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## THE VOICES OF THE THREE SIGNS

[EXODUS 4:1-9.]

[REPUBLISHED FROM THE WATCH TOWER OF 1901 BY REQUEST.]

WHILE PREPARING the Sunday School lessons relating to Moses and his two presentations of himself to the Israelites, as their deliverer from Egyptian bondage, we noted the fact that "these things were written aforetime for our admonition upon whom the ends of the Ages are come." (I Cor. 10:11.) And, considering the matter from this standpoint, we perceived, as we had never done before, that the three signs by which the Israelites were convinced that God's deliverance of them was at hand, at Moses' second presentation, must have been intended to typify some corresponding three signs or testimonies at the second advent of Christ; testimonies which will be convincing to the true spiritual Israelites. In the type these three signs or testimonies preceded the plagues upon the Egyptians; and this in the antitype must mean that the three signs or testimonies to spiritual Israel respecting the second advent of our Lord and respecting the great deliverance which He is to accomplish, must precede the plagues, the great time of trouble, coming upon the world in general shortly.

At first we were perplexed, and said to ourself: "The Scriptures clearly show us that we are now 'in the days of the Son of Man'; our journal has borne as its sub-title, '*Herald of Christ's Presence*,' since its institution in 1879; yet where are these three signs? Already twenty-seven years of the forty-year harvest have passed, and but thirteen remain, in the last four of which [which period we have already entered at the time of the reprinting of this article] we confidently expect the plagues upon the world – antitypical Egypt. Where are these signs or testimonies, which the type teaches us we should expect at this time, to convince all the true Israelites?"

For a time we were inclined to look for *miraculous* tokens, but subsequently realized that this would be out of the Lord's order, as the antitype is always on a higher and grander scale than the type: as, for instance, the typical Passover lamb but feebly foreshadowed the Lamb of God, and the great things accomplished through His sacrifice. Feeling confident of the times in which we are living ("in the *parousia* of the Son of Man"), we concluded that in all probability these signs had already been given, or were in process of being given, at the present time.

Still we could not recognize them, and feeling that the matter must *now* be to the Lord's household "meat in due season," we besought the Lord earnestly and repeatedly for light upon the subject, while continuing our studies. No light coming, we mentioned the matter to the Bible House family at the dinner table, requesting the prayers of all upon the subject, and that if any had suggestions to offer they would feel free to present them. Seemingly it was in line with the Divine purpose that we should thus come to the point of making confession of inability to solve the riddle, and that our reliance for wisdom was wholly upon the Lord; for within two hours after this acknowledgment the entire matter became clear and lucid to our mind, as we shall now endeavor to show.

Our Lord declares Moses to have been, in some particulars, in some of his transactions, a type of Himself, saying, "Moses wrote of Me." Moses himself declared, "A Prophet [Teacher] shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me." Peter **[R4853 : page 215]** quotes this last expression in his sermon, and emphasizes it. (John 5:46; Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22.) Moses did not typify Christ in all of his doings, however, nor was his life as a whole a type of the life of Christ. For instance, in his smiting of the rock, contrary to the Divine command, he became a type of those of Christ's followers who put Him to an open shame, and who, in consequence, will die the Second Death; and as a type of these Moses was not

permitted to enter into the land of promise. – Num. 20:11; Deut. 32:51; Heb. 10:29.

Moses typified Jehovah at times also; but in the present instance we are specially interested in considering his conduct with the Israelites in connection with their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. In this type we see him distinctly as a representative of Christ Jesus. Moses was rich, a prince in high honor, learned in all the learning of his times, but for Israel's sake he renounced these, left them all, and they being bondmen, he took his place amongst them, to be their leader and deliverer. How like this is to the description given us in the Scriptures of our Lord's course! He left the glory of the heavenly condition and spiritual plane of being; He took a bondman's form and was found in fashion as a man. He came to deliver His brethren from bondage. – Phil. 2:6-8, *Diaglott*.

When Moses came to his own people they rejected him, and he fled for his life to the land of Midian, from whence he came to them a second time. So Christ came to His own, and His own received Him not (John 1:11); and He went into a far country, even heaven itself, from whence He has now, a second time, come, and will deliver all who are "Israelites indeed" from the bondage of sin and death.

