

ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, EZEKIEL

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Chapter 1

The Sinful Nation

Isaiah means "Salvation of Jehovah," and he has been called the "evangelical prophet." He wrote more about Christ and the Christian dispensation than did any other prophet. He prophesied in "the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." (Isaiah 1:1)

If he began to prophesy in the last year of Uzziah, about 758 BC, and continued to the end of Hezekiah's reign, about 698 BC, this would give sixty years of service as a prophet. We do not certainly know that he lived throughout the reign of Hezekiah, but we know that he lived through the most of it, so that he prophesied, at the very least, nearly sixty years. It would thus appear that he was quite young when he was chosen of God to prophesy.

It would seem from Isaiah 6:7 that it was in the year that Uzziah died that he began to prophesy; for there he records a vision of "the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," (Isaiah 6:1) and he exclaims, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isaiah 6:5)

Then one of the seraphim flew unto him, "having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched your lips;

and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me." (Isaiah 6:6-8)

This must have been Isaiah's first vision, and the time when he was chosen to the prophetic work; for it was at this time that his sins were forgiven. And when he first sees the Lord, he exclaims, as we have read, "Woe is me! for I am undone." (Isaiah 6:5)

But when the seraph has touched his lips with the hallowed fire, and told him his sin is cleansed, his iniquity taken away, then he is ready to be a messenger of the Lord; and as soon as he hears the voice asking who shall be sent, he cries, "Here am I; send me. And he said, Go." (Isaiah 6:8-9)

Thus the Lord would have no one go to speak for Him, nor in His name, till his iniquity has been taken away and his sin purged. Then, and not till then, can we bear the message of the Lord.

In this very first vision he spoke of Christ, and of the people in the day when Christ was upon the earth. John tells us so. In recording the words and works of the Saviour, he says, "But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him." (John 12:37)

And these very ones who did not believe on Christ, in them was fulfilled the very saying of Isaiah as recorded in Isaiah 6:9-10. Compare John 12:38-41 and Isaiah 6:1-13. Then says John, "These

things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory and spoke of Him." (John 12:41)

We see also by this that in the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah not only spoke of this people, but he also spoke of Christ, and he then saw Christ.

- That majestic one whom Isaiah saw sitting upon that throne high and lifted up;

- That one whose train filled the temple in Heaven;

- That one in the presence of whose glory the bright seraphim shaded their faces;

- That one of whom these seraphim said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory," (Isaiah 6:3) that was Christ our Lord and Saviour. That was He who speaks in righteousness, He who is indeed "mighty to save." (Isaiah 63:1)

We have no prophecy which Isaiah refers definitely to the reign of Jotham, nor any message sent directly to Jotham as there is to Ahaz and Hezekiah. In chapters 7, 8, and 9 are prophecies in the reign of Ahaz. Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, had formed a confederacy to take Jerusalem and Judah, and kill Ahaz and make the son of Tabeal, a creature of their own, king in Jerusalem. But the Lord sent a word to Ahaz and his people, "Thus

says the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass."
(Isaiah 7:7)

And in that message to Ahaz and his people Isaiah uttered his prophecy of Immanuel: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) "which is, being interpreted, God with us." (Matthew 1:23,RV)

At the same time he prophesied of that child which should be called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Isaiah 9:6-7) "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32-33)

And at the same time he prophesied of the second coming of the Saviour, the reform on the law of God, and the working of Spiritualism just before Christ comes in His glory. "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hides His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which

dwells in mount Zion. And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward." (Isaiah 8:16-21) "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." (2 Thessalonians 2:9)

And in the lesson for today, his word is a prophecy which Paul applied to the people in his day. "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." (Isaiah 1:9) "And as Isaiah said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah." (Romans 9:29) "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." (Romans 11:5)

These are but a few instances in illustration of Peter's word about the prophets: "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Peter 1:12)

In reading the prophets, we are always to bear in mind that they have written many things to us, as well as some things to those of their own day. And when, in today's lesson, we read, "Ah, sinful nation," (Isaiah 1:4) He means the people of today--not the people who make no profession of His name, but the people upon whom His name is called. To those of today, He says, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." (Isaiah 1:2)

To what purpose are sacrifices, and offerings, and the calling of assemblies, when the law of God is despised and rejected? So in another place this same prophet says: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God." (Isaiah 58:1-2)

To what purpose are fastings and prayers, when the ordinance of God is forsaken? "He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." (Proverbs 28:9)

Therefore, today He says to the people of today: "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1:16-17) "Turn yourselves and live." (Ezekiel 18:32)

Hearken to the word of God and obey. Jesus said to His disciples, "Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3)

Paul says that, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27)

Peter says: "You have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." (1 Peter 1:22)

The only way in which to "learn to do well," is by strict obedience to the word of God, through the Spirit. And the only way to obtain the Holy Spirit is by confession, and the forsaking of sin. "He that covers his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall find mercy." (Proverbs 28:13) "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18) "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." (Romans 3:24-25) "If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land: But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." (Isaiah 1:19-20) "[Christ is] the author of

eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." (Hebrews 5:9) "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22)--Signs of the Times, November 26, 1885--Notes on the International Lesson, December 6--Isaiah 1:1-18

A.T. Jones

Chapter 2

The Purpose of Sacrifices

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says the Lord." (Isaiah 1:11)

God had a purpose in the sacrifices which He commanded Israel to offer. The sacrifices themselves were not the end desired. They were only a means. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come,...can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered; because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." (Hebrews 10:1-2)

The fault of Israel was that they did not proceed from the shadow to the substance. The reason of their rejection of Christ, when He came among them in the flesh, was that they had not recognized Him in the sacrifices, commanded by God, which prefigured His work. Had they learned what the sacrifices were designed to teach them, they would have received the Saviour gladly when He appeared. "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they know Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him." (Acts 13:27)

The eyes of Israel were blinded in the reading of the Old Testament. They thought that they were God's people, because they were so much better than the surrounding heathen, and that in offering sacrifices they were rendering the worship which God desired.

But God did not wish them to stay for ever among the shadows. He wanted them to come to the substance and know by experience the fullness and power of the salvation from sin which was in Christ. Since the shadows in themselves were worthless, it did no good to multiply them. No number of shadows, however great will suffice to make one substance. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." (Hebrews 10:4)

So the Lord asks, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices?" (Isaiah 1:11)

The object at which the Lord aimed was the taking away of sin, and the bringing in of righteousness, not only to cleanse the sinner and make him whiter than snow, but to keep him so. "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;...burnt offering and sin offering You have not required." (Psalm 11:6) "Though you offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will, not accept them. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." (Amos 5:22,24)

The same question is addressed to us, "To what purpose is the multitude of your prayers and religions observances?"

Are these the end of our Christian experience? Are we, any more than was Israel, come to the substance of Christ's work for us, or do we, as they, have to offer continually, year after year, sacrifices that never take away sin? Are we delivered from the power of sin any more than were they? "You shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) "Wherefore when He came into the world, He said, Sacrifice and offering You would not, but a body have You prepared me: ... Then said I, Lo, I come...to do your will, O God. ... By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:5,7,10)

In proportion as Christ's sacrifice was more effectual than the blood of bulls and goats for the taking away of sin, so should the deliverance from sin of those who receive Christ differ from the experience of those who offered slain beasts. "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; ... For by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Hebrews 10:11-12,14)

All that is needed to be done to keep men from falling and to present them faultless before the presence of God with exceeding joy, (Jude 1:24) has been already completed in the sacrifice of Christ. Those who receive Him for all that He is may prove now

"the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe."
(Ephesians 1:19)

This is the object of God in giving His Son to us. Until He is received as a perfect Saviour from sin, He is not known in His real character. His name is Jesus because He saves from sin, (Matthew 1:21) and no one can know Jesus who does not know a Saviour from sin. Until we thus know Him, even if professing faith in Him, we are only among the shadows of good things to come.

In giving Christ to us, God gives us deliverance from all the power of evil, and if we neglect to receive so great salvation, all our prayers and religious observances will be to no purpose. They will be no more acceptable to God than were the sacrifices offered by ancient Israel.

But now that the reality of Christ's work for us is made known, we may leave the shadows of good things to come, and enjoy the good things themselves. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; ... Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." (Hebrews 10:19-20,22)--Present Truth, January 26, 1899--
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E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 3

Reasoning Together

"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

What a wonderful promise! It seems too much to be true, but it is truth. Think of it! A man that is thoroughly defiled by sin, made as pure as the snow fresh from heaven. That is the wonder of the universe. How is it accomplished? Well, it is in a way that no man would ever have thought of. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Timothy 1:15) "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." (1 John 3:4-5) "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. ... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:7,9) "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." (Romans 3:23-25) "But to him that works not,

but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:5)

The sum of all this is that the sinner is saved from sin by receiving the righteousness of God in Christ. He is redeemed, cleansed by the blood of Christ. But the blood of Christ is the life of Christ. "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." (Leviticus 17:11)

When Christ shed His blood for man, He poured out His life for sinful man. Whoever acknowledges that he has sinned, and takes Christ by faith, receives His life into his soul. Then, "he is a new creature," (2 Corinthians 5:17) "and the life that he lives, he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him." (Galatians 2:20)

That man has simply exchanged lives with the Son of God. Being crucified with Christ, he gives his old life to Christ, and thus it, with its sins, is nailed to the cross. But since he is crucified with Christ, he must also be made alive with Christ, for: "If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." (Romans 6:5)

But only Christ has the power to live after giving up His life; therefore the new life that the redeemed ones live is the life of Christ. Thus he has exchanged lives with Christ. All this is contrary to human reason. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish

foolishness. ... We preach Christ crucified, and to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to 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 1:18,23-24)

Man would say, "Do right, and then you will be right."

That seems to the human mind to be the only reasonable way. But God says, "Let me make you right, and then you will do right." "And 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)

The children of Israel had sinned in the wilderness, "And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." (Numbers 21:6)

Then the people confessed their sins and begged that the serpents might be removed from them. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Make a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that everyone 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 21:8-9)

It would be strange if there were not some among the people who refused to look. They would "reason" in this way:

"It is all nonsense to think that looking at that brazen serpent can heal a snake bite. If we would climb the pole, and rub the wounded against a serpent, there might be some virtue in that; but just looking can never be of any use, and I am not going to make a fool of myself."

That is just the way that men reason about the Lord. It seems to them foolishness that a man can be made perfectly righteous by simply looking at Christ. No; if they are ever to be made righteous they are confident that it must be by some more promising means than that. They will not risk their salvation upon a look. They can trust their own efforts, but to lie passively and look seems to them too presumptuous.

The truth is that the facts of the Gospel cannot be reasoned out by man. They are altogether above and beyond the reach of human reason. Man left to his own reason will reason himself into hedonism every time. (See Romans 1:20-25) "But doesn't God tell us to reason together?" some will ask.

