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Week of Prayer

Adventist World

We Are
Called to Be
**Faithful to
His Prophets**



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Faithful to His Prophets

God has always longed to communicate with His created beings. Before sin entered this world He walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. After the Fall, this was no longer possible, as sinful human beings would be consumed by His divine presence.

Not wanting to abandon us, however, God created another way to give His special messages of instruction, warning, reproof, and love to His people—the gift of prophecy. God's prophets are so important that the Bible assures us, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

The theme for this Week of Prayer is "Faithful to His Prophets," and throughout the week we will consider several important questions regarding this remarkable gift of prophecy, including "Why did God send prophets?" "What moved prophets to deliver their messages?" "What are the marks of a true prophet?" "How should we interpret the prophetic word?" and more.

In the daily readings Marcos and Claudia Blanco will lead us in considering this important topic through their thoughtful and inspiring articles.

Capping off the week is a sermon, "A Prophet to God's End-time People," featuring the writings of Ellen G. White and her strong emphasis on the Bible as the sole rule of faith and practice.

I encourage you to set aside time each day to study and pray during this special Week of Prayer. I am certain that the Lord will abundantly bless as we come together as a world church family, focusing on faithfulness to His prophets in anticipation of Christ's soon return.

Ted N. C. Wilson is president of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. Additional articles and commentaries are available from the president's office on Twitter: @pastortedwilson and on Facebook: @Pastor Ted Wilson.



Meet the Authors

Marcos and **Claudia Blanco** have worked in the Seventh-day Adventist publishing ministry for almost 20 years. Marcos is a pastor who serves as managing editor in the South American Spanish Publishing House (Asociación Casa Editora Sudamericana [ACES]), while Claudia is a freelance translator and a stay-at-home mother. Both are avid readers of Ellen G. White's writings and have translated and edited several of her books into Spanish. The Blancos have two children—Gabriel, 15, and Julieta, 14—and live in **Buenos Aires, Argentina**.

We believe in the power of prayer, and we welcome prayer requests that can be shared at our weekly staff worship every Wednesday morning. Send your requests to prayer@adventistworld.org, and pray for us as we work together to advance God's kingdom.



First Sabbath

Why Did God Send Prophets?

The Lord reveals His secrets to His servants.

BY TED N. C. WILSON

Imagine that the first face you ever saw was the face of God. Imagine that the first voice you ever heard was God's voice. That's how it was with Adam and Eve. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7).

"Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man" (verse 22).

When Adam and Eve opened their eyes, they looked into the lovely face of Jesus, and the first words they heard came from His melodious voice.

Everything was perfect in their beautiful garden home. They enjoyed the company of angels, of each other, and of God Himself. Ellen White describes the scene: "The holy pair were not only children under the fatherly care of God but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator. They were visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between."¹

But once sin entered this world, things went horribly wrong. Instead of delighting to meet with God, our first parents fled in terror, seeking to hide. But of course, one can never hide from God.

Of the many things they lost that day, one of the most painful was the privilege of open, face-to-face

communion with God Himself. “Adam, in his innocence, had enjoyed open communion with his Maker; but sin brought separation between God and man, and the atonement of Christ alone could span the abyss and make possible the communication of blessing or salvation from heaven to earth.”²

GOD DID NOT ABANDON US

When we love someone, we want to talk with them and spend time together. Those of us who are parents long to spend time with our children—sharing experiences, teaching and encouraging them, and offering help when needed. We want to give them the gift of being there and communicating together.

If we human beings have such a longing to communicate with those whom we love, how much more does our Father in heaven long to communicate with us? Jesus said, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” (Matt. 7:11).

God did not abandon His people, leaving them to the devil’s devising. Since God could no longer speak face to face with fallen humanity because of the sin barrier, nor teach them as He had previously, He created other ways to communicate His all-important, lifesaving instruction to the world.

The Bible identifies at least nine avenues that God has used to communicate with people: (1) angels; (2) creation (nature); (3) the cloud/pillar of fire; (4) the Urim and Thummim; (5) dreams; (6) voice from heaven; (7) the Holy Spirit guiding individuals; (8) Christ in person; and (9) prophets.

While God has used all these communication methods, “the major revelations of the will of God for the instruction of the church in

all ages have been given through the prophets,”³ with Jesus being chief among them (Luke 24:19; Matt. 13:57, 58). God’s prophets are so important that the Bible assures us, “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

WHY DID GOD SEND PROPHETS?

Why did God send prophets? We find the answer in the Bible: “Because He had compassion on His people” (2 Chron. 36:15).

The context of this passage is interesting. The kingdom of Judah had lost much and was on the brink of Babylonian captivity and destruction. Following a series of wicked kings, Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, and “all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, according to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the Lord which He had consecrated in Jerusalem” (verse 14).

This happened in spite of God sending numerous prophets, including Jeremiah, “who spoke from the mouth of the Lord” (verse 12). These prophetic messengers were sent because the Lord “had compassion on His people” (verse 15).

How did God’s people respond? “They mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy” (verse 16).

It is a serious thing to despise the messages God sends through His prophets. In this case it resulted in the death of young men and women, elderly individuals, even those who took refuge in God’s sanctuary. The remaining treasures of the sanctuary were plundered and God’s house was burned. Jerusalem’s walls were broken down and

Prophets showed the people that God valued human beings enough to choose from among them men and women to represent Him.

the city destroyed. Those who lived were taken to Babylon as captives.

All of this the Lord had warned them about through His prophets, including Jeremiah, but the people refused to listen (verse 15).

Sadly, God’s prophets, and the messages He sends through them, have often been rejected. Nevertheless, God has persisted in maintaining a prophetic channel of communication to His people—the apple of His eye (Deut. 32:10; Zech. 2:8).

GOD WORKS THROUGH PROPHETS

Through the ages God has given vital, lifesaving messages through His prophets. Prophets are ordinary people whom God has chosen to represent Him by receiving His divine messages and delivering them faithfully to His people.

God spoke to His prophets in visions and dreams; and the prophets, under the guidance of the

Holy Spirit, conveyed what they saw and heard using their own language, “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

Prophets have played a vital role throughout human history, illustrating why God has blessed His people by sending prophets. In his book *Messenger of the Lord* Herbert Douglass gives eight reasons God used prophets “rather than some dramatic attention-getting device such as writing on the clouds or thundering out His will every morning at dawn.”⁴

1. Prophets pointed to and prepared the way for Christ’s first advent.

2. As representatives of the Lord, prophets showed people that God valued human beings enough to choose from among them men and women to represent Him.

3. Prophets were a continual reminder of the nearness and availability of God’s instruction.

4. The presence of prophets tested the people about their attitude toward God.

5. Messages through the prophets accomplish the same purposes as personal communication from the Creator.

6. Prophets demonstrate what fellowship with God and the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit can accomplish in human lives.

7. Prophets helped to communicate the plan of salvation, for God has consistently used a combination of the human and the divine as His most effective means for reaching lost humanity.

8. The prophets’ outstanding work is their contribution to the Written Word.⁵

PROPHECY IS A GIFT

Clearly, prophets serve as a key communication link between

God and human beings. Many of God’s messages of instruction, explanation, warning, reproof, encouragement, and ultimate plans are preserved for us through God’s Written Word, the Bible.

The Bible is a collection of God’s messages for His people and a record of His working among them, written by His prophets over a span of nearly 1,600 years (from Moses to the apostle John) as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The gift of prophecy is one of the gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12, and God’s Word indicates it will be present at the end of time. In identifying God’s last-day remnant people, we read, “And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17, KJV).

Related to this passage and the concept of God speaking through His prophets, we read the words of the angel to John: “I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10).

Seventh-day Adventists believe that God, in His wisdom and compassion, has raised up a prophet for these last days. While it is not necessary to mention all of the tests of a prophet here, one important test is that a true prophet will never contradict previous messages given through God’s prophets, for “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Cor. 14:32) and “if they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20).

Throughout all of her writings, letters, sermons, and messages, Ellen White upholds the Bible and never contradicts its teachings. Millions have been led to Jesus through

her prophetic ministry; millions more have been blessed through the God-given counsel she provides. Insights into healthful living, education, ministry, and more continue to serve as guideposts for God’s people today. Warnings of things to come and instruction on how best to prepare are messages that benefit all who take them seriously.

During this Week of Prayer I encourage you to consider the incredible gift of wisdom and compassion God has given to us through His prophets, and to remember the blessings that come from heeding His Word. “Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper” (2 Chron. 20:20). ©

Suggestions for Prayer

1. Pray for the ability, supplied by the Holy Spirit, to hear what God is saying to you through His prophets.
2. Pray reflectively on the blessings that God has granted through the encouragement of His prophetic words in your life.
3. Ask God to bring to your mind a clear understanding of the role of His latter-day prophet, Ellen White.

¹Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 50.

²*Ibid.*, p. 67.

³T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1955), p. 23.

⁴Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1998), p. 10.

⁵*Ibid.*

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Sunday

God Wants to Send You a Message

What moves a prophet to deliver the message?

Imagine for a moment that you have never heard about Christianity. Suddenly you come across a book on the street. You pick it up and it just says “Holy Bible” on the cover—nothing about its author. Who wrote it?

The first thing I do when I pick up a book, other than reading the title, is to look for its author. Having worked in the publishing field, I know exactly where to find this information: on the copyright page. But surprise! When you open the “Holy Bible,” the information about the Bible author is not there.

What should the first-time reader—the one who approaches the Bible for the first time—assume? Who wrote it? How did it come to us? Who put it together? Of course, even a layperson in religious matters knows that Christians claim the Bible had its origin in God Himself. Does that mean the Bible as we know it today fell from heaven? Does God have “secretaries” or editors? Was it written by God or by human beings?

A key decision we must make when approaching the phenomenon of the Bible is to determine whether we will analyze it from viewpoints that are alien to it, or give priority to the way in which it defines itself. For us to gather its meaning, it would not be fair to the book and its author (or authors) to disregard what the Bible says about itself and its origin.

