fire, that would make no difference. They were not serving the Lord for personal gain. They did not have the notion that God was under obligation to give them an easy time if they served Him, as so many have.

There are very many who would be willing to serve the Lord, if He would insure them against hardships; and there are very many professed ministers of the Gospel, and religious teachers, who are inculcating this notion, and teaching the people that they cannot be expected to do what they think is right unless the way is made so easy that there will be no possibility of their suffering.

We see this in the demand for Sunday laws, in order that men may be free to keep the day which they hold to be the Sabbath. They profess to believe that God's law demands Sunday observance; yet by making pleas for human laws restrain-

ing employers from requiring labor on that day, they virtually say that men do not need to serve the Lord unless everybody else does, or if men in high positions are against it.

There was no mistaking the answer of the Hebrews. Such a seeming defiance of his authority the king was not accustomed to, and he could not endure it. So he commanded that the rebellious men should forthwith be carried to execution. Such a flagrant disregard of authority must receive signal punishment, so that all others might take warning, and orders were given that the furnace should be heated seven times hotter than usual.

Then the three men were bound in their mantles, their turbans, their hose, and all their other garments, just as they stood, and were cast into the super-heated furnace. So hot was the furnace that the men who were appointed to cast the captives in were killed in the act. What must have been the terrible fate of the men who were cast into it bound in all their inflammable clothing?

A wonder took place. The executioners were slain, and the condemned men were set at liberty, and that by the agent of death. Such a thing was never known before. Nebuchadnezzar himself was the first to notice it. He rose up in haste and amazement, and said unto his counselors,

Daniel 3

²⁴ Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?

He can hardly trust his own senses, and seeks confirmation of what he sees with his own eyes.

²⁴ ...They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

²⁵ He answered and said, Lo I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Only their bonds were loosed. Thus would God demonstrate

to all the world that His servants are free men. In the face of this record, how weak and foolish sound the excuses sometimes made by men, for not serving the Lord.

“I could not live, if I should keep the commandments.”

Well, the three Hebrews lived, and no one will ever be placed in a more desperate situation than they were. Men sometimes shrink from going as missionaries to some heathen land, because it is so hot there, but no one can ever get into a hotter place on this earth than those men were in; yet they lived. Their experience demonstrates that there is no place where men cannot live and prosper if God is with them. They were better off after they went into the furnace than they were before. In their case we see the fulfillment of Christ’s words,

Matthew 28

²⁰ Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

His name is I AM, therefore He says,

Isaiah 43

² When you pass through the waters, I am with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.

There was not so much as the smell of fire on their garments. A fiery furnace can become a pleasure garden, where men can walk to and fro at their ease, if the Lord be with them. They who...

Isaiah 33

¹⁵ ...walk righteously, and speak uprightly,...

¹⁴ ...[can] dwell with the devouring fire, [and even] with everlasting burnings.

Although these three men were nominally captives, they were the most powerful men in the entire kingdom, not excepting the king himself; and the king was the first to ac-

knowledge the fact.

Daniel 3

²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

Then compare that with the words of the Apostle Paul:

Romans 6

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.

¹³ Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

There was not defiance of man, but yielding to God. In yielding was their strength, for they trusted in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength.

It would have been an easy matter for those men to compromise with their consciences, by saying,

“We can fall on our faces, so as not to attract attention to ourselves, and thus incur the penalty; but we need not worship the image. We can be calling on God in our hearts.”

No, it would not have been an easy matter for those men to reason in that way, but it comes very natural to a great many. What a failure their whole lives would have been if they had. What a glorious opportunity they would have missed.

“Oh, yes; we could stand out for the truth as well as they did, if we were sure that God would interfere to save us.”

Exactly; we could serve the Lord if we had confidence in Him, and could trust Him. The difficulty is that everything is so commonplace when we are called upon to witness for the Lord. The way looks so shut up, that we just dare not go

ahead. But those men had no assurance that they would not be burned alive. To all appearances that was the last of them. But that made no difference; they would serve the Lord whatever happened, and God honored them in their honoring Him.

The same God lives today, and He has the same power to deliver. His law also is just as holy as it was then. Not one jot of its requirements has been relaxed. Men have set it at naught, and kings and rulers have enacted laws contrary to it, and even requiring its transgression, as, for instance, the laws requiring observance of Sunday instead of the Sabbath, and also laws requiring men to kill their fellow-men; and thousands of professed Christians think that these human laws absolve them from their duty to the law of God.

But since God has not changed, things are in exactly the same condition that they were when Nebuchadnezzar set up his image in the plain of Dura, and commanded all men to fall down before it. Where are the men who will be faithful even unto death?

9. Good and Bad Counsel

Present Truth, June 6, 1895

Daniel 3:15

E. J. Waggoner

THE world is generally ready to give advice to Christians in matters pertaining to their religious life; but those who would lead the life that is pleasing to God would do well to remember that such advice comes from the poorest possible source. Here is an illustration:

Daniel 3

¹⁵ Now if you be ready that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the image which I have made, well; but if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace.

This was the counsel given by the government of Babylon to the three Hebrew officials who persisted in disregarding the law of the land by refusing to bow down to the king's image. Nebuchadnezzar seems to have been somewhat loath to use these three eminent men, so he offered them a second opportunity, and said if they would then fall down and worship, it would be well.

Well? Yes; there was no doubt about it from the government's point of view. But it would have been anything but well for them if they had followed this eminent advice. As it was, they were cast into the fiery furnace; and what was the result? A glorious meeting with the Son of God, their Redeemer, in which they walked and communed with Him face to face! The brightest and most rapturous moments of their lives were those which they spent in that fiery furnace.

That was well for them—exceedingly well; but exactly contrary to all results calculated from a human standpoint. The worldly advice given them was friendly and well meant, but it did not come from a competent source. The world is never

competent to give advice which will secure real and permanent success in anything. The deed dictated by worldly wisdom perishes; but that done in the counsel of God lives for ever.

If we hearken to the voice of the Lord and heed His counsel, well; but if not, we shall finally be cast into a furnace of fire from which there will be no escape.

Matthew 13

⁴¹ The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

⁴² And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The Lord has counseled us abundantly, for all His Word is counsel, written for our learning and admonition. Jesus says,

Revelation 3

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.

We want that which has been tried in the fire, because only that will endure in the fire; for we must be tried by fire; we have been chosen in the furnace of affliction.

Isaiah 48

¹⁰ Behold, I have refined you, but not with silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.

This experience is necessary to fit us to stand at the presence of God; for:

Hebrews 12

²⁹ Our God is a consuming fire.

The devil, who was behind Nebuchadnezzar's image-making and his decree for its compulsory worship, is still as interested and as active as ever in this line of work. There is still a

fiery furnace for those who will not worship the god of gold. But the history of these three men of faith is set before us for our encouragement. They are “witnesses” about us, that we may run with patience the race before us.

Hebrews 12

¹ Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

Then let us not shrink from the furnace, for there we shall meet with the Son of God and be with Him as we could not be outside.

Isaiah 43

² When you pass through the fire, I will be with you.

And let us not take counsel of the world, which would point out some way by which we might escape. There is no way of escape but will require bowing down to the image. Let us not deliberate or parley with the power that suggests it. We shall be happy and free in the furnace, in the company of our Divine Redeemer.

10. The Experience of Nebuchadnezzar

Present Truth, May 23, 1895

Daniel 3 & 4

E. J. Waggoner

A Lesson for Princes and People

NEVER was there a king who had a clearer title to his throne than Nebuchadnezzar had. God himself said:

Jeremiah 27

⁵ I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

⁶ And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

Yet, like most men, Nebuchadnezzar did not recognize the hand of the Lord in His gifts. He was a heathen. Nevertheless God gave him a dream which forms one of the simplest, most easily understood, and yet most comprehensive prophecies in the Bible. In connection with that dream, God gave Nebuchadnezzar his first lesson.

When all Nebuchadnezzar's magicians and astrologers were unable to tell him his forgotten dream, much less to interpret it, the faithful servant of God made the whole thing plain. This was Nebuchadnezzar's first lesson of God's power. He was told that the secret was not in Daniel, but that the God of heaven alone could reveal secrets; yet he seems not to have comprehended this. He saw that Daniel was a valuable servant; but he evidently knew little more of God than the name.

The Second Lesson

The record of the 3rd chapter of *Daniel* shows that although Nebuchadnezzar had been told that the God of heaven had given him a kingdom, and power, and strength, and glory, and although God's servant had revealed to him things to come,

he did not yet have any practical knowledge of God. For we find him making a colossal image of gold, and commanding all men to worship it under penalty of death.

What hope for one who would still remain an idolater after having received such wonderful light from heaven? Who would not have left him to destruction? Anyone would, except the merciful God. He reveals himself to men, and if they are slow to learn, He is very patient with them, longsuffering,

2 Peter 3

⁹ ...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

There were three of Nebuchadnezzar's officers who would not worship his golden image. They were very respectful, but Nebuchadnezzar considered their steadfast loyalty to God as a defiance to him, forgetting that since he himself was but a pensioner on God's bounty, he owed the same service to God that they did, and that their loyalty to God was the surest possible proof that they were the best subjects he had. So he said,

Daniel 3

¹⁶ ...if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

Clearly, Nebuchadnezzar did not yet know God. He had heard of Him, but it was only as a name. So when the three firmly refused to worship his image, he had them bound and cast into the furnace. And then he learned something of the difference between the God of heaven and the false gods.

The furnace was so excessively hot that the idol-worshipping officers could not get near enough to it to throw the three Hebrews in without being themselves burned to death. Yet while the flames consumed those on the outside, it did not injure those who were in the midst of it. The king saw the three fall down bound in the midst of the furnace, and then

saw four men loose, and walking about at their ease. The Lord himself came down to fulfil in person His promise,

Isaiah 43

² When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.

At the king's command the three men came out of the furnace,

Daniel 3

²⁷ And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

²⁹ Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

One excellent trait the king had, namely, that he was ready to acknowledge when he was wrong. He had a mind open to receive instruction. But his decree shows that he had not yet learned to know God. He knew that He was far greater than any gods of the nations, but he did not know Him as He is. If he had, he would never have made such a decree. Let us note a few points suggested by it.

In the first place, it shows that the king did not know the essential difference between the God of heaven and the idols of men. The latter cannot help themselves, and they have no attractiveness, and so men must needs be forced to worship them. But the Lord is a living God, and is altogether lovely, so

that He is able to draw worshippers to himself. He needs nobody with a sword to secure homage to Him. Nebuchadnezzar did not know that the only acceptable service to God is love, and that such service cannot be bought or forced.

In the second place the decree was equal to saying that the king himself ought to have been cut in pieces, because he had spoken against God. Every decree of that nature is a condemnation of God's longsuffering. That law which says that those who do not render certain service to God shall be punished, virtually charges God with laxness. It declares that His longsuffering is altogether wrong. They who issue such decrees thereby invite God's judgment upon themselves. They really say that God ought not to show mercy to anybody.

The Third Lesson

But Nebuchadnezzar meant well, although he acted ill. He was yet ignorant of God, but his heart was open to instruction; and so God gave him the third lesson. This is narrated in the 4th chapter of *Daniel*. It is told by Nebuchadnezzar, and the contrast between this proclamation and the other is so marked that it shows that he had at last come to know God.

The story need not be repeated in detail. But we must read the introduction, which runs thus:

Daniel 4

¹ Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you.

² I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God has wrought toward me.

³ How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.

And then the king, still in the glory of his kingdom, honored by lords and counsellors, relates the story of his haughty pride, and his abasement by the God of heaven. David said,

Psalm 119

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted, I went astray.

Job, after he had grievously suffered, said,

Job 42

⁵ I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.

So Nebuchadnezzar learned in adversity the lesson that he failed to learn in prosperity. When he had learned to know God indeed, he was again established in his kingdom. Then He said:

Daniel 4

³⁷ Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.

What a contrast with his previous decree! That was a threat of terrible death to all who spoke against God. This is simply personal experience—a public confession of sin and faith in God. It is unique among the State papers issued by kings. Before he knew God, he was ready to force people to worship Him; when he knew God, he was content to worship Him for himself, leaving his example and confession to influence others.

Can anyone be in doubt for a moment as to which one of Nebuchadnezzar's decrees had the most effect in inducing people to serve God? Men cannot be forced to serve God, for His service is love and love cannot be forced. But love wins. Christ says,

John 12

³² If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.

Jeremiah 31

³ The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you.

Tell of the goodness of God, and souls will be drawn to Him. When the song of praise unto our God is heard, many will trust in the Lord.

Psalm 40

³ And he has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

The lesson for kings and rulers is that God has called them to their exalted position for a purpose. That purpose is that they may glorify Him, and make His name widely known, but not by decrees designed to compel other people to worship Him. They are to glorify Him by their personal obedience, and by their own personal confession of His goodness. In short, they are to serve Him as preachers of righteousness.

King Solomon had no higher title than that of “The Preacher.”⁴⁵⁷ Who could preach the Gospel so effectively as a devoted King, who when he speaks can reach the ears of millions, where an ordinary preacher could reach only a few hundreds? But the preacher on the throne is no more called of God to try to force others to be godly than is the humble preacher who sits on a shoemaker’s bench.

There are “not many mighty, not many noble”⁴⁵⁸ in the ranks of the disciples; yet there will be some, for the promise is that when the church arises and shines in the light of God, kings shall come to the brightness of its rising.⁴⁵⁹ Some will heed the message which God speaks to kings as to men with great opportunities for doing good, but yet as only men,—

Psalm 2

¹⁰ Be wise now therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth.

¹² Kiss the Son.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ecclesiastes* 1:1.

⁴⁵⁸ *1 Corinthians* 1:26.

⁴⁵⁹ *Isaiah* 60:1-3.

11. The Mind of the Natural Man

Present Truth, August 13, 1896

Daniel 4:30

E. J. Waggoner

DANIEL tells how, just before Nebuchadnezzar was stricken and humbled, the proud king walked up the terraces of his palace, saying,

Daniel 4

³⁰ Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?

Memorials of Vanity

He not only spoke it, but engraved like sentiments in his inscriptions upon the royal tablets, now dug up and read. One of them says:

For the astonishment of men I built this house; all of the power of my majesty encompasses its walls....In Babylon alone I raise the seat of my dominion.

