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Studies in the Book of Hebrews – No.3

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Studies in the Book of Hebrews.—No. 3.

E. J. WAGGONER.

(Thursday Afternoon, Feb. 11, 1897.)

WE should keep in mind the statements of the first chapter, because the second chapter depends upon the first, and the third chapter depends upon the second, and so on. Let the chapter divisions drop out as you study.

Before beginning where we left off yesterday, let us remember from the first chapter that God speaks in his Son, who is so much higher than the angels, high as they are, powerful as they are; that he sits at the right hand of God. Their work is to minister. They have been sent to men with messages from the Lord, with commandments and directions from the Lord. We read of that in the Old Testament, and whenever those commandments were disobeyed, those directions disregarded, every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.

But what does the Son speak to us?—Great salvation. Salvation began to be spoken by the Lord, and was brought to us, and confirmed by them that heard it.

Christ was upon the earth; his lips moved; men saw his lips move, and they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. God was speaking. How often you hear these words: I do not speak of myself; I have not spoken of myself. God was in Christ speaking the word of reconciliation. Now Christ is gone above, and in his stead, as his representatives, he

has put into us the word of reconciliation. Now who said that? Have I said it?—No, the Word says it. Then do not think of it as anything that you have heard me say; but here you read it, and you read it again, and read it alone at home, and when you read it, do not read Brother Kilgore, or Brother Loughborough, or Brother Olsen, or other ministers in there. It does not say the preachers. Who is he talking about here?—"If *any* man be in Christ." Then it is any man that is in Christ. God has put into him the word of reconciliation. And we want to understand that here is the lesson for us to-day—that God does not know anything about classes and masses, and in the church he does not have high and low. But he has men, and they are all men: and to every one, according to his several ability, God has given the word of reconciliation. And it does not rest upon this man who is a preacher, any more than it does upon you, except as God may have given him greater ability and a wider field. The Word is one and the same for every individual who is in Christ, and that Word is the word of reconciliation. "Therefore if *any* man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." And he can do it too, if he allows God to speak in him, not his own word, but the Word of God.

I thank God so often when I see and hear of the controversy about the priesthood in the churches that claim to have a sacrificing priesthood, and a clergy who have the right to speak the word,—I thank the Lord that he says to every one of his people, "Ye are a kingdom of priests, to offer up spiritual sacrifices."

We read this morning, from the Testimonies, "The work of saving human souls is an interest infinitely above any other line of work in our world." And when we think of the last verse of the first chapter of Hebrews, we can get some idea of the infinite worth of that work. Angels who excel in strength, angels whose might is that of the mighty winds, God has commissioned to be

servants of those who have this work committed to them of saving souls. It is wonderful to think of. It is humiliating to me, and makes me feel ashamed to think how lightly I have esteemed it; to think that God has given to us the work of proclaiming the gospel, while these wondrous beings are ministers to us. He has committed unto us the word of reconciliation, even that same word that Christ proclaimed. And there is given unto us on this earth the identical work that Christ had. For "we pray you *in Christ's stead* be ye reconciled to God." And Christ has given to those mighty beings, simply the work of waiting upon, serving, helping us to whom this ministry is given.

There is something marvelous and altogether unnatural, unworldly, about the gift of God; for when he puts a man in high position—and he has put every one of us in a high position—it does not exalt him, but it humbles him. When the world puts a man in a high position, it exalts him. Why has not God given the angels the work of preaching the gospel and saving souls?—Because he has not put the world to come in subjection unto angels. Here is some glorious comfort for every one to whom God has committed the work of saving souls. Those who hear Christ, proclaim it with the power of God's witnesses,—miracles, signs, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. He has given the teaching of the Gospel to men. He has put the world to come in subjection unto men. And it is an infinitely high work that God gives to man?—

What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; and crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands.

Where do we find that testified?—In the first chapter of Genesis, and the eighth Psalm. Just think of those two passages; they are doubtless familiar. The Lord said:—

Let us make man in our image; after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Note each statement. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and every creeping thing. And it was so. So God did it. The Psalm says:—

What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast

made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.

There is complete dominion given to man. "For in that he put all things in subjection under him, he left not anything that was not put under him." We see that God gave Adam dominion over all the earth. Does that mean that God took a back seat, and abdicated in favor of man?—No. God could not give up his right, because all things existed only in him. It is the Word of God that upholds all things. And it is his power that rules all things. Therefore the dominion which God gave to Adam over all the earth, over the birds and beasts and fishes, was just as complete as God's power, just as complete as God's dominion; for he was ruling in Adam. All things stand by his Word. He spoke, and it was. So when we look abroad on the things of nature, we see evidences of his power. When we look over the meadow, we see the Word of God made grass. God spake, and, lo! that Word appeared as a tree, or as grass.

You may have seen pictures of voice forms, even human voice forms, that when a note would be uttered so that the breath which formed that note would impinge upon a membrane upon which were particles of sand, in every instance the sand that was set in motion by the vibration took different forms, shapes of things. This is simply an illustration, just a hint of the fact that God "spake and it *was*." God spake, and his voice took all the infinite forms that we see in nature; and everything that we see, and every spot that our foot treads upon, was given by God to let us know that his Word is something, and not mere emptiness.

As the last act of creation, God made man. And as in all creation we see the Word of God made trees, grass, etc., in man we see the Word of God made flesh. He was the son of God. We find that in the third chapter of Luke. Sometimes we think those genealogies are pretty dry things, but the point of it all is in the very last word.

