Sabbath School Lesson #8 – Interpreting Prophetic Writings – 14-20 November 2026

Christ is He that inspired the prophetic writings, and He gives the interpretation thereof. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). The two disciples on the road to Emmaus talked together of Christ. As they went, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. It is just as true today that wherever two communes together of Jesus, He is there between them. He expounded to those two disciples all the Scriptures concerning Himself, beginning with Moses and the prophets. He is just as ready to do this to-day as He was then. Jesus tarried with them, He opened their eyes to His presence and they knew Him. All this is not impossible now – for He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Sunday: The Bible, Its Own Interpreter – Read Matthew 5:17-48; how did Jesus explain the teachings of the Old Testament mentioned in this passage? "And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you: As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:15-16). It is only the "unlearned and unstable" who wrest scriptures unto their own destruction. They who have a desire to understand and who read the simple promises of the Bible will not be among those who end up in destruction. Paul wrote his epistles to the laity in local churches, and we cannot suppose that the local churches who received differed from the great body of Christians in general, and of them we read that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Corinthians 1:26). The truest followers of Jesus have always been among "the common people." So in those churches there were doubtless simple gardeners, shopkeepers, artisans, day laborers, carpenters, etc, and many servants in the families of wealthy citizens, together with a few who might hold some position of rank. When we consider that it was confidently expected that people of this sort would understand the letters, we may be encouraged to believe that the same class of people can understand his letters today. Paul's exhortation and assurance to Timothy form the best guide to the study of all the epistles, and the whole Bible as well. "Consider what I say, for the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things" (2 Timothy 2:7). The Lord explains the Bible. Nothing can take the place of prayerful meditation upon the exact words of the Bible. By this means the most unlearned in this world's wisdom may become mighty in the Scriptures. The Lord has said just what He means, and the only way to find out just what He means is to become thoroughly familiar with just what He says.

Monday: The Historical-Cultural Context – Read Isaiah 65:17-20; what does it mean that in the new heavens and earth a child shall "die one hundred years old"? We are introduced, in verse 17, to "new heavens and a new earth" where "the voice of weeping shall be no more heard" "nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days."

When a prophet speaks of an event which is to come, we must look at him in his relation of the matter as standing at the very point where the work is to be accomplished. The Lord here carries us to the time when the new earth is to be created, and tells us something of what shall be when that state comes. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days." When? After the new earth is created. Why shall there be no such thing there? Isaiah says, "For the child shall die an hundred years old," etc. But when is this child of one hundred years to die? If you say, in the new earth, you spoil the text; for if there is death there, there would of course "be an infant of days" – a short-lived child – and "an old man who had not filled his days" – premature old age. But as this dying here spoken of is one reason assigned why there shall be no dying in the new earth, it must be that it is to take place just at the point where that work of creating the new heavens and new earth takes place. As we have fixed the point of time where the dying is to take place, the next question is, Who is meant by the "child a hundred years old?" The sinner who may be a hundred years old. Who is to be destroyed at that time? It cannot be the righteous; for they will then be immortal, to die no more. Peter speaks of the creation of the new earth, saying: "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of

judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7). The same fire that purifies the earth, destroys the wicked; so it must be the wicked who are referred to here by the term child. Although they may be a hundred years of age, they are but children in age compared with the lives of the saints who are to live forever. With this view we conceive all is plain thus far.

Tuesday: The Literary Context – Read Genesis 3:1-5 and Matthew 4:1-11; how did Satan distort God's words by applying them out of context? It is all summed up in one sentence, "Ye shall not surely die." It was the belief of this lie that caused the first sin and all the sins that have followed in its train. It is by the subtlety by which the serpent beguiled Eve, that our minds are in danger of being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. The false prophets and teachers are threatened with punishment by the Lord, because, as He says: "With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life" (Ezekiel 13:22). Paul said: "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Evidently, in every attempt to beguile men from the truth as it is in Christ, Satan has used the same arts with which he succeeded in deceiving Eve.

Wednesday: The Meaning of the Text – Read Luke 10:25-28; does the Bible need to be interpreted? The blessing of the gospel preached to Abraham (Genesis 12), was for the whole world, but the Jews misunderstood. Thus, the disciples thought "a woman of Canaan" was not of "the lost sheep" (Matthew 15:22-24)! Jesus corrected them, but they were slow to learn, for not until Peter was commanded to preach to Gentiles that he learnt that the gospel was for all souls (see Acts 10:34-35). But the Scriptures had been plain (Isaiah 11:10, 41:1; Psalm 67:1-2). But as it was then, as now, the plainest scriptures, when read in the light of a prejudice, are not permitted to convey the truth to the heart. It is often necessary to ask, as did Jesus, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). And we are told: "Whoever sought the Saviour, ready to believe on Him when He should be manifested to them, were of the lost sheep whom He had come to gather in His fold" {2SP 302.2}.

Thursday: Biblical Exposition – Read Luke 4:16-30 and Luke 24:25-27, 44-49; what can we learn from the way Christ explained the Scriptures here? Christ was patient with people slow to learn what Scriptures plainly revealed; the lesson for us is to be patient with our fellow slow learners. It is true that all men ought ever to be ready and willing to recognise truth and to walk in it. David said, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments" (Psalm 119:60). This is the proper way, and all ought to do the same; but we must not harshly judge those who do not, for they may be even more honest than we are. Now some of the things that seem so easy to us may appear just as unmeaning to others. The whole of the Old Testament history shows the truth that God is no respecter of persons; yet Peter, who was familiar with the Scriptures from his childhood, did not perceive the truth until God sent him a vision and a special message by the Spirit. Strange that it should have taken him so long to grasp so plain a truth! Yes, it is, but no more strange than that we are so "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Saul of Tarsus thought that he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," and he did. He had given more than ordinary study to the Scriptures, and could no doubt repeat the most of them from memory; yet he saw no Christ in the Bible. It was not until Christ suddenly appeared to him in the way, "and straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God," and wherever he went he reasoned with the people out of the Scriptures (Acts 9:20; 17:2-3). But the Scriptures were just as clear before as afterward, and Saul the persecutor was just as sincere as Paul the apostle. He ought to have seen the truth from the beginning; but he did not, and therefore God patiently waited for him. Bible exposition requires patience.