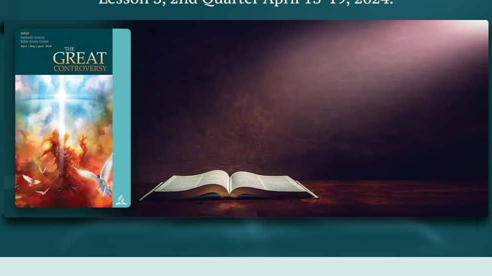
Light Shines in the Darkness

Lesson 3, 2nd Quarter April 13-19, 2024.



Sabbath Afternoon, April 13

Memory Text:

"Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." KJV — John 12:35

"Thousands were imprisoned and slain, but others sprang up to fill their places. And those who were martyred for their faith were secured to Christ and accounted of Him as conquerors. They had fought the good fight, and they were to receive the crown of glory when Christ should come. The sufferings which they endured brought Christians nearer to one another and to their Redeemer. Their living example and dying testimony were a constant witness for the truth; and where least expected, the subjects of Satan were leaving his service and enlisting under the banner of Christ. GC 42.1

"Satan therefore laid his plans to war more successfully against the government of God by planting his banner in the Christian church. If the followers of Christ could be deceived and led to displease God, then their strength, fortitude, and firmness would fail, and they would fall an easy prey. GC 42.2

"The great adversary now endeavored to gain by artifice what he had failed to secure by force. Persecution ceased, and in its stead were substituted the dangerous allurements of temporal prosperity and worldly honor. Idolaters were led to receive a part of the Christian faith, while they rejected other essential truths. They professed to accept Jesus as the Son of God and to believe in His death and resurrection, but they had no conviction of sin and felt no need of repentance or of a change of heart. With some concessions on their part they proposed that Christians should make concessions, that all might unite on the platform of belief in Christ." GC 42.3

Sunday, April 14

Compromise: Satan's Subtle Strategy

Compare John 14:6 with John 8:44. What contrast between Jesus' character and Satan's is seen in these two passages?

"Now the church was in fearful peril. Prison, torture, fire, and sword were blessings in comparison with this. Some of the Christians stood firm, declaring that they could make no compromise. Others were in favor of yielding or modifying some features of their faith and uniting with those who had accepted a part of Christianity, urging that this might be the means of their full conversion. That was a time of deep anguish to the faithful followers of Christ. Under a cloak of pretended Christianity, Satan was insinuating himself into the church, to corrupt their faith and turn their minds from the word of truth. GC 42.4

"Most of the Christians at last consented to lower their standard, and a union was formed between Christianity and paganism. Although the worshipers of idols professed to be converted, and united with the church, they still clung to their idolatry, only changing the objects of their worship to images of Jesus, and even of Mary and the saints. The foul leaven of idolatry, thus brought into the church, continued its baleful work. Unsound doctrines, superstitious rites, and idolatrous ceremonies were incorporated into her faith and worship. As the followers of Christ united with idolaters, the Christian religion became corrupted, and the church lost her purity and power. There were some, however, who were not misled by these delusions. They still maintained their fidelity to the Author of truth and worshiped God alone." GC 43.1

Read Proverbs 23:23, John 17:17, and John 8:32. What similarity do you see in these passages regarding the truth of God's Word? What is their central message?

"Satan is well aware that the weakest soul who abides in Christ is more than a match for the hosts of darkness, and that, should he reveal himself openly, he would be met and resisted. Therefore he seeks to draw away the soldiers of the cross from their strong fortification, while he lies in ambush with his forces, ready to destroy all who venture upon his ground. Only in humble reliance upon God, and obedience to all His commandments, can we be secure. GC 530.1

"No man is safe for a day or an hour without prayer. Especially should we entreat the Lord for wisdom to understand His word. Here are revealed the wiles of the tempter and the means by which he may be successfully resisted. Satan is an expert in quoting Scripture, placing his own interpretation upon passages, by which he hopes to cause us to stumble. We should study the Bible with humility of heart, never losing sight of our dependence upon God. While we must constantly guard against the devices of Satan, we should pray in faith continually: 'Lead us not into temptation.'" GC 530.2

Monday, April 15

Savage Wolves

Read Acts 20:27-32. What specific warnings did the apostle Paul give to the church leaders from Ephesus regarding the coming apostasy?