So here we stand looking at what ought to be, for we know that whatsoever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, nothing taken away from it. Now we are looking still, and we see man there, with all that God gave

him. Now what next does the text say?—"Now we see not yet all things put under him." Fallen as nature is, God has absolute control over the beasts and birds and fishes; even yet they will do his will. They do it as far as man will let them. Man is the only being that will not yield perfect obedience. And it is man's interference and rebellion that stops them from obeying Him. We are looking at the earth; but what earth is it that was given to man?—The world to come. So unto the angels has he not put into subjection the world to come, but he has put it under subjection to man. That dominion which man had in the beginning over the beasts and birds and fishes, and over the earth, is the dominion which God has given to man over the world to come. So that in the world to come man again will have that complete and perfect dominion over everything that God has made; all will be subject to him as unto God, subject to him as head, because God is in him, and God will be all in all. Then the Word will be made flesh in its perfection just as it was in the beginning in Adam. "But now we see not yet all things put under him;" but on the contrary, we see just the reverse. In the first place, all things were put under man; in the next place, man is under all things. In the first place, man was on the top; now he is under. Fallen man has everything on him. He is bound hand and foot, delivered over to Satan; he is fallen. So while we are looking at man in the noble position in which he was made in the beginning, as we still look at him we see Jesus; because in the beginning the Word was made flesh, and so it is Christ, the Word, in Adam. There we see Jesus. Where?—Just in the same place where man fell; there we see Jesus, made a little lower than the angels because he took man's place. When, in the beginning he was infinitely higher, for the suffering of death, to rescue man, to save man, to raise him up, he took his place. Now, if one will lift up another who falls, he must go where the man is. Wherever there is a fallen man, Jesus is there. But I am a fallen man, too. Just let each one of us take that to himself. The Lord has not cast off man. We read, "For the Lord will not cast off forever." He does not cast off at all. No; man takes himself away; God does not cast off. And there is nobody that can pluck man out of his hands. There we are safe as long as we are willing to abide in him.

We see man perfect, with dominion; then fal-

len, with everything above him, and on him, and against him. Looking still there, we see Jesus as man, and for the suffering of death we see him crowned with glory and honor; that, by the grace of God, he should taste death for every man. Therefore, wherever you see a man fallen,—and he cannot fall lower than into the grave,—there you see Christ, who went into the grave and tasted the depths of sin and degradation for every man. So every man's degradation and sin is on Christ—the man Christ Jesus. But the same man Christ Jesus is crowned with glory and honor. Now mark: A crown signifies a king or ruler. Where in this chapter have we first read about a crown? "But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; and crownedst him with glory and honor." That is to say, you have made him king, a king of glory. Adam, the king of glory and honor; so long was he over all things. But when he sinned, then he lost the glory he had. But now we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, and in the position that man was in, in the beginning. But he is crowned with glory and honor in the same nature as man had. So just as God made man, and crowned him with glory and honor, we now see the man Jesus, that Man who is in every man crowned with honor and glory; and he added all things unto him.

Now read the last words of the first chapter of Ephesians :—

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. Verses 17-21.

But what was the name which Jesus always delighted to give himself while upon this earth?—The Son of man. The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. When ye hath delivered the Son of man. The Son of man shall go to Jerusalem, and they shall crucify him, and he shall be buried. And on the third day the

Son of man shall rise again. But and if ye shall see the Son of man. Ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. All this time it is the "Son of man." And this Son of man we see, because of his faithfulness, crowned with glory and honor, and having under him all principalities and powers and might and dominion, not only in this world, but also in the world to come. For unto the angels hath he not put under subjection the world to come, but he hath put the world to come in subjection to man, even Jesus, and ye are complete in him. Read in the second chapter, verses 1-6 :—

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Where is he?—Far above all principalities and powers. Is not the work of saving souls far above everything else in this world? It has been said that "to be a Roman is greater than to be a king." In this day, and in every age, to be a Christian is greater than to be a king of this earth. And now we have that Word confirmed unto us by them that heard him, "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost," according to his power, because under the angels he had not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak. That simply says that the power, the honor, the glory, the dignity to accompany the preaching of the gospel which God has put into those who are reconciled to him, is the power and glory of the world to come.

True Education.—No. 3.

W. W. PRESCOTT.

(Thursday Afternoon, Feb. 11, 1897.)

It may convey a rather indefinite idea to some that in education the one thing that should be sought is a knowledge of God, that that should be first and last in all study. To-day we will study

further from the Scriptures and from the Spirit of Prophecy some references to the field opened up, and what the study involves. The basis of study is the scripture: "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever." Rom. 11:36. First, *of* him are all things. This is inclusive; it means all things whether they be visible or invisible. 1 John 5:19: "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." In one sense we are of him, whether we are Christians or not, but in a special sense we are of him being born again. Acts 17:28: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being." We are *in* him as well as of him.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Ps. 90:1, 2.

For *in* him were all things created in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, all things consist and are held together. Col. 1: 16, 17. R. V.

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. Gen. 2: 4, 5.

The word "generation" means bringing forth. These are the bringing forth of every plant before it was in the earth. Of his own will they were. What did he do for us? "Of his own will begat he us." All things that we see are but an expression in that form of what God is. See how little is the difference, and yet how wide is the difference between truth and error. What is pantheism?—All things are God. What is truth?—God is *in* all things.

All things were created by the Word of God, and they continue by that same will. When Christ was speaking to the Jews, he said, "My Father worketh hitherto; and I work." Notice the tenses. It does not say, My Father *has* worked, and I am now working, but my Father *is* working until now, and I am working. In Hebrews we read that he upholds all things by the word of his power,—still working.

Many teach that matter possesses vital power,—that certain properties are imparted to matter, and it is then left to act through its own inherent energy; and that the operations of nature are conducted in harmony with fixed laws, with which God himself cannot interfere. This is false science, and is not sustained by the Word of God. Nature is the servant of her Creator. God does