

LESSON 21 (Second Epistle of Peter - Lesson 5). – November 24, 1888.

2 PETER 1 : 16-21.

1. IN his second epistle, what does Peter say that he had previously made known to the people? 2 Peter 1 : 16.

2. With what positiveness could Peter speak of the glory of Christ's coming? lb.

3. When had he been an eye-witness of Christ's majesty as it will be displayed at his second coming? Verses 17, 18.

4. State the details of this occurrence. Matt. 17: 1-5; Mark. 9 : 2-8; Luke 9 : 28-36.

5. What had Jesus previously said which also shows that the transfiguration was a representation of the second coming of Christ? Matt. 16 : 28; Mark 9 : 1.

6. Is it possible to have any better evidence than that given to Peter, James, and John? 2 Peter 1:19.

7. What office does the word of prophecy serve to us? _lb, Ps. 119: 105.

8. How long will it shine to show us the way? 2 Peter 1 : 19, last part.

9. In what, period are we living, that a light should be necessary? Rom. 13 : 12; Isa. 60 :2.

10. What has brought about this night of darkness? Rom. I: 21.

11. Who is the day-star? Rev. 22 : 16; John 8 : 12.

12. Can any prophecy be interpreted by the-unaided knowledge of any man? 2 Peter 1 : 20.

13. Why not? Verse 21.

14. What connection has the light of prophecy with the day-star, the light of the world? I Peter 1 : 10, 11.

15. Why cannot all the world see this light? 1 Cor. 2 : 14; 2 Cor. 4: 3, 4.

16. What aid must we have in order to understand it? 1 Cor. 2 : 9, 10.

17. Having the aid of the Spirit, how must we proceed in our study ? Verse 13, last clause.

NOTES.

IT is usually considered that one who was an eye-witness of any event is the one best qualified to testify concerning it. And most certainly it is better than testimony given at second hand. So Peter assures us that he had not been deceived by cunningly devised fables when he made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he himself had been an eye-witness of his majesty. Then he refers to the transfiguration scene, in a way to show that that was what he had in mind as exhibiting the power and glory of Christ at his second advent. And this is in accord with transfiguration. our Saviour said when he foretold the transfiguration.

"WHEN Christ, who is our life, shall appear," there will be two classes of the righteous who will appear with him in glory" -those who have fallen asleep, and those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord. The dead shall be raised, and the living shall be changed, and so they will together be glorified. So it was when Christ was transfigured. Elijah was there as the representative of those who shall be translated without seeing death, and Moses, as the representative of those who fall asleep. in Jesus, and whom God will bring with him from the dead. That Moses had been raised from the dead when he appeared with Elijah upon the mount, is proved (1) by the fact that if he had not been raised from the dead he could not have been there, for "the dead know not anything." Eccl. 9 : 5. See also Eccl. 9 : 6, 10; Ps. 6 : 5; 115 : 17; 146 : 3, 4; Isa. 38:10, 11, 18, 19, etc. (2) Jude says that Michael (Christ) contended with the devil about the body of Moses. Jude 9. The devil has the power of death (Heb. 2 : 14) and shuts up in his prison house (the grave) all that he can, claiming that they are his lawful prey (see Isa. 14 : 12-17); and although Christ has brought away the keys of the grave, Satan does not willingly allow any to pass from his power. There could not possibly be anything that would cause a dispute between Christ and Satan about the body of Moses, except the matter of his resurrection. (3) If Moses had not been raised from the dead, the transfiguration would not be what both Christ and Peter declared it to be,—a representation of the second coming of Christ.

