

Lesson 11

Sabbath Afternoon, December 05

Prophetic Manifestation in Crucial Moments

The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly presented. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed. Satan watches to catch away every impression that would make them wise unto salvation, and the time of trouble will find them unready.

As we near the close of this world's history, the prophecies relating to the last days especially demand our study. The last book of the New Testament scriptures is full of truth that we need to understand.

The solemn messages that have been given in their order in the Revelation are to occupy the first place in the minds of God's people. . . .

Precious time is rapidly passing, and there is danger that many will be robbed of the time which should be given to the proclamation of the messages that God has sent to a fallen world. Satan is pleased to see the diversion of minds that should be engaged in a study of the truths which have to do with eternal realities.

The testimony of Christ, a testimony of the most solemn character, is to be borne to the world. All through the book of Revelation there are the most precious, elevating promises, and there are also warnings of the most fearfully solemn import. Will not those who profess to have a knowledge of the truth read the testimony given to John by Christ? Here is no guesswork, no scientific deception. Here are the truths that concern our present and future welfare. What is the chaff to the wheat?

Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only? —*Maranatha*, p. 160.

God lives and reigns. His glory is not confined to the temple made with hands. He has not closed heaven against His people. As in the Jewish age, so in this age God reveals His secrets to His servants the prophets.

The image shown to Nebuchadnezzar [Daniel 2] in the visions of the night represents the kingdoms of the world. The metals in the image, symbolizing the different kingdoms, became less and less pure and valuable. The head of the image was of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the sides of brass, [the legs of iron], and the feet and toes of iron mingled with clay. So the kingdoms represented by them deteriorated in value. . . . If they had kept the fear of the Lord ever before them, they would have been given wisdom and power which would have bound them together and kept them strong. —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 327.

On one occasion Jehoshaphat visited the king of Israel at Samaria. Special honor was shown the royal guest from Jerusalem, and before the close of his visit he was persuaded to unite with the king of Israel in war against the Syrians. Ahab hoped that by joining his forces with those of Judah he might regain Ramoth, one of the old cities of refuge, which, he contended, rightfully belonged to the Israelites.

Although Jehoshaphat in a moment of weakness had rashly promised to join the king of Israel in his war against the Syrians, yet his better judgment led him to seek to learn the will of God concerning the undertaking. "Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today," he suggested to Ahab. In response, Ahab called together four hundred of the false prophets of Samaria, and asked of them, "Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?" And they answered, "Go up; for God will deliver it into the king's hand." Verses 4, 5.

Unsatisfied, Jehoshaphat sought to learn for a certainty the will of God. "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord," he asked, "that we might inquire of him?" Verse 6. "There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord," Ahab answered; "but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." 1 Kings 22:8. Jehoshaphat was firm in his request that the man of God be called; and upon appearing before them and being adjured by Ahab to tell "nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord," Micaiah said: "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace." Verses 16, 17.

The words of the prophet should have been enough to show the kings that their project was not favored by Heaven, but neither ruler felt inclined to heed the warning. Ahab had marked out his course, and he was determined to follow it. Jehoshaphat had given his word of honor, "We will be with thee in the war;" and after making such a promise, he was reluctant to withdraw his forces. 2 Chronicles 18:3. "So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead." 1 Kings 22:29.

During the battle that followed, Ahab was shot by an arrow, and at eventide he died. "About the going down of the sun," "there went a proclamation throughout the host," "Every man to his city, and every man to his own country." Verse 36. Thus was fulfilled the word of the prophet. —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 195, 196.

Monday, December 07
A Mother in Israel

For twenty years, the Israelites groaned under the yoke of the oppressor; then they turned from their idolatry, and with humiliation and repentance cried unto the Lord for deliverance. They did not cry in vain. There was dwelling in Israel a woman illustrious for her piety, and through her the Lord chose to deliver His people. Her name was Deborah. She was known as a prophetess, and in the absence of the usual magistrates, the people had sought to her for counsel and justice.

The Lord communicated to Deborah His purpose to destroy the enemies of Israel, and bade her send for a man named Barak. . . . and make known to him the instructions which she had received. She accordingly sent for Barak, and directed him to assemble ten thousand men of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun, and make war upon the armies of King Jabin.

