

Lesson 8 carries the title, “Providence and Fulfilled Predictions.” It is Full of Mrs. White’s personal experiences as an agent of a miracle-working Providence. You will enjoy every page.

PROPHETIC GUIDANCE IN THE ADVENT MOVEMENT

TESTS OF A TRUE PROPHET

Test Questions - Lesson 7

1. Complete these Bible statements:

1. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but.....the"

2. “Ye shall know them.....”

2. Answer these questions:

1. By what yardstick is a prophet’s claim to be tested?
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.....
.....

2. What relationship will exist between the counsel of a true prophet now, and that of true prophets who have preceded him?
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.....
.....

3. Supply words missing from these E. G. White statements:

1. “The Holy Scriptures ... are the.....
.....of character, the of doctrines, and the.....of experience.”

2. The last words spoken by Mrs. White to a world assembly were, "Brethren and sisters,.....
.....
.....
.....”

4. Meditate on these questions, then answer them briefly:

1. Why is so much of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy writings devoted to the discussion or Jesus’ life and ministry?
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.....

2. How would a lack of this emphasis in the work and writings of Ellen G. White affect your confidence in her?

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5. Fill in the missing words in these key statements by Ellen G. White:

1. “Lift up.....you that teach the people."
2. “Let the science of.....be the burden of every....., the theme of every.....”

6. Answer these these questions:

1. Is fulfilled prophecy an essential test of a true prophet?
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2. Is the fulfillment of God’s promises ever dependent on man’s reaction thereto? If so, mention an example.
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7. List two or more of Ellen G. White’s predictions that were unmistakably fulfilled:

10. List three characteristics of a true prophet’s message:

1.
.....
2.
.....
3.
.....

THINK ON THESE THINGS (No written answers)

Is prophecy given purely to inspire confidence in God?

Does it serve any practical purpose?

What about the three E. G. White predictions cited in Treasure Chest? – Was any practical good accomplished by their fulfillment?

1.
.....
2.
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3.
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4.
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8. Is it reasonable to look for the fruit of the prophetic gift –

1. in the prophet’s own life?.....
2. in the lives of those who are influenced by him?..... 3. in the lines of endeavor called into being by his messages?

9. Answer these questions:

1. If Mrs. White’s personal life and ministry had been inconsistent with her writings, should not this have been evident in the 87 years of her life?
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2. Could a self-centered person have written such books as Desire of Ages and Steps to Christ?
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.....
.....

Test of A True Prophet

7



PROPHETIC GUIDANCE

GUIDING TEXT: Beloved, believes not every spirit, but try the spirit whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. – 1 John 4:1

Our Attitude Towards Those Who Claim to Have the Gift of Prophecy

The Revised Standard Version renders our guiding text thus: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, to see whether they are of God.”

In these last days when so many false prophets have gone out into the world, the only safe course is to acquaint yourself thoroughly with the Bible tests of a prophet, and to know these tests so well that you can apply them whenever and wherever needed.

Arthur G. Daniells, for many years president of the General Conference, observed:

No man can make himself a prophet. No body of men, however authorities in the church, can elect another to that sacred office. He must receive the prophetic gift- a gift which only God can bestow. Hence a person becomes a prophet only when the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, imparts to that person the prophetic gift. – The Abiding Gift of Prophecy, p. 277. Italics supplied.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has recognized the evidence in the prophetic call in the life and labors of Mrs. E. G. White. Through the years God imparted to her messages of guidance, encouragement, and warnings for His people. These messages are preserved and made available in her many books.

Let us now apply the above Bible tests to her work or that of any person claiming to speak as the special messenger of God. Mrs. White herself candidly and fearlessly urged the most thorough investigation of her work. She wrote in 1876:

God is either teaching His church, reproving their wrongs and strengthening their faith, or He is not. This work is of God, or it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work for the past thirty years bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God or of the devil. – Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 230.

The Basic Yardstick by Which Prophet’s Claims Are to be Judged

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. – Isaiah 8:20.

Prophecy is to be tested by the yardstick of the Scriptures, “the law and the testimony.”

Isaiah here directs men to the Word of God as the standard of truth and the guide to right living. God has revealed Himself in His Word. Whatever men may speak that is not in harmony with that Word has, “no light” in it. – S. D.A. Bible Commentary, vol.4, p. 144.

The utterances of one who claims direct instruction from God by vision and dreams must be true, and they must be in harmony with the inspired word of God. – A. G. Daniells, The Abiding Gift of Prophecy, p. 279.Italics supplied.

The Bible, then, is the accurate and certain testing instrument. To put it another way, all that a true prophet speaks will correspond to the writings of the prophets of God who preceded him. L. E. Froom has observed that:

The Spirit will not speak through one messenger in contradiction to what He has given through earlier prophets or to anything in the inspired Word of God. – Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers, vol. 4, p. 993.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. – 1 Corinthians 14:32, 33.

In their messages to the church, true prophets will not clash by speaking contrary to one another, producing confusion, disorder, and disharmony.

