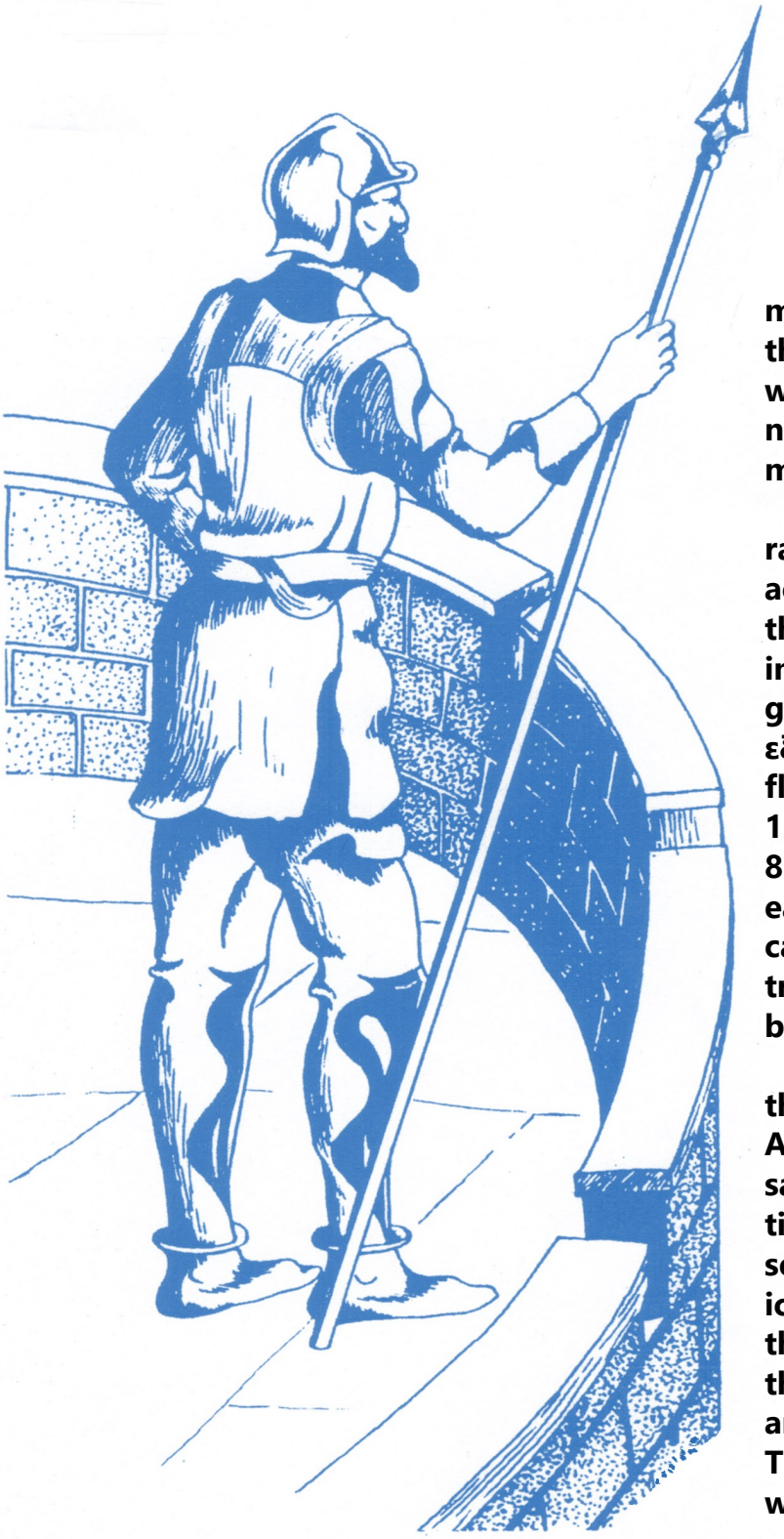
Issue # 68 ◆ Dec. 2024 / Jan. 2025

"Watchman, what of the night ?"

" The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!" Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)



▶ THIS ISSUE'S READING

"THE TRUE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE INCARNATION OF JESUS – REVISITED"

(ADDENDUM 'A')

Editor's Preface

With this Issue of WWN, we will begin supplementing our continuing study of the doctrine of the Incarnation with a number of addenda articles which show the scriptural relevance of the Incarnation to the 1888 message and the final atonement.

