**“The Rest that Remains” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times 4, 11.**

E. J. Waggoner

We return once more to Abraham, and the promise to him and his seed. We have learned that the promise was confirmed to him in Christ; and certainly this was the case when a son was promised to him, for the record says, “And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” Genesis 15:6. This counting his faith for righteousness was nothing else but the forgiveness of his sins, through Christ. This is plainly declared to be the case, in Romans 4:3-9. Now at the very time when the promise was thus confirmed to him, the Lord said to him: “Know of a surety that thy 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.” Genesis 15:13, 14. {BEST June 1, 1889, p. 170.1}

In this text we have the sojourn in Egypt foretold; but we have more than that, for the children of Israel were not in Egypt four hundred years. It was only four hundred and thirty years from the time that the promise was made to Abraham until the giving of the law, immediately after the departure from Egypt. Galatians 3:17. We can easily make up this time thus: From the time that the promise was made, till the birth of Isaac, was twenty-five years. Compare Genesis 12:1-4 and Genesis 21:5. From the birth of Isaac till the birth of Jacob was sixty years. Genesis 25:26. From the birth of Jacob till the going down into Egypt was one hundred and thirty years. Genesis 47:8, 9. Therefore from the promise to Abraham, until the going down into Egypt was (25 + 60 + 130) 215 years. And Josephus says (“Antiquities,” chap. 15, par. 2) that the length of the sojourn in Egypt was two hundred and fifteen years, thus making the four hundred and thirty years of Galatians 3:17. {BEST June 1, 1889, p. 170.2}

But how about the four hundred years of affliction, which the Lord said that the posterity of Abraham should suffer? It is evident from the text, and also from Acts 7:6, 7, that the four hundred years ended at the exode, the same time when the four hundred and thirty years ended. Thus they must have begun thirty years after the promise was first made to Abraham, or when Isaac was about five years old. Now in Galatians 4:29 Paul says that “he that was born after the flesh,” namely, Ishmael, persecuted Isaac, who was “born after the Spirit;” and this cannot refer to any other time than that when Ishmael “mocked” Isaac, which resulted in the expulsion of Ishmael and his mother. Genesis 21:9, 10. This is the only recorded instance of the persecution of Isaac by Ishmael, and was, as nearly as can be calculated, about thirty years after the promise, and four hundred years before the deliverance from Egypt. So there were one hundred and eighty-five of the four hundred years’ affliction, that were endured in the land of Canaan, and in adjoining countries. Yet all this time they were sojourning in a country that was not theirs. Compare Genesis 15:13 and Hebrews 11:9. {BEST June 1, 1889, p. 170.3}

We pass over the bondage in Egypt, and come to the time of the exode. When Moses was sent down into Egypt to deliver the people, the Lord gave him the following message: “Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments; and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage; I am the Lord.” Exodus 6:6-8. {BEST June 1, 1889, p. 170.4}

Here the promise to Abraham, which was renewed to Isaac and to Jacob, was renewed again to their descendants. And in pursuance of that same promise, the Lord said to them when they had gone out of Egypt: “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” Exodus 19:4-6. {BEST June 1, 1889, p. 170.5}

Now that this was the same promise that was made to Abraham, we have an explicit statement in the following words, found in Deuteronomy 7:6-8: “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and *because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers*, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” {BEST June 1, 1889, p. 170.6}

When we read the promise recorded in Genesis 22:17 we noted that in the words, “Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies,” it included rest from oppression. So likewise the promise to the Israelites included not only possession of land, but rest. This will appear from the next article. {BEST June 1, 1889, p. 170.7}

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E. J. Waggoner

The promise to the Israelites included not only possession of land, but rest. Thus when Moses allowed two tribes and a half to settle in the country across the Jordan, he said to them: “The Lord your God hath given you this land to possess it; ye shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel, all that are meet for the war, ...until the Lord have given rest unto your brethren, as well as unto you, and until they also possess the land which the Lord your God hath given them beyond Jordan.” Deuteronomy 3:18-20. {BEST June 15, 1889, p. 186.1}