This vanity is the common frailty of the human mind.

The Mind of Christ

Contrast with this Christ's attitude as he came into the world to show men how to live for man. He had not built a pile of bricks and mortar, but the very earth and all living things upon it and the heavens were the work of His hands. Yet He said,

John 5

³⁰ I can of my own self do nothing.

John 6

³⁸ I came...not to do my own will.

John 17

⁴ I have glorified You on the earth.

Nebuchadnezzar glorified himself as the builder of a great city now buried in the sands. Jesus, in whom all things consist, glorified God.

Philippians 2 [RV]

⁵ Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who...emptied himself.

12. The Handwriting on the Wall (1886)

Signs of the Times, February 4, 1886

Notes on the International Lesson, February 14

Daniel 5:1-12, 25-28

A. T. Jones

A GAIN the scene of our lesson is laid in Babylon, “the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency.”⁴⁶⁰ Still she sits, the...

Isaiah 47

⁵ ...lady of kingdoms,

—comforting herself with the thought,

⁷ I shall be a lady forever;

⁸ I shall not sit a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children.

But just then it was that she should no more be called the lady of kingdoms, and just then it was that there should come upon her that which had been spoken of her:

⁹ These two things shall come to you in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon you in their perfection for the multitude of your sorceries, and for the great abundance of your enchantments.

¹¹ Therefore shall evil come upon you; you shall not know from whence it rises: and mischief shall fall upon you; you shall not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you shall not know.

The events noted in this lesson occurred about forty-four years after those of the lesson for last week.⁴⁶¹ The great king Nebuchadnezzar had been dead about twenty-three years, and with him had departed the greatness and the real glory of the kingdom.

⁴⁶⁰ *Isaiah* 13:19.

⁴⁶¹ See the fifth article in this section, “The Fiery Furnace,” *Signs of the Times*, January 28, 1886.

Nebuchadnezzar himself had finally been brought to a full acknowledgment of the true God, and had published a decree to that effect to all the nations of his dominion;⁴⁶² but it seems to have had no discernible impression on any that followed him in the kingdom, and iniquity culminated in his grandson, Belshazzar, the subject of the present lesson. Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son, Evil-merodach; but:

...his lusts, and his other wickedness, made him so intolerable, that at length even his own relations conspired against him and put him to death,⁴⁶³

—after his having reigned two years, and Neriglissar, his brother-in-law, reigned in his stead. Neriglissar reigned nearly four years, and was succeeded, but merely in name, by Laborosoarchod, “a mere boy,” who was suffered to remain only a few months when Nabonadius, the father of Belshazzar, took the throne, 555 BC, and held it till the end of the empire, 538 BC. Nabonadius sometime, we know not just how long, before the ruin of the kingdom, had associated his son, Belshazzar, with himself in the rule of the kingdom.

In the year 539 BC, Cyrus, at the head of a heavy army of Medes and Persians, left Ecbatana in an expedition against Babylon. In the spring of 538 BC he crossed the Tigris, and came within sight of Babylon itself before he met any opposition. Nabonadius had drawn out an army to meet the invader a short distance from the city. The Babylonian forces were defeated, and King Nabonadius took refuge in Borsippa about six miles from Babylon. Cyrus shut him up there, left enough soldiers to hold him, and he with the main army laid siege to the glorious capital. The defeat of Nabonadius, and his flight to Borshippa, left to the young Belshazzar the sole direction of affairs in Babylon.

⁴⁶² See *Daniel* 4.

⁴⁶³ Humphrey Prideaux, DD, *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews*, Book II.

Cyrus carried on the siege for some time with no prospect of success against its “mountain-high” walls, and its brazen, iron-barred gates, protected by an impassable moat. But mid-summer coming on, and with it the grand Babylonian festival in honor of the god Tammuz, Cyrus determined on a stratagem. Knowing of the boundless license in which it was the wont of the Babylonians to indulge in that debilitation, Cyrus went up the Euphrates a considerable distance, and dug channels by which to turn its waters from their course. As the Euphrates flowed through the city under the great walls, Cyrus’s plan was to draw the water down so shallow that men could wade without difficulty, and have them march into the city by the river-bed.

But even that would have been of no avail, had not the Babylonians given themselves up to utter heedlessness in their wild orgies. For on each bank of the river, within the city, stood walls about a hundred and fifty feet high, with double gates of solid brass; and if only these gates had been shut or even watched, the Persians in the bed of the river would have been certainly caught in a trap. However, no such precaution was thought of in the proud, wicked city.

Daniel 5

¹ Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

Then he called for the sacred vessels of Jehovah, which his grandfather had brought from the house of God in Jerusalem,

³ ...and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them.

⁵ In the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

⁶ Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

⁷ The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

But none of all these could tell him a word. Then his mother came in, and told him of Daniel's ability to interpret secrets. Daniel was immediately sent for; and he came, and told the king the writing and the meaning of it.

Daniel 5

²⁶ God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it.

²⁷ You are weighed in the balances and are found wanting.

²⁸ Your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

The drunkenness and lascivious carousals in the palace were copied to perfection in all parts of the city. Drunkenness was everywhere, and men and women mingled together in the awful obscenity of that heathen revelry which was the most acceptable worship of Venus and Adonis.

Meanwhile, outside the city, in silence and darkness, the Persians watched at the two points where the Euphrates entered and left the walls. Anxiously they noted the gradual sinking of the water in the river-bed; still more anxiously they watched to see if those within the walls would observe the suspicious circumstance, and sound an alarm through the city. Should such an alarm be given, all their labors would be lost....

But as they watched, no sounds of alarm reached them—only a confused noise of revel and riot, which showed that the unhappy townsmen were quite unconscious of the approach of danger.

At last shadowy forms began to emerge from the obscurity of the deep river-bed, and on the landing-places opposite the river-gates clusters of men grew into solid columns. The undefended gateways were seized; a war-shout was raised; the

alarm was spread; and swift runners started off to show the king of Babylon that his city was taken at one end. In the darkness and confusion of the night a terrible massacre ensued. The drunken revelers could make no resistance.

The king, paralyzed with fear at the awful handwriting upon the wall, which too late had warned him of his peril, could do nothing even to check the progress of the assailants, who carried all before them everywhere. Bursting into the palace, a band of Persians made their way to the presence of the monarch, and slew him on the scene of his impious revelry.⁴⁶⁴

Daniel 5

³⁰ In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

³¹ And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

With this lesson read Rawlinson's *Fourth Monarchy*, chap. 8, par. 52-55. *Jeremiah* 50 and 51; *Isaiah* 21:1-9; 47:1-15; 45:1-4.

⁴⁶⁴ Rawlinson, *The Fourth Monarchy*, chap. 8.

13. The Handwriting on the Wall (1899)

Present Truth, July 13, 1899

Daniel 5:17-31

E. J. Waggoner

THE portion of Scripture covered by this lesson is but the closing part of a most interesting and instructive history, and therefore we must first give some attention to what precedes. Nebuchadnezzar, who had brought Babylon to the highest pitch of grandeur and greatness, was dead, and his son Nabonadius, who had associated with himself Belshazzar his son, was ruling in his stead.

The 3rd chapter of *Daniel*, which we have already studied, and also the 2nd, show us something of how God had dealt with Babylon, and how He had revealed himself to the king. The 4th chapter, which is passed by in these lessons, recounts Nebuchadnezzar's pride and its abasement, and gives his humble acknowledgment of his sin and of the goodness and greatness of God. The time of the 5th chapter is nearly seventy years later than that of the 1st.

A Blasphemous Orgy

At the time when the events of this chapter occurred, Babylon had been besieged by Cyrus, king of Persia, commanding the combined forces of Media and Persia, for about a year. As yet nothing decisive had been accomplished. The walls of Babylon were very thick and high, and a deep and wide moat surrounded the city.

The soldiers of Cyrus had been engaged in cutting a canal round one side of the city, extending from a point on the Euphrates River above the city to a point below, as it passed through the city; but the Babylonians, feeling secure in their stronghold, with provisions laid up for many years, laughed at this sort of warfare, and gave themselves no concern.

As if to emphasise their unconcern, the people were this

night celebrating with unusual hilarity a heathen festival. The king made a special feast to a thousand of his lords, drinking himself drunk in their presence, while they all...

Daniel 5

⁴ ...praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

The vessels of the house of God were brought out, and the king's courtiers and courtesans drank wine out of them, thus wantonly insulting the God of heaven. It was a wild scene of licentious carousing, in which the king, who felt himself superior to the Majesty of the universe, allowed himself to be no true king, but a mere thing lower than the brutes.

Cowardice of Blasphemers

⁵ In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

⁶ Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

The king's conscience made a coward of him. He could boldly blaspheme the God of heaven as long as He kept silence, but when God began to manifest himself in a special manner, he trembled like a leaf in the wind. He had fancied himself a king, and could boast of his power, believing all the flatteries of his princes; but now he was revealed before them as a miserable, shrinking, trembling thing. Where was now his confidence in the gods which he had been praising?

Vain Confidence

⁷ The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck,

and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

⁸ Then came in all the king's wise men; but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.

⁹ Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

But the king's wise men were not familiar with the handwriting of God. They had not studied in His school. They had so long worshipped the work of their own hands,⁴⁶⁵ that the hand of God was to them a hidden mystery.

Isaiah 44

²⁵ [God] frustrates the tokens of liars, and makes diviners mad; [He] turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolish.

When He speaks, His words are so deep that all human wisdom sinks into insignificance. It was with reference to this very time that these words were written more than a hundred years before. See the remainder of *Isaiah* 44, and 45:1-4.

It was now the time of punishment for the wickedness of Babylon. Long before, God had sent its people warning, and had wrought wonderfully among them; but because judgment upon their evil works was not executed speedily, their hearts were fully set to do evil.⁴⁶⁶ This very time, and this very circumstance had been accurately foretold through the prophet, before any of the actors in the scene were born. God had said to Babylon and its rulers:

Isaiah 47

⁶ I was wroth with my people, I have polluted my inheritance, and given them into your hand: you did show them no mercy; upon the ancient have you very heavily laid your yoke.

⁷ And you said, I shall be a lady for ever: so that you did not lay these things to your heart, neither did remember the lat-

⁴⁶⁵ *Isaiah* 2:8.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ecclesiastes* 8:11.

ter end of it.

⁸ Therefore hear now this, you that are given to pleasures, that dwell carelessly, that say in your heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:

⁹ But these two things shall come to you in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon you in their perfection for the multitude of your sorceries, and for the great abundance of your enchantments.

¹⁰ For you have trusted in your wickedness: you have said, None sees me. Your wisdom and your knowledge, it has perverted you; and you have said in your heart, I am, and none else beside me.

¹¹ Therefore shall evil come upon you; you shall not know from whence it rises: and mischief shall fall upon you; you shall not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you shall not know.

¹² Stand now with your enchantments, and with the multitude of your sorceries, wherein you have labored from your youth; if so be you shall be able to profit, if so be you may prevail.

¹³ You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save you from these things that shall come upon you.

¹⁴ Behold, they shall be as stubble.

A Faithful Witness

The astrologers and necromancers could not prevail, and Daniel, the servant of the despised and blasphemed God of Israel, was called in to make known the mystery. To him the same rewards were offered that had tempted the astrologers to try their skill; but they were no inducement to him; yet he unhesitatingly promised to make know the writing and its interpretation.

Daniel had long been a student in the Lord's school, and he knew His handwriting, and had no trouble in deciphering it. It was a terrible message that he had to deliver, but he had no

fear. He had so long been accustomed to stand before the God of heaven and earth, that he could not be abashed by the tinsel and gaudy splendour of a profligate court, nor elated by the promises of rewards offered by the ruler of a kingdom of a day.

Very plainly and forcibly he recounted to the king the history of God's dealings with his ancestors, and how the lesson had not been laid to heart. God had abased the haughty pride of Nebuchadnezzar, and the king, in a writing sent to all the world, had humbly acknowledged the God of heaven as supreme;

Daniel 5

²² And you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this;

²³ But have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before you, and you, and your lords, your wives, and your concubines, have drunk wine in them; and you have praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways, you have not glorified.

What a striking arraignment this was! How insignificant Belshazzar's gods must have seemed to him at that moment! Talk about wise men, when they did not know any more than to praise senseless pieces of metal, and in the same breath belittle the name of Him who gave them breath!

Emptiness

Then was the writing again placed on the wall, and these words appeared:

²⁵ MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

The words themselves were not difficult. Anybody present could have pronounced them. Literally translated, they are,

“Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, Divided.”

But what could they signify?

Daniel 5

²⁶ God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it.

Twice was this repeated, for emphasis. A most accurate account had been kept, and there was no mistake in the books. The end of the kingdom had come; it was about to fall to pieces by its own weakness.

²⁷ You are weighed in the balances, and found wanting.

Isaiah 40

12 [God] weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance,

–yet...

1 Samuel 2

³ ...by Him actions are weighed.

His scales are wonderfully accurate, and are adapted to the greatest things as well as the least. Belshazzar had been placed in them, and had been found lighter than air. He weighed absolutely nothing.

Psalms 62

⁹ Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.

That which men call “gravitation” is but the power of the presence of God, to whom alone power belongs; outside of Him there is no weight whatever; Belshazzar had rejected the Lord, and therefore when laid in the balances he went up like the fine dust.

Sudden Destruction

Only one thing remained to be said:

Daniel 5

²⁸ Your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Per-

sians.

Even then the soldiers of Cyrus were marching into the city through the river bed, the waters of which had been drained off. Sudden retribution was about to fall upon the head of the blasphemous king of Babylon.

Daniel 5

³⁰ In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

³¹ And Darius the Median took the kingdom.

The judgment came as a thunderbolt, yet it was not sudden; for the warning had long been given. The destruction of Babylon was not only a representation of the judgment of the last day, but was in reality the beginning of it, for the punishment then will be finished when the Lord shall appear. Even as it was in Belshazzar's day,

1 Thessalonians 5

³ When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

And thus the story ends.

For Our Learning

Yet it is not ended for us. It is written for our learning, and if we have not learned it, then we are as guilty as Belshazzar was. The pride and self-confidence of the Babylonians was the cause of their fall. The very feast in which they were congratulating themselves on their safety was used by Cyrus for their complete overthrow. Trusting in their strength, they relaxed their watchfulness, and there was nothing to hinder the conqueror from marching into the very heart of the city; and even if he had been seen, the drunken lords and rulers were in no condition to repel him.

