



The Gift of Prophecy

“Have Faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful” (2 Chronicles 20:20, NIV).

During the winter of 1849 – 1850 Adventist pioneers James and Ellen White held revival meetings in Oswego, New York. At the same time the county treasurer held a revival in a nearby Protestant church, professing to have a great burden for the unconverted.

Young Hiram Patch and his fiancée could not decide which revival with which to associate. Ellen White received a message from the Lord regarding the true character of the fellow revivalist. God told her to advise Hiram Patch, “Wait a month, and you will know for yourself the character of the persons who are engaged in this revival and who profess to have such a great burden for sinners.” Mr. Patch agreed to wait.

Within two weeks the treasurer-revivalist burst a blood vessel in his stomach, requiring bed rest. Those who took over his treasury work at the county office found a shortage of \$1,000. The sheriff’s inquiry brought only denials from the treasurer of any knowledge of the missing money. Meanwhile, another officer observed the treasurer’s wife hastily hiding something in a snowbank. The “something” turned out to be \$1,000.

The treasurer’s revival collapsed. Hiram Patch and his fiancée, with Ellen White’s counsel fresh in mind, joined the Adventist believers. The fulfillment of her inspired prediction within only two weeks greatly strengthened the faith of many in the reality of this modern gift of prophecy.

Preview

Four general attitudes toward modern prophets prevail today.

1. Some are skeptical of the whole idea of anyone ever having the ability to predict the future or reveal secrets supernaturally. They reject any proof as “a lucky guess.”
2. Others go to the opposite extreme and believe almost any person claiming to be a modern prophet, no matter how wild or ridiculous the “prophecy.”
3. Still others accept the evidence for Bible prophecy but balk at the idea of the prophetic gift operating any time after the first century A.D.
4. An alternative avoids the weaknesses in these positions and presents the truth of the matter. To this Bible teaching, we turn our attention in this lesson.

Points to Ponder

1. God no longer speaks to us face-to-face as He did to Adam and Eve. Why? Sin has separated us from God.

2. How did God choose to communicate with us?
After sin made it impossible for direct communion between God and humanity, God chose to reach humanity through inspired messages that He would give to men and women whom He chose to use. These special messages, which convey His will and guidance for human salvation, are called the gift or Spirit of Prophecy.
3. In Bible times people generally accepted the prophet's messages as coming from God. Why?
They had ample evidence of the divine inspiration of such messages.
4. Yet many prophets were spurned and persecuted. Why?
People resented having their faults pointed out, preferring to reject the messenger rather than accept the message.
5. When God chose to give Ellen White messages, did she welcome these visions from the Lord?
No. She said: "If I could have my choice and please God as well, I would rather die than have a vision, for every vision places me under great responsibility to bear testimonies of reproof and warning, which has ever been against my feelings, causing me affliction of soul that is inexpressible. Never have I coveted my position, and yet I dare not resist the Spirit of God and seek an easier position."
6. Ellen White never claimed to be a prophet. Why?
The title has been brought into disrepute by many false prophets. She referred to herself as "a messenger of the Lord."
7. The Bible is a sufficient guide for salvation, yet the Lord sent a modern prophet. Why?
8. God wants to point us to the neglected Bible and leave us without excuse. Also, God's inspired gift might also be used to guide and guard the church during these last days of Satan's greatest deceptions.

Nuts & Bolts

1. What is the prophet's main work? To give guidance, or to predict the future?
1 Corinthians 14:3: "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to _____ and _____ and _____."
2. What indications do we have that prophecy would continue in the church beyond Bible times?
The New Testament church needed prophets to bring unity, to edify, to give warnings, and to confirm their faith. Has the church still a need for this in the last days? Ephesians 4:11-13:...
"And he [Christ] gave some... prophets... for the _____ of the saints, for the work of _____, for the edifying of the _____ of _____; Till we all come in the _____ of the _____ and of the knowledge of the _____ of _____, unto a _____ man, unto the _____ of the stature of the _____ of Christ."

3. How long will this gift be manifest in the church?

Acts 2:17-20: "And it shall come to pass _____ the _____, saith God, I will pour out My _____ upon _____ flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall _____, and your young men shall see _____, and your old men shall dream _____."

Notice the period to which this prediction is applied, in verses 19, 20.

4. Where else in the Scriptures do we have the assurance of the Spirit of Prophecy in the last days?

Revelation 12:17: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make _____ with the _____ of her seed, which keep the _____ of God, and have the _____ of _____."

Revelation 19:10: "For the testimony of _____ is the Spirit of _____."

5. Why are we not guilty of rejecting the Bible when we accept a modern prophet?

Hosea 12:13: "By a _____ the Lord brought Israel out of _____, and by a _____ was he preserved" (Hosea 12:13).

God led his people from bondage in Egypt to Canaan. Likewise, as Isaiah 11:11 promises, God will lead His people from this sin-polluted earth to the heavenly Canaan: "It shall come to pass in that day, that the _____ shall set His _____ again the _____ time to recover the _____ of his _____."

6. What tests must a true prophet pass?

a. Harmony with the teachings of the Bible. "To the _____ and to the _____: ... if they speak not according to this _____, it is because there is no _____ in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

b. Acceptance of Jesus. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every _____ that confesseth that _____ is come in the _____ is of God" (1 John 4:2).

