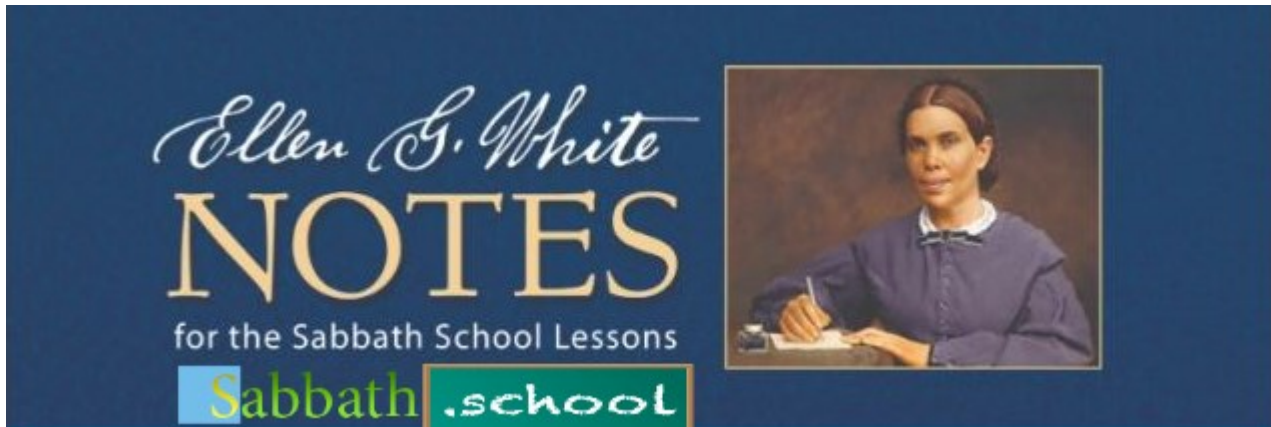


EGW Notes - Lesson 1

How to Read the Psalms



Sabbath Afternoon, December 30

After the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ, His disciples listened with wonder and amazement to His lessons of truth; for they seemed as new ideas to them; but He told them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you. . . Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:44, 45). The truth is constantly unfolding and presenting new features to different minds. All who dig in the mines of truth, will constantly discover rich and precious gems. We are anxious that all who claim to believe the truth now open before us, and especially those who take the responsibility of teaching the truth to others, should have a clearer conception themselves of the all-important significance of the themes of the Bible.—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 404.

The communion with nature and with God, the care of his flocks, the perils and deliverances, the griefs and joys, of his lowly lot, were not only to mold the character of David and to influence his future life, but through the psalms of Israel's sweet singer they were in all coming ages to kindle love and faith in the hearts of God's people, bringing them nearer to the ever-loving heart of Him in whom all His creatures live.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 642.

The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all “given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed, have themselves embodied the thought in human language. . . .

God designed the Bible to be a lesson-book to all mankind, in childhood, youth, and manhood, and to be studied through all time. He gave His Word to men as a revelation of Himself. It is the medium of communication between God and man.—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 10.

When reading the Bible with humble, teachable heart, we are holding [communion] with God Himself. The thoughts expressed, the precepts specified, the doctrines revealed, are a voice from the God of heaven. . . .

The psalmist prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." The Lord heard him, for how full of assurance are the words, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Psalm 119:18, 103; 19:10.) And as the Lord heard and answered David, so He will hear and answer us, making our hearts full of gladness and rejoicing.—
That I May Know Him, p. 196.

Sunday, December 31

The Psalms in Ancient Israel's Worship

The service of song was made a regular part of religious worship, and David composed psalms, not only for the use of the priests in the sanctuary service, but also to be sung by the people in their journeys to the national altar at the annual feasts. The influence thus exerted was far-reaching, and it resulted in freeing the nation from idolatry. Many of the surrounding peoples, beholding the prosperity of Israel, were led to think favorably of Israel's God, who had done such great things for His people.—
Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 711.

When the ark of the covenant was brought into the city of David, and a psalm of joy and triumph was chanted, "all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord." This fervent response was an evidence that they understood the word spoken and joined in the worship of God.

There is too much formality in our religious services. The Lord would have His ministers who preach the word energized by His Holy Spirit; and the people who hear should not sit in drowsy indifference, or stare vacantly about, making no responses to what is said. . . . There should be wide-awake, active churches to encourage and uphold the ministers of Christ and to aid them in the work of saving souls. Where the church is walking in the light, there will ever be cheerful, hearty responses and words of joyful praise. . . .

Let us learn the song of the angels now, that we may sing it when we join their shining ranks. Let us say with the psalmist: "While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being." "Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee." — *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 318.

