

LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY

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Chapter 1

God Requires Strict Obedience

"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. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. 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. 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. So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said. 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. 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. And the Lord spoke unto Aaron, saying, 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: And that you may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that

you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken unto them by the hand of Moses." (Leviticus 10:1-11)

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.

"You shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall you pour drink offering thereon." (Exodus 30:9)

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. (Genesis 18:25)

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 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: "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall not do any work." (Exodus 20:8-10)

And it gives as a reason for this, the fact that is stated in Genesis 2:3, that: "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." (Genesis 2:3)

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: "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." (Ezekiel 22:26)

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; (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.) 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: "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." (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

But God says: "I am the Lord, I change not." (Malachi 3:6)

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. "He has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness." (Acts 17:31)

And He has reserved "the unjust unto the day of Judgment to be punished." (2 Peter 2:9)

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, "The Lord spoke unto Aaron, saying, 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: And that you may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean." (Leviticus 10:8-10)

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, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18)

Attention is called to just one point taught by Exodus 35:26-29. That is that: "Everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whom his spirit made willing, (Exodus 35:21) brought an offering

for the sanctuary. God had told Moses to take an offering only "of every man that gives it willingly with his heart." (Exodus 25:2)

The result of this willing offering is given in Exodus 36:2-7. The people brought unto Moses "free offerings every morning," (Exodus 36:3) until the overseers of the work said to him, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make. 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. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much." (Exodus 36:5-7)

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.--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

Chapter 2

The Glory to Be Revealed

"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. 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; And said unto me, You are my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." (Isaiah 49:1-3) "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 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: 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." (Isaiah 40:3-5) "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." (Romans 8:18)

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: "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. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. 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." (Leviticus 10:1-3)

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.--See Present Truth, July 17, 1902--"The Tabernacle of Witness--Based on Exodus 11:1-8--It is article 41 in the section on "Exodus" in this collection. Then when the first offering was made on the altar, "the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. 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." (Leviticus 9:23-24)

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: "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)

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: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." (1 Corinthians 3:16-17) "The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men." (Psalm 11:4)

There is a temple of God in heaven; (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.) 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 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: "And the Lord spoke unto Aaron, saying, 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: And

that you may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken unto them by the hand of Moses." (Leviticus 10:8-11)

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: "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:3)

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?--Present Truth, July 24, 1902--
Leviticus 10:1-11

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 3

The Lesson of the Cloud

When the Lord led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, to conduct them to the land of Canaan, "[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: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." (Exodus 13:21-22) "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. So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. 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. ... 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. 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. 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." (Numbers 9:15-17,20-22)

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: "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." (Exodus 14:24)

And Moses, recounting to the Israelites God's gracious dealings with them, said: "You did not believe the Lord your God, 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." (Deuteronomy 1:32-33)

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: "the world passes away, and the lust thereof." (1 John 2:17)

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: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," (Romans 15:4) 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: "There is no respect of persons with God." (Romans 2:11)

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 "a plentiful rain," (Psalm 68:9) whereby God refreshed and strengthened His inheritance, so that: "all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (1 Corinthians 10:1-2)

God in Every Cloud

"[The Lord] makes the clouds His chariot, and walks upon the wings of the wind;" (Psalm 104:3) [He] has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet." (Nahum 1:3) "[His] paths drop fatness." (Psalm 65:11)

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. "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: And in the morning, then you shall see the glory of the Lord." (Exodus 16:6-7)

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.
--Alexander Pope, Essay on Man, Epistle 1, 1732.

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, "And there was a cloud that overshadowed them;

and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear Him." (Mark 9:7) "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation [foundation] of His throne." (Psalm 97:1-2)

Because the clouds are round about God's throne, which is established in righteousness, "the skies pour down righteousness." (Isaiah 45:8)

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. "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)

We are to learn to extract comfort from tribulation, and not merely to be soothed while under it, to "glory in tribulation." (Romans 5:3)

Clouds and darkness are round about God, yet He dwells "in the light," (1 Timothy 6:16) even clothing himself with it. "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with honor and majesty. Who cover yourself with light as with a garment: who stretch out the heavens like a curtain." (Psalm 104:1-2)