BUT notwithstanding the fact that Peter had actually been an eye-witness of "the power and coming" of Christ, and could testify from personal knowledge, he says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, unto which ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." The Revised Version renders this verse as follows : "We have the word of prophecy made more sure;" but we cannot accept this rendering. Alford says that this rendering is on the ground,---

"That the comparative alludes to what has gone before as its reason, as if it had been said Wherefore, or Now, or Henceforth we have, etc.; i. e., 'on account of this voice from Heaven which we have heard, we have firmer hold of, or esteem [possess] more sure the prophetic word, as now having in our own ears begun its fulfillment.' The great objection to such a view is the omission of any such connecting particles as those above supplied. It is true the apostle may have omitted them [as he certainly did, and, presumably, on purpose] ; but even supposing that; it is further against the view, that if such be the force of the comparison, the thought is not at all followed up in the ensuing verses."— New Testament for English Readers.

It may be further said that nothing can make the word of prophecy more sure than it was when it first came from the lips of the holy men whom God inspired. The meaning is evidently exactly given in the common version, that the sure word of prophecy is more sure than any panoramic view can be. Our eyes may deceive us, but the word of God "liveth and abideth forever."

PROPHECY is light proceeding directly from God, who is himself light. With him there is "no darkness at all." 1 John 1 : 5. In Heaven, where the will of God is done perfectly, all is light. In the New Jerusalem, the inhabitants "need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light." Rev. 22 : 5. And when the will of God shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven, the whole earth will be lightened by the glory of God. "The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light" that comes from the city of God. Rev. 21 : 23, 24. But sin has separated man from God, so that darkness now covers the earth. The prophecy comes as a beacon-light to guide men to the source of light. As with the rays from a distant light-house, the prophetic light may at first be comparatively faint; but the nearer we approach to the source of light, the brighter the light will become; and so of those who take heed to it, it may truly be said that their path is "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. 4 : 18.

"No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." This means that Scripture is its own interpreter. For every prophecy contained in the Bible, the key is found there also, and therefore every prophecy is of public interpretation—the interpretation is just as free to one person as it is to another. Whenever a man puts forth any view as an explanation of a given prophecy, the humblest person has a right to challenge his exposition, no matter how learned he may be. If he cannot produce positive Scripture authority for his interpretation, it must be rejected, or at least held in suspense until some wiser person can find a Bible reason for the theory. The Peshito Syriac version renders the verse thus : "No prophecy is an exposition of its own text." The idea is the same as that expressed above. No man can read a prophecy and tell by his own unaided power, from the reading of it, what it means. He must look for an exposition to some other passage, possibly in the same chapter (as in Daniel 7), but still separate from the prophecy itself. Spiritual things must be compared with spiritual.

Ellen White Notes Compiled:

#1 But the teacher of sacred truth can impart only that which he himself knows by experience. "The sower sowed his seed." Christ taught the truth because He was the truth. His own thought, His character, His life-experience, were embodied in His teaching. So with His servants: those who would teach the word are to make it their own by a personal experience. They must know what it is to have Christ made unto them wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. In presenting the word of God to others, they are not to make it a suppose-so or a may-be. They should declare with the apostle Peter, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty." 2 Peter 1:16. Every minister of Christ and every teacher should be able to say with the beloved John, "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." 1 John 1:2. {COL 43.1}

#2 Yet they received great light. They were assured that all heaven knew of the sin of the Jewish nation in rejecting Christ. They were given a clearer insight into the work of the Redeemer. They saw with their eyes and heard with their ears things that were beyond the comprehension of man. They were "eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16), and they realized that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, to whom patriarchs and prophets had witnessed, and that He was recognized as such by the heavenly universe. {DA 425.2}

#3 The apostle was well qualified to speak of the purposes of God concerning the human race; for during the earthly ministry of Christ he had seen and heard much that pertained to the kingdom of God. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables," he reminded the believers, "when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." {RH, September 26, 1912 par. 3}

#4 I saw that the faith of the disciples was greatly strengthened at the transfiguration. God chose to give the followers of Jesus strong proof that he was the promised Messiah, that in their bitter sorrow and disappointment they should not entirely cast away their confidence. At the transfiguration the Lord sent Moses and Elias to talk with Jesus concerning his sufferings and death. Instead of choosing angels to converse with his Son, God chose those who had an experience in the trials of earth. A few of his followers were permitted to be with him and behold his face lighted up with divine glory, and witness his raiment white and glistening, and hear the voice of God, in fearful majesty, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him. {1SG 40.1}