Now the same destruction that was prophesied upon Baby-

lon is to come upon all the earth.⁴⁶⁷ Nations and kings may say, that they are well fortified against all invasion: but that is just what Belshazzar said. When God brings judgments, so that no one can know whence they come, who can be prepared against them? Only those who make the preparation of putting on Christ.

Vanity of Earthly Honors

In the very hour of his death king Belshazzar commanded that the promised rewards should be conferred on Daniel. He was clothed in purple, the royal color, a chain of gold was placed about his neck, and a proclamation was issued that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom, next to Belshazzar himself.

Daniel knew the value, or rather, the worthlessness, of these honors. The kingdom was defunct, and with it all its honors would perish. He would not have cared for them, even if it had been in the beginning of the kingdom, instead of at the close, for he served a King who could give more real and lasting rewards.

But let it not be forgotten that the rewards and honors which Belshazzar conferred that night were just as valuable as any that are ever conferred by any earthly monarch. All the kingdoms of this earth, like that of Belshazzar, are but for a day. In the sight of the Lord, all nations are...

Isaiah 40

¹⁷ ...less than nothing, and vanity.

Why then should anybody be elated at the thought of what kings can bestow? or seek worldly honor and preferment? The thing offered cannot be as great as the power offering it, and that is less than nothing! With what trifles men who are called wise amuse themselves?

⁴⁶⁷ See *Isaiah* 14:24-27.

Psalm 118

⁸ It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.

⁹ It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

14. Daniel in the Den of Lions

Present Truth, July 20, 1899

E. J. Waggoner

Daniel 6:10-23

IN THE 3rd chapter of *Daniel* we have the record of a trial that came to the three companions of Daniel. In this chapter we have the account of a test to which Daniel himself was put. As in that one we read nothing of Daniel, so in this one we hear nothing of his three companions; but we may be sure that they were as loyal to the truth of God as was Daniel, and as they had previously showed themselves to be.

We need not take it for granted that Daniel was the only one in the whole kingdom who was faithful to God, but as the whole affair was worked up simply to entrap Daniel, any others would not be noticed.

Daniel's character and talents made a place for him. There is always work for those who are fitted for it. Daniel had held the position of greatest responsibility in the kingdom of Babylon, and when the kingdom passed into the hands of the Medes and Persians he was really indispensable, so he was first under Darius as he had been under Nebuchadnezzar. There were three presidents over the one hundred and twenty provinces of the empire, and of these three Daniel was one, and was preferred above the others.

All the accounts of the realm had to pass through the hands of these three presidents, and we may be sure that there was no cheating as long as Daniel was one of the three. The princes who had to render account regularly to the presidents, could not bribe them, for Daniel would not suffer such a thing; and his two companions in the presidency were prevented by his sturdy integrity from filching from the public treasury. Such honesty in public affairs was an unprecedented thing, and was appreciated by the king, who thought to place Daniel over the whole realm.

The favor in which Daniel was held, together with his strictness in business, made the other presidents and the princes envious. Small minds are always envious at the success of others; but they were incensed against Daniel by the additional fact that he was a check upon their evil purposes. There was no opportunity for them to enrich themselves while he was at the head of affairs.

So they sought to find some occasion against him in his conduct of the affairs of the kingdom, but could not find anything whereof to accuse him,

Daniel 6

⁴ ...forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

His adversaries were forced to acknowledge his integrity, saying,

⁵ We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

What a grand thing it is when that can be said of a man, and by those who are most anxious to find a fault in him! The good do not always have an easy time in this world. Jesus said to His disciples:

John 15

¹⁸ If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

2 Timothy 3

¹² All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

The reason for this is given in this exhortation:

1 John 3

¹¹ This is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

¹² Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore did he slay him? Because his own

works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

¹³ Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

From this text we are assured of the reason why the princes of Medo-Persia wished to have Daniel out of the way. It was because his works were righteous, while theirs were evil. With him removed, they could manipulate the funds as they pleased, and they would not be under the condemnation of his presence.

Accordingly a conspiracy was formed, and the king was made a party to it, without his knowledge. Indeed, nothing could be accomplished unless they had the king's consent, and they could not expect that the king would remove his most faithful officer. So they had to manufacture a new crime. Very subtly was their plan laid.

It was a very common thing for Eastern monarchs to receive divine honors, as though they were gods, and such homage was quite acceptable to them, since it was easy for them to persuade themselves that they really were what their flatterers called them. Therefore it was not at all surprising to Darius when a great company of the chief men in his kingdom came to him, and said,

Daniel 6

⁶ King Darius, live for ever!

⁷ All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask any petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of you, O king, he shall be cast into a den of lions.

⁸ Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not.

⁹ Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

He readily fell into the trap, never thinking of his favorite, Daniel. If they had not lied, in saying that all the presidents

had been in consultation over this matter, his suspicions might possibly have been aroused; nevertheless when integrity and loyalty to principle are so rare as they are, it is not natural for kings to consider the few in whom such virtues are found, especially when they are persuaded that any measure will be “for the public good.” It does not take long to persuade most officials or seekers after office that whatever contributes to their advancement and exaltation is for the good of the public.

The plot was fairly hatched, and the decree was published. How did it affect Daniel? It did not affect him in the least. When he knew that the writing was signed,

Daniel 6

¹⁰ ...he went to his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as aforetime.

Think how much is conveyed in that statement. Daniel prayed to his God just as he had done before. Note that as he prayed he gave thanks. Not a word about the decree; no frantic request for protection; he acted as though there were no such thing. He saw no cause for fear, but only for thanksgiving, “as aforetime.” In this he fulfilled the Divine injunction,

Philippians 4

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

Without thanksgiving there is no prayer. The peace of God which passes all understanding⁴⁶⁸ kept Daniel. He was the least perturbed man in the whole kingdom. How easy it would have been for most professed Christians to find “a way out of the difficulty;” only Daniel did not find himself in any difficulty. Some would say,

⁴⁶⁸ *Philippians 4:7.*

“There is no harm in complying with the law, since it does not demand the worship of any false god, or of any man; it merely says that we must not ask anything of any god or man except the king; and for the next thirty days we will not ask anything of anybody.”

Very plausible, isn't it? Or they would say,

“If you will pray, then do it so that no one will know it. You are not obliged to let anybody know when you pray.”

Ah, what a movement in favor of secret prayer there would have been about that time, if any prayer at all. Daniel, however, was not seeking plausible excuses for not praying to his God. He was too well acquainted with the Lord, and loved Him too well for that. He served the Lord, and that continually.

Suppose that Daniel had acted according to any of these or similar excuses; what would he have virtually been saying? Simply this, that he could not trust the Lord to take care of him when everything seemed to be against him.

- It would have been admitting all the claims to the heathen, that their gods were greater than the God of Israel.
- It would have been exalting the king and his decree above God and His law.
- It would have shown that all his previous prayers had been a mere form, a pretence, without heart or feeling.
- It would have shown that Daniel had no faith in God.

But he had faith, and therefore he could not act in any such way. His service of God was from the heart, and he had prayed because he believed in God; and just because he believed in God, he could not act as though he did not believe in Him. It is such times as that, that determine whether or not a man really loves and serves the Lord. Daniel would not bear false witness against God. When men were banded together against God, in the person of His servant, then was the time

for faithfulness.

Yet Daniel was not the man to flaunt his religion in the faces of men; no vain boaster; his religion was a part of his life; the same every day, and therefore he did just as he had been in the habit of doing. When he went to his room his windows were open, and he did not take the trouble to shut them. Why should he? He had not done so before, and there was no more reason now than there ever was, since his God had not changed.

He went about his devotions as quietly and regularly as in former days. That he was not in the habit of making noisy demonstrations when he prayed is evident from the fact that his enemies had to assemble to find him praying. But it is worth noting that they were quite sure of finding him at prayer. In that heathen kingdom Daniel was not ashamed to have it known that he worshipped Jehovah. And why should he be? is not Jehovah King over all? He is not One to be ashamed of.

Only one step now remained to fasten Daniel in the trap that was set for him. The grave counselors of State, whose minds were supposed to be absorbed in considerations of public interest, had plotted against an innocent, upright man, had acted the part of sneaking spies, and now they had only to be informers. But it would not do to go at once and denounce Daniel to the king, for they knew that he was Daniel's friend. So they took the precaution to get the king committed to the enforcement of the law. They said to him:

Daniel 6

¹² Have you not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save of you, O King, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not.

That was just what they wanted. The king could not escape

now. Having admitted that the law could not be changed, he could not possibly make an exception in favor of Daniel.

Daniel 6

¹³ Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regards not you, O king, nor the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.

How artfully they sought to prejudice the king against Daniel.

¹⁴ Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

But all was in vain. The princes were inexorable. They had framed the law for the express purpose of catching Daniel, and they did not propose to allow him to escape; so they held the king to the decree, reminding him that the honor of the kingdom was at stake, since a law once passed could not be revoked or changed.

¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now king spoke and said unto Daniel, Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.

What a wonderful influence there is in a steadfast Christian life! The king well knew that there was a power with Daniel that was with none of his other officers, and not even with himself, king though he was. He knew that Daniel had more than human power with him, and therefore he believed that the power that had made Daniel what he was, and that had kept him amid all temptations, would still keep him, even in the den of lions.

And he was right; for there was no greater miracle wrought for Daniel when he was in the lions' den than when he was in the king's court. The same power that will keep a man upright

in the midst of temptation will keep him from the jaws of wild beasts.

1 Peter 5

⁸ Our adversary the devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;

—and when a man is kept safe from his attacks, it is but a light thing to keep him from the beasts of the forest.

After passing a sorrowful night, the king went to the den very early in the morning. Although he had expressed the belief that Daniel would be delivered, he was not absolutely sure of it. The king evidently had a far worse night than Daniel had. A man may be far happier and more at ease in a den of lions than others are in a palace. The king's grief showed itself in his voice; as he came to the den and called,

Daniel 6

²⁰ O Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you?

We can see that the king was quite convinced that his gods were nothing in comparison to the God of Daniel; but here was a test question:

“Is your God able to deliver you?”

Yes, He was.

Psalm 34

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.

This had been fulfilled in the case of Daniel, who replied, not forgetting the respect due the king:

Daniel 6

²¹ O king, live for ever.

²² My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me.

The penalty had been executed, and therefore Daniel could be taken out of the den without any violence to the majesty of the law.

Daniel 6

²³ So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

His faith saved him. Faith has wondrous power; by it men have...

Hebrews 11

³³ ...subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

³⁴ Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong.

“Perhaps the lions were not hungry?”

You may be sure that some of the enemies suggested that thought, and contended that Daniel should be left in the den until they recovered their appetite. Well, if they were not hungry, then there certainly could be no objection to putting these informers in for a little holiday from the cares of business; and whether they were hungry or not the king was disposed to deal very summarily with the malignant crowd.

Daniel 6

²⁴ The king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and broke all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

That settled the question. Those men who had been under the control of the great roaring lion who walks about seeking to devour, had no protection against these lions. The result of the whole affair was that Daniel was prospered more than ever, and the knowledge of the true God was published by the

king to all people, and in all languages on earth. Thus even the wrath of man is made to praise God.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁹ *Psalm 76:10.*

15. How to Find Strength

Present Truth, January 10, 1895

Daniel 10:19

E. J. Waggoner

Daniel 10

¹⁹ And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened.

SO WROTE the prophet Daniel in describing a vision given him by the side of one of the rivers of Babylonia. For three weeks Daniel had been mourning, having eaten no “pleasant bread” nor tasted meat or wine.⁴⁷⁰ He was mourning and praying on account of the sins of his people and the captivity into which they had been brought.

He felt not only for himself but for the multitude of his nation in the land of their captivity, and for the temple of his God, which was lying in ruins in a far-off land. The weight of so much trouble pressed heavily upon him, and in his sorrow he turned for help to the Lord. He talked with the Lord, and the Lord, by His angel, talked with him; and the prophet received strength and light.

The course of Daniel and his trouble is the course for us. Human sympathy is comforting and helpful, but the tale of sorrow is rarely lightened by being poured into human ears, and the burden of each is a heavy one of itself; but only tell the trouble to the Lord, tell it in faith, and the burden lightens at once. Talk to God as to a Father, and He will talk to you. The Lord is no respecter of persons.⁴⁷¹ He is as willing to talk with any one of us as He was to talk with Daniel.

Although Daniel was “greatly beloved”⁴⁷² by the Lord, the words which were spoken to him did not relate only to him, but were spoken in reality to us who live long after his day,

⁴⁷⁰ *Daniel* 10:3.

⁴⁷¹ *Acts* 10:34.

⁴⁷² *Daniel* 9:23; 10:11, 19.

when the prophecies he wrote were to be fulfilled. The favors which were seemingly bestowed upon Daniel and upon all the prophets, in the communications given them from God, were in reality bestowed upon us. This is what Peter tells us in his first epistle, when speaking of the prophets and holy men of old, he says,

1 Peter 1

¹² Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

The Lord had us in mind when He sent mighty angels from heaven with communications to His chosen prophets and apostles. Can we say, then, that we are not “greatly beloved” as well as they? Has God not given to us as much as He gave to them, and will He not do for us what He did for them? We are assured that having given us His Son He will...

Romans 8

³² ...with Him also freely give us all things,

–and that:

Acts 17

²⁵ He gives to all life and breath and all things.

In talking to the holy men of old, God was also talking to us; for:

Romans 15

⁴ Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

God was so anxious to talk with us, for our learning and comfort, He spoke to us long before we were born. And upon our entrance into the world, we find His words waiting for us, to give us the hope and strength and comfort with which they

are filled.

When we come to the Scriptures, we come to God, and in them He talks with us, as truly as He ever talked with human flesh; and, unlike the words of man, His words are ever fresh, applying always to the present hour and our present circumstances.

God courts an audience with us, and His time and place are always ready. He knows all our weakness and our sorrow, and so has invited us to come to Him, that we may find hope and comfort, and say as did Daniel,

Daniel 10

¹⁹ When He had spoken unto me, I was strengthened.

