**“The Reign of Peace” The Signs of the Times, 19, 48.**

E. J. Waggoner

The greatest and most common mistake among men is to judge God by themselves. The Lord’s reproach to man is, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.” Psalm 50:21. But the facts in the case are stated in these words: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways saith 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. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.21}

That is the reason that men have such erroneous ideas about the government of God. They judge God’s method of governing by what they know of human governments, and therefore we hear such expressions as these, “If God rules this world why does he not put a stop to all this poverty and misery?” Or, “Why doesn’t he make everybody good?” “If he rules, and is omnipotent, why does he allow anybody to be lost?” or, allowing that he does reign, they conclude that he is neither good nor merciful, because he allows sin and misery to exist. Thus many infidels rail against the Lord, and many poor, overworked men and women echo the sentiment, because they do not know the Lord, but form their opinions of him by themselves. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.22}

The fact is that if God were to do what the people say he ought to do, they themselves would add hate to their indifference to him. Men shout for liberty, and execrate tyranny, and then murmur against God because he is not a tyrant. They refuse to serve him, because he does not deprive them of their liberty, and make them not only slaves, but mere machines. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.23}

God is a “God of peace.” Hebrews 13:2. His reign is a reign of peace. The Apostle Paul says, “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.” Colossians 3:15. He rules by peace. This is different from anything known among men, and we shall see the significance of it presently. Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, is the “Prince of peace;” “and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” Isaiah 9:6, 7. His gospel is “the gospel of peace.” Ephesians 6:15. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.24}

God’s thoughts concerning man are “thoughts of peace, and not of evil.” Jeremiah 29:11. And his ways are peace. When he speaks, he speaks peace. “I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints.” Psalm 85:8. Of the work of the Father and of the Son upon the throne, the prophet says: “And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” Zechariah 6:12, 13. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.25}

Thus we see that the God of peace, and the Prince of peace, “who is our peace,” are sitting upon the throne together, and their counsels together are counsels of peace. Their thoughts toward men are thoughts of peace, and they speak peace. The word of the ruler is law, and therefore the law of God is a law of peace. Everything in connection with his government is peace. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.26}

The peace of God is an active quality. It is peace that rules. “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6, 7. It is impossible to describe peace that passes all understanding, and the only way that men can know it is to receive it at the hands of the Lord, for he says: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” John 14:27. And yet, although we are not able to fathom its depth, we may know the nature of it from the word of God. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.27}

**PEACE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Peace comes with righteousness. In the throne of God “mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” We have seen that the law of God is a law of peace, and so the Psalmist declares, “Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them,” or cause them to stumble. Psalm 119:165. And again we read the words of the Lord, “O that thou hadst harkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.” Isaiah 48:18. Peace and righteousness, therefore, are synonymous. This is further shown in the statement, “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” Isaiah 57:21. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1. “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” Isaiah 32:15. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.28}

Peace is the opposite not only of open war, but also of enmity, for war is the result of enmity in the heart. Now Christ is our peace, because he has abolished the enmity in himself. Ephesians 2:14, 15. He has “made peace through the blood of his cross.” Colossians 1:20. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Romans 5:8-10. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.29}

“It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 16:11), because the blood is the life. Therefore we are reconciled to God by the life of Christ, which he gives to us in his death. When we read that Christ has made peace through the blood of his cross, we understand that he made peace by the life which he poured out on the cross. And so when he says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,” we know it is the same as if he said, “My life I give unto you.” His life is peace and righteousness. “To be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Romans 8:6. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.30}

**THE FREEDOM OF PEACE**

Christ gave himself for the world; he is able and willing to save the whole world, and will give his life to all who will have it; but he will not force his presence upon any. He says, “Behold I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Revelation 3:20. He will not force the will. His rule is a rule of perfect liberty. The wonderful and glorious liberty of the sons of God is beyond all human expression. The liberty of the kingdom of God is the perfection of liberty. Every man is to be absolutely free. And in order that every man may be absolutely free in his kingdom, God gives to every person on this present earth perfect liberty to choose what he will have. The right and liberty to choose life, which God extends to all, implies liberty to reject it. “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” Deuteronomy 30:19. “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” Revelation 22:17. So not only in the world to come, but also in this life, God gives to every person exactly whatever he wishes to have. Those who desire life will have it abundantly, and of the wicked the Lord says: “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. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” Proverbs 1:29-31. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.31}

It will be seen that there is nothing like force in the government of God, nothing like compulsion. If there were, his reign would not be a reign of peace. It is altogether different from any earthly government that exists, or that ever did exist. Christ explained this matter when two of his disciples were seeking for themselves places of power in his kingdom. Said he: “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:25-28. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.32}

Mark that statement beginning, “even as the Son of Man came.” That shows us that serving is the rule in the kingdom of God, because Christ himself sets the example. His government is in every respect different from earthly governments. They exist by force and authority; his exists by love and peace. Not only when on earth in the form of a servant did Christ serve, but he says that when the saints are all gathered with him in glory, he himself will come forth and serve them. Luke 12:37. In coming to this earth he took upon him the form of a servant; but the mind to serve was in him before he came. And so it will be in the glory of his kingdom. But there will be no danger that Christ’s position will not be properly respected in that innumerable throng, all of whom are bent on serving others. Greatness there will be measured by the amount of service rendered, and in that he will ever be infinitely above the whole human race. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.33}