Yes; and here is where so many pervert the text with which we started. They use their reason as a basis for faith, forgetting that faith must be the instructor of reason. God does not tell us to apply our reason to the task of figuring out a way of salvation but says, "Come now, and let us reason together." (Isaiah 1:18)

Who does the "us" include? Why, ourselves and the Lord, of course. The trouble is that so many read that call, and then they

proceed forthwith to begin to reason alone, leaving the Lord out altogether. Then they come to fatal conclusions. We are to reason together with the Lord. Well, it is only reasonable that in reasoning with the Lord we should defer to Him, and let His reason direct. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9) "[Even] the foolishness of God is wiser than men." (1 Corinthians 1:25)

So it is not with our mind that we are to reason about the things of God, but with the mind of the Lord. First we are to submit to the Lord, (James 4:7) that He may put in us the mind that was in Christ, (1 Corinthians 2:16) and then we shall see clearly, for we shall be walking in the light as He is in the light. (1 John 1:7) Then it is that: "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

That which seems foolishness when looked at from a human point of view, is very reasonable when seen with the mind of God; for as "God is love," (1 John 4:16) and as "[He] delights in mercy," (Micah 7:18) it is the most natural thing for God to save sinners. But it is none the less wonderful, for the smallest of God's ways affords matter for the never-ending wonder of man.--Present Truth, January 12, 1893--Isaiah 1:18

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 4

Reasoning With God

It is a very common thing for men to reason with God. Though He does not stand personally and visibly before them and talk with them, they have His spoken word, to which many feel free to make objections, or excuse themselves from performing its requirements. It is just the same as if they stood face to face with the Creator and presumed to enter into an argument with Him.

This is not the kind of reasoning that the Lord desires. He has said, "Come now, and let us reason together," (Isaiah 1:18) but He does not ask us to tell Him anything that He does not know, or attempt to prove Him to be in the wrong. To do that would be to unseat Him from His throne. But He says, "Put me in remembrance, let us plead together." (Isaiah 43:26)

He wishes men to remind Him of His promises; not because He has forgotten them, but because He longs for an opportunity to fulfill them. He pleads with men to comply with the conditions upon which His promises are made, in order that by fulfilling them He may demonstrate to men His power and love toward them.

If they will do this, He will remember instantly the things that He has sworn to perform. He holds out to them the greatest of inducements by saying, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall

be as white as snow: and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

To reason properly with the Lord is simply to give Him an opportunity of doing for us this wonderful work. The result will be most convincing, as regards all the points that can possibly be at issue.--Present Truth, October 4, 1894--Isaiah 1:18

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 5

Isaiah Called to Service

The prophet Isaiah began to see visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem in days of king Uzziah, and his work continued for some sixty years. It was in the last year of Uzziah's life that Isaiah saw the vision which is the subject of the present lesson.

Uzziah was the grandson of Joash. The latter, like his father; died a violent death, as did also his own son Amaziah. Both Amaziah and his son and successor, Uzziah, began to reign in the fear of God, but as the Lord prospered them, their hearts were lifted up. Amaziah worshiped false gods, and Uzziah became so full of pride and self-importance that he even forced his way into the sanctuary with the intention of burning incense. For this he was smitten with leprosy, and obliged to surrender the kingdom to his son Jotham.

Cleansing From Sin

In Isaiah's vision there was revealed to him the Lord upon His throne, exalted high, surrounded by angels and worshiped by the seraphim. As these declared the holiness of the Lord, a sense of his own sinfulness overwhelmed the prophet and he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." (Isaiah 6:5)

But God never makes known His holiness with the object of inducing despair in men. High and lifted up as He is, His holiness and power are equaled by His love for men, and He bids them. "Sing unto the Lord, all you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." (Psalm 30:4)

In His love He bestows His holiness freely upon sinful men, hence the infinite measure of His holiness only makes known the fullness of His unspeakable gift. In quick response to the prophet's sense of need, an angel flies to him with a live coal from off the altar, and as it was laid upon Isaiah's mouth, the comforting assurance was given, "Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." (Isaiah 6:7)

A Throne of Grace

The blasphemous pride of King Uzziah in presumptuously approaching that altar had merited and found swift and awful punishment; but for Isaiah's humble confession of guilt it had no terrors. The sinful and helpless, who can only plead their sad necessity, may come with boldness to the throne of grace, and find there plenteous redemption. The broken and contrite heart may be despised among men, but it is honored in heaven. God has respect unto the lowly. His answer to every confession of wrongdoing is, as it was to Isaiah, "Your iniquity is taken away." (Isaiah 6:7)

Whom Shall We Send?

Then follows the next step. Isaiah dwelt among an unclean people. God cared for them as much as He did for Isaiah. Who should go forth and tell them of the cleansing that was so freely given, and so easily obtained? The angels could not do it, for they did not know the defilement and the burden of sin. The messengers must be chosen among men redeemed, and Isaiah, who knew both the disease and the healing, offered himself for the work, saying, "Here am I; send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

A Warning Message

Just as quickly as the cleansing of sin followed upon the confession of it, did the commission to declare the Gospel follow upon the offer of service. "And He said, Go," (Isaiah 6:9)

The words of the message were put into his mouth. It reads like a message full of discouragement at first sight. "tell this people, Hear indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but perceive not." (Isaiah 6:9)

The cause also was to be made known. "For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and bear with their ears, and understand with their heart." (Acts 28:27; Isaiah 6:10)

Although the words hardly seem like a message of good tidings, they were so in reality for all who would hear, since they made known the flimsy character of the barrier that kept the people from forgiveness and healing. If only Judah would use their senses, hear with their ears, see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, the result would be that they "should be converted, and I should heal them." (Acts 28:27)

The Glory of the Lord

God did not require great things of His people that they might be saved. If He had asked them to hear without ears, or see without eyes, they might have complained that His conditions were hard, but these faculties had already been given and God simply asked that they should be used.

It was necessary to use their members for the maintenance of their physical life. Food grew around them in abundance, but they needed to see it and gather it with their hands before it could give them life. So all about them, as the seraphs sang, the whole earth was full of the glory of God, or the fullness of the whole earth was His glory. (See Isaiah 6:3, margin of Revised Version.)

Had their ears been open to hear what God said to them, by His servants and His works, their eyes been willing to see in the wonders of nature the living presence and continual working of their Creator, they would have gladly recognized in every ministration of earth and sea and air, supplying their wants, that they were made

partakers of the Divine life, and thus have been turned from idols to serve the living God.

Like the Beasts That Perish

The same lesson is for us today. The difficulty that hindered Judah then, prevented their children from acknowledging the Messiah, and Paul told the Jews at Rome that the Holy Ghost had spoken truth by Isaiah, when it declared the real nature of the obstacle that kept them from being saved.

Fuller than the beasts that perish, men receive the life of God through the channels by which it is conveyed, caring only for the food and raiment after which the heathen seek, and forgetting that these are added to a far more precious gift, the righteousness of God. "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:31-33)

In the life of God that is bestowed so freely upon men, "filling their hearts with food and gladness," (Acts 14:17) are given "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2 Peter 1:3)

But it is true of the multitudes now as it was in the time of Isaiah: "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, my people do not consider." (Isaiah 1:3)

How Long?

The Divine ambition is to see men happy. God's rejoicing is in the welfare of His children, and He desires that men shall acknowledge His love in the abundance of His gifts. If they will not do so, before He allows himself to be finally rejected, and the way of death irrevocably chosen by His creatures, He gives opportunity to learn the value of His gifts by their withdrawal. Some, when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, will learn righteousness: "when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isaiah 26:9)

And so, although God does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men, (Lamentations 3:33) this is often the only chance of saving them. It was so with Judah. To Isaiah's question, how long it should be before the people should be willing to see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and thus be healed, the reply was given, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." (Isaiah 6:11)

Yet the promise was given that a remnant should return, and that like a tree which has life in its trunk, even though all outer sign of life, in leaves and branches, has disappeared, the holy seed should be the substance of the nation. This seed was not holy by its own

merits but would consist of all who should submit themselves to the righteousness of God, and not attempt, in ignorance of God and His righteousness, to establish their own righteousness. (Romans 10:3)

The Gospel of Isaiah

Isaiah had marvelous revelations of God's character. His writings present so much of the work of Christ that they are often spoken of, and truly so, as: "The Gospel according to Isaiah."

For this reason, many who are counted wise and learned, but who know not the Scriptures nor the power of God, have declared it impossible that a man living so many hundred years before Christ, could have been so enlightened on the subject of the Saviour's work and teaching. To all such the warning of Isaiah comes, that they should open their eyes and ears, and learn to discern, where they see now only common things and human power, the glory of God filling all the earth. This glory of God, whom the seraphim acclaimed as, "Holy, holy, holy!" (Isaiah 6:3) when seen and received by faith, works in the beholder the fulfillment of the Divine command, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16; Leviticus 11:44-45)--Present Truth, October 13, 1898--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons, October 23--Isaiah 6:1-13

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 6

God's Glory His Gospel

When Isaiah saw the Lord on the throne, high and lifted up, surrounded by the seraphim, he heard those beings crying one to another, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." (Isaiah 6:3)

These words were spoken hundreds of years ago. Are they true now, and is the earth now full of the glory of the Lord? Most certainly; all the while the word has been, "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you." (Isaiah 60:1)

The whole earth is full of the glory of God. He has revealed it in every blade of grass, and every flower, and everything that He has made. "His glory covers the heavens, and the earth is full of His praise." (Habakkuk 3:3)

The plant springing up and yielding its fruit, is showing forth the glory of God; for when in Cana of Galilee Christ accelerated the process, and, instead of waiting six months for the rain to come down and be taken up into the vine and converted into the juice of the grape, changed the water into wine by the power of the same word which sends the rain and is the life of the plant, it was written that this beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, "and manifested forth His glory." (John 2:11)

Power and Glory

The power of God is the glory of God. He showed His mighty power in the resurrection of Christ from the dead; but: "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." (Romans 6:4)

The power of God is also shown in the things that He has made, and the Gospel, which is this power manifested unto salvation, is "the glorious Gospel of God." (1 Timothy 1:11)

The Gospel is glory; it is also power. And the whole earth is full of it. The earth preaches no set sermons. It does not begin with firstly, secondly, thirdly, and deliver an artistic address. What does the earth do? It receives the light from God, and manifests it forth. It simply receives the gifts that God sends upon it, and glorifies God in returning the fruits of the life. That is the Gospel. "The Gospel...is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believes, For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." (Romans 1:16-17)

Why All Do Not Glorify God

Someone may ask, "Then why am I not as much to the praise of God as the heavens?"

Simply because you do not desire to be. We are all exactly what we wish to be. It is a fact that: "[God] satisfies the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:16)

The trouble with some is that they do not want to be satisfied. If you really want to know the Lord, nothing in the world can hinder; because the Lord wants you to know Him. There is no use in standing off, and saying, "We want to know the Lord, and want to serve Him," when for many years He has been seeking for us, and knocking for us to open the door and let Him in, and has been speaking to us in every way He could. He has spoken to eyes, and ears, into every sense we have; for there is not a thing in heaven or earth that does not proclaim the power and the glory of God.

Therefore as soon as we are willing to believe that the Lord is better than we are, that He is more at peace and rest than we are, we shall have Him; for we shall then be willing to give up our ways, and our poverty, and our unrest and disquietude, and have the peace and rest of God, and the riches and righteousness which He has given to us.