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. "There was the cloud and the darkness, yet it gave light by night: and the one came not near the other all the night." (Exodus 45:29, RV)

Light From the Cloud

The common saying that that "every cloud has a silver lining" 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 "commanded the light to shine out of darkness." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

This also is for our learning. There will come a day when "the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above be black," (Jeremiah 4:28) 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, "As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; ... they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:27,30)

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: "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." (Isaiah 25:9)--Present Truth, July 31, 1902--Numbers 10:11-13, 29-36

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 4

Afraid of Moses

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: "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. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." (Numbers 12:6-8) "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." (Deuteronomy 34:10)

Christ testified that to disbelieve Moses was to disbelieve in Him. "For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?" (John 5:46-47)

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.--Present Truth, June 20, 1895--Numbers 12:6-8

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 5

How Moses Knew

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 "made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel," (Psalm 103:7) for the Lord spoke to him mouth to mouth. "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?" (Numbers 12:8)

This is the way the entire Bible was written: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21, RV)

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: "They know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

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: "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." (Ezekiel 20:12)

Without the knowledge of creation and the Sabbath there can be no knowledge of perfect sanctification. "Your word is true from the beginning." (Psalm 119:160)

It is all "profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Creation and the Cross

The eternal power of God is clearly seen in the things that he has made. "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." (Romans 1:20)

Creation is the measure of God's power. Not that anyone save God can measure it, because it is infinite; but the power manifested in creation is the same power that saves men from sin. "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. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17)

So that the Gospel is simply creative power applied to sinful men. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10) "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

But the preaching of the cross is also the power of God. "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. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. ... But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:17-18,23-24)

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. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:14) "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 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." (Romans 5:9-10)

The blood is the life: "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. ... 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." (Leviticus 17:11,14)

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. "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 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." (Colossians 1:14-16)

He is the source of the creation: "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." (Revelation 3:14)

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: "For You, Lord, have made me glad through your work, I will triumph in the works of your hands." (Psalm 92:4)

And Paul wrote "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Galatians 6:14)

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. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2)

We are to find life and godliness in every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.--Present Truth, March 22, 1894--Numbers 12:8

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 6

Unfaithful Witnesses

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: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; " (Psalm 19:7) or, "Through your commandments, You have made me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for your testimonies are my meditation, (Psalm 119:98-99) 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: "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 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, " The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 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, everyone a ruler among them. And Moses by the commandment of the Lord sent them from the wilderness of Paran." (Numbers 13:1-3)

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: "And I said unto you, You are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God does give unto us. 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. 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. And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe." (Deuteronomy 1:20-23)

So the spies went up, with these instructions: "Get up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwell therein, whether they be strong or

weak, few or many; 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; And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not." (Numbers 13:17-20)

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 "a good land and a large, ... a land flowing with milk and honey." (Exodus 3:8; also vs. 17, 13:5, 33:3)

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? "For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arms save them." (Psalm 44:3)

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: "It is nothing with You to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power." (2 Chronicles 14:11) "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; 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: That no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

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 "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." (Numbers 13:32)

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. "He that believes not God has made Him a liar." (1 John 5:10)

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, "not knowing where he went," (Hebrews 11:8) and not asking. It was "to Abraham, and to his seed," (Luke 1:55) 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, "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." (Hebrews 3:19)

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, "Sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:34)

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.

--Mary G. Brainard, Hymn: He Knows, 1869.

"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. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)--
Present Truth, July 31, 1902--Numbers 13:1-32

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 7

Each Man's Destiny Self-Decided

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: "Send men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel; Of every tribe of their father shall you send a man, everyone a ruler among them." (Numbers 13:1-2)

Accordingly the twelve men were chosen, and Moses sent them away with this charge: "Get up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwell therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; 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; 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." (Numbers 13:17-20)

So they set off, and searched the land for forty days. "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. That place was called the valley of Eschol, because of the cluster which the children of Israel cut down from thence." (Numbers 13:23-24)

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? "They returned from searching the land after forty days. 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. 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." (Numbers 13:25-27)

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: "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. 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." (Numbers 13:28-29)

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: "Unto you will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, He reprov'd kings for their sakes; Saying, touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm." (Psalm 105:11-15)

