

Bible Studies for Adventists



These studies are NOT produced by or connected to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Week 12 • March 14–20, 2009

Commentary on “The Blessings of the Prophetic Gift”

PHIL HARRIS

Day 1: Sabbath Afternoon, March 14, 2009

Today's lesson opens with an interesting phrase: "Prophets who wrote no books of the Bible".

PROBLEMS

Nathan, Elijah and even Jesus, who we learned in previous commentary is the true Spirit of Prophecy, wrote no books. However, their prophetic words are recorded in the Bible by Godly inspired writers. In John 1:1 we see that Jesus is called the "Word", meaning that when he speaks, we are hearing the voice of God. The title of the lesson for this week includes the phrase; "Prophetic Gift", implying that Ellen White's words are a gift from God. Since her words are not included in Scripture, written by her or any of the Biblical authors, what she has to say must be judged against the known prophetic Word, the words of Jesus Christ recorded by known prophets of God. Her motives are beside the point. The only thing that counts is what we learn when her words are compared against the Biblical standard.

Since the church is mentioned in this lesson, we need to be reminded that the true Church, the Body of Christ are those who have believed the gospel message of Jesus Christ and who have been sealed by the promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is sent by our Savior to each member of his Body.

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.(Eph. 1:10-14)

SUMMARY

We have seen in earlier commentary where the prophetic gift is only one of many important spiritual gifts bestowed by the will of God and all these gifts work together through the various members of the true Body of Christ, his Church. None of these gifts function apart from the other gifts and they are never the domain of any one certain person within the Body. We have learned that Jesus Christ alone holds the title of; "Spirit of Prophecy". These gifts bring glory to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who is our blessing.

Later this week we will also be looking at the unique Adventist phrase; "counsels on health" and how it relates to the gospel message of Jesus Christ and our salvation.

Day 2: Sunday, March 15, 2009

The opening question in today's lesson is; "Why did God elect Israel as His special people?" and it follows up with the question; "What is the mission of the Christian church, and how well is it carrying out this mission?"

PROBLEMS

In response to the first question we should begin with this passage:

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 12:1-3)

From this passage we learn that through Abraham and the nation of Israel, God elected that all families of the earth would be blessed. Since we know that Israel has repeatedly turned away from serving God, we need to change the question and ask; How did God keep his promise that Israel would be a blessing to "all families of the earth"?

And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus. (Acts 13:22,23)

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. (Rev. 22:16)

The "offspring of David", the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is how "all families of the earth" have been blessed and why the nation of Israel is God's special people.

The mission of the church is to carry this message of the Savior who came through the "root of Jesse" of the Nation of Israel unto all the world. Remember, the reason we need a Savior is we are all under the curse of death because of the sin of Adam. Jesus Christ brings us good news; the GOSPEL MESSAGE.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (Romans 3:23)

The command to the Church to spread the gospel message, was summarized by Paul in the following two verses:

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.... For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (I Cor. 2:2; 3:11)

This is why Jesus was able to say to the thief on the cross these words:

"Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43b)

One important point that should not be overlooked is that we can not obey the command to spread the gospel message to the whole world without first being indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus Christ as the Comforter who would represent him in the life of each Believer:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:16,17)

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

Summary

All the families of the world have been blessed by the line of Abraham because of the Messiah, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The mission of the Church, the true Body of Christ, is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ paid the full penalty for our sins and that we receive God's salvation in the same way that the thief on the cross did, by complete faith in Jesus Christ. The question of how well any Christian is delivering the gospel message centers on how truly they are indwelt, enlightened and empowered by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Day 3: Monday, March 16, 2009

The theme of today's lesson is Christian education.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (Deut. 6:4-7)

Parents are to diligently teach their children the word of God that comes from deep within their own hearts.

PROBLEMS

But 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. (John 14:26)

A 'Quarterly' lesson plan instead of the personalized Holy Spirit's revelation of God's Word is not how God intended we learn and understand his written word. Remember, the Holy Spirit indwells each and every member of the Body of Christ. Ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit that leads us into an understanding of God's Word.

Deut. 6:4-7 is a passage that is directed towards parents. They are the ones commanded by God to be teachers of their respective children. This role is not intended to be delegated to anyone else, be it government, church or whatever. The sending away of Adventist children to boarding academy is a flagrant violation of God's word.

The role of the church is to equip the Body of Christ through the collective administration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is the will of our Savior that each and every local body of Christians receive these gifts for this purpose, to build up and support parents, who in turn, train their children in the 'heart' knowledge of God.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (Eph. 4:11-16)

SUMMARY

The role of the Holy Spirit includes the mission of personally and directly enlightening each member with a knowledge and understanding of God's word. Since God intends that each child grow, in all respects, under the care of his/her parents it is wrong to send them to a boarding academy before they are adults themselves. The role of Christian institutions should be to assist parents, not replace their authority.