But this is a giving up of all there is of self. To give up our ways means to confess that we do not know as much as we thought we did, and that is hard. It is a difficult thing to say that we are mistaken, and that we have no wisdom, or might, or anything that is good and worth having. This hurts; but it is only saying that the Lord is greater than we are, and that we are willing that His life in us shall manifest forth His glory, that we also may be "To the praise of

the glory of His grace." (Ephesians 1:6)--Present Truth, March 1,
1894--Isaiah 6:3

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 7

The Live Coal from God's Altar

When Isaiah saw the vision of the Lord in His temple, "high and lifted up," he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone." (Isaiah 6:5)

He saw his own poverty and nakedness as never before. The Lord wanted someone to go with the message to sinners; but he was "a man of unclean lips." (Isaiah 6:5)

Then flew a seraph to him, with a live coal from off the altar of the Lord, and touched his mouth, saying, "Lo, this has touched your lips and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." (Isaiah 6:7)

Isaiah believed the words, and when he heard the call, "Who will go?" (Isaiah 6:8) he answered, "Here am I; send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

And the commission came, "Go." (Isaiah 6:9) "Is not my word like as a fire? says the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:29) "Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3)

It was with the living word of God that the prophet's lips were touched. As he believed the word it was his cleansing, and he was ready to go to sinners with it. The very word which the Spirit uses to convict of sin has power in it to burn away the sin. Thank God for it,

and believe it, and hold the life to the Word for constant correction and cleansing. When it is a burning coal direct from God's altar to your lips, you may daily say, "Here Lord, send me," and the Lord's answer will be, "Go."

But He sends us to speak only His words. "He that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire?" (Jeremiah 23:28-29)--Present Truth, June 3, 1897--Isaiah 6:5-9

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 8

Christ's Coming Foretold

Who can ever become weary of the grand words of the evangelical prophet of Israel? What a richness, a luxuriance, there is in them, and what rhythm? How easy it is to remember them! They fasten themselves in our memory, never to be effaced. There are but few of them in this lesson, but they are wonderfully comprehensive. Let us read them. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined. You have multiplied the nation, You have increased their joy: they joy before You according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, You have broken as in the day of Midian. For all the armor of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be even for bursting, for fuel of fire. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this." (Isaiah 9:2-7,RV)

The lesson begins with darkness, and ends with light. The preceding chapter closes with the statement that upon the earth there

shall be "trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish." (Isaiah 8:22)
"Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you." (Isaiah 60:2)

Christ is the light of the world; there is no life but from Him, and His light is the light of righteousness, for He is "the Sun of righteousness." (Malachi 4:2)

That the prophecy in our lesson refers to the first advent of Christ, is made plain by comparing the first two verses with Matthew 4:15-17. It was when "the Word of life" (1 John 1:1) was manifested, that the light came into the world. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

But God did not leave the world in darkness for four thousand years. Far from it. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." (Genesis 1:1-3)

The Word of life--the light of men--was "from the beginning."
(1 John 1:1)

It was the eternal life, shining for the salvation of all men. And men saw the light--and rejoiced in it--in the far-away olden time. Abraham saw it, and was glad. (John 8:5,8) When the light shone

forth out of the darkness in the beginning, "God saw the light, that it was good." (Genesis 1:4)

From that time it has been bringing good news. Thus long has "the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ," (2 Corinthians 4:4) been in the world. "There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us." (Psalm 4:6)

From "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," (2 Corinthians 4:6) has all the good come, that has ever been known on this earth. "Turn us again, O God, and cause your face to shine: and we shall be saved." (Psalm 80:3) "God be merciful to us and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; That your way may be known upon earth, your saving health among all nations." (Psalm 67:12-13) "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord in the light of your countenance. In your name shall they rejoice all the day: and in your righteousness shall they be exalted." (Psalm 89:15-16)

Thus sang the Psalmist hundreds of years before Jesus walked in "Galilee of the Gentiles." (Matthew 4:15)

Ah, the light that shines forth from Jesus of Nazareth was enlightening the earth ages before the glory of God shone round the shepherds of Bethlehem, and the angel said, in fulfillment of the words of Isaiah, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour." (Luke 2:11) "And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not." (John 1:5)

There is healing in the wings of the Sun of righteousness. He makes people feel whole, "every whit whole." (John 7:23)

To those that "sat in the shadow of death, light has sprung up." (Matthew 4:16)

The light of life scatters the shadows of death. "The light of His countenance." (Psalm 4:6) has in it "saving health." (Psalm 67:2)

Let "the joyful sound" (Psalm 89:15) ring out over all the earth, that He who heals the sick, gives sight to the blind, cleanses the lepers, raises the dead, brings the captives out of the dark prison house, and binds up the broken-hearted, has come to earth, and that His healing presence has never departed. Then why are not all healed and set at liberty? Oh, "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." (Luke 4:27)

Yet the light shone for all. It still shines. From those who take the veil off their hearts, the shadow of death will flee away before the life-giving beams of the Sun of righteousness. "And they shall joy according to the joy in harvest." (Isaiah 9:3) "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." (Psalm 97:11)

The sowing-time is the promise of the harvest. What though the corn of wheat falls into the earth and dies, and the storms of long,

dark winter nights howl above it? The promise is sure: "If it die, it brings forth much fruit." (John 12:24)

Therefore he who sees with the eye of faith may rejoice as much amid the blasts of winter as when the golden light of autumn reveals the glory of the ripened sheaves. So although the rod of the oppressor is grievous, and "for a season,...you are in heaviness through manifold temptations, The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, you love; in whom though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:6-9)

Rich men now oppress the poor; the just are condemned and killed; but the joy of the coming harvest is reflected in their faces, and for very joy they do not resist; but take all patiently. "Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be you also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh." (James 5:7-8) "The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in

the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear."
(Matthew 13:39-43)

All the armor of the armed man--the furious oppressor--shall be only for a "burning, for fuel of fire." (Isaiah 9:5)

Whereby may we know this? By this: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." (Isaiah 9:6)

The first coming of Christ had in it the power and the glory and the joy of the second advent. That little Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger, is "the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

A "tender plant" (Isaiah 53:2) it was, weak as any other babe that ever was born, yet Herod trembled, and raged against it in vain; "for the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:25)

That Child shall yet cause all the kingdoms of this world to totter and fall and crumble into pieces that cannot be found, while "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." (Isaiah 9:7)

Often during His short revelation on this earth did the "Holy Child Jesus" (Acts 4:27,30) show forth His power and glory. Once was it seen that nothing less than "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," (2 Peter 1:16) were veiled by the flesh of the

Carpenter of Nazareth, and the three disciples in the holy mount were "eye-witnesses of His majesty." (2 Peter 1:16)

For the light that encircled Him then was not light that shone upon Him, but light that shone from Him; "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14) was always visible to those who could recognize it in the form of "grace and truth." (John 1:14)

So we see that the mighty power that will be revealed in the shaking heavens and earth at the second coming of Christ, will be but the power of Christ's coming in the flesh. It is the same "power of the Highest" (Luke 1:35) that overshadowed Mary, enabling her to bring forth the "holy thing" (Luke 1:35) that was called the Son of God; and it is the same "power that works in us," (Ephesians 3:20) even now, to form Christ in us the hope of glory. There is not so much difference between the first and the second advent of Christ, as people are wont to think. The prophets, as in the instance before us, often mentioned them together as one. The second is but the further unfolding of the first. No man believes in the first, who does not also believe in the second.

He who was, is the One who is, and who is to come. (Revelation 1:8) He is not divided; we must take the whole of Him or nothing. If we do not accept Him as the One who is coming again to take visible possession of His own inheritance, then we do not fully realize His power as our present sovereign Lord.

Never in eternity will there be any more power manifested in Jesus than was necessary to bring Him to birth in Bethlehem of Judea, and to raise Him from the dead. And that is the power by which He now dwells in every living heart. The power of His coming to Judgment, is the power of His humble birth, and the power of the cross. Only by the cross are repentant sinners saved, and reprobate sinners destroyed.

Therefore lift up your heads and rejoice. The time of tribulation is the time to "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Romans 5:11)

The oppressor may be as cruel and fierce as ever; "your adversary the devil," (1 Peter 5:8) may be as active as ever; there may be visible oppression; but Christ has promised "liberty to the captives," (Isaiah 61:1) and the liberty is ours. The power by which He will at the last "rend the heavens, [and] come down," (Isaiah 64:1) is the same power by which He now rides on a cherub and flies on the wings of the wind to the help of His afflicted, tempted ones. (Psalm 8:1-10)

Then why not now rejoice over the conquered foe. Do you expect to be glad when the Lord comes to claim His own? You will not unless you rejoice now, even while surrounded with trials. The crown will be given only to those who "love His appearing;" (2 Timothy 4:8) and none love His appearing who do not know the power of it in His blessed presence. "A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is

delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." (John 16:21)

Therefore, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice;" (Philippians 4:4) for, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." (Isaiah 9:6) "Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together Before the Lord; for He comes to judge the earth." (Psalm 98:8-9)--Present Truth, December 14, 1899--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons--Isaiah 9:2-7

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 9

Messiah's Kingdom Foretold

It is noteworthy that very many of the illustrations used by Isaiah, to represent the truths taught by him, are drawn from the vegetable world. He speaks a great deal of the kingdom of God, and of that kingdom Christ himself said that it is "as if a man should cast seed into the ground." (Mark 4:26)

In the present lesson the Saviour is likened to a rod coming forth from the stem of Jesse, and a branch growing out of his roots. There had been a good many vicissitudes in the history of Jesse's descendants, when Isaiah wrote, and the future contained a great many more. It seemed sometimes, so far as any hope of spiritual life was concerned, that Jesse's was a dry, withered root, but out of this unpromising soil, Christ was to grow up "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." (Isaiah 53:2)

The Word Made Flesh

"All flesh is grass," (Isaiah 40:6) and Christ was made in all things like unto His brethren. He had no more strength than the grass of the field, for He declared that of himself He could do nothing. It was the Word of the Lord that caused the grass to grow and gave it life. The grass is simply the visible manifestation of the Word by which it lives. Hence the various forms of the grass show forth the beauty and glory of the Lord.

Many will not allow that it can be true of them that they are merely grass. They point with pride to their achievements, to the acquirements which mark them as superior to others, and claim that these give proof of an independent intelligence.

Christ made no such claim for himself. He sought not His own will. The Father gave Him commandment what He should speak, and showed Him all things that He should do. He simply took the humble place of the grass of the field, which exists only because of the Word of life, and reveals, not itself, but the working of that Word, in the Word made grass. Christ was the Word made flesh, and all flesh is grass.

Led by the Spirit

Because Christ did not lean to His own understanding, but trusted in the Lord with all His heart, the Lord directed His every step. Because He submitted to the guidance of the Spirit, it had free course in Him and was revealed in its fullness in His life. It was everything to Him, and so it imparted to Him freely everything that it was.

It was not given by measure, and being unhindered by Him in its manifestations, all its characteristics were revealed in His life as: "wisdom and understanding,...counsel and might,...knowledge and the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah 11:2)

The Spirit made Him "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," (Isaiah 11:3) and He allowed it to influence His mind and form His judgment on all matters that demanded attention. He did not rely upon the inadequate means of information supplied by His human eyes and ears, but trusted in the infallible guidance of the Spirit. So His judgment and reproof was given in righteousness and equity. "And He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: "But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." (Isaiah 11:3-4) "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

A Witness to the People

Christ came to earth to make known what inconceivable riches had been bestowed by God upon men in the gift of His life. The life was communicated by the Spirit, but men saw no particular value in the gift, and felt indifferent as to whether it was given or not.