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, "All the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. 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!" (Numbers 14:1-2)

Two men alone were faithful to God in the truth. Caleb and Joshua "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 13:30) "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. 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. Only rebel not against the Lord, neither fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not." (Numbers 14:7-9)

Surely it would be a one-sided contest: the people of the land had no defense. True, they had cities with high walls; but, "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain." (Psalm 127:1)

The Lord is more than all, for: "All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity." (Isaiah 40:17)

Nevertheless the ten spies said: "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we." (Numbers 13:31)

And so much were they overcome by their foolish and wicked fears that, although they had just told how good the land was, "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." (Numbers 13:32)

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, "because of unbelief." (Hebrews 3:19)

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. "According to your faith be it unto you." (Matthew 9:29)

God has blessed us with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3) "His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2 Peter 1:3)

In Christ, "we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will." (Ephesians 1:11)

Our weapons are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds," (2 Corinthians 10:5) 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. "And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it [His cross]." (Colossians 2:15)

He is able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us," (Ephesians 3:20) and that is: "His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion." (Ephesians 1:19-21)

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, "All things are yours; Whether ... the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." (1 Corinthians 3:21-22) "He that overcomes shall inherit all things;" (Revelation 21:7) and the victory has already been won for us. In

Christ are all things, and He is "the desire of all nations." (Haggai 2:7)

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: "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. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit." (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

Oh, then, "Receive the Holy Ghost," (John 20:22) and, "Be not faithless but believing," (John 20:27) for, "All things are possible to him that believes." (Mark 9:23)

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.--Present Truth, June 2, 1898--Numbers 13:1-32; 14:1-9

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 8

They Wanted to Be Sure

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. (Exodus 3:8,17)

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. "He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." (Psalm 106:7)

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. (Exodus 23:28)

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, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)--Present Truth, May 28, 1903--Numbers 13 & 14; Deuteronomy 1:19-36

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 9

They Are Bread for Us

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: "Fear not the people of the land, [said Caleb and Joshua,] for they are bread for us." (Numbers 14:9)

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.--Present Truth, March 26, 1903--Numbers 14:9

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 10

The Sin of Moses

1. When the Israelites came to Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, what took place? "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." (Numbers 20:1)

2. From what did the people suffer? "And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron." (Numbers 20:2)

3. What did they do and say? "And the people chided with Moses, and spoke, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!" (Numbers 20:3)

4. What did they charge Moses with doing? "And why have you brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?" (Numbers 20:4)

5. What did they say of the place where they then were? "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." (Numbers 20:5)

6. Whom did they blame for bringing them out of Egypt? Moses (and Aaron)." (Numbers 20:2-5)

7. Who had really brought them from Egypt? "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. You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:1-2)

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? "They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea." (Psalm 106:21-22)

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? "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." (Numbers 20:6)

12. What directions did the Lord give them? "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 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." (Numbers 20:7-8)

13. When the people were gathered before the rock, what did Moses say? "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?" (Numbers 20:10)

14. What does the psalmist say of this occurrence? "They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips." (Psalm 106:32-33)

15. How did it go ill with Moses? "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." (Numbers 20:12)

16. In what particular did Moses and Aaron trespass against the Lord? "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." (Deuteronomy 32:51)

17. When Moses allowed the Israelites by their rebellious words to provoke his spirit, what position toward God did he also assume?

"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 20:24)
"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." (Numbers 27:14)

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? "Charity suffers long, and is kind; charity envies not; charity vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, Does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

20. What evidence have we that, although Moses was prohibited from entering the promised land, he repented of this and was fully forgiven? "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. 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." (Deuteronomy 34:5-6) "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." (Jude:9) "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; 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." (Matthew 17:1-2)

21. Then what must even the best of men say to the Lord? "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." (Psalm 130:3-4)

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 "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7)

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 a mission 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.--Signs of the Times, May 27, 1889--Numbers 20:1-24

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 11

Saved by a Look

We cannot begin at any better place than the time-honored "golden path" that has saved the souls of many besides Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; That whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:14-15)

Then comes the second realization, which, by its comprehensiveness, gives point to the whole story, and makes it a personal assurance to each individual: "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." (John 3:16)

