

"The Sacred Waters of India"

The Present Truth – June 29, 1893

E. J. Waggoner

What a strange place to go to pray! Why do they do it?

If you were in India, you would see many scenes like this, and once a year you would see thousands and thousands of people coming from every direction along the hot, dusty roads toward certain rivers and wells. Some travel for many miles on foot until they are well-nigh ready to die with the heat and fatigue.

Why are they so anxious to visit these particular rivers?



Have they no water nearer home?

They have water at home, but none like this water, they are told. There false guide-books declare that the sight, the name, or the touch of the river Ganges takes away all sin or naughtiness, however

bad; that thinking of the Ganges when at a distance, is sufficient to remove the taint of sins; but that bathing in it has blessings more than any one can imagine.

No wonder, then, that the poor Indians are so willing to leave their work and home and everything and make long pilgrimages, if they only can see this wonderful stream and bathe in its sacred waters.

If you know of a fountain where you could really wash away every unkind word that you have spoken, and every hateful thing that you have done, would you not also gladly go to any trouble to reach it?

Well, the Lord says that there is such a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, where every naughty thing that you have ever done can be washed away, but there is only one such fountain, and it is not the River Ganges or any other river in India.

Satan knows where the real cleansing fountain is, but he hates people, and wants them to be destroyed by sin, so he sends them false guide-books and tries to lead them around some other way to fountains and rivers that can do them no good, some of which are too filthy to cleanse even their hands and faces. How sad it is to see people travel for hundreds and hundreds of miles to have their sins washed away, and then go back just as sinful, just as unsanctified, and just as thirsty as when they came. They have indeed "forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." [Jer. 2:13]

"When a pilgrim first comes to Allababad, he sits down on the bank of the Ganges, and has his head shaved, holding it over the water, so that every hair may fall into it; and he believes that for every single hair he will get a million years in heaven."

The Hindus are also taught to believe that whoever dies in that stream is sure of future happiness. Many sick people, therefore, are brought there to die. As soon as it is thought that a man is too ill to

get well, he is carried down to the river, laid on the ground so that the sacred water may touch his feet; his mouth is filled with mud out of the stream, and then he is left alone to die, with no food, no drink, no medicine! A great many are thus forced to die of hunger, for they are not always so ill as their friends suppose.

"Why don't they take them home again? you will ask. Because if a man gets better after he has been taken to the river, his friends say it must be because he was so wicked the gods would not have him, so none of his relatives, not even his mother or his little boys or girls would ever touch him again, and he would have to live by himself all his life and be a beggar, and everyone would think it a disgrace to have anything to do with him." "And this is all the comfort and help that the Hindu religion can give to the dying soul." It is said that one thousand of these unhappy deaths take place every day in India!

But India is such a large country that not all of the poor people in the far south can afford to travel the thousand miles or more to reach the Ganges. They therefore have their own sacred streams and fountains which, although not thought so sacred as the Ganges, are yet thought to have power to cleanse from sin.

One Brahmin, however, not satisfied with these, worked for years, spending all his money and much that he begged from others, in digging a tank where they might have the sacred Ganges water. Although the river itself was more than 1,100 miles away the sacred book said that if one should dig deep down in that certain place he would find a spring into which the Ganges flowed. Poor misguided soul! If he had only sooner known of the true Guide-Book he might have used his money and strength in a way that would have done him more good, for after the tank was all finished he found that its water could not wash away a single sin!

In the Golden Temple at Benares is a well called the Well of Knowledge. It is full of dead flowers and rice mixed with Ganges

water; the flowers and rice being the offerings put in by those who have come there to worship. "A dreadful smell is caused by all these dead leaves and the stagnant water; and yet a Hindu will give a great deal of money, if he has it, to be allowed to have just one teaspoonful of that water; he thinks it so very holy."

Besides all the sacred tanks and wells, that have been made in different parts of India, Ganges water is taken by carriers around the country and sold to those who wish it. Then those who go to the Ganges themselves, carry some of the water home for their friends. "It is used to purify people who have been defiled, it is sprinkled on the bride and bridegroom at a wedding, and on the dead."

