

Sabbath School Lesson #1 – Some Principles of Prophecy – 29 March-4 April 2025

Christ would have us know that the foundation of the principles of prophecy is wisdom and true wisdom consists in knowing God. “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23, 24). To know God is the sum of all knowledge for Christ, who is the only manifestation of God, who is the Source of all creation. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Romans 11:33, 36).

Sunday: Whoever Reads, Let Him Understand – Read Matthew 24:15; what do you say to those who think prophecies cannot be understood? The Saviour, referring directly to the prophecy of Daniel, says, “Whoso readeth let him understand” (Matthew 24:15). With this endorsement by our Saviour of our efforts to understand, with the declaration that the wise shall understand (Daniel 12:10), and with the promise that “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5), we are certain that the way is open for an understanding of prophecies for all those who are humble and teachable. We are not told the day of Christ’s coming, but when certain prophecies come to pass, then we know Christ is at the doors (Matthew 24:33), for we “are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:4).

Monday: God Wants to Be Understood – Do we have the ‘vocabulary’ to communicate with, and understand, what God is telling us in His word? “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God” (Deuteronomy 29:29). But He does not keep them all to Himself, for we are assured that “there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets” (Daniel 2:28); and “those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children for ever.” “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him” (Psalm 25:14); to such He is very communicative. To him “that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High” (Psalm 91:1), the ways of God will be plain; “but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand” (Daniel 12:10).

Tuesday: Daniel – Shut Up the Words – Read Daniel 12:4; What does the Lord reveal to Daniel here? “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end” (Daniel 12:4). Here it should be noticed that the book is not to remain shut up and sealed till the end; but “to the time of the end.” This period, called the time of the end, evidently commenced about 1798. In Daniel 11:32-35, the 1260 years of Papal supremacy are referred to, “And some of them understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end” (verse 35). In 1798, the 1260 years, in which the Papacy had power to put the saints to death, closed, marking the commencement of the time of the end. Since that time, great light has shone upon the book of Daniel. Prophecy in Daniel, which before had been considered obscure, and was hardly read, has become one of the plainest books of the Bible, and the attention of the people has been called to it.

Wednesday: Studying the Word – The Lesson writer says, “Seventh-day Adventists owe much to William Miller for their understanding of Bible prophecy.” What did we receive through William Miller? We received rules of Bible interpretation. Sadly, the Lesson writer does not refer to Miller’s rules. Ellen White says, “Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel’s message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted. In the little book entitled ‘Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology,’ Father Miller gives the following simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation:” {RH Nov 25, 1884 Par 23}. “1. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible; 2. All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by diligent application and study; 3. Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering; 4. To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know, then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error; 5. Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound to me, and he should

guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule, and not the Bible" {RH November 25, 1884 Par 24}. "The above is a portion of these rules; and in our study of the Bible we shall all do well to heed the principles set forth" {RH November 25, 1884 Par 25}.

Thursday: Figurative or Literal? – Sadly, the Lesson writer fails to refer to Miller's rules for an answer to his question: "How does one determine if the author was using symbolic language, and how does one know what the symbol represent?" Miller gave 14 rules, which were endorsed by Ellen White. Let us study the 14 rules by William Miller (Joshua Himes (ed), *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronologies* (Boston, 1842) pp 20-24): "1. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible. Proof, Matt. 5:18. 2. All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by a diligent application and study. Proof, 2 Tim. 3:15-17. 3. Nothing revealed in the Scriptures can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering. Proof, Deut. 29:29; Matt. 10:26,27; 1 Cor. 2:10; Phil. 3:15; Isa. 45:11; Matt. 21:22; John 14:13,14; 15:7; James 1:5,6; 1 John 5:13-15. 4. To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error. Proof, Isa. 28:7-29; 35:8; Prov. 29:27; Luke 24:27, 44,45; Rom. 16:26; James 5:19; 2 Pet. 1:19,20. 5. Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom, is my rule, and not the Bible. Proof, Ps. 19:7-11; 119:97-105; Matt. 23:8-10; 1Cor. 2:12-16; Eze.34:18,19; Luke 11:52; Matt. 2:7,8. 6. God has revealed things to come, by visions, in figures and parables; and in this way the same things are often time revealed again and again, by different visions, or in different figures and parables. If you wish to understand them, you must combine them all in one. Proof, Ps. 89:19; Hos.12:10; Hab. 2:2; Acts 2:17; 1 Cor. 10:6; Heb. 9:9,24; Ps. 78:2; Matt. 13:13,34; Gen. 41:1-32; Dan. 2:7 and 8; Acts 10:9-16. 7. Visions are always mentioned as such. 2 Cor. 12:1. 8. Figures always have a figurative meaning, and are used much in prophecy to represent future things, times and events - such as mountains, meaning governments, Dan. 2:35,44; beasts, meaning kingdoms, Dan. 7:8,17; waters, meaning people, Rev. 17:1,15; day meaning year, etc. Eze. 4:6. 9. Parables are used as comparisons, to illustrate subjects, and must be explained in the same way as figures, by the subject and Bible. Mark 4:13. 10. Figures sometimes have two or more different significations, as day is used in a figurative sense to represent three different periods of time, namely: first, indefinite, Eccl. 7:14; and second, definite, a day for a year, Eze.4:6; and third, a day for a thousand years, 2 Pet. 3:8. The right construction will harmonize with the Bible, and make good sense; other constructions will not. 11. If a word makes good sense as it stands, and does no violence to the simple laws of nature, it is to be understood literally; if not, figuratively. Rev. 12:1,2; 17:3-7. 12. To learn the meaning of a figure, trace the word through your Bible, and when you find it explained, substitute the explanation for the word used; and if it make good sense, you need not look further; if not, look again. 13. To know whether we have the true historical event for the fulfillment of prophecy: If you find every word of the prophecy (after the figures are understood) is literally fulfilled, then you may know that your history is the true event; but if one word lacks a fulfillment, then you must look for another event, or wait its future development; for God takes care that history and prophecy shall agree, so that the true believing children of God may never be ashamed. Ps. 22:5; Isa. 45:17-19; 1 Pet. 2:6; Rev. 17:17; Acts 3:18. 14. The most important rule of all is, that you must have faith. It must be a faith that requires a sacrifice, and, if tried, would give up the dearest object on earth, the world and all its desires – character, living, occupation, friends, home, comforts, and worldly honors. If any of these should hinder our believing any part of God's word, it would show our faith to be vain. Nor can we ever believe so long as one of these motives lies lurking in our hearts. We must believe that God will never forfeit his word; and we can have confidence that He who takes notice of the sparrow's fall, and numbers the hairs of our head, will guard the translation of His own word, and throw a barrier around it, and prevent those who sincerely trust in God, and put implicit confidence in His word, from erring far from the truth."