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Studies in the Book of Hebrews – No.1

ing an official position in any of our institutions' It speaks to you; it says, You must be born again. It says, You must be converted. It does not say that you never were converted; even though we have been converted, the time is such that God calls for a more thorough conversion, a deeper consecration than ever you or I have known before. It is nothing to you or to me that we were converted five, ten, or fifteen years ago, if we are not converted now, to-day. And to-day he says if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. To-day, while it is called to-day, he says to you and to me, You must be born again; you must be converted; and except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. And there is the blessed promise, A new heart will I give unto you. Thank the Lord! Let us seek the Lord with such heart, with such earnestness as never before, that he may use us as never before; and then he will roll away the reproach from his church, and she will rise to go forth untrameled, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. That is what the Lord wants of you and me to-day. Shall he have it?

Studies in the Book of Hebrews.—No. 1.

E. J. WAGGONER.

(Tuesday Afternoon, Feb. 9, 1897.)

"ACCORDING to the announcement, and my wish as well, this is to be a Bible study. But in order that we really may have a Bible class, we must have some who will do Bible study. Now, I know that the circumstances here are most unfavorable for Bible study. We cannot have a Bible school here as we would if we had come together for that purpose alone, because the day is quite largely filled with other meetings; and, aside from meetings, there are many here who have other duties to perform, so that the time for actual study is very limited. Yet I think we may, any of us, find one hour each day for Bible study. We should find that much time at least each morning to devote to this purpose. Open your Bibles, if you please, to the book of Hebrews. Let some one begin to read, and, without any break, let somebody else follow, taking verse by verse in this first chapter of Hebrews, each one looking upon his Bible during the reading."

(The chapter is now read.)

"First, let us take this up verse by verse, and notice what it says, each statement,—and notice what it says, each word; and recognize what it says.

"What is the subject of this chapter?"

"Christ."

"Who is the One first spoken of here?"

"God."

"God is the one, then, first spoken of. That is the first thing we know, because when we stand at the beginning of the chapter, supposedly we do not know what follows. The first thing we meet in this book is what?"

"God."

"That is the beginning. What about God? What has he done?"

"He spoke."

"God spoke. When?"

"In times past."

"To whom did he speak?"

"To the fathers."

"How did he speak?"

"By the prophets."

"He has spoken—how often?"

"Many times. Sundry times."

"Yes, God spoke. What does he still do?"

"He speaks. He still speaks."

"He speaks; he hath spoken. To what time does that expression, 'He hath spoken,' refer?"

"To the past."

"It is completed action. 'He hath spoken.' Of course, but to what time does it bring that completed action?"

"To the present."

"To whom has he spoken?"

"To us."

"To whom does he speak?"

"To us; to me."

"Very well; there isn't anything in this world that all men, including you and me, need to know and understand and appreciate more than this simple thing. We have God in this. I know in my own experience, when I just stop still from everything, and think of that, it works wonders. Now what have we learned so far in this lesson?"

"God speaks to me."

"God speaks. God *speaks*. If we didn't know anything more about the Bible than that, there would be a great deal in that. Whatever other portions of the Bible have by previous study become familiar, we can, of course, let fall into place as we study here the nature of the Word, the living Word. That fact that God speaks—is

it always kept in mind? Do we always act as though he were speaking? God *has* spoken and he *does* speak. To whom does he speak?"

"To us."

"How does he speak to us?"

"By his Son."

"Has any one present a different rendering of that, a different reading?"

(One with the Greek original) "In his Son."

"Yes, I think the Revised Version gives the same; and that is exactly literal in that case. What is the reason that the precepts, the promises—the precepts are the promises—of the Bible do not have more effect upon us,—do not take hold of us more than they do?—We don't recognize God as speaking. It is unbelief. We can't see the force of the point. People think they believe the Bible if they believe that God at one time, a long while ago, said something. But they may believe all that, so far as that goes, and not believe the Bible at all for any good to them. The idea unconsciously obtains in the minds of some of those people, that the Word has grown old,—that it was spoken so long ago that the life has dried up in it, and so the Word comes to us as a shell. It does n't come to us as a shell, but we take it as such. Then what is the living thing that is present to us here for our present faith to lay hold upon?"

"God speaks."

"What is the nature of the Word of God?"

"Power. Spirit. Life. John 6:63."

"The Word is Spirit, and it is life, for God himself is life. The Word of the living God liveth and abideth forever. Eternal Word!"

"Now, what is the characteristic of that which is eternal,—the characteristic of God, of Christ, of heaven, and of the earth when it is made new to abide forever?"

