

PRIMARY STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

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THE LOST KEY OF KNOWLEDGE

THEOLOGIANS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE!

THEIR CONFUSION AT HAND!

"Woe unto you, Doctors of the Law, because ye have taken away the Key of Knowledge: you entered not yourselves, and those approaching you hindered."—Luke 11:52.

We are living in a pre-eminently practical day, when results are sought rather than doctrines. Indeed, in but few Christian pulpits are doctrines ever considered in these later years. Doctrinal preaching is considered obsolete, and has been replaced largely by what is termed practical preaching. In other words, the preaching of good works has taken the place of the doctrines preached by Jesus and the apostles. The reason of this is not far to seek: talented men, able ones of all denominations, in the pulpit and in the pew, are heartily ashamed of the doctrines confessed in their creeds. The preachers, therefore, are glad enough to let these alone, hoping that their congregations will forget them, and especially that they will not ask them any troublesome questions respecting them.

As a result we have throughout the civilized world to-day just what the Jews had at the first advent of our Lord—namely, a form of godliness without the power. Our Lord's discourses and parables continually bore witness to the fact that the Jews of his day, especially the prominent ones, were outwardly pious, zealous for God's Law, but inwardly ravenous wolves and full of all manner of corruption. Our Lord upbraided the leaders for their long prayers and affectations of piety, which were entirely contradicted by their conduct in daily life; their selfishness, which would lead them to take advantage of the widow, to grasp for property, and which would bind heavy burdens of Law observance upon the weak and the poor, to their discouragement. Our Lord declared to them how they had made the divine Law of none effect through their traditions—more than this, had made God and his Law abhorrent to the poor and the ignorant by exaggeration. For instance, the Law of the Sabbath was exaggerated and is still exaggerated in the Talmud, which teaches that to rub wheat between the hands and to blow away the chaff in order to eat the kernels would be unlawful, a violation of the Sabbath Day, because it would be threshing and winnowing on a small scale. Similarly, to hunt a flea would be a violation of the Sabbath Law, because it would be hunting on a small scale.

Taking Away the Key

Thus did the Doctors of the Law in Jesus' day, by the substitution of traditions instead of the divine Word, misrepresent the character of God and turn the attention of the people from him. Thus did they take away the "Key of Knowledge," for the "reverence of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Note our Lord's words, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) In a word, God's creatures need to know him well and truly in order to appreciate him and in order to have confidence in his gracious promises. Such a knowledge is necessary to a

true worship such as the Lord appreciates, for, as the Master said, the Father seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:22, 23.) Whoever, therefore, misrepresents the divine character and the divine plan is taking away the "key of knowledge" of God. This was the crime of the Doctors of the Law, which their hypocritical professions and prayers only helped to aggravate; for the common people, relying largely upon the holy professions and teachings of those leaders, were the more thoroughly deluded and the more thoroughly alienated from God by reason of their professions of sanctity.

Our Lord's words, "Woe unto you, Doctors of the Law," had a fulfilment, too. Certain woes fell with special weight upon this very class but shortly after our Lord's prediction. Very soon a period of disintegration set in, which affected everything and every prospect of the wealthy and professedly religious class of the Jews, especially the Doctors of the Law. This led to anarchy and ultimately the destruction of their national polity, A. D. 70. True, it meant dire tribulation to all people; but, as always, those most intelligent and in the high stations of life, must have suffered proportionately more in the stress which came upon all the people in fulfilment of the prophecy,—*"Wrath is come upon this people to the uttermost."*