In the latter times of Judah’s apostasy Hananiah, a false prophet, spoke peace and smooth things concerning that nation; but the Lord’s prophet, Jeremiah, harked back to the prophets that have been before me,” who “prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence.” Jeremiah 28:8. Jeremiah knew that what God had spoken of forthcoming calamity, through the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, would not be contradicted or canceled out or made of non effect by what any later true prophet spoke. Zechariah asked, “Should ye not hear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets?” Zechariah 7:7.

Conclusion: A true prophet will give evidence that his work is of God by the harmony of his teaching of former prophets.

Ellen White’s Position in Respect to Bible Prophets

The Holy Scripture are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. – *Great Controversy*, Introduction, p. vii. (Written at Healdsburg, California, May, 1888.)

I take the Bible just as it is, as the Inspired Word. I believe its utterance in an entire Bible. – *Selected Messages*, Book I, p. 17.

This word arranged into books, the Old and New Testaments, is the guidebook to the inhabitants of a fallen world, bequeathed to them that, by studying and obeying the directions, not one soul should lose its way to heaven. – *Ibid.*, p. 16.

At the 1909 session of the General Conference, Mrs. White spoke on several occasions. Of her last public message at this important conference, W. A. Spicer wrote:

Mrs. White spoke a few good words of good cheer and farewell, and then turned to the pulpit, where lay a Bible. She opened the Book, and held it out with hands that trembled with age. And she said: “Brethren and sisters, I commend unto you this Book.” Without another word, she closed the Book, and walked from the platform. It was her last spoken word in the world assembly of the remnant church. Well was it symbolic of the lifelong ministry through this gift, ever exalting high, supreme above all, the Holy Scriptures as the foundation of the faith of the people of the Advent Movement. – *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement*, p. 30.

Mrs. White accepted the teaching of the Bible prophets at face value. To her the Scriptures were “an authoritative, infallible revelation” of God’s will. Her oral and written messages ever elevated the Law of God and the writings of the prophets. She believed that the Lord had spoken to her, and that her writings were sent to provide special guidance for the church in the last days. In 1889 she wrote:

In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the testimonies of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them pursue. – Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 661.

This statement shows that God who spoke through “the mouth of prophets and apostles” instructs His people today through the testimonies. If this is true, there can be only harmony between the former prophets and apostles and the testimonies of Mrs. White; between Paul, Moses, and John, for example, and the Spirit of Prophecy writings. *But keep in mind that John and Paul and Moses are not to be tested by Ellen White. Ellen White is to be tested by John and Paul and Moses and the other Bible prophets.* The testimonies must square with the former prophets, with the Bible, for the Bible is the standard.

And since Mrs. White wrote so much, the chances of discrepancy are many. Do these writings stand this all-important test? We believe that they do; and we shall deal more fully in this matter in Lesson 9, “In Harmony With the Gospel.”

The Attitude of a True Prophet to Christ and His Incarnation

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: *Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.* – 1 John 4:2, 3. Italics supplied.

Carlyle B. Haynes observed that absolute loyalty to Jesus Christ and complete devotion to the teaching of His atoning sacrifice on the cross are invariable signs of a true prophet. After quoting 1 John 4:2, 3, he stated:

Here is an essential and close test-fidelity to the central facts and truths of the atonement of Christ. Christ must be acknowledged, honored, worshiped, and upheld. There must be loyalty to all that He taught, all that He did, all that He is, all that He is to do. The whole tendency of the life, the work, the teaching, of one having the gift of prophecy must be to exalt Him, glorify Him, and lead men to Him. This is fundamental. If there is any failure here, no matter what other credentials the prophet may have or show, no matter what miracles he may work, no

matter what signs he may perform, he is a false prophet, and belongs to Satan. – *Gift of prophecy*, pp. 109, 110.

We hasten now to see how this test applies in the case of Mrs. E. G. White.

Mrs. White’s Attitude Towards Christ and His Work of Redemption

The following message addressed by Mrs. White to the ministers of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church is typical of hundreds of Christ-filled appeals addressed to the denomination’s religious workers:

Lift up Jesus, you that teach the people, lift Him up in sermon, in song, in prayer. Let all your powers be directed to pointing souls, confused, bewildered, lost, to “the Lamb of God.” lift Him up, the risen Saviour, and say to all who hear, Come to Him who “hath loved us, and hath given himself for us.” Ephesians 5:2. Let the science of salvation be the burden of every sermon, the theme of every song. Let it be poured forth in every supplication. Bring nothing into your preaching to supplement Christ, the wisdom and power of God. Hold forth the word of life, presenting Jesus as the hope of the penitent and stronghold of every believer. Reveal the way of peace to the troubled and the despondent, and *show forth the grace and completeness of the Saviour.* – *Gospel Workers*, p. 160. Italics supplied.

Here Ellen White speaks of the “grace and completeness of the Saviour.” To her Christ was everything, and His cross was the center of God