What about that serpent in the wilderness? Why was it lifted up? The story is brief; let us read it: "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. 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. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. 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. 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. 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." (Numbers 21:4-9)

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, (2 Corinthians 3:18) and "are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Hebrews 3:14)

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. "[He who] is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish," (2 Peter 3:19) 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. (See Psalm 91:1-13) 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 "he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm." (Acts 27:5)

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." (2 Kings 18:4; [Hezekiah] called it Nehushtan [that is, "a piece of brass"]) 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. "With His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

It was their faith that made them whole; (Matthew 9:22; Mark 5:34, 10:52; Luke 8:48, 17:19) 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. "Neither let us tempt Christ,

as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." (1 Corinthians 10:9)

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. "Whoso offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies me; and prepares a way that I may show him the salvation of God." (Psalm 50:23, RV, margin)

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 version, 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 "the bread of the mighty," (Psalm 78:25, margin) even of the "angels, that excel in strength." (Psalm 103:20)

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: "The Lord said unto Moses, Make a fiery serpent." (Numbers 21:8)

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 "by the spirit of burning."
(Isaiah 4:4)

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 "dwell with the devouring fire, [and] with everlasting burnings." (Isaiah 33:14) "Our God is a consuming fire," (Hebrews 12:29) 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. (Psalm 73:26)--
Present Truth, August 14, 1902--Numbers 21:1-9

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 12

The Serpent's Bite Cured

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; "For 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)

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. "For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?" (John 5:46-47)

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: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; That whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:14-15)

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, "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. 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. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. 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. 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. 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." (Numbers 21:4-9)

No Arbitrary Punishment

One of the first things to learn, and one which should be continually remembered, is that God does nothing arbitrarily. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be held with the cords of his sins." (Proverbs 5:22)

The wicked "treasure up" unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath. (Romans 2:5) They shall "eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the

simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." (Proverbs 1:31-32)

Every punishment has a natural connection with some sin. "The wages of sin is death," (Romans 6:23) but, "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." (1 Corinthians 15:56) "Sin came into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12) "When lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished [full grown], brings forth death." (James 1:15)

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, "The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me." (John 14:30)

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. "him that had the power of death." (Hebrews 2:14)

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, "and there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand." (Acts 28:3)

The people of the island, knowing the venomous nature of the serpent, looked to see Paul fall down dead suddenly, but: "He shook the beast off into the fire, and felt no harm." " (Acts 28:5)

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: "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." (1 Corinthians 10:9)

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: "They tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?" (Exodus 17:7)

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. "Yet in this thing you did not believe the Lord your God, 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." (Deuteronomy 1:32-33)

Moreover, He had not brought them out to allow them to die, but to give them life, for He was their life: "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." (Deuteronomy 30:20)

And they had bread, even bread from heaven, the very body of Christ. (John 6:32-48) 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 "a piece of brass." (2 Kings 18:4)

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 "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan." (Revelation 12:9)

Sin is of the devil, and "all have sinned." (Romans 3:23)

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, "wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." (Ephesians 6:16)

Even though the poison has contaminated our whole lives, and every fiber of our beings, a look at Christ, not for a moment only, but continuously, will take all the burning sting from the wound, and give us "perfect soundness." (Acts 3:16) "Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

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, "He that believes in me,

though he were dead, yet shall he live." (John 11:25) "He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." (Psalm 23:3) "[He] redeems [our] life from destruction, ... so that [our] youth is renewed like the eagle's." (Psalm 103:4-5)

Righteousness is a defense; "[God's] truth [is a] shield and buckler." (Psalm 91:4)

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: "With the heart man believes unto righteousness," (Romans 10:10) we have the promise: "These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 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." (Mark 16:17-18)

And this: "You shall tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under foot. Because he has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high, because he has known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him." (Psalm 91:13-16)

We read that in the new earth, when sin is removed, and there is no more curse, "The sucking child shall play on the hole of an asp,

and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 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." (Isaiah 11:8-9)