The Gospel Age Parallel

On previous occasions, and in Vols. II. and III. of SCRIPTURE STUDIES, we have shown from the Scriptures that the Jewish Age and people represented typically Spiritual Israel and this Gospel Age; that the Jewish Age began with the death of Jacob, the Gospel Age with the death of Christ; that the former was established in the twelve sons of Jacob and the latter in the twelve apostles of the Lamb. We have also shown that the former had typical sacrifices and sin-offerings, while the latter has antitypical or "better sacrifices than those;" that the former had a typical priesthood in Aaron and his sons, while the latter had an antitypical priesthood, called by the Apostle a "Royal Priesthood," of which Christ is the Chief Priest and his faithful followers the under-priesthood. We have further shown that these Ages are of the same length, and that, as the Jewish Age ended with the harvest in which our Lord was present in the flesh as the Chief Reaper, so this Gospel Age will end with a harvest in which our Lord as a spirit being will be present as the Chief Reaper, gathering the wheat into his garner, before the great time of trouble, the figurative burning-day coming upon the world in general—"a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation." (Dan. 12:1.) We have seen that the trouble-day with which the Jewish Age ended is paralleled exactly in time and in character by the period of trouble which will consummate this Age.

In harmony with these parallels it is not wonderful that to-day we find amongst nominal Christian people (Churchianity) conditions in many respects corresponding to the conditions described by our Lord amongst the

"Read this I pray thee!"—Isa. 29:11.

THE LOST KEY OF KNOWLEDGE

Jews in their harvest time. To-day, also, we find an outward respect for God and for religion—a drawing nigh unto the Lord with the lips while the hearts are far from him—busied with fashion, pleasure and money seeking. Now, also, we find that the people look to Doctors of Divinity for guidance and instruction; that they greatly reverence them, and that the latter could have great power if they were in harmony with God—if, behind the profession, there was a knowledge of God's character and plan, and if this were imparted to the people who, according to the Scriptures, are now famishing—a famine not for bread nor for water, but for the hearing of the message of the Lord. (Amos 8:11.) This sad arraignment of the pulpites of our day is a thankless and unpleasant task; but it is as proper to-day as it was nineteen centuries ago to show those hungering and thirsting for the Word of the Lord the real cause of their difficulty—to show that the clergy have taken away the "key of knowledge" and are keeping it hid, and that neither are they themselves entering into the knowledge nor are they favoring any others entering in. On the contrary, they hinder in a hundred ways the spread of a true knowledge of God and his Word amongst the people.

When the Key Was Lost

We should not be understood as teaching that all the responsibility of the loss of the Key of Knowledge belongs to the Christian ministers of to-day, neither did our Lord charge the Doctors of the Law of his day with the full responsibility. He pointed back to the same class in earlier days, saying, "Woe unto you! for you build the sepulchers of the prophets, and your fathers killed them." (v. 47.) Our Lord seems to have arraigned the clergy as a class, and to have held the modern representatives responsible, because they gave evidence of having the same spirit that their predecessors had, even though they condemned some of their practices. Thus, their fathers killed the prophets, while they killed the Lord himself and persecuted his followers. Nor should we understand our Lord's words to apply to every individual of the Jewish clergy, the Doctors of the Law, but rather that he spoke of them as a class, ignoring the few exceptions. Similarly we hold that amongst the teachers of to-day there are exceptions to the general rule—God-loving and God-fearing men, themselves striving to enter into the knowledge of God and to assist others to enter in. But surely these are a very small minority, and they are rarely heard from.

The Key of Knowledge of God's true character was lost long ago, buried under what the Lutherans style the "dunghill of Roman decretals." It was lost during the "dark ages." Luther and some of his coadjutors did valiantly in striving to recover the Key, and at least got hold of the handle. But, alas! little progress has since been made. The key, while recovered, is still hidden by a veil, a mist of superstition and false doctrine. Shall we illustrate this? How, we ask? Could any one come to a knowledge of God—a true knowledge, an appreciative knowledge, a hearty sympathy, a true devotion—while still thinking of God as the all-powerful Creator, who made mankind for his own pleasure, yet, before man's creation prepared for the vast majority a place of eternal torment, manned with fire-proof devils and supplied with fuel enough for all eternity? Who that has that thought before his mind, who that believes that unscriptural teaching, could rightly reverence his Creator as a God of justice and of love? In proportion as this cloud of error, this "doctrine of devils," comes between an intelligent mind and its Creator, in that same proportion it will be impossi-

ble for him to really know God, whom to rightly know would imply life eternal. Before the Key of Knowledge can be found and used, and access gained to a right appreciation and worship of God, this doctrine and other similar superstitions of the "dark ages" must be gotten rid of. We thank God that in his providence some to-day, Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile, are being helped to a knowledge by a message of the great Teacher, even as a little flock of Israelites indeed were taught of God and inducted into a knowledge and love of God, despite the conduct and false teachings and wrong attitude of the Doctors of the Law at the first advent.