One of the most prolific writers in the Bible, the apostle Paul, bluntly noted: “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).¹

In the same vein, the apostle Peter states: “We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19-21).

This biblical self-witness affirms that the Scriptures are “inspired” by God. The prophets spoke as they were “being inspired” by the Holy Spirit.

These two Bible passages contain a wealth of in-depth information about the origin and nature of the Bible. They state (1) that the Scriptures had their origin in God, and He is the one who takes the lead in revealing Himself in communicating with human beings; (2) that revelation occurs through the phenomenon of “inspiration”

(Greek: *theopneustos*); and (3) that this phenomenon applies to the *entire* Bible.

When we consider these verses about the origin of the Bible, it is important for us to keep in mind both what they affirm and what they do not. While the emphasis is on God being the *author* of the Bible, the passages do not assert that He is the *writer*. The writers, “holy men of God,” were those who recorded the revelation under divine “inspiration.”

So the apostle Peter clearly states that although human beings are the physical agents of the Scriptures, the origin of revelation—the source of the content that is found in the Scriptures—is God Himself. Human activity takes part in the process, but it is not the source from which the explanations, expositions, or interpretations contained in the Scriptures emerge.

HOW INSPIRATION HAPPENS

The question remains: How should we understand the relationship between the divine Author and human writers? What part does each of these actors play? How was this process of revelation embodied in the Scriptures?

Even a superficial approach to the Bible as a book is enough for a reader to realize that the writing of the Bible was not a monolithic phenomenon that developed in a short time and in the same way throughout. On the contrary, the Bible, as it has come to us, is the result of about 40 writers who left their testimony over 15 centuries in three different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. A more scholarly approach would show that the many literary styles correlate with the number of authors and the diversity of cultures represented.

So then, how was the Bible put together?

The way the biblical writers expressed themselves—the words chosen to convey the divine message—were their own choice, guided by the Holy Spirit.

The verses we have briefly analyzed (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21) categorically state that God “inspired” the Scriptures. This term, however, is too broad to articulate an explanation of how the divine method to communicate the will of God in writing works in practice.

Considering the statements of Scripture itself—the Bible in its written form—scholars have tried to understand how the phenomenon of inspiration works. Although as Seventh-day Adventists we reject the theory of mechanical or verbal inspiration (we do not believe that every word of Scripture was dictated by the Holy Spirit), we do believe that the process of revelation and inspiration influenced the words of the prophets. The Holy Spirit guided the prophets in the writing process, ensuring that the prophets’ own words expressed authoritatively and reliably the message they received. Therefore, “words are intrinsic to the process of revelation and inspiration.”²

In fact, God guided the writers themselves, who in turn expressed the divine revelation in their own words. Consequently, the way the biblical writers expressed themselves—the words chosen to convey the divine message—were their own choice, guided by the Holy Spirit. In other words, the writers of the Bible were the scribes of God, not His pens.

While biblical writers used the “imperfect” vehicle of human language, the Word of God is the supreme, authoritative, and infallible

revelation of God’s will. Thus, the imperfect human vehicle communicates the truth. However, in the same way that the divine-human nature of Christ is indivisible, also the content and the vehicle cannot be separated in the Bible; it is impossible. In this divine-human phenomenon, God generates information and guides the writing process without nullifying any human individuality or ability, but He makes sure that the result of the whole process is reliable and true to His purpose. ©

Suggestions for Prayer

1. Pray for insight into the various parts of the Bible and what God wishes to give you from its many parts to increase your understanding.
2. Ask for trust and discernment in the inspiration process through which the Scriptures were given to us.
3. Praise God for the variety of messages given to us in His Word, including parables, proverbs, poems, and prophecies.

¹Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

² Raoul Dederen, “Toward a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Revelation-Inspiration,” in *North American Bible Conference 1974* (Silver Spring, Md: North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974), p. 10.

Monday

The God-proclaimed and the Self-proclaimed

What are the marks of a true prophet?

What do you think about that woman who claims to be a prophet, whose messages are on YouTube?" an apprehensive brother blurted out while I was greeting church members after the worship service one Sabbath morning.

"To be honest, I've never heard of her," I replied. "Let me watch the videos first, and then I'll be able to give you a more informed response."

After watching the videos, I discerned that by all accounts, the woman was not a true prophet. (YouTube has enabled greatly expanded visibility for self-proclaimed prophets.) What drives a person to assert that they have received prophetic messages from God? More important, how can the church assess whether someone has actually received prophetic messages from God? And if they receive those messages, does it make them prophets immediately?

On the one hand, we should keep in mind that God still wants to communicate with us through prophets. The apostle Paul recommends: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with

contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good" (1 Thess. 5:19-21). We make a serious mistake if we disregard the true prophetic message, either the one that God has conveyed to us through the prophets of old or the one that God wants to communicate to His people at the end of time.

On the other hand, Christ warned about the rise of false prophets: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matt. 7:15). They would also aim to deceive even the elect just before the Second Coming (Matt. 24:24). That's why John's advice is very clear: "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

TESTS OF THE PROPHETS

What, then, are the marks of a true prophet of God? The Bible shows that the rising-of-false-prophets phenomenon is not unique to contemporary Christianity. It had already manifested itself among the people of Israel in the days of Jeremiah (Jer. 14:14). Jeremiah's contemporaries were instructed to use the filter of fulfilled prophecies as a test for a genuine prophet: "But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the Lord only if his prediction comes true" (Jer. 28:9; see Deut. 18:21, 22).

Bear in mind that the ministry of a prophet encompasses much more than foretelling the future, and that the principle of conditional prophecy establishes that a change in conditions or in relationships can also imply a change in the predicted future (see Jer. 18:7-10), as happened with Jonah's prediction about the destruction of Nineveh.

Another test element concerns the internal coherence of the prophetic message. A system of revealed truths consists of a chain of related messages. The same Spirit revealed all the prophetic messages in the canon of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16). Therefore, every new message must be in harmony with the truths previously revealed: “Consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn” (Isa. 8:20). Christ Himself appealed to “all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27) from the past to show that His message as a prophet and His sacrifice as Messiah were truthful and the prophecies were correctly fulfilled.

Certainly, truth is progressive (new truth is revealed over time), and later prophets add ideas and details to the truths already revealed by earlier prophets, but in no way can the new messages contradict the messages given in the past.

While it is true that what counts is the message, not the messenger, and the prophets are but human beings with all their weaknesses and limitations, Christ calls on us to see the fruit in the life of an alleged prophet when judging their authenticity: “By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. . . . Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them” (Matt. 7:16-20).

Although sometimes it takes time, a ravenous wolf will sooner or later show its fangs through its mild sheep disguise.

Of course, every prophet has to be Christ-centered, confess the divine-human nature of Christ, and exalt His sacrifice for humanity: “This is how you can recognize

the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God” (1 John 4:2, 3).

Other signs of a true prophet might include the timely nature of their messages (2 Kings 6:10-12); the practical nature of their messages (as opposed to abstractions and generalizations); the fruit in the lives of those who follow their messages; and receiving the revelations through dreams and visions (Num. 12:6). However, we do well to remember that passing the acid test in any or a few of these signs does not make someone a true prophet, just as the divine vision that King Nebuchadnezzar received did not make him a prophet in the whole dimension of this ministry.

THE PRICE OF BEING A TRUE PROPHET

During the years that we have served in the South American Spanish Publishing House we have received more than a dozen manuscripts containing alleged prophetic messages for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some were sent to us just to evaluate their content. Others came with the supposed divine order to publish them immediately. Being denied that possibility, a number of people condemned us to eternal damnation for not complying with their directive.

We have found out that most of these alleged prophets have something in common: an almost desperate desire to be acknowledged as prophets. Yet when we examine the experience of the biblical prophets, we see that things are the other way around: many of them resisted accepting the call (Jer. 1:6; Isa. 6:5; Ex. 4:10-15), or asked for countless proofs that they should accept that call (Judges 6). The main

reason is that, typically, a prophet is unwelcome (Jer. 20:2; 1 Kings 18). The “greatest” of all prophets ended up with his head on a silver platter (Matt. 11:11; 14:1-12). These experiences have taught us to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1), especially when the alleged prophets insist they be acknowledged as messengers of God.

Every falsification implies the existence of something genuine. In fact, the more sophisticated the counterfeit, the more evidence it gives of the value of the authentic version that this counterfeit wants to supplant. That is why Satan tries to supplant true prophets: he is aware of the value of true divine messages. Let’s test the spirits, but let’s not stifle the voice of the Spirit. ☺

Suggestions for Prayer

1. As you hear messages that come from various people who claim to speak for God, plead with Him to help you be discerning about what they say.
2. Pray for the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit before aligning yourself with any human being who speaks biblical messages.
3. Lift up a prayer to God when “new truth” comes to your attention, and examine it with pleas for the Holy Spirit to show you what is His truth. Allow for the possibility that He does not affirm what you think.

*Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.

Tuesday

Are You Reading the Bible the Right Way?

What did Jesus say concerning how to interpret the prophetic word?

In Jesus we find an exceptionally interesting phenomenon. In Him, message and prophet merge. He was both the Father's greatest revelation (John 14:9) and a great prophet (Heb. 1:2), as recognized by His contemporaries (John 6:14; Luke 7:16, 17). "Sir," even the Samaritan woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet" (John 4:19).

Not only was Christ the revelation and revealer, message and messenger, but He was also a great interpreter of the Scriptures. As a prophet He conveyed direct messages from heaven, and in the traditional, school-of-the-prophets way, He was a great exponent and interpreter of the Torah. Even at an early age He left the teachers of the Law speechless, so that "everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2:47). His authority as an exponent of the Scriptures was recognized both by the people of Israel (Mark 1:22) and the religious leaders of Jerusalem, who addressed Him with the title of Teacher sent by God (John 3:2).