**PEACE IS REST**

Since the world began there has never been a time when there was perfect peace. Neither has there ever been a single nation in which at any time there has been peace. There have been times when no war was in progress, but the so-called peace that existed was made and preserved by force, just as the peace of Europe is maintained now by huge armies. But it is not peace. Peace is rest; but in all earthly governments there is a state of constant unrest. There is no real peace unless there is peace in the heart, and peace can be in the heart only by the presence of Jesus there. “He is our peace.” {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.34}

The peace of God’s government is not maintained by standing armies, nor by compelling people to submit to his laws, but by the infusing of his own life in the hearts of those who will receive him. And now we can see why God does not arbitrarily interfere to put a stop to sin and its consequent misery. To do so would be to deny himself, and to subvert his own government; for his government is peace, and peace cannot be forced any more than love can be. God is not only the King, but he is the Father of his people, and that means that his subjects are to associate with him as with a father, on terms of intimacy. They are not to cower and cringe before him as before a tyrant, not to fawn and flatter to obtain his favor, but to be as free as he himself is. They are to have the liberty of his Spirit. While gladly acknowledging his infinite greatness, his people are to feel in his presence the freedom of equals. This is the mystery of God. The absolute perfection of liberty can be found only in him. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.35}

In the beginning God filled all things by his presence. Then sin came in, and there was rebellion against his gentle sway. But he did not change. His rule now is the same that it was in the beginning, and the same that it will be in the earth made new. It is ever a reign of peace. So now he is seeking to bring men back to his mild rule, in the same way that he will rule when all acknowledge him. He stretches out his hands to all. He reveals his love and tenderness, and begs and entreats all to be at peace with him; but he compels none against their will, for he has set that forever free. Those who obstinately and persistently refuse him, and choose their own way, are left to their own way, which is death (Proverbs 16:25), because it is separate from the life of God. {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.36}

It would not do to close without calling attention to the contrast between the way in which God works to extend his government among men, and the way in which men work to do the same thing. Religious law made by men have only the power of physical force, while God’s law has the power of his own life of peace. It will be seen that when men make laws professedly for the purpose of extending Christianity, they are working against God, instead of for him. So for human governments to enact and enforce religious laws, is to oppose and exalt themselves against God. Civil laws concerning religion, therefore, even though they expressly state that they are to upbuild the religion of Christ, are only the work of antichrist. They upbuild the religion of physical force, while his religion is that of spiritual peace. They misrepresent God, and cause him to be hated, or at least dreaded. But when God is represented as he is, men love him. Therefore let all his servants say, “Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; so shall good come to thee.” {SITI October 9, 1893, p. 706.37}

**“Authority for the Sabbath” The Signs of the Times, 19, 50.**

E. J. Waggoner

We are in receipt of a letter which says: “So long as a seventh day of rest is observed, it matters not a bit which of the seven days it is; but it is wise to conform to general custom, for the sake of convenience and order; every day is a seventh day.” This statement of the case is worthy of consideration, for it presents a very common idea of the Sabbath question. The only thing that should concern us is to know the exact truth, and not mistake conjecture for positive evidence. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 759.1}

We are told that “a seventh day of rest” ought to be observed, but that it makes no difference what day it is. Query: How does anybody know that a regular rest day ought to be observed? The idea is quite prevalent among certain nations, but what gave rise to it? Let us see if we can find out. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 759.2}

Someone will say that reason teaches it. But no one has exceeded the ancient Greeks and Romans in acuteness of intellect or power of reasoning, yet they never had the idea of a weekly rest day. They had innumerable holidays,-festival days,-when those who were able to do so gave themselves up to amusement and revelry, but there was no thought of cessation of labor. Those who went to the greatest length in the observance of the holidays were the ones who did little or no work, while for the laboring class there was no respite. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 759.3}

It is a fact such a thing as a Sabbath day is not and has never been known among what are termed heathen nations. This disposes also of the supposition that physical reasons are sufficient to account for the weekly rest day. The Chinese are diligent toilers, yet they have never learned the necessity of a weekly rest day. It is the same with other heathen peoples. So then it is a fact that by far the greater number of people on earth not only do not observe a weekly rest day, but do not recognize the existence of such a thing. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 759.4}

Whence, then, comes the idea of a necessity for a weekly rest day? The only answer that can be given is that it comes from the Bible. Where the Bible has no place, the weekly rest day is unknown. The fourth commandment enjoins it, and gives its origin as well. Here it is:— {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 759.5}

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” Exodus 20:8-11. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 759.6}

Here is the original authority for the observance of a rest day. Whatever idea men may have about such a day, the idea that there should be a weekly rest day at all sprang from this source, and from this alone. Now the question must arise, Since it is to the Bible that we owe our knowledge of the fact that a weekly rest day ought to be observed, why should we not also depend solely on the Bible for our knowledge of all the particulars concerning it? Why should men learn from the Bible that a rest day ought to be observed, and then consult custom, or their own taste or convenience, as to how and when it shall be observed? Such a course is manifestly inconsistent in the highest degree. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 759.7}