#5 Jesus had told His disciples that there were some standing with Him who should not taste of death till they should see the kingdom of God come with power. At the transfiguration this promise was fulfilled. The countenance of Jesus was there changed and shone like the sun. His raiment was white and glistening. Moses was present to represent those who will be raised from the dead at the second appearing of Jesus. And Elijah, who was translated without seeing death, represented those who will be changed to immortality at Christ's second coming and will be translated to heaven without seeing death. The disciples beheld with astonishment and fear the excellent majesty of Jesus and the cloud that overshadowed them, and heard the voice of God in terrible majesty, saying, "This is My beloved Son; hear Him." {EW 164.3}

#6 There is to be no compromise with those who make void the law of God. It is not safe to rely upon them as counselors. Our testimony is not to be less decided now than formerly; our real position is not to be cloaked in order to please the world's great men. They may desire us to unite with them and accept their plans, and may make propositions in regard to our course of action which may give the enemy an advantage over us. "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy" (Isaiah 8:12). While we should not seek for controversy, and should not needlessly offend, we must present the truth clearly and decidedly, and stand firm to what God has taught us in His Word. You are not to look to the world in order to learn what you shall write and publish or what you shall speak. Let all your words and works testify, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables" (2 Peter 1:16). "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" (2 Peter 1:19). {2SM 371.1}

#7 By searching the Scriptures we are to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. The Bible has not been given for the benefit of ministers only; it is the book for the people; it is the comfort of the poor man. It is a great mistake for ministers to give the impression to the people that they should not read the Bible because they cannot understand its sacred teachings, and should be content with the interpretation given by those whose business it is to proclaim the word of God. Ministers who thus educate the people are themselves in error. The Bible and the soul were made one for the other, and through the agency of the word and the Holy Spirit, God moves upon the heart. To him who receives the love of the truth, the word of God is as a light that shineth in a dark place, pointing out the path so plainly that the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein. He realizes that "the entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." {ST, August 20, 1894 par. 2}

A familiar acquaintance with the Scriptures sharpens the discerning powers, and fortifies the soul against the attacks of Satan. The Bible is the sword of the Spirit, which will never fail to vanquish the adversary. It is the only true guide in all matters of faith and practice. The reason why Satan has so great control over the minds and hearts of men, is that they have not made the word of God the man of their counsel, and all their ways have not been tried by the true test. The Bible will show us what course we must pursue to become heirs of glory. Says the psalmist, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." But this is not the case when it is left unopened and unread. {RH, January 4, 1881 par. 27}

#8 "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." God would have us take hold of the rich promises of his Word. Come to his feet, and plead with him for power. {RH, July 6, 1905 par. 18}

#9 The day is at hand. For the lessons to be learned, the work to be done, the transformation of character to be effected, the time remaining is but too brief a span. {Ed 184.2}

"Behold," says the Scripture, "the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." Isaiah 60:2. {COL 415.2}

It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth. {COL 415.3}

#10 Spiritual idleness means spiritual unfaithfulness. Could every idler in the market-place understand the penalty of slothfulness, he would be up and doing. The Word declares that he which is unfaithful in that which is least is unfaithful also in much. All his work bears the impression of unfaithfulness. None will be pleased to meet their unfaithfulness in the judgment; for the "wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse; because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." These words represent the case of the servant who hid his Lord's treasure, in the place of using it to the glory of God. {ST, August 18, 1898 par. 13}

#11 Christ came to our world to manifest God to men, to lead men to God. "I am the light of the world," He declared. What was it that consecrated Him the light of the world? It was this. He came down from heaven. He is the true Teacher sent from God. He was the One chosen to reveal God's character to the world. He is the Bright and Morning Star. He is the Sun of Righteousness, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel. John declared of Him, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." {20MR 268.3}