Moses was forty years in coming to the point where he offered himself to Israel the first time; then he was absent from them an *equal* period of time, forty years, and came again and delivered them. There is a type or parallel in this time feature also; it illustrates the length of the Jewish and the Gospel Ages, as being *equal*. From the time of the beginning of typical Israel as a nation, waiting for the coming of Messiah, down to the time when Jesus actually presented Himself, was a period of 1,845 years, and from that time, when He died and left them, until the period which the Scriptures show us marked His second coming (October, 1874) was a like period of 1,845 years – corresponding exactly to the two periods at which Moses offered himself in the type.\*

## THE VOICE OF THE FIRST SIGN

At Moses' second presentation of himself to Israel he did not address them personally and directly, as at the first, God having said to him, "Aaron shall be thy prophet (or mouthpiece), and thou shalt be a god unto Aaron." This item of the type would seem to imply just what we see to be the fact of the case now, viz., that the Lord Jesus does not address Himself to the true Israelites in person now, as at the first advent, but through His agent, through a mouthpiece. Aaron, the mouthpiece or agent of the Lord, we understand to represent the Royal Priesthood – those of the Lord's consecrated people still in the flesh, still sacrificing – those who have not yet passed beyond the veil into glory. The type, then, seems to say that the signs or testimonies which will convince all true Israelites now living respecting the presence of the Lord and His mighty power to deliver, His ultimate victory over Satan, sin and death, will be of or from our *present* Lord, but by or through the living members of His Body, His brethren, represented in Aaron.

The first of the signs or testimonies to Israel was the casting of the rod upon the ground, and its becoming a serpent, and the taking of the serpent by the tail, and its becoming a rod again in the hands of Aaron. It was Moses' rod, and Aaron was merely his representative in every act. The natural Israelite merely saw this as a miracle, and discerned in it no teaching; but the spiritual Israelite is not to expect a larger rod and a larger serpent, as the antitype, but should expect to comprehend the meaning of the rod and of the serpent as an antitypical instruction or testimony today.

A rod symbolizes authority. Moses' rod was frequently used in connection with the plagues, as well as in connection with the signs, as signifying Divine authority. A serpent is a symbol of evil – of sin and all its consequences – evil in general. The lesson for the spiritual Israelite today is that he is now to understand that all the evil there is

in the world is the result, directly or indirectly, of God's having let go of His rod or authority; and they are to understand further that it is God's intention or purpose, as it is also His promise, to take hold upon the present evil conditions, which have lasted now more than six thousand years, and to bring order out of confusion – to re-establish His authority in His own hand.

These acts or signs are said to have "voices" or to be *testimonies*. (Exod. 4:8,9.) Hence our query must be, Is this sign or testimony now being given to God's people throughout the world? We answer, Yes. Has it been always recognized and presented thus? We answer, No. Was it ever thus presented before this Harvest time? We answer, No. Heretofore it has been a matter of speculation amongst peoples and theologians of all classes and shades of Christian belief, but a question without an answer – Why did God permit evil in the world?

Some have blasphemously held that God has *caused* the evil, that good might follow; but this God Himself most emphatically denies, and everything pertaining to His character refutes it. He declares that every good and every perfect gift is of Him, with whom is no changeableness nor variableness. "His work is perfect." Others have claimed that a conflict is in operation between God and Satan, between good and evil, and that each side is doing its utmost to conquer the other – with evil and Satan predominant in the world, on account of which it is spoken of as "the present evil world," in which there is "none righteous, no, not one."

But whatever the standpoint of view, it has been confusion only, until the Harvest time, when the true light upon the subject began to shine forth, showing that when sin entered the world God gave mankind over, let them take their course, let the rod of Divine authority drop, "rested from His own work," permitting sin and evil to flourish – not, however, intending that it should flourish forever as a serpent, but fully intending, predestinating, and even foretelling, that in due time He would set up His Kingdom in the person of the Messiah

who should lay hold upon that old Serpent, the Devil and Satan, and restrain his power; showing, too, that He will ultimately bring all evil conditions back to subjection and harmony with the Divine authority and law – destroying the evil connected therewith.

This teaching, then, is the sign whose "*voice*" or *testimony* was typified by Aaron's casting the rod upon the ground, its becoming a serpent, and his taking it [R4853 : page 216] back into his hand again. How much grander the antitypical teaching than the typical sign! How much more forceful! Who of the true Israelites who has heard this testimony is any longer in doubt respecting the speedy deliverance of all of God's people from the power of Satan, sin and death?