Although Christ did not come to change the source of the revelation (the Law) but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17), His mission was to bring the true meaning of the Scriptures to a people who had strayed from both the method of correct interpretation and the true practice of genuine religion. Thus, Jesus constantly contrasted the methods of contemporary interpretation—alluding to what "was said" (verse 27), or what they understood concerning what had been said—with the "but I tell you"

(verse 28) of the true prophetic interpretation.

And since Christ was not only a great teacher and prophet but also our example in everything, we would do well to follow His principles of biblical interpretation in our own study.

Did He outline His principles of biblical interpretation in any of His teachings or speeches? One episode shortly before His ascension to His heavenly Father can help us draw out a number of those interpretive principles. Let's join Jesus on this path that leads us to discover the true meaning of the prophetic word. Let's walk along with Him to Emmaus and let Him guide us through some principles of biblical interpretation that will leave our minds enlightened and our hearts burning.

THE HERMENEUTICS OF JESUS

In Luke 24, while addressing those two discouraged disciples who were returning to Emmaus, Jesus presented them, practically and schematically, with several principles of biblical interpretation that He had already given to His disciples and followers throughout His ministry.

The account informs us that the two disciples were walking along feeling saddened by the recent death of Jesus, because with His death all their messianic expectations had vanished. Then Jesus joined them, although they did not recognize Him. On hearing from their lips the reasons for their discouragement, He replied, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning

Christ Himself established the supremacy of the Bible over tradition, and other writers underscored the fact that the Scriptures have preeminence over human philosophy.

himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

From His answer we can draw several principles of prophetic interpretation:

1. *The canonical principle.* Christ did not interpret the truthfulness of His messianic mission in the light of the first-century reality around Him, nor through Jewish tradition or Greek philosophy, the predominant cultures at that time. On the contrary, He used “what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (verse 27). That is, He used the Scriptures to interpret biblical information—His own role as Messiah. Hence, the information needed to interpret the Bible is found in the canon of the Scriptures themselves. The Scriptures are their own interpreter.

Christ Himself had established the supremacy of the Bible over tradition (Matt. 15:3-6), and other writers underscored the fact that the Scriptures have preeminence over human philosophy (Col. 2:8), human reason (Prov. 14:12), and the so-called knowledge in the world, of which science might even be considered a part (1 Tim. 6:20).

The basic scientific procedure requires that our hermeneutical presuppositions stem from what we intend to understand. The dependence on philosophy to

establish theological hermeneutical presuppositions implies a breakdown with the canonical principle. Rather than following from philosophical presuppositions, principles of interpretation must be derived from the Scriptures themselves in order to interpret biblical information.

2. *The principle of the unity of the Scriptures.* In the first article of this series we learned that although the Bible was written by many writers over a period of many centuries, all Scripture is inspired by the same Spirit and is altogether the Word of God. In this sense a crucial unity and harmony exists between its parts (Matt. 5:17; 2 Tim. 3:16).

Christ emphasized this principle before these two disciples on their way to Emmaus, when, “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27, NIV). By referring to Moses (the Pentateuch) and “all the prophets,” Jesus used in His explanation the whole Bible known at that time, the Hebrew Bible, emphasizing this principle of unity of the Scriptures.

3. *The Christological principle.* One reason Jesus used the whole Hebrew Bible to indicate “what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” was that all Scriptures “testify about” Him (John 5:39). The New Testament endorsed this idea by describing Christ as the fulfillment and the consummation of “the promises made to the patriarchs” (Rom. 15:8), since “all the prophets testify about him” (Acts 10:43), “for all the promises of God in Him are Yes” (2 Cor. 1:20, NKJV).

4. *The principle of the salvific purpose.* The Scriptures were not written just to satisfy intellectual curiosity, so we should not study them only to win a debate or to show that we have the right doctrine. By pointing

out that He was the fulfillment of all the promises of the Scriptures, Christ presented Himself as the Lamb of God who is able to save. The revelation of His salvation is the overall purpose of Scripture and is the foundational interpretive idea as we study.

By using the right principles of prophetic interpretation, Jesus wanted the two men on the road to Emmaus to overcome their spiritual discouragement and go on to rejoice in the good news of a risen Christ who overcame death and brings eternal life. He achieved His goal, since, after the Bible study, they admitted: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32).

By following these principles established by Christ, we will not only understand the biblical truths but also let Him light our hearts with the salvation that the Scriptures themselves affirm He came to give us. ©

Suggestions for Prayer

1. As you enter into Bible study using Jesus’ principles of Bible reading, pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal links between Scripture passages that bring godly understanding.
2. Pray for growing insight into salvation so that its meaning grows in your relationship with Jesus.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a testimony of the value of the Scriptures in your life that you can share with others.

*Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.

†Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version.

Wednesday

Dusting Off the Law and the Testimony

How do we live in light of the
prophetic word?





God's people have rarely had a good relationship with their prophets. In fact, those called to the prophetic ministry have often been reluctant to accept the call, mindful that people usually rejected the messenger along with the message. Thus bringing God's prophetic word has always been a costly business for prophets. Jesus pointed out that Christians would be mistreated "in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before" them (Matt. 5:12, NIV). And Stephen questioned the Jewish Sanhedrin, "Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute?" (Acts 7:52, NIV).

This is the kind of poor reception that prophets have had to face. Animosity toward the prophetic word, however, was not the only rejection that prophets have endured at the hands of God's people. Violent opposition during a prophet's lifetime resulted in an increasing indifference, which ended with the prophetic message fading into oblivion—from which it often did not manage to escape. And typically, in the wake of the people's disregard for the prophetic Word, ruin and apostasy followed.

A GENUINE REVIVAL

In the worst seasons of apostasy or national disgrace, God rescued the prophetic message from oblivion to generate a revival. Thus, during the restoration of God's Temple in the time of Josiah, Hilkiah told the chronicler Shaphan, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord" (2 Chron. 34:15). It sounds like a science-fiction story that God's prophetic message had been gathering dust in some abandoned corner of the Temple!

On hearing what this prophetic scroll said, Josiah acknowledged, "Great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do according to all that is written in this book" (verse 21). And the rest is history. Josiah summoned all the people to listen to the Word; the king and the people renewed their covenant with God; and they celebrated perhaps the most memorable Passover ever, since "none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 35:18).

Something similar happened in the time of Nehemiah, when Ezra read the Law before the people. On the same day of the year (the first day of the seventh month—perhaps wanting to repeat the experience of Josiah), "Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly. . . . He read it aloud from daybreak till noon. . . . And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law" (Neh. 8:2, 3). Three weeks later, the revival continued: "The Israelites gathered together, fasting. . . . They . . . read from the Book of the Law of the



Lord their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the Lord” (Neh. 9:1-3).

That revival was followed by a reformation: They “joined their leaders and bound themselves with an oath. They swore a curse on themselves if they failed to obey the Law of God. . . . They solemnly promised to carefully follow all the commands . . . of the Lord” (Neh. 10:29, NLT).¹ They promised not to mingle with heathen nations, to keep the Sabbath according to the commandment, to help others, to sustain the Temple and its services, and to return tithes and offerings (verses 30-39).

All this happens when we dust off the prophetic Word and put God’s will into practice in our lives.

DUSTING OFF THE PROPHETS

According to the Global Church Member Survey 2018, 48 percent of Seventh-day Adventists around the world study the Bible daily.² Although this statistic might suggest a glass-half-full/glass-half-empty scenario, depending on whom you talk to, it is clear that as a church we have room for improvement concerning our Bible-reading habits. Amid the darkness of this world the Bible can bring light and hope to our lives, help us lead others to Jesus, and lighten our way to heaven: “We have even greater confidence in the

message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19, NLT).

Our natural tendency is to rely on our own intelligence, strength, or wisdom, forgetting that our heart is deceitful (Jer. 17:9). Hence, our only safeguard is to trust in the prophetic Word: “Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be able to stand firm. Believe in his prophets, and you will succeed” (2 Chron. 20:20, NLT). Yes, the Scriptures can rekindle our souls, make us wise, bring joy to our hearts, and give us the right attitude toward life: “The instructions of the LORD are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight for living” (Ps. 19:7, 8, NLT).

THREE SHEMA PRINCIPLES

Few—if any—of us are exempt from a dysfunctional family past. Unhealthy interpersonal interactions can be traced back to someone who chose to depart from divine counsel. That generates pain and suffering, even when God’s love is a palliative that brings healing and forgiveness to our lives. No one needs to perpetuate those negative

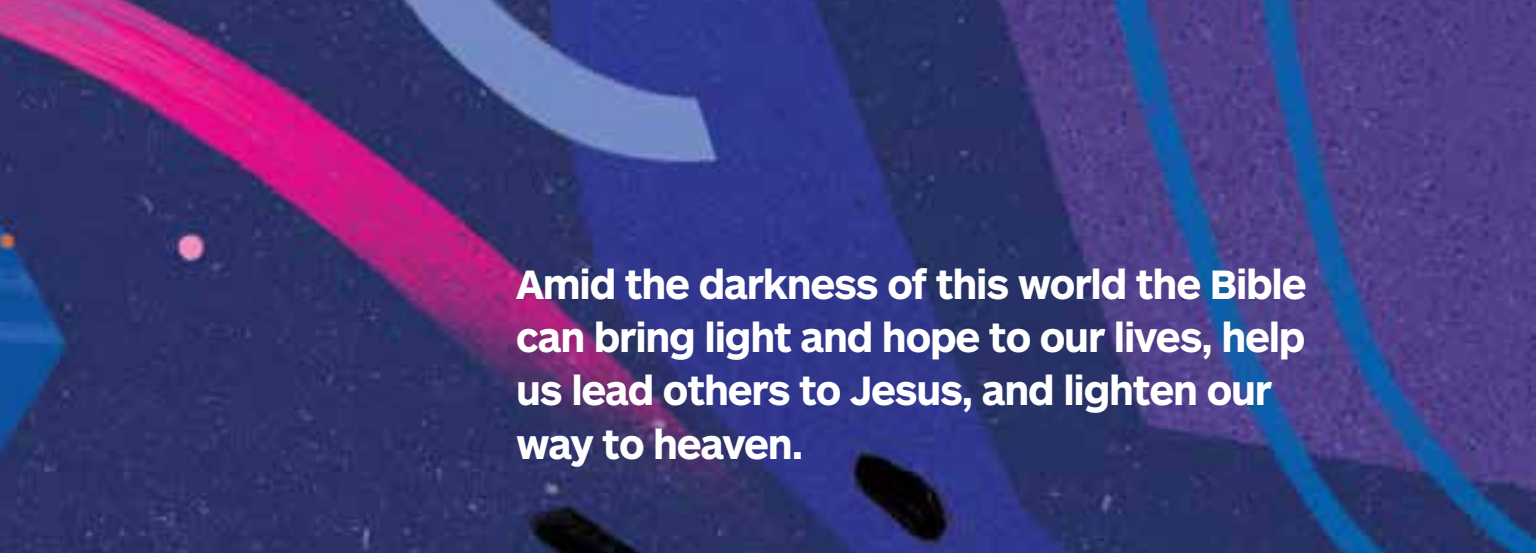
inherited patterns, however. We can all be transformed in our character and, over our lifetime, change the trend of an entire genealogy if we decide to break with those negative attitudes and behavioral patterns in order to live by faith in the light of the prophetic word.

