

Bible Studies for Adventists



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Week 13 • March 21–27, 2009

Commentary on “Confidence in the Prophetic Gift”

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Day 1: Sabbath Afternoon, March 21, 2009

The lesson’s memory text: “Jehoshaphat stood and said, ‘Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper’” (2 Chronicles 20:20 NKJV).

This verse is prefaced as a call to consider or trust Ellen G. White as a ‘prophet’...the context of this verse is of course the Old Covenant.

The Law and the Prophets [were proclaimed] until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. Luke 16:16 (NASB)

In the Gospel of Luke we are told by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself that the context of the Old Covenant prophets ended with John’s proclamation of the Messiah and the New Covenant; His Gospel of Grace. In Hebrews 1:1-2 we hear again that the prophets of the Old Covenant context ended with Christ.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. Hebrews 1:1-2 (NASB)

Summary

1. This week’s memory text was written in the context of the Old Testament and cannot be used to endorse a latter-day prophet in the context of the New Testament church.
2. Luke records Jesus stating that the context of old covenant prophets ended with John the Baptist.
3. Hebrews 1:1-2 states that God spoke through prophets long ago, but in these last days He has spoken to us through His Son.

Day 2: Sunday, March 22, 2009

The lesson asks: “What parallels do you see between the experience of the disciples after the Crucifixion and the early Advent believers after the Great Disappointment in 1844? Luke 24:13-27; Acts 10:9-16, 44-48.”

This is a case of apples and oranges; there is no parallel. The disciples' disappointment after the crucifixion was a result of not understanding the true prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament.

The Great Disappointment in 1844 was simply the failure of a false prophecy which the Bible clearly warns against in Matthew 24.

The lesson says: “Read Acts 1:6. What does this say about how, even after Jesus was with them after the Resurrection, they still were carrying false ideas about what His coming meant?”

“So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”” Acts 1:6 (NASB)

This passage cannot be honestly used to support “The Great Disappointment” of 1844. Not one of Jesus' disciples had made a mistaken prophecy concerning His return. Jesus had clearly prohibited this. In fact, if the context of this passage was observed, it would be understood that Jesus would never reveal dates such as 1844: “He said to them ‘it is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has set by His own authority’” (Acts 1:7). The disciples were simply asking the Lord if he was going to immediately be establishing His kingdom on the earth (Acts 1:8).

The Jews being the chosen people of God always thought that would bring them world dominion. Their eyes were fixed on the world and not eternity while Jesus spoke of God's eternal kingdom. The whole purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection was to provide those that repent from their sin and trust in Him to forever be free from the oppression of sin and the sentence of spiritual death in hell that came with it. The disciples were looking for a life free from oppression and dominance from foreign nations such as Rome.

Summary

1. There is no parallel between the disciples disappointment after the crucifixion and the “early Adventist believers”.
2. The disciples had not understood the Bible's prophecies of the Messiah. The Great Disappointment was simply the failure of a false prophecy.
3. Acts 1:6 does not support The Great Disappointment of 1844. The Jews' eyes were fixed on the world while Jesus spoke of God's eternal kingdom.
4. The purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection was to forever free those who trust Him from the oppression of sin and the sentence of hell. The disciples were looking for a life free from the dominance of Rome.

Day 3: Monday, March 23, 2009

The lesson asks: Why did the Bereans study the Scripture every day to see if what Paul said was true? Why did they not trust his words? Acts 17:11

The Bereans that Paul was speaking to were Jews. Jews who would view Paul as something of a traitor for leaving Judaism and following Jesus; Jews who did not believe that their Messiah was Jesus Christ; Jews who believed that someone that was crucified was accursed of God; Jews who did not allow these things to prevent them from examining their only source of verification of anything concerning their God...the Scriptures. Upon examining the Scriptures many of them accepted the truth of Paul's message of the Savior and became Christians.

Acts 17:11 does not support the notion that Paul's words weren't “good enough”, thus suggesting that he and Ellen White are similar in role and use.

The lesson asks: “What do the following texts tell us about the importance of the study of Scripture? Prov. 2:1-6, Isa. 34:16, Matt. 6:6, Rev. 1:3.”