#12, #13 Convincing as was this evidence of the certainty of the believers' hope, there was yet another still more convincing in the witness of prophecy, through which the faith of all might be confirmed and securely anchored. "We have also," Peter declared, "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." {RH, September 26, 1912 par. 4}

While exalting the "sure word of prophecy" as a safe guide in times of peril, the apostle solemnly warned the church against the torch of false prophecy, which would be uplifted by "false teachers," who would privily bring in "damnable heresies, even denying the Lord." These false teachers arising in the church are accounted true by many of their brethren in the faith, but the apostle compared them to "wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever." "The latter end is worse with them," he declared, "than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." {RH, September 26, 1912 par. 5}

#14 Peter, writing of the salvation brought to light through the gospel, says: Of this salvation "the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister." [1 Peter 1:10-12.] {GC88 344.2}

#15 Nicodemus came to the Lord thinking to enter into a long discussion with him concerning points of minor importance, but Jesus laid bare the first principles of truth, and showed Nicodemus that his first need was humility of heart, a teachable spirit, a new heart; that if he would enter into the kingdom of God, he must be born again. Are there not those who hold responsible positions in the Sabbath school who would be irritated and annoyed if I should testify to them that though they are rulers in Israel, they too need to be born again? Nicodemus wondered that Christ should speak to him in the way which he did, not respecting his position as ruler in Israel, and he was not prepared to receive the truth, and he

answered Christ in words full of irony. "Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" He revealed the fact, as do many, when the cutting truth is brought home to the conscience, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. There is nothing in them that responds to spiritual things; for spiritual things are spiritually discerned. But although Nicodemus did not comprehend his words, Jesus did not become impatient or discouraged, but sought to make more plain his statement of truth: In solemn, quiet dignity, Jesus repeated his words in a manner that would convince him of their divine truth, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." {Sabbath-School Worker, August 1, 1892 par. 5}

Satan is continually seeking to overcome the people of God by breaking down the barriers which separate them from the world. Ancient Israel were enticed into sin when they ventured into forbidden association with the heathen. In a similar manner are modern Israel led astray. "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 4:4.] All who are not decided followers of Christ are servants of Satan. In the unregenerate heart there is love of sin, and a disposition to cherish and excuse it. In the renewed heart there is hatred of sin, and determined resistance against it. When Christians choose the society of the ungodly and unbelieving, they expose themselves to temptation. Satan conceals himself from view, and stealthily draws his deceptive covering over their eyes. They cannot see that such company is calculated to do them harm; and while all the time assimilating to the world in character, words, and actions, they are becoming more and more blinded. {GC88 508.2}

#16 The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer's faith. It is that which Christ Himself has declared to be eternal life. But the possession of this knowledge was no ground for self-glorification. Through no wisdom or goodness of his own had it been revealed to Peter. Never can humanity, of itself, attain to a knowledge of the divine. "It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" Job 11:8. Only the spirit of adoption can reveal to us the deep things of God, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him;" and the fact that Peter discerned the glory of Christ was an evidence that he had been "taught of God." Psalm 25:14; John 6:45. Ah, indeed, "blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." {DA 412.3}

#17 The Lord is our helper. It is not his good pleasure that any should perish, but rather that all should come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved. God will not withhold from man the fulfillment of the only real hope he can have in the world. Jesus says, "Without me, ye can do nothing;" but in him, and through his righteousness imputed unto us, we may do all things. The work of the Spirit of God will stand forever, but the works of men will perish. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. To the worldly-wise the workings of the Spirit of God that leads to confession and acknowledgement of sin and to the acceptance of the truth as it is in Jesus, appear as foolishness. They cannot reason out the "whys" and "wherefores" of its operation any better than did Nicodemus, and they ridicule and denounce the work of God; their human wisdom cannot interpret it. "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things

also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." {RH, July 1, 1890 par. 2}