

Lesson 4
Sabbath Afternoon, October 17
New Testament Prophets

The whole Bible is a revelation, for all revelation to human beings comes through Christ and all centers in Him. God has spoken unto us by His Son, whose we are by creation and by redemption. Christ came to John, exiled on the isle of Patmos, to give him the truth for these last days, to show him that which must shortly come to pass. Jesus Christ is the great trustee of divine revelation. It is through Him that we have a knowledge of what we are to look for in the closing scenes of this earth's history. . . .

John, the beloved disciple, was the one chosen to receive this revelation. He was the last survivor of the first chosen disciples. Under the New Testament dispensation he was honored as the prophet Daniel was honored under the Old Testament dispensation.

The instruction to be communicated to John was so important that Christ came from heaven to give it to His servant, telling him to send it to the churches. This instruction is to be the object of our careful and prayerful study, for we are living in a time when persons who are not under the teaching of the Holy Spirit will bring in false theories. . . .

After the passing of the time [1844], God entrusted to His faithful followers the precious principles of present truth. . . . Those who passed through these experiences are to be as firm as a rock to the principles that have made us Seventh-day Adventists. . . . Those who took part in the establishment of our work upon a foundation of Bible truth, those who know the way marks that have pointed out the right path, are to be regarded as workers of the highest value. They can speak from personal experience regarding the truths entrusted to them. These workers are not to permit their faith to be changed to infidelity; they are not to permit the banner of the third angel to be taken from their hands. They are to hold the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end.

The Lord has declared that the history of the past shall be rehearsed as we enter upon the closing work. Every truth that He has given for these last days is to be proclaimed to the world. Every pillar that He has established is to be strengthened. We cannot now step off the foundation that God has established. We cannot now enter into any new organization, for this would mean apostasy from the truth. —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 367.

Sunday, October 18
Jesus as Prophet

By curing Simon of leprosy, Christ had saved him from a living death. But now Simon questioned whether the Saviour were a prophet.- Because Christ allowed this woman to approach Him, because He did not indignantly spurn her as one whose sins were too great to be forgiven, because He did not show that He realized she had fallen, Simon was tempted to think that He was not a prophet. Jesus knows nothing of this woman who is so free in her demonstrations, he thought, or He would not allow her to touch Him.

But it was Simon's ignorance of God and of Christ that led him to think as he did. He did not realize that God's Son must act in God's way, with compassion, tenderness, and mercy. Simon's way was to take no notice of Mary's penitent service. Her act of kissing Christ's feet and anointing them with ointment was exasperating to his hardheartedness. He thought that if Christ were a prophet, He would recognize sinners and rebuke them.

To this unspoken thought the Saviour answered: "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. . . . There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged."

As did Nathan with David, Christ concealed His home thrust under the veil of a parable. He threw upon His host the burden of pronouncing sentence upon himself. Simon had led into sin the woman he now despised. She had been deeply wronged by him. By the two debtors of the parable, Simon and the woman were represented.- Jesus did not design to teach that different degrees of obligation should be felt by the two persons, for each owed a debt of gratitude that never could be repaid. But Simon felt himself more righteous than Mary, and Jesus desired him to see how great his guilt really was. He would show him that his sin was greater than hers, as much greater as a debt of five hundred pence exceeds a debt of fifty pence.

Simon now began to see himself in a new light. He saw how Mary was regarded by One who was more than a prophet. He saw that with keen prophetic eye Christ read her heart of love and devotion. Shame seized upon him, and he realized that he was in the presence of One superior to himself.

"I entered into thine house," Christ continued, "thou gavest Me no water for My feet;" but with tears of repentance, prompted by love, Mary hath washed My feet, and wiped them with the hair of her head. "Thou gavest Me no kiss: but this woman," whom you despise, "since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss My feet." Christ recounted the opportunities Simon had had to show his love for his Lord, and his appreciation of what had been done for him. Plainly, yet with delicate politeness, the Saviour assured His disciples that His heart is grieved when His children neglect to show their gratitude to Him by words and deeds of love. —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 566, 567.

Monday, October 19
Apostles and Prophets

The Lord Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan. . . stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions. They are to him an incomprehensible mystery. The angels of God. . . look on with astonishment and joy, that fallen men, once children of wrath, are through the training of Christ developing characters after the divine similitude, to be sons and daughters of God, to act an important part in the occupations and pleasures of heaven.

The Lord has provided His church with capabilities and blessings, that they may present to the world an image of His own sufficiency, and that His church may be complete in Him, a continual representation of another, even the eternal world, of laws that are higher than earthly laws. His church is to be a temple built after the divine similitude. . . .

To His church, Christ has given ample facilities, that He may receive a large revenue of glory from His redeemed, purchased possession. The church, being endowed with the righteousness of Christ, is His depository, in which the wealth of His mercy, His love, His grace, is to appear in full and final display. The declaration in His intercessory prayer, that the Father's love is as great toward us as toward Himself, the only-begotten Son, and that we shall be with Him where He is, forever one with Christ and the Father, is a marvel to the heavenly host, and it is their great joy. The gift of His Holy Spirit, rich, full, and abundant, is to be to His church as an encompassing wall of fire, which the powers of hell shall not prevail against. In their untainted purity and spotless perfection, Christ looks upon His people as the reward of all His suffering, His humiliation, and His love, and the supplement of His glory—Christ, the great center from which radiates all glory. —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 282.

Through the ages that have passed since the days of the apostles, the building of God's temple has never ceased. We may look back through the centuries and see the living stones of which it is composed gleaming like jets of light through the darkness of error and superstition. Throughout eternity these precious jewels will shine with increasing luster, testifying to the power of the truth of God. The flashing light of these polished stones reveals the strong contrast between light and darkness, between the gold of truth and the dross of error.