The doctrine of the Incarnation cannot be separated from the teaching of the perfection of character which God intends His people to manifest in the final display of His glory on the earth. In His incarnate life, Christ finished the work the Father gave Him to do – having been given "power (Gr., εξουσια, 'exousian' – authority; power) over all flesh" – He "glorified [Him] on the earth" (John 17: 2-4); He "condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8: 3). This is to be repeated; for the final victors of earth are to overcome, "even as [Jesus] also overcame." (Revelation 3: 21). The genuine biblical truth regarding 'Last Generation Theology' is based and built on this understanding.

In context, a corollary to this comprehension that has caused considerable question within the Adventist community is whether the '1888 Message' is simply a reinstatement of the 'Reformation (era) Gospel'? Those who advocate this view seem to (roughly) believe that the only soteriological issue involved was 'legalism'. Suffice to say, that the heaven-sent message sent by the Lord through His messengers, Elders E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones encompassed more than just that. The testimonies of both Waggoner and Jones, and what they taught at the time – some of which is

embodied in this article – will demonstrate otherwise.

" The Incarnation In The Final Conflict And The Restitution Of All Things "

The Conflict Within The Seventh-day Adventist Movement, Over The Truth Of The Incarnation As Understood By Elders E. J. Waggoner And A. T. Jones

During the period of time covered in this supplemental material – 1888 to 1905 – the subject of the Incarnation was preached more extensively, and discussed more fully than at any other time in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the exception of the years after 1950. To understand the why of this emphasis during this period of time, it is necessary to note the messages of righteousness by faith which came to the Church at the 1888 General Conference Session and the decade following that Session.

At the General Conference Session in Minneapolis (1888) – "The Lord in his great mercy sent a most precious message to his people through Elders Waggoner and Jones." (*Special Testimony to the Battle Creek Church*, pg. 35).[1] These men enlarged and emphasized this message during the years that followed. Not only did the message present "justification through faith in the Surety;" but "it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." Christ, through the Holy Spirit, came near to His Church with the objective of "imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent." This is "the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure." (*Ibid*., pp. 35-36).

It needs to be understood also that Christ as High Priest in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary was desirous of completing His work for man according to covenant promise. He had upon the Cross provided a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of mankind; but as our High Priest, He was "to complete His work, and fulfill His pledge to 'make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.' Isaiah 13: 12." (DA, pg. 790). [2] This work of Christ is noted in the Writings as "a special atonement for Israel," or "a final atonement" (EW, pp. 251, 253). [3]

The question of what was involved in making a man more precious than the golden wedge of Ophir, and how it was to be accomplished became the primary emphasis in the presentation of the message of righteousness by faith. The truth that the Incarnation had a definite relationship to the atonement, as projected by Edward Irving (see *Strong's Systematic Theology*, pg. 744) [4] – though misunderstood and misapplied by him – now came into its own; and it was seen to be an essential and vital part of the message concerning the special work that Jesus desired to accomplish in and for men.

During this period, the special messengers whom the Lord sent presented the doctrine of the Incarnation. In 1890, the Pacific Press released a book of Dr. E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*,[5] which LeRoy Froom in his 1971 publication (*Movement of Destiny*, pg. 189) avers to be an edited presentation of the messages given by him at the 1888 General Conference Session. [6] *[Note: This is (still) open to serious question and challenge (?)]* However, in the book, after setting forth Christ's divinity, Waggoner turns to the "wonderful story of His humiliation." (pg. 24).[5] He quotes and comments upon John 1: 14 and Philippians 2: 5-8. Then he writes: "Other scriptures that we will quote bring closer to us the fact of the humanity of Christ, and what it means for us." (pg. 26).[5] These other texts were Romans 8: 3-4, Hebrews 2: 16-17, and 2 Corin-

thians 5: 21.