**THE DEFINITE SABBATH DAY**

Note well that in the commandment there is nothing said about “a seventh day of rest.” The language is very definite. “*The* seventh day is the Sabbath.” “In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested *the* seventh day.” The idea of an indefinite Sabbath, regulated by custom, is utterly foreign to the Scriptures. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 759.8}

Just before the commandments were proclaimed from Sinai, the children of Israel were given manna for their food. See Exodus 16. Six days in the week it fell, but on the Sabbath none was to be found. On each of the first five days only enough for the day’s supply was to be gathered, and if more was gathered, and it was kept till the next day, “it bred worms and stank;” but on the sixth day twice the usual amount was to be gathered, and a supply laid up for the Sabbath day, in which case it did not spoil, but kept sweet. By this series of miracles, which was kept up for forty years, the Lord showed his regard for the Sabbath day; and at the same time he effectually guarded against the idea that the day of the Sabbath is to be settled by the caprice or custom of men. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 759.9}

The reader can see at a glance how impossible it was for any of the Israelites to get the idea that the Sabbath is an indefinite day. They might rebel against it, and disregard it, but they knew very well that the Sabbath was fixed by the Lord himself, and not left to man; custom has nothing to do with is. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 759.10}

After the Babylonian captivity the Jews became very strict in the outward observance of the Sabbath, even going far beyond the commandment. They often presumed to rebuke Jesus for what they termed his violation of the day. On one occasion he healed a man on the Sabbath day, and the Jews murmured. That day was the seventh day of the week. If the Sabbath is any day that men may choose, what an opportunity that was to enlighten the Jews. Did he tell them that it made no difference what day was observed, if only a seventh part of time were kept?-Not at all. He simply said, “It is lawful do well on the Sabbath days” (Matthew 12:12), thus recognizing the definite Sabbath day, but showing that he had not violated it. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 759.11}

Christ was crucified on the day before the Sabbath; “that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on.” Luke 23:54. “And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day *according to the commandment*.” Verses 55, 56. “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared.” Luke 24:1. This first day of the week was the day immediately following the Sabbath day on which they rested “according to the commandment,” for the record in Mark says that “when the Sabbath was past, ...very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher” (Mark 16:1, 2); and the record by Matthew is still more definite, saying that it was “in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week.” Matthew 28:1. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 789.1}

What do we learn from these texts? This, that the Sabbath day “according to the commandment” is the day before the first day of the week.” The day before “the first day of the week” must be “the seventh day of the week,” since there are but seven days in a week. Therefore we have the fact stated, by Inspiration, that “the Sabbath day according to the commandment” is the seventh day of the week. Moreover, to make the matter more sure, we are told that even “very early in the morning the first day of the week” the Sabbath is already “past.” No matter how early one rises in the morning the first day of the week, he will be too late to find the Sabbath day; it passes before the first day begins. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 789.2}

If one regards the Bible as no authority, that is another matter. We have no commission to prove the truth of the Bible, for it is its own evidence; but to those who regard the Bible as the word of God, the evidence above given, although brief, must be conclusive. The Spirit of God expressly declares that the Sabbath “according to the commandment” is the day before the first day of the week namely, the seventh day of the week; and the words of Christ are, “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the law to fail.” Luke 16:17. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 789.3}

**CUSTOM**

The Bible declares that “the customs of people are vain.” Jeremiah 10:3. The command is, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.” Exodus 23:2. Again we read: “Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies; because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.” Hosea 10:13. {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 789.4}

The correctness of a course is not determined by the number who follow it. In the days of Noah the multitude were opposed to the truth. Noah was in what would be termed “a hopeless minority;” and if the truth of his preaching could have been settled by a popular vote, the flood would never have come. Nevertheless it did come, because the word of the Lord had said so. When Christ was on earth, “he came unto his own, and his own received him not.” John 1:11. He was rejected by the church. The question was, “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?” John 7:48. They had not, with the exception of one or two who believed secretly, and the fact that they had not was considered sufficient evidence that he was an imposter; yet he was the Son of God, although “despised and rejected of men.” {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 789.5}

There is custom, however, that we are permitted to follow, and that is the custom of Christ; for “he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” 1 John 2:6. He left us an example, that we should follow in his steps. 1 Peter 2:21. Of him we read that after his baptism and temptation, “being full of the Holy Ghost,” “he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.” Luke 4:16. Said he, “I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” John 15:10

* King James Version
* American Standard Version
* Webster’s Bible
* American King James Version
* Darby Bible
* World English Bible
* Young’s Literal Translation
* King James Bible With Strong's Dictionary
* King James Bible With Strong's Dictionary
* King James Bible With Strong's Dictionary
* King James Reference Version
* King James Bible With Strong's Dictionary
* Bible Commentaries Scripture Index

. Reader, whose custom will you follow? The vain custom of the world? Or the righteous custom of the Lord Jesus Christ? {SITI October 23, 1893, p. 789.6}