A true prophet teaches the truth about Jesus and exalts Jesus, not himself or herself. The message is a Christ-centered message.

c. A godly life. "Wherefore by their _____ ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). This doesn't mean the prophet is perfect, but is rather a godly person who lives by what he or she teaches and leads others to holiness.

d. Fulfillment of predictions. If a prophet is of God, the things he or she says will come to pass. The predictions will be accurate. "When the word of the _____ shall come to pass, then shall the _____ be known, that the Lord hath truly _____" (Jeremiah 28:9).

e. Reprover of sin. A true prophet reproves sin. "Hearken not unto the _____ of the _____ that prophesy unto you; they make you _____ : they speak a _____ of their own heart, not out of the _____ of the _____" (Jeremiah 23:16).

7. How did Ellen White meet the test of prophetic accuracy?

Apply the biblical tests you just read. _____

Name four of Ellen White's books that teach the truth about Jesus. _____

8. Compare Ellen White's attitude toward Christ with Paul's, in Galatians 2:20.

9. Messages God gave to Ellen White greatly influenced the Adventist Church.

Mention some of the areas in which God's counsels through Ellen White shaped the SDA church.

10. Explain the relationship between this gift of prophecy and the Bible as suggested in the book under the following headings:

a. The Bible the supreme standard. Copy her words: "I recommend to you, dear reader,

b. A guide to the Bible. _____

c. A guide because we have neglected to study the Bible. "If you had made _____ your study, with the desire to _____ the Bible _____ and attain to Christian _____, you would not have needed the _____."

d. A guide to apply Bible principles. "The Lord has _____ a _____ light to lead men and women to the _____ light."

- e. A guide in understanding the Bible. "The written testimonies are not given to give _____, but to _____ vividly upon the heart the truths of _____ already revealed."

11. What does Paul command regarding prophecy?

1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21: "Despise _____ prophesyings. _____ all things; _____ fast that which is good."

Ellen White wrote, "I have no special wisdom in myself. I am only an instrument in the Lord's hands to do the work He has set for me to do. The instructions that I have given by pen or voice have been an expression of the light that God has given me."

Ellen White met every Bible specification for a true prophet. Read her writings for yourself. Prove all things, and then hold fast what is good.

Words to Remember

Prophecy: One of God's chosen ways to communicate with His people.

Spirit of Prophecy: Operation of the Holy Spirit upon an individual to convey a message from God. The medium of prophecy itself.

Remnant church: God's chosen people who restore apostolic truth shortly before Christ's second coming.

Testimony of Jesus: Message from or about Jesus through the prophets.

Testimonies: As used by Adventists, they refer to messages from God to individuals or to the church through Ellen White.

The Difference Between

True and false prophet: A true prophet is one who speaks for God under direct divine guidance and upholds the Bible and Jesus Christ. A false prophet is guided by self or Satan. Christ warned that many false prophets will appear in the last days.

Common dreams and visions: Common dreams are what everyone experiences during sleep. Visions are a medium through which God reveals His message to a prophet during waking hours. Prophets may also receive dreams from God.

The Bible and Ellen White's writings: The Bible is the standard for all spiritual truth and practice, including what Ellen White says. Ellen White's writings are a guide to lead us to the Bible and to help us understand and apply it to life.

Ellen White's son, Willie, once asked her, "Mother... how do you know that God is talking to you in the dreams of which you so frequently speak?"

She answered, "Because the same angel messenger stands by my side instructing me in the visions of the night, as stands beside me instructing me in the visions of the day."

I Truly Believe

Near the outbreak of the American Civil War on January 12, 1861, at an afternoon meeting in a church in Parkville, Michigan, Ellen White was given a vision. Four states had seceded from the Union, but no one expected war. On coming out of vision, she told the audience that the nation was on the brink of war. She described what she saw—armies in conflict; battlefields covered with the dead and dying;

homes saddened by the loss of husbands, sons, and brothers. Then, looking around, she said sad words that startled the audience: "There are those in this house who will lose sons in that war."

In a few months, the war began and lasted four years. Five families who were in that church lost loved ones.

Again in 1902 she warned, "San Francisco and Oakland are becoming as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Lord will visit them in wrath."

While in Loma Linda, California, April 16, 1906, she described a vision of the night. She said, "I saw buildings, great and small, falling to the ground. Pleasure resorts, theaters, hotels, and the homes of the wealthy were shaken and shattered. Many lives were blotted out of existence. The air was filled with the shrieks of the injured and the terrified... It seemed that the forbearance of God was exhausted, and that the judgment day had come."

Two days later on April 18, while in Los Angeles, she heard the newsboys crying, "San Francisco destroyed by an earthquake!" With a heavy heart she read of the terrible disaster.

These predictions were fulfilled accurately. Some of her predictions are yet in the future, but sadly, one is being fulfilled right now.

She wrote that God warned, "The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish.' Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony."

Please, dear reader, do not let Satan deceive you and cause you to criticize and doubt these messages. Think carefully about each of the following statements. Check the ones you agree with.

- I believe God spoke through the Bible prophets.
- I accept what the Bible says about the gift of prophecy in these last days.
- I agree that Ellen White fulfilled the promise of a prophet in God's last-day church.
- I want to read and heed God's messages to me as found in the Bible and in the writings of His modern messenger.
- I pray that God will guide me as I heed the warnings, counsel, and instruction from my study of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

My Prayer

Heavenly Father,

I am so thankful that You have spoken to us through Your prophets, both in Bible times and today. Help me to understand and appreciate these messages and to read them regularly. Give me Your grace and power to live them out in my life, so that I may be ready for Your coming kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.