The Minor Prophets

1. Gracious Invitations

Present Truth, June 22, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Hosea 14:1-9

E. J. Waggoner

The call:

Hosea 14

¹ O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.

SEE how different the Lord's ways are from man's! With man, a great offense, a fall, is considered ground for casting one off. How often do we hear of a man who is called a father, that has turned a son or daughter away from home because the child has fallen into sin. Because of this human characteristic, to make a fall into sin a reason for berating a man, people who think that God is like a man fear to come to Him when they have sinned.

"I am so sinful, I don't believe the Lord can ever receive and forgive me,"

—says the wandering one. Why, that is the very ground on which God bases His call for you to come. Why does He call us to come? Because we have sinned, and not merely sinned, but have fallen by our iniquity.

"Oh well, perhaps Israel had not sinned so much as I have; in fact, I do not believe there was ever so great a sinner in the world as I am."

It is well for each one to think himself the chief of sinners; for when anyone, no matter, who has a just sense of what he really is, he can see more sin in himself than he can ever see in any other man. The best man must therefore necessarily with all sincerity regard himself as worse than the worst man of whom he has any knowledge. That, however does not make

any difference with God's reckoning. But let us see what we can find as to Israel's actual condition when this gracious invitation was uttered.

By comparing *Hosea* 1:1 and *Isaiah* 1:1, we find that the two prophets, Isaiah and Hosea, lived and prophesied at the same time. Isaiah's inspired utterance, at the beginning of his ministry was that the people were...

Isaiah 1

⁴ ...laden with iniquity,

—that they were corrupters, and that they were altogether corrupt—as bad as they could be. Of all the kings of Israel, after the division at the death of Solomon, not one was good.

1 Kings 15

³⁰ Jeroboam...sinned, and...made Israel sin,

—and the story of each succeeding king is that he was worse than all that were before him. Read the record in the books of *Kings*. Coming to Ahaz, king of Judah, during whose reign the prophets Isaiah and Hosea prophesied, we find that:

2 Chronicles 28

³ He burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

Then he was greatly troubled,

²² And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz.

²³ For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.

Moreover he shut up the house of the Lord, and cut in pieces the sacred vessels, and in all the cities of Judah he

made high places, to burn incense to other gods.⁴⁷³ Really, things could not have been worse than they were when God said:

Hosea 14

¹ O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.

This invitation is the same as,

Revelation 22

¹⁷ Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

There is no limitation, no exclusion. No sinner can be too vile, no backslider can have fallen too low, for the Lord to receive and pardon him.

Hosea 14

¹ ...you have fallen by your iniquity.

That is unqualified. God does not say,

“Return, because you haven’t fallen very low yet,”

–but simply,

“Return, because you have fallen;”

–and that takes in the fall to the very lowest depths.

Luke 15

² This Man receives sinners.

Then give heed to the gracious invitation. The Lord is very gracious, for He tells us just how to come to Him. He says,

Hosea 14

² Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.

“But what shall I say? I haven’t a word to say for myself.”

⁴⁷³ 2 *Chronicles* 28:24-25.

Psalm 40

¹² My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up.

Yea, words would fail you, if you had to find them yourself; but the Lord tells you just what to say, so that you can come with boldness to the throne of grace, knowing that your heaven-inspired plea cannot fail. Here are the words that you are to take with you, when you return to the Lord:

Hosea 14

² Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.

That is sufficient; when you have uttered those words from the heart, you may be sure that the prayer is instantly answered. God does not trifle with men, and when He tells us to come to Him with a certain request, and tells us just what to say in order to gain it, we can have no doubt as to the result.

Of course this means confession of sin. The request, “Take away all iniquity,” indicates this. We acknowledge that we have sinned, and that everything that God calls sin, is sin. In short, we accept God’s estimate of us. This is necessary, in order that we may be made into what He estimates we ought to be.

Jeremiah 3

¹² Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.

¹³ Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God.

See how large a request He tells us to make. “Take away all iniquity.” It is just as easy for God to do a great thing, a complete work, as a little thing. In fact the work is already done:

Titus 2

¹⁴ [Christ] gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.

When God does a work, He does it thoroughly. Christ is given for our sins.

Galatians 1

³ Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

⁴ Who gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

When we accept that gift, we get the whole of His sinless life in exchange for our sinful life. So God receives us graciously, and takes away all our iniquities at once.

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me;
And that You bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
Just as I am, You wilt receive;
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe;
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.⁴⁷⁴

Hosea 14

³ Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods; for in You the fatherless finds mercy.

This is simply a recognition of God as the only God, in whom alone there is deliverance.

Psalms 33

¹⁷ An horse is a vain thing for safety.

The nations of earth depend very much upon horses for safety. The Governments of earth send agents abroad to buy up horses for the army. Without horses, an army would be very much crippled, if not useless, and without an army a nation would be helpless; but while...

⁴⁷⁴ Charlotte Elliott, Hymn: *Just as I Am*, 1835.

Psalm 20 [RV]

⁷ Some will trust in horses and some in chariots; But we will trust in the name of the Lord our God.

The Lord often reproved Israel for their dependence on horses, from which we are to learn that in returning to the Lord we are absolutely to depend on Him. For a church or an individual to make any sort of alliance with the world, or to look to earthly Governments for help and support, is virtually to say that God is not sufficient; it is having other gods beside Him.

But would it not be a mere matter of form, without any reason, for us who have been brought up amid Christian surroundings to say,

Hosea 14

³ Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods?

We have never fashioned graven images for ourselves to worship. This is true, yet there is great need of our making just the prayer that the Lord here gives us. How often we have made gods of the work of our hands. Many, many times have we regarded with complacent self-satisfaction what we were pleased to call our good works. Who has not at some time in his life imagined that he would get credit for something that he has done? Have we never, after escaping from some danger, congratulated ourselves upon our own dexterity or shrewdness, and forgotten to give thanks to God? What was that but saying to the work of our hands,

“You are our gods”?

The man who has no other gods besides Jehovah, and who never trusts himself, will certainly be saved. It is good to trust in Jehovah, for in Him the fatherless find mercy, whereas mercy is not found in any gods of human devising.

Not what these hands have done
Can save this guilty soul;
Not what this toiling flesh has borne
Can make my spirit whole.
Your work alone, O Christ,
Can ease this weight of sin;
Your blood alone, O Lamb of God,
Can give me peace within.⁴⁷⁵

There is a very significant statement at the close of verse 2:

Hosea 14

² ...so will we render the calves of our lips.

The *Revised Version*, and some others, have it,

“So will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips.”

The French of Segond has it:

“We offer You, instead of bullocks, the homage of our lips.”

The idea clearly is, that praise and thanksgiving, that is spoken out of the abundance of the heart, is more acceptable to God than offering of animals, and, moreover, that it was so in the days of Hosea. Remember that this is the Lord’s own statement. It was not sacrifice that He ever desired, but faith and love. The verse is very similar to:

Hebrews 13

¹⁵ By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.

Psalms 69

³⁰ I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving.

³¹ This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that has horns or hoofs.

We have read the gracious invitation, now listen to the gra-

⁴⁷⁵ Horatius Bonar, Hymn: *Not What These Hands Have Done*, 1864.

cious promises:

Hosea 14

⁴ I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for my anger is turned away from them.

Through the prophet Joel the Lord said,

Joel 2

²⁴ I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten.

Restoration is the Lord's order.

Luke 19

¹⁰ The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

One saves the lost only by bringing it back again; so the Lord promises to make good all that His people have lost by the fall. He will heal all their backsliding, so that no trace of sin or the curse will remain. The Lord loves His people freely, fallen though they be; and the result of His love for the church is to...

Ephesians 5

²⁷ ...present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Another promise:

Hosea 14

⁵ I will be as the dew unto Israel: He shall grow [or blossom] as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

A whole lesson is in this promise.

Matthew 6

²⁸ Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.

How do they grow? By the life of God that is in them. The life within makes the external beauty. Their life is their beauty, their clothing. See how the grass lifts up its head, and laughs for very joy of life, as the dew refreshes it. Now the

dew is only one way in which God manifests His grace. What the visible dew is to the grass, that God is to His people. He can make them grow...

Ephesians 4

¹³ ...unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

–as easily as He can bring the lily to perfection. Not only will God bless His backslidden, fallen people, but He will make them a blessing to others. He will make the branches of Israel to spread, and:

Hosea 14

⁷ They that dwell under His shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine.

Psalms 104

¹⁶ The trees of the Lord are full of sap.

Planted by the river of the water of life, they bring forth their fruit in its season, their leaves do not fade, and whatsoever they do prospers. Their fruit is of God.

Consider these things, and be wise. Remember that great as are the promises of God, so great is the loss of those who reject them.

Hosea 14

⁹ The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

The very thing that enables some people to walk, causes others to stumble. It all depends on whether they are willing to stand in it, or are determined to ignore it. Whatever happens, the Lord's way is right. There can be no charge sustained against the One who makes such gracious invitations, and such glorious promises, which He is able also to perform.

Psalms 2

¹² Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

2. Sinful Indulgence

Present Truth, September 1, 1898

Amos 6:1-8

E. J. Waggoner

THE message of Amos the prophet was given in a time of great seeming prosperity. Both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were victorious in war, winning back from their enemies much of the territory that had been taken away. Jeroboam the second was king over Israel and...

2 Kings 14

²⁵ He restored the coast of Israel...

²⁶ For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel.

²⁷ And the Lord said not that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

Uzziah reigned over the kingdom of Judah,

2 Chronicles 26

⁵ ...and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.

⁷ And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians...

⁸ And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened himself exceedingly.

¹⁵ And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong.

Neither Were Thankful

But it was the same old, sad story over again. Israel and Judah forgot that it was God who made them rich and strong, and began once more to trust in themselves and their uncertain riches.

Hosea 2 [RV]

⁸ For she did not know that I gave her the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.

⁹ Therefore will I take back my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will pluck away my wool and my flax which should have covered her nakedness.

Thus spoke Hosea, who prophesied at the same time as Amos.

Lessons Unlearned

In despising the long-suffering of God and forgetting all His benefits, Israel was surely preparing the way for another experience of suffering and oppression, such as that from which they had been lately delivered. The Lord was not willing that the lessons of the past should thus be wasted, and sent His servants the prophets with messages of warning and instruction. These called attention to the patience and mercy of the Lord, as revealed in their past history, denounced the sins into which the people had fallen, and pointed out the inevitable results of continuance in their evil way.

Amos 5

¹⁴ Seek good, and not evil, that you may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you as you say.

An Inspired Herdman

Amos had not been educated as a prophet. He was not declaring God's Word because that was the kind of work he had been brought up to do. When the priest of Bethel told him to get out of Israel and go to Judah if he wanted to prophesy, because Bethel was very well contented with things as they were, and could not consent to hear anything against the king who supported its false worship, Amos replied that he was not engaged in the work by his own choice, but that God who gave him the message told him where to speak it. Said he,

Amos 7 [RV]

¹⁴ I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a dresser of sycamore trees:

¹⁵ And the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

We Cannot But Speak

The time needed such a man, one who was filled with a solemn sense of the fact that God had given him a message for the people, and that they must hear it. It was no light thing to Amos that the Lord had spoken, and he could not withhold the message from those for whom it was intended. He says,

Amos 3

⁴ Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?

⁵ Can a bird fall in a snare on the earth, where no gin is set for him? shall a snare spring up from the ground, and have taken nothing at all?

⁶ Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? shall evil befall a city, and the Lord has not done it?

⁷ Surely the Lord; God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.

⁸ The lion has roared, who will not fear? THE LORD GOD HAS SPOKEN, WHO CAN BUT PROPHECY?

At Ease in Zion

Amos 6

¹ Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.

Zion has never been a place for the idle and self-indulgent. It is true that there is rest in the presence of the Lord, but because this is true, no one who truly believes and enters into the rest, can be contented without bringing others to the same knowledge of God's nearness to them,

Acts 17

²⁷ That they too should seek the Lord, if haply they might

feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one.

Christ had not held to the riches and glory of heaven, but for our sakes became poor that we might be rich. Israel had been exalted once more among the nations that these might learn how blessed a thing it was to have...

Deuteronomy 4

⁷ ...God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for;

—and that in the spread of this knowledge, the promise to Abraham should be fulfilled that his seed should be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

Debtors to All Men

Instead, however, of recognizing God in His gifts, and exalting His name among the heathen, Israel resigned itself to the sinful enjoyment of its temporal blessings, unmindful of the crying need of a world that lay in darkness, without God and without hope.⁴⁷⁶

Had they carried the knowledge of God to other nations, these would have been subdued by the influence of the Gospel, but they were not, and Israel had only themselves to thank when, in after days, brought into bondage to those heathen nations, they learned how cruel a people could become when unenlightened by the Word of God. Then the work which might have been done in comparative ease, had to be done under a terrible pressure of discouragement and difficulty. It would have been better for them had they gone to the heathen than waited for the heathen to come to them.

Carnal Security

At present they felt secure in the mountain of Samaria. They put far away the evil day, and rejoiced in deeds of vio-

⁴⁷⁶ *Ephesians 2:12.*

lence and shame. Lying on beds of ivory, and stretched on luxurious couches, they feasted on dainties, and sang idle songs to the sound of the viol. They devoted much time to the fine arts, inventing instruments of music. Wine flowed freely at their banquets, and fragrant ointments perfumed their persons.

But the anger of the Lord was against them because their one thought was to use all His gifts for their own gratification, and in their self-centred pleasures they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Like Elijah's disturbing message, there came to them the stern reproof of the herdman Amos, that for these things,

Amos 6 [RV]

⁷ ...shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away.

⁸ The Lord God has sworn by himself, says the Lord, the God of hosts: I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

Unacceptable Worship

The services of the temple had taken on new magnificence in those days of prosperity. The newly invented instruments of music were introduced into the public worship, but the Lord was not pleased with them.

Amos 5 [RV]

²¹ I hate, I despise your feasts.

²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs; for I will not hear the melody of your viols.

What God desired was that they should receive from Him the righteousness that was bestowed as freely as the corn and wine.

²⁴ Let judgment roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

But Israel did not appreciate the best gifts of all, and failing to receive these, they also lost the lesser gifts. The promise is given to us that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all necessary things shall certainly be added.