We would avoid personality as far as possible, but believe it to be in the interest of the truth and of the true Israelites that we point out that this sign has already been given. THE WATCH TOWER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE was founded in 1879, and the "voice" therefrom, to the true Israel of God, announced that the second advent of our Lord, as the Deliverer of the world, had already taken place – that He was *present* but invisible, a Spirit Being not possible to be seen by any, even His Church, until they should be "changed" and made *like Him* in the First Resurrection. The message further declared that He is present for the purpose of establishing His Kingdom, and delivering His saints and the whole groaning creation from the bondage of corruption – as many as will obey Him. And it is very remarkable that very shortly a special number of this journal was issued, bearing the significant title, "*Food for Thinking Christians – Why Evil Was Permitted.*"

This voice or testimony was spread abroad amongst the spiritual Israelites in an extraordinary manner – over a million and a half copies being circulated through the mails and at church-doors in the United States, Canada and Great Britain. And the "voice" or testimony of this first sign, token, teaching, is still being repeated from one to another of the Lord's people throughout the world, and now in various

languages. In that pamphlet, for the first time, so far as we know, was shown that the evil in the world, the bondage to sin and death, and the reign of iniquity and the various oppressions to which the whole groaning creation is subject, are the results of God's having *let go His authority* (rod), and not the result of His *inability* to hold the authority, nor in any sense the outworking of the *authority in His hand*. It showed also how complete will be the restraint of evil and its complete annihilation when again the Lord shall take unto Himself His great power and reign.

Could there possibly be a greater or a grander antitype for the sign which Moses and Aaron presented to Israel through the rod and the serpent? Is not the truth on this subject much more convincing to the spiritual Israelite today than any natural signs or wonders or miracles could possibly be? Does not the knowledge now granted the Lord's people respecting "The Divine Plan of the Ages," and its purpose, and the result, satisfy our longings as nothing else could do, and assure our hearts that deliverance is nigh?

### **THE VOICE OF THE SECOND SIGN**

The second of the signs to be given to the Israelites was that of the leprous hand. Hidden in the bosom, when revealed it was leprous; but when hidden again, and revealed a second time, it was whole. Again we say that the natural Israelite discerned nothing but the natural sign, but it was intended of God that the spiritual Israelite should discern a much grander lesson, and that a testimony through this grander lesson would be still more convincing to him than was the typical sign to the typical Israelite. A hand is a symbol of power. In this case the hand represented Divine power. Leprosy is a symbol of sin. The teaching, therefore, would seem to be that Divine power was first manifested without sin or imperfection or blemish; secondly, that the same Divine power, hidden for a time, was afterward manifest in sin and imperfection; and thirdly, that the same Divine power, hidden again for a time, will subsequently be manifest without sin.

What teaching or testimony is this? We answer that it is in harmony with the previous teaching respecting the permission of evil, but does not apply to evil in general, but rather to sin in particular; does not apply to the world in general, but specially applies to the people of God – to those whom God uses as His agents or representatives, His *hand*, His *power* in the world. God's power originally was manifested unblemished. But during this Gospel Age He has been represented by His consecrated people, the members of the Body of Christ, who are His ambassadors and representatives; but they are leprous, actually imperfect, though reckonedly perfect in Christ. As the world sees them they are blemished, but from the Divine standpoint their blemishes are all hidden, covered with the merit of Christ's righteousness. Nevertheless, these have been the *hand* or *power* of God in the world for more than eighteen centuries; but by and by they are to be received into His bosom again, and "changed" in the First Resurrection, so that when manifest again in the future they will be without sin, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," and will again be used of the Lord as His Agent in stretching forth His rod and bringing the plagues upon Egypt, and delivering the residue of God's people from the bondage of sin and death.

And is this also a sign or a testimony peculiar to this time in which we live, and was this subject never clearly seen before? We answer, it is peculiar to our day, and was never clearly seen before. In the past many have seen something of justification, something of sanctification, something of a coming Deliverer; but never before have these subjects been seen in the clear light in which they are now seen as related to each other. Never before was the relationship distinctly seen between justification and sanctification and deliverance; that justification is of Divine grace, accepted through faith; that sanctification implies works and sacrifice, based upon justification; and that to these justified and consecrated ones, who faithfully overcome, by the grace of God in Christ, shall be granted a share in



the "glory, honor and immortality" of the *divine nature* in the First Resurrection.

But has the voice or sign of this testimony gone forth in any particular channel, as did the preceding voice or testimony? We answer, Yes – in the SCRIPTURE STUDIES series of volumes, the first of which was published in 1886. The united testimony of these relates to the Church, showing original sin, the first step out of it into justification, through faith in Christ, the second step of sanctification, and sacrifice, and the ultimate change, in the First Resurrection, to the divine nature, and glory and joint-heirship. These volumes deal specially with this subject from its various standpoints, the Ransom-Sacrifice of our Lord, on account of which the cleansing will come to us in due time, being everywhere prominently set forth; and also the fact that no absolute purity is to be expected until the Lord shall take us to Himself in our "change."