"Paul trembled for the church as, looking into the future, he saw the attacks which she must suffer from both external and internal foes. With solemn earnestness he bade his brethren guard vigilantly their sacred trusts. For an example he pointed them to his own unwearied labors among them: "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears." AA 395.1

"He who holds the truth in unrighteousness, who declares his belief in it, and yet wounds it every day by his inconsistent life, is surrendering himself to the service of Satan and leading souls to ruin. This class hold intercourse with fallen angels and are aided by them in gaining the control of minds. When Satan's bewitching power controls a person, God is forgotten, and man who is filled with corrupt purposes is extolled. Secret licentiousness is practiced by these deceived souls as a virtue. This is a species of witchcraft. The question of the apostle to the Galatians may well be asked: "Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" There is always a bewitching power in heresies and in licentiousness. The mind is so deluded that it cannot reason intelligently, and an illusion is continually leading it from purity. The spiritual eyesight becomes blurred, and persons of hitherto untainted morals become confused under the delusive sophistry of those agents of Satan who profess to be messengers of light. It is this delusion which gives these agents power. Should they come out boldly and make their advances openly they would be repulsed without a moment's hesitation; but they work first to gain sympathy and secure confidence in themselves as holy, self-sacrificing men of God. As His special messengers they then begin their artful work of drawing away souls from the path of rectitude by attempting to make void the law of God." 5T 142.1

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12. How doe the apostle Paul describe the coming apostasy? What characteristics should believers look for?

"The apostle Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, foretold the great apostasy which would result in the establishment of the papal power. He declared that the day of Christ should not come, "except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." And furthermore, the apostle warns his brethren that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 7. Even at that early date he saw, creeping into the church, errors that would prepare the way for the development of the papacy. GC 49.1

"Little by little, at first in stealth and silence, and then more openly as it increased in strength and gained control of the minds of men, "the mystery of iniquity" carried forward its deceptive and blasphemous work. Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the Christian church. The spirit of compromise and conformity was restrained for a time by the fierce persecutions which the church endured under paganism. But as persecution ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions. The nominal conversion of Constantine, in the early part of the fourth century, caused great rejoicing; and the world, cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ. GC 49.2

"This compromise between paganism and Christianity resulted in the development of "the man of sin" foretold in prophecy as opposing and exalting himself above God. That gigantic system of false religion is a masterpiece of Satan's power—a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will." GC 50.1

Tuesday, April 16

Safeguarded by the Word

Read John 17:15-17 and Acts 20:32. What insights do Jesus and the apostles give us regarding protection from the deceptions of Satan?

2 Tim. 3:16, 17—"All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

2 Pet. 1:20, 21—"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."

Affirmatively stated, all Scripture, not merely a part of It, is inspired. Negatively stated, none of It is privately interpreted, for the reason that It did not come of men but of God; that is, as the Spirit of God dictated to men the Scriptures, so the Spirit of God must interpret the Scriptures to men, that no man privately (without Inspiration) is capable of disclosing the sealed prophecies or interpreting any part of them or even capable of understanding their importance after they are interpreted except it be by the gift of the Spirit of Truth. "None of the wicked," therefore, "shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Dan. 12:10.

We should now be convinced that as long as this Divine command and principle of interpreting God's Word is overlooked and abused, and as long as selfishness and bigotry exist among Christians in general and among Bible students in particular, isms will continue to increase, and the strength of the people will continue to be wasted just as was the strength of both the builders of the bridge and the builders of the tower. Yes, just as certainly as night follows day, just that certain will their, efforts come to naught, and their shame be uncovered.

That we cannot be led into all Truth without the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy, Inspiration symbolically forewarns through the prophet Zechariah. Let us turn to Zechariah 4, and begin with the first verse.

Zech. 4:1-4—"And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and has seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my Lord?"

The illustration here exhibited, you note, is an exact reproduction of Zechariah's symbolism. In order that our study be simplified and vivid, we shall study the chapter along with the illustration.

Now let us hear the angel's explanation of this symbolism.

Verses 5, 6—"Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my Lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the Word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

The angel disclosed two things: First he made known that the symbolism is concerning the Word of the Lord (the Bible) to the servants of God; second, that His Word is revealed, not by man's might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God.

Plainly this symbolism as a whole represents the system by which the Lord transmits His revealed Word to His people. That we might have a thorough understanding of this Divinely designed system, we need to know what each component part of the illustration stands for. The Spirit of Prophecy gives the clue.

In The Great Controversy, page 267 is explained that the "olive trees" represent the "Old and New Testaments"; Testimonies to Ministers, page 188, says that the golden oil represents the Holy Spirit; and on page 337 of the same book, along with Revelation 1:20, says that the seven lamps represent the church, and that the seven tubes (the ministry) convey the oil to the churches.

Now study the illustration itself as you would study any cartoon. First of all, the trees represent the Word of God (the Bible–both Old and New Testaments–two trees).

