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Studies in the Book of Hebrews – No.2

Studies in the Book of Hebrews.—No. 2.

E. J. WAGGONER.

(Wednesday Afternoon, Feb. 10, 1897.)

LET us remember that we cannot know anything except as we find it in the Word. I am not here to unload something upon you, to tell you something that I have studied out or found out in any way; but we are here together, both you and I, to study the Word and see what the Lord has said to us; and to see that God speaks to every one of us, and not to a few special ones, and that we may all learn to understand him when he speaks.

As we stand at the beginning of this chapter, we stand face to face with God, who speaks to us through his Son. It is no new thing for God to speak, for he spake in times past to the fathers and prophets, and he now speaks unto us by Christ. It seems to me that the book of Hebrews represents in a striking way what we find in the whole Bible. It starts out with God, and in the whole Bible we stand face to face with God. Here we may pause with reverence. God in these last days has spoken to us by his Son. He spake once and still he speaks to us through his Word. First, God spoke and created, which in the Psalms is expressed, "He spake, and it was." He created all things in Christ, because he is the Word, and God spake in him; therefore all things are created in him. And further, we learn that Christ is the brightness of God's glory, the shining forth of his glory. There is no difference between the Father and the Son. The Son is the express character of God's being.

Question.—If there is no difference between the Father and the Son, how could Christ say, "The Father is greater than I am"?

I don't know. Now you will pardon me if I dwell for a moment upon this question without personal reference to anybody. What conditions make it possible for us to hear in general whoever may speak? If we do not hear, what conditions prevent our hearing? Sometimes a person may not speak loud enough or distinctly enough. Is it possible for those conditions to obtain when God is speaking?—No. Does not God speak distinctly enough to be heard, and clearly enough to be understood, and loud enough to be heard?—Most certainly. Then if the fault is not with him, and we do not hear, what is the trouble?—We do

not listen. Now, suppose I were here to talk this afternoon, and I should begin to talk, and each one of you should at the same time begin to talk to his neighbor, you would not be able to hear much of what I said. And if there was one here who did not say anything, but was trying to listen, the talking of the others would make it difficult for him to hear. Now, my experience and observation has been, and doubtless yours has been so, that one reason why we do not hear when the Lord speaks is that we do not give him a chance to speak; we break in on him. He begins to speak, and before he has time to finish the sentence we begin to talk back to him, or we straightway forget that he is talking, and begin with our neighbors, and say, I don't know how that can be. What do you think about that anyhow? We would not treat a brother that way, because it is not polite. Now, does not God have a right to be heard, at least until he is done speaking, before we begin to answer back? You all agree that he has that right. It is fair that God should have a chance to finish what he is saying before we begin to answer back.

You told me something about the nature of God's Word; it liveth and abideth forever. God in times past spake; has he finished speaking?—No. Then it is not yet time for us to talk. He is talking yet. What does he say in the Psalms?—"Be still, and know that I am God." Brethren, the only way we can learn is by keeping still. I do not mean to say that we should not ask questions; that is all right, but hold to just what God says, and do not doubt one thing that God says plainly because he says something else we do not understand. Because God says something in one place we cannot understand, we often doubt something that we can understand. That is not right. Hold to what he says, and you will find out in time that which you do not understand.

Now return to the thought in the chapter: Christ stands as the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his person,—just the very impress and the shining forth of the glory of God. Christ is the Word, and the Word which he speaks is spirit and life. When he speaks that Word which is spirit and life, he speaks his own life. So when we read, He bears all things by the word of his power, we see in that not that only, but we see in that that he bears all things himself. So he speaks, he creates, he bears, he has purged our sins and is

now set down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

What is the force of that word "being"—"being the brightness"? He being the brightness of the glory of God has done something. *Since* he is the brightness, *because* he is the brightness of the Father's glory, *because* he is the very image of God, *because* he upholds all things by the word of his power, he has purged our sins. Does it say he *will* purge our sins?—No, it says he has done it. He has cleansed, rinsed, washed them. He hath loved us and washed us in his own blood.