Living by faith means doing the will of God without doubting its direction, even if we do not understand its purpose in the past and cannot discern the path that lies ahead. How is this achieved? “In order to live in the light, you must come where the light shines.”³ The key is to allow ourselves to “be saved by [the light], fully live up to it, and transmit it to others in darkness.”⁴

When we decided to start our family, we sought to obey the Shema mandate in our daily lives:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deut. 6:4-9).

This text embraces three principles to keep the light of the



Amid the darkness of this world the Bible can bring light and hope to our lives, help us lead others to Jesus, and lighten our way to heaven.

prophetic word shining in our life.

First, it talks about *priorities*. God should come first in our hearts (verse 5).

Second, it prompts us to *spend time* with the Word of God. We should read it and talk about it from morning to night (verses 6, 7).

Third, it speaks of *influences*. The Word of God must always be at hand and be the main influence that enters into our minds through the avenues of the soul (verses 8, 9).

Thus if we devote enough time to the right influences from the Word of God, we will get our priorities straight, and God will reign in our life and our homes.

SURE GUIDANCE FOR OUR TIME

As Seventh-day Adventists we have a twofold privilege: we have not only the Bible—which is our standard of faith and practice—but also the modern manifestation of the prophetic gift in the testimony of Ellen White. Why is it a privilege? Because almost 2,000 years after the biblical text was finished, we have divine guidance in how to *apply* the Scriptures to our modern context and mission in the end time.

As a family we have benefited from reading and applying Ellen White's writings to our lives. *Mes-sages to Young People* and *Letters to Young Lovers* encouraged us to pray intelligently for a marriage based

on the fear of God. *Child Guidance, Education, and The Adventist Home* continue to be a source of solid guidance amid so many human theories about child rearing that are currently swarming all around. In addition, we give full credit to her century-old advice on food and health for our healthy lifestyle.

Plunging into *Steps to Christ* and *The Desire of Ages* has been one of the most refreshing, Christ-centered devotional experiences of our spiritual journey; while *Mind, Character, and Personality* prompted us to raise the bar to strengthen our self-control and keep our habits of thought at bay to please God.

Ellen White's homiletic applications and biblical interpretations have shaped and substantiated our sermons, while her unique theological approach continues to surprise us for its depth, bearing in mind also that it has helped keep our denomination together under the enemy's blows throughout the years.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

While we continue the struggle to follow the sure prophetic guidance of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, a whole generation is ready and waiting to be conquered out there. The low reading rate of new generations, added to the fierce competition of smartphones and other screens, makes this challenge more severe.

On the threshold of eternity, however, in a world that is drifting in all kinds of winds of ideas and doctrines, we have a sure anchor in the prophetic Word, as well as the precise coordinates to reach a safe harbor. Let its light shine on our pathway, and that of others, until the Morning Star appears. ☉

Suggestions for Prayer

1. Pray to the Lord about your own attitude toward His law and your willingness to obey.
2. Praise God, in the style of David's psalms, for the light that He brings to your path with His guidance and commands.
3. Ask God in prayer to bring His light to bear on the world and its travails, especially through the prophetic word of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White.

¹ Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

² See "Reaching the World: How Did We Do?" a partial report of the key findings of the Global Church Member Survey 2018, www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/AC2018%20-%20Global%20Church%20Member%20Survey%20Data%20Report.pdf.

³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 4, p. 106.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 123.

Thursday

True and False Prophets, Old and New

Is the prophetic gift limited to the past?

After a church meeting, a teenager asked this clear, direct question: "Why does God not speak to me?"

The easy answer would be that God speaks to each one of us through the Bible. But this teenager wanted to know why God was not talking *to her*.

Many believers wonder why God does not speak directly to them today. While it is true that He spoke to us in the past through the prophets and especially through His Son (Heb. 1:1), we may very well ask, Why does He not speak to us in our day? In answering this question, we consider whether the prophetic gift ceased with the closing of the Bible canon, or whether God has raised up prophets since then or will do so in the future.

A GIFT THAT CEASED?

Two opposing views exist regarding the validity of the prophetic gift. Cessationists believe that spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing, ceased after the age of the apostles. According to this view, those were supernatural gifts meant to function as a sign in the context of the emergence of the Christian church and the initial spread

of the gospel. The opposing view is continuationism, which teaches that the Holy Spirit can bestow spiritual gifts at any time to people who are not the original 12 disciples.

Cessationism denies the possibility of a resurgence of the gifts, appealing to the principle of *sola scriptura*, insisting on three propositions: (1) the closing of the biblical canon; (2) the infallible and sufficient authority of the Bible; and (3) the perfect adequacy of the Scriptures to guide the church. In other words, they believe that the testimony given in the closed canon of the Bible is enough to guide the church until the time of the end.

Aside from teaching the Word and communicating the will of God as a regular and sustained ministry, however, prophets were often sent into crisis scenarios. In times of hardship, created either by external causes or by internal conditions of apostasy, prophets provided guidance amid conflict and confusion in these special situations or simply brought a special message at a certain point in the plan of salvation.

Some of these prophets did not become part of the canon (for example, Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo [2 Chron. 9:29]). What the non-canonical prophets said or wrote was authoritative and binding for the people of their time (2 Sam. 12:7-15), because the authority of a prophetic writing is grounded in its inspiration. The prophetic gift of the noncanonical prophets was not given to replace the testimony of the canonical prophets, but rather to satisfy a specific need of the people of God. It must be noted, however, that what such prophets taught was in harmony with God's revelation to the canonical prophets.

Since the time of John the revelator, the biblical canon has been closed, and other inspired books cannot be added. The question we

Jesus gave a warning about false prophets because a prophetic forgery would appear that would be in contrast to the genuine gift in the end-time.

ask today is Have there been any prophets sent from God since the closing of the biblical canon? And could one rise up in the present or the future?

A DESIRABLE GIFT

The New Testament grants a prominent place to the gift of prophecy among the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, on one occasion the apostle Paul gives it first place among the ministries most useful to the church, and on two occasions he gives it second place (see Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). Moreover, he encourages believers to eagerly desire this gift (1 Cor. 14:1, 39), even though the Holy Spirit always gives His gifts as He wills.

Thus Paul points out twice that God has appointed prophets within the church (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). What is more, he affirms that the

New Testament church was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20). These are New Testament prophets because, as Paul says in Ephesians 3:4, 5, the Spirit had revealed the mystery of Christ to apostles and prophets who had not been made known to previous generations. We conclude that this manifestation of the gift of prophecy was not limited to the canon.

A GIFT FOR THE END-TIMES

Jesus stated that false prophets who would say that they prophesy in His name would appear (Matt. 7:15-23) on this earth. These false prophets would be active in the end time, showing signs and wonders, and trying to deceive even the elect (Matt. 24:24). Jesus gave this warning because a prophetic forgery would appear that would be in contrast to the genuine gift in the end-times.

Speaking particularly of the end-time, Joel prophetically announces the abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God upon His people. This outpouring would manifest itself in young people who will see visions, in older people who will dream dreams, and on sons and daughters who will prophesy (Joel 2:28, 29). How do we know that Joel refers specifically to the end-time? Because this prophecy establishes the time frame for the manifestations of the gift of prophecy. He mentions cosmic phenomena such as the darkening of the sun and the moon turning into blood. He also speaks of disasters on earth, which are cryptically described as “blood and fire and billows of smoke.” All this must precede “the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (verses 30, 31, NIV).

The apostle Peter applied Joel’s prophecy to the Pentecost experience (Acts 2:16-21), which links the gift of prophecy to the gift of tongues. Why? Joel’s prophecy

of the coming prophetic gift is mentioned in the context of the early and latter rain (Joel 2:23-32). Autumn rains, which allowed the seed to germinate and take root, were called early rain. Spring rainfalls, which ripened the grain and prepared for the harvest, were called the latter rain. The Old Testament uses this phenomenon of the Palestinian agricultural cycle as a symbol of the spiritual gift that God gives to His people through His Spirit (Hosea 6:3).

Peter and the other apostles experienced the early rain. The latter rain would come with the same power of the Spirit, and the people of God will manifest the gift of prophecy in their midst. Today, while we, “the remnant whom the Lord calls” (Joel 2:32), await the soon return of Jesus, we are invited to experience the spiritual latter rain. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit will be more abundant than the previous one. It will make “your sons and your daughters . . . prophesy, your old men . . . dream dreams,” and “your young men . . . see visions” (verse 28). ©

Suggestions for Prayer

1. Pray especially for insight into the prophecies of the New Testament that speak to our time.
2. Ask God to plant His truths so clearly in your mind that you will never be fooled by a clever counterfeit.
3. Express to God your decision to trust Him to guide you in all things and keep you from the dangers of false prophets.