What it would do for helpless men was seen in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Springing, like His brethren in the flesh, from a dry root, which only conveyed its inheritance of sin and death, He triumphed over both by receiving the life from above. The whole of His victorious life was a witness to men of what God had done for them.

His sinlessness did not separate Him from the unworthy, for such a High Priest became us, but showed the power of the salvation that was theirs by free gift. So He said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings" (Isaiah 61:1) to men, that they too might be, like himself, "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord." (Isaiah 61:3)

Out of Weakness Made Strong

It may seem at first sight humiliating to be told that: "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the field," (Isaiah 40:6) so that man is absolutely dependent upon the Lord, but those who receive this truth find in it unending strength and rejoicing. They learn that in being made dependent on His life God does not doom them to a beggarly existence, and their hearts are comforted, "being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:2-3)

A Glorious Rest

As men learn to trust in the Lord for all things, and put no confidence in the flesh, God's strength is made perfect in their weakness, and they are made "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)

Thus the power of God is seen and declared among men, and the root of Jesse "shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious." (Isaiah 11:10)

As the tumults of earth agitate human minds, and "Men's hearts fail them for fear, looking after those things that are coming on the earth," (Luke 21:26) God's people trust calmly in Him, in whom there is everlasting strength, and perfect peace. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:3-4)

When trials and clouds are thickest and darkest, His rest is most glorious, and made known to the Gentiles as most worth their acceptance.

Abundance of Peace

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the 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 11:6-9)

The picture of perfect peace presented in this lesson is but a demonstration of what the Spirit of God can do, in reconciling the most contrary natures. The wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the calf and the young lion, can all live together in amity and peace, because the rule of God, interrupted by man's rebellion, is fully restored in all things.

The law of God, which is the life of God, is made again the universal law of being, and there shall be no evil or destruction, because: "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9)

In the everlasting inheritance of God's redeemed, "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace," (Psalm 37:11) for only they shall possess the earth. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

The earnest of that inheritance is given now in the Holy Spirit to believers, (Ephesians 1:13-14) and since the inheritance is all that it is by virtue of the power of the Spirit, it follows that whosoever receives the Spirit knows thereby the power of the world to come. (Hebrews 6:4-5)

This is the power which is made known to those who confess themselves to be only grass, and find a glorious rest in the knowledge that: "It is God which works in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)--Present Truth, October

20, 1898--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons,
October 30--Isaiah 11:1-10

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 10

The Stability of Righteousness

It is a common saying that "nothing is settled until it is settled right." That is a truth that is stated at length in the following scripture: "Because you have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believes shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then you shall be trodden down by it." (Isaiah 28:15-18)

Nothing can stand except that which is built upon the foundation of truth and righteousness; every other structure that is built for a refuge will fall down, and will involve in its destruction all have taken refuge in it. The living God, the God of truth, is the only sure refuge, and His truth is a shield and buckler to everyone who accepts it and hides in it alone.

This suggests another phase of the same truth, and that is, that whenever a thing is settled right it is absolutely settled. This is stated in the following scripture: "Judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isaiah 32:16-18)

Righteousness is the sure and everlasting foundation. Whoever is right, and knows that he is right because he is building solely on God's Word, can rest in quiet, no matter how much people may rage against him.

- He may be misrepresented, and his motives maligned, or even his life threatened but none of these things will move him.
- He does not need to vindicate the truth, for it is its own authority; and
- He doesn't need to defend himself, for the truth is his defense.

What a condition of perfect rest in peace this is! "Great peace have they which love your law; and nothing shall offend them [or, "cause them to stumble"]." (Psalm 119:165)--Present Truth, April 24, 1902--Isaiah 28:15-18

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 11

Gentleness and Firmness

Gentleness and courteous grace are not incompatible with firmness. Moses, the meekest man, (Numbers 12:3) was one of the firmest and most immovable.

Daniel very politely and meekly requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself with the king's dainties: but he had "purposed in his heart" (Daniel 1:8) that he would not. He did not think that it was necessary, however, to bluster, and to use strong language, in order to impress the one in charge; it is only the weak man that does that; the strong man is quiet simply because he is strong. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)--Present Truth, August 21, 1902--Original title: Back Page--Isaiah 30:15

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 12

The Power That Keeps

In that wonderful chapter, the 40th of Isaiah, we have a most vivid representation of the power of God, and the greatness of His creation. Take, for instance, the fifteenth verse: "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing." (Isaiah 40:15)

More literal and more forcible is the rendering in the margin of the Revised Version, "The isles are as the fine dust that is lifted up."

That is, the islands are no greater to God than the fine dust is to us; more than this, they are no greater to God than the dust, because with God there is no such thing as comparison; nothing is hard for Him. "Darkness and light are both alike to Him;" (Psalm 139:12) great and small have no difference between them in His sight. The greatest thing in our eyes is as easy for Him as that which seems to us easy. What an idea of the immensity of the universe is given by that expression, "Behold, the isles are as the fine dust that is lifted up." (Psalm 139:15)

All the islands of the sea are no greater, in comparison to the universe of God, than the fine dust that every breeze lifts up is to the whole earth. Truly, "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the

strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." (Psalm 95:3-7)

But this is not all. Our minds are directed to another evidence of His greatness. "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these, that brings out their host by number: He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power, not one fails." (Isaiah 40:26)

With the natural eye innumerable stars can be seen; the telescope reveals innumerable others, but even the most powerful telescope reveals only an exceedingly small fraction of the number of stars. Photography, however, enlarges our ideas. By exposing plates for several hours, the light is accumulated so that stars too distant to be discovered even by the telescope, record their existence. In a photograph of a very small section of the heavens in which no stars could be seen, many thousands were revealed. If our camera were placed on the most distant of the stars, we doubtless should have the same thing repeated.

Millions upon millions in number are the stars of heaven; yet God calls them all by name, because He made them; and the word of His power keeps them from falling. (Hebrews 1:3) They hang upon His word. Well might the psalmist exclaim, "O Lord, how manifold

are your works! in wisdom have You made them all." (Psalm 104:24)

All this shows the power of God; for the Lord by the Apostle Paul assures us that ever since the creation of the world, the invisible things of God, namely, His eternal power and Divinity, are clearly seen through the things that He has made. (Romans 1:20) It is because He is great in power that none of the host of heaven fall from their places. They do not collide, because His hand guides them in their various orbits.

With this view of the power and wisdom of God, how forcible are the words that follow: "Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed away from my God? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increases strength." (Isaiah 40:27-29)

No one need fear that he is in danger of being forgotten by the God to whom the names of the infinite number of worlds are as familiar as the names of children are to their parents. The stars are God's flock, which He guards and we are His flock also. That is one point of encouragement. The other is that all this power is for the use of the man who is in need. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The power by which God is able to keep the soul from falling, is the power by which He keeps the host of heaven in their

proper places. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." (Psalm 33:6)

By that same word they are kept. (See 2 Peter 3:5-7) And this is the word of the Gospel which is preached unto us. (1 Peter 1:25) Therefore we may know that all the power of the universe is pledged for the redemption of those who believe God. The existence of the universe depends upon the fulfillment of God's promises to us; for the same word that brings the promises to us, is the word that upholds all things; and if that word were broken, everything would return to chaos, and vanish from existence.

And this comfort is for the poorest and the weakest and most sinful; for God's word would be broken just as surely if it failed to the least, as if it failed with the greatest. So the existence of the stars in the heavens is a pledge to even the weakest soul, that God has not forgotten His promises, and that every prayer of faith will be answered.

Thus it is that God's people in the last days, when troubles thicken, and wicked men and persecutors become more rampant, are directed to "Look up." (Luke 21:28)

Strength comes from looking up. Therefore, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, preserved in

heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:3-5)--
Present Truth, January 4, 1894--Isaiah 40:15, 26-29

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 13

Christ Not Discouraged

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench; He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth." (Isaiah 42:1-4)

This is the work of Christ. What a world of comfort and encouragement there is in the statement of it, especially in the last verse. His work is to set judgment, or righteousness, in the earth. Righteousness can be set in the earth only by putting it into the hearts of men.

Christ's work is to take poor, weak, sinful men, and make righteous beings of them; to clothe them with the righteousness of God. Very poor material He has to work with, and no one knows this better than He. But He shall not fail or be discouraged in this work. He knows how difficult the task is; but knowing man's sinfulness and hardness of heart, He is not discouraged.

Then what occasion is there for being discouraged? If He is not discouraged with His task, need we be? Shall not we gather courage from His courage? We may be of good courage, for He has

overcome the world, and in Him we shall do valiantly.--Present
Truth, August 29, 1895--Isaiah 42:1-4

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 14

Prisoners and Freemen

"Who is addressed in Isaiah 49:8-9? Who are the prisoners, and when and from what are they to be freed?"

The verses referred to read thus: "Thus says the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you; and I will preserve you, and give you for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That you may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places." (Isaiah 49:8-9)

By reading the preceding verses in connection with these, we readily learn who is addressed. "And now, says the Lord that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him. And He said, It is a light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49:5-6)

These passages show unmistakably that Christ is the one addressed. Compare verse 6 with: "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word: For my eyes have seen your salvation, Which You have prepared before the face of all

people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." (Luke 2:29-32)

The 8th verse itself shows that Christ is addressed, in the words, "I will preserve You, and give You for a covenant of the people." (Isaiah 49:8)

Compare this with: "Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not, and nations that knew you not shall run unto you because of the Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you." (Isaiah 55:4-5)

The "day of salvation" is the entire time during which God's mercy to man is manifest in the gospel. In this day--this acceptable time--Christ is heard in behalf of the people, and is given for the objects mentioned in verses 8 and 9.

Opening the Prison

One of these objects is the opening of the prison, and saying to the prisoners, "Go forth." It might appear to some, from the words that immediately follow (verse 10), that this has reference to the opening of the graves at the last day; but from almost identical language used elsewhere in prophecy, and applied by our Lord himself, we are obliged to place the opening of the prison within the "day of salvation." "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He

has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Isaiah 61:1-2)

When our Lord went into the synagogue at Nazareth and read this much of the prophecy, He closed the book, and said to the people: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:21)

The fact that He said this, and that He refrained from reading the next clause,--"and the day of vengeance of our God,"--shows that all that He read is fulfilled in the day of grace. But the dead are not raised until the day of mercy is past. Therefore the "opening of the prison to them that are bound" must be during the "day of salvation."

What Is the Bondage?

Then we have to inquire, Who are bound, and what is their bondage? The following verses will set us in the way of the correction answer: "They [the wicked Jews] answered Him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how say you, You shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abides not in the house forever; but the Son abides ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:33-36)

From these words we learn that sin is a bondage, and that it is from this bondage that Christ sets men free. To further show that sin is a bondage we need only to refer to the following verses, out of a multitude that might be quoted: "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." (Romans 7:14) "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." (2 Peter 2:19)

Again, we know that Christ's special work is to save people from sin: "And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15) "Looking for...our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:13-14)

Both these points, namely, that sin brings men into bondage, and that Christ releases them from this prison, are brought out in the following passage: "For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which [i.e., by the Spirit] also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." (1 Peter 3:18-20)

Christ, by the Spirit, went and preached unto the spirits in prison; this was in the days of Noah, while the long-suffering of God waited. God's long-suffering waited one hundred and twenty years, and during this time His Spirit was striving with the wicked antediluvians. "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." (Genesis 6:3)

Those wicked men were in the bondage of sin; Christ was ready and anxious to give them freedom,--the same freedom that Noah had, namely, the righteousness which is by faith,--but they refused to be made free, and were therefore destroyed.