Now, there is a word in the text that really ought not to be there. It is not indicated in the best Greek texts. It is "our." What has Christ done?—Purged sins. He "made purification of sins." Why was it that he by himself should purge sin?—Because he bears all things himself—because in him all things consist—he has by himself purged sin, and made a purification of sin. How long, then, shall we wait for pardon? How long shall we wait to know the complete and perfect forgiveness and cleansing from sin?—Long enough to confess it—to take a thing that is already done. How much sin has he purged?—All sin. Then it is true as a matter of fact, that he has purged our sin. He has purged the sins of all the world, because he came himself to bear all things.

Now Christ has a place better than that of the angels; that better place is that he is set down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; being made so much better than the angels, because he had by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. That more excellent name that he has obtained is "Son," which name God had never applied to any of the angels.

All the angels of God worshiped him, the first begotten, when he was brought into the world, so that of Christ in the very lowest place, even in the manger, God said: "Let all the angels of God worship him."

"Thy throne, O God, is forever." These words were addressed by the Father to the Son. "A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom." What is the word which stands as a symbol of power and authority in the kingdom?—Scepter. A scepter means power, so the very nature and power of his kingdom is righteousness. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness." The scepter of his kingdom is

the scepter of righteousness. The power of Christ's kingdom is the power of righteousness. He has loved righteousness, and loving righteousness he has hated iniquity. There is but one state of mind involved in loving righteousness and hating iniquity. If a man loves righteousness, it is not necessary for him to conjure up some other state of mind in order to hate wickedness. It is all in the loving of righteousness. Mark which comes first—love righteousness, hate iniquity. It is a very common thing in this world for people to try to manufacture a love of righteousness, or a sentiment of love of righteousness, by crying out against iniquity; but that is not the way. No, first of all love righteousness, and hating iniquity necessarily follows. "Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows,"—in the presence of thy fellows or associates.

We have two things told us here about the kingdom of Christ: the scepter or power, and therefore the nature of his kingdom, is righteousness; and God has anointed him. What does anointing signify?—It signifies kingship. When he was anointed, he was anointed as king. God in anointing him king of this kingdom of righteousness used the oil of gladness; therefore his kingdom is a kingdom of joy. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Those therefore who acknowledge the power of this kingdom will first of all be righteous people. "Thy children shall be all righteous." There can be no question whether those who acknowledge the authority of Christ will be righteous. The authority is righteous, and whoever acknowledges that authority must be righteous.

But Christ's right to the kingdom, as in the case of an earthly ruler, is demonstrated and sealed by his anointing. That is the thing which inducts him into the kingdom, and establishes him over the kingdom. He is anointed with the oil of gladness, the oil of joy; therefore, since that is the thing which marks his right to rule, his kingdom is a kingdom of joy. Since it is a kingdom of joy and gladness, those that belong to it will rejoice in God, will be joyful in the Lord, joy in the Holy Ghost. Can one, then, be a subject, a loyal subject, of Christ the king, and not be joyful?—No. Then if one is not joyful, there is something the matter. He is not recognizing the authority of the King.

Now, in the second chapter of first John, sixth verse, is a text that we have often read: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Does it say obligation is *laid* upon him to walk as Christ walked? that he should make himself walk as he walked? Let us illustrate: We pass by a field, and we see a tree in the distance. Some one asks me what kind of a tree it is. I have heard that it is a beech tree. He says, If it is a beech tree, then it ought to have a certain shaped leaf, and a peculiar kind of bark. Does he mean that if that is a beech tree, it is the duty of that tree to get some leaves of that kind and put on?—No; if it is a beech tree, that is what it ought to have, because it must have that if it is that kind of tree. Suppose it is not a beech tree, then it ought not to have that kind. He that saith he abideth in Christ ought to walk as he does. That is, if a man says he is a Christian, he ought to have certain distinguishing characteristics. He ought to walk as Christ walked. Why ought he to do so?—Because he is a Christian,—because that kind of walk is characteristic of Christ. He abides in Christ, and he walks as he did; but if he is not like Christ, he is not abiding in Christ.

There are many people who think that the subjects of Christ ought to be glad, and so they try to be glad. Suppose we say, Let us be glad this afternoon. But you can't be glad unless you are glad, and if you are not glad, then you cannot make yourself glad. A bird sings because it is glad—because gladness is in it.

Question: Now upon this point of being always joyful. We read in 1 Pet. 1:4, 5, that we are begotten "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Is there not sorrow at times?

