**“‘Greater Works than These’” The Signs of the Times, 23, 48.**

E. J. Waggoner

Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” John 14:12. The first question that almost invariably arises whenever this is read, is, “What greater works can anybody possibly do than the Lord did?” or, “How can anybody do greater works than he did?” To this the hearer is obliged to answer, “I don’t know.” But the fact that we do not know, and can not form any conception of the thing, has no effect upon it. Jesus has said it in the most positive manner, and that is sufficient. {SITI December 9, 1897, p. 754.1}

Let it be remembered that it is only those who *believe* that can do these great works; and certainly no one who is not able to do the works, can be expected to know anything about the matter. But the very asking of the questions, “What?” and “How?” implies more or less unbelief. The person may not realize it, but there is at least a shade of doubt underlying those questions; there is a trace of the notion that we will not believe what we can not understand. Now if there is unbelief even in the slightest degree, then it is certain that no works at all will be done; for “this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom he hath sent.” John 6:29. But if there is unbelief, there can not possibly be belief. Therefore the one who questions this matter need not expect ever to know anything about it. {SITI December 9, 1897, p. 754.2}

“But is it not unbelief that prompts my questioning,” some will say; “it is only a real desire to know what the works are, and how they are to be done.” In other words, it is curiosity. Well, of one thing we may be sure, and that is that whatever good works one has, come from God; for that which was true of Christ must most certainly be true of us, “I can of mine own self do nothing.” John 5:30. “The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” John 14:10. Since “it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13), it is not necessary for us to know *how*. Our part is simply to yield ourselves as instruments of righteousness. The instrument does not need to know what the one who handles it is doing, nor how he is able to do it. Nay, the instrument *can not* know how, else he would no longer be the instrument. “Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord?” Psalm 106:2. {SITI December 9, 1897, p. 754.3}

Finally, is it useless to ask how we can do greater works than those which Christ did, for those who do them will be unconscious of them. When at the last day the Lord says to the faithful ones, “Come, ye blessed of my Father,” and enumerates the good works that they have done, they will wonderingly ask, “Lord, when did we ever do these things?” They will have been so yielded to the Lord that his mighty power will have wrought them in the most natural and unobtrusive way, just as it does through the growing plant. It is well that we are thus ignorant. If it were possible that the mighty works of God could be wrought through self-conscious folks, it would be most uncomfortable for those who were obliged to live with them. If we thought that we were doing greater works than Christ did, we would become so conceited and overbearing that nobody could live with us. Let us be content, yea, we may even rejoice, that we are weak and ignorant, since our Father is almighty and all-wise, and he is ours. E. J. W. {SITI December 9, 1897, p. 754.4}

**“Editorial. The Lesson of History” The Signs of the Times, 23, 49.**

E. J. Waggoner

We do not say “a lesson from history,” but “the lesson of history;” for there is but one great lesson that history teaches, yet it is one that is rarely learned. For want of learning this one lesson, thousands study history in vain; while he who learns the simple, fundamental lesson in the beginning of his study will read to profit. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 768.1}

The reason why the lesson referred to is so almost universally overlooked, is that the records that are usually studied are so crowded with details that the mind becomes confused; history becomes to the student only a mass of occurrences, in which the underlying truth taught by history is lost. This melancholy result would be avoided if people began at the right place to study, taking the simplest history first and afterwards that which is more complex. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.1}

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and the Bible is the book that teaches the fear of the Lord; therefore it is in the Bible that the beginning of wisdom is found. It is the simplest book in the world, as would naturally be expected of a book of beginnings. That it is really a book very easy to be understood is proved by the fact that it teaches the way to the kingdom of heaven, which can be entered only by children and those who become like children. See Matthew 18:3. It is manifest, therefore, that the Bible can be understood by children, and consequently must be an easy book. It is the first book that children should study. But the whole of a thing is found in the beginning, just as the entire tree exists in the germ; and so the Bible, which teaches the fear of the Lord, contains the sum of knowledge, and may be studied by the gray-haired sage as profitably as by the little child. Its treasure of wisdom is inexhaustible. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.2}

Now for the first lesson in history. Very fittingly it begins with the beginning of time. We will quote a page from it, that we may clearly see what is the simple, underlying truth taught by all history since the creation of the world. Here it is:— {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.3}

