

*March 170.*



# "Watchman, what of the night?"

*The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12*

## WHAT DID ELDER E. J. WAGGONER TEACH?

To understand the message that was brought to the church in 1888 certain factors must be kept in mind. The message which was given by Elders A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner was declared to be "the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of [God's] Spirit in a large measure."<sup>1</sup> In 1892, the servant of the Lord was able to state that "the loud cry of the third angel *has already begun* in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer."<sup>2</sup> A failure to understand this import of the message of 1888 places out of focus all the other facets of this period, and therefore, leads to wrong conclusions.

Furthermore, if the message as brought by the messengers which the Lord sent was destined to finish the work of God in the earth, then a recovery of the truths presented by these men would bring us once again to that very point. What we need is no more, and no less, than a full understanding of what was presented by these men whom God chose to bring a message to His church. Additional light will no doubt shine forth from further study of these truths, but such light will not contradict the basic premises, but will make clearer to the understanding how these truths may be applied to the every day life.

In our search as to what these men actually taught during this period (1888 - 1893) marked so precisely by the servant of the Lord, we discover that we have available a very limited amount of source material. Not until the 1891 General Conference Session were verbatim reports made of the sermons presented.

In the case of Elder E. J. Waggoner, who at that session presented a series of studies from the book of Romans, his first seven studies appear to be merely summations of what was presented rather than verbatim reports. However, the Pacific Press did publish at this time a booklet by Elder Waggoner entitled, Christ and His Righteousness.<sup>3</sup> Based on these two available sources, we shall seek to learn what Elder E. J. Waggoner taught during the "inceptive period" when the message of righteousness by faith was brought to this church in such a way as to constitute the loud cry of the third angel. (A study of what Elder A. T. Jones taught will be discussed in another thought paper at a later date.)

The church in 1888 had come to such a spiritual state that "many had lost sight of Jesus."<sup>1</sup> It was just at this point that Elder Waggoner sought to alter the course of spiritual experience for the member of the church. In the first paragraph of his book - Christ and His Righteousness - he asks the reader to consider Jesus Christ, and then comments:- "To do this as the Bible enjoins, to consider Christ continually and intelligently, just as He is, will transform one into a *perfect* Christian."<sup>4</sup> A few paragraphs later this thought is found:

It is only by constantly and prayerfully considering Jesus as He is revealed in the Bible, that we can keep from becoming weary in well-doing, and from fainting by the way.<sup>5</sup>

Elder Waggoner then proceeds to present Christ as the mighty God, Creator of all things, the great I AM THAT I AM, and THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. The summary statement of this section is worth considering. It reads:

Let no one, therefore, who honors Christ at all, give Him less honor than he gives the Father, for this would be to dishonor the Father by just so much; but let all, with the angels in heaven, worship the Son, having no fear that they are worshiping and serving the creature instead of the Creator.<sup>6</sup>

From the consideration of Christ as God, Dr Waggoner then considers the humiliation of Christ as the Son of man. His understanding of the incarnation was clear, concise, and free from ambiguity. After quoting Romans 8:3 - "God

sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." - here are his words:

A little thought will be sufficient to show anybody that if Christ took upon Himself the likeness of man, in order that He might redeem man, it must have been sinful man that He was made like, for it is sinful man that He came to redeem. Death could have no power over a sinless man, as Adam was in Eden; and it could not have had any power over Christ, if the Lord had not laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Moreover, the fact that Christ took upon Himself the flesh, not of a sinless being, but of sinful man, that is, that flesh which He assumed had all the weaknesses and sinful tendencies to which fallen human nature is subject, is shown by the statement that He "was made of the seed of David *according to the flesh.*"<sup>7</sup>

Then quoting 2 Corinthians 5:21 - "For He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us" - Elder Waggoner comments further on the incarnation in these words:

This is much stronger than the statement that He was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh." He was made to be sin. Here is the same mystery as that the Son of God should die. The spotless Lamb of God, who knew no sin, was made to be sin. Sinless, yet not only counted as a sinner, but actually taking upon Himself sinful nature. *He was made to be sin in order that we might be made righteousness.*<sup>8</sup>

This concept of truth was no more acceptable in Waggoner's day than it is in our own times. The Elder knew the reaction of the human heart, and the reluctance to accept the offense of the cross, for he added this comment:

Some may have thought, while reading thus far, that we were depreciating the character of Jesus, by bringing Him down to the level of sinful man. On the contrary, we are simply exalting the "Divine Power" of our blessed Saviour, who Himself voluntarily descended to the level of sinful man, in order that He might exalt man to His own spotless purity, which He retained under the most adverse circumstances.<sup>9</sup>

Human nature still has one more "out". If the humanity of Christ is explained so that there is no excuse, then the pendulum swings, and the divinity of Christ is made a cloak for the continuance in sin. Waggoner recognized this, and observed that "someone will say, 'I don't see any comfort in this for me. To be sure, I have an example, but I can't follow it, for I haven't the power that Christ had. He was God even while here on earth; I am but a man.'" He then called attention to Paul's statement in Ephesians 3:14-19 emphasizing the

concepts - "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith", and "that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." This comment followed:

Who could ask for more? Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, may dwell in our hearts, so that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. What a wonderful promise! <sup>10</sup>

In Elder Waggoner's thinking, there was clear relationship between the earthly life of our Lord, and His ministry in the courts of heaven following His ascension. Noting that Christ of necessity became like His brethren so that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, he stated the purpose in these words:

So the work of Christ as priest, is for one thing, - to deliver us from sin. What is the power of Christ's priesthood? He is made priest "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an *endless life*." That is the power by which Christ delivers you and me from sin *this day, and this hour, and every moment* that we believe in Him.<sup>11</sup>

Elder Waggoner did not teach or intimate that in some far off day there would come a time when the sinful nature would be eradicated, and original sin removed, so that man could do what God asked him to do. Neither did he conceive the idea that man had to wait till the body of our humiliation was removed from us at the resurrection before the glorious ideal of imparted righteousness could become man's experience. To Elder Waggoner *now* was the accepted time, *now* was the day of salvation! Realizing the weakness and utter inability of man of himself to attain, he, nevertheless, visualized the power of Christ's intercession for us, in the same way that he understood the victory of Christ's earthly life in our fallen humanity. To him, "the life of Christ [was] divine power", and the only reason why the just live by faith is because "Christ lives in them." Thus, for the Christian "in the flesh there may be the divine life that was in Christ when He was in the flesh."<sup>12</sup>

When Elder Waggoner reached the sixth chapter of his studies in Romans

he analyzed carefully verse 11 - "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" - commenting:

"Likewise" - Like what? *Like as Christ was raised from the dead to be dead no more, so likewise reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin to sin no more.* Is that true? Note it carefully, - that sin shall have no more dominion over you. That is what the Bible says . . . If men really believe that Christ is risen from the dead, they can believe that they are dead unto sin, but alive unto God, and free from sin. Does the Apostle mean free from sin? It is a solemn, but a glorious thought. How thankful ought men to be that they can have that confidence in the power of God through Christ that they can without any mental reservation take this chapter and believe it. Yes, believe these very words, "He that is dead is freed from sin."<sup>13</sup>

In answering the question of the human heart - Is it true that man can live without sinning? - Elder Waggoner declares that in Romans 6, only two services are presented - "The service of Satan, which is of sin unto death, and the service of Christ, which is obedience unto righteousness." Then follows some searching questions:

Now can we be the servants of Christ while we are committing sins, and making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof? Is Christ the minister of sin? Whose servants are we while we are committing sin? We are the servants of sin, and sin is of Satan. . . Is sin stronger than righteousness? is Satan stronger than Christ? No! Then as Christ has proved Himself to be the stronger of the two, and just as surely as when we were the bondservants of sin, it had power to keep us free from righteousness; so when we yield ourselves as bondservants of Christ, He has power to keep us from sin.<sup>14</sup>

But what has been our experience? How have we sought to accommodate ourselves with our existence? Let Elder Waggoner answer these questions -

Now we call ourselves Christians. That means - what? Followers of Christ! But in all our Christian experience we have left little loopholes along here and there for sin. We have never dared to come to that place where we would believe that the Christian life should be a sinless life. We have not dared to believe it or preach it. But in that case we cannot preach the law of God fully. Why not? Because we do not understand the *power* of justification by faith.<sup>14</sup>

The three Angels' Messages produce saints that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.<sup>15</sup> The messages, brought by Elders Jones and Wag-

goner to this people in 1888 and for several years afterwards, were declared to be "the third angel's message in verity."<sup>16</sup> The reason is given - "The present message - Justification by Faith - is a message from God; it bears the divine credentials, *for its fruit is unto holiness.*"<sup>17</sup> We have been doing a lot of talk and a lot of writing about justification by faith for over eighty years. Isn't it time that we as a people grasped the full message of 1888 and start preaching about the *power* of justification by faith, and through the indwelling Christ, truly serve our God "in human nature which we *now* have?"<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers, p. 92

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, "The Perils and Privileges of the Last Days", Review & Herald, Nov. 22, 1892

<sup>3</sup>E. J. Waggoner, Christ and His Righteousness, The Bible Students Library No 72, October 15, 1890 (Pacific Press, Oakland, Cal.) 96 pp.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 5

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 7

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 24

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-27

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-28

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 28

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp 29-30

<sup>11</sup>E. J. Waggoner, "Letter to the Romans", No 8, General Conference Bulletin, 1891

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., No 10

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Revelation 14:12

<sup>16</sup>Ellen G. White, "Repentance the Gift of God", Review & Herald, April 1, 1890

<sup>17</sup>Ellen G. White, "Camp Meeting at Rome, N. Y.", Review & Herald, September 3, 1889

<sup>18</sup>Ellen G. White, Our High Calling, p. 48

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Note - By the law of logical continuity, the next thought paper should discuss what Elder A. T. Jones taught during this same period - 1888-1893. But research on this subject has not been completed. Therefore, we shall discuss two other topics in the April and May issues. One will be entitled, "After Ten Years", and take note of certain observations made by Robert Brinsmead in a letter dated, September 10, 1969. The other paper will be a critique on the use being made of Manuscript 21, 1893 from the pen of Ellen G. White.

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