The Condemnation of the Law

Still further: We have seen that men are bound in prison because of sin. Said Paul, "The law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." (Romans 7:14)

Now, "sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4)

And therefore it is the transgressed law that shuts men up in prison. David said, "I will walk at liberty; for I seek your precepts." (Psalm 119:45)

But when he turned aside from the commandments he was at once bound as a criminal. This bondage in which the transgressed

law holds its victims until they accept freedom in Christ, is most forcibly indicated by Paul in the following words: "But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." (Galatians 3:22-23)

It is well known that human law casts its violators into prison. The sheriff who arrests the criminal, the judge who sentences him, and the jailer who locks him up, are only the agents of the law. The massive bolts and prison walls simply represent the outraged law. Now notice the parallel in the case of a transgressor of divine law. Having willfully sinned, he is justly accounted guilty of a violation of the whole law: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10)

For a time he is unconscious of his bondage. Said Paul, "I was alive without the law once." (Romans 7:9)

The office of the Spirit is to make men conscious of this bondage: "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." (John 16:8)

It does this by bringing the word home to their hearts, for the Bible is the Spirit's sword. Some, it is true, resist the influence of the Spirit, and never become conscious of their need until it is too late. But we will consider the case of one upon whom the Spirit works effectually.

As the truth is impressed upon his heart, his prison walls seem to contract about him. Whereas before he thought he had unlimited freedom, he now finds that he is in a narrow cell, the walls of which are the ten commandments. He resolves that he will be free, and starts out in one direction. But he has taken the name of the Lord in vain, and the third commandment says, "You can't get out here."

He turns in another direction, but he has borne false witness, and the ninth commandment presents an effectual barrier to his escape in that direction. Whichever way he turns, a commandment, stronger than any earthly prison wall, drives him back. He is shut in on every side.

Freedom Through Christ

But Christ is the door that ever stands open. Toward this door the enclosing walls seem to drive him, and he is shut up to it as the only avenue of escape. At last he escapes through this door, and becomes in Christ a free man. In Christ he is as though he had never sinned, and in Him he is, "made the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

That is, he becomes a commandment-keeper, and therefore continually walks at liberty. He has now only to "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith God has made him free." (Galatians 5:1)

One more point. Christ is the "tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion." (Micah 4:8)

Now turn to the exhortation of the prophet: "As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn to the strong hold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." (Zechariah 9:11-12)

The blood of the covenant is still offered before the throne of God, and is powerful enough to set every prisoner free. Therefore we are all prisoners of hope. We may all be free if we will. No matter how high our sins may seem to be piled up against us, backed by the law of God, we need not despair, for: "the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin;" (1 John 1:7) and, "Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound." (Romans 5:20)--Signs of the Times, January 13, 1887--Isaiah 49:8-9

E. J. Waggoner

Chapter 15

The Suffering Saviour

This prophecy really begins with verse 13 of the preceding chapter. "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." (Isaiah 52:13)

Altogether, it is a most vivid description of the life, sufferings, and death of Christ the Saviour. The Lord showed by His prophets, not only that the Saviour should come, but the time when He should come, the place where He should be born, and here, by Isaiah, the leading particulars and characteristics of His career while in this world. In verse 14 of the preceding chapter we read of the effects upon Him of His fast in the wilderness: "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." (Isaiah 52:14)

Men may talk of men's fasting forty days, and count it as detracting from the merit of that fast of our Saviour; but the fact still remains that the condition to which our Saviour was reduced by his forty days' fast was lower than that which was ever reached by any man that was ever in this world, who lived after it. "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." (Isaiah 52:14) "Who has believed our report?" (Isaiah 53:1)

Although the Lord had by His prophets foreshown the coming, and the manner of the coming, of the Saviour, yet there were few,

very few, to receive Him at His coming. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (John 1:11)

With what profound and reverent interest should the elders of Israel have been studying the place, the time, the circumstances, of the greatest event in the world's history,--the coming of the Son of God to accomplish the redemption of man! Oh, why were not the people watching and waiting that they might be among the first to welcome the world's Redeemer? But lo, at Bethlehem two weary travelers from the hills of Nazareth traverse the whole length of the narrow street to the eastern extremity of the town, vainly seeking a place of rest and shelter for the night. No doors open to receive them. In a wretched hovel prepared for cattle, they at last find refuge, and there the Saviour of the world is born. ...

An angel visits the earth to see who are prepared to welcome Jesus. But he can discern no tokens of expectancy. He hears no voice of praise and triumph that the period of Messiah's coming is at hand. The angel hovers for a time over the chosen city and the temple where the divine presence was manifested for ages; but even here is the same indifference. The priests, in their pomp and pride, are offering polluted sacrifices in the temple. The Pharisees are with loud voices addressing the people, or making boastful prayers at the corners of the streets. There is no evidence that Christ is expected, and no preparation for the Prince of life.

In amazement the celestial messenger is about to return to Heaven with the shameful tidings, when he discovers a group of

shepherds who are watching their flocks by night, and, as they gaze into the starry heavens, are contemplating the prophecy of a Messiah to come to earth, and longing for the advent of the world's Redeemer. Here is a company that are prepared to receive the heavenly message. And suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared, declaring the good tidings of great joy. Celestial glory flooded all the plain, an innumerable company of angels was revealed, and as if the joy were too great for one messenger to bring from Heaven, a multitude of voices broke forth in the anthem which all the nations of the saved shall one day sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."--Ellen White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume Four (1884), Chapter XII "God Honors the Humble," p. 197-198.

We shall not attempt any annotation on any of that part of the lesson from verse 2 to verse 10. In these verses Inspiration himself, out of the depths of divine, pitying love, has described the sufferings, the afflictions, and the sorrows of the Holy One, who died for the children of men, and to attempt an "exposition" would be but to mar the beauty and the blessed symmetry of the description. We will, however, transcribe these verses, and whoever reads them, we ask him to read them over slowly, thoughtfully, three times. "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs,

and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to His own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when you shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." (Isaiah 53:2-11)

That is, he shall see the fruits of His suffering, and shall be satisfied. Satisfied?

- Could He not be satisfied with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was? (John 17:5)

- Could he not be satisfied with His place upon that throne "high and lifted up," (Isaiah 6:1) where Isaiah saw Him?

- Could He not be satisfied with the worshipful song of the seraphim crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3)?

Was not all this enough to satisfy Him? No, not while man was lost in this world of sin. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." (Hebrews 12:2)

And when He shall have gathered to himself all of the fruits of His sufferings, from "sacrificing Abel" to the last one, then He "shall be satisfied;" then His joy will be full; then will be fulfilled His saying, "I will declare your name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto You." (Hebrews 2:12)

And again: "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." (Zephaniah 3:17)

Do you want to share that joy, as well as add to it? Gather souls to Christ. increase the fruits of His suffering by bringing souls to His salvation, and you will increase His joy; then it will be said to you, "Enter into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:21)

Oh, you suffering, afflicted, sorrowing Saviour! If I can add one ray of gladness to that fair brow that was pierced with the cruel thorns, I shall be satisfied. If I can add one beam of satisfaction to that visage that was so married more than any man, I shall be delighted. If I can add one thrill of joy to that great heart of love that

was broken with the ingratitude of men, my joy shall be full. "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." (Isaiah 53:12)

Satan is the strong one who has spoiled the human race. He brought sin into the world, and death by sin, and has shut up man in his prison-house--the grave. And Jesus, in talking of Satan and his house and his power, said: "How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." (Matthew 12:29)

Satan had the power of death. (Hebrews 2:14) Christ died and went into the grave, and came forth exclaiming: "I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen; and have the keys [the power] of hell [the grave] and of death." (Revelation 1:18)

Now He will bring forth all who have gone down to the grave trusting in Him. And when He went into the land of the enemy, and returned a conqueror, He brought forth some spoils to grace His triumph, and soon will bring all. "And many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after His resurrection." (Matthew 27:52-53) "And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Colossians 2:15)

And, "When He ascended up on high, He led a multitude of captives." (Ephesians 4:8,margin)

In this text, Colossians 2:15, Paul uses the figure of a Roman triumph. When a Roman commander had gone into an enemy's country, and had seized the power, when he returned he brought captives and spoils to immense value to his capital city; and then he was awarded a triumph, wherein he should be exalted on high, and following in his train were all the captives and spoils which he had taken.

So when Christ went into Satan's country, and, as we have seen, seized the power, when He returned He brought a multitude of captives, who graced His triumph as He returned to His glorious city.

But that was only the beginning, that was but a foretaste; soon He comes to gather all His saints together unto Him; then when the righteous dead arise, and the righteous living are changed, and caught up to meet Him in the air; (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) then when He returns with all His ransomed throng there will be a triumph indeed. And He deserves it. "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12)--Signs of the Times, December 3, 1885--Notes on the International Lesson, December 13--Isaiah 53:1-12

A.T. Jones

Chapter 16

All We Like Sheep

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

We have turned everyone to his own way, because we regarded our way as better than the Lord's way. The fact shows that we have regarded our own judgment as better than the Lord's judgment. Thus we find it to be a fact that every man naturally thinks himself above and better than the Lord. So, "that man of sin, ... the son of perdition, Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, " (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) is simply the full development of human nature. Our turning to our own way is therefore a direct insult to the Lord. "He is despised and rejected of men." (Isaiah 53:3)

By what men is He despised? By all men--by us; for: "we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." (Isaiah 53:3)

We ourselves have done this. The insults that were heaped on Christ in Herod's judgment hall; the crown of thorns; the spitting and the blows in the face; and the cross itself, are all chargeable to us. "The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

When we remember this, we may begin to appreciate the wonderful goodness and forbearance and love of the Lord in giving himself for us. Forgetting all the insults that we have heaped upon Him, His hand is stretched out still, and His gentle voice pleads, "Come unto me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

But how shall we come to Him? We all like sheep have gone astray; we have wandered far away from the fold; how shall we know how and where to find Him? Well, in the first place, we must settle it that we cannot come, except as lost sheep. Christ came to save the lost, and He accepts us in our lost condition.

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,--
O, Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe;
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
--Charlotte Elliott, Hymn: Just as I Am (1835)

Yet still the despairing cry is uttered, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!"