Here is seen that the whole symbolical set up is for the purpose of depicting the accomplishment of but one thing—of keeping the seven lamps (the entire church membership) supplied with spiritual oil (Bible Truth) so that it might give spiritual light all round about, that the church might lighten the world with the revealed Word of God. And since the ministry's duty is to feed the church with spiritual food, the fact is that the seven tubes represent the ministry at work, taking the oil (revealed Truth) from the bowl to the seven lamps, the churches. Now the truth that in the illustration the tubes (the ministers) do not take the oil directly from the olive trees (the Bible), it positively indicates that the bowl in which the oil is deposted represents the container or the store in which the compilations of Inspired Bible interpretations are stored, and that from it, not from the olive trees, the ministers help themselves with oil and carry it to the seven lamps (to the church).

The two golden pipes, therefore, can be only a representation of the inspired channels which are capable to extract the oil (light of Truth) from the trees (from both Testaments) and store it in the bowl (books) for the tubes (ministers) to convey it to the candlestick (to the churches).

The symbolism, therefore, points out the system which Heaven has ordained for dispensing the Word of the Lord to His church: that the Spirit of Prophecy at work is the only remedy against isms in the church and in the world.

Wednesday, April 17

Human Reasoning Apart from Scripture

Read Proverbs 16:25, Judges 21:25, and Isaiah 53:6. What do these texts reveal about Satan's strategy of deception?

"Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." Isa. 7:14, 15.

Surely all of us agree that this passage of Scripture is a forecast of the Emmanuel of Matthew 1:23 – Christ at His first advent. The fact, however, that Christ ate all manner of lawful food, and was even accused of being a "gluttonous man, and a winebibber" (Luke 7:34), eating with "publicans and sinners" (Mark 2:16), makes it transparently clear that this diet of "butter and honey" is not literal. Moreover, the fact that butter and honey possess absolutely no virtue to endue one with wisdom and will to choose the good and to refuse the evil, no, no more than do other articles of food, shows conclusively that this "butter and honey" are figurative of something special, just as the fly and the bee of Isaiah 7:18 are figurative of Egypt and Assyria. And of what else could it be but of spiritual food, the kind that builds up moral character, that makes one "refuse the evil, and choose the good?" And from what source other than the Scriptures could such food come? And what else, moreover, could the honey represent but the sweet Spirit of God that blesses everyone's sincere study of and simple faith in the Word?

Manifestly, therefore, this butter-and-honey symbolism infallibly tells us that Immanuel, Christ, was enabled to discern and to overcome sin by His study of the Bible – by digesting Its contents and allowing them to become a part of Him. This was His sweetest delight, as the symbolical honey reveals. Thus it was that "He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of" (John 4:32), and, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matt. 4:4.

Accordingly, the truth is evident that Christianity is a spiritual plant, feeding on the Word of God as unfolded by the sweet Spirit of Truth. Consequently if Christ our Examplar thuswise "increased in wisdom..., and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52), then it is even more essential that we, His followers, live on the same Word, on the same butter and honey, if we are to possess true, life-sustaining, life-preserving Christianity. Indeed we are told precisely that in the next verses of Isaiah's prophecy:

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep; and it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land." Isa. 7:21, 22.

In these verses Inspiration directs our attention to three butter-producing creatures – two sheep and a young cow, and forewarns that only those who eat of their products will have the right to live in "the land" – in the land of God's people. None others, no, not another one, will be there.

Since, therefore, only those who eat of the butter, those who thus learn to refuse the evil and to choose the good, are to be permitted to live in the holy land, all the more obvious it is that the butter is figurative of spiritual food. And since its source of supply is the two sheep and the young cow, it is of absolute necessity that we explore in the realm of this Bible symbolism to find what they are.

The two sheep, of a kind and not young, are manifestly symbolical of the Old and New Testaments, the Word, which enables its recipients to "choose the good and to refuse the evil." And the cow being young, and therefore of later origin than the sheep, and its also being of larger size than they, it can accordingly only be figurative of inspired writings of later origin and of greater volume than the Bible Itself. The only such besides the Bible are those which bring to us "the testimony of Jesus:....for the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy" (Rev. 19:10) – the inspired interpretation of the Scriptures.

It is also to be noted that this butter and this honey are produced in the Christian era, in the time when both sheep, both Testaments, are in existence, and also in the time when the Spirit of Prophecy is at work.

And what is the Spirit of prophecy? – The same chapter and verse give the answer:

"And I fell at his feet," at the feet of the one who unfolded the prophecy to John, "to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Rev. 19:10.