"Immortal, unchanging, living."

"Does God grow old?"

"No."

"How much older is God to-day than he was in the beginning?"

"Not any."

"What is his name?"

"I AM."

"I AM. *I AM*. Then he is n't any older than he was a million years ago. How much older, then, is his Word, that was spoken to the fathers by the prophets? No older, is it? How old is it?"

"Everlasting."

"Why, it is just now as though he were speaking to-day to us. We have this additional statement: He hath spoken to us by his Son. But calling on your knowledge of the Bible, how did he speak to the fathers?"

"Through the prophets."

"But how did he speak to them by the prophets?"

"In his Son."

"What spirit was in the prophets when they spoke?"

"The spirit of Christ."

"Then we might read it in this way: God, who in times past spoke unto the fathers through the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us in his Son, in whom yet he continues to speak all the time; and that Word which he spoke so long ago (as it seems to us), and which is so old as we reckon time, is just as fresh and living as ever. Last year, when I was crossing the North Sea, I fell in with a man who was a very pleasant companion, but an infidel. We talked a great deal, and he asked me, 'How do you know the Bible is true?' He did n't believe that it was true at all. He didn't believe anything in it. I said, 'My friend, how do you know I am talking to you? How do you know?' He said, 'Why, I hear you.' 'You hear; you know. Could you absolutely know in any other way that I am talking to you, if you did not hear me speaking?' Well, this is the only way we can know that this is God's Word—by hearing him speak to us. Now I know that this is God's Word, because he speaks to me, and I hear him; and when we come to that truth, there is no chance for any quibble or equivocation. You do not think of raising the question while I am at present speaking, Now perhaps it is not you that is speaking; perhaps it is somebody else. There is no room for that question, is there? You know I am speaking, because you hear me; and we know God because he speaks. If we do not know that, how can we believe? Did not Christ say that the Jews knew him not, because they could not hear him? Yet was not that Word spoken for the purpose of causing them to believe in Christ? He said, 'This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.' Did those get out of it what they might? Yet did they not hear the voice? Now, is this not the way that a good many read the Bible? It is a voice, an expression. You read the words and get the sound, but you have not come to the place

where you hear the voice of God. There is something else besides the voice of God which you want to hear—you want to hear the Word itself. I do not know of anything in the world that has helped me more than to stop and hear God speak. I may say, God, speak; and then listen, and he speaks; and then take up the Bible and read, and thus hear God speaking. The Word of God; he speaks to the fathers by the prophets in the Son in these last days,—“in the last of these days,” literally,—speaks to us in the Son; he is speaking. When God spoke on Sinai, Moses spoke in answer to the voice; and then when God spoke the ten words, what does the Bible say the people did?”

“They trembled. They besought that the Word should not be spoken to them any more.”

“Yes, that was a bad thing. They would rather have a man talk to them than God. What is God? Is he not life? What is the nature of his Word? If they had received God’s words as living words, they would not have entreated Moses that the voice discontinue. No; they heard the Word just the same as we often hear it, and did not recognize it as the living Word of God speaking to them; hence they were afraid. They feared it would kill them. God would not speak to his children in such a manner that his words would destroy them. Let us read Ex. 20:18–21: ‘And all the people saw the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.’ What was the characteristic of Moses?”

“Meekness; timidity.”

“Yet there is another qualification which goes with that, and this is mentioned in the book of Hebrews. He was faithful. He was not afraid to draw near, or that he would die as a result of his approaching God. He drew near to the mount that quaked and smoked, burned and thundered. And what was the thundering?”

“The voice of God.”

Now, there is coming a time when that voice will be heard again, and the trump, too. Some will be afraid, frightened, and will seek hiding-places.

Others will say, Lo, this is our God; we will be joyful, we will be glad. Why?—Because they have learned to know the sound of the trump. They know that when God speaks, it is life. It is life, and it doesn’t make any difference in what form he speaks; it is life, and they know it, and are not at all afraid. If he whispers, all right; if he thunders, well. At that time the trump waxes louder and louder, and we will not run to get from the voice; we will know it.

(One reading the Greek original) “God thundereth marvelously with his voice.”

