

## Sabbath School Lesson #1 – From Reading to Understanding – 28/12/2019-3 Jan 2020

**C**hrist would have us read and understand the prophecies of Daniel. In the early Christian Church, when the Ethiopian official did not understand the prophecies of Isaiah, the Lord sent Philip to help him: “And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readeſt?” (Acts 8:30).

God in His mercy sends messengers to help His people understand. For us, Seventh-day Adventists, the Spirit of Prophecy – the writings of Ellen G White – contains enough counsel that if heeded would lead us from reading to understanding even the prophecies of Daniel. But many pay only lip service to it. Many excuses are given for disregarding the truth contained therein. Those who call others to heed the Spirit of Prophecy are often ridiculed and suffer reproach. “The Spirit of Prophecy offers counsel for almost every aspect of Christian life, and is as relevant today as when it was written decades ago. These are truly messages from heaven. Read the Spirit of Prophecy daily alongside your Bible. Believe it. Promote it. Use it. Teach it. Support it – and you will discover a new power in your spiritual life that helps you to rise and walk in newness of life” (GC President, *Adventist World*, November 2010, p. 10).

The Spirit of Prophecy is given to us to make the Bible plain so that we have no excuse. In his day, Peter warned that some misunderstand the letters of Paul. For in Paul’s letters, there are “some things hard to be understood” (2 Peter 3:16). The theme subjects of Paul, the second coming, victory over sin, and righteousness by faith, could be more difficult to understand without the plainness in the Spirit of Prophecy. The Spirit of Prophecy is to the church as Philip was to the Ethiopian officer. In Acts 8:26-39 we find this analogy. If you say, ‘I will only read my Bible, no Ellen G White’s writings,’ Philip asks: “Understandest thou what thou readeſt?” (verse 30). If you humble yourself, you will say: “How can I, except some man should guide me?” (verse 31). We must accept the aid of the Spirit of Prophecy to fully understand the prophecies of Daniel. Yet many in the Seventh-day Adventist Church ignore Ellen White’s counsel on how to understand the prophecies of Daniel, and they misinterpret especially Daniel 11. “Those Seventh-day Adventists who take their stand under Satan’s banner will first give up their faith in the warnings and reproofs contained in the Testimonies of God’s Spirit” (*Selected Messages*, Vol. 3, p. 84). “The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony” (*Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 48). “The enemy has made his masterly efforts to unsettle the faith of our own people in the Testimonies ... This is just as Satan designed it should be, and those who have been preparing the way for the people to pay no heed to the warnings and reproofs of the Testimonies of the Spirit of God will see that a tide of errors of all kinds will spring into life” (*Selected Messages*, Vol. 3, p. 83).

In these last days, in the time of the end, the Lord knowing that the prophecies of Daniel would be misinterpreted even within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Lord used Uriah Smith to write a verse-by-verse commentary on Daniel and Revelation, in his book known as *Daniel and the Revelation*. Instead of reading Uriah Smith’s commentary, many ask: do I have to believe Uriah Smith? Cannot God give me special light? This is what the prophetess said: “The very same Satan is at work to undermine the faith of the people of God at this time. There are persons ready to catch up every new idea. The prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation are misinterpreted. These persons do not consider that the truth has been set forth at the appointed time by the very men whom God was leading to do this special work. These men followed on step by step in the very fulfillment of prophecy, and those who have not had a personal experience in this work, are to take the Word of God and believe on ‘their word’ who have been led by the Lord in the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages” (Ellen G White, 2SM 111.2). That is an indictment to human pride! If you humble yourself, read the words of our pioneers like Uriah Smith and believe “their word.”

As you read to understand the prophecies of Daniel in this week’s Lesson and throughout the Lessons in this first quarter of 2020, heed the Spirit of Prophecy, lest you be deceived even by the Lesson writers who have long refused to follow Uriah Smith’s commentary. On Daniel, the Spirit of Prophecy is very clear that we should read the book by Uriah Smith.

It is the book known as "*Daniel and the Revelation*" or "*Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation*" by Uriah Smith that Ellen White says those in the Seventh-day Adventist Church who are starting out in ministry need to understand, yet many have been taught to ignore Uriah Smith. To our Adventist ministers, counsel is given: "Those who are preparing to enter the ministry, who desire to become successful students of the prophecies, will find *Daniel and the Revelation* an invaluable help. They need to understand this book. It speaks of past, present, and future, laying out the path so plainly that none need err therein. Those who will diligently study this book will have no relish for the cheap sentiments presented by those who have a burning desire to get out something new and strange to present to the flock of God. The rebuke of God is upon all such teachers. They need that one teach them what is meant by godliness and truth. The great, essential questions which God would have presented to the people are found in *Daniel and the Revelation*. There is found solid, eternal truth for this time. Everyone needs the light and information it contains" (EGW, 1MR 61.2).

"God desires the light found in the books of Daniel and Revelation to be presented in clear lines. It is painful to think of the many cheap theories picked up and presented to the people by ignorant, unprepared teachers. Those who present their human tests and the nonsensical ideas they have concocted in their own minds, show the character of the goods in their treasure house. They have laid in store shoddy material. Their great desire is to make a sensation" (Ellen G White, 1MR 62.3). "The truth for this time has been brought out in many books. Let those who have been dealing in cheap sentiments and foolish tests, cease this work and study *Daniel and the Revelation*. They will then have something to talk about that will help the mind. As they receive the knowledge contained in this book, they will have in the treasure house of the mind a store from which they can continually draw as they communicate to others the great, essential truths of God's Word" (Ellen G White, 1MR 62.4).

"The interest in *Daniel and the Revelation* is to continue as long as probationary time shall last. God used the author [Uriah Smith] of this book as a channel through which to communicate light to direct minds to the truth. Shall we not appreciate this light, which points us to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, our King?" (Ellen G White, 1MR 63.1). "This book has been the means of bringing many precious souls to a knowledge of the truth. Everything that can be done should be done to circulate *Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation*. I know of no other book that can take the place of this one. It is God's helping hand" (Ellen G White, 21MR, 444.3). "The light given was that *Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation*, *The Great Controversy*, and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, would make their way. They contain the very message the people must have, the special light God had given His people. The angels of God would prepare the way for these books in the hearts of the people" (EGW, CM 123.3).

The prophecies of Daniel lead us to the second coming of Christ. The Lord gave Daniel a vision of events reaching to the time of the end. The language covering these events was in such terms that Daniel did not understand it, and when he asked the Lord how long it would be until the end of these things, the reply was, "Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). Christ would not have His people relax their diligence through the thought that His coming was hundreds of years in the future; so He left the time indefinite, in order that each generation might regard it as imminent, and live in harmony with His words, "Watch, for ye know not at what hour your Lord will come." Even to Paul who was favoured with wonderful revelations and preached the prophecies of Daniel (2 Thessalonians 2), the Lord had said that the *time* was sealed up until the time of the end, and He would not reveal it to Paul any more than to Daniel. And so Paul's earnest desire was to depart and be with Christ, whose coming was his principal theme. And how Paul expected to be with the Lord, he makes clear in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Since 1798, we live in the time of the end. The prophecies of Daniel have been unsealed; many have turned to and fro in them, and knowledge of them has been increased. The signs which Christ gave have been fulfilled, so we know that He is near, even at the door. We know not the day nor the hour, but we do know that "yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." "He which testifieth of these things saith, Surely I come quickly;" and let all who love him also love his appearing, and respond with the beloved apostle, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."