Our minds may at once be set at rest concerning that. "He is not far from everyone of us." (Acts 17:27)

He does not stand in His comfortable home, and call us, but He seeks us until He finds us. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." (Revelation 3:20)

We have not to hunt for Him; He comes to us, and we have only to accept the salvation that He brings us. For let it never be forgotten that in Him is all fullness. He is not only the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep, but He is the door into the fold, and the fold itself. So, no matter how far away we have wandered, the very moment we yield to the call which He utters close beside us, we are at home. The Shepherd and the fold come to find the sheep; and from lost wanderers, we find ourselves at once in our Father's house. What a blessed encouragement that Jesus has brought heaven itself down to earth for us. God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ (by grace you are saved;) And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:4-6)--Present Truth, April 2, 1896--Original title: Front Page--Isaiah 53:6

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 17

The Gracious Invitation

"Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Isaiah 55:1)

This is an invitation to the thirsty of all lands to come to the Fountain of living waters. And no one anywhere who thirsts for this water--no one who desires righteousness--will ever be turned away empty. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6) "Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14)

Isaiah, too, gives the song that all these may sing: "And in that day you shall say, O Lord, I will praise you: though You were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12:1-3)

This gracious invitation is to all people,--"Ho, everyone,"--"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." (Titus 2:11) "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him

that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17) "without money and without price." (Isaiah 55:1) "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." (Romans 3:24-25)

Abraham is the "father of the faithful," (Romans 4:11; That he [Abraham] might be the father of all them that believe.) and he received that title because he believed God. When God told Abraham to look toward heaven and "tell the stars" if he were able to number them, and that so many--innumerable--should his seed be, Abraham believed it. "And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6) "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." (Romans 4:23-25)

As the Lord said to Abraham, as the number of the stars, "so shall your seed be;" so He says to every man, of his sins, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18) "Though you have lien among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." (Psalm 68:13)

And as Abraham believed God in that, so much we believe God in this. And as in that Abraham's belief was counted to him for righteousness, so in this our belief is counted to us for righteousness. So Abraham became the father of the faithful. "And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29) "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread?" (Isaiah 55:2)

It may not be exactly the thought that was in the mind of the prophet; but we would take occasion to remark upon this, that multitudes of people, and those who suppose themselves Christian people too, not only spend their money for that which is not bread, but spend it for that which is worse than no bread. Tobacco, for instance--why do you spend your money for that? It simply creates an appetite that destroys the will and makes an idolater of him that uses it. Why do you spend your money for gold and jewels, rings and ear-rings, and to keep pace with all the foibles and fashion and the ways of the world? It is simply to foster pride, and the desire to please the world rather than to please God. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John 2:15-16)

And it is "the god of this world, which blinds the minds of them that believe not." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Shall the Lord be your God? or shall the god of this world be your god? Why do you spend "your labor for that which satisfies not?" (Isaiah 55:2) "Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." (John 6:27)

Spend your money for that which will spread among men the love and glory of Christ. Labor to show forth the virtues of God, and the graces of the Spirit of Christ. Labor to adorn the doctrine of God, and not your own person. And then when He who searches the heart, shall reward every man "according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings," (Jeremiah 32:19) you will find that you have labored for "that meat which endures unto everlasting life." Then it will be seen that you have labored for that upon which you can feed to all eternity, and for that which "satisfies" indeed. "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." (Psalm 91:16) "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." (Isaiah 55:6)

This plainly suggests a time when the Lord may not be found even though He be sought for, and when He will not be near even though He be called upon. Men may talk eloquently about the gospel continuing forever; about the world becoming converted; and all such imaginary things. But the angel of God "swore by Him that lives forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that ... the mystery of God should be finished." (Revelation 10:6-7)

The mystery of God is the gospel of Christ; it is the work of Christ in this salvation of men. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (1 Timothy 3:16)

Christ declared repeatedly that this world will end, and that it will end in wickedness, such as was in the days of Noah, and which had to be swept from the earth by the furious flood. In all the Bible the end of the world is spoken of in no other way than as ending in wickedness. And the doctrine of the conversion of the world is only an invention of Satan to blind the eyes of the children of men, that they may not see the dangers and duties of the last days, as they are portrayed in the faithful word. There is to be a "day of vengeance of our God," (Isaiah 61:2) and that day of vengeance begins when "the day of salvation," (2 Corinthians 6:2) "the acceptable year of the Lord," (Isaiah 61:2) ends. "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup," (Psalm 75:8) "[the] cup of salvation," (Psalm 116:13) "and He pours out of the same" (Psalm 75:8) to all who will accept the gracious invitation. But when the dregs of that cup are reached, then these are poured "into the cup of His indignation," (Revelation 14:10) and "all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." (Psalm 75:8)

All who will not willingly and freely drink of the "cup of salvation," will be compelled to drink deeply of the "cup of indignation." (See also Revelation 15:1; 16:1-21; Jeremiah 25:15-

33.) "And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at your hand to drink, then shall you say unto them, Thus says the Lord of hosts, You shall certainly drink." (Jeremiah 25:28)

Then will be the time spoken of in Proverbs 1:24-33, when the Lord may not be found, neither will He hear: "Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But you have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes; When your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish comes upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof." (Proverbs 1:24-30) "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon Him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:6-7) "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die?" (Ezekiel 33:11) "For the Lord delights in mercy." (Micah 7:18)

The wicked man is to forsake his ways and learn the way of God. He is to forsake his thoughts, and learn the thoughts of God. These he must learn by the Spirit of God, which the Lord gives to

those who will forsake their sins, and ask Him to guide them into the way of His thoughts; for, "His thoughts are very deep." (Psalm 92:5) "But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. ... But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:10-12,14)

There is no way right but the Lord's way, and to find that way we must first forsake our own way. There are no right thoughts but the Lord's thoughts, and to find those thoughts we must first forsake our own thoughts. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord." (Isaiah 55:8)--Signs of the Times, December 10, 1885--Notes on the International Lesson, December 20--Isaiah 55:1-11

A.T. Jones

Chapter 18

Height of Mercy

This being the close of the quarter, the choice is given of reviewing or of substituting a lesson on temperance or on missions. The scripture suggested for one of the substituted lessons is Isaiah 55:8-13, and on this a few comments will be made. The text reads thus: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah 55:8-13)

The text quoted begins with "for," indicating that it is a conclusion from something preceding. The sixth and seventh verses contain an exhortation: "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the

unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:6-7)

Then naturally follows the statement, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts," (Isaiah 55:8)

The unrighteous man is to forsake his thoughts, because they are not the thoughts of God. From this we learn the wonderful fact that men must think the thoughts of God, in order to please Him. What are the thoughts of God? It is evident that we must be able to determine this, to some extent at least, or else we should not know whether or not to forsake the thoughts that we have, as not being His thoughts.

Since the Bible is the word of God, it is plain that it must express His thought. In it we find what He thinks of different actions of men. But that which is most specifically the thought of God is His law, the ten commandments. This is His revealed will, comprehending in itself all that is drawn out in detail in the various books of the Bible.

The law of God is a law of love. It was given as love. "And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in your hand: and they sat down

at your feet; everyone shall receive of your words." (Deuteronomy 33:2-3)

The object of it is love. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." (1 Timothy 1:5)

Love is the fulfilling of it. "Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10)

The keeping of the commandments is the only complete manifestation of the love of God. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3)

And it is in vain that anybody makes a profession of love to God, while he does not keep His commandments. "If you love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15) "And why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)

From these Scripture facts we may know that when the apostle Paul says that "Love thinks no evil," (1 Corinthians 13:5) he means that perfect obedience to the law of God consists in being free from evil thoughts. This must necessarily follow, because the law of God is the thoughts of God.

These thoughts are as much higher than the thoughts of the natural man as the heaven is higher than the earth. Therefore when a

man fully turns to the Lord, his thoughts must be elevated as much as from earth to heaven.

And this one point shows the exceeding greatness of God's law, and how far short of it all men come. Men in their self-righteousness may boast, like the Pharisee, over those whom they regard as great sinners, but their boasting is vain, for, while there are indeed degrees of sin, the difference in the guilt of different men, when compared with that heavenly standard, the law of God, is only as the difference in the height of different trees on earth compared with the distance of earth from the farthest star.

The statement that as the heavens are high above the earth so are God's thoughts higher than our thoughts, may remind us that the heavens themselves may enable us to think God's thoughts after Him. As the law of God is an expression of God's thoughts as to morals, so the material universe is an expression of God's thoughts in concrete form. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)

In them we see what great thoughts God had to mind when he planned the universe. They show His eternal power and godhead, and thus are an aid in lifting our thoughts to the level of God's, in the realm of morals. Surely it is impossible for a person to gaze upon the heavens thoughtfully, and with reverent recognition of their Creator, and at the same time to harbor evil thoughts.

But there is comfort as well as instruction in the fact that God's thoughts are as much higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. It is in connection with the statement that God will "abundantly pardon" those who turn to Him. Now of His thoughts toward us we read: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jeremiah 29:11)

His thoughts toward us are thoughts of peace, and they are as much higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. This agrees with the statement in: "Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds." (Psalm 36:5)

Also: "For your mercy is great above the heavens; and your truth reaches unto the clouds." (Psalm 108:4)

And: "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:11)

It would be well sometimes if doubting souls could think of their own good traits in contrast with those of God. I do not mean for them to think how evil they are, but to rate at a fair value any good qualities they may possess, and then, holding to that valuation, think in how infinitely greater degree those same good qualities exist in God.

For instance, take the quality of mercy; let a man think how he would receive one who, having injured him, comes to him with tears in his eyes, making a humble confession, and asking pardon. There are few who would even wait for the penitent one to finish his confession before assuring him of full pardon. His thoughts toward him would be all kindness; but God's thoughts are as much higher than ours as heaven is higher than earth. God is as much more merciful than man as He is greater. Whoever will institute such a comparison as this, will become ashamed of his own thoughts.

That which should be of special encouragement in the line of missionary effort is the statement that God's word will accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto He sends it. This does not mean that it will result in the conversion of the whole world. The word of God has been as powerful in every age of the world as it is now, or as it ever will be; yet in no age of the world, not even when the word was incarnate, have even a large minority of people acknowledged God.

It is true, however, that even then it accomplished God's purpose. It gathered out of the multitude a people for His name, and left the remainder without excuse. Of one thing we may be sure, that the word will prosper. Therefore consecrated effort to spread abroad a knowledge of the word will not be in vain. "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand; for you know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." (Ecclesiastes 11:6)

It is certain that either this effort or that will prosper, and there is a possibility that both may yield abundant returns. And the few from every age, who have heeded the word of God, will at last form a great multitude whom no man can number, who "shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God," (Matthew 8:11) "[When] the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads," (Isaiah 35:10) and the whole earth shall resound with the praises of God.--Signs of the Times, June 23, 1890--Notes on the International Lesson, June 29--Isaiah 55:8-13

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 19

Hope in Lamentations

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore will I hope in Him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." (Lamentations 3:24-26)

This is from the Lamentations of Jeremiah; if we are Christians indeed, knowing the Lord, we shall make all our lamentations in the same way.--Present Truth, September 18, 1902--Original title: Back Page--Lamentations 3:24-26

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 20

The New Heart

In order that we may get the most possible benefit from this study, we will quote the portion of Scripture that it covers, beginning one verse back. It reads thus: "I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that you shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus says the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be built. And the desolate land shall be tilled,

whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that which was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it." (Ezekiel 36:24-36)

There are some gracious promises in this lesson that can be appreciated by everybody; but the full benefit of it cannot be obtained without some knowledge of what has gone before. It is always a difficult matter to take a text out of its connection and to treat it as it deserves. A very brief outline of the conditions under which this scripture was written, and of God's purpose concerning Israel, will be of value both in this lesson and in the two that follow.