Matthew 6

³¹ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

The Present Situation

The situation now is the same as it was in the days of Amos. There are judgments waiting to be poured out, not upon one nation only, but upon all nations. Men put far away the evil day, and there are many at ease in Zion.

1 Thessalonians 5

³ When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them...and they shall not escape.

Some are scoffing at the promise of His coming, and...

Matthew 24

³⁸ As in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,

³⁹ And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

God's servants should now be proclaiming His Word, calling on men to...

Revelation 14

⁷ Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come;

–to recognize God in His works and receive life and right-

eousness at His hands, that the prophecy of Amos may be fulfilled to them,

Amos 9

¹⁵ I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, says the Lord your God.

3. The Story of Jonah

Signs of the Times, October 29, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, November 8

Jonah 1:1-17

A. T. Jones

JONAH lived during the reign of Jeroboam II, for we read in the account of what Jeroboam did that:

2 Kings 14

²⁵ He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spoke by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher.

As was related in our last lesson,

2 Kings 13

²² Hazael, king of Syria, oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz;

—and Elisha, just before his death, had prophesied to Joash, Israel's deliverance from Syria. But as Joash, in obeying the prophet's word to smite with the arrows upon the ground, had shown his lack of persistence in smiting only three times, whereas he should have smitten till directed to hold, the prophet said to him,

2 Kings 13

¹⁹ You should have smitten five or six times; then had you smitten Syria till you had consumed it: whereas now you shall smite Syria but thrice.

Accordingly Joash smote Syria three times, and no more; and then it fell to Jeroboam II to complete the deliverance of Israel from the oppressions of Syria.

2 Kings 14

²⁶ For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any

helper for Israel.

²⁷ And the Lord said not that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

And it was the prophet Jonah that directed, encouraged, and strengthened Jeroboam in his appointed work, because the Lord was gracious to Israel and had compassion on them,

2 Kings 13

²³ ...because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Jeroboam, the son of Joash, reigned from 827 BC to 786, and it was in the former part of his reign that Jonah prophesied.

1. Because, as we have seen, it was at the word of Jonah that victory was given to Jeroboam, and that Israel recovered his possessions; and
2. Because of these successes Israel became exalted, and then Amos prophesied Israel's captivity and destruction.⁴⁷⁷

And Amos says he prophesied...

Amos 1

¹ ...in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Uzziah began to reign in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam, which would be in the year 800 BC; and this would leave only fourteen years of the reign of Jeroboam, so that Amos prophesied between the years 800 and 786 BC. Therefore Jonah's prophesying in the early years of Jeroboam's reign, must have been from 827 BC down to about 810 BC.

Nineveh, to which Jonah was commanded to go, was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. It was situated on the River Tigris, 36° 20' north latitude, 43° 10' east longitude, and was

⁴⁷⁷ See *Amos* 7:7-17.

600 miles from Jonah's home. Vul-lush III was king of the city of Nineveh and the empire of Assyria from 810 to 781 BC, and it is most likely that it was in his reign that Jonah was sent on this mission to Nineveh. It may have been in the reign of Vul-lush's predecessor, Shamas-Vul, who reigned from 823-810. We cannot tell yet exactly in which it was; but we may be almost certain that it was in the reign of one of these two kings that Jonah was sent to Nineveh.

Vul-lush had great success in all his expeditions; he extended his dominions in almost every direction, and it is most likely that the wealth acquired from the tribute of all the nations round about had induced that state of luxury and dissipation which called for destruction unless immediate repentance was shown. Therefore the Lord said to Jonah,

Jonah 1

² Arise go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

The Lord has left no nation to itself without full opportunity to know and serve Him. Here His prophet is sent to the capital of Assyria, whose empire then ruled from Egypt and the Great Sea to Central Asia, and from the Persian Gulf to the mountains of Armenia. Before this, His prophets had spoken directly to, and had even anointed, a king of Syria. Afterward He spoke in a dream, and then by His prophet, to the great Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; and Nebuchadnezzar published a letter to all people, nations, and languages that he...

Daniel 4

² ...thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God has wrought toward [him].

From Jeremiah the Lord sent messages to Edom, and Moab, and Ammon, and Tyre, and Sidon.⁴⁷⁸ He spoke to Cyrus and to Alexander the Great. We repeat, God has left no nation with-

⁴⁷⁸ *Jeremiah 27:3-7.*

out a knowledge of himself, and no nation has ever been left to itself without warning.

But Jonah was not willing to carry the Lord's message to this perishing city.

Jonah 1

³ Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Nineveh lay about six hundred miles to the east, and Jonah started to go about three thousand miles to the westward; for Tarshish was on the southwest coast of Spain. But Jonah was open-hearted about it; he did not pretend, as many people now do, to be obeying the Lord by going directly opposite to what the Lord told him. He was disobedient, and he intended it to be considered so.

But now, thousands of people, in effect, do just as Jonah did, and then try to convince themselves that they are obeying the Lord. The Lord says to all people,

Exodus 20

¹⁰ The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work.

Thousands of people will work all day the seventh day, and then do no work on the first day, and pretend that in this they are obeying the commandment of God. But to rest on the first day of the week is no more obedience to the commandment of God to keep the Sabbath than it was obedience for Jonah to go to Tarshish when the Lord told him to go to Nineveh.

If you are going to obey the Lord, do it; and if you are determined to disobey, do that; but don't try to pass off disobedience for obedience, and so deceive yourself.

Deuteronomy 6

²⁵ And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.

Jonah 1

³ [Jonah]...went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

⁴ But the Lord sent out a great wind...

This was a euroclydon, such as struck the ship on which Paul was being taken a prisoner to Rome.

⁴ ...and there was a mighty tempest in the sea...

⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to light it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

Jonah seems to have felt perfectly safe, although he knew he was disobeying God. So do many people. And, as then, innocent persons are thrown into trial and distress because of their careless disobedience.

⁶ So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, what do you mean, O sleeper? arise, call upon your God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

Then they cast lots to find whose was the fault that the storm was upon them, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

⁸ Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray you, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is your occupation? and whence come you? what is your country? and of what people are you?

⁹ And he said unto them, I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which has made the sea and the dry land.

¹⁰ Then were the men exceedingly afraid.

They knew that the God who made the sea and the dry land must be above all gods, and so when they heard of Him, they were “exceedingly afraid.” Then, knowing that Jonah was the cause of all their trouble,

¹¹ They said unto him, What shall we do unto you, that the

sea may be calm unto us? for the sea grew more and more tempestuous [margin].

¹² And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea...for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

¹³ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not...

Even against the evidence of the lot, and the convincing word of Jonah, the men labored hard to deliver themselves rather than pitch him into the sea; but it was all no use; overboard he had to go. So the men...

Jonah 1

¹⁴ ...cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech You, O Lord, we beseech You, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You.

¹⁵ So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows." So the Lord turned Jonah's rebellion into good for those who knew not the Lord, and taught them of himself.

¹⁷ Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

This part of the story is just as true as is any other. Jesus makes mention of this very verse of Jonah, in His preaching. And, having the indorsement of Christ, we know that it is as true as any other of His words, and they are all absolutely true; although the translation in the New Testament, which gives the word "whale," is not justifiable. The original says,

¹⁷ The Lord had prepared a great fish.

And a great fish was what it was. But because a whale is a great fish, it does not follow at all that this was a whale. There are great fish in the Mediterranean that can swallow not only

a man, but a horse or a buffalo. In one such was found the whole body of a man in complete armor. In one was found a whole horse. In one was found the skin of a whole buffalo, which had been thrown overboard from the very ship which caught the fish.⁴⁷⁹

It was nothing strange or wonderful at all that such a great fish should swallow Jonah; and that the Lord should preserve him unhurt, and was no more wonderful than to preserve the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, or Daniel in the den of hungry lions.

⁴⁷⁹ See *Smith's Dictionary*, Art. "Whale."

4. Nineveh's Repentance

Signs of the Times, November 5, 1885

Notes on the International Lesson, November 15

Jonah 3:1-10

A. T. Jones

LAST week's lesson ended with Jonah in the fish's belly. Then he began to pray. In fact, he began to pray as soon as he was cast into the sea; for he says:

Jonah 2

³ For You had cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all your billows and your waves passed over me.

⁴ Then I said, I am cast out of your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.

⁷ When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto You, into your holy temple.

It often happens that some such upsetting as this is necessary to bring men to see themselves. David said,

Psalms 119

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept your word.

Then he says:

⁷¹ It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

The whole of Psalm 107 is made up of instances of men being brought by dangers, afflictions, etc., to acknowledge God, and of calls upon men to...

Psalms 107 [also vs. 14, 21, 31]

⁸ ...praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.

Yet it is to be feared that, in most cases, after the Lord at such times has heard their cries and delivered them, they remember Him, at best, for only a little while, and turn again to

folly. But Jonah well says:

Jonah 2

⁸ They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

Hebrews 12

¹¹ Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Jonah's repentance was genuine. He was ready to obey God, and he said,

Jonah 2

⁹ I will sacrifice unto You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.

¹⁰ And the Lord spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

Jonah 3

¹ And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid you.

“Preach the preaching that I bid you,” is the Lord's command to every preacher.

Ezekiel 3

¹⁰ Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears.

¹¹ ...and tell them, Thus says the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

2 Timothy 4

¹ I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom;

² Preach the word.

That which the Lord says is the only thing that is right. It may not always be the most pleasant thing to speak, nor the most pleasant thing for men to hear, but it is the best thing to

speak, and it is the best thing for men to hear.

Jonah 3

³ Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

Nineveh was built by Asshur, a grandson of Noah,⁴⁸⁰ and at this time was the greatest city in the world, containing about 600,000 people. It was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, which had spread its rule from the Tigris to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf.

⁴ And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

⁵ So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

The message reached the king, and he too joined the general fear. He not only joined in it, but issued a decree that the good work should go on.

⁶ For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

⁷ And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

⁸ But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

This was genuine repentance. The Saviour declared it to be so, and that these men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment and condemn the generation to whom He preached.

Matthew 12

⁴¹ The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this gener-

⁴⁸⁰ *Genesis* 10:11.

ation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here.

We have, therefore, the testimony of Jesus that the men of Nineveh repented. The word which John the Baptist, and Jesus, and Peter, and all the apostles preached, was, "Repent."⁴⁸¹ And by the action of the Ninevites, it is shown that repentance is not only in word, not only in fasting and prayer, but this with turning every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands.

Isaiah 1

¹⁶ Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil;

¹⁷ Learn to do well.

Anything short of turning from evil and of wanting to do better, it is of no avail until they really do better. And all who do so God will receive and forgive as really as He did the men of Nineveh.

Jonah 3

¹⁰ And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not.

Jonah 4

¹ But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

Jonah thought all his credit as a prophet, or even as a man, was forfeited. He had told the people that the city should be destroyed, and now the Lord was not going to do it, and he was therefore "very angry." It seems that he had told the Lord as much before he left his own country; for now he says:

² O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish.

From this it appears that when the Lord first told Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh and cry against it, Jonah had said to

⁴⁸¹ *Matthew* 3:2, 4:17; *Acts* 2:38, 17:30, 26:20.

Him, in substance,

“If I go up Nineveh and tell them the city shall be overthrown, they will stop sinning and turn to the Lord, and then You will not overthrow it; and so if the city is not to be overthrown anyhow, I might as well stay in my own country, or anywhere else; therefore I will flee to Tarshish.”

He did not think that if the city was to be destroyed anyway it was indeed useless for him to go. Jonah apparently cared more for his reputation than he did for all the souls in Nineveh, and thought that the Lord should turn a deaf ear to all the cries of the people, so that Jonah’s word might be performed in spite of all.

Jonah 4

⁵ So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

Then,

⁶ The Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head...

–from the heat; and the next day the gourd withered, and a vehement east wind...

⁸ ...and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, –and he wished that he might die, and said,

⁸ ...It is better for me to die than to live.

¹⁰ Then said the Lord, You have had pity on the gourd, for which you have not labored, neither made it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night;

¹¹ And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

There the record closes. Jonah made no further answer. It is

queer that he could not see and rejoice in the mercy of God, in the first place; that the wicked people would not turn without warning; that unless they did turn they must perish; and that the warning alone could save them. But the Lord was patient and gentle with him, and kindly taught him the lesson which he was slow to discern.

Micah 7

¹⁸ Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retains not His anger for ever, because He delights in mercy.

5. The Bounds of Heathenism

Present Truth, March 7, 1895

Micah 6:6-7

E. J. Waggoner

THESE bounds are set by the word of God; that word alone defines what is heathenism and what is not. Only by that word can be determined whether the principles by which our lives are governed are heathen, or whether they are Christian.

Micah 6

⁶ Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

Doubtless we would not think of presuming to worship God by such acts as are herein enumerated; yet what we do offer Him as worship may fall quite as far short of that worship which is in spirit and in truth.

The worship referred to by the prophet is heathenism. Heathen worship is not inconsistent with the retention of forms and ceremonies instituted by God, or of those which are approximate to them. God instituted sacrifices as an essential feature of His worship, and it was doubtless from these that all other sacrificial ceremonies were borrowed.

The heathen looked no further in their worship than the sacrifice itself, and attributed to it all the virtue of obedience to the Divine instructions. It was this that made them heathen. They lost faith, which looked beyond the form and ceremony to the Lamb of God, in whom alone there was virtue for mankind. Heathenism is simply worship not of faith.

This being gone, and human reasoning and speculation hav-

ing taken its place, perversion of the forms of worship followed as a matter of course, in proportion as the human intellect endeavoured to give them a meaning. God came to be regarded as a being to be appeased by the shedding of blood, or —by what was held as its equivalent—the taking of life. Men thought to purchase His favor, and measured the probability of success by the value of the sacrifice which they offered.

And thus it came to pass that they offered the fruit of their bodies—their own children—for the sin of their souls. They made their sons and their daughters to...

2 Kings 17

¹⁷ ...pass through the fire,

—or sacrificed them upon the burning altar.⁴⁸² It was the most valuable offering they knew how to make, and as such, in their view, the most acceptable. And that view was but the logical outgrowth of the human mind, working upon a system of worship without faith. And thus the very sacrifices by which they thought to atone for sin only added tenfold to it. The word of God declares,

Romans 14

²³ ...whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Without faith there is no real sight of the Lamb of God, and without the sight of Him all forms of worship lose their meaning. Then come in human reasoning, philosophy, and tradition, by which the spiritual sight is utterly darkened, and the commandments of God made of none effect.