“Yes; God doeth marvelous things. Now I have known people, and I myself am one of them, who have at times come into places where the Word of God was spoken, and where one was present whom I knew or felt sure had the Word of the Lord to speak, a message from the Spirit of God, and yet I have been afraid. It is supposed that all present believe in the Spirit of Prophecy,—God speaking through a person still to his people; but I have known people to be afraid that they have received a testimony from the Lord. Doubtless some of you have had experience in this. I have known people who, when a testimony was read, lost all heart and hope and courage, and became despondent and down-hearted. What was the trouble? Was it not that they did not know the voice of God,—that they had not yet learned the joyful sound? Yet, if a person will not be in a proper condition of mind to hear the voice of God, what will he do when he hears the voice? Will he not stand afar off? In this time which is coming, will it be a good thing to stand afar off? No, we want to draw near at that time. Will not only those who know the voice of the Lord want to draw near at that time? How many ways has God of speaking? Many? Then we want to get acquainted with the different phases of God’s voice. It is not enough to know just one sound, for if he speaks in many ways, we must be able to recognize all in order to be able to recognize God at all times when he speaks to us. This thought of knowing the voice of God in all its forms will perhaps come to us as we continue the study of the book of Hebrews. No one hath seen the Father. Christ is the shining out and glory; and when the glory shines forth from Christ, it is the shining out of the glory of God. Still further: He is the express image of the Father. Express image; now what word do we use quite commonly which might be a synonym of this, and which, although we hardly

ever remember the fact, comes direct from the Greek?—The word character. What is the idea of character—what is the character of man? Is it not just what he is? Well, this is the word used here.

“Whom hath he appointed heir of all things?—Christ. Notice the next phrase, ‘being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.’ Also, ‘upholding all things by the word of his power.’ He himself is the Word. He upholds all things by his powerful Word. Again, ‘when he had by himself purged our sins.’ Purg-ing our sins—what synonym does it suggest to your minds?”

“Rinse. Cleanse. Wash.”

Now let us read the third verse in the light of what we have learned this afternoon: Who, because he is the shining of his glory, and the very imprinted character of his substance, and upholds all things by the word of his power, by himself purged our sins, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

“Now, does that convey a more striking thought to you than before? He himself purged our sins because he is the Son of the Father; because he is the brightness, because he is the character of his Father; because he upholds all things. Now take that word ‘uphold.’ Can you give an equivalent?”

“Holds up. Carries. Bears.”

“Yes, bears or maintains, carries. ‘Bears’ is exactly the first definition of the word which is given there in the text in the Greek. Bears all things; that makes it more forcible to my mind. What is Christ?”

“The express image of God’s person.”

“What does he do?”

“He bears all things by the Word.”

“He bears all things by the Word, or by himself. Because he does all that, what can he do?”

“Cleanse us from sin.”

“This thing that is about to be sin in us; suppose we let him bear it, and let him bear us; then what will it be?”

“Righteousness to us.”

“See? Because he himself bears all things, therefore by himself he purges us all of sin.”

“Our time has expired. Now let our theme for study to-morrow afternoon be this first chapter, verse by verse, as we have begun. Question it; it is all right. If I should speak to you, and you do not understand, you say, ‘Please repeat that sentence.’ There is no other way in which you can find out. It is all right to question the Lord in

like manner; and remember, we can come face to face with the Lord, and question him, and that is the only way we can hear him speak. Speak to him in his Word; talk to him; ask what he says, and get him to repeat that over and over again, until it becomes an unmistakable message to yourself. Study every expression that he uses, and then you will be able to look into it, and see the force of it.”

True Education.—No. 1.

W. W. PRESCOTT.

(Tuesday Afternoon, Feb. 9, 1897.)

THIS hour has been set apart for a conference on the subject of education, and perhaps I need hardly say that it will be Christian education; that is, education from the standpoint of such instruction as God has given either in the Scriptures or in the Spirit of Prophecy. Of course the world has its way and plan for education, but God has his way, and he has given us instruction concerning his way. This is what we shall study; and it will not be the plan to lecture, or discuss, or argue about educational plans or educational methods, but to study what instruction God has given concerning this matter for his own people. And we must believe that, and we must receive that, regardless of whether it is in harmony with the worldly plans and methods or not. We are to receive the truth as the truth; and what God says upon this subject either in the Scriptures or in the Spirit of Prophecy, we are to receive and act upon in this line just as in any line, because it is the Word of the Lord. So it will be a Bible study; and I hope we have Bibles here, and will use them.

We will read and consider several scriptures:—

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. Gen. 1:27.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Rom. 3:23.

And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 1 Cor. 15:49.

These three scriptures bring out these points clearly: Man was created in the image of God; all have sinned, have lost the image of God, and have the earthly image; it is the purpose of God to restore that lost image. Now we are in the process, as it were, of having the image of God restored. Let us read further to get some foundation ideas