Quarter Four: *The Gift of Prophecy*

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Lesson 8—Interpreting Prophetic Writings

Sunday: The Bible, Its Own Interpreter

November 15, 2026

- **Last Week:** "Now Hear This!"
  - Absolute truth vs relative truth (what I want to hear or believe)
    - Price paid by prophets for delivering truth
    - Accepting or rejecting the truth in God's Word / delivered by the prophets

- **This Week:** "Interpreting Prophetic Writings"
  - Importance of rightly interpreting & understanding the prophetic writings

  - 2 disciples on way to Emmaus
    - They had misinterpreted Scripture (based on common teaching of the day)
      - The Messiah would come & break the Roman yoke & rule over Israel
    - Instead, Jesus had come as a Suffering Servant
      - Their hopes were dashed
    - Jesus came on their walk & properly interpretated Scripture
      - Context matters
      - Comparing Scripture with other Scriptures matters
      - Original language matters
      - Proper interpretation of Scripture means everything

  - We are to –
    - Study to learn Scripture (not prove our point)
    - Ask Holy Spirit for His guidance (don't depend on our preconceived ideas)
    - Approach Scripture with prayer (not with pride or a sense that we know it all)
    - Be willing to walk in obedience to what we learn (don't resist what we learn)
      - Whether sin that God points out or specific truth we're called to follow
    - Look for Jesus in everything we study (don't separate Scripture from Jesus)
      - John 3:16 vs conquest of Canaan in OT or geologies
    - Examine the Word in context (not isolated verses)
    - Compare Scripture with Scripture (not just one passage without visiting the entirety of the Word)
    - Study the historical & cultural context (not just the Word itself)
    - Learn the original languages (not just the English translation)
    - Learn **from** others & share the Word **with** others

Memory Text: "Then beginning with Moses and with all the Prophets, He explained to them the things written about Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27, NASB).

The week in brief:

- **1. Sunday:** The Bible, Its Own Interpreter (Jill)
  - Importance of & how to study the Word in context

- **2. Monday:** The Historical-Cultural Context (Pastor John D)
    - Importance of & how to study the Word in light of the cultural / historical context
- **3. Tuesday:** The Literary Context (Rise)
    - Importance of the Word in context & Satan's twisted use of Scripture to serve his own purpose
- **4. Wednesday:** The Meaning of the Text (Pastor James R)
    - Importance of & how to compare Scripture with Scripture
- **5. Thursday:** Biblical Exposition (Pastor Ryan J)
    - Importance of keeping Jesus center of everything we study in God's Word; importance of learning **from** others & sharing Scriptures learned **with** others
- **6. Friday:** Reading Ellen G White (Pastor John D)
    - How to approach the study of EGW: prayer, open mind, contextually, look for principles

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2 Tim 3:16; Matt 5:17 – 48; Jer 31:31 – 33; Heb 8:8 – 10; 10:16; Dan 2:31 – 35; 2:36 – 45; Matt 13:18 – 23; 2 Chron 36:22, 23 / Jer 25:11, 12; 29:10

- Is Scripture inspired?
    - 2 Tim 3:16 – "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."
    - 2 Pet 1:21 – holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit

- Yet, Scripture can be twisted
    - 2 Pet 3:16 – "as also in all his (Paul's) epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction as they do also the rest of the Scriptures."
        - Even Biblical authors recognized that Scripture could be twisted
        - How do we properly understand and interpret Scripture?
        - How do we let the Bible interpret itself?

5 keys to Biblical interpretation: the Bible is its own interpreter, but how do we let it interpret itself?

- **1. Come with a teachable spirit**
    - How do I approach Scripture?
        - Push aside preconceived ideas
    - Prov 3:5 – "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;"
        - Remove the preconceived ideas – don't approach Scripture with your preconceived ideas

- **2. Look beneath the surface**
    - What am I looking for?
        - We're not looking for a secret / hidden meaning. We're allowing Scripture to unfold the fullness of understanding.

- OT 10 commandment law:
  - Don't murder
  - Don't commit adultery

- NT interpretation / unfolding of that law:
  - Matt 5 – sermon on the Mount
    - Outward compliance to the law = OT law
    - Inward heart conversion & motive of the same law = NT interpretation
      - Murder = hate
      - Adultery = lust

  - Jer 31:33 – "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after. Those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."
    - Obedience springs from a heart response
    - Heb 8

- **2. Look beneath the surface**
  - As we allow the Bible to interpret itself, we discover deeper meanings in Scripture
    - Salvation is simple enough that a child can understand
      - Yet Scripture contains depths that the deepest scholar cannot fathom

- **3. Study the passage in context**
  - Where do I find the meaning?
    - Look within the passage for the interpretation
    - Sometimes, the Bible gives us the interpretation right beside the prophecy, parable, or symbol.

  - Matt 13 – Parable of the sower & the seed
    - Sower & the seed: some fell
      - By the wayside
      - In stony places
      - Among thorns
      - On good ground

    - Interpretation right in the passage:
      - Vs 18 – "Therefore hear the parable of the sower:"
        - Wayside = hardened heart (road was packed)
        - Stony = shallow heart (seed didn't take deep root)
        - Thorny = distracted heart (seed was choked out)
        - Good = open, receptive heart

- **4. Ask God for understanding**
  - Who can help me understand?
    - Biblical things can only be understood by God
    - Prayer isn't just one of the keys. Prayer is the posture we maintain throughout all 5 keys.

- Ps 119:18 – "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law."
  - Pray, ask God to open your eyes to understand His Word
    - If He's the Author, He provides the best interpretation

- Dan 2
  - King Nebuchadnezzar's dream – couldn't remember dream
    - Daniel & friends prayed & God gave both the dream & interpretation

  - Dan 2:26 – 28 – "The king answered & said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, 'Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?' (27) Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, 'The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. (28) But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.'"

  - King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image
    - Head of gold
    - Chest & arms of silver
    - Belly & thighs of bronze
    - Legs of iron
    - Feet of iron & clay

  - Interpretation was given right in the passage (#3: study passage in context)
    - Daniel didn't invent the interpretation: God supplied it

    - Head of gold = kingdom of Babylon
    - Chest / arms of silver = kingdom of Medo-Persia
    - Belly / thighs of bronze = kingdom of Greece
    - Legs of iron = kingdom of Rome (pagan to papal Rome)
    - Feet of iron & clay = countries that won't mix, b4 2nd coming of Christ
- 4. Ask God for understanding
  - We don't make Scripture say what we want – we allow Scripture to tell us what it means.

- **5. Compare Scripture with Scripture**
  - How do I confirm what I've found?
  - Compare other passages of Scripture for deeper meaning
    - *Second coming of Christ
      - OT & NT – compare Scripture with Scripture

    - OT types & symbols – fulfillment in Jesus in the NT
      - "The OT is the gospel in figures & symbols. The NT is the substance. One is as essential as the other." (SM, bk 2, p. 104)

  - Scripture interprets Scripture:
    - Jeremiah gave the prophecy: Chronicles gave the fulfillment

    - 70-year prophecy
        - Jer 25:11 – "And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."
        - Jer 29:10 – "For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place."

    - Fulfillment
        - 2 Chron 36:22, 23 – "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, (23) 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!'"

- **Why does this matter?**
    - Correct biblical interpretation isn't merely about getting information right
        - It's about seeing Jesus more clearly
        - All Scripture ultimately points toward Christ.

5 keys to Biblical interpretation

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    - What am I looking for?
- 3. Study the passage in context
    - Where do I find the meaning?
- 4. Ask God for understanding
    - Who can help me understand?
- 5. Compare Scripture with Scripture
    - How do I confirm what I've found?