It was thus that the Jews had become actual heathen in the days of Christ; it is thus that many have become heathen in our own day who imagine themselves Christians.

Every individual can determine his own position and the character of his religion by an examination of God's word.

⁴⁸² 2 Kings 3:27.

That word is the rule of faith, and...

Romans 14

²³ ...whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

It is faith alone that sets the bounds to heathenism.

6. The Desire of All Nations

Present Truth, August 31, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Haggai 2:1-9

E. J. Waggoner

TWO kings have reigned in Persia since the period of our last lesson,⁴⁸³ and one of them, Artaxerxes in response to complaints to assist those who were not allowed to assist in rebuilding the temple, has given orders that the work of restoration is stopped,

Ezra 4

²⁴ So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia.

In that year, Haggai and Zechariah began to prophesy unto Judah and engaged them to go on with the work of rebuilding the temple.

It is evident from the 1st chapter of *Haggai* that the people had become discouraged. They were saying that the time had not come for the Lord's house to be built. Yet they were building goodly houses for themselves. It was just as true then as it is now that those who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness will find all other necessary things added to them. The prophet called the people to consider their ways. He reminded them.

Haggai 1

⁶ You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but you have not enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink, you clothe yourself, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages earns wages to put it into a bag with holes.

⁹ ...Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that is waste, and you run every man unto his own house.

⁴⁸³ The article referred to appears in the section, "Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther," the third article, "Rebuilding the Temple," *Present Truth*, August 24, 1899.

We may find in this lesson an explanation of much of the misfortune that attends the plans of men in these days. A lack of liberality toward the cause of God is no economy.

Proverbs 11

²⁴ There is that withholds more than is meet but it tends to poverty.

²⁵ ...He that waters shall be watered also himself.

It is true that there were a great many very serious obstacles in the way of building the temple, but because of this the people were not justified in concluding that it was not yet time to build the Lord's house. Faith is that which connects us with God. No one can come to Him who does not believe Him. Hence it is important that faith shall be able to endure testing and trial.

Men would like to escape this experience and go right into heaven without a trial, but if they did, it would not be heaven very long. Israel desired to go straight from Egypt into the Promised Land, but till the influences of Egypt and the love for the ways were taken out of their hearts they would have turned Canaan itself into a copy of Egypt.

In the building of the second temple, God was not so anxious to see the completion of an erection of wood and stone, as to see in the hearts of His people that preparation for a pure and spiritual worship which would make it possible for Him to bless them. The people had not arrived at this state, and it was necessary that they should be schooled and disciplined by the trying of their faith, that this being much more precious than gold that perishes, or even the structure of a magnificent temple, might be found unto praise and honor and glory.

For this reason, they were tried, to see whether, in the face of difficulty and temptation, they would still seek first the kingdom of God, or make the food and raiment of chief account. That they did the latter, showed them lacking in the

first principles of the service of God, but they were not for this rejected. They needed instruction, and prophets were sent to teach them the right way.

The words spoken by these prophets are for us also, that we may not make the mistake of letting the service of God become secondary to anything else. Nothing is more foolish than for a man to weigh his chances of getting a living against the call to obey God. It is true now, as it was in Haggai's day, that faith must be tested, but there is no question about the Word of God being sure. The only uncertain element is our confidence in that Word. When we believe it and obey it with all our heart, our welfare is assured, for it rests upon the security of promises which cannot be broken. We must learn now to trust God's Word, even in the face of adverse circumstances, for the unbelieving and fearful never enter the city of God.

Even after the Jews had set to work on the temple, their hearts were discouraged when they remembered how far short it fell of approaching the splendor of Solomon's temple. Some of the people had seen this before the captivity, and they despondingly compared these two.

But this was a small matter. The Lord sent a message by Haggai to all the people of the land bidding them work and be of good courage. The most splendid temple that men could have built would have fallen far short of God's grand purpose. This was that men themselves should be His temple.

Isaiah 66

¹ Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

Solomon had recognized how impossible it was to build a habitation meet for the God who had created all things. In his prayer of dedication he had said,

1 Kings 8

²⁷ But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built?

God's chosen dwelling place is not in temples made with hands. He himself has constructed a temple, a living one, in which He may reveal His glory.

1 Corinthians 3

¹⁶ Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you.

¹⁷ The temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

We cannot make ourselves holy; God has done that already; but we can defile the temple of God by enthroning idols in the holy place where God has chosen to dwell. The sacredness of the human body can only be measured by the holiness of Him who dwells there.

Isaiah 57

¹⁵ I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit.

But in this same verse, we read,

¹⁵ Thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity.

Think how much is brought into God's temple. There is the loftiness and height of God, as well as His eternity. So we read that we are to comprehend the length and depth and breadth and height of the love of Christ, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God.⁴⁸⁴ God will infinitely enlarge the life that is submitted to Him, so that it shall be a fit temple for himself in every respect.

This was the truth which God desired to teach Israel. So long as they got no farther than to build Him a temple of wood and stone, it was evidence that they could not see His purpose or enter into it.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ephesians* 3:18-19.

Hebrews 9

⁸ The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.

The lesson will be learned when God's people enter the New Jerusalem, for John says,

Revelation 21

²² And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

There is no shadow needed there of the good things to come, for the good things have come. Then we know even as also we are known.⁴⁸⁵

³ The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them.

The relation between God and His people, in their perfect union, is typified by the relation of the bridegroom and the bride. These are one flesh, yet each can see the other as a separate person. In a perfect marriage there is perfect union so that both lives are merged in one, yet the happiness is wonderfully increased by reason of the separate existence of the loved one. Thus not only do the heart and will and judgment find enjoyment, but also the senses that convey impressions from the inner life. So,

1 Corinthians 13

¹² ...as in a glass, darkly,

—does the Lord instruct us how we may be temples for His indwelling, and yet see His face, and find in Him our temple, wherein we may dwell always, and go no more out.

John 14

²⁰ At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

⁴⁸⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:12.

This was the truth which God spoke to the Jews through Haggai, if they had had ears for it.

Haggai 2

⁴ I am with you, says the Lord of hosts:

⁵ According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remains among you.

God does not withdraw His Spirit from men, though they grieve it more, and resist its working.⁴⁸⁶ He dwelt in Israel, and that fact made them a holy people unto the Lord their God.⁴⁸⁷ Now the Lord assures Judah that His Spirit remains among them still; therefore they are holy, if they will but acknowledge it.

The same thing is true today. Men have lost the knowledge of God and think that to be saved, they must purify themselves. But,

Isaiah 30

¹⁵ ...in returning and rest shall you be saved.

It is true that God requires holiness, but how shall it be gained? God sanctifies every place where He dwells, and what men need to learn is that God does not cast off, but that He dwells in them still, and therefore they are holy. The holy place may be defiled, the sanctuary trodden underfoot, but He who dwells there can cleanse it, and He alone.

We are called to rest in a work which has been completed from the foundation of the world;⁴⁸⁸ and to show our faith in God's finished work, by resting on the seventh day, whereon God rested from all His works. The Sabbath is a sign between God and His people,

Ezekiel 20

¹² ...that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctifies

⁴⁸⁶ *Psalm* 139:7-10.

⁴⁸⁷ *Deuteronomy* 7:6.

⁴⁸⁸ *Hebrews* 4:3.

them.

Because God has formed every man for His own dwelling place, and implanted in every soul desires that can only be satisfied by the fullness of God dwelling within, Christ is truly...

Haggai 2

⁷ ...the Desire of all nations.

Men are ever in a state of unrest, seeking variety for satisfaction in the things of this world,

1 John 2

¹⁶ ...the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

But, as we have seen, man was made for...

Isaiah 57

¹⁵ ...the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity;

—consequently nothing short of this gives lasting satisfaction. The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; there is no peace for them,⁴⁸⁹ because they do not receive the one thing that brings peace and rest,—the fullness of God.

Do we hunger and thirst after something we have never yet attained? It is the crying out of our heart and our flesh after God, like a thirsty land.⁴⁹⁰ Perhaps we have some ambition or longing, which, if we can only get it satisfied, will, we think, be all we desire. It is not so. Let none grasp longer after fleeting shadows, but take the substance that is freely offered, and which makes the receiver...

Deuteronomy 33

²³ ...satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord.

The highest stage of Christian life is to be “filled,” and by the

⁴⁸⁹ *Isaiah* 57:20-21.

⁴⁹⁰ *Psalms* 63:1.

infinite greatness of that which fills, we may learn the insatiable character of the desire which God has placed in men. It is folly to think of finding satisfaction in the broken cisterns of this world.

Haggai 2

⁷ I will fill this house with glory.

It was to this building, though much enlarged by Herod, that Christ came so many times in His earthly life. The Son of God, whose glory could not be contained by the heavens and the earth, filled the temple with His sacred presence. The mere adorning with silver and gold was nothing compared with this.

⁹ In this place will I give peace, says the Lord of hosts.

Christ, came to give peace to every restless, unsatisfied, longing heart. Malachi foretold that the Messiah, whom Israel desired, should suddenly come to His temple, but:

Malachi 3

² Who shall stand when He appears?

Jesus Christ has come to the temple which was built in Haggai's time, but that does not fulfill the prophecy in its completeness.

Haggai 2

⁶ Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations.

The Lord will come to His temple, the men and women who are His dwelling-place, and fill them with glory. But how will it affect them?

Malachi 3

² Who may abide the day of His coming? for He is like a refiner's fire.

Those who have defiled His sanctuary with their detestable

things, will desire to be hidden from the wrath of the Lamb. His glory is to them a consuming fire; and they are...

2 Thessalonians 1

⁹ ...punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.

It is not that they did not obey His law. They...

⁸ ...obey not the Gospel.

The Gospel declared that they were the holy temple of God, and made known to them His sanctifying rest in the Sabbath, but they would have none of it. God is no respecter of persons, and it is His life that has been revealed in all mankind. Those who have confessed that Christ has come in their flesh⁴⁹¹ and have acknowledged Him in all their ways,⁴⁹² when He appears in His glory,⁴⁹³ are made like Him, for they see Him as He is.⁴⁹⁴

2 Thessalonians 1

¹⁰ He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe,

—but the disobedient are unable to bear the revealing of His glory. Christ must fill all things, and it is for those whom He has chosen for His dwelling-place to decide whether He shall purify them from sin now, that they may be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing;⁴⁹⁵ or whether they will forget that they are not their own,⁴⁹⁶ defile His temple,⁴⁹⁷ and be consumed when He gathers...

Matthew 13

⁴¹ ...out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them

⁴⁹¹ *1 John 4:2.*

⁴⁹² *Proverbs 3:6.*

⁴⁹³ *Matthew 25:31.*

⁴⁹⁴ *1 John 3:2.*

⁴⁹⁵ *Ephesians 5:26-27.*

⁴⁹⁶ *1 Corinthians 6:19-20.*

⁴⁹⁷ *1 Corinthians 3:17.*

which do iniquity.

7. The Source of Power

Present Truth, September 7, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Zechariah 4:1-14

E. J. Waggoner

IN THE visions granted to Zechariah, one of which is the subject of the lesson, he was taken behind the scenes and shown the powerful agencies which were at work on behalf of Israel. In the 3rd chapter is the history in brief of the struggle between God's people and their enemies, with its outcome. Satan appears as the real adversary, but in spite of his efforts, the high priest who represents Israel, is cleansed from defilement and clothed with change of raiment.

Israel was unconscious of much that was taking place in connection with their experience. They saw the attacks of their enemies and walked in fear of the machinations of their hostile neighbours, but these things did not by any means complete the picture. The powers of heaven were leagued with them, and while Satan seemed often to triumph to outward appearance, in reality the adversary was compelled to stand by, powerless under the Divine rebuke, while God wrought for His people in causing their iniquity to pass from them.

There is a lesson for us in this experience. We are not to fix our attention upon earthly difficulties. It is true that Satan will find numerous instruments through whom he can work to tempt and harass us, but we may always rejoice in the confidence that his seeming triumph is but a hollow one. Christ is the Captain of our salvation, and He never stands aside from our spiritual conflicts, His strength is available to make us more than conquerors,⁴⁹⁸ and...

⁴⁹⁸ *Romans 8:37.*

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁷ Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

As the angels of God, although invisible to human eyes, were yet all the while encamped about Elisha,⁴⁹⁹ so in times of apparently overwhelming attack, we may remember that Christ has promised never to leave or forsake us,⁵⁰⁰ and that:

2 Corinthians 2

¹⁴ [God] always causes us to triumph in Christ.

Again, in the 4th chapter *Zechariah* is shown that, while success depends entirely upon the Spirit of God, abundant provision is made for every one to receive this in its fullness. The prophet was shown a candlestick with seven lamps. There was no need for any of the lamps to become extinguished, because a pipe connected each with olive trees, which poured the oil out of themselves through the pipes into the lamps.

The candlestick with seven lamps stood for God's people. In the earthly sanctuary, the lights were to be kept always burning before the veil, showing that Israel was always in the presence and thought of God.

Exodus 27

²¹ It shall be a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel.

When John was shown the sanctuary in heaven, and saw the Saviour in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, it was explained to him that the seven candlesticks were the seven churches.

Revelation 1

²⁰ ...the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven

⁴⁹⁹ *2 Kings 6:17, Psalm 34:7.*

⁵⁰⁰ *Hebrews 13:5.*

churches.

God's people are the light of the world:

Matthew 5

¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Philippians 2

¹⁵ That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world;

And it was solely that the light might shine that the temple was now to be re-built. God's ambition for His people is expressed in the words,

Isaiah 62

¹ For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns.

The two olive trees it was told Zechariah by the angel, were...

Zechariah 4

¹⁴ ...the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

They are referred to again in the 11th chapter of *Revelation* as God's two witnesses, also as two candlesticks.

Revelation 11

³ And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

⁴ These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

1 John 5

⁸ There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit and the water and the blood: and these three agree in one.

As these three agree in one, we may conclude that the two witnesses certainly refer to the life of Christ, as revealed in:

- the Spirit, which testifies of Him;⁵⁰¹
- the Word or Water, which is himself, the Water of Life;⁵⁰² and
- the Blood, which is the life of Christ.