“This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth; and the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years; and he begat sons and daughters; and all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died. And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos; and Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters; and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died. And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan; and Enos lived after he begat Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters; and all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died.” Genesis 5:1-11. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.4}

Thus the record continues to the end of the chapter, of which we have quoted just one fourth; yet the chapter covers a period of more than fifteen hundred years. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.5}

What is the sum of history, as indicated by this record?—Simply this, that men lived a certain number of years, and then died. With this first historical record agree all that have been written since. The whole of history can be summed up in the words, They lived so long, and then they died. The one thing, therefore, that history teaches, is that a man’s life is but “a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” Yet this is the thing that is seldom thought of in reading history. Histories written by man are so filled up with accounts of the incidentals,—the things that people did, the battles fought, the kingdoms established, the cities built, and the “glory” gained,—that unless one has begun the historical study with the primary book, that is, the Bible, he will lose the main point. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.6}

Secular history alone is sufficient, if one reads it thoughtfully, to show that it is utterly impossible for man to inherit or possess this earth. “For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.” Notwithstanding this, “their inward thought is this their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honor abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings.”Psalm 49:10-13. Each generation imagines that it is an exception, and that its works will stand forever. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.7}

**Dull Students**

People refuse to learn the lesson of history, even when it is spread out before their eyes. They contemplate the ruins of former greatness, and even while looking, think: “How superior we are to those who lived in ancient times! Their empires have all vanished, and their cities are in ruins, or utterly extinct.” But that is most short-sighted reasoning. A man might as well claim to have more vitality than Methuselah, because he himself is living, in the possession of full strength, while Methuselah, forsooth, is long since dead! Ah, but wait, my friend, and time will tell a different story! You will not have to wait one-tenth the length of Methuselah’s life, to learn your mistake. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.8}

So with the works of which men boast to-day. There are now no structures so massive and so strongly built as many of those of ancient days, that have been utterly demolished by time. Should time continue as much longer as it has already continued, nothing would remain of the glory of the nations that now inhabit the earth, and their names would be forgotten unless some new fragments of stone preserved them. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.9}

No; this earth is under a curse, and unsuited for man’s dwelling-place. He can not live here. Do what he will to establish himself here, he is swept away before he can fairly get a foothold. The princes of the earth are brought to nothing, and the judges of the earth are as vanity. “Yea, scarce are they planted, scarce are they sown, scarce hath their stock taken root in the earth, when He bloweth upon them, and they wither, and the whirlwind taketh them away as stubble. Isaiah 40:24, R.V., margin. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.10}

In spite of this truth which is the one thing that is most evident in all history, men go on planning for this earthly life as tho they were to abide here forever. We see them throwing all their energies into a political struggle, fiercely excited over the outcome, scrambling and crowding for a place, perfectly oblivious to the fact that even if they succeed in attaining the coveted object, it will disappear, and they themselves with it, almost as soon as they seize it. So it always has been, and so it will be to the end. They are as foolish as children on the beach, fighting over the sand houses they have built, which the next wave of the incoming tide will wash away, and at the same time overwhelm them. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.11}

What hope is there then for man?—Much, every way. Go back again to our elementary history book. Surely we can believe a record that is so conclusively substantiated by facts. That tells us that God created the earth not in vain, but to be inhabited (Isaiah 43:18), and that when he had completed it, with man upon it, he “saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Genesis 1:31. The critical eye of the Master could detect no flaw, nothing that could be improved, either in man or his condition and circumstances. Everything was as good as God himself could make it. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.12}

Now we know that “whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever.” Ecclesiastes 3:14. Therefore the condition of the earth in the beginning, and of man as well, is that which is to be through all eternity. God did not place men on the earth in order that they should be swept away like gnats, but that they should *possess* it forever, even forever and ever. Therefore, “we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 2 Peter 3:13. Even tho there were not many repetitions of that promise, the fact that in the beginning God placed a perfect man in a perfect earth, is sufficient promise that so it will be. In view of this promise we can confidently say, even when about to be carried away by the flood of time, “God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me.” Psalm 49:15. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.13}

Who will begin to read history from the beginning, and learn the great lesson that it teaches? Who will cease to chase the bubble that collapses as it is grasped, and begin to plan and live as citizens of a better country, that is, an heavenly, whose capital is a city that has everlasting foundations, whose builder and maker is God? E. J. W. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 769.14}