Barak knew the scattered, disheartened, and unarmed condition of the Hebrews, and the strength and skill of their enemies. Although he had been designated by the Lord Himself as the one chosen to deliver Israel, and had received the assurance that God would go with him and subdue their enemies, yet he was timid and distrustful. He accepted the message from Deborah as the word of God, but he had little confidence in Israel, and feared that they would not obey his call. He refused to engage in such a doubtful undertaking unless Deborah would accompany him, and thus support his efforts by her influence and counsel. . . .

Barak now marshaled an army of ten thousand men, and marched to Mount Tabor, as the Lord had directed. Sisera immediately assembled an immense and well-equipped force, expecting to surround the Hebrews and make them an easy prey. The Israelites. . . looked with terror upon the vast armies spread out in the plain beneath them equipped with all the implements of warfare. . . . Large, scythelike knives were fastened to the axles, so that the chariots, being driven through ranks of the enemy, would cut them down like wheat before the sickle.

The Israelites had established themselves in a strong position in the mountains to await a favorable opportunity for an attack. Encouraged by Deborah's assurance that the very day had come for signal victory, Barak led his army down into the open plain, and boldly made a charge upon the enemy. The God of battle fought for Israel and neither skill in warfare, nor superiority of numbers and equipment, could withstand them. The hosts of Sisera were panic-stricken. . . . God alone could have discomfited the enemy, and the victory could be ascribed to Him alone. —*Reflecting Christ*, p. 329.

God would have been with Ahab if he had walked in the counsel of heaven. But Ahab did not do this. He married a woman given to idolatry. Jezebel had more power over the king than God had. She led him into idolatry, and with him the people. God sent Elijah to Israel with messages of warning, but neither king nor people would heed his words. They looked upon him as a messenger of evil. At last God sent a drought upon the land.

Did the people discern and acknowledge the object of this judgment and humble their hearts before Him? No; Jezebel said that the prophets of Jehovah had brought this calamity upon them. She said that all Israel was suffering because of their reproofs, and that there would be no rest or prosperity in the land until these prophets were put to death. Thus a feeling of anger was aroused against the men whom God had sent to entreat the people to repent of their wickedness. Many holy men died for their testimony. Elijah was preserved by a miracle of divine power, to proclaim before the king and queen the warnings and threatenings of God.

"Go, shew thyself unto Ahab," God said to Elijah. When the king and the prophet met, Ahab said, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" . . . But Elijah said, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim."

He told Ahab to gather the prophets of Baal together; and then came a wonderful manifestation of the power of God. All day long the false prophets called upon Baal, but received no response. When Elijah appealed to the God of heaven, the answer was at once given. The prophets of Baal had prayed wildly and incoherently. Elijah prayed simply and fervently, asking God to show His superiority over Baal that Israel might be led to turn to Him. As his prayer ascended, the answer came. Fire descended from heaven and consumed the sacrifice and the water with which it had been drenched.

Seeing this wonderful manifestation of power, Israel cried, "The Lord, he is the God." While their hearts were touched and softened by the miracle they had witnessed, Elijah took this opportune time to slay the false prophets.

However bold and successful and courageous the people of God may have been in doing a special work, unless they constantly look to God and continue to have confidence in the work He has given them, they will lose their courage. After God has given them a wonderful revelation of His power, bracing them up to do His work, circumstances will arise to test their faith, and they will fail unless they trust implicitly in the Lord.

Thus it was with Elijah. He had by the help of God defeated the prophets of Baal. But he was disappointed as to the results of the manifestation of God. Under the threats of the wicked queen he lost his courage and his faith. He lost sight of Him in whose keeping he was, and without being sent he fled for his life. He was terribly depressed, for he had hoped for much from the miracle wrought before the people. —*Christ Triumphant*, pp. 162, 163.

Repentance is one of the first fruits of saving grace. Our great Teacher, in His lessons to erring, fallen man, presents the life-giving power of His grace, declaring that through this grace men and women may live the new life of holiness and purity. He who lives this life works out the principles of the kingdom of heaven. Taught of God, he leads others in straight paths. He will not lead the lame into paths of uncertainty. The working of the Holy Spirit in his life shows that he is a partaker of the divine nature. Every soul thus worked by the Spirit of Christ receives so abundant a supply of the rich grace that, beholding his good works, the unbelieving world acknowledges that he is controlled and sustained by divine power, and is led to glorify God. . . .