But, "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation," (2 Corinthians 5:17, RV) and he is redeemed from the curse, (Galatians 3:13) 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, the perfect Man, is proof of the possibility of this. This freedom from sin and its accompanying curse, is the unspeakable gift (2 Corinthians 9:15) of God in Christ. "According to your faith be it unto you." (Matthew 9:29)--Present Truth, November 1, 1900--Numbers 21:4-9

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 13

Kept from Honor

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, "Flee you to your place; I thought to promote you unto great honor, but lo, the Lord has kept you back from honor." (Numbers 24:11)

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 distinction 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. "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." (1 Samuel 2:30)

They are those who serve the Lord Jesus Christ. "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." (John 12:26)

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. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." (Hebrews 11:6) "Faith which works by love," (Galatians 5:6) this is the only actuating power by which a man can do service to God. Those who seek worldly honor cannot have faith. "How can you believe, [said the Saviour,] who receive honor one from another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?" (John 5:14)

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. "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. 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. And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure." (1 John 3:1-3) "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." (Romans 8:17) "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." (Hebrews 2:11)

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!--Present Truth, February 22, 1894--Numbers 24

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 14

A View of God's Power

Moses 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, "O Lord God, You have begun to show your servant your greatness, and your mighty hand." (Deuteronomy 3:24)

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 "the exceeding greatness of His power [is] toward us who believe." (Ephesians 1:19)--Present Truth, June 3, 1897--Deuteronomy 3:24

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 15

Bible Study

In Deuteronomy 6:5-9 we have directions as to our duty in regard to the Bible. We will quote it in full: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart; 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. And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

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: "And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart." (Deuteronomy 6:6)

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.--Present Truth, August 29, 1895--
Deuteronomy 6:5-9

E. J. Waggoner

Chapter 16

One of the People

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: "This is my beloved Son ... hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5; Compare Matthew 17:5 and 2 Peter 1:17-18)

These words proved that Jesus was the one of whom the Lord spoke, when He said to Moses, "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. 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." (Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

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. "the Man Christ Jesus," (1 Timothy 2:5) the one Mediator between God and man, was "in all things ... like unto His brethren," (Hebrews 2:17) 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 may be. "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." (Psalm 89:19)

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," (Isaiah 53:3) offering up prayers and supplications with "strong crying and tears," (Hebrews 5:7) asking for strength, because He said, "I can of my own self do nothing." (John 5:30)

- 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, (Acts 10:34) we know that every person, every one of His brethren, may be a mighty one: "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might;" (Ephesians 6:10) "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power." (Colossians 1:11)

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," (Philippians 2:7, RV) 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. "He [is] a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people," (Hebrews 2:17) because He was "in all things ... like unto His brethren." (Hebrews 2:17) "This Jesus has God raised up, ... [And] ... being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost," (Acts 2:32-33) 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 "One of the people." (Psalm 89:19)

Christ was a Prophet like unto Moses, yet those who professed to believe Moses would not listen to Him. "We know that God

spoke unto Moses; but as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is," (John 9:20) [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: "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." (Acts 13:41)

The Prophet still speaks: Hear Him.--Present Truth, August 21, 1902--Deuteronomy 18:9-22

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 17

The Ever-Present Word

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: "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. ... I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." (Romans 7:18,21)

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: "Christ has suffered for us in the flesh," (1 Peter 4:1) "the Just for the unjust," (1 Peter 3:18) that He might bring us to God, "[And] he that has suffered in the flesh" (1 Peter 4:1) has ceased from sin.

In the lesson before us, we learn how truly and how righteously it is that: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [down] the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; 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," (Romans 1:18-20) seen most clearly in men, the earthen vessels that bear about the living image of God, "so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

So come we to the teaching of "the righteousness which is by faith," (Hebrews 11:7) which sounds as clearly forth today as when Moses uttered it, to every soul that would either comfort or upbraid itself with the words, "How to perform that which is good I find not, ... [But] I find a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." (Romans 7:18,21)

And here is the teaching: "This commandment which I command you this day, it is not hidden from you, neither is it far off. 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? 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? But the Word is very nigh unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it." (Deuteronomy 30:11-14)

The commandment, the word, is "very nigh unto you." How near? "In your mouth, and in your heart." (Deuteronomy 30:14)

Why is it so near? "That you may do it." (Deuteronomy 30:14)

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: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. ... That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, ... full of grace and truth." (John 1:1,4,9,14)

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" (Matthew 1:23)--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 bemoaned the ever-present sin in his flesh: "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); Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). 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; 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. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:6-10)

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, "who is over all, and through all, and in all." (Ephesians 4:6, RV)

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: "Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off?" (Jeremiah 23:23)

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. "The Word [Christ] is near you, in your mouth." (Romans 10:8)

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.

