

Lesson 1

Some Principles of Prophecy

Sabbath Afternoon March 29

Those who accepted the advent doctrine were roused to the necessity of repentance and humiliation before God. Many had long been halting between Christ and the world; now they felt that it was time to take a stand. . . . The Spirit of God rested upon them and gave power to their earnest appeals to their brethren, as well as to sinners, to prepare for the day of God. . . .

Why, then, this widespread ignorance concerning an important part of Holy Writ? Why this general reluctance to investigate its teachings? It is the result of a studied effort of the prince of darkness to conceal from men that which reveals his deceptions. For this reason, Christ the Revelator, foreseeing the warfare that would be waged against the study of the Revelation, pronounced a blessing upon all who should read, hear, and observe the words of the prophecy.—The Great Controversy, pp. 340, 342.

In the past teachers have declared Daniel and the Revelation to be sealed books, and the people have turned from them. The veil whose apparent mystery has kept many from lifting it, God's own hand has withdrawn from these portions of His word. The very name "Revelation" contradicts the statement that it is a sealed book.

"Revelation" means that something of importance is revealed. The truths of this book are addressed to those living in these last days. We are standing with the veil removed in the holy place of sacred things. We are not to stand without. We are to enter, not with careless, irreverent thoughts, not with impetuous footsteps, but with reverence and godly fear. We are nearing the time when the prophecies of the book of Revelation are to be fulfilled.—Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 113.

God has spoken, and his word is reliable, and we must rest our faith upon a "Thus saith the Lord." God would have us study the events that are taking place around us, and compare them with the predictions of his word, in order that we may understand that we are living in the last days. We want our Bibles, and we want to know what is written therein. The diligent student of prophecy will be rewarded with clear revelations of truth, for Jesus said, "Thy word is truth."—"What Manner of Persons Ought Ye to Be?" Signs of the Times, October 1, 1894, par. 8.

SUNDAY, MARCH 30

Whoever Reads, Let Him Understand

The word of God, like the character of its Author, presents mysteries that can never be fully comprehended by finite beings. But God has given in the Scriptures sufficient evidence of their divine authority. His own existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. True, He has not removed the possibility of doubt; faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration; those who wish to doubt have opportunity; but those who desire to know the truth find ample ground for faith.

The Bible unfolds truth with a simplicity and an adaptation to the needs and longings of the human heart that has astonished and charmed the most highly cultivated minds, while to the humble and uncultured also it makes plain the way of life. "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Isaiah 35:8. No child need mistake the path. Not one trembling seeker need fail of walking in pure and holy light. . . . The more we search the Bible, the deeper is our conviction that it is the word of the living God, and human reason bows before the majesty of divine revelation.—Education, pp. 169, 170.

The Holy Spirit has been given us as an aid in the study of the word. Jesus promises, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Those who are under the training of the Holy Spirit will be able to teach the word intelligently. And when it is made the study book, with earnest supplication for the Spirit's guidance, and a full surrender of the heart to be sanctified through the truth, it will accomplish all that Christ has promised. The result of such Bible study will be well-balanced minds; for the physical, mental, and moral powers will be harmoniously developed. There will be no paralysis in spiritual knowledge. The understanding will be quickened; the sensibilities will be aroused; the conscience will become sensitive; the sympathies and sentiments will be purified; a better moral atmosphere will be created; and a new power to resist temptation will be imparted. And all, both teachers and students, will become active and earnest in the work of God.—Special Testimonies on Education, p. 26.

The Holy Spirit and the Word are in perfect harmony. The Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures and always leads to the Scriptures. . . .

While searching the Scriptures, the mind that is led by the Holy Spirit sees their Author, and by beholding is constantly brightening while looking at the Word. Thus the intellect aspiring to reach the standard of perfection becomes elevated to comprehend it.—That I May Know Him, p. 195.