**“What War Is” The Signs of the Times, 23, 49.**

E. J. Waggoner

It is a most singular thing, yet it is a fact, that the loudest calls for war that have been heard within the last two or three years, have come from the ministers of the Gospel. From thousands of pulpits appeals have been made for any or all of the Powers to proceed to annihilate the Turks, in the interest of the Armenians; later, the Cretans have been encouraged in their efforts to throw off Turkish rule, and Greece has been applauded for taking the part of Crete in order that she might get the whole; while many of the same preachers unsparingly berated the English Government for not joining the Greeks in their war with Turkey. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 771.1}

What a strange spectacle,—professed ministers of the Gospel of peace, to say nothing of thousands of church members, clamoring for war! Do they know what war is? Let us just take the barest glance at it, as it really is. One of the war correspondents with the Turkish army, in the course of his description of the battle of Mati, says:— {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 771.2}

The guns were already clouded in smoke and dust. Now and again a dot came traveling up toward us with painful slowness-a wounded artilleryman; now moaning convulsively; now silent, and swallowing an invisible lump, with twitching eyes. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 771.3}

Who cannot see the picture of the strong man striving to repress any expression of the pain that was nevertheless overmastering him? Later on, the correspondent says:— {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 771.4}

The ambulance drove forward to pick up our wounded, and Edhem Pasha pushed on behind his victorious troops. I passed a Tutish soldier who lay with both legs broken, sobbing piteously with pain. And then I hated war. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 771.5}

And who would not? For war means those same scenes magnified, and multiplied a thousand times. It means men helpless and suffering with wounds, lying in some spot for hours and even days in the heat and cold, famishing for water. In short, it means wholesale murder, aggravated by the fact that many of the victims are not killed outright. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 771.6}

We are charitable enough to believe that most of this call for war, from the lips of professed Christians, would cease if those who do the calling could be placed for a season in the front ranks. Not that they are cowards, but that they do not stop to think what they are talking about. The fact is, that every man who shouts for war is simply an aider and abettor of murder. One famous general declared that “war is hell,” and it is fact that the spirit of war is the spirit of Satan. An officer in the Franco-Prussian war said that if he had led a regiment of angels into the battle they would have come back devils. How can Christians be in any way whatever accessories to such fiendish work? {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 771.7}

It is for the purpose of warning, not of condemning, that we write. We know that there are thousands of sincere Christians who “know not what manner of spirit they are of “when they call for war, to avenge wounded honor or even outrage, and some with whom we have talked have been shocked, on having their attention called to the matter, to find that they were unconsciously being inspired by the spirit of the devil, for it is the spirits of devils, that go about to stir up war. See Revelation 16:14. The man who shouts for and applauds murder is at heart a murderer. In this time when the nations are preparing war, “great plainness of speech” is necessary, in only that some at least may be awakened to their danger, and may for ever break loose from the fierce, murderous, Satanic spirit that is benumbing the senses of the world’s millions, and carrying them to everlasting destruction. E. J. W. {SITI December 16, 1897, p. 771.8}

**“Only as Shadow” The Signs of the Times, 23, 50.**

E. J. Waggoner

Every shadow of darkness, every cloud of gloom, every fear of whatever kind, is simply the shadow of death, and of the devil. He has cast his hellish shadow over the world. Now, as Zacharias prophesied by the Holy Ghost at the birth of his son, the Lord has visited us and delivered us out of the hand of our enemies that we “might serve him without fear.” {SITI December 23, 1897, p. 786.1}

He has delivered us from every tremor of fear, and hath sent the Dayspring from on high “to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.” If you have his life you have his light. What is there to be afraid of? To the one in Christ death itself is only a shadow. The sting is gone. Satan can cast the shadow over him, but there is nothing in a shadow to be afraid of. He is delivered from the power of darkness. He is going through an enemy’s land, whose weapons are all broken. He is going into a nest of scorpions, whose stings have been removed. He is going into a prison-house, the key of which is held by One who loves him. E. J. W. {SITI December 23, 1897, p. 786.2}

**“He Hath Blinded Their Eyes” The Signs of the Times, 23, 50.**

E. J. Waggoner

“Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” John 11:39, 40. {SITI December 23, 1897, p. 786.3}