Day 4: Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Today's lesson focuses on the Adventist health message which is known as; "counsels on health" because it is the counsel given by Ellen White on this subject.

God speaking to the Israelites:

...and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I [am] the LORD who heals you." (Ex. 15:26 NKJV)

Problems

The first reference given is; Lev 7:22-26. For the most part, these are rules that pertain to animals brought as a sacrifice. For instance, there is the prohibition against eating the fat of the sacrifice. This is a poor text to support a health message.

What this passage does show is why the sons of Eli the priest were so evil when they demanded the raw meat with the fat still on it. The fat was meant to be burnt in the sacrificial fire.

The next reference, Lev. 11:1-8, poses another interesting problem. In these verses the Hebrew people are given a list of what animals are clean and what is to be considered as unclean. This appears to be somewhat contradictory when compared to what animals God gave Noah to eat:

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. (Gen. 9:3,4)

We find the explanation when we study further into Leviticus:

But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people. Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine. (Lev. 20:24-26)

The Hebrew people were to show their separation from the godless people around them by not eating food God declared as unclean for them. The list of 'unclean foods' they were forbidden to eat was to demonstrate their separation from the sins of the Gentiles. Insight into the association of Gentiles with unclean foods gives Christians a full understanding of the vision given to Peter by God in Acts Chapter Ten. Gentiles were no longer to be considered as unclean in the same way that there were now no longer foods that were to be considered as unclean. To argue that the vision didn't change the food rules and was only talking about Gentiles versus Jews is to forget that these rules also included separation or contact from Gentiles while eating. You can not separate contact with Gentiles while eating from what was 'unclean' meat. This was demonstrated by Paul when he came down so hard on Peter:

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. (Gal. 2:11,12 ESV)

Now, we need to consider another important point by looking at First Corinthians chapter three, verses 16 and 17, which are used to support the Adventist health message:

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. (I Cor. 3:16,17)

If you start with verse one of this chapter you will learn a lesson that has nothing to do with what we eat or anything else we do to our bodies. When we put our loyalty on a person other than Jesus Christ, that is the sin that pollutes the Body of Christ. Ultimately, the warning in verses 11 through 15 is being ignored:

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (I Cor. 3:11-15)

Here are the words of Jesus concerning what defiles a person. Notice that food does not but there are many things that do.

And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (Mark 7:14-23)

Summary

While it is good that Christians care for their bodies and nourish them in all ways, spiritually, mentally and physically, this should not be the focus of our "missionary call". It is not part of the gospel message and as we have just seen in the last Scripture passage, it is not what pollutes or defiles our bodies, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Since Jesus Christ is central to the gospel message, that is where our focus should be. For a group of people who love to quote the 'Ten Commandments', how can they overlook the one that says; "thou shall have no other Gods before me"?

Day 5: Wednesday, March 18, 2009

This lesson starts out with the claim that Moses was the first to write down God's words. Then it goes on to point out that God's word should be placed in our homes where it is constantly in view. After that, it is asserted that the Adventist publishing work was the result of a vision from God.

Problems

First off, it should be pointed out that the references given (Ex. 17:14, 34:27, Deut. 31:24) nowhere state that Moses was the first to write down God's word. For instance, the book of Job is considered to be much older than the writings of Moses and we have no idea who the author is. While this point doesn't affect the theme of this lesson, why state something that can not be supported from the Bible?

Publishing the written word of God certainly is in compliance with the command to spread the gospel message. But, what of the writings of Ellen White? The Adventist publishing activities focus on her written works far more than the printing and distribution of the Bible. Why is this? For that matter, why write a book titled; *The Clear Word Bible* and call it the Bible with Ellen's words inserted into the body of the text? This has all the appearance of perverting God's word and is not what we are commanded to take to the world.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Rev. 22:18,19)

God has always intended that his inspired holy word move from the written page to the "door posts" of our homes and into our "hearts", not just the intellect of our minds as the following verse would indicate:

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Ps. 119:11)

We already know from God's word (John 14:16,17,26) that the role of the Holy Spirit includes leading each person into all truth. Therefore, the role of parents is to take the written word of God, the Scriptures, into their homes and through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, introduce their children to the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Summary

As Christian parents, you are the ones responsible to lead your children to a saving knowledge of the gospel message of Jesus Christ through the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. When you consider Rev. 22:18,19, should you not tremble if holding a copy of such a book that Adventist publishers call a bible? When writing, publishing, or simply preaching from material that you consider to be God's holy word, make sure that it really is the pure word of God. If you take away or add to his Word, there is a curse to be aware of.

Day 6: Thursday, March 19, 2009

Today's lesson focuses on God's use of prophets to protect his people from theological error. It then makes the claim that Ellen White had the same role and makes passing reference to the "Kellogg Crisis", the "semi-Arian" doctrine and A. F. Ballenger's challenge to the "sanctuary teaching". Finally, the topics relating to the Creation week and the Sabbath are introduced.