Again, just a little while before they refused the land of Canaan, Moses said to them: “For ye are not as yet come *to the rest* and *to the inheritance*, which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and *dwell* *in the land* which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when *he giveth you rest* from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose the cause of his name to dwell there,” etc. Deuteronomy 12:9-11. Thus we find that *rest from their enemies* was as much a part of the promise as was the inheritance of the land. {BEST June 15, 1889, p. 186.2}

Joshua was the one to lead the people over Jordan into the land of promise; and the record expressly states that before he died the land was divided among the people, “and the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers; and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.” Joshua 21:44. {BEST June 15, 1889, p. 186.3}

Yet in the face of this record, the apostle declares that Joshua did not give them rest. For some reason we know not what, the translators of King James Version sometimes gave an incorrect translation in the body of the text, and placed the correct rendering in the margin. So it is in Hebrews 4:8. We quote with the correct marginal reading: “For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.” The “another day” of this text is the “to-day” of Psalm 95:7-11, when the Lord said through his servant: “To-day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways; unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.” {BEST June 15, 1889, p. 186.4}

Now, although a very few of those who came out from Egypt did enter into the land of Canaan, and the Lord gave them rest, it is certain that that was not the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, because (1) Abraham had no part in it (Acts 7:5): “Neither did Isaac and Jacob, to whom the promise was made, as well as to Abraham; and (2) the apostle speaks of “Gideon, and of Barak, and of Sampson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets” (Hebrews 11:32), all of whom lived after the days of Joshua; and of them he says: “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:39, 40. {BEST June 15, 1889, p. 186.5}

Here we learn that the promise will not be fulfilled to them until we share it with them; and so the apostle says: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” Hebrews 4:9. At the same time, however, he utters a word of caution, saying: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” Hebrews 4:1, 2. {BEST June 15, 1889, p. 186.6}

From this we learn that the promise of rest was made known to the ancient Jews through the preaching of the gospel. We have already read the statement of Paul, that the gospel was preached to Abraham. Galatians 3:7, 8. But the Jews, as a nation, did not have faith and so they were debarred from the final rest which the Lord promised to Abraham. The same promise is left to us, but we, like them, shall come short of it, unless we have the faith of Abraham. {BEST June 15, 1889, p. 186.7}

That the rest here referred to is the rest in the earth when it shall be freed from the curse, is manifest from verses 3-5 of Hebrews 4. The apostle says: “For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, as I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter [that is, they shall not enter] into my rest; although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.” {BEST June 15, 1889, p. 186.8}

The apostle is not making any argument here concerning the Sabbath. He simply refers to the record of Genesis 2:3, in proof of his statement that “the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” The earth was designed to be inhabited by man. Isaiah 45:18. The dominion of the earth, as it came pure and undefiled from the hand of the Creator, was given to man. Genesis 1:28. And so, on the seventh day, when God rested from all his works, his rest was prepared for his people. That rest, which was simply the possession of the whole earth kingdom, was lost through transgression; yet it is certain that some must enter in (Hebrews 4:6) and so the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2) is granted. This is the day that is spoken of in Psalm 95:7, the day secured to us through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as spoken of in Psalm 118:29-24; the day which Abraham saw, and which caused him to rejoice. John 8:56. In this day of grace all who will may become enrolled as children of Abraham, through birth, becoming “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;” and to them that Lord will say when he comes, sitting upon the throne of his glory: “Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you *from the foundation* of the world.” Matthew 25:34. Compare Hebrews 4:3, and the comments upon it. {BEST June 15, 1889, p. 186.9}

Thus we learn that “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;” and that “the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.” 2 Peter 3:9, 15. But though the Lord is long-suffering, he will not always delay judgment. Of the antediluvians he said: “My spirit shall not always strive with men.” For one hundred and twenty years his Spirit, was seeking to draw them away from sin; and not until it was useless to strive longer did God withdraw his Spirit. His grace that was bestowed upon them proved to be in vain, because the delay in the execution of the sentence upon their evil works only made them the more determined to do evil. Let us learn a lesson from their fate, and seek the Lord while he may be found. {BEST June 15, 1889, p. 186.10}