Many people are more inclined to find doubt and despair in the Bible, than to find hope and comfort, although the Bible contains none of the former, and is full of the latter; so when they read the words of the prophet Isaiah, they at once begin to complain against God, and to say that he is unjust and partial, and they will feel sure that they can not believe, because God has made it impossible. {SITI December 23, 1897, p. 786.4}

Now the Bible claims to be the Word of God. It exists for the sole purpose of revealing God to men, that they may see in him the One altogether worthy of worship and affection. Everybody knows that this is the object of the Bible, whether they believe what it says or not. That being the case, how can it be supposed that anything can be found in the Bible that would tend to depreciate God in the estimation of men? Considered from a human standpoint, and as a merely human production, no one would be so foolish as to write things derogatory to his hero, in a book published for the sole purpose of honoring him. We may therefore be sure that none of the men who had to do with the production of the Bible saw in such statements as the one first quoted anything except such goodness and mercy as is consistent with the character of an all-merciful God, a God who not only loves, but who *is love*. {SITI December 23, 1897, p. 786.5}

That there is comfort in even such texts as that quoted from Isaiah, and that they were written for the sole purpose of producing hope and comfort, is proved by Romans 15:4: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” And that the words of the prophet Isaiah do not teach that there are some who can not be saved even tho they wish to, is shown by the inspired words of Peter, concerning Christ: “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” Acts 10:43. {SITI December 23, 1897, p. 786.6}

When we read that God has hardened the heart of any person, then we should read the story of Pharaoh. God hardened his heart; but every one who reads the account carefully, will see that it was only by the manifestation of kindness and mercy that he did it. When God sent judgments upon Pharaoh and his land, he humbled himself, and confessed his sin, promising repentance; but as soon as God showed him favor and prosperity came again, then his heart was hardened. It was because Pharaoh hated truth and righteousness that as soon as special mercy was manifested toward him he took advantage of it to sin yet more, “Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.” Isaiah 26:10. {SITI December 23, 1897, p. 786.7}

Read the verses in connection with John 12:39, 40, together with the eleventh chapter, and you will see that the way the Lord blinded the eyes of the people was by sending great light to them, which was not according to their previous experience. Jesus declared himself to be the Light, and his mighty works had showed how great was the light. But the greater the work that he did, the more the people hated him and his teaching. Everybody knows the effect that great light has upon the eyes of those who are not accustomed to it; it blinds them, or causes them to close their eyes. The more they have accustomed themselves to live in the darkness, the more does the light blind them. {SITI December 23, 1897, p. 787.1}

The Jews, like all the rest of the world, sat in darkness; but their blindness was even greater than that of the rest of mankind, because they had had great light; and everybody knows that the darkness is much more intense to one who goes out of the light into it, than to one who as always been in the dark. But while others came to the light that shone in the darkness when Jesus came, the Pharisees and the principal part of the Jews rejected him. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” John 1:11. “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” John 3:20, 21. The Jews had loved darkness, and persisted in walking in darkness so long that the light was much more blinding to them than the darkness itself. {SITI December 23, 1897, p. 787.2}

The very same statement by the prophet Isaiah we find thus quoted in Matthew 13:13-15: “Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and *their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see* with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” The same spirit of truth prompted Matthew to make this quotation from Isaiah, that moved Isaiah to write the words in the first place; therefore we know that what we read in Matthew is the exact meaning of what we read in Isaiah. God blinded the eyes of men, only by sending them wonderful light. {SITI December 23, 1897, p. 787.3}

Is it therefore God’s fault that they can not see?—Not by any means. How can it be? If men complain because God shows mercy, what would they say if he manifested wrath? If they reject the love and mercy of God, what can he do for them? Shall we complain of God for sending light that caused men to close their eyes? Shall we say that if he had not sent light, they would not have closed their eyes? Well, what then? Is it better to have one’s eyes open in the pitchy darkness, where there is not a ray of light, than to have them shut in the sunshine? The last condition of the man is just the same as the first, and his possibilities are infinitely greater; for nobody can possibly see in the darkness, but all can see in the light if they will accustom their eyes to it. Let us open our eyes, and praise the Lord for bringing us “out of darkness into his marvelous light.” E. J. W. {SITI December 23, 1897, p. 787.4}