Here it is seen that as the prophecies were unfolded to John by one of his brethren, thereby was revealed to him the Testimony of Jesus, the Spirit of Prophecy. Plainly, then, an inspired servant of God who bears a message to his brethren, bears the Testimony of Jesus to them. To illustrate: Suppose the Lord Jesus communicated a personal message to you by a messenger, would not His message be His testimony to you? And should God endow the messenger with the gift of His Spirit to unfold to you the prophecies which are in the Scriptures, would he not be coming to you with the Spirit of Prophecy?

Thus it is clear that the "Testimony of Jesus" and "the Spirit of Prophecy" are synonymous terms for a timely message sent from God – "meat in due season." The Spirit of prophecy, therefore, is God's means of communicating from Heaven directly to His church on earth, as well as of unfolding the sealed prophecies to her.

As we have already seen that the two sheep are symbolical of the Old and New Testaments, we now see also that the "young cow" is symbolical of the inspired interpretations of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy in our day. It is now obvious that the product of these three creatures necessarily must become our spiritual diet if we expect to be "left" and permitted to live in the Holy Land, and that there is no use of our thinking to abide the judgment in some other way. And if there remain any doubt about this, then consider please what the Apostle Peter says on the subject:

"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 Pet. 1:19-21.

Did you mark what Inspiration says? It plainly declares that the Scriptures are not privately interpreted – not without the Spirit of God in the man, not by the man alone, and not without God's own appointment. And the reason given, you note, is the very fact that prophecy did not come by the will of man, but by the will of the Spirit, through "holy men of God." This, brethren, is Heaven's law and order. And who are we to change it? To put your trust in private interpretation is therefore to barter your soul to man. Concerning such a perilous practice, the Lord commands:

"Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Isa. 2:22.

As revealed truth is unfolded only by the Spirit of Truth at a given time, then for one to reject such revelation, "meat in due season" (Matt. 24:45), is indeed to sin "against the Holy Ghost." Matt. 12:31.

Since it now is clear as sunlight that the ever-unfolding, Inspired interpretation of the Scriptures is the ever-living Spirit of Prophecy, the eyes of the church at work (1 Sam. 9:9), then to be without these spiritual eyes is to try to walk, as it were, in dense darkness.

Thursday, April 18

Battle for the Mind

Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-6. What does "whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe" (2 Cor. 4:4) mean? How are their eyes blinded? How are eyes opened?

"God does not conceal His truth from men. By their own course of action they make it obscure to themselves. Christ gave the Jewish people abundant evidence that He was the Messiah; but His teaching called for a decided change in their lives. They saw that if they received Christ, they must give up their cherished maxims and traditions, their selfish, ungodly practices. It required a sacrifice to receive changeless, eternal truth. Therefore they would not admit the most conclusive evidence that God could give to establish faith in Christ. They professed to believe the Old Testament Scriptures, yet they refused to accept the testimony contained therein concerning Christ's life and character. They were afraid of being convinced lest they should be converted and be compelled to give up their preconceived opinions. The treasure of the gospel, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, was among them, but they rejected the greatest gift that Heaven could bestow. COL 105.1

"'Among the chief rulers also many believed on Him,' we read; 'but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.' John 12:42. They were convinced; they believed Jesus to be the Son of God; but it was not in harmony with their ambitious desires to confess Him. They had not the faith that would have secured for them the heavenly treasure. They were seeking worldly treasure. COL 105.2

"And today men are eagerly seeking for earthly treasure. Their minds are filled with selfish, ambitious thoughts. For the sake of gaining worldly riches, honor, or power, they place the maxims, traditions, and requirements of men above the requirements of God. From them the treasures of His word are hidden. COL 106.1

"'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,' 1 Corinthians 2:14. COL 106.2

"'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4." COL 106.3

Friday, April 19

Further Thought

"Christ was acquainted with the Scriptures, for He met all the temptations of the devil with "It is written." Arguments and reasons would have been of no avail, but "It is written" showed that Christ, the tempted One, had His feet upon solid, immovable rock. We are to learn these lessons from the Word, hanging them in memory's hall, and thus preparing to meet Satan with the only weapon which will repulse him—"It is written." All things written in the law and in the prophets are true, and they carry the proof of it in themselves. Nothing is gained by endeavoring to prove by argument the divine origin of the Bible. It is its own expositor. It carries its own keys; scripture unlocks scripture. If we do not see the truth in the Bible, it is because our opinions and prejudices have not been laid at the door of investigation. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" [2 Corinthians 4:3, 4]. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" [1 Corinthians 1:18].—Manuscript 40, 1895, 2. ("Education," no date.)" 2MR 96.

For further studies, feel free to contact:
Whatsapp: (+63)961-954-0737
contact@advancedsabbathschool.org