As the children of Israel, journeying through the wilderness, cheered their way by the music of sacred song, so God bids His children today gladden their pilgrim life. There are few means more effective for fixing His words in the memory than repeating them in song. And such song has wonderful power. It has power to subdue rude and uncultivated natures; power to quicken thought and to awaken sympathy, to promote harmony of action, and to banish the gloom and foreboding that destroy courage and weaken effort. . . .

. . . Singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer. Indeed, many a song is prayer. . . .

As our Redeemer leads us to the threshold of the Infinite, flushed with the glory of God, we may catch the themes of praise and thanksgiving from the heavenly

choir round about the throne; and as the echo of the angels' song is awakened in our earthly homes, hearts will be drawn closer to the heavenly singers. Heaven's communion begins on earth. We learn here the keynote of its praise.—*Education*, pp. 167, 168.

Monday, January 1

Meet the Psalmists

David, in the beauty and vigor of his young manhood, was preparing to take a high position with the noblest of the earth. His talents, as precious gifts from God, were employed to extol the glory of the divine Giver. His opportunities of contemplation and meditation served to enrich him with that wisdom and piety that made him beloved of God and angels. As he contemplated the perfections of his Creator, clearer conceptions of God opened before his soul. Obscure themes were illuminated, difficulties were made plain, perplexities were harmonized, and each ray of new light called forth fresh bursts of rapture, and sweeter anthems of devotion, to the glory of God and the Redeemer.

The love that moved him, the sorrows that beset him, the triumphs that attended him, were all themes for his active thought; and as he beheld the love of God in all the providences of his life, his heart throbbed with more fervent adoration and gratitude, his voice rang out in a richer melody, his harp was swept with more exultant joy; and the shepherd boy proceeded from strength to strength, from knowledge to knowledge; for the Spirit of the Lord was upon him.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 642.

I must continually have my strength in God. My dependence must not waver. No human agency must come between my soul and my God. The Lord is our only hope. In Him I trust, and He will never, no never, fail me. He hath hitherto helped me when under great discouragement.

I will thank the Lord and praise His holy name. I will praise the Lord that in Him I can trust at all times. He is the health of my countenance and my strong tower into which I can run and be safe. He understands my necessities and He will give me the light of His countenance that I may reflect light upon others. I will not fail nor be discouraged. I look to Thee, my heavenly Father, to give strength and grace. I will praise the Lord at all times and not wait for a happy flight of feeling. Then praise the Lord, for He is good, and His mercies will attend me morning, noon, and night. A happy flight of feeling is not evidence; His Word is my assurance.—*That I May Know Him*, p. 266.

The Lord gave His word in just the way He wanted it to come. He gave it through different writers, each having his own individuality, though going over the same history. Their testimonies are brought together in one Book, and are like the testimonies in a social meeting. They do not represent things in just the same style. Each has an experience of his own, and this diversity broadens and deepens the knowledge that is brought out to meet the necessities of varied minds. The thoughts expressed have not a set uniformity, as if cast in an iron mold, making the very hearing monotonous. In such uniformity there would be a loss of grace and distinctive beauty.—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21.

Tuesday, January 2

A Song for Every Season

The psalms of David pass through the whole range of experience, from the depths of conscious guilt and self-condemnation to the loftiest faith and the most exalted communing with God. His life record declares that sin can bring only shame and woe, but that God's love and mercy can reach to the deepest depths, that faith will lift up the repenting soul to share the adoption of the sons of God. Of all the assurances which His word contains, it is one of the strongest testimonies to the faithfulness, the justice, and the covenant mercy of God. . . .

Glorious are the promises made to David and his house, promises that look forward to the eternal ages, and find their complete fulfillment in Christ.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 754.

God speaks to us in His word. Here we have in clearer lines the revelation of His character, of His dealings with men, and the great work of redemption. Here is open before us the history of patriarchs and prophets and other holy men of old. They were men "subject to like passions as we are." James 5:17. We see how they struggled through discouragements like our own, how they fell under temptation as we have done, and yet took heart again and conquered through the grace of God; and, beholding, we are encouraged in our striving after righteousness. As we read of the precious experiences granted them, of the light and love and blessing it was theirs to enjoy, and of the work they wrought through the grace given them, the spirit that inspired them kindles a

flame of holy emulation in our hearts and a desire to be like them in character—like them to walk with God.—*Steps to Christ*, p. 87.

Those who have communed with the poets and sages of the Bible, and whose souls have been stirred by the glorious deeds of the heroes of faith, will come from the rich fields of thought far more pure in heart and elevated in mind than if they had been occupied in studying the most celebrated secular authors, or in contemplating and glorifying the exploits of the Pharaohs and Herods and Caesars of the world. . . .