Friday

People of the Greater Light and the Lesser Light

Why did God raise a prophet to guide the remnant church?

often interact with ministers of different denominations during the Argentine Bible Society meetings. On one occasion one of them showed interest in the present state of the Seventh-day Adventist

Church. He was acquainted with our educational and health institutions and expressed his admiration for the way our church was growing in South America. Near the end of our conversation he casually commented, "I only regret that you have Ellen White as a prophet." Indeed, this is a reservation often raised by our evangelical friends.

What exactly is the legacy that Ellen White left for the Seventh-day Adventist Church? And what is the current relevance of her writings for our church? We will attempt to answer here in a way that can serve as a starting point to reflect on these issues as a church.

HER LEGACY

Denying Ellen White's legacy for Seventh-day Adventists would be like questioning the importance of Luther for Lutherans, or that of John and Charles Wesley for Methodists. Indeed, her significance exceeds the fact of her having cofounded the movement that became the Adventist Church.¹ Her writings laid the philosophical and theological bases for the establishment of the very educational and health institutions that have dazzled the pastors of other churches. Without the vision, leadership, and personal sacrifice of Ellen White (in addition to the efforts of James White and Joseph Bates), "there would be no Seventh-day Adventist Church today."² What a paradox that the pastor I met praised those institutions while criticizing the person who laid their foundations!

Ellen White was not only a

resolute visionary. She also considered herself as “God’s messenger,”³ entailing that her call and mission played a key role in the emergence and development of the denomination. This statement was not automatically accepted, however. Her contemporaries, and every new generation of Adventist believers since, have assessed her writings and ministry by applying scriptural tests in accepting a prophet.⁴ This acceptance is articulated in number 18 of the Adventist Church’s fundamental beliefs.⁵

Ellen White’s writings and teachings encompass an array of current issues that could be articulated as evidence of their relevance.⁶ To mention an example: her advice on physical, mental, and spiritual health—aligned with Jesus’ three-fold ministry of healing, teaching, and preaching—has made members in the Adventist movement one of the longest-living and most healthy “peoples” on earth.⁷

HER GREATEST CONTRIBUTION

Translating Ellen White’s work from English into other languages takes attention to detail. Her own words are so intertwined with countless biblical paraphrases and passages she used to support her writings that it is crucial to differentiate her wording from biblical texts, so as to translate only the former, and to transcribe the latter from a Bible version of the target language. This fact highlights the importance Ellen White attached to the Bible as the basis of her messages.

She was aware that her message consisted of applying the biblical message to God’s people at the end of time. Above all, she was clear that her testimonies were “a lesser light,” destined to lead the people to the “greater light” of the Scriptures.⁸ She assumed that her messages were

Ellen White was aware that her message consisted of applying the biblical message to God’s people at the end of time.

subject to the canonical authority of the Scriptures, so she invited her listeners and readers to study the Bible and to put her message into practice.⁹ Speaking to the assembly during her last General Conference session in 1909, she held up her Bible before the delegates and said, “Brethren and sisters, I commend unto you this Book.”¹⁰

The best way that we twenty-first-century Seventh-day Adventists can honor Ellen White’s legacy is to continue to be known as “the people of the Book,” a people who love Jesus and exalt the Bible as the standard of faith and practice. ☉

Suggestions for Prayer

1. Pray to God for understanding concerning His latter-day prophet, Ellen White, and how the Spirit wishes to influence your life through her words.
2. Ask the Lord for help in dedicating yourself anew to studying His Word daily and applying it practically every moment.
3. Praise God for the extensive testimony He has supplied for our spiritual edification to face the challenges of the end-times.

¹ Ellen White cofounded (together with Joseph Bates and James White) a denomination in 1863, with around 3,500 members, which now has grown to a global church of nearly 21 million baptized members.

² George R. Knight, *Meeting Ellen White: A Fresh Look at Her Life, Writings, and Major Themes* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1996), p. 59.

³ She declared, “For half a century I have been the Lord’s messenger, and as long as my life shall last I shall continue to bear the messages that God gives me for His people” (*Selected Messages* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980], book 3, p. 71).

⁴ “Seventh-day Adventist acceptance of the modern manifestation of the prophetic gift [in the ministry of Ellen White] is based on the Bible and its teachings. . . . Ellen White’s gift, they [early Seventh-day Adventists] believed, was a part of the true manifestation of the biblical gifts of the Spirit” (Theodore N. Levterov, *Accepting Ellen White: Early Seventh-day Adventists and the Gift of Prophecy Dilemma* [Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2016], pp. 88, 89).

⁵ “The Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church, and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Num. 12:6; 2 Chron. 20:20; Joel 2:28, 29; Amos 3:7; Acts 2:14–21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 1:1–3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 22:8, 9.)” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine* [Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2018], p. 253).

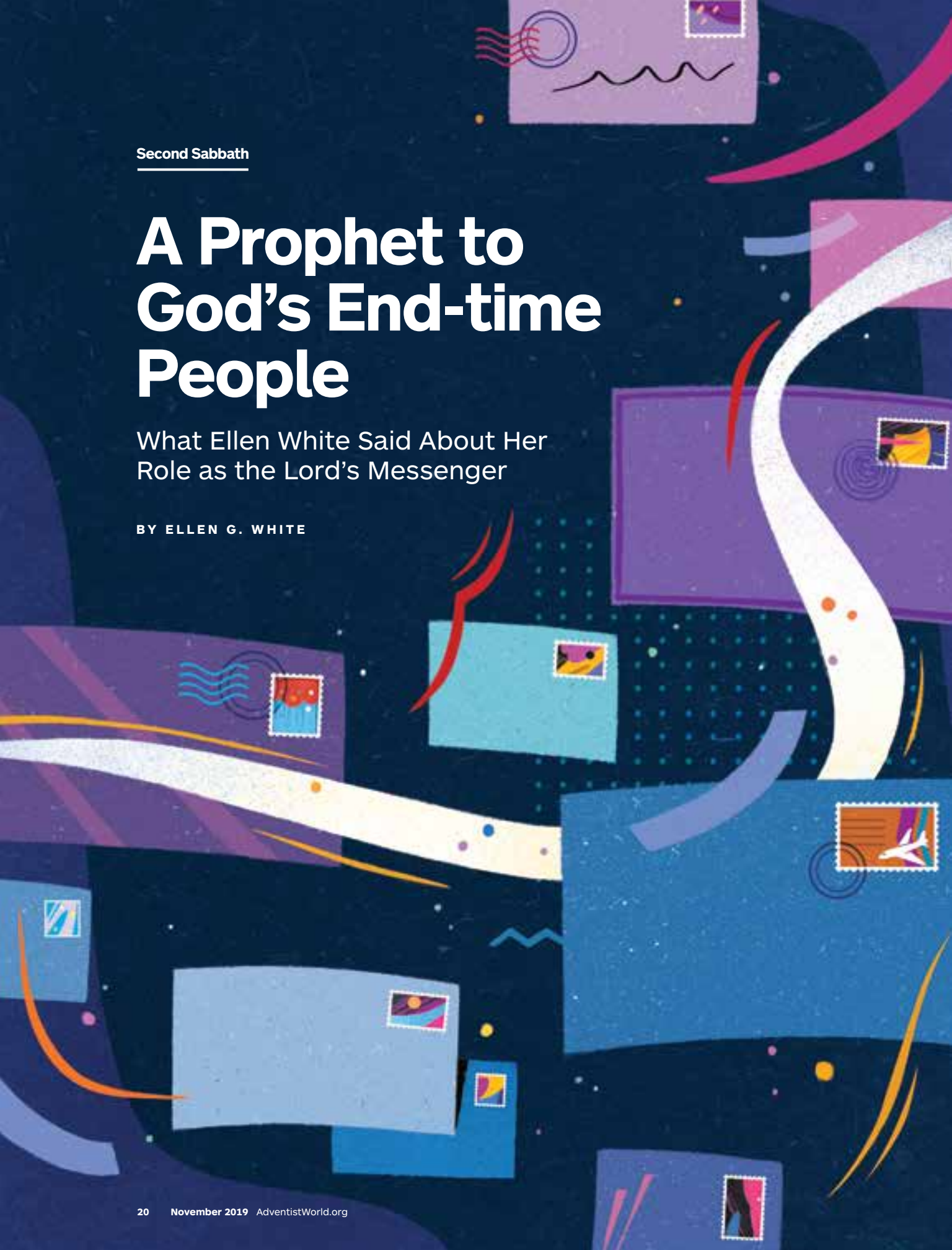
⁶ Her literary corpus includes more than 20 books (not including compilations), around 200 tracts and pamphlets, more than 5,000 periodical articles, 6,000 typewritten letters and general manuscripts, plus journals and diaries, totaling around 100,000 pages of material from her 70-year ministry (1844–1915). See George E. Rice, “Spiritual Gifts,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2000), p. 636.

⁷ Dan Buettner, “The Secrets of Long Life,” *National Geographic*, November 2005; Dan Buettner, *The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer From the People Who’ve Lived the Longest* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2008).

⁸ She wrote, “Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light” (*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 30).

⁹ Ellen White made strong statements about the proper relationship between her writings and the Scriptures: “Brother J would confuse the mind by seeking to make it appear that the light God has given through the Testimonies [i.e., Ellen White’s writings] 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” (*Testimonies for the Church* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948] vol. 4, p. 246).

¹⁰ Quoted in W. A. Spicer, *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1937), p. 30.



Second Sabbath

A Prophet to God's End-time People

What Ellen White Said About Her
Role as the Lord's Messenger

BY ELLEN G. WHITE



n the night of April 30, 1871, I retired to rest much depressed in spirits. For three months I had been in a state of great discouragement. I had frequently prayed in anguish of spirit for relief. I had implored help and strength from God, that I might rise above the heavy discouragements that were paralyzing my faith and hope, and unfitting me for usefulness.