1 John 5

¹⁰ He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself.

And so also, whatever the two olive trees represented, they poured out of themselves into the lamps. We see, therefore, that there were infinite possibilities before the children of Israel at this time, and the vision was given that they might know something of the riches of the glory that was bestowed so freely upon them. A great work could be done if they would only learn what was the true nature of God's work, and not get the false idea that spiritual receptivity and success meant much outward display.

It is evident that many were as yet laboring under this mistake, for they were despising the day of small things. Their thoughts were altogether upon externals. Had a vast army of workmen been at their command, and a splendid structure in course of rapid erection, they would have felt that things were going prosperously, but because these outward indications were lacking, they set down the whole thing as a comparative failure. They did not know how they might work the works of God, and so the instruction was given:

Zechariah 4

⁶ Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.

With sufficient gold they might have erected a building

⁵⁰¹ *John* 16:14.

⁵⁰² *John* 1:1.

which would be unsurpassable in architectural splendor, but all the gold in the world could not buy one living stone for the temple which God was building. Every other agency but the Spirit was valueless and powerless for the work.

Christian workers need to keep this truth in mind. When God has given success to some effort, it is often felt that if only so many more men could be engaged in the work, so much more good could be accomplished. But this is a fallacy which is based on a mistake. It is “not by might” (or “an army,” margin). It is not by one man or a multitude that God effects anything.

Therefore when we would attain greater success in God’s work, we should not seek for more men, but for more of God’s Spirit. If we get this, the question of more workers will take care of itself. When the first thought is to get more men with a view to success, the real thing to be desired is partly obscured, and when the increase in men is obtained, it is often discovered that there has been no increase in real efficiency. On the other hand, the obtaining of more of God’s Spirit will always ensure greater success.

The same principle applies with respect to every other means by which men think to advance the kingdom of God. The power of numbers, the influence of the press, the lever of wealth and worldly patronage are much sought after, but it is not by these that success comes. Even when the desire for them is satisfied, they bring leanness into the soul.

God’s Spirit, His own character and power, are the one means by which His work of saving men can be carried forward. And the Spirit is given freely, without measure. Zechariah saw this in the vision of the two olive trees. No promise is more clear or more emphasized than the promise of the Spirit. Christ declared that if earthly fathers knew how to give good gifts to their children, much more would our

Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.⁵⁰³

Notice the expression,

Zechariah 4

⁶ This is the Word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel.

What was the word? Why the very thing it spoke of. God did not say to them,

“You can do nothing without my Spirit,”

–and then leave them to hunt for it. The pouring out of the Spirit was the word to Israel that it was the thing they needed. We may know whenever God tells us that we need anything, that we have that very thing in the Word which declares our need. No word of God is given to discourage.

Romans 15

⁴ For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Without God’s Spirit, as we have seen, numbers and wealth would have availed Israel nothing, for their enemies were stronger than they in both respects. But with God’s Spirit working for them, the more opposition they met, the better they would get on. Everything would work together for their good.

The difficulties in their way were compared by God himself to a...

Zechariah 4

⁷ ...great mountain,

–but that great mountain, by the working of God’s Spirit would become a plain before Zerubbabel, and all that would be left of it would simply serve for a headstone for the temple, to be brought forth with shoutings of “Grace, grace.”

⁵⁰³ *Luke 11:13.*

Never be afraid of the mountains of difficulty that stand in your path, or sigh for might or power to remove them. God's Spirit is poured into you with an unceasing flow from the Divine reservoir, and by its working the mountain will be brought low. Out of it shall come that which is needed to crown the completed structure of your life. Where the mountain stood will be a plain, and the massive strength and solidity which blocked your path is transferred into your own life, making you an enduring monument of grace.

8. The Day of Small Things

Present Truth, February 24, 1898

Original title: Back Page

Zechariah 4:10

E. J. Waggoner

Zechariah 4

¹⁰ Who has despised the day of small things?

NOT the Lord, for He makes use of small things to accomplish His purposes.

1 Corinthians 1

²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are.

In harmony with this, the Lord says:

Isaiah 41 [margin]

¹⁴ Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you few men of Israel...

¹⁵ Behold I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff.

Isaiah 60

²² A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.

Nothing is too small for the Lord to pay attention to it. If God did not care for small things He would neglect the principal part of the world, because there are far more small things than large ones. Indeed, even the large things are composed of small particles.

God's infinite greatness manifests itself in this, that He can personally superintend an infinite number of details, without being worried or flurried. Where there is the greatest weak-

ness, there does He exhibit His greatest power. Therefore,

Isaiah 40

²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

²⁸ Have you not known? have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength.

Psalm 40

¹⁷ I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me; You are my help and might deliverer.

9. Unacceptable Service / Lessons in Giving

Present Truth, November 30, 1899

Malachi 1:6-11; 3:8-12

E. J. Waggoner

THE title of this lesson is simply, "Lessons in Giving," but the first portion of Scripture has no reference to giving, but to the service of the sanctuary, so that the lesson properly comes under two heads. Both portions of Scripture are so pertinent that they need to be reprinted, that everybody may read them.

Malachi 1

⁶ A son honors his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is my honor? and if I be a Master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And you say, Wherein have we despised your name?

⁷ You offer polluted bread upon my altar; and you say, Wherein have we polluted You? In that you say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.

⁸ And if you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto your governor; will he be pleased with you, or accept your person? says the Lord of hosts.

⁹ And now, I pray you, beseech God that He will be gracious unto us; this has been by your means; will he regard your persons? says the Lord of hosts.

¹⁰ Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do you kindle fire on my altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

¹¹ For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, says the Lord of hosts.

Whoever reads the book of *Malachi* entirely through will

see that while it is addressed to all Israel, the priests are especially singled out. The people had departed from the Lord, but it was the priests that had led the way.

Malachi 2

⁷ The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

⁸ But you are departed out of the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts.

A great responsibility rests upon religious teachers and leaders. Apostasy begins at the head, rather than at the foot. It is the elders that draw away disciples after them.

Acts 20

²⁸ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

³⁰ Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

If the people are going astray, be sure that the priests are still farther astray. Christ said that He sanctified himself, in order that His followers mighty be truly sanctified.

John 17

¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

That is the true way, but it is seldom done. All reforms among the people have to be carried out in spite of the leaders of the people. The people are ready to follow the light, but they are hindered by the teachers of the law, who take away the key of knowledge, and will not enter in themselves, nor

allow others to do so.⁵⁰⁴ If a religious teacher or one in authority in the church is not far ahead of the people, leading them along, then he is far behind them, dragging them back.

Malachi 1

⁷ You offer polluted bread upon my altar,

—says the Lord. How did they do this? How did it become polluted? By being in the unclean hands of the priests.

Haggai 2

¹¹ Thus says the Lord of hosts: Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying,

¹² If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

¹³ Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

¹⁴ Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, says the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.

A clean person cannot make a thing clean by touching it; but an unclean person defiles everything that he touches. So the priests, who had unclean hands, made every offering polluted, even though it was clean when it came into their hands.

Malachi 1

¹⁰ Who is there even among you that would shut the doors *for nought*? neither do you kindle fire on my altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

This scripture has often been quoted as showing how unwilling people were to do any service unless they were paid for it; but such use of the text is based upon a misunderstanding of it. Rightly read, it contains nothing about working with

⁵⁰⁴ Luke 11:52.

or without pay. Notice that the first words, “for nought,” are in italics, indicating that they are not in the Hebrew. The *Revised Version* has a fairly correct rendering of the text, thus:

Malachi 1 [RV]

¹⁰ Oh that there were some one among you that would shut the doors, that you might not kindle a fire upon my altar in vain!

The Lord is not complaining because the priests and people would not work for nothing, but because they did any service at all. What He desired was that they should leave off all form of service in the sanctuary. For while people often think that Divine service consists mostly in form, and that things cannot be wholly bad if there is at least a form of godliness, the Lord tells us that under such circumstances it would be a relief to Him if there were no form of service, no going to meeting, no preaching nor praying. Compare with:

Isaiah 1

¹⁰ Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah.

¹¹ To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

¹² When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

¹³ Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

¹⁴ Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear you.

¹⁵ And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Surely this is enough for one lesson. If we learn it, we have learned all that we need to know. Service that is rendered to

the Lord from an impure heart and with unclean hands, is an abomination. He would much rather that one did not profess to serve Him. “Divine service” does not consist in going to church, in saying or hearing prayers or sermons, and in singing, nor in keeping fast and feast days. In what does it consist? Hear the Word of the Lord:

Isaiah 1

¹⁶ Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil;

¹⁷ Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Service to God means the same kind of service that Jesus rendered, when He went about doing good.

- When He washed the feet of the disciples,
- When He fed the hungry,
- When He blessed the little children,
- When He cleansed the lepers,
- When He cheered the heart of the widow, and
- When He spoke words of compassion and courage to the repentant sinner,

—He was doing Divine service. The only kind of Divine service there can possibly be, is the service that the Divine Son of God does. If we allow God to work in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure,⁵⁰⁵ we shall render Divine and acceptable service.

Cannot a sinner then serve the Lord? Oh, yes.

Psalms 51

¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

The ointment that was poured upon the feet of Jesus by a sinful woman was far more pleasing than the grand feast of

⁵⁰⁵ *Philippians 2:13.*

the self-righteous Pharisee.⁵⁰⁶ God is pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, and He counts every sacrifice a sacrifice of righteousness, no matter how vile the sinner who brings it, when it is brought in contrite love.

There is a promise in this lesson, an assurance of a time when the Lord will be served acceptably by all.

Malachi 1

¹¹ For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering.

Righteousness will prevail at the last, even though wickedness seem now to have the supremacy. Christ was never more powerful than when He hung up on the cross, the butt of all the ridicule that an unfeeling mob could heap upon Him. That despised cross was the power of God. By the power of the cross a new creation is to be effected.

2 Corinthians 5 [RV]

¹⁷ If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation.

The power of the cross is the power that creates and upholds. The power that created the heavens and the earth in the beginning still acts.

Ecclesiastes 3

¹⁴ Whatsoever God does, it shall be for ever;

—therefore the new heavens and the new earth shall again spring forth from the cross which men despise. Then all shall know the Lord, from the least unto the greatest,⁵⁰⁷ and every service will be acceptable. Every offering will be pure, for it will be brought by pure hands, the gift of a pure heart,—a heart in which God rules.

But that new heavens and new earth will not be created un-

⁵⁰⁶ *Luke 7:36-50.*

⁵⁰⁷ *Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:11.*

til it is seen that there is need for them, that is, until there are new creatures, who need a suitable dwelling-place. So even before the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, there will be a pure offering, an offering in righteousness.

Malachi 3

³ And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

⁴ Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

Who will accept the transforming grace of God, so that every work of their hands will be acceptable⁵⁰⁸ and will be established,⁵⁰⁹ because prompted by the Christ who dwells within?

⁵⁰⁸ *1 Peter 2:5.*

⁵⁰⁹ *Psalm 90:17.*

10. Fruits of Right and Wrong Doing

Present Truth, December 7, 1899

Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons

Malachi 3:13-18; 4:1-6

E. J. Waggoner

WE MAKE no apology for printing the whole of these passages of Scripture, for nothing that any man can write is comparable to the word inspired by God; moreover we are persuaded that but few would take the trouble to turn to the passage in their Bibles, and read it while reading the article, and without the text before the eyes, or in the mind, the talk upon it is of little profit.

Malachi 3

¹³ Your words have been stout against me, says the Lord. Yet you say, What have we spoken so much against You?

¹⁴ You have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?

¹⁵ And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

¹⁶ Then they that feared the Lord spoke with one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.

¹⁷ And they shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him.

¹⁸ Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.

Malachi 4

¹ For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

² But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

³ And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the Lord of hosts.

⁴ Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

⁶ And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse [or, “with utter destruction”].

A few general notes, to enable the student to read the passage understandably, are all that space will allow, and all that are necessary. If everybody knew how to read the Bible, and would read it, there would be no need of any such paper as this. Indeed, there would be little need of religious books of any kind; for to know how to read the Bible is to know the Lord; and to know the Lord well is to be in a position where one needs no other instructor. The promise to God’s children is,

John 6

⁴⁵ ...they shall all be taught of God;

–and when the time comes that all know Him, from the least to the greatest,

Jeremiah 31

³⁴ They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord.

One should read the entire book of *Malachi*, in order to get a good understanding of the portion contained in this lesson. It is short, and will not take much time. From the reading it will appear that the service of God had degenerated into a mere form among priests and people, and that the people

were weary even of the form. Not only were...

Matthew 23

²³ ...the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith,

–neglected, but, offerings, tithes and sacrifices were omitted or slighted.

False Witness Against God

Yet they could not see that they had said anything against the Lord. They had evidently not been guilty of open blasphemy, and so they boldly asked, when reproved,

Malachi 3

¹³ What have we spoken against You?

They had said that it was vain to serve God, and that there was no profit in keeping His commandments. The Lord regarded these as very “stout” words against Him, and they certainly were. To say that the service of God is vain, and that there is no profit in keeping His commandments, is the same as saying that He is a liar; for He says that His commandments are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb,⁵¹⁰ and that:

Psalms 19

¹¹ ...in keeping of them there is great reward.

It is the same as saying that God himself is nothing. What more terrible charge could be brought against God than to say that His service is vain?

Are you sure that you have never been guilty of speaking such stolid words against God? Have you never become discouraged, and said,

“I can’t see any use in trying to do right”?

Have you never envied the wicked, and called the proud happy, and said,

⁵¹⁰ *Psalm 19:10.*

Malachi 3

¹⁵ They that work wickedness are built up,

—and that people who look out for themselves, and do as they please, are better off than those who serve God? Have you never said, or thought, that the Lord did not care for you, and that He had neglected you, although you have given diligence to be faithful to Him? Have you never felt like “giving up” the Christian life, or at least that which you supposed was a Christian life, because you could not see that there was any profit in it,—no worldly profit, certainly, and no prospect of any spiritual gain?

If so,—and who cannot plead guilty to some such thoughts and speeches at some time in his life?—then your words have been exceedingly “stout” against God. You have been echoing the devil’s false witness against the Most High. Surely it is time to repent.

