

Sabbath Lesson #1 – The Uniqueness of the Bible – 28 March-3 April 2020

Christ would have us understand the importance of studying the Bible. We read that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The psalmist says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). And again, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (verse 11). He says also, “Princes did sit and speak against me; but Thy servant did meditate in Thy statutes” (verse 23). All these texts show the necessity of understanding the word of God, for it is our blueprint.

Sunday: The Living Word of God – The life and power of the word of God are attested: “For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). Christ also said of the words of God, “The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Whoever finds the word indeed, finds Christ, and he who does not find Christ in the word, has not found the word of God. Paul says that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). But he says also that Christ dwells in the heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17). So faith in the living word of God brings Christ into the heart. Christ is the life of the word of God. In the thirty-fifth verse of John sixth chapter, we read, “Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life.” Again, in the fifty-first verse, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” And again, “Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” Then in the sixty-third verse he added, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life.” Here we find the plainest declaration that the word of God, received in faith, conveys Christ actually to the soul of man. The fact that Christ is in the word, that the life of the word is the life of Christ, is a most stupendous one. It is the mystery of the gospel. When we receive it as a fact, and appropriate it, we shall know for ourselves the meaning of the words that man shall live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt 4:4).

Monday: Who Wrote the Bible, and Where? – The Bible was written by the Jews, for “unto them were committed the oracles of God” (Romans 3:1-2). Even Luke wrote after converting to a Jew inward, for “he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; ... but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart” (Romans 2:28-29). All those who are saved will “enter in through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14), but each of those gates has the name on it of one of the twelve tribes, showing that the saved compose the twelve tribes of Israel. This is evident also from the fact that “Israel” means overcomer. Book of James is addressed to the twelve tribes, yet each Christian knows that its promises are for him. There is no divine blessing for man that was not “to the Jew first” (Romans 1:16). Paul says of the “Gentiles in the flesh,” that they are “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:11-12). Whoever is saved must be saved as a Jew. We read: “God at the first did visit the Gentiles *to take out of them a people* for His name” (Acts 15:14).

Tuesday: The Bible as Prophecy – The spiritually great and wise men of the past have been students of prophecy; and by its light they took some of the most important steps of their lives. The prophet Daniel studied the book of the prophecy of Jeremiah and understood that the period of Babylonian captivity was coming to an end; and due to his understanding of the fact that the time had come for the termination of the captivity, he contributed to the return of the Jews and the restoration of Jerusalem, we are not told (Daniel 9). In the record of the wise men from the East, who came to visit the infant Saviour at Bethlehem, we have another instance of the value of a knowledge of prophecy – the “wise men” were wise in the understanding of the prophecies (Matthew 2:1-7) and they came to the infant Saviour. God is the ruler over all things, and the Bible as prophecy is but the declarations of His purposes.

Every great purpose of God in His works for the salvation of men has been made known before the time for its accomplishments. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). He reveals them for the instruction of men, that they may be wise and may know what to do when the time for action arrives. In the Bible, "we have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19). Do we indeed do well to take heed unto the sure word of prophecy, until the day dawn? Then many of us may be admonished by this utterance of the apostle. The day has not yet dawned. We are yet in the time when the word of prophecy is "a light that shineth in a dark place." If we take no heed to the light, we must walk in darkness, the result of which cannot fail to be a disaster; "for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you" (Acts 13:40-41). Let us speak like those who have the understanding of the times, by taking heed, as did the wise men of old, to the word that God has spoken by His prophets.

Wednesday: The Bible as History – The Bible is not like any other book. It is of Divine; all other books are of human. Books which are only the product of the mind of man, may be thoroughly mastered by the mind of another man. But the Bible is the production of the Spirit of God, and therefore can be understood only by the aid of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). When the Bible is studied, whether in the home, or the church, merely as an ordinary history book, its object is perverted. Yes, we may study the Bible as history, but it is only when we study it as inspired history that we get any benefit from it. It is utterly impossible to get a correct idea of the Bible narratives, if we do not study them in the light of God's great plan. More than this it is a sin to regard the Bible as an ordinary book. One of the great sins of the Jewish priests was that they "put no difference between the holy and profane" (Ezekiel 22:26). Anyone who regards the Bible as any other history, does incalculable injury to his own soul. He not only misses the point of the historical narrative but he makes it more and more difficult for him to be impressed by sacred things. Let the Bible be studied as the word of God, and it will impart wisdom that will be the wonder of the world (Deuteronomy 4:5-6).

Thursday: The Transforming Power of the Word – We are transformed by the Word. The new creation has begun, even while we are in this tabernacle, for the life of Jesus is made manifest in our mortal flesh. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Romans 8:8-9). Since "all things are become new," we experience the joy, the blessedness, and the power of the world to come. The Spirit is the first-fruits of our inheritance. We are thenceforth to live (not merely is it our duty so to live, but the grace and strength thereto are given to us) as we shall continue to live in the new earth. The only difference between the condition now and in the future world is this: Then we shall live perfect lives, free from sin, having no temptations, no sinful flesh, nothing to contend with; whereas now we live the selfsame life in spite of all these difficulties. We live in the flesh as though the flesh were dead and buried, and we had already received the resurrection body. This glorious freedom is possible only by our death with Him who is the resurrection and the life; but it is possible: "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). Do you say that this is a hard saying? Oh say not so; it is indeed a glorious saying. It is the good and joyful news of salvation. It is the proclamation of emancipation from the bondage of corruption, and the deliverance into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. How can it be hard to live that life of righteousness, when it is no more I, but Christ, that liveth in me (Galatians 2:20)? What marvellous love, and what a transforming power it has! It changes us into the Divine image. And it is "stronger than death" (Song of Solomon 8:6), since it has conquered death. Our union with Christ was effected in death. It was at the worst state that sin and Satan can reduce men to, that we were united to Him in love; therefore "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). Have you this persuasion?