God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt in fulfillment of the promise made in the covenant with Abraham. (See Exodus 6:2-8) That covenant was confirmed in Christ (Galatians 3:16-17) and could be fulfilled only through His death and resurrection. In the inspired thanksgiving of Zacharias, the father of John the forerunner of Christ, we learn that Israel's being saved from their enemies, and from the hand of all that hated them was in performance of the promise of God to the fathers, and His covenant with Abraham, and their deliverance from their enemies was in order that they might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. (Luke 1:71-75)

Their life, moreover, was to be everlasting, because the covenant made with Abraham was an everlasting covenant, and the promise was that he and his seed should have the land for an everlasting possession, which would involve their living for ever. (Genesis 17:6-8)

When the promise was made to Abraham, he was distinctly told that he should die before the land could be possessed, (Genesis 15:1-16) and Stephen tells us that he had not so much of the land as to set his foot on, although God had promised it to him.

Now since no word of God can fail, it necessarily follows that the inheritance which God promised to Abraham and his seed was only such an inheritance as can be obtained through the resurrection from the dead. This appears in the words of Paul when he stood before Agrippa: "Now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers unto which promise our twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 16:6-8)

Every promise, therefore, to place Israel in their own land, involves the resurrection of the dead. The nature of the true Israel must also be borne in mind. "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall your seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but

the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (Romans 9:6-8)

The children of promise are counted for the seed, because the word was "in Isaac shall your seed be called." (Romans 9:7)

Isaac was the child of promise, and he was born after the Spirit; (Galatians 4:22-29) therefore as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. (Romans 8:14-17) "And if you be Christ's then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

Only Christians indeed, therefore, those who are born of the Spirit, and who walk after the Spirit, are children of Abraham, and Israelites indeed. They are those in whom there is no guile. (John 1:47) "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Romans 2:28-29)

The children of Israel might have received the fullness of the promise soon after they left Egypt, for God was leading them to the Mountain of His inheritance, the place which He had made for them to dwell in, even the Sanctuary which His hands have established; (Exodus 15:17) and this is in the heavens, (Hebrews 8:1-2) in the

New Jerusalem which is above, "the mother of us all." (Galatians 4:26)

But they did not believe, and therefore they could not enter in. (Hebrews 3:18-19) Ever since their failure, the promise has been left to us. (Hebrews 4:1) David was king over all Israel in the land of promise, yet when he sat in his house, "and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies," (2 Samuel 7:1)

God said to him, "I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more as beforetime." (2 Samuel 7:10)

And when David was delivering the kingdom over to Solomon, at the time when it was greatest, he said, in the presence and on behalf of all the princes and rulers of Israel: "We are strangers before You, and sojourners, as were all our fathers." (1 Chronicles 29:15)

It is only by taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name, through the Gospel, that God builds up the house of David. (Acts 15:14-18) Christ is the One by whom the kingdom is to be restored to Israel, for: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32-33)

Ezekiel prophesied at the time of the captivity of Israel. Long before the time when the scripture that we are studying was written, he had said to Zedekiah, whose name was a reminder of his rebellion against God, "You profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus says the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him." (Ezekiel 21:25-27)

When the kingdom passed from Zedekiah to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, three over-turnings or revolutions were foretold, which should give the dominion successively to Medo-Persia, Grecia, and Rome: then there should be no more world revolutions until the coming of Christ, who will destroy all the kingdoms of the earth, and scatter them like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, so that no place will be found for them, and will then reign for ever over an earth made new. (See Daniel 2:44-45; 2 Peter 3:10-13.)

We know, therefore, that the promises in this vision pertain to the work and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Certain it is that since the days of Ezekiel the Jewish people have never had a place of their own, so that the promise has not yet been fulfilled. It was not fulfilled by the return of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, and can be fulfilled only in Christ and His coming.

With this explanation, there need not much be said on the text before us, since it is straightforward reading. God promises to take

His people from among the heathen, and bring them into their own land. The land which belongs to the people of God is no part of "this present evil world," (Galatians 1:4) from which they are delivered by the death of Christ, but the country for which faithful Abraham looked, "that is, a heavenly." (Hebrews 11:16)

In gathering them from among the heathen, to bring them into their own land, God sprinkles clean water, even the pure water of life, upon His people, to cleanse them from all their iniquities. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses, us from all sin," (1 John 1:7) and the Spirit and the water and the blood agree in one. (1 John 5:8) The clean water with which God sprinkles His people as He gathers them is the blood of Christ. This cleansing is a thorough one, and since the filthiness which we have contracted among the heathen permeates us completely our cleansing involves an entirely new creation. God has to give us a new heart, which means a new life, "for out of the heart are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23) "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation." (2 Corinthians 5:17,RV)

He promises to put His Spirit in us, so that we shall walk in His statutes, and keep His commandments; for the law is spiritual. Then, says God, "you shall be my people, and I will be your God." (Ezekiel 36:28)

Compare this with the promise of the new covenant, (Jeremiah 31:33-34) and the promise to Abraham. (Exodus 6:6-8) The heathen will see the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and his Seed, for they will all come up and surround the Holy City, the New

Jerusalem, after it comes down from God out of heaven. (Revelation 20:7-9)

The people of God, redeemed from all their enemies, even from the last and greatest enemy, death, will go forth from the New Jerusalem over the renewed earth, and build cities and inhabit them, and plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. (Isaiah 65:17-23)

It is true that before they go forth the wicked will be destroyed in the fire that renews the earth; but the heathen will nevertheless know that the Lord builds the waste and desolate and ruined cities, for they will see the proof of it in the New Jerusalem, which will stand upon the site of the old city, only greatly enlarged. (Zechariah 14:1-9; Isaiah 49:18-22) "Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God." (Ezekiel 36:32)

This is humiliating, and may well cause us to be ashamed and confounded, but is wonderfully encouraging. The reason why so many people become discouraged, and doubt the possibility of their salvation, is that they think that it is their own worthiness that must be taken into account.

"I am too unworthy for the Lord to take notice of me."

"I am so sinful that the Lord surely will not receive me."

These are common expressions. Now comes the most comforting assurance that our unworthiness has nothing to do with the case. It is not for our sakes, but for His own sake, that the Lord

forgives our sins. "I even I am He that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." (Isaiah 43:25)

So we can say with all boldness and assurance:

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee;
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

--Charlotte Elliott, Hymn: Just as I Am (1835)

--Present Truth, July 27, 1899--Notes on the International
Sunday-School Lessons--Ezekiel 36:25-36

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 21

The Necessity of a New Heart

When the Lord would cleanse His people,--those who professed to be serving Him,--from all their idols and their filthiness, (Ezekiel 36:25) He said to them, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God." (Ezekiel 36:26-28)

This is the only way that any person can be brought into a condition where he can walk in the statutes of God, and keep His judgments. He must experience a change of heart. The same thing is declared in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah. "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. ... But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

The Israelites had the law of God written upon tables of stone and preserved in the sacred ark. They had heard the law spoken from the summit of Mt. Sinai by the voice of God, and had heard it repeated by Moses; but they did not have it written upon their hearts, and the result was they did not keep it. The record of their lives is a record of transgression, of worshiping idols, and other iniquitous practices by which they violated the Divine statutes and judgments. They intended to keep them, and professed to be keeping them; perhaps even persuaded themselves that they were keeping them; but they were not.

The conditions under which they tried to serve God made the keeping of His law an impossibility to them. Not that these conditions were imposed upon them; they were simply the conditions of every man in his natural state. The law of God was not written in their hearts. They were hardened through unbelief, so that their hearts would not receive the impress of the principles of God's great moral code.

A change of heart is the great requisite felt by the repentant sinner as he turns to God. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10)

Thus David prayed after he had gone in the way of the carnal heart and grievously sinned against God; and his prayer is echoed by every repentant soul. The clean heart for which he prayed is one upon which is written the principles of righteousness.

All who are truly converted have these principles upon their hearts, the agency by which they are written being the Spirit of God. Thus Paul writes to the church at Corinth: "You are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." (2 Corinthians 3:3)

As the heart is, so is the life; for "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34)

It was the apostle's trust that the Corinthian brethren would in their lives be an epistle unto their fellow-men, wherein would be read the virtues of Christ and the power of God unto the salvation of believers. All persons who have the Divine law written in their hearts will be the epistles of Christ.

The Jews among whom Christ walked when upon the earth had the law of God everywhere about them, but in the one place where its living principles were most needed it was absent. It was held up before them in their synagogues; they wore it in letters upon their garments; they had it in their minds, so that they could repeat it from memory; but they were constant and flagrant violators of its requirements. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Matthew 23:25)

This was the stern denunciation upon them from the lips of Jesus. "You make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess." (Matthew 23:25)

No one ever made a greater outward show of piety and reverence for God than did the Pharisees, yet all that did not save them from the most terrible condemnation. Neither will it avail anymore for the most respectable professor of Christianity today, who has not experienced the needed change of heart.

All along from their day to ours, the devil has led men to try to be servants of God without undergoing this change; and it has been one of his most successful devices. He has led men to think that if they kept the law of God often before their eyes and upon their lips, they would be living about as God would have them. So they have surrounded themselves with pictures of the Saviour and the names connected with His ministry, and with images of himself and His mother and the apostles and "saints," they have wore crucifixes upon their breast--as the Pharisees wore the law upon their phylacteries--and in every way by their surroundings and outward practices endeavoured to convince themselves and others that they were the true servants of God.

But however well they succeeded in deceiving themselves and their fellow-men, they did not in the least deceive God. His eye read their hearts, and He knew who were His and who were mere pious hypocrites, like the scribes and Pharisees. He knew whether they were His subjects at heart, or whether forms and ceremonies and imposing houses of worship and pictures and images served only to hide the secret iniquity of hearts that were still carnal. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

It is Christ dwelling in the heart by faith; (Ephesians 3:17) it is God dwelling with the spirit that is humble and contrite. (Isaiah 57:15) We may have the precepts of God upon the walls of our churches and our homes, and upon the tablets of our memories, and sounding often in our ears--and all this is proper and well; but if they be not written upon our hearts we are but subjects of the kingdom of darkness. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)--Present Truth, August 24, 1893--Ezekiel 36:26-28

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 22

The Gathering of Israel: Ezekiel's Great Vision

"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, You know. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O you dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God unto these bones: behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then He said unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus says the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. [Revised Version: "We are clean

cut off."] Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus says the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall you know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, says the Lord." (Ezekiel 37:1-14)

The most cursory reading of this chapter is sufficient to show that it deals with the resurrection of the dead. It is a most literal description of that event. Someone will say that it is a representation of the restoration of the Jews to their own land. That is exactly the truth, for that is what the text itself says; but it also tells us that the restoration is to be effected by the resurrection.

In the eleventh verse the children of Israel are represented as saying that they are clean out off. Death cuts man off from the face of the earth, and is apparently the destruction of his hope; for the promise is that the children of Abraham shall inherit the earth, yet they die without having any share in it. Accordingly the scoffers say, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:4)

But, "The righteous has hope in his death." (Proverbs 14:32)

The Apostle Paul writes: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-16)

The promise of the land to Abraham included, and was based upon, the resurrection, and Abraham so understood it, else he could not have died in faith, not having received the promise.

