

Sabbath School Lesson #10 – Prophecy and Scripture – 27 May-2 June 2017

Christ whose Spirit was in prophets, spoke by Peter: “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).

When we have our attention specially directed to the fact that the Scriptures proceed wholly from the Spirit of Christ (also called the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit – see Romans 8:9), we cannot fail to be struck with the frequency with which the statement occurs in the Bible. “Now these be the last words of David. David, the son of Jesse, said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:1-2). David spoke the word, but it was the Word of God. “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:10-11). Who was it that testified? It was not the prophets themselves, but the Spirit of Christ that was in the prophets. The prophets did not understand the full importance of the things that the Spirit testified through them, but had to study their own writings.

If Christ’s Spirit dwells in us, we are watchmen who speak the “sure word of prophecy.” “I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night” (Isaiah 62:6). “Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion” (Isaiah 52:9). “Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come” (Isaiah 21:11-12). God’s watchmen are all the followers of Jesus, and not simply a few men called prophets or preachers. Every one, no matter what his station in life, who regards the words of Jesus, is a watchman, for the Lord Jesus said: “The Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every wan his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye, therefore; ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!” (Mark 13:34-37). It is obvious from this that every one who follows Jesus is a watchman.

What is their cry? “It is high time for you to wake out of sleep, for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Romans 13:11-12). “The morning cometh and also the night.” From the texts already quoted, it is evident that the morning for which God’s people are watching is the coming of the Lord. When Jesus came, the people which sat in darkness saw great light. “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not” (John 1:4-5). All the time that sin reigns on this earth, from the fall of Adam till “the times of restoration of all things,” at the coming of the Lord, is night, because sin is darkness. The light of Christ’s life is the only light that pierces the gloom of this night.

But Jesus is the Word, and so the word which His Spirit inspires, being His own life, is the light that shines in this darkness. It is our guide, So the Apostle Peter, speaking of “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” of which he was an eyewitness on the mount of transfiguration, wrote: “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). Jesus is “the bright and morning Star.” Just before the coming of the Lord His Word is to be proclaimed, and His life to be manifested, to an extent and with a power never before known. This will be the shining of the Day-star, which will usher in the perfect day, when “the Sun of Righteousness” will shine over all the land, and “the earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea.” Christ cannot come until the power and love of God have been demonstrated in the lives of His followers to the same degree as in His own life. God will show by means of the church, – that is, all true believers in Jesus, – His power to work perfect righteousness in sinful mortals, accomplishing a work greater than that which Satan set himself to overthrow.

“The morning cometh, and also the night.” Light rejected means darkness. For those who, when light comes to them see no light in it, there remains nothing but deeper night. Man’s attitude to God’s Word of light determines whether or not the morning, which necessarily comes with the bright shining of that Word in its perfection in human lives, will be morning for them. They who come to the light, find the morning; they who reject God’s Word, have no morning. “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to the Word, surely there is no morning for them” (Isaiah 8:20). “For Zion’s sake will I not bold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth” (Isaiah 62:1). The perfect day that is to dawn on the whole earth, and never cease, when the Lord comes, will not be simply the shining of the glory of the Lord in the heavens, but the shining forth of His glory in the lives of His people. They that “be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3). Therefore “arise and shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee” (Isaiah 60:1).

The transfiguration on the mount was a miniature representation of the coming of the Lord in glory, to raise the righteous dead (represented by Moses who was raised from the dead Jude 4), and to translate the living (represented by Elijah, who was translated without seeing death). Ever after that memorable day, the coming of the Lord must have been a more vivid reality to Peter, James, and John, than it had been before. Jesus said to them, “When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory,” and now these three disciples could realise what that glory would be. They had been eye-witnesses of His majesty, and had beheld the glory of His coming. Perhaps some may be inclined to say, ‘If I could have such evidence as that, I should have no doubt about the matter. If I could only see for myself, I should know that these things are so.’ Well, now read what Peter says immediately after his reference to the transfiguration: “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; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:19-21). Our eyes may deceive us, but the word of God “liveth and abideth for ever.” It is something that is more sure than anything that man has seen; it is something that comes direct from “the Spirit of truth.”

Men’s eyes may deceive them; but the word of prophecy does not depend upon any human faculty; it “came not in the old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Men were simply the unresisting mouth-pieces of the Spirit of Christ which was in them; it spoke the words, and they had no voice in the matter.

An instance of how the prophecy came not by the will of man, is afforded by the case of Balaam. It is true that Balaam was not a “holy man of God;” but the fact that he intended to pronounce a curse makes it more apparent that the prophecy came not by the will of man. Balaam was tempted by the promise of a great reward to go and curse Israel, but God, in His great love for His people, “turned the curse into a blessing” (Nehemiah 13:2). When Balak reproached Balaam for not cursing Israel, Balaam replied, “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak” (Numbers 24:13).

While Balaam was thus passive in the hands of the Lord, he uttered this prophecy: “I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city” (Numbers 24:17-19). Here we have one instance of the “sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19) concerning the conduct of the Lord. Considering the circumstances under which it was uttered, it is a notable instance. It shows most fully that prophecy has in it nothing of the human, but is wholly Divine. No human frailty enters into it, but it comes direct from the Spirit of Christ. Thus it is “more sure” than human eyesight. For this reason it is that it was said: “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31).