That night I had a dream which made a very happy impression upon my mind. I dreamed that I was attending an important meeting, at which a large company were assembled. Many were bowed before God in earnest prayer, and they seemed to be burdened. They were importuning the Lord for special light. A few seemed to be in agony of spirit; their feelings were intense; with tears they were crying aloud for help and light. Our most prominent brethren were engaged in this most impressive scene. Brother A was prostrated upon the floor, apparently in deep distress. His wife was sitting among a company of indifferent scorners. She looked as though she desired all to understand that she scorned those who were thus humiliating themselves.

I dreamed that the Spirit of the Lord came upon me, and I arose amid cries and prayers, and said: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me. I feel urged to say to you that you must commence to work individually for yourselves. You are looking to God and desiring Him to do the work for you which He has left for you to do. If you will do the work for yourselves which you know that you ought to do, then God will help you when you need help. You have left undone the very things which God has left for you to do. You have been calling upon God to do your work. Had you followed the light which He has given you, then He would cause more light to shine upon you; but while you neglect the counsels, warnings, and reproofs that have been given, how can you expect God to give you more light and blessings to neglect and despise? God is not as man; He will not be trifled with."

I took the precious Bible, and surrounded it with the several "Testimonies for the Church," given for the people of God. "Here," said I, "the cases of nearly all are met. The sins they are to shun are pointed out. The counsel that they desire can be found here, given for other cases situated similarly to themselves.

"God has been pleased to give you line upon line and precept upon precept. But there are not many of you that really know what is contained in the Testimonies. You are not familiar with the Scriptures. 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.

"The Lord deigns to warn you, to reprove, to counsel, through the testimonies given, and to impress your minds with the importance of the truth of His Word. The written Testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. Man's duty to God and to his fellow man has been distinctly specified in God's Word; yet but few of you are obedient to the light given. Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies simplified the great truths already given, and in His own chosen way brought them before the people, to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse.

"Pride, self-love, selfishness, hatred, envy, and jealousy have beclouded the perceptive powers, and the truth, which would make you wise unto salvation, has lost its power to charm and control the mind. The very essential principles of godliness are not understood, because there is not a hungering and thirsting for Bible knowledge, purity of heart, and holiness of life. The Testimonies are not to belittle the Word of God, but to exalt it and attract minds to it, that the beautiful simplicity of truth may impress all."

I said further: "As the Word of God is walled in with these books and pamphlets, so has God walled you in with reproofs, counsel, warnings, and encouragements. Here you are crying before God, in the anguish of your souls, for more light. I am authorized from God to tell you that not another ray of light through the Testimonies will shine upon your pathway, until you make a practical use of the light already given. The Lord has walled you about with light; but you have not appreciated the light; you have trampled upon it. While some have despised the light, others have neglected it, or followed it but indifferently. A few have set their hearts to obey the light which God has been pleased to give them.

"Some that have received special warnings through testimony have forgotten in a few weeks the reproof given. The testimonies to some have been several times repeated; but they have not thought them of sufficient importance to be carefully heeded. They have been to them like idle tales. Had they regarded the light given, they would have avoided losses and trials which they think are hard and severe.

"They have only themselves to censure. They have placed upon their own necks a yoke which they

“In order to be God’s special instrument, you should lean to no one, but hang upon Him alone, and, like the clinging vine, let your tendrils entwine about Him. He will make you a means through which to communicate His light to the people.”

find grievous to be borne. It is not the yoke which Christ has bound upon them. God’s care and love were exercised in their behalf; but their selfish, evil, unbelieving souls could not discern His goodness and mercy. They rush on in their own wisdom, until, overwhelmed with trials and confused with perplexity, they are ensnared by Satan. When you gather up the rays of light which God has given in the past, then will He give an increase of light.”

I referred them to ancient Israel. God gave them His law; but they would not obey it. He then gave them ceremonies and ordinances, that in the performance of these God might be kept in remembrance. They were so prone to forget Him and His claims upon them, that it was necessary to keep their minds stirred up to realize their obligations to obey and honor their Creator. Had they been obedient, and loved to keep God’s commandments, the multitude of ceremonies and ordinances would not have been required.

If the people who now profess to be God’s peculiar treasure would obey His requirements, as specified in His word, special testimonies would not be given to awaken them to their duty, and impress upon them their sinfulness and their fearful danger in neglecting to obey the Word of God. Consciences have been

blunted, because light has been set aside, neglected, and despised. And God will remove these Testimonies from the people, and will deprive them of strength, and humble them.

I dreamed that, as I was speaking, the power of God fell upon me in a most remarkable manner, and I was deprived of all strength, yet I had no vision. I thought that my husband stood up before the people, and exclaimed: “This is the wonderful power of God. He has made the Testimonies a powerful means of reaching souls, and He will work yet more mightily through them than He has hitherto done. Who will be on the Lord’s side?”

I dreamed that quite a number instantly sprang to their feet, and responded to the call. Others sat sullen, some manifested scorn and derision, and a few seemed wholly unmoved. One stood by my side, and said:

“God has raised you up, and has given you words to speak to the people and to reach hearts, as He has given to no other one. He has shaped your testimonies to meet cases that are in need of help. You must be unmoved by scorn, derision, reproach, and censure. In order to be God’s special instrument, you should lean to no one, but hang upon Him alone, and, like the clinging vine, let your tendrils entwine about Him. He will make you a means through which to

communicate His light to the people. You must daily gather strength from God, in order to be fortified, that your surroundings may not dim or eclipse the light that He has permitted to shine upon His people through you. It is Satan’s special object to prevent this light from coming to the people of God, who so greatly need it amid the perils of these last days.

“Your success is in your simplicity. As soon as you depart from this, and fashion your testimony to meet the minds of any, your power is gone. Almost everything in this age is glossed and unreal. The world abounds in testimonies given to please and charm for the moment, and to exalt self. Your testimony is of a different character. It is to come down to the minutiae of life, keeping the feeble faith from dying, and pressing home upon believers the necessity of shining as lights in the world.”—*Life Sketches*, pp. 197-202. ©

Suggestions for Prayer

1. Ask God to keep you in the simplicity of your first pure faith in Him.
2. Pray to receive light concerning the distractions you may have allowed into your life that keep you from communing with God.
3. Lift up your family members and your church family and ask for deliverance and protection for them and for yourself.

First Sabbath

Memory Gem: “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

Volody and the Beasts

What's that lying there on the ground? Ten-year-old Volody reached down and picked up a book that someone must have thrown away. The cover read: Holy Bible. The Ukrainian boy had never been in a church, but he'd heard the Bible talked about miracles, and supernatural things interested him. He picked up the Bible, a children's story version without chapters and verses, and took it home.

Over the next few days Volody read portions of the Bible he'd found. Still, the God of the Bible seemed far away, not really someone to whom a 10-year-old Ukrainian boy could relate. Volody set the Bible aside and didn't think much about it.

One day as Volody waited in line to buy some bread for his mother, a nearby poster caught his eye. *What in the world is this about?* Volody wondered. On the poster were weird, frightening-looking monsters—some of them with more than one head! Studying the poster more closely, he saw the poster mentioned the Bible! According to the poster, those monsters had something to do with prophecies in the Bible book of Daniel.

I don't care about the Bible, but I've got to learn more about those monsters! Volody told himself. Besides, the speaker was an American. Government officials had warned, “Those Americans are real devils!” Others had said, “They have horns and tails!” Since Volody didn't have any other way of knowing, he was determined to find out the truth. Volody noted the time and place of the first meeting. *I have to see all this for myself!* he thought.



When the date arrived, Volody found a seat and eagerly awaited the presentation. What would the American really look like? But when the speaker appeared, he didn't have either a tail or horns! In fact, he looked a lot like a normal human being!

Volody stayed for the presentation and learned that those beasts represented some important things that would happen in the future. This was called "prophecy."

As if that news weren't enough, Volody heard the speaker talk about Jesus. It turned out that hundreds of Bible prophecies related to Him! The American talked about how Jesus loved people so much that He had died for them—including Volody! Even more stunning, he learned that Jesus was coming back to take people to heaven! More Bible prophecies told about this future event. For some reason it seemed that the Bible that Volody had found hadn't included that part.

Eventually Volody found the Seventh-day Adventist church in town and began learning more about prophecy and Jesus Christ. He accepted Jesus as his Savior and promised to serve Him no matter what. There would come times when that wouldn't be easy, but Volody kept his promise.

Volody learned a lot about the future when he attended those prophecy meetings, but there was something in his own future that he couldn't see. Eventually Volody became a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and moved to the United States. So far, the only Americans he's seen with horns and a tail have been at Halloween. They represent the devil, and Volody wants nothing to do with him!*

*Story adapted from Ellen Weaver Bailey, "Volody and the Weird Beasts," *Guide*, April 23, 2016.

THINK IT THROUGH

- Why has God sent prophets?
- Can you think of a Bible prophecy? Who delivered the message? What was it about?
- Would you like to be a prophet? Why or why not?

DO IT!

Just for fun, write down exactly what you think will be the first words you hear tomorrow *anywhere outside of your own home*. Listen carefully! Were you right? If so, does this make you a prophet? Why or why not?

Amaze a friend by showing them the prophecy of Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1-3. What was their response? Why do you think the person reacted the way they did? ©

Sunday

Memory Gem: "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

Held at Gunpoint!

Diane stared down the barrels of three machine guns. "We're going to fill you full of holes!" shouted one of the guerrilla soldiers. This country had been in a state of unrest for some time, and now Diane was experiencing it firsthand.

She'd been on a bus returning from visiting an orphanage. In the early-morning darkness, soldiers had stepped out onto the muddy jungle road and stopped the bus.

"Did you hear they bombed the communication tower in San Luis?" one passenger had whispered. "Yes, and over to the east they killed some people!" another had said.

The guerrilla soldiers had climbed onto the bus. "Everyone get out!" one of the soldiers had ordered. Machine gun-toting soldiers outside had yanked open the bus's door.

One by one the passengers had jumped to the ground through the rear exit. Then Diane's turn had come, and she had jumped too. That's when the soldier had told Diane that they were going to be shot.

But now Diane looked back at the bus's rear door and saw a stooped-over, old woman standing in it. Suddenly Diane heard a calm voice inside her mind say, *Help that old woman*. Courageously, Diane turned her back on the machine guns and said to the old woman, "*Venga, senora*." ("Come, let me help you down.") Diane helped the old woman to the ground as the guerrilla soldiers looked on in bewilderment.

Diane continued helping others to the ground: children, a mother with a baby, and another older woman. After she finished, Diane turned to see the soldiers standing by, their machine guns hanging limply by their sides.

There would be more excitement before their ordeal was over, but none of the passengers lost their lives. Thanks to Diane listening to a still small voice, her actions foiled the soldiers' evil plans to

take her life. It's always best to follow that heavenly voice's instructions!*

*Story adapted from Diane Aguirre, "Guerrillas, Machine Guns, and God," *Guide*, September 12, 2015.

THINK IT THROUGH

- Think about a time when you were asked to deliver a message. Was it a written or spoken message? Were you successful?
- Can you think of a time someone told you something you didn't want to hear? What did you do?
- Why do you think God uses prophets instead of just giving us messages directly?

DO IT!

Gather a few friends and whisper a message into the first person's ear. (The message can't be repeated.) Do this for each person and see how accurate the message is when it gets to the last person. What helps a prophet's message not to get mixed up?

Ask a parent or other loved one to share a time when they received a life-changing message. Were they glad they did what the message told them to do? Why or why not? ©



Monday

Memory Gem: "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16).

The War That Never Happened

Mike was a prophet. At least, that's what plenty of people thought.

One day Mike carefully wrote the following mysterious prophecy:

*"Mars and the scepter will be in conjunction,
A calamitous war under Cancer.*

A short time afterward a new King will be anointed,

Who will bring peace to the earth for a very long time."

What could this strange prophecy mean? "Mars" and a "scepter"? Was a war going to end with everyone getting cancer? Who was this "new king"?

This wasn't the first prophecy to come from Mike, whose actual name was Michel de Nostredame. The man was a French physician who lived from 1503 to 1566. Eventually he simply became known as Nostradamus.

Nostradamus wrote a book containing 942 four-line poetic prophecies called "quatrains." The book, whose English title is simply *The Prophecies*, is still being used—and believed—by many people. All the "prophecies" in the book sound pretty weird, just like the one above.

So what about the above prophecy? Can you figure out what event it's predicting? Through the centuries some people have made a few suggestions. One of the most recent involved some folks saying "Mars" was the planet Mars, and the "scepter" referred to the planet Jupiter. These two planets would supposedly be "in conjunction," or "lined up," in space on June 21, 2002. That's when a terrible war would begin!

Except that it didn't happen.

Actually, lots of experts agree that the prophecies of Nostradamus can mean, well, pretty much anything you want them to mean!

It's important to remember that telling the future isn't always a prophet's main job. They might also write, preach, or deliver God's message in some other way.

But how do you know if a prophet is really God's messenger? Here are four ways to help you know whether a prophet's message is from heaven—or somewhere else.

BIBLE. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). In other words, a person's prophecy must match what the Bible says on the subject.

ACTIONS. "You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16). How does the person claiming to be a prophet live their life? Does the person cheat? Does the person use foul language? A true prophet's life will show the fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22, 23, traits such as love, gentleness, and self-control. In other words, what Jesus is like!

RESULTS. "When the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent" (Jeremiah 28:9). In other words, how do things turn out after the prophet delivers their message? Does the prophecy come true?

JESUS. "By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God" (1 John 4:2). What does the prophet say about Jesus? If it's something like "Well, Jesus was a good teacher, but He wasn't God's Son," run the other direction!

DID YOU KNOW?

In the United States a man named Harold Camping claimed to know the date of Jesus' return. He gained many followers, even after Jesus didn't return on three different dates: September 6, 1994; May 21, 2011; and October 21, 2011.

A few false prophets are mentioned in the Bible, including one named Hananiah. You can read about him in Jeremiah 28:15-17.

THINK IT THROUGH

- Why would someone who's not a real prophet claim to be one?
- Do you think Satan might be behind certain false prophecies? Why or why not?
- How do you think you'd react if someone came and told you they were a prophet sent by God? ☺



Tuesday

Memory Gem: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Cracking the Code

What a strange stone! Pierre must have thought. It was July 1799. A man named Pierre-François Bouchard was helping to rebuild an ancient Egyptian fort near the town of Rosetta in Egypt. Suddenly he noticed something sticking out of the ground. It turned out to be a large black slab of stone. The stone had writing on it!

Later people began studying the one-ton, black rock slab, which contained portions of messages written in three different languages, or "scripts." The first language was Greek, and the second was an Egyptian language called Demotic. The third set of scripts was Egyptian hieroglyphics, a system of writing based on symbols and pictures.

The experts were excited! They realized that the three different languages must be telling the same story! Until then, no one had figured out the secret to understanding these super-old Egyptian word pictures. But now, by using the first two languages as their "code key," they would finally be able to understand the meaning of the third language: hieroglyphics!

It took a long time to figure out the entire Rosetta Stone, but it was worth it. Thanks to its

discovery, the ancient “code” of Egyptian hieroglyphics had been broken at last!

Just as people needed the Rosetta Stone to understand hieroglyphics, we need the right information to understand prophecy *properly*. Without the right information to understand prophecy, we'll end up *wrongly* dividing (translating) the word of truth (the Bible)! Too many people drift from the Bible when they try to figure out a prophecy and end up with some pretty wacky interpretations!

Here are a few tips to help keep you on the right track when reading a prophecy:

Always pray for the Holy Spirit to help you understand a prophet's message. Accept all the heavenly help you can get!

Know your Bible. Even if it seems hard to figure out a prophecy, it will help if you know the general idea behind the Bible's main message about God: He loves you and He wants to someday take you to heaven. The Bible is the foundation to help you understand more and more as you grow and grow!

Try a more kid-friendly Bible. It might help the text make more sense to you.

Ask for help from people you trust. Prophecies can be confusing! If you can't figure out a prophet's message, or if you've heard two different interpretations, get help from someone whom you know loves Jesus.

Don't think you have to know it all now. Each day ask God to show you what you need to know about Him. When the time is right, He'll bring understanding to your mind—one prophecy at a time.

DID YOU KNOW?

The words on the Rosetta Stone are actually pretty boring. It's a copy of a decree celebrating the day Ptolemy V Epiphanes became king of Egypt.

Egypt shows up in many Bible prophecies, including this one in Hosea 11:1: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.” Where did Joseph and Mary take Jesus to escape King Herod? Yep—Egypt! From there, the little family went to live in Nazareth, which is when Jesus was “called” out of Egypt.

THINK IT THROUGH

- Have you ever made an exciting discovery? Did it help you in some way? If so, how?
- How do you feel when you can't understand something? What do you do about it?
- Can you think of a Bible prophecy that's easy to understand? What does it mean to you? ☺

Wednesday

Memory Gem: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Krystal's Courage

Krystal* was very bright. In fact, if grades meant anything, Krystal was the brightest student in her class.

One day Krystal was startled by words spoken by her teacher, Mr. Campbell. “You’ve gotten too used to getting good grades,” the teacher said harshly to Krystal. “Well, let me tell you something—I’m going to do all I can to fix that ‘problem.’”

Stunned, Krystal tried to figure out why Mr. Campbell was being so unkind to her. One of the few Christians in her public school, Krystal wondered if her faith had something to do with Mr. Campbell's attitude.

As the weeks went by, Mr. Campbell continued to make life difficult for Krystal. One day in class the topic turned to how life came to be. Most of her classmates seemed to believe in evolution. One said he believed in creation, but the six days mentioned in the Bible had to actually be millions of years. Finally Krystal spoke up.

“I believe what the Bible says about creation,” she said. “It says, ‘In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is—’”

“Wait!” Mr. Campbell rudely interrupted. “Are you trying to tell us you actually believe that nonsense?”

“Yes,” Krystal replied. “If God is who He says He is, why couldn't He create the world in six days? Why would He need millions of years? Just because we can't understand that kind of power doesn't mean it doesn't exist.”

“That's crazy talk!” Mr. Campbell said with a sneer. “What about the dinosaurs? What happened to them?” he asked.

When Krystal explained her belief in Noah's flood, Mr. Campbell threw back his head and laughed. “You really believe that? How stupid can you get?”

Something evil seemed to come over Mr. Campbell just then. He rushed into the school hallway. Spotting a couple of teachers and a group of students, he shouted, “You have to come in here

and listen to what Krystal believes!" Soon the room was filled with teachers and students all making fun of Krystal.

Despite all the trouble Mr. Campbell kept causing, Krystal's grades remained better than anyone else's. This meant she would be giving a speech the last weekend of school.

One day the principal called her aside. "Now, Krystal, I know you're a Christian, but you can't include a prayer in your speech. It's against the law."

But Krystal knew that wasn't true. "No, Mr. Sheffield, the law says I can have a prayer as long as school officials don't tell us what to say." The principal knew he was defeated.

When the day of the speech came, Krystal walked to the podium and bowed her head and prayed. After saying "Amen," she went on to give a powerful talk.

Later Krystal was congratulated by family, friends, classmates, and others. How thankful she was that the God who created her had helped her to stay strong for Him.[†]

* Names have been changed

† This story was adapted from Richard G. Edison, "Krystal's Clear Conviction," *Guide*, Mar. 11, 2006.

THINK IT THROUGH

- Have you ever heard of Ellen White before? If so, what do you think?
- If you know something about Ellen White's work, what words come to mind when you think of her? Be honest and share and discuss your response at family worship or Sabbath School.
- What situations in your life and around the world do you think could use some heavenly wisdom? Where can you find out if Ellen White wrote something about these kinds of situations?

DO IT!

Take a walk in a park, in the woods, or in another nature setting. List at least five things you see that make it hard for you to believe in evolution.

During the next few weeks, write down some problems you're having in your life. Either by yourself or with the help of a friend and/or trusted adult, see if you can find some help with some of these problems in the writings of Ellen White. Your Sabbath School teacher or pastor can help. If you have Internet access, you can check there as well.