It should be noted that our Lord does not intimate that the Doctors of the Law themselves had entered into the knowledge and were keeping others out of it, but, on the contrary, that while they were in a favored position to supply the Key and to enter in and to enjoy the knowledge, they were not only not doing so, but in avoiding the knowledge they were hindering others who were in quest of it. So to-day we are not to be understood as intimating that the preachers of Christendom have the true knowledge and are withholding it from the people, but the contrary—that they are confused, that they know not God, and that therefore the divine plan of boundless mercy for the sins of the whole world is hidden from their view. As a class they know not God—they misunderstand him. But, instead of seeking for the Key and entering in, and seeking to assist others to enter in, have they not abandoned the Word of God and taken up with Higher Criticism and Evolution, and are they not guiding those who look up to them for counsel in the same direction? Why do not these educated men of great opportunity awake to the privilege of their position and search the Scriptures, and by full consecration of their all to the Lord enter into the school of Christ, that they may be taught of him, that they may find the Key of Knowledge and assist in putting it into the hands of those who are seeking God, "feeling after him, if happily they might find him," but who are now being misled and misdirected? As our Lord said, the blind are leading the blind, and surely all will fall into the ditch. The ditch of that day was the time of trouble which wrecked the Jewish nation. The ditch of our day is the approaching day of trouble, in which Christendom will be wrecked in a cataclysm of anarchy, according to the Scriptures.

The Importance of Knowledge

In worldly matters the word knowledge is applicable to any subject which we know and can demonstrate, but in religious matters the word has a still broader meaning, and applies to things that we cannot actually prove, but which we believe on satisfactory evidence—as, for instance, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Faith is the basis of this knowledge—faith in what we believe to be a God-inspired revelation of things past and to come. This we may call faith-knowledge, and to this the Scriptures everywhere continually appeal, assuring us that "without faith it is impossible to please God," that such faith is the foundation of all our hopes, the main-spring of all our best endeavors, and that according to our faith will be the results as respects our present development of character along the lines of righteousness and our future attainment of the heavenly reward. It is for this reason that we are urged to search the Scriptures and to study to show ourselves approved workmen, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, and again that we may be ready, able at all times, to give to him that asketh us a reason for the hope within us. (John 5:39; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15.) He who has not a knowledge of the divine revelation, the divine plan, can-

not have a Scriptural hope, cannot have the legitimate results of such a hope, namely, the anchorage of the soul, sure and steadfast. (Heb. 6:19.) In harmony with this the Apostle points out the fact that the heathen cannot be saved under the call of this Gospel Age. Whatever salvation there may be for them will come later under the Millennial Kingdom arrangements, for how could they at present believe on him of whom they have not heard, since now it has pleased God to save only those that believe and whose faith leads to the appropriate conduct outlined in the Scriptures. The more of this faith and knowledge the Lord's people possess the stronger should be their confidence and the nobler should be their lives. This faith-knowledge is referred to in the Scriptures as the truth, as, for instance, when our Lord said, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth." (John 17:17.) The message of God received by faith is accepted to be the truth, to be true knowledge, and wherever it goes there must be a sanctifying, separating power.

How forceful, then, is this injunction, "My people perish for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6.) Not that we put knowledge as superior to love—quite the contrary; knowledge is the foundation, love is the superstructure, the character development. No one, therefore, can rear a proper superstructure without a proper foundation. The measure of the foundation must of necessity mark the limitations of the building upon it. Whoever has little knowledge of God and his character and his Word has proportionately little of the sanctifying power of the Truth. If the knowledge does not produce this fruitage the results are even as the Apostle points out in the words, "If I had all knowledge and had not love I should be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal"—it would profit me nothing. (1 Cor. 13:1.) On the contrary, whoever thinks to build up a proper character without knowledge errs egregiously. The Apostle seems to point to this fact when he refers to some as building upon the one sure foundation, Christ Jesus, with wood, hay, stubble, erroneous teachings; and others as building upon the good foundation with gold, silver and precious stones, representative of the divine truth. And the Apostle assures us that the testing time will come and that only the latter class will stand the test, while the former will suffer loss, though themselves will be "saved so as by fire." (1 Cor. 3:13-15.) Thus does he point out the two distinct classes of the saved ones of this Gospel Age, known in the Scriptures as the "Little Flock" and the "Great Company." It is proper that every child of God should look to it "that he receive a full reward" (2 John 8); that he win the great prize, that he be not one of those merely "saved so as by fire," and who must "come up out of great tribulation."—Rev. 7:14.

Our Lord's Knowledge Attested

An illustration of the value of knowledge is set forth in the Scripture in the words, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, when he shall bear their iniquities." (Isa. 53:11.) And this surely illustrates well the principle we have applied in the Scriptures to all the members of the Church, the Body of Christ, who are required to be character copies of God's dear Son. Note the following references to the value of knowledge to the Church, the Elect of this present age. The Apostle speaks of some who "have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge," and distinctly intimates their disadvantage in the race on this account. (Rom. 10:2.) The Apostle commends those who are "full of goodness, and filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another." (Rom. 15:14.)

And again, he speaks of the advantage secured to those "enriched in Christ with all knowledge." (1 Cor. 1:5.) And again, he speaks of knowledge coming through the holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8), and again, he reproves some who "have not the knowledge of God."—1 Cor. 15:34.

Again he points out that God's grace has shined into our hearts to give the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God." (2 Cor. 4:6.) And again, he exhorts to faithfulness "by pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering" (2 Cor. 6:6); and again in faith and utterance and knowledge; and again he refers to the necessity of casting down all imaginations that would tend to exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. (2 Cor. 10:5.) In his epistle to the Ephesians he speaks of his own favor from God in respect to the knowledge of Christ, the knowledge of the Mystery, and of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. (1:17; 3:4, 19.) To the Philippians he writes (1:9) urging that they abound more and more in knowledge; and speaks of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus. (3:8.) To the Colossians he writes that they should be filled with a knowledge of God's will, and make increase in the knowledge of God. (1:9, 10.) He refers to the treasures of wisdom and knowledge divine which are hidden in Christ and intended for those who come unto the Father through him. The Apostle Peter also teaches that the Lord's grace comes unto us through the knowledge of God, who hath called us; and he exhorts that we add to our virtue knowledge, that we may be not barren in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—2 Pet. 1:2-8.

Knowledge During the Millennium

As the knowledge of God reaches but comparatively few of the human family during this Gospel Age, and few, therefore, gain the eternal life, it is of deep interest to all that the Lord's Word enunciates that it is his will that all men should be saved [recovered from the tomb] and come to a knowledge of the Truth that they may be saved. (1 Tim. 2:4.) If the knowledge of the Lord is a blessing to us now, and brings with it responsibility and great opportunity and blessings present and prospective, it is in full accord with this that the Lord here promises that ultimately all shall know him, and all, therefore, have a full opportunity of attaining the blessings he is so willing to bestow upon those who seek him in sincerity. Let us hearken to some of the promises given to these through the prophets. Isaiah tells us that the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. (11:9.) Habakkuk gives a very similar statement of the matter, assuring us that the earth will be filled with a knowledge of the glory, the greatness, the grandeur of the Lord. (2:14.) And again, the prophet Jeremiah declares that there shall be no longer need for every man to say to his neighbor and to his brother, Know thou the Lord, for all shall know him from the least even unto the greatest. (31:34.) How glad we are that ultimately God's glorious character shall be clearly seen by all mankind—when the blindness of superstition, ignorance, bigotry and Satanic deceit and doctrines of devils shall have given way to the glorious light of the Sun of Righteousness, with healing, restitution, in its beams!

"Whom Shall He Teach Knowledge?"

Isaiah the Prophet is caused to give a picture of our day in which is pointed out the stumbling of the teachers of our time. Symbolically they are represented as drunkens with the wine of false doctrine, so that they

"err in vision, they stumble in judgment," because Babylon hath made all nations drunk. (Rev. 17:2; 18:3.) These, the creeds of the different denominations, are represented as their table, at which they feed, and are declared to be full of ejecta and uncleanness. Then, still referring to our day, the Lord through the Prophet inquires (Isa. 28:9), "Whom shall he teach knowledge and whom shall he make to understand doctrine?" The question implies that few will be in a condition to understand the Truth in this day, and then the answer is given—"Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts." This symbolical picture represents the Lord's faithful people as merely babes in Christ, and informs us that even these must be weaned from their infantile condition that, as the Apostle suggests, they may appreciate the strong meat of divine revelation, and thus grow strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, advancing from the infantile condition to full manhood in Christ.—Heb. 5:12.

While the intimation is that the Doctors of the Law at the first advent and the Doctors of Divinity at the present time will wield so strong an influence as to hinder the majority of those who are trusting them from entering into the riches of God's grace which are properly their portion, we have various intimations that the Lord will not permit this to be the case with those who are at heart loyal to him. These will be drawn from the priests of sectarianism and from the creeds of the "dark ages"; they will be weaned; they will find the sectarian bed too short and the sectarian covers too narrow, and will get out from these conditions into the full liberty of the children of God. Not into that bold agnostic condition known as the New Theology, but into the liberty of the sons of God, under the limitations of the divine Word of revelation, which to them will be line upon line, here a little and there a little. As at the first advent the Lord found such a class and fed them, strengthened them, so—although they were recog-

nized as ignorant and unlearned men—they were soon known as talented, and their neighbors and enemies took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus and learned of him—learned of the true God, of his true character and of the true hope set before them in the Gospel; so we have the Lord's promise that in the end of this age—notwithstanding the fact that the Key of Knowledge is lost to the majority, and that those who should have it and should be leading the way into it have it not and are turning the people aside from looking in the right direction—nevertheless our Lord Jesus, whom the Apostle styles the great Shepherd of the sheep, promises that at his second advent he will gather his sheep in that dark and stormy day.—Ezek. 34:11, 12.

He promises also that in this day he will cause his faithful ones, weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts, to sit down to a table of his own furnishing, not filled with the ejecta of the "dark ages," and that he himself will come forth and serve his people meat in due season, things new and old. Let us not only take this attitude of readiness to enter into the light of the knowledge of God and to be fed thereby, but additionally let us see to it that the strength which we derive from this strong meat of Present Truth shall be such as will build us up, sanctify us, that we may attain to that full knowledge of God which can be had only by those who come into heart-fellowship with him through Christ, and which will constitute to them an evidence that they are sons of God, taught of God, for to such is the message of the Saviour, "The Father himself loveth you." (John 16:27.) To all who have hitherto been careless as respects this Key of Knowledge and the blessings that are to be unlocked thereby, we urge that it is high time for them to awake out of sleep and out of darkness and to search the Scriptures and to enter into the blessed joys of the Lord to be had now through faith in his Word, and to be prepared to enter into the joys of the Lord actually very soon.

If the reader hungers and thirsts for the Truth he shall be filled, is the Master's promise—The Key of Knowledge shall be found now by him who seeketh it. Our Society has published and is supplying at cost price (25c, cloth-bound, postpaid) a veritable "Bible Key," as many have found it—"THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES," 385 pages. Order a copy at once, that your faith may be the more quickly reestablished in God's promises and that your joy in the Lord may the more quickly abound in your heart. In seven different languages. Sold by colporteurs, 35c. Over two millions of these are already in the hands of the people.

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