Commenting on Romans 8: 3-4, he wrote:

"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 was sinful man that He came to redeem ... Moreover, the fact that Christ took upon Himself the flesh, not of a sinless being, but of a 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*." (pp. 26-27; emphasis his). [5]

In commenting on 2 Corinthians 5: 21, Waggoner wrote:

"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." (pp. 27-28; emphasis his). [5]

How does the Incarnation relate to us being made righteous? Observe the further observations of Waggoner:

"He (Christ) is 'touched with the feeling of our infirmity.' That is, having suffered all that sinful flesh is heir to, He knows all about it, and so closely does He identify Himself with His children that whatever presses upon them makes an impression upon Him, and He knows how much Divine power is necessary to resist it; and if we but sincerely desire to deny 'ungodliness and worldly lusts,' He is able and anxious to give us strength 'exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think.' All the power which Christ had dwelling in Him by nature, we may have dwelling in us by grace, for He freely bestows it upon us." (pg. 30). [5]

Then he adds:

"What wonderful possibilities there are for the Christian! To what heights of holiness he may attain! No matter how much Satan may war against him, assaulting him where the flesh is weakest, he may abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and be filled with the fullness of God's strength." (pp. 30-31). [5]

Thus Dr. Waggoner inseparably linked the truth of the Incarnation – that Christ took upon Himself the fallen, sinful nature of man – and the objective of the atonement – "That Christ may dwell in [our] hearts by faith," "that [we] might be filled with all the fullness of God" – the "heights of holiness" to which we may attain.

At the 1891 General Conference Session, Elder Waggoner gave a series of studies on the book of Romans. In these studies the same emphasis appears as in his book, *Christ and His Righteousness*. In the 8th study, he noted the attribute of a priest as one who had compassion, and observed that the compassion of Christ was revealed by the fact that "it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren." Then he asked, "What is done by the compassion of Christ? ... What benefit is the compassion of Christ to us?" To these questions, he answered:

"He (Christ) knows the strength we need. He knows what we need, when we need it, and how we need it. So the work of Christ as priest, is for one thing, – to deliver us from sin."

His next question was – "What is the power of Christ's priesthood?"

To this question the answer was given:

"He is made a 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."

Dr. Waggoner considered the power of the "endless life" as coming from two sources: 1) It was a divine power, and 2) the earthly life

of Christ in the flesh was a life free from sin; therefore "death could not hold Him." To the objection that this was good theory in the case of Christ, but we are the flesh of sin, he replied – "That is true; but in the flesh there may be the divine life that was in Christ when He was in the flesh." (GCB, 1891, pp. 130-131). [7]

In the 10th study, Waggoner returned to the concept of the power of an endless life as it pertains to the individual. He asked – "Now how do we get hold of Christ? How do we get the benefit of that righteous life of His?" Here was his answer:

"It is in the act of death. At what point is it that we touch Christ, and make the connection? At what point in the ministry of Christ is it that He touches us, and effects the union? – It is at the lowest possible point where man can be touched, and that is death. In all points He was made like His brethren, so He takes the very lowest of these – the point of death, – and there it is, when we are actually dead, we step into Christ."

But since Christ arose, we too, rise to newness of life. "That new life, – that newness of life which we have, is the life of Christ, and it is a SINLESS LIFE." In this same study, Waggoner declared this to be the very heart, life, and power of the message of righteousness by faith.

He said:

"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 to 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. Then without justification by faith it is impossible to preach the law of God to the fullest extent." (*Ibid*., pp. 156, 159).[7]

Herein is the difference between justification by faith as presented in the Protestant Reformation and the doctrine as brought to the Church in 1888. While the basic foundation was the same – the just shall live by faith – it was in the 1888 message that the full application of what it meant was made – the power to keep from sinning. In other words, a people were to be prepared of whom it could be said – "Here are they that keep the commandments of God."

In the 12th study all the teaching of righteousness by faith was linked with the Incarnation. In discussing "the old man," and our marriage to this "body of sin" as Paul presented it in Romans, Chapter 7, Waggoner observed that we were one with it. Just so, when we are crucified with Christ, and rise to a new relationship, we are married to Christ, and thus one with Him. On this point, he commented:

"What a precious thought it is, that we are one flesh with Christ! In this we see the mystery of the Incarnation appearing again. If we can believe that Christ was in the flesh, God incarnate in Christ, we can believe this, – Christ dwelling in us, and working through us, – through our flesh, just the same as when He took flesh upon Himself and controlled it." (Ibid., pg. 185). [7]

In 1892, Elder E. J. Waggoner accepted a call to become editor of the *Present Truth* published in England. He did not again speak before a General Conference Session until 1897. At that Session he presented nineteen studies primarily on the first section of the book of Hebrews. In these studies he maintained the same position on the nature of Christ's humanity that he had held six years previously.