Supplemental to the teaching of the STUDIES on this subject, and to assist in emphasizing their "voice" and making clear their testimony, the Pilgrim service has been instituted under which various brethren travel from place to place explaining and demonstrating the lesson taught by the leprous hand and its healing, and all of our readers, having heard the testimony, are daily giving it forth to others. [R4853 : page 217]

### **THE VOICE OF THE THIRD SIGN**

Another sign was to be given, the Lord clearly intimating that it would be necessary, and that not all of His true people would hear or heed the "voice" of the first two testimonies. To natural Israel the third sign was the taking of the water from the river, and pouring it upon the earth, where it became blood. They saw merely the sign, the miracle; they read not its meaning, as the spiritual Israelite must seek to do. In explanation of the symbolical teaching of this type we suggest that *water* is here, as elsewhere, a symbol of the *truth*; and that the *earth* is here, as elsewhere, a symbol of *society*.\*

[\\*STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, Vol. I, pp. 66-71.](#)

The pouring of the water upon the earth would ordinarily mean the refreshment of the earth, a blessing; and the pouring of the truth upon society would ordinarily be expected to mean a blessing to society; but in the symbol the water turned to blood, repulsive, abhorrent, symbolizing death; and this, in the antitype, would signify that in the present time the pouring out of the truth upon society will produce an effect contrary to what might ordinarily have been expected. Society, civilization, has been claiming, especially within the past century, to be searching high and low for the truth. But this type says that the time has come when these professed truthseekers (the word *science* signifies *truth*) will reject the truth, disdain it, and to them it will seem obnoxious, loathsome, intolerable.

Readers of THE WATCH TOWER will here possibly call to mind our Lord's words respecting this present time, "The sun shall be darkened and the moon shall be turned into *blood*." We have elsewhere shown the significance of this:+ that the moon is the symbol of the Jewish Law, as the sun is the symbol of the Gospel message; and that the Gospel message will become darkness to the eyes of society in general, through the sophistries, Higher Criticism, Evolution theories, etc., of this boastful day; while the Law, represented by the moon, will be viewed as bloody – that its sacrifices will not be esteemed as types, nor appreciated as such, but be regarded as the work of misguided Jews, who slaughtered their animals by the thousands because of their ignorance and superstition, and that the commands which they obeyed were not of God, but of their own conjecture and of priestly connivance. The same thought attaches to this sign or testimony of the water of truth being poured upon the social earth. It will be resented, as *bloody*, instead of being absorbed as *truth*.

[+STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, Vol. IV, pp. 590-594.](#)

Is there any thing corresponding to this sign now in progress in the world, that could be esteemed a sign or testimony to the true

Israelites, such as never was before given? We answer, Yes, there is. A very remarkable movement has been in progress amongst us during the past ten years, during which the *Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society* has supplied tracts and papers free in any quantity to those who would promise to use them judiciously. You have the annual reports, showing the millions of pages which have thus been circulated – the truth being thus poured upon the symbolical earth, society, liberally, in many lands and in many languages. But especially has this pouring out of the water, truth, progressed wonderfully during the past three years, under what we have designated the "volunteer" work, in which hundreds of the Lord's consecrated people have systematically, season after season, distributed to Christian people, papers and booklets which our Society has supplied freely – the donations covering the expense coming in without urging or even request.

But what is the effect of this pouring out of the water upon the most enlightened peoples of the world, professed truth-seekers? Is it gladly received, joyfully absorbed? Only by the few – the vast majority seem to be angered, as the Scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of Divinity at the first advent were angered when they perceived that the Lord and the Apostles were teaching the people, and that without money and without price. (Acts 4:2.) Nothing can be more evident than that the professed teachers of Christendom do not want to be taught themselves and do not want the people to be taught *the truth*. They bitterly oppose it, and persecute and speak evil of those who in this way are seeking to do good. More and more they are getting so changed from the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ to the theory of Evolution and Higher Criticism and sectarian pride and worldliness that the truth seems repulsive to them, undesirable, bloody. They not only view the typical sacrifices as bloody, but they resent the thought that the antitypical sacrifice for sins was the death of Christ – they resent the thought that Divine Justice required this sacrifice, and that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," as the Apostle declared. (Heb. 9:22.) It does not fit with their theories.