Well, read right on, and it will tell it: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, 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, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Here is the blessedness of the peace and joy of

Christ, that you do not have to manufacture it. You cannot manufacture it. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Has he given it to everybody here?—Yes. It does not make any difference whether they will take it or not. He has given it.

Now, here is a nickel. Brother Hyatt, I will give that to you for friendship's sake. [Coin laid on table beside him.] Have I given it to him? He has not taken it; I do not know whether he will take it or not; but I have given it to him as a *bona fide* gift, and I leave it there with him, and I will never take it up again. Now, if you believe that I tell the truth, you believe that I have given him five cents.

Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." To whom?—To everybody; and he has given it to us. There are some people that do not believe he has given it, and they do not take it, and there are some people who do not want it; but the fact remains that God has given his peace. But what about that peace? "My peace,"—the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. Read further than that: "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Do not worry. What was the characteristic of Christ's peace? Some think that peace is a sort of happy-go-lucky feeling of complacence, an easy sort of lazy feeling, because the man does not have anything to prod him, and he lies in a hammock in the sunshine, and he has peace,—nothing to do, nothing to worry him. He is a man of peace. That is what men think of peace. That is not the way Christ did. From the cradle to the grave, the devil was seeking every possible opportunity to take his life. He had him in his hands once; that is, his agents did. They took him to the brow of the hill, and they thought they could end his life; and that very thing was being tried continually. But that was not the worst thing he had to bear. The scribes and Pharisees were continually nagging him, criticising every word he uttered. He had lies told about him. They said, He has a devil; he is crazy; he is a fanatic; he deceives the people; he is leading them astray. And those things he had to endure. And not only his enemies, but even his brethren did not believe on him. And so wherever he went he found trouble always,—something to oppose him, something to come upon him. He was always in turmoil, he was always in trouble; but he was never troubled.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation," but do not be troubled. Christ's gift is of such a nature that a man can have trouble, and not be troubled; he can have affliction and sorrow, and not be sorrowful; he can have heaviness, and yet rejoice; he can have warfare, and be at peace. That is the peace that he gives.

No one was allowed to make any oil like the oil with which the priests were anointed. What do we learn from that? That was not merely an arbitrary thing. Do not try to counterfeit the grace of God. God gives the oil of joy. Do not try to manufacture an artificial joy. It was to show that it could not be done.

Now, continuing the study in Hebrews: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands; they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." The heavens and the earth shall grow old, they get old. What is their condition now? Old, worn-out, barren, bald we find the earth in many spots. It is worn out and grown old, so old that it trembles. It did not shake in the beginning when it was new, but now the earth shakes and trembles.

The earth shall wax old like a garment, shall be changed like a vesture. When a garment gets old you lay it aside. When you change an old coat, what do you have?—A new one. The earth and the heavens shall wax old like a garment, and they shall be changed; and then, of course, when they are old and are changed, the new heavens and earth will appear. "But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." He does not get old. What a world of comfort there is in that! We change; He is the same. Though we believe not, he is the same. He abideth faithful, always the same. The devil makes us think that Christ changes as we change. But he is the same.

My ministering brethren, seek Jesus with all lowliness and meekness. Do not try to draw the attention of the people to yourselves. Let them lose sight of the instrument, while you exalt Jesus. Talk of Jesus; lose self in Jesus. There is too much bustle and stir about our religion, while Calvary and the cross are forgotten.—*Test. No. 31.*

True Education.—No. 2.

W. W. PRESCOTT.

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God can control the mind, and the mind be wholly and unconditionally submitted to God, and yet be free. But the mind of no created being can control the mind of any other created being, and still there be freedom. The devil was a created being, and just as soon as the mind of humanity was handed over to him slavery came in. Sin brought bondage; a lie brought bondage to every human being. The truth brings freedom. "The truth shall make you free."

I wish to cite a few scriptures to show the change that God will work to restore this image in man. First, the fact that we are changed:—

And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unprovable in his sight. Col. 1:21, 22. And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Eph. 2:1. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Eph. 4:17, 18.

This reveals the channel for the change. The restoration comes through the same channel. To show this I will read the following scriptures:—

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Rom. 12:1, 2.

But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph. 4:20-24.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: