

THE BASIS OF THE ADVENTIST DOCTRINE

Test Questions – Lesson 10

1. Complete the following quotations:

1. “Every true doctrine makes the center.”
2. “We are to receive God’s as supreme”
3. “Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ”

2. Answer these questions:

1. What is the creed of the Adventist faith?
2. Would adoption of a formal creed (a) bar the way to progress? (b) conflict with the Spirit of Prophecy?

3. Fill in the words missing words in these quotations:

1. “I take the Bible just as it is, as the Word. I believe its utterance in an ”

2. “It is a whole perfectly adapted to the needs ”

4. Answer these questions:

1. As explained by Mrs. White, why are the testimonies needed?
2. By what apt illustration did Mrs. White show the relationship of her writings of the Bible?

5. What is the four-fold role of the Spirit of Prophecy in developing doctrinal truth?

1.
2.
3.
4.



Among the doctrines taught by the pioneers, what two were specifically confirmed by vision?

1.
2.

6. Underline the words in parentheses which truthfully complete these statements:

1. The pioneers (were) (were not) bigoted because they said, “We have the truth, we know it.”
2. It (is) (is not) possible to know with certainty that we now have the truth.



Answer these questions:

1. Who were the four men mentioned by Mrs. White as having a prominent part in laying the foundations of doctrinal teaching, and with whom she had studies? (a) (b) (c) (d)
2. When the brethren could go no further in study, how did they accept light given through Mrs. White?

7. Underline the word in parentheses which correctly completes each sentence:

1. True light will (weaken) (strengthen) the foundation stones of the message.
2. True light will promote (harmony) (confusion) in the church.
3. The advocâte of true doctrine will be (recognized) (ignored) by the church.

THINK ON THESE THINGS (No written answer)

Observe that the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and of the Spirit of Prophecy on the point of the supreme authority of the Bible are one and the same. If Mrs. White has sought to interpose her counsels between the church and the Scriptures, would she have held God's book in such high esteem?

Sincè the Spirit of Prophecy was given to rekindle in the heart a love for the Bible, do I show my appreciation by planning some time every day for personal Bible study?

How did the pioneers know for sure that they had the truth?

Do I share their deep convictions?

The Basis for Adventist Doctrine

10



PROPHETIC GUIDANCE

GUIDING TEXT: Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. - Ephesians 2: 19, 20.

The Goodspeed translation of our guiding text reads:

"You are built upon the apostles and prophets as your foundation, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone."

The sixty-six books of the Bible were written by inspired "apostles and prophets." Therefore the Old and New Testaments may be received as the foundation and authority in all matters of faith and doctrine. In this lesson we shall discover how securely the Advent Movement is anchored to the foundation stones of the Scriptures.

As a preview of this lesson, read the chapter titled "The Scriptures a Safeguard," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593-602.

The Sure Foundation of Christian Faith

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. - 1 Corinthians 3:11.

Every true doctrine makes Christ the center, every precept receives force from His words. - *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 54.

The words of Jesus recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the messages that He gave through the prophets and apostles in both the Old and the New Testaments are to be received by Christians as the very Word of God.

The first item under "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventhday Adventists" in the official Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook and the Church Manual reads:

Seventh-day Adventists hold certain fundamental beliefs. . . .

That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain an all-sufficient revelation of His will to men, and are the only rule of faith and practice. 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

Mrs. White wrote: “We are to receive God's Word as supreme authority.” - *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 402.

True Christianity receives the word of God as the great treasure house of inspired truth, and the test of all inspiration. *Great Controversy*, p. 193.

Protestantism sets the power of conscience *above* the magistrate, and the authority of the word of God *above* the visible church.

In our time there is a wide departure from their [the Scriptures] doctrines and precepts, and there is need of a return to the great Protestant principles. - the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty. - *Ibid.*, pp. 204, 205. Italics supplied.

God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the *standard* of all doctrines, and the *basis* of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and as discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority, - not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support. - *Ibid.*, p. 595. Italics supplied.

The Creed of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

A creed is defined by Webster as “a brief, authoritative formula of religious belief.”

Early in the work of the Adventist Church, Elder James White declared:

The Bible is our creed. We reject everything in the form of a human creed. We take the Bible and the gifts of the Spirit; embracing the faith that thus the Lord will teach us from time to time. And in this we take a position against the formation of a creed. -*Review and Herald*, Oct. 8, 1861, p. 148. Italics supplied.

The apostles upheld the Word of God as the basis for doctrine:

All scripture. . . is profitable for doctrine. - 2 Timothy 3:16.

Put away all. . . rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. - James 1:21, R. S. V.

Ellen White was a staunch defender of the Scriptures as the rule of faith. "The Bible and the Bible alone," said she, "is to be our creed." - *Selected Messages*, Book I, p. 416. Objection to church creeds was often voiced by early Advent leaders. To representatives of the Sabbath-keeping Adventists gathered in Battle Creek in the year 1861, Elder White stated his objections to creeds on the ground that creeds would make ineffectual the spiritual gifts promised in the Scriptures-gifts that were to remain in the church till the close of time. And to him, repudiation of the gifts meant rejection of the Bible:

I take the ground that *creeds stand in direct opposition to the gifts*. Let us suppose a case: We get up a creed, stating just what we shall believe on this point and the other, and just what we shall do in reference to this thing and that, and say that we will believe in the gifts too. But suppose the Lord, through the gifts, should give us some new light that did not harmonize with our creed; then, if we remain true to the gifts, it knocks our creed all over at once. *Making a creed is setting the stakes, and barring up the way to all future advancement*. God put the gifts into the church for a good and great object; but men who have got up their churches, have shut up the way or have marked out a course for the Almighty. They say virtually that the Lord must not do anything further than what has been marked out in the creed. A creed and the gifts thus stand in direct opposition to each other. - *Review and Herald*, October 8, 1861, p. 148. Italics supplied.

When the first issue of the *Signs* appeared in the year 1874, a statement of the "Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists" was published. But the statement was prefaced by this paragraph:

In presenting to the public this synopsis of our faith, we wish to have it distinctly understood that we have no articles of faith, creed, or discipline, aside from the Bible. - *Signs of the Times*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 3.

And to this day a General Conference statement of fundamental beliefs is issued *principally to answer honest inquiries* about the beliefs of the movement, never "setting the stakes," as James White said, "barring up the way to all future advancement." The Lord will teach His church by the word and the gifts of His Spirit - opening up the truth of heaven to His people.

Unique Completeness of the Scripture Revelation

For I testify unto every man that hearerth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. - Revelation 22:18, 19.

John's statement refers primarily, of course, to the last book of Scripture, the book of Revelation. In view of this statement anyone should tremble to tamper with the living word of the living God. Here is a Book, unique and complete in itself, a Book that represents the mind and will of God. Ellen G White declared concerning its completeness and adequacy:

I take the Bible just as it is, as the Inspired Word. *I believe its utterances in an entire Bible.* - *Selected Messages*, Book I, p. 17. Italics supplied.

It contains the alpha and omega of knowledge.-*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 299; *Gospel Workers*, p. 309.

It is a perfect whole perfectly adapted to the needs of all men. - *Education*, p. 123; *Steps to Christ*, p. 112; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 746-749.

It is an inexhaustible treasury, so full of truth that a thousand years of research would not exhaust it.-*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 444; *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 443; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 113.

It contains all the present truth.-*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 192.

Look up as many of these references as possible, and study the statements in the light of their context. See also *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 445, 446; *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 193; vol. 4, p. 27; and *Christ's Object Lesson*, p. 107.

Relationship Between the Testimonies and the Bible

Mrs. White declared that if the Word of God had been studied and followed as it should have been, there would have been no need for the Testimonies. The Spirit of Prophecy is a voice in the church calling the people back to the neglected Bible:

If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the Testimonies. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God's inspired book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings.-*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 605.

Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light. - *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 125, Italics supplied.

Mrs. White was distressed when a certain layman made it appear that the *Testimonies* were an *addition* to the *Bible*.

That the *Testimonies* were not given to take the place of the Bible, the following extract from a testimony published in 1876 will show:

Brother J would confuse the mind by seeking to make it appear that the light God has given through the *Testimonies* is an addition to the word of God, but in this he presents the matter in a false light. God has seen fit in this manner to bring the minds of His people to His word, to give them a clearer understanding of it." [vol. 2, pp. 483, 484 (1876)]

The word of God abounds in general principles for the formation of correct habits of living, and the testimonies, general and special, have been calculated to call their attention more especially to these principles." [vol. 4, p. 323 (1879)] -Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 663, 664.

Mrs. White was also deeply concerned over some Adventists who professed great respect for the Bible, the "greater light," but who did not heed the *Testimonies*, the "lesser light":

My brethren, beware of the evil heart of unbelief. The Word of God is plain and close in its restrictions; it interferes with your selfish indulgence; therefore you do not obey it. The testimonies of His Spirit call your attention to the Scriptures, point out your defects of character, and rebuke your sins; therefore you do not heed them. And to justify your carnal, ease-loving course you begin to doubt whether the testimonies are from God. If you would obey their teachings you would be assured of their divine origin. Remember, your unbelief does not affect their truthfulness. If they are from God they will stand. Those who seek to lessen the faith of God's people in these testimonies, which have been in the church for the last thirty-six years, are fighting against God. It is not the instrument whom you slight and insult, but God, who has spoken to you in these warnings and reproofs. -Ibid., (1889), pp. 234, 235.

Doctrinal Structure of the Church Built Upon Sure Foundation

The doctrines held by Seventh-day Adventists are founded on the Bible. They were developed gradually through earnest and prayerful study of the Word of God, both by individuals and by groups. In the early days of the Advent Movement the pioneers would often remain together far into the night, searching the Scriptures for light and truth. Fervently they prayed that the Holy Spirit would illuminate their minds and direct them in their search for truth.

Sometimes, when the pioneers came across a difficult passage of Scripture or found themselves confused or bewildered over a certain phase of doctrine, the Lord in His goodness would give to Ellen White a vision directing the minds of the searchers to passages of Scripture that clarified the topic under consideration and filled their hearts with joy and gratitude.

At times the Spirit of Prophecy counsels initiated Bible study in important areas to which attention had not been given. To illustrate: In the autumn of 1845 Mrs. White was given a vision which showed that before Christ would come the second time, "the saints must pass through the 'time of Jacob's trouble,' which was future." "This, said James White, "was entirely new to us, as well as herself." - "A Word to the 'Little Flock,'" p. 22. This led to a careful study of future events, which he set forth in 1847, in a series of seven articles published in the above-named pamphlet. Observe that the vision did not take the place of Bible study, but led the minds of the pioneers to even more earnest searching of the Scriptures.

Records of the first decade of Seventh-day Adventist history reveal the fourfold role of the Spirit of Prophecy in the development of doctrine. The E. G. White counsels had a vital place in (1) initiating and prompting Bible study; (2) bringing to light precious Bible truths when the pioneers were confronted with theological difficulties; (3) pointing out errors which threatened, and correcting those who erred from Bible truth; and (4) confirming conclusions reached through earnest study of the Scriptures.

Never did the visions constitute a substitute for Bible study. Never in the experience of Seventh-day Adventists were visions given to take the place of the study of God's Word or the exercise of sanctified judgment. At a time when diligent study was being given to certain Bible truths, with some difference of opinion, Ellen White stated significantly:

God. . . wants us to go to the Bible and get the Scripture evidence. . . . This investigation must go forward. - *E. G. White, MS 9*, 1888; quoted in *Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 39.

Throughout the period during which the doctrinal platform was being built - 1844 to 1851, - great lines of truth were gradually unfolded before the early pioneers; and they, in turn, proclaimed these truths to others. In New England, Elder Joseph Bates led out in teaching the Sabbath truth. Hiram Edson and his associates in central New York discovered and proclaimed the sanctuary truth. In Maine, James White was particularly active in preaching the signs of the second advent. And to Ellen Hannon White divine revelations were given which established confidence in God's leadership in the Advent Movement. Visions there were also that met errors and fanaticism, and others that confirmed and enriched the foundational points of doctrine. How these truths were discovered is a thrilling story, as we shall see.

Circumstances and Conditions Under Which Pioneers Searched Out Truth

Meetings were held on several occasions from 1845 to 1848, notably the five Sabbath conferences of 1848:

1. Hocky Hill, Connecticut, April 20-24, Albert Belden's house. (See *Life Sketches*, p. 108.) Attendance, fifty.
2. Volney, New York, beginning August 18, Brother Arnold's barn, (See *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 97.) Attendance, thirty-five.
3. Port Gibson, New York, August 27, 28, Hiram Edson's barn. (*Ibid.*, p. 99)
4. Rocky Hill, Connecticut, September 8, 9, second meeting in Albert Belden's house.
5. Topsham, Maine, October 20-22, Brother Howland's house.

These conferences were so successful in the search for truth, that by 1850 most of the fundamental lines of doctrine were clearly defined and bound together as a unit of truth; and the later conferences served largely as teaching and unifying agencies.

Our position looks very clear; we know we have the truth. -E. G. White Letter, March, 1849. Record Book I, p. 72; quoted in *Messenger*, p. 39.

We have the truth, we *know* it. - E. G. White Letter. *Ibid.*, p. 54; *Ibid*.

Five years later came this retrospective statement:

By care and incessant labor and overwhelming anxiety has the work gone on until now the present truth is dear, its evidence by the candid undoubted, and it is easy to work now to carry on the paper to what it was a few years ago. The truth is now made so plain that all can see it and embrace it if they will, but it needed much labor to get it out clear as it is, and such hard labor will never have to be performed again to make the truth deal-E. G. White MS 2, 1855, August 26, 1855. Quoted in *Messenger to the Remnant*, pp. 39, 40.

More Light for God's Commandment - keeping People

This scripture has meaning for God's people in any day:

The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. - Proverbs 4:18.

Though the pioneers of the message were assured that in their study of the Scriptures they had discovered fundamental truths-truths attested to by the Spirit of Prophecy - yet this did not excuse them or us from continued diligent study of the Word of God. Each must have an individual experience in searching for truth - led by the Spirit of truth (John 16:13) - as a basis of our knowledge and confidence. Such study, rightly carried forward, carries rich reward in the discovery of new rays of light. Our duty to study the Bible personally, and the blessings resulting from its study, are set forth in these words:

Whatever may be man's intellectual advancement, let him not for a moment think that there is no need of thorough and continuous searching of the Scriptures for greater light. As a people we are called individually to be students of prophecy. We must watch with earnestness that we may discern any ray of light which God shall present to us. We are to catch the first gleamings of truth; and through prayerful study clearer light may be obtained, which can be brought before others. - Testimonies, vol. 5. p.708.

Are you searching the Scriptures as did the pioneers? Is your faith built upon a personal knowledge of Scripture truth? Read 2 Timothy 2:15; John 5:39; and Acts 17:11.

The subject of Lesson 11 will be "Science Confirms the Spirit of Prophecy."

Evidence will be presented of divine illumination in fields of knowledge completely unfamiliar to Mrs. White.