MONDAY, MARCH 31

God Wants to Be Understood

To the Waldenses the Scriptures were not merely a record of God's dealings with men in the past, and a revelation of the responsibilities and duties of the present, but an unfolding of the perils and glories of the future. They believed that the end of all things was not far distant; and as they studied the Bible with prayer and tears, they were the more deeply impressed with its precious utterances, and with their duty to make known to others its saving truths. They saw the plan of salvation clearly revealed in the sacred pages, and they found comfort, hope, and peace in believing in Jesus. As the light illuminated their understanding and made glad their hearts, they longed to shed its beams upon those who were in the darkness of papal error.—The Great Controversy, p. 72.

All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it. Yet as we study the Bible and meditate upon the life of Christ and the plan of redemption, these great themes will open to our understanding more and more.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 740.

During these days that Christ spent with His disciples, they gained a new experience. As they heard their beloved Master explaining the Scriptures in the light of all that had happened, their faith in Him was fully established. They reached the place where they could say, "I know whom I have believed." 2 Timothy 1:12. They began to realize the nature and extent of their work, to see that they were to proclaim to the world the truths entrusted to them. The events of Christ's life, His death and resurrection, the prophecies pointing to these events, the mysteries of the plan of salvation, the power of Jesus for the remission of sins—to all these things they had been witnesses, and they were to make them known to the world. They were to proclaim the gospel of peace and salvation through repentance and the power of the Saviour.—The Acts of the Apostles, p. 27.

TUESDAY, APRIL 01

Daniel—Shut Up the Words

As we near the close of this world's history, the prophecies recorded by Daniel demand our special attention, as they relate to the very time in which we are living. With them should be linked the teachings of the last book of the New Testament Scriptures. Satan has led many to believe that the prophetic portions of the writings of Daniel and of John the revelator cannot be understood. But the promise is plain that special blessing will accompany the study of these prophecies. "The wise shall understand" (verse 10), was spoken of the visions of Daniel that were to be unsealed in the latter days; and of the revelation that Christ gave to His servant John for the guidance of God's people all through the centuries, the promise is, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." Revelation 1:3. . . .

A careful study of the working out of God's purpose in the history of nations and in the revelation of things to come, will help us to estimate at their true value things seen and things unseen, and to learn what is the true aim of life. Thus, viewing the things of time in the light of eternity, we may, like Daniel and his fellows, live for that which is true and noble and enduring. And learning in this life the principles of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, that blessed kingdom which is to endure for ever and ever, we may be prepared at His coming to enter with Him into its possession.—Prophets and Kings, pp. 547, 548.

The study of the Revelation directs the mind to the prophecies of Daniel, and both present most important instruction, given of God to men, concerning events to take place at the close of this world's history.—The Great Controversy, p. 341.

Honored by men with the responsibilities of state and with the secrets of kingdoms bearing universal sway, Daniel was honored by God as His ambassador, and was given many revelations of the mysteries of ages to come. His wonderful prophecies, as recorded by him in chapters 7 to 12 of the book bearing his name, were not fully understood even by the prophet himself; but before his life labors closed, he was given the blessed assurance that "at the end of the days"—in the closing period of this world's history—he would again be permitted to stand in his lot and place. It was not given him to understand all that God had revealed of the divine purpose. "Shut up the words, and seal the book," he was directed concerning his prophetic writings; these were to be sealed "even to the time of the end." "Go thy way, Daniel," the angel once more directed the faithful messenger of Jehovah; "for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. . . . Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Daniel 12:4, 9, 13.

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 02

Studying the Word

Endeavoring to lay aside all preconceived opinions, and dispensing with commentaries, [William Miller] compared scripture with scripture by the aid of the marginal references and the concordance. He pursued his study in a regular and methodical manner. . . . As he studied with earnest prayer for divine enlightenment, that which had before appeared dark to his understanding was made clear. . . .