Read or watch a video about dinosaurs. Does what you read match up with what Ellen White and the Bible say? ©

Thursday

Memory Gem: "Your sons and daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams" (Joel 2:28).

The Police Sergeant's Dream

Several police officers in South Auckland, New Zealand, were tired of having so much crime in their area. "What can we do to help change things?" they asked each other.

"What if we could give first-time criminals something to read that would help them make better choices in the future?" the senior sergeant asked. As the officers talked further, they came up with an idea for a magazine about criminals who'd given their lives to Jesus. They would call the magazine *Crime 2 Christ*. Everyone was excited about the idea for the new magazine, but their police department didn't have enough money to fund this.

Then one night that same police sergeant had a strange dream. In the dream was a woman who was going to have a baby. Above the woman were written the words "Seventh-day Adventist."

Suddenly the sergeant awoke. *I must write down what I've just dreamed*, he told himself. After he'd written the dream, he went back to sleep.

The next morning at the police station the sergeant told the others what he thought the dream meant. "I believe the Seventh-day Adventist Church will 'give birth' to this magazine project," he said.

"I'm a Seventh-day Adventist," one of the officers said excitedly, "and I know of a local Adventist church that would be interested in helping!"

Soon the police sergeant met with Pastor Hurlow of the nearby Papatoetoe Seventh-day Adventist



Church. “Yes,” the pastor said with a smile, “we’d like to help with this magazine project.” But Pastor Hurlow explained that while the church would help with writing and other tasks, they couldn’t provide any money for the project.

The very next day a woman walked into the police station and asked to speak with the senior sergeant. When the man appeared, the woman said, “God sent me here. I don’t know why, but tell me what you are doing in the community.”

After the sergeant told her about the magazine project, the woman said, “Now I know why God sent me here to talk with you. We’d like to donate some money. I’ll go pray and talk to some people. Then we’ll get back with you.”

A few days later the woman returned to the police station. “I have NZ\$10,000 ready for you to use on your magazine project,” she said with a smile. This was enough to print the first issue of the magazine! “Oh,” the woman added. “I also have more money for your next issue.”

The first issue of *Crime 2 Christ* included the story of Amos, a founding member of a huge gang called The Head Hunters, and a woman who went from a life of crime to following Jesus Christ. Many people have been baptized because they read something in *Crime 2 Christ* magazine that touched their heart.

When God gives someone a dream, He also helps to make it come true!*

* Story adapted from Andrew McChesney, “The Policeman’s Dream,” am.adventistmission.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bible says that dreams still play a role in prophecy. (See today’s Memory Gem.)

Since a prophet’s job may include more than telling the future, such as teaching, preaching, even dreaming, God might someday choose *you* to be a prophet—even if you can’t tell the future!

THINK IT THROUGH

- What are some ways to help know whether or not a person’s dream (or other special message) is really from God?
- Since the gift of prophecy can include teaching and preaching, are *all* teachers and preachers prophets? Why or why not?
- Many Christians believe the “Dark Day” of 1780 was a prophetic sign. (George Washington actually wrote about it.) Today some scientists say it was smoke from a Canadian forest fire that caused the Dark Day. Does this make a difference? Why or why not? ©



Friday

Memory Gem: “These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Rev. 14:4).

The Green Cord Dream

Ellen was discouraged! The 15-year-old girl loved Jesus, but she didn’t feel that she would ever be good enough to please Him. Later Ellen wrote about her feelings during this time. “It seemed to me that my doom was fixed, that the Spirit of the Lord had left me, never to return.”* But one night Ellen had a dream that helped her see things in a whole new light.

In the dream Ellen saw herself in deep sadness. *If only I could see Jesus, He’d help me feel better!* she thought. Just then in the dream an angel appeared. “Do you wish to see Jesus?” the angel asked Ellen. “He is here, and you can see Him if you desire to do so. Take everything you possess and follow me.”

Of course she wanted to see Jesus! So in the dream Ellen gathered up her few possessions and followed the angel. “Keep looking upward,” the angel told Ellen, “or else you might grow dizzy and fall.”

What a dream Ellen was having! Her heart seemed full of joy as she followed the angel up a steep stairway. At last Ellen stood before a door. “Leave your things here,” the angel said to Ellen in the dream. With that, the angel swung open the door . . . and there stood Jesus!

Ellen could hardly believe it! Suddenly she fell at her Savior’s feet. Jesus came near to Ellen, and with a gentle smile on His face, He placed His

hand on the girl's head. "Fear not," He told Ellen.

Ellen felt too filled with joy to speak. In the dream she seemed to know that she'd reached the safety and peace of heaven itself! Jesus' loving eyes were still upon her, and Ellen's heart bubbled up with joy. Now Ellen realized that it was only by trusting in Jesus that she would one day live in heaven.

Soon in the dream the angel guide opened the door. Ellen and the angel left the presence of Jesus, but something had changed—something too wonderful for words.

Now something else most unusual happened in the dream. The angel handed Ellen a green cord. "Place this next to your heart," the angel instructed. "When you wish to see Jesus, take the green cord and stretch it all the way out. Do this often, because you don't want the cord to get knotted up," the angel said. To Ellen, the green cord represented faith and trusting in Jesus.

In the dream Ellen placed the cord near her heart and joyfully went down the narrow stairway. Along the way, she praised God and excitedly told everyone she met along the way where they could find Jesus.

When Ellen awoke, the world seemed brighter, and she had a peace in her heart that hadn't been there before. And it was all because of Jesus!

* Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882, 1945), p. 79. See also pages 80 and 81.

THINK IT THROUGH

- What is the main point of the "green cord dream"?
- Has Ellen White affected your life? If so, how?
- Why do you think some people choose to not pay attention to Ellen White's messages?

DO IT!

Using a shoelace, yarn, or something similar, make your own "green cord." Keep it where it will help to remind you that any time is a good time to trust in Jesus! Perhaps attach a favorite Bible promise to the cord.

Cut a piece of cardboard about seven inches (17.78 centimeters) tall and five inches (12.7 centimeters) wide. Cut a door that can open, leaving about a half-inch "door frame." (See illustration.) Draw or find a nice picture of Jesus and glue it to the backside of the doorframe. If you wish, you can cut a window in the door to show Jesus' face. Now, whenever you open the door, Jesus will be waiting for you! ©

Second Sabbath

Memory Gem: "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10).

The Incredible Vision

On a Sunday afternoon in Lovett's Grove, Ohio, James White had just finished giving a funeral sermon. Ellen, his wife, stepped to the front of the little schoolhouse where the funeral had been held. She wanted to offer her own words of encouragement. But God had something special planned for this moment in history.

Ellen suddenly went into vision, something she'd done many times before. In this vision God showed her scenes from the invisible battle taking place between Jesus and Satan. She saw how Satan had once been a respected angel in heaven, along with how he'd sinned and been cast to earth. As Ellen remained in vision, scenes passed before her. She saw Jesus' death on Calvary, and how Sunday would replace the true Sabbath as God's special day. Ellen was also shown how Satan would try to trick people into thinking dead people went straight to heaven, and that they could talk with these "departed" loved ones!

Finally after two hours, Ellen's vision ended—but not before God told her something else. She was to write out this vision, which would become known as the "great controversy" vision. God also told her that Satan would try to stop her from sharing what she'd seen in vision. As people left the schoolhouse, some said, "We have seen strange things today!"

Soon James and Ellen White left Ohio and headed for Jackson, Michigan, to visit their friends the Palmers. Shortly after they arrived at the Palmers' home, something happened to Ellen. Later she wrote about it this way: "A strange, cold sensation struck my heart, passed over my head, and down my right side. . . . I tried to use my left arm and limb, but they were perfectly useless."¹

Satan was already trying to stop Ellen from writing out the vision! But thanks to prayer, Ellen slowly got better. She later wrote, "I was shown in vision that in the sudden attack at Jackson, Satan intended to take my life, in order to hinder the



work I was about to write; but angels of God were sent to my rescue.”² “The Lord heard and answered the faithful prayers of His children, and the power of Satan was broken.”³ Eventually Ellen was able to finish writing out the entire vision. You can read what she wrote in a book called *The Great Controversy*.

Today, thanks to the gift of prophecy God gave to Ellen White, God’s end-time people know a lot about how to be ready when Jesus comes again. It’s a special gift to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But the special insights God gave to Ellen White don’t belong to just one group of people. They’re meant to be shared with the whole world! What an amazing privilege to play a part in making such a difference to others, not only in this lifetime, but forever!

¹ Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 162.

² *Ibid.* p. 163.

³ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, Mich.: James White, 1860), vol. 2, p. 272.

THINK IT THROUGH

- What would you say if someone told you Ellen White was no longer important?
- Who do you think was most important in Ellen White’s life? Why?

DO IT!

Buy or ask for someone to give you *Steps to Jesus*, a kid-friendly version of Ellen White’s book *Steps to Christ*. Read a few paragraphs each night before you go to bed. It will help you learn to love Jesus more.

Find a few especially meaningful sentences in *Steps to Jesus*, or another Ellen White book. Write the sentences or print them on a computer printer. Cut out small cards from cardboard and glue the sentences on the cardboard. Decorate the cards. You might “laminare” them by placing clear shipping tape on both sides and trimming the edges. Keeps the cards in a special place (consider making a little cardboard “card keeper” for them). Enjoy reading these encouraging quotes from time to time. You might even wish to memorize a few of these special thoughts from God’s end-time messenger, Ellen White.

Keep a written journal of especially meaningful things that Ellen White wrote or said. If you wish, include drawings that illustrate the important points. ©

Randy Fishell is former editor of *Guide* magazine.

Adventist World

Publisher

The *Adventist World*, an international periodical of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The General Conference, Northern Asia-Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists[®], is the publisher.

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Adventist World is published monthly and printed simultaneously in Korea, Brazil, Indonesia, Australia, Germany, Austria, Argentina, Mexico, South Africa, and the United States.

Vol. 15, No. 11



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