In discussing Hebrews 2: 9, which states that Jesus "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death," Waggoner commented – "He was made a little lower than the angels; He was man. So that when we consider Him now, we consider Him as man, and from this point through we have Jesus before us all the time, but always as

man. Never forget that." (GCB, 1897, pg. 45).[8] To emphasize how closely Jesus has identified Himself with man, Waggoner observed that Jesus did not abandon man when he sinned, but accepted the curse in Himself, even the curse that man received because of sin. He asked the question – "Where is that point where the curse falls upon Christ?" In answer to his own question, he said – "Sinful flesh. Not only sinful flesh, but that which stands as the symbol of the curse that falls upon Christ – the cross." (Ibid., pg. 45).[8] To Waggoner, the crucifixion did not begin at Calvary, for he declared – "Christ taking fallen, sinful humanity upon Him, is Christ crucified" (Ibid., pg. 71).[8]

In contrasting the difference between the two Adams, Waggoner emphasized what he understood the Scripture to mean which said – "The Word was made flesh." He stated, "The Word was made perfect flesh in Adam, but in Christ was the Word made fallen flesh. Christ goes down to the bottom, and there is the Word flesh, sinful flesh." (*Ibid*., pg. 57).[8]

In 1901 the demise of the Holy Flesh Movement, at least outwardly and officially, came at this General Conference Session. However, the re-organization controversy at the Conference overshadowed the doctrinal conflict projected by the advocates of the "Holy Flesh" doctrines. Fifteen days after the Session opened, Elder E. J. Waggoner gave the 7 p.m. evening sermon. He chose for his Bible text – Hebrews 10: 4-10. Then he introduced a question that had been given to him which read as follows:

"Was that holy thing which was born of the virgin Mary born in sinful flesh, and did that flesh have the same evil tendencies to contend with that ours does?" (1901 *GC Bulletin*, pg. 403). [9]

In Waggoner's answer there was left little doubt as to what he was talking about. He mentioned the concept of sinless flesh, and declared it to be "the deification of the devil." (*Ibid*. pg. 405).[9] He stated very specifically as to when the change would come in the flesh, and what the results would be. His words were:

"The flesh will be opposed to the Spirit of God so long as we have it, but when the time comes that mortality is swallowed up of life, then the conflict will cease. Then we shall no longer have to fight against the flesh, but that sinless life which we lay hold of by faith and which was manifest in our sinful bodies, will then by simple faith be continued throughout all eternity in the sinless body." (*Ibid*., pg. 406).[9]

What then is the purpose of this earthly struggle? Waggoner continued:

"When God has given this witness to the world of His power to save to the uttermost, to save sinful beings, and to live a perfect life in sinful flesh, then He will remove the disabilities and give us better circumstances in which to live. But first of all this wonder must be worked out in sinful man, not simply in the person of Jesus Christ, but in Jesus Christ reproduced and multiplied in thousands of His followers. So that not simply in the few sporadic cases, but in the whole body of the church, the perfect life of Christ will be manifested to the world, and that will be the last crowning work which will either save or condemn men; and greater testimony than that there is not, and can not be, because there is none greater than God. When God is manifest among men, not simply as God apart from man, but as God in man, suffering all that man suffered, subject to everything that man is subject to, what greater power can be manifested in the universe than that?" (*Ibid*., 406). [9]

During the sermon, Dr. Waggoner challenged those listening to settle it, each for himself, whether or not he was truly "out of the church of Rome." He then commented:

"There are a great many that have got the marks yet, but I am persuaded of this, that every soul who is here to-night desires to know the way of truth and righteousness, ...

and that there is no one here who is unconsciously clinging to the dogmas of the papacy, who does not desire to be freed from them.

"Do you not see that the idea that the flesh of Jesus was not like ours (because we know that ours is sinful) necessarily involves the idea of the Immaculate Conception of the virgin Mary? Mind you, in Him was no sin, but the mystery of God manifest in the flesh, the marvel of the ages, the wonder of angels, that thing which even now they desire to understand, and which they can form no just idea of, only as they are taught it by the church, is the perfect manifestation of the life of God in its spotless purity in the midst of sinful flesh. ... O, that is a marvel, is it not?" (*Ibid*., pg. 404). [9]

From 1892 and onward the burden for the presentation of the Message of 1888, and the truth in regard to the Incarnation at the General Conference Sessions rested upon A. T. Jones. At both the 1893 and 1895 Sessions, Jones used the same theme – "The Third Angel's Message." In the 10th study of the 1893 series, Jones discussed the "white raiment" with which the saints are to be clothed. Of this garment, he declared:

"Brethren, that garment was woven in a human body. The human body – the flesh of Christ – was the loom, was it not? That garment was woven in Jesus; in the same flesh that you and I have, for He took part of the same flesh and blood that we have. That flesh that is yours and mine, that Christ bore in this world – that was the loom in which God wove the garment for you and me to wear in the flesh, and He wants us to wear it now, as well as when the flesh is made immortal in the end!