The children whom Herod slew in order to kill the infant Jesus represent all the dead children of Israel. Rachel, the wife of Jacob, is represented as weeping for her children; but all the children of Israel are her children just as much as were the innocent babes who were slaughtered by the tyrant. Now read what is said of the death of her children: "Thus says the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus says the Lord; Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in your end, says the Lord, that your children shall come again to their own border." (Jeremiah 31:15-17)

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Corinthians 15:26)

Those who are dead are in the land of the enemy, but God has promised that they shall come from that land, and shall return "to their own border." So we see that the return of the children of Israel to their own border, to their own land, is by the resurrection of the dead. That is the hope of Israel. The Apostle Paul was seized and bound by the unbelieving Jews because he preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and he said, "For the hope of Israel am I bound with this chain," (Acts 28:20) and to another congregation of the Jews he said, "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead am I called in question." (Acts 23:6)

There is therefore no hope for Israel except in the resurrection at the coming of the Lord; but that hope is a "lively hope, [to which we are] begotten ... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3)

Christ's resurrection is the surety of the general resurrection. And from this we may learn that every righteous person is counted as Israel, and will be included in the restoration; for it is by the resurrection of the dead, through Christ, that Israel are restored, and what Christ does for one He does for all. There are no people who have some special interest in the death and resurrection of Christ, that others do not have. Since it is by the resurrection of Jesus that the children of Israel are restored to their own land, it follows that

everybody who sleeps in Jesus, and is raised from the dead through Him, is an Israelite, waiting to be redeemed from exile in the enemy's land. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ... Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11:9-10,12-13)

Now we know that they did not inherit the promise; for God, in making to Abraham the promise of an innumerable seed and an everlasting inheritance in the land wherein he was a stranger, said to him: "Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." (Genesis 15:13-16)

David said, "I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." (Psalm 39:12)

And he repeated this statement when at the height of his power he handed the kingdom over to Solomon. "For we are strangers before You, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." (1 Chronicles 29:15)

All the faithful are alike waiting the return of the Lord, and the resurrection, as the consummation of their hopes. It was by faith in the resurrection of the dead that Abraham offered Isaac. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." (Hebrews 11:17-19)

The prophet says that as he prophesied according to the command of the Lord, "there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone." (Ezekiel 37:7)

In the Revised Version we find "earthquake" in the place of "shaking," and the margin gives "thundering" in the place of "noise." This agrees exactly with the description of the resurrection at the coming of Christ. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

When Christ died upon the cross, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the

saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (Matthew 27:51-53)

Three days afterward, "There was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." (Matthew 28:2)

So we see that the resurrection of the dead is accompanied by an earthquake.

It is by the breath of God that men live. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) "He gives to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:25) "In [His] hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." (Job 12:10)

Job said: "All the while my breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils; My lips shall not speak wickedness." (Job 27:3-4)

If He thought only of himself; if He gathered and kept to himself His Spirit and His breath; all flesh would perish together, and man would turn again unto dust. (See Job 24:14-15) He takes away the breath of man and beast, and they die, and return to their dust; but He sends forth His Spirit, and they are created, and He renews the face of the earth.

Accordingly God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the wind, and say, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." (Ezekiel 37:9)

From this we see that the wind that plays upon our cheeks, and that refreshes us as we draw full inspirations into our lungs, is the breath of God. Surely it is so, because we breathe the air, and yet we have the breath of God in our nostrils. Our breath is the same as Adam's. Adam's breath the second moment that he lived, and the third, and the fourth, and so on, was exactly the same as the first moment.

Moreover, neither Adam nor any of his descendants has ever had any power over the breath, either to start it or stop it. (Ecclesiastes 8:8) It comes involuntarily. For a minute, by a great effort, we may hold our breath, and then it will come in spite of us. No man could commit suicide by voluntarily refusing to breathe. The breath comes arbitrarily while we are asleep and entirely unconscious.

Therefore it is plain that not only did God breathe the breath of life into Adam's nostrils in the beginning, but that He continued doing so, and has performed the same operation for every man that has ever lived, every moment of his life.

How near God is to us! So near that we can feel His breath in our faces; so near that He is face to face with us, breathing into our

nostrils. How real it is that: "He is not far from everyone of us."
(Acts 17:27)

And He is just as near us when we fall asleep in death; for all the righteous ones "sleep in Jesus," (1 Thessalonians 4:14) and the same breath that keeps us in life now will revive the dead from their sleep in the grave. "The hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth." (John 5:28-29)

And this resurrection from the dead is but the same process by which those who are dead in trespasses and sins are now quickened, and made to pass from death to life. Therefore we may know that if we believe God the life of righteousness will be just as easy as breathing, for that is what will give it to us. "The just shall live by faith," (Romans 1:17) but every man, whether just or otherwise, lives by breathing; therefore that which makes a man righteous is the fact that he breathes by faith. Our hope in Christ and His resurrection rests in the fact that God has surrounded the earth with an atmosphere of grace.--Ezekiel's Great Vision--Present Truth, August 3, 1899--Subtitle: The Resurrection, and the Restoration of Israel--Ezekiel 37:1-14

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 23

The River of Salvation

Probably the last chapters of the book of Ezekiel are less understood than any other equal portion of the Bible, and they are doubtless the most difficult part of the book. Referring to the 40th chapter, where the trying portion begins, we find that the prophet was in the visions of God brought "into the land of Israel, and set upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south." (Ezekiel 40:2)

This was in the 14th year after the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Now the Lord had already said through Ezekiel (Ezekiel 21:25-27) that when Zedekiah ceased to reign, the kingdom of Israel should be no more, "until He come whose right it is." (Ezekiel 21:27)

Therefore we must conclude that the description of the city and temple which is given in the last chapters of Ezekiel is not a portrayal of something that was for the Jews in their state as one of the nations of earth, but that it refers to the new earth, and is something that will be the portion of all who are saved.

It is true that there are difficult passages in the description, which seem irreconcilable with this presentation, but we must remember that a difficulty is not an argument against the truth. In the writings of the Apostle Paul there are "some things hard to be

understood," (2 Peter 3:16) but that is no fault of the writings themselves. It is our dullness and slowness of comprehension, that makes the Scriptures difficult.

The only way to understand difficult passages of the Bible is to hold fast to certain firmly-established principles. The plain facts of the Gospel are always the same, and must never be lost sight of. It must also be remembered that the whole Bible is given for the purpose of revealing God to men, and that this is done only through the cross; so that wherever we read, we may be sure that there is something that concerns the great work of salvation. Nothing is placed in the Bible merely to satisfy curiosity, or as a mere matter of history. "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)

In this chapter of Ezekiel, therefore, we may be sure that there is something to give us hope. Holding fast to the truth that we know, we shall gradually come to an understanding of those things that are at present obscure. After reading Ezekiel 40:2 read: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." (Psalm 48:1-2)

It was to this place that God was leading the children of Israel when He took them from Egypt. "You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord,

which You have made for yourself to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established." (Exodus 15:17)

It is this place which Ezekiel saw, and which he has described for us with so much minuteness that our minds are overwhelmed. Of the place which Ezekiel saw, God said to him: "Son of man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever." (Ezekiel 43:7)

It is when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and there is a new heaven and a new earth, that the voice from heaven says, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." (Revelation 21:3)

So we may be assured that what we read of in Ezekiel pertains to the new earth state. It may be urged that in the course of this description we read of the offering of sacrifices, which is not consistent with the idea that it refers to the new earth state. That is a difficult thing to understand, it is true; but no more so than other statements. For instance, take Jeremiah 33:14-18, which undoubtedly refers to the redeemed state. There we read: "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be

saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness. For thus says the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually." (Jeremiah 33:14-18)

It is after Christ sits as a Refiner and Purifier of silver, and purifies the sons of Levi, "that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years." (Malachi 3:3-4)

Verses 1 and 2 show that the time referred to is the last days. We must therefore rest content for the present with the fact that there are some things in this connection that we cannot understand, and not let them deprive us of the good of that which is plain, and evidently parallel to other scriptures concerning which there is no chance for a misunderstanding.

The River of Life

And now we can consider the portion of Scripture that is assigned for the lesson, which, however, after we have settled the application of the last part of Ezekiel, as already done, is so plain as to need no comment. The prophet was brought to the door of the house, where he saw the "waters issued out from under the threshold

of the house eastward; for the forefront of the house stood toward the east." (Ezekiel 47:1)

It was "eastward in Eden" (Genesis 2:8) that the Lord planted a garden, and after He had driven man out of the garden, "He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword," (Genesis 3:24) the symbol of His presence. The tabernacle built by Moses, which was a picture of the temple in heaven, was always pitched facing the east, and the temple of Solomon faced the east. We know also that "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb [there proceeds] a pure river of water of life." (Revelation 22:1)

It is this river, therefore, that we have presented before us in this lesson.

How wide is that river? We may ask that question, because in this lesson the measurements are given, and it is always allowable to ask anything of which the Bible speaks. All we can learn, however, is that it is very wide; for we find from the measurements made by the angel who showed the house to Ezekiel, that the river deepened gradually from the shore for six thousand cubits, or more than a mile, where the water was deep enough to swim in, that is, a man could no longer wade. We may know then that the river of God is of a size commensurate with the greatness of the God from whose throne it flows. "And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued

out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine [or "for healing"]." (Ezekiel 47:12)

All that is necessary in order to understand the reference here is to read: "On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Revelation 22:2)

The two passages of Scripture are identical. The tree mentioned by Ezekiel is the tree of life, or, rather, the trees of life, for it is many trees in one, extending along the banks of the river indefinitely. The river is the river of life, for "every thing shall live whither the river comes." (Ezekiel 47:9)

That river is a real stream, and is flowing today. It is the life of God sent out into all the universe, and wherever it comes there is life even in spite of the death that rests upon this earth.

How little we know of the infinite variety of forms which the life of God can assume. We breathe in the air, we eat it in our food, we drink it in the pure water, we are cheered and strengthened by it as it comes to us in the sunshine, and in many other ways it refreshes us. There are many things that contribute to our existence here, but they are all forms of the one life. All proceed from God, who is our life.

From that river of God, which is full even to overflowing, we drink day by day, since it is from it that the earth is refreshed and made to bring forth fruit. "You visit the earth, and water it: You greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water: You prepare them corn, when You have so provided for it. You water the ridges thereof abundantly: You settle the furrows thereof: You make it soft with showers: You bless the springing thereof." (Psalm 65:9-10)

Every shower that falls upon the earth is but the overflowing of the river of life, which nevertheless never runs dry. From that river we drink, and since it is the life of God, which is righteousness, if we would but recognize God in His gifts, living by faith, we should drink in righteousness every time we quench our thirst.

Only God can supply the desires of mankind. "You open your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:16)

Our hunger and thirst are but cravings for a renewal of the life which comes alone from God; and the drinking of the children of Israel from the rock in the desert, which Rock was Christ, (Exodus 17:5-6; 1 Corinthians 10:4) and the feeding of the five thousand in the wilderness, are demonstrations to us that when we eat and drink we are taking from Christ himself.

So it is God that we are unconsciously longing for when we feel the pangs of hunger and thirst. He satisfies our longings by giving us himself; and if we would remember this, every meal that we eat, and

every draught of water that we drink, would be to us healing both of body and soul, even as though we were standing by the throne, looking into the unveiled face of God, and eating and drinking from the tree and the water at life.--Present Truth, August 10, 1899--
Ezekiel 47:1-12

E.J. Waggoner