With intense interest he studied the books of Daniel and the Revelation, employing the same principles of interpretation as in the other scriptures, and found, to his great joy, that the prophetic symbols could be understood. He saw that the prophecies, so far as they had been fulfilled, had been fulfilled literally; that all the various figures, metaphors, parables, similitudes, etc., were either explained in their immediate connection, or the terms in which they were expressed were defined in other scriptures, and when thus explained, were to be literally understood.—The Great Controversy, p. 320.

Jesus, the greatest teacher the world has ever seen, recognized the value of the Holy Scriptures, and expounded them to his disciples. After his resurrection, he drew near to two of them as they were on the way to Emmaus, talking, as they went, of the disappointed hopes occasioned by the death of the beloved Master. . . . Jesus said to them, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” And beginning at Moses and the prophets, “he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Jesus reproved the disciples for not being acquainted with the scriptures that testified of the Messiah. Had they been familiar with the Scriptures, their faith would have been sustained in the hour of trial, and their hope would have remained unshaken; for the treatment Christ would receive at the hands of those he came to save was plainly stated in the prophecies.—“Value of Bible Study,” Signs of the Times, June 10, 1886, par. 9, 10.

Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel’s message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted. In the little book entitled “Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology,” Father Miller gives the following simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation:

“1. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible; 2. All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by diligent application and study; 3. Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering; 4. To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know, then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error; 5. Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule, and not the Bible.”—“Notes of Travel,” Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, November 25, 1884, par. 23, 24.

THURSDAY, APRIL 03

Figurative or Literal?

Early in His ministry Christ had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." In the figurative language of prophecy, He had thus foretold His own death and resurrection. "He spake of the temple of His body." John 2:19, 21. These words the Jews had understood in a literal sense, as referring to the temple at Jerusalem. Of all that Christ had said, the priests could find nothing to use against Him save this. By misstating these words they hoped to gain an advantage. The Romans had engaged in rebuilding and embellishing the temple, and they took great pride in it; any contempt shown to it would be sure to excite their indignation. Here Romans and Jews, Pharisees and Sadducees, could meet; for all held the temple in great veneration. On this point two witnesses were found whose testimony was not so contradictory as that of the others had been. One of them, who had been bribed to accuse Jesus, declared, "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." Thus Christ's words were misstated. If they had been reported exactly as He spoke them, they would not have secured His condemnation even by the Sanhedrin. Had Jesus been a mere man, as the Jews claimed, His declaration would only have indicated an unreasonable, boastful spirit, but could not have been construed into blasphemy. Even as misrepresented by the false witnesses, His words contained nothing which would be regarded by the Romans as a crime worthy of death.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 705.

Let the heart be softened and subdued by the spirit of prayer before the Bible is read. Truth will triumph when the spirit of truth cooperates with the humble Bible student. How precious the thought that the Author of truth still lives and reigns. Ask Him to impress your minds with the truth. Your searching of the Scriptures will then be profitable. Christ is the great Teacher of His followers, and He will not leave you to walk in darkness.

The Bible is its own interpreter. With beautiful simplicity, one portion connects itself with the truth of another portion, until the whole Bible is blended in one harmonious whole. Light flashes forth from one text to illuminate some portion of the Word that has seemed more obscure.—"How to Study the Bible," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 13, 1959, par. 4, 5.

And when you search the Scriptures with an earnest desire to know the truth, God will breathe his Spirit into your heart, and impress your mind with the light of his word. The Bible is its own interpreter, one passage explaining another. By comparing scriptures referring to the same subject, you will see harmony and beauty of which you have never dreamed. There is no other book whose perusal strengthens and enlarges, elevates and ennobles, the mind as does the perusal of this Book of books.—"God's Word Our Study-Book," *Youth's Instructor*, June 30, 1898, par. 4.

FRIDAY, APRIL 04

“Jesus at Emmaus,” in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, pp. 208, 209.

“William Miller,” in *Early Writings*, pp. 229–232.

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