Problems

Since the Sanctuary Doctrine is central to Adventist theology, that is where we will place our focus in today's commentary.

Point #1, When was the veil torn away?

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; (Matt. 27:50,51)

The temple veil, separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn away at the death of Jesus on the cross. This means that, because Jesus paid the penalty for all our sins, there is no separation of the Holy compartment from the Holy of Holies. Christians have had direct access to God the Father for the better part of two thousand years.

Point #2, When did Jesus sit down at the right hand of the Father?

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:1,2)

Shortly after his resurrection Jesus ascended into heaven and has been at the 'right hand' of God the Father ever since. Because the veil had long since been torn apart, there is no Inner Compartment for Jesus to move into and he has always been at the right hand of the Father since he ascended into heaven. Nothing happen in 1844 other than many people were exposed as fools.

Point #3, Who is our Scapegoat?

Adventist teach that the word, scapegoat comes from the word; *azazel*, which carries the idea of being 'evil' or 'cursed', therefore it must be Satan. The only agreed understanding of the meaning of this obscure word is that it means; to go to "a place unknown". As for there being a curse involved, note that the cross is a shame, a curse and it is Jesus who hung on it.

His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. (Deut. 21:23)

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:2)

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. (Gal. 3:13)

Scripture mentions nothing about Satan bearing our sins at any time or having any involvement in the redemption of our souls. Jesus became a curse for us and he carried our sins into the grave, "a place unknown". To teach that Satan has any part in our salvation is to promote heresy.

Point #4 Jesus is fully God.

In the early Adventist history, the semi-Arian belief that Jesus was not God or fully God, was taught instead of the orthodox Trinity Doctrine. While Ellen White took a public stand against this view and Adventist theologians now publically claim to hold with the orthodox Trinity Doctrine, The Sanctuary Doctrine exposes them to the charge that their roots are still Arian. That is, if you limit Jesus' access to the Father, then you are saying he is not fully God.

My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. (John 10:29-30)

The Jews understood what Jesus was saying. Do You? The doctrine of the Trinity and the unique Adventist Sanctuary Doctrine are incompatible.

Summary

It is agreed that true, Biblically based theology, is critical to the life of each person who claims to be a Christian. Especially where our salvation is involved. Through prayer and Holy Spirit led search of Scriptures, each person who claims Jesus as their Savior, is encouraged to have a clear understanding of the foundation of their faith. When you conclude that the Sanctuary Doctrine is false you will realize that it has no part in the gospel?

Day 7: Friday, March 20, 2009

Today's lesson centers of the reliability and credibility of Ellen White as a messenger of God with special attention given to her 'health message'.

Problems

As has been already stated, one of the primary problems with the 'health message' is that proof texts are taken out of context and used to promote her idea of good health. In doing so, attention is diverted from the original Biblical issues that these passages are addressing. For instance, it has been shown that what pollutes our bodies, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, is not what we put into it but what comes out of our mouths from our hearts, the source of evil desires of every description. Perhaps even more important is that the gospel is not about a health message, regardless of how important it may be to have healthy bodies. The gospel centers on what Jesus Christ did to save our souls from the consequences of sin. As for her health mes-

sage being better than her contemporaries, that is open for debate. If her advice were really inspired words from God then we have a right to expect what she said as being totally correct, not mostly or largely right. Those she appears to have borrowed her ideas from never claimed to be totally correct. They were only speaking from a foundation of the best that modern research had to offer at that time or place in history.

Let's look at how it was God's intention to directly rule over the Nation of Israel through priests, judges and prophets. Then, we will examine how God intends to direct the affairs of the Church and each individual Christian within the Body of Christ.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. (I Sam. 8:4-9)

When Israel demanded to have a king like the rest of the nations it was God they were rejecting. Some might contend that Ellen was a prophet and that is why her teachings are to be followed. We have already considered the question of the truth of her teachings. Her prophecies have not always passed the test of time and much of what she said contradicts Scripture, issues we have already considered. Furthermore, we have seen in Rev. 22:18,19 that there is a curse placed upon those who add to or take away from the inspired words of God. Know then, that when you follow a false prophet you are rejecting God in the very same way the Israelites did when they demanded that a king rule over them.

Earlier in the week we saw how the role of the Holy Spirit is to personally indwell, empower and instruct each believer. As members of the Body of Christ, we are to mutually to build up and support each other through the gifts given to each believer by the Holy Spirit.

And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Luke 22:25-30)

Summary

Each member of the Body of Christ has direct access to God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The canon of the Scriptures has been closed since the apostles and prophets of the first century, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recorded the very words of Jesus Christ. This means that there is no room for another prophet, much less a false one. It is a paradox of Adventist theology that it promotes physically healthy bodies on the principle that to do otherwise would defile the temple of the Holy Spirit yet deny his role as a seal of our salvation and to illumine us with an understanding of God's word.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; (I Peter 2:9)