Speaking God's Praise

Malachi 3

¹⁶ Then they that feared the Lord spoke with one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.

This verse is often quoted in meetings for prayer and testimony, as an incentive for people to bear testimony for the Lord. No doubt the speaking one to another includes such occasions, but it is most certain that it is not limited to them.

They that fear the Lord have conversations with one another about His goodness, and they do not need to be exhorted and urged to do so. Love that is forced, and must be prompted, is not of much value.

Psalms 145

¹⁰ All your work shall praise You, O Lord; and your saints shall bless You.

¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and talk of your power;

¹² To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom.

And this they will do spontaneously from the fullness of their hearts. The saints of the Lord will praise and bless Him in the same way that His other works do, only to as much greater a degree as they are greater than all things else. The heavens declare the glory of God without any urging them to “do their duty.”

Get acquainted with the Lord, and you will know that His service is not vain, but that it is so blessed and joyous that you must tell of it to others.

Psalm 66

¹⁶ Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul!

Acts 4

²⁰ For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

The Lord's Property

Malachi 3

¹⁷ And they shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him.

¹⁸ Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.

The Lord has an interest in this earth. He made it, and He has a desire to the work of His hands. Those to whom He let out His property have sadly neglected it, and have let it run down, and have failed to give Him what fruit it did raise; yet He has not parted with it, and proposes to take the property over at no distant day.

When He makes up His property, those who have spoken to one another of His goodness, and have made known to the sons of men the glorious majesty of His kingdom will be acknowledged as His. They are not only His servants, but they are called sons. They serve the Lord, not as slaves, but as sons.

At that time there will be no difficulty in distinguishing between the righteous wicked, between Him that serves God, and him that serves Him not, for the day that burns as a furnace will burn them up. They will be nothing but stubble in the flame. But to those who fear the Lord the Sun of righteousness will arise, and they will be able to dwell with everlasting earnings.⁵¹¹

The Fate of the Wicked

Malachi 4

¹ For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

This scripture shows sufficiently, if there were no other in the Bible to the same effect, that there will come a time when there will not be a sinner in the Lord's dominions. Not because all will be converted, for the Lord tells us that the majority will go in the broad road to destruction,⁵¹² but because at the last day those who have utterly refused the Lord, will be utterly destroyed.

The Lord is coming, and His fan is in His hand,

Matthew 3

¹² ...and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into His garner; but the chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire.

Then will the wicked...

⁵¹¹ *Isaiah* 33:14-15.

⁵¹² *Matthew* 7:13-14.

Obadiah

¹⁶ ...be as though they had not been.

Psalm 37

²⁰ The wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of the lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

¹⁰ For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.

These truths concerning the final fate of the incorrigibly wicked are not arbitrary. They are a necessary consequence of the truth that Christ Jesus came into the world that...

John 3

¹⁶ ...whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The utter extinction of those who reject the Lord is not an arbitrary act of vengeance on the part of God, but is the inevitable result of their rejection of Christ, who is...

John 14

⁶ ...the way, and the truth, and the life.

Since they reject...

Acts 3 [margin]

¹⁵ ...the Author of life,

—who is the only life, the One in whom alone men can live, and move, and have any being,⁵¹³ it inevitably follows that they must cease to be.

Psalm 139

⁷ Whither shall I go from your Spirit? or whither shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, You are there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

⁵¹³ Acts 17:28.

¹⁰ Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

And wherever God is, He must reign. Therefore when men say that they will not have Him to reign over them, that they will not be led by Him, and that they will not have His right hand hold them, because they wish to be “free from restraint,” and declare that they will not live in His presence, it is plain that there is no place for them in the universe.

The only place where they can flee from His presence is to get out of existence. And God, who gives to every man the desire of his heart, will graciously send them there. It is not necessary that He perform any arbitrary act in order to do this, but simply to let them be; when His life is withdrawn from them, according to their wish, they at once sink into nothingness. Outside of God there is nothing.

New Life and Perfect Health in Christ

Malachi 4

² But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

When the Sun of righteousness arises it is “with healing in His wings.” He is our life.⁵¹⁴

Psalms 103

³ [He] who forgives all our iniquities [also] heals all our diseases.

⁴ [He] redeems our life from destruction.

This He does by giving us His own life, which is eternal life. Now the characteristics of eternal life is that it is ever new, ever fresh. Who ever drinks of the water of life that Christ gives, has in him a well of water, ever springing up.⁵¹⁵ The vigour of this life will be seen to be full when all things have

⁵¹⁴ *Deuteronomy* 30:20.

⁵¹⁵ *John* 4:14.

been created new and sin and sinners have been cleared from the earth by the fires of the last, great day. Then the righteous will go forth, and from very exuberance of life, from the bare joy of being alive, shall leap and gambol as calves let loose from the stall.⁵¹⁶

Isaiah 35

⁶ Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

But all this freshness is not to be reserved till the last day. Even now does the Sun of righteousness shine, and we may, if we will, rejoice in His healing beams. When the lame man at the gate of the temple was made strong in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, he went with the apostles into the temple,

Acts 3

⁸ ...walking, and leaping, and praising God.

Isaiah 40

³¹ They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

The life is manifested, in order that we may have fullness of joy, and joy of the most real kind. The life is life indeed.

Lamentations 3

²² It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.

²³ They are new every morning.

It is possible,—and whatever is possible with the Lord is our privilege and duty,—for men to live so fully by the life of the Lord, that His new mercies will make them feel new life every morning, so that they will be glad with the joy of life. This is not sentiment,—it is not a matter of theorizing, but comes by consciously taking the life of the Lord as it is manifested in

⁵¹⁶ *Malachi 4:2.*

His gifts to us, and of receiving it fresh from the Fountain head, in the purest form possible.

Isaiah 58

⁸ Then shall your...health spring forth speedily.

The words of God are health to the flesh of all who will live by them.

Proverbs 4

²⁰ My son, attend to my words; incline your ear unto my sayings.

²¹ Let them not depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart.

²² For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

We must not try it for the mere selfish purpose of desire and to feel better physically, but because we wish to live wholly to the glory of God, who gives us life; doing this, we shall find even with the progress of years the freshness and buoyancy of youth.

The Law of Moses a Defense

Malachi 4

⁴ Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

⁶ And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse [or, "with utter destruction"].

The law of Moses is not obsolete. Even down to the very last days, just before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord,⁵¹⁷ it is to be remembered. The Spirit and power of Elijah the prophet are given in connection with this law, to work a reformation among men, so that the Lord will not be

⁵¹⁷ *Joel 2:31.*

obliged to smite the earth with utter destruction.

Isaiah 13

⁹ Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

Isaiah 24

⁴ The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.

⁵ The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

⁶ Therefore has the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

But because some will remember the law of Moses, which God commanded him in Horeb, with all the statutes and judgments, and will not say that there is no profit in keeping His charge, there will be a few men left.

Luke 12

³² Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Moved by the Holy Spirit, the Psalmist David prayed:

Psalms 25

⁷ Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to your mercy remember me for your goodness' sake, O Lord.

That, therefore, is a promise that the Lord will do as requested. What a comfort to know that all the sins and follies of our youth are forgiven, and that we need not be handicapped by them, but can run the race set before us as freely as though we had never sinned.

Why bow thee down, O soul of mine,
Crushed by ancestral sin?
You have a noble heritage

That bids thee victory win.
The tainted past may bring forth flowers,
As blossomed Aaron's rod;
No legacy of sin annuls
Heredity from God.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁸ Lydia Avery Coonley-Ward, Poem: *Heredity*.

11. Messiah's Messenger

Signs of the Times, March 11, 1886

Notes on the International Lesson, March 21

Malachi 3:1-6; 4:4-6

A. T. Jones

FROM the day that man sinned to the days of Malachi, there had been promises of the coming of the Deliverer. And now as the last prophetic voice of the Old Testament is heard, it announces the coming of the messenger to prepare the way of the promised One, and to make ready a people prepared to meet Him.

This messenger came accordingly, calling the people to repentance, and to belief on Him that was to come. Those who received the message of the messenger, were by that prepared to receive Him whom the messenger announced. Those who rejected the words and testimony of the messenger, likewise rejected the Messiah when He came.

He knew that he was that messenger. He knew the message that he had to bear to the people, and he delivered his message faithfully and fearlessly. He, like the prophet Haggai before him, was...

Haggai 1

¹³ ...the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people.

John the Baptist came...

Matthew 3

¹ ...preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

² And saying, Repent; for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

¹⁰ And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

¹¹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost,

and with fire:

¹² Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

And when they sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was,

John 1

²³ He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah.

He knew the work that he had to do. He knew that the time was come for the fulfillment of these prophecies. And he knew that his work was the fulfillment of them. He was the one of whom Malachi had spoken in the lesson for today; he was the one of whom Isaiah had spoken; and he and his message were the living evidence that God gave to the people that the Messiah was at hand. And while he was preaching, Messiah came and was baptized of him.

But it was not alone the first coming of Christ that was announced by John the Baptist, nor by Malachi, nor by any of the prophets. John the Baptist announced the gathering of the wheat into the garner—the harvest—and the burning up of the chaff. This is what Malachi had prophesied in the verses chosen for the present lesson.

He not only spoke of the coming of the Lord to His temple as at His first advent, but he also spoke of the coming of the same Lord “to judgment,”⁵¹⁹ which will be at His second advent; as says Paul,

2 Timothy 4

¹ I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom;

² Preach the word.

⁵¹⁹ *Malachi 3:5.*

This is the coming which is referred to in the questions,

Malachi 3

² Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appears?

See also:

Joel 2

¹¹ And the Lord shall utter His voice before His army: for His camp is very great: for He is strong that executes His word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

It is then especially that He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver, and whosoever reflects His image will be accepted with Him. And this is especially so of those who shall be alive on the earth to behold Him when He appears. They are to endure a “fiery trial”⁵²⁰; they are to be “baptized with the baptism;” they are to have every vestige of this world’s dross purged out of them. The test will be severe so that none is like it;⁵²¹ but those who endure it shall come forth as gold, and...

1 Peter 1

⁷ ...be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Then after that comes the burning up of the chaff,

Malachi 4

¹ For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Here is the declaration of the word of God, as plain as language can make it, that all that do wickedly shall be burned up, root and branch. And the force of these words cannot be evaded except by making the language figurative, and then it

⁵²⁰ 1 Peter 4:12-13.

⁵²¹ Jeremiah 30:7.

may be made to mean just what any one pleases.

But as long as plain language conveys any real meaning, so long will it be the truth that these words mean that the wicked shall be burned up as chaff is burned in the fire. This is made even stronger, if such a thing were possible, by the third verse, which says to the righteous,

Malachi 4

³ And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the Lord of hosts.

The wicked are to be punished upon this earth;⁵²² they are to be punished by fire, and that fire is to be the fire that is to melt the earth.⁵²³ The earth will in that day burn as an oven, and all the wicked being upon it, will be, according to the words of the prophet, burned up upon the earth. Then the earth is to be made over new, and the righteous shall dwell therein forever,⁵²⁴ according to the word of Christ,

Matthew 5

⁵ Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth;

—and according to the words of Malachi in the lesson. After saying that the wicked shall be burned up, then he says:

Malachi 4

² But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.

And the wicked, having been consumed on the earth, and returned to dust and ashes, shall be ashes under the soles of the feet of those who inherit and inhabit the earth. The doctrine of eternal torment is contrary to the word of God. More than a hundred times the Lord speaks of the fate of the

⁵²² *Proverbs 11:31; Isaiah 24:21; Revelation 20:8-9.*

⁵²³ *2 Peter 3:7, 10.*

⁵²⁴ *Revelation 21:5, 7.*

wicked in terms that denote nothing but utter destruction and cessation of existence.

As there was a message of His coming carried to the people to whom Christ was to appear in His first advent; likewise there will be a message announcing His coming to the people who will see Him in His second advent. It will be a message such as was that of Elijah to the people of His day.

1 Kings 18

²¹ You have forsaken the commandments of the Lord...How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal [the sun] then follow him.

The world in these last days have forsake the commandments of the Lord and have followed Rome, and now God sends a message of warning and of duty to this, the generation of those who shall see the appearing of the Lord in glory. He says:

Revelation 14

⁹ If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation...

¹² Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Then the next thing that is seen is...

¹⁴ ...a white cloud, and upon the cloud one...like the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle,

—and coming to reap the harvest of the earth; to gather the wheat into His garner, and to gather the chaff to burn it. As those who accepted the message of God by John the Baptist were thereby prepared to accept the Messiah which he announced, so those now who accept this message of God will be thereby prepared to meet the Messiah in His second advent

to this world.

God's message and His messengers are now in the world announcing the second coming of Christ, as really as was His message in the world proclaiming His first coming. Will you accept the message and meet Him in peace, bear His image, and be gathered as the precious wheat into His garner? or will you reject His warning and be found among the chaff?

12. The Light of Life

Present Truth, June 27, 1895

Malachi 4:2

E. J. Waggoner

CHRIST—who is one with His Father—is the...

Malachi 4

² ...Sun of Righteousness.

What the visible sign is to the physical world, Christ is to the spiritual world. The sun gives light to the physical world, and the Sun of Righteousness gives righteousness to the spiritual world.

As we cannot see the sun without having its light upon us, so we cannot see Christ without having His light upon us, which is righteousness. Looking unto Him, we are covered with His righteousness which shines upon us, and thus are made righteous.

As the sun is a powerful disinfectant and destroyer of disease-giving germs, so the Sun of Righteousness destroys with His beams all that which brings disease to the soul.

² Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings.

Sin cannot live in the sight of God, as mold cannot live in the bright sunshine. In the light of God's countenance is life,⁵²⁵ and that light comes to us through Jesus, the propitiation for our sins. Thus we can look upon it and live, which no man could do were he to behold God's face. That light destroys sin, but not the sinful flesh in which it works. So then we are to...

Hebrews 12

¹ ...run with patience the race that is set before us,

² Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

⁵²⁵ **Proverbs 16** ¹⁵ In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favor is as a cloud of the latter rain.

And how can we see Him, and thus stand in the light of the Sun of Righteousness? Simply by faith, believing His word. Faith exercised to its full extent always brings Jesus into view. By faith we may ever “look and live.”⁵²⁶

⁵²⁶ *Numbers* 21:9.