"And in your heart." (Romans 10:8)

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. "In Him we

live, and move, and have our being. ... He [is] not far from every one of us," (Acts 17:28,27) 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: "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." (Romans 10:9)

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? "Believe in your heart at God has raised Him from the dead." (Romans 10:9)

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. (Romans 7:18) 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 "power over all flesh," (John 17:2) as was fully demonstrated in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:6)

This is the way to serve and obey God. We simply recognize 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, "according to the power that works in us;" (Ephesians 3:20) 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.

--Present Truth, September 4, 1902--Deuteronomy 30:11-20

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 18

Life and Death Opposite Terms

In the last words which Moses, at the command of the Lord, spoke to the children of Israel, he said: "See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil;

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. But if your heart turn away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; 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. 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." (Deuteronomy 30:15-19)

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: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," (Romans 6:23) 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. "See, [says the Lord,] I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil." (Deuteronomy 30:15)

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: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing;" (Deuteronomy 30:19)

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: "For He is your life, and the length of your days." (Deuteronomy 30:20)

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 "know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ... shall be punished with everlasting destruction." (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)

He says again that: "[Christ] has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," (2 Timothy 1:10) 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: "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." (John 3:36)

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: "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward," (Job 5:7) 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. "I am come, [said He,] that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

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?--
Signs of the Times, July 6, 1888--Deuteronomy 30:15-19

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 19

Renew Their Strength

"As your days, so shall your strength be. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven in your help, and in his excellency upon the sky. The Eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:25-27)

Read the context, and see how exactly it coincides with the text, "As your days, so shall your strength be." (Deuteronomy 33:25)

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: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." (Isaiah 40:31)--Present Truth, December 15, 1904--Deuteronomy 33:25-27

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 20

The Fountain of Eternal Youth

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. "Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." (Deuteronomy 34:7)

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: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house." (Hebrews 3:1-2)

Now that which makes anybody active and faithful in God's service is life. The Word works in them that believe: "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." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

And the active word is living: "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 discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

It is life. "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." (1 John 1:1)

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 "fight the good fight of faith." (1 Timothy 6:12)

And this is simply to live, for: "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

Life itself is a fight against sin and death. We fight for life, and it is with life that we fight. Christ said: "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." (John 5:26)

Why has the Father given to the Son to have life in himself, and authority to execute judgment? "Because He is the Son of man." (John 5:27)

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: "Get up into this mountain Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, ... and behold the land of Canaan, ... And die in the mount wither you go up." (Deuteronomy 32:49-50)

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. "[God] made known His ways unto Moses." (Psalm 103:7)

In the same psalm that tells us this, it tells us to "bless His holy name, ... and forget not all His benefits; Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." (Psalm 103:1-5)

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: "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." (Exodus 23:25)

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, "the Fountain of living waters," (Jeremiah 2:13) with whom is "the Fountain of Life," (Psalm 36:9) 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"

(John 10:10; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly) 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. "Costly in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15)

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 "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints," (Ephesians 1:18) 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? "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord;" (Psalm 107:43) and, "in His favor

[lovingkindness] is life," (Psalm 30:5) "even life for evermore."
(Psalm 133:3)--Present Truth, September 11, 1902--Deuteronomy
34:1-12

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 21

Laying Hold on Eternal Life

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. "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." (Deuteronomy 34:7)

Why was this? What was the secret of his youthful old age? It was simply this: He was faithful in all God's house; (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) and whoever fights the good fight of faith lays hold on eternal life. (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) "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; To show that the Lord is upright; He is my Rock." (Psalm 92:13-15)

He is all for us that He was for Moses, if we will but learn His ways as He makes them known to us.--Present Truth, September 11, 1902--Original title: Back Page--Deuteronomy 34:7

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