What subjects are presented in the Sacred Scriptures for the mind to dwell upon! Where can be found higher themes for contemplation? Where are themes so intensely interesting? In what sense are all the researches of human science comparable in sublimity and mystery with the science of the Bible? Where is anything that will so call out the strength of the intellect in deep and earnest thought? . . .

“The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.” Angels stand beside the searcher of the Scriptures, to impress and illuminate the mind. The command of Christ comes to us with the same force today as when addressed to the first disciples eighteen hundred years ago: “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.”—*Messages to Young People*, pp. 255, 257.

Wednesday, January 3

Inspired Prayers

There is in genuine faith a buoyancy, a steadfastness of principle, and a fixedness of purpose that neither time nor toil can weaken. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Isaiah 40:30, 31. . . .

Present [your] petitions at the throne of grace. Plead for the Holy Spirit. God stands back of every promise He has made. With your Bible in your hands say, I have done as Thou hast said. I present Thy promise, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

We must not only pray in Christ's name, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This explains what is meant when it is said that the Spirit "maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." Romans 8:26. Such prayer God delights to answer. When with earnestness and intensity we breathe a prayer in the name of Christ, there is in that very intensity a pledge from God that He is about to answer our prayer "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Ephesians 3:20.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 147.

Jesus was often found in prayer. He resorted to the lonely groves or to the mountains to make His requests known to His Father. When the business and cares of the day were ended, and the weary were seeking rest, Jesus

devoted the time to prayer. We would not discourage prayer, for there is far too little praying and watching thereunto. And there is still less praying with the Spirit and the understanding also. Fervent and effectual prayer is always in place, and will never weary. Such prayer interests and refreshes all who have a love for devotion.

Secret prayer is neglected, and this is why many offer such long, tedious, backslidden prayers when they assemble to worship God. . . . They hope to pray themselves into the favor of God. But frequently these prayers result in bringing other minds down to their own low level in spiritual darkness. If Christians would take home the teachings of Christ in regard to watching and praying, they would become more intelligent in their worship of God.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 582.

It is when we come into difficult places that [the Lord] reveals His power and wisdom in answer to humble prayer. Have confidence in Him as a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God. He will reveal Himself to you as One who can help in every emergency. He who created man, who gave him his wonderful physical, mental, and spiritual faculties, will not withhold that which is necessary to sustain the life He has given. He who has given us His word—the leaves of the tree of life—will not withhold from us a knowledge of how to provide food for His needy children.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 199.

Thursday, January 4

The World of the Psalms

As humble and modest as before his anointing, the shepherd boy, [David], returned to the hills and watched and guarded his flocks as tenderly as ever. But with new inspiration he composed his melodies and played upon his harp. Before him spread a landscape of rich and varied beauty. The vines, with their clustering fruit, brightened in the sunshine. The forest trees, with their green foliage, swayed in the breeze. He beheld the sun flooding the heavens with light, coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. There were the bold summits of the hills reaching toward the sky; in the faraway distance rose the barren cliffs of the mountain wall of Moab; above all spread the tender blue of the overarching heavens. And beyond was God.

He could not see Him, but His works were full of His praise. The light of day, gilding forest and mountain, meadow and stream, carried the mind up to behold the Father of lights, the Author of every good and perfect gift. Daily revelations of the character and majesty of his Creator filled the young poet's heart with adoration and rejoicing. In contemplation of God and His works the faculties of David's mind and heart were developing and strengthening for the work of his afterlife. He was daily coming into a more intimate communion with God. His mind was constantly penetrating into new depths for fresh themes to inspire his song and to wake the music of his harp. The rich melody of his voice poured out upon the air, echoed from the hills as if responsive to the rejoicing of the angels' songs in heaven.—*Patriarchs and*

Prophets, p. 641.

As we make Christ our daily companion we shall feel that the powers of an unseen world are all around us; and by looking unto Jesus we shall become assimilated to His image. By beholding we become changed. The character is softened, refined, and ennobled for the heavenly kingdom. The sure result of our intercourse and fellowship with our Lord will be to increase piety, purity, and fervor. There will be a growing intelligence in prayer. We are receiving a divine education, and this is illustrated in a life of diligence and zeal.

The soul that turns to God for its help, its support, its power, by daily, earnest prayer, will have noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth and duty, lofty purposes of action, and a continual hungering and thirsting after righteousness. By maintaining a connection with God, we shall be enabled to diffuse to others, through our association with them, the light, the peace, the serenity, that rule in our hearts. The strength acquired in prayer to God, united with persevering effort in training the mind in thoughtfulness and care-taking, prepares one for daily duties and keeps the spirit in peace under all circumstances.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 85.

Friday, January 5

For Further Reading

That I May Know Him, “The Model Prayer,” p. 261;

Messages to Young People, “The Benefits of Music,” pp. 291, 292.