Women as well as men bathe in the Ganges. Of course a high-caste lady must not be seen by a man outside of her own family, so she is shut up tightly in her palky, and carried to the river. She does not get out even when she reaches the river, but is dipped in the water, she and her palky together. (As the bottom of the palky is full of holes the water can easily get into it.) Then she is carried back home without so much as an opportunity to put on dry clothes.

If a Christian touches a Hindu after he has been bathing in the Ganges, all the good is undone, and he must either go without the good, or go back and bathe again.

But what does the good amount to? "An old Hindu named Moses, said he had worshipped many idols, and dug into many wells, washed in many streams, drank even the water in which he had first washed a Brahmin's dirty feet. But nothing satisfied his soul; it was still unclean, and he thirsted still."

Bathing in the so-called sacred streams does no more good than bathing in any other water. Water will indeed cleanse from all outward stains and filth, but sin is in the secret chambers of the heart, and it has left such deep, poisonous stains there that no water

on earth can take it away. The Lord Himself says that "though thou wash thee with niter, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity [sin] is marked before Me." [Jer. 2:22]

"The Only Fountain for Sin and Uncleanness"

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It is necessary to have clean faces, clean hands, and clean bodies, and to have clean clothes and clean houses and clean gardens, for uncleanness of any kind brings disease and sometimes death. But the uncleanness of sin is worse yet, for it will always bring eternal death unless it is removed.

Have you ever disobeyed your father or your mother? Have you ever said unkind words, or acted selfishly, or thought or felt naughty things in your heart? The Lord says that every time you thought or acted thus, it left poisonous stains in your heart that will destroy you forever unless you have them all washed away. You need to be cleansed from sin as much as do the people of India. Suppose you should lay this paper away and never get another mark on it, would that take away the marks that are already upon it? Suppose you should never make another sin stain on your heart, would that take away the sin stains that you have already made there? No, even though you should never do another naughty thing, your heart must be cleansed from the sins already in it, or they will destroy you.

Jesus knew that you never could wash the stains out with water or anything else that you could find.

He knew that they must be washed away or you would perish. He loved you. He could not bear the thought of seeing you destroyed.

He knew that He alone could do it for you, that He only could open a fountain that would cleanse you. But it would cost Him His very life if He did it. Jesus loved you so that He willingly suffered the shameful death that the fountain might be opened where you could be cleansed. Oh, what love!

Where is the fountain? In Him is the fountain of life.

Who will cleanse you? "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." [1 John 1:9]

With what will He cleanse you? "And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." [1 John 1:7]

Can His blood cleanse from very bad sins? "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." [Isa. 1:18]

How much will it cost? "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." [Isa. 55:1]

Is there room enough for all? "And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." [Rev. 22:17]

Does He invite the children? "Suffer the little children to come, and forbid them not." [Mark 10:14]

How far away is He? "Behold I stand at the door and knock." [Rev. 3:20]

When will He cleanse you? "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." [Rev. 3:20]

How only can you take darkness out of a room? By bringing a light in.

Why does Jesus' coming into our hearts drive out the dark stains of sin? "I am the light of the world." [John 8:12]

Dear child, will you let Him in? If you are sorry for your naughty ways, tell Jesus, and ask Him to forgive you and come into your heart. He is the only fountain of cleansing, of righteousness, of life, of happiness.

Sin brings eternal death, but righteousness springs eternal life. Therefore as long as you let Jesus dwell with you you are safe, for His own purity and righteousness drive out your sins, he has promised to come in if you ask Him to, really wanting to give up your ways and take His ways. Then you must believe that He does come in and that He does cleanse away your sins, as soon as you believe, it is done.

You cannot see Him now with your eyes, but you can feel His sweet, gentle Spirit helping you to do right, and by and by, if you do not grieve Him away, you shall see Him coming in the clouds of heaven to take you to His beautiful home.