Read and study the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel. In it we are given most precious encouragement. "I will save my flock, and they shall be no more a prey," the Lord declares. ". . . And I will make with them a covenant of peace. . . ."

The most striking feature of this covenant of peace is the exceeding richness of the pardoning mercy expressed to the sinner if he repents and turns from his sin. The Holy Spirit describes the gospel as salvation through the tender mercies of our God. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," the Lord declares of those who repent, "and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12). Does God turn from justice in showing mercy to the sinner? No; God cannot dishonor His law by suffering it to be transgressed with impunity. Under the new covenant, perfect obedience is the condition of life. If the sinner repents and confesses his sins, he will find pardon. By Christ's sacrifice in his behalf, forgiveness is secured for him. Christ has satisfied the demands of the law for every repentant, believing sinner. —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 138.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:26.

The truths of the Word of God are not mere sentiments, but the utterances of the Most High. Anyone who makes these truths a part of the life becomes in every sense a new creature. The person is not given new mental powers, but the darkness, that through ignorance and sin has clouded the understanding, is removed.

The words "A new heart will I give you" mean "A new mind will I give you." This change of heart is always attended by a clear conception of Christian duty, an understanding of truth. The clearness of our view of truth will be proportionate to our understanding of the Word of God. A person who gives the Scriptures close, prayerful attention will gain clear comprehension and sound judgment, as if in turning to God he or she had reached a higher grade of intelligence. —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 351.

Thursday, December 10
A Prophet for the Time of Waiting

The mighty Angel who instructed John was no less a personage than Jesus Christ. Setting His right foot on the sea, and His left upon the dry land, shows the part that He is acting in the closing scenes of the great controversy with Satan. This position denotes His supreme power and authority over the whole earth. The controversy has waxed stronger and more determined from age to age, and will continue to do so to the concluding scenes when the masterly working of the powers of darkness shall reach their height. . . .

After these seven thunders uttered their voices, the instruction comes to John, as to Daniel, in regard to the little book: "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered." . . . John sees the little book unsealed. . . . Then Daniel's prophecies have their proper place in the first, second, and third angels' messages to be given to the world. The unsealing of the little book was the message in relation to time.

The books of Daniel and the Revelation are one. One is a prophecy, the other a revelation; one a book sealed, the other a book opened. . . . The special light given to John, which was expressed in the seven thunders, was a delineation of events that would transpire under the first and second angels' messages. . . . The first and second angels' messages were to be proclaimed, but no further light was to be revealed before these messages had done their specific work. . . .

This time, which the Angel declares with a solemn oath, is not the end of this world's history, neither of probationary time, but of prophetic time, which would precede the advent of our Lord. That is, the people will not have another message upon definite time. After this period of time, reaching from 1842 to 1844, there can be no definite tracing of the prophetic time. The longest reckoning reaches to the autumn of 1844.

The Angel's position, with one foot on the sea, the other on the land, signifies the wide extent of the proclamation of the message. It will cross the broad waters and be proclaimed in other countries, even to all the world. The comprehension of truth, the glad reception of the message, is represented in the eating of the little book. The truth in regard to the time of the advent of our Lord was a precious message to our souls. —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 344.

As we near the close of this world's history, the prophecies relating to the last days especially demand our study. The last book of the New Testament scriptures is full of truth that we need to understand. Satan has blinded the minds of many, so that they have been glad of any excuse for not making the Revelation their study. But Christ through His servant John has here declared what shall be in the last days, and He says, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein."

"This is life eternal," Christ said, "that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Why is it that we do not realize the value of this knowledge? Why are not these glorious truths glowing in our hearts, trembling upon our lips, and pervading our whole being?

. . . .

In eternity we shall learn that which, had we received the enlightenment it was possible to obtain here, would have opened our understanding. The themes of redemption will employ the hearts and minds and tongues of the redeemed through the everlasting ages. They will understand the truths which Christ longed to open to His disciples, but which they did not have faith to grasp. Forever and forever new views of the perfection and glory of Christ will appear. Through endless ages will the faithful Householder bring forth from His treasure things new and old. —*Lift Him Up*, p. 378.

Friday, December 11
For Further Reading

Christ Triumphant, "Beware of Those Who Contradict God's Commands," June 3, p. 161.
Christ Triumphant, "The Value of Souls Versus One's Reputation," June 14, p. 172.