According to their theories man was created next to the monkey, and has been evolving as a race grandly, up to the present time, and will continue to evolve and develop until he becomes a god, and hence needs only to be let alone; he needs no Savior, no Deliverer from the present condition of things, which are not seen to be evil. They put evil for good, and good for evil, darkness for light, and light for darkness. To these the Truth of God's Word respecting the fall, respecting the Ransom, respecting the coming deliverance and restitution blessings which God has provided in Christ, through the Millennial Kingdom for all the families of the earth – these are all objectionable, contradictory to their theories, hateful, bloody.

As the "voice" of the third sign or testimony was to bring conviction to all of the true typical Israelites, so in the antitype this last testimony or evidence will ultimately bring conviction to all of the Lord's true people in the world today. They will discern that the systems and theologians in whom they have trusted are going farther and farther, day by day, away from the appreciation of the true Gospel – the truth as it is in Christ Jesus – into the outer darkness of the world. All who are loyal to the Lord, as they perceive this condition of things, as they recognize the cleavage between belief and unbelief, from the Scriptural standpoint, will thus be helped, convinced, and enabled to take their stand for the truth accordingly.

It will be remembered that when Moses and Aaron presented themselves before Pharaoh they performed the first of these signs in his presence – the rod turned into a serpent, and being reclaimed was a rod. Pharaoh called for his magicians (types of theologians of today, whose minds, not morals, have become corrupted, and who are reprobates, not morally, but as respects the faith. – 2 Tim. 3:8). He explained to them that Moses and Aaron claimed that this sign was an evidence of Divine power and favor, and asked them if they could not show the same evidences. They replied, Yes, and cast their rods upon the ground, and their rods also became serpents; but Aaron's rod-serpent swallowed up all of these. What did this signify? It might mean

that so far as the world is concerned the first sign or testimony which convinced the Hebrews will be claimed to be nothing new; it will be claimed that theologians all along have declared and [R4853 : page 218] thought that God blesses evil things, so that they result in good. But we answer that the view of this subject which God has *now* displayed to His people is so much more complete that it quite *swallows up all these* suggestions and theories of the past. What the Lord is now showing proves to His people conclusively, not only that some accidents are overruled of the Lord for good, but that all evil of every kind is the result of absence of Divine control, and that when the Lord shortly shall put forth His hand, and again take control of earth's affairs, its evil conditions will give place to conditions in accord with the Divine character and authority.

It will be remembered, also, that the first plague which came upon the Egyptians was the turning of all the water of Egypt into blood – the river, ponds, etc. – so that the Egyptians could not drink of the water, but digged for themselves wells near the river. As the water represents truth, the thought here conveyed would be that from the worldly standpoint very soon all truth will become repulsive – every feature of truth connected with the Divine Plan, as represented in the Word of God, will become abhorrent; and the digging of wells would seem to imply that, rejecting the Word of God, the world (Christendom – Churchianity) will seek for truth in various ways of their own.

### **WHAT SHALL WE SAY TO THESE THINGS?**

It should be a great encouragement to us all to find so clearly expressed in the type what we had vaguely and indistinctly hoped would be expressed, viz., that the Lord's people of the Royal Priesthood on this side the veil are being used of Him in various ways in the accomplishment of His purpose of separating the people of God from others – the wheat from the tares. It is remarkable in this connection that none but the consecrated have ever been successful in connection with the circulation of any of these testimonies. Of the

more than a million copies of SCRIPTURE STUDIES now (1901 A.D.) in circulation remarkably few have been circulated by any but those who are believers in their testimony, and who have circulated them through a desire to be instruments and mouthpieces of the Lord in giving forth His Word – even as was Aaron to Moses.

Let us, then, dear brethren and sisters, feel encouraged as, looking into the type, we see so clear a fulfilment in our day of the things written aforetime for our admonition. Let us with fresh courage show forth to all whom we have any reason to believe are "Israelites indeed" the secret of the Divine Plan – *Why Evil Was Permitted*. Let us prosecute also the work of showing them respecting the hand, the instrumentalities which God has used during this Gospel Age in this service; respecting the justification which covers, in God's sight, though it does not transform us in the sight of men, pointing out also the final victory of the consecrated. Let us persuade the First-Born of Israel to faithfulness until our "change" comes, when we shall be made like the Lord and fit to be His servants and representatives. Let us continue also to pour out the water of truth, whether others hear or whether they forbear. The Lord's assurance is that this sign, this testimony and its *contrary results*, ultimately shall influence all "Israelites indeed." Let us remember that the opposition of the worldly, even, will prove to be a co-operative influence, in deciding for the Israelites indeed that the Deliverer and the deliverance are at hand. And finally let us apply to ourselves the Lord's assurance to Moses respecting himself and Aaron, "Certainly I will be with thee."

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