This is not a typical list of verses to show the importance of, and blessings of studying Scripture. Below are a few passages that better define the importance and benefit of studying Scripture.

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping [it] according to Your word. Psalm 119:9 (NASB)

Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. Psalm 119:11 (NASB)
Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. Psalm 119:105 (NASB)
Plead my cause and redeem me; Revive me according to Your word. Psalm 119:154 (NASB)
Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily {to see} whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. Acts 17:11-12 (NASB)
All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB)

The lesson asks: “What are ways you can get more out of your own Bible study?”

One of the most important things you can do to get more out of Bible study is to read the Scripture in context. Take the verse that is referred to or used as a proof-text and study its context. When a verse is read in the context of the paragraph, or the entire chapter in which it is found it may dramatically challenge long-held interpretations of a text.

Bible study can be optimized by reading the passage at least 10 times; read the whole book for context; read in a few different versions; read outlines/surveys; get as much context as possible (such as author, time, place, culture, audience, original language), jot down thoughts, observations, and questions; and determine what the passage means. The proof-text method of “here a little and there a little” is referring to false prophets in the Old Testament.

Another important way to get more out of the Bible is to read it in a translation that you can understand. The translation you choose should never be translated by one denomination. One of the marks of a cult is that they create their own Bible translations or paraphrases which usually change the Scriptures to support cultic doctrines. These spurious translations would include: The New World Translation, the Mormon translation of the Bible, and the Clear Word paraphrase (see exAdventist.com, Dr. Wayne Grudem statement on the Clear Word).

Finally, read entire sections of Scripture to understand big concepts or presentations of truth. Here are some passages to start with: Galatians 3-4, 2 Corinthians 3, Hebrews 8, Colossians 2, Romans 14, Ephesians 1-2.

Summary

1. To maximize the profitability of your Bible study, determine the application to you from the passages you read and actually apply it to your life. True wisdom is the application of biblical knowledge.
2. The Jewish Bereans’ study of Scripture to understand Paul’s gospel preaching does not parallel or support the idea that Ellen White is similar to Paul and is similarly grounded in Scripture.

Day 4: Tuesday, March 24, 2009

The lesson says: “Jesus said: “ You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39, NKJV).

What do the following Old Testament texts tell us about Jesus? Ps. 16:9, 10; 41:9; Isa. 53:4-6; Mic. 5:2.”

“Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.” Psalm 16:9-10 (NASB)

This prophetic psalm tells how God the Father will resurrect Jesus from the grave (Sheol), and not allow His flesh to decay.

Sheol, per *Strong’s Concordance* is not a very precise word:

- 1) sheol, underworld, grave, hell, pit
 - a) the underworld
 - b) Sheol - the OT designation for the abode of the dead
- 2) place of no return
- 3) without praise of God
- 4) wicked sent there for punishment
- 5) righteous not abandoned to it
- 6) of the place of exile (fig)
- 7) of extreme degradation in sin

“Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.” Psalm 41:9 (NASB)

This a psalm written by David when he was ill and his enemies hoped that it was a serious and terminal illness. One of his enemies turned out to be someone who was formerly a close friend. This passage is referred to in part by Jesus in John 13:8 concerning His betrayal by Judas; it is not a prophetic psalm however.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being {fell} upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. Isaiah 53:4-6 (NASB)

Isaiah is prophesying about how the Jews will view Jesus' crucifixion as a punishment for His sin. Isaiah also points out that He was punished for our sins not His own; He had none.

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, [Too] little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." Micah 5:2 (NASB)

This messianic prophecy declares where the Messiah was to be born, from what tribe of Israel, that He will be ruler in Israel, and that He is eternal; without cause...an attribute of God.

Forgetting for a moment about doctrine and theology, ask yourself this basic question: How well do I know Jesus? What does your answer tell you about yourself and your spiritual life? What changes might you need to make?

How do you know that you have the 'real' Jesus if you forget about doctrine and theology? Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and Muslims all say they know who Jesus is and quite possibly even say they know Him well...can we still forget about doctrine and theology and know the real Jesus well? None of them know the real Jesus Christ. Your walk with Jesus does not even begin until you have the Jesus Christ of the Bible as your Lord and Savior.