Paul and the other apostles, and all the righteous who have lived since then, have acted their part in the building of the temple. But the structure is not yet complete. We who are living in this age have a work to do, a part to act. We are to bring to the foundation material that will stand the test of fire—gold, silver, and precious stones, "polished after the similitude of a palace" (Psalm 144:12). To those who thus build for God, Paul speaks words of encouragement. . . : "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." . . . The Christian who faithfully presents the word of life, leading men and women into the way of holiness and peace, is bringing to the foundation material that will endure, and in the kingdom of God He will be honored as a wise builder.

—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 224.

The talents that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the gifts and blessings imparted by the Holy Spirit. "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." 1 Corinthians 12:8–11. All men do not receive the same gifts, but to every servant of the Master some gift of the Spirit is promised.

Before He left His disciples, Christ "breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." John 20:22. Again He said, "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you." Luke 24:49. But not until after the ascension was the gift received in its fullness. Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received. Then in a special sense the goods of heaven were committed to the followers of Christ. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Ephesians 4:8. "Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ," the Spirit "dividing to every man severally as He will." Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:11. The gifts are already ours in Christ, but their actual possession depends upon our reception of the Spirit of God.

The promise of the Spirit is not appreciated as it should be. Its fulfillment is not realized as it might be. It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner be won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe. —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 327, 328.

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. In the temple the Son of God was dedicated to the work He had come to do. The priest looked upon Him as he would upon any other child. But though he neither saw nor felt anything unusual, God's act in giving His Son to the world was acknowledged. This occasion did not pass without some recognition of Christ. "There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ."

As Simeon enters the temple, he sees a family presenting their first-born son before the priest. Their appearance bespeaks poverty; but Simeon understands the warnings of the Spirit, and he is deeply impressed that the infant being presented to the Lord is the Consolation of Israel, the One he has longed to see. To the astonished priest, Simeon appears like a man enraptured. The child has been returned to Mary, and he takes it in his arms and presents it to God, while a joy that he has never before felt enters his soul. As he lifts the infant Saviour toward heaven, he says, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

The spirit of prophecy was upon this man of God, and while Joseph and Mary stood by, wondering at his words, he blessed them, and said unto Mary, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Anna also, a prophetess, came in and confirmed Simeon's testimony concerning Christ. As Simeon spoke, her face lighted up with the glory of God, and she poured out her heartfelt thanks that she had been permitted to behold Christ the Lord. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 55.

Paul made it a part of his work to educate young men for the gospel ministry. He took them with him on his missionary journeys, and thus they gained an experience that later enabled them to fill positions of responsibility. When separated from them, he still kept in touch with their work, and his letters to Timothy and Titus are an evidence of how deep was his desire for their success. "The things that thou hast heard," he wrote, "commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." [2 Timothy 2:2.]

This feature of Paul's work teaches an important lesson to ministers today. Experienced laborers do a noble work when, instead of trying to carry all the burdens themselves, they train younger men, and place burdens on their shoulders. It is God's desire that those who have gained an experience in His cause, shall train young men for His service.

The younger worker must not become so wrapped up in the ideas and opinions of the one in whose charge he is placed, that he will forfeit his individuality. He must not lose his identity in the one who is instructing him, so that he dare not exercise his own judgment, but does what he is told, irrespective of his own understanding of what is right and wrong. It is his privilege to learn for himself of the great Teacher. If the one with whom he is working pursues a course which is not in harmony with a "Thus saith the Lord," let him not go to some outside party, but let him go to his superior in office, and lay the matter before him, freely expressing his mind. Thus the learner may be a blessing to the teacher. He must faithfully discharge his duty. —*Gospel Workers*, p. 102.

The less you meditate upon Christ and His matchless love and the less you are assimilated to His image, the better will you appear in your own eyes, and the more self-confidence and self-complacency- will you possess. A correct knowledge of Christ, a constant looking unto the Author and Finisher of our faith, will give you such a view of the character of a true Christian that you cannot fail to make a right estimate of your own life and character in contrast with those of the great Exemplar. . . .

The fitting up for your work is a life business, a daily, laborious, hand-to-hand struggle with established habits, inclinations, and hereditary tendencies. It requires a constant, earnest, and vigilant effort to watch and control self, to keep Jesus prominent and self out of sight.

It is necessary for you to watch for the weak points in your character, to restrain wrong tendencies, and to strengthen and develop noble faculties that have not been properly exercised. The world will never know the work secretly going on between the soul and God, nor the inward bitterness of spirit, the self-loathing, and the constant efforts to control self; but many of the world will be able to appreciate the result of these efforts. They will see Christ revealed in your daily life. You will be a living epistle, known and read of all men, and will possess a symmetrical character, nobly developed.

"Learn of me," said Christ; "for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." He will instruct those who come to Him for knowledge. There are multitudes of false teachers in the world. The apostle declares that in the last days men will "heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears," because they desire to hear smooth things. Against these Christ has warned us: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits." The class of religious teachers here described profess to be Christians. They have the form of godliness and appear to be laboring for the good of souls. . . . They are in conflict with Christ and His teachings, and are destitute of His meek and lowly spirit. . . .

The Good Shepherd came to seek and to save that which was lost. He has manifested in His works His love for His sheep. All the shepherds who work under the Chief Shepherd will possess His characteristics; they will be meek and lowly of heart. Childlike faith brings rest to the soul and also works by love and is ever interested for others. If the Spirit of Christ dwells in them, they will be Christlike and do the works of Christ. —*Lift Him Up*, p. 213.

Friday, October 23
For Further Reading

The Great Controversy, "The Scriptures a Safeguard," pp. 593–602.
Child Guidance, "The Bible in the Home," pp. 507, 508.