"What was the loom? Christ in His human flesh. What was it that was made there? [Voice: 'The garment of righteousness'] And it is for all of us. The righteousness of Christ – the life that He lived – for you and for me, that we are considering to-night, that is the garment. ... It was God in Christ. Christ is to be in us, just as God was in Him, and His character is to be in us, just as God was in Him, and His character is to be woven and transformed into us through these sufferings and temptations and trials which we meet. And God is the weaver, but not without us. It is the co-operation of the divine and the human – the mystery of God in you and me – the same mystery that was in the gospel and that is the third angel's message." (GCB, 1893, pg. 207). [10]

In the above statement Jones clearly indicated that the doctrine of the Incarnation which teaches that Christ took upon Himself the fallen nature of man is inseparably linked with the message of righteousness by faith, and this combined message is the third angel's message. Furthermore, this whole concept was linked with the perfection that must be man's in the final hour of human history.

In the 18th study. Jones discussed the demands of the Law of God. It demands "perfect love, manifested 'out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.'" Man can only respond, "I have not got it: I have done my best." But the Law replies: "That is not what I want; I don't want your best; I want perfection. It is not *your* doing I want anyhow, it is God's I want: it is not your righteousness I am after: I want God's righteousness from you: it is not your doing I want: I want God's doing in your life."

What can man say to this? Nothing, absolutely nothing! What is the answer? Here is the answer that Jones gave:

"But there comes a still small voice saying, 'Here is perfect life; here is the life of God: here is a pure heart; here is a good conscience; here is unfeigned faith.' Where does that voice come from? [Congregation: 'Christ'] Ah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came and stood where I stand, in the flesh in which I live; He lived there; the perfect love

of God was manifested there; the perfect purity of heart manifested there; a good conscience manifested there; and the unfeigned faith of the mind that was in Jesus Christ, is there." [And Jones added] " ... the law wants to see that thing *in me*." (*Ibid*., pg. 412; emph. his). [10]

In the 1895 GC series of studies which Jones gave, he enunciated the doctrine of the Incarnation and the nature of Christ's humanity more clearly and more completely than had been done previously in any single presentation. He began the study by noting the common source from which the humanity we possess was derived. "One man is the source and head of all our human nature. And the genealogy of Christ, as one of us, runs to Adam ... All coming from one man according to the flesh, are all of one. Thus on the human side, Christ's nature is precisely our nature" (GCB, 1895, pg. 231). [11]

» To be Continued.

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2. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 790.

3. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945), 251, 253.

4. Augustus H. Strong, D.D., LL.D., *Systematic Theology, vol. 2* (Philadelphia, PA: The Judson Press, 1907), 744. https://archive.org/details/systematictheolo44555gut

5. Ellet J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Melbourne, AUS: Echo Publishing Company, Ltd., Printers and Publishers – 1892), 24, 26, 26-27, 27-28, 30, 30-31. www.littlebookopen.org/books/chr/ChristandHisRighteousness--byEJWaggoner.pdf

6. LeRoy E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971), 189.

7. *Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Session* (Battle Creek, MI: 1891 Daily Bulletin, Vol. 4 – No. 9; No. 11; No. 13), 130-131; 156, 159; 185.

8. *Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Session* (Lincoln, NE: 1897 Daily Bulletin, Vol. 1 – No. 3; No. 5; No. 4), 45; 71; 57.

9. *Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Session* (Battle Creek, MI: 1901 Daily Bulletin, Vol. 4 – Extra, No. 17), 403, 405, 406, 404.

10. *Ibid*. (1893 Daily Bulletin, Vol. 5 – No. 8; No. 18), 207; 412.

11. *Ibid*. (1895 Daily Bulletin, Vol. 1 – Extra, No. 8), 231.

*All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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