Summary

1. The answer to the question above can tell you whether or not you truly are a Christian. True believers of Christ are positionally sanctified by their redemption through Christ but they are also being sanctified along through experiential sanctification.
2. Experiential sanctification is advanced as the result of growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (paraphrase of 2 Peter 3:18). It has to do with yielding to God through a continual progression from worldliness, self, and sin to Christian maturity.

Day 5: Wednesday, March 25, 2009

The lesson states: " 'Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets'" (Matt. 23:28-31)

What do Jesus' words have to say about the attitude that many have had towards the prophets? What lesson can we draw from these words for ourselves?

The scribes and the Pharisees pretended to honor the OT prophets by building and/or repairing their tombs and putting wreaths on their monuments. In memorial speeches, they said they would not have joined their ancestors in killing the prophets. ...they admitted that their fathers, of whom they were physical sons, shed the blood of the prophets. But Jesus used the word sons in the sense of meaning people with the same characteristics. He knew that even as they were decorating the prophets' graves, they were plotting His death. Second, in showing such respect for the dead prophets, they were plotting His death. William McDonald, *Believers Bible Commentary*, pp.1290-1291.

Summary

The lesson asks: "What is your own attitude about the writings of Ellen White? Why do you hold them? Think through your reasons for those attitudes. Are you open to change, if need be?"

1. Everyone needs to answer these questions after thorough and objective research like their eternal soul depends on it...because it does.
2. Wouldn't these be the same questions that we would ask a Mormon concerning Joseph Smith or a Jehovah Witness concerning his Watchtower organization—hoping that they would be thorough and objective? We should expect the same of ourselves.

Day 6: Thursday, March 26, 2009

The lesson states: “Read Luke 24:13-27, the story of Jesus and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. What did He point them to in order to persuade them that Jesus of Nazareth was, indeed, the Messiah? Why is that answer so important to us, particularly in the context of the prophetic gift?”

Jesus pointed His two followers to all the Messianic prophecies in Scripture, which must have been a long and fascinating walk.

The Bible shares that Jesus quoted the Scripture which is His model for us to follow. This answer is important to us because only in Scripture can we determine what is true and that because Scripture is our final authority in everything...only the prophetic gifts exercised in Scripture logically matter to Bible-believers and to the Lord.

Summary

1. The prophets pointed to Jesus—He fulfilled the prophecies God gave to them.
2. Jesus is God’s final word to this world (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Day 7: Friday, March 27, 2009

The lesson directs: “Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “Attitudes Toward the Testimonies,” pp. 40-48, in *Selected Messages*, book 1.”

The point of the further study is to defend the alleged prophetic gift of Ellen G. White and to malign those who do not believe that she is a ‘prophet’.

“Those who are reprov’d by the Spirit of God should not rise up against the humble instrument. It is God, and not an erring mortal, who has spoken to save them from ruin.” *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 3, p.257.*

Here are a few prophecies from the writings of Ellen G. White...

...when England does declare war {against the North during the Civil War}, all nations will have an interest of their own to serve, and there will be general war, general confusion.” ...this nation {the United States} will ... be humbled into the dust. *Testimonies for the Church Vol.1, p.259.*

I saw that the time for Jesus to be in the most holy place was nearly finished and that time can last but a little longer. *Early Writings, p.64. (1850’s)*

The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. The 144,000 shouted, “Alleluia!” as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death, and in the same moment we were changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. *Early Writing, pp.15-16.*

Summary

1. England did not declare war on the US, the US was not humbled into dust, Jesus still has not returned (150+ years was not a little longer), and Mrs. White died in 1915 well before the Lord’s return she said she would be a part of.
2. If we are to believe Mrs. White’s quote in page 257 of Testimonies for the Church Vol. 3 and that God speaks through her and that she is not speaking as an erring mortal; then who is in error? She wrote: “This work is of God, or it is not. My work...bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. The testimonies are of the spirit of God or of the Devil.” Testimonies for the Church Vol. 4, p.230.
3. For further study please read God’s Word: Ezekiel 13:6-9, Deuteronomy 18:20-22, Deuteronomy 13:1-3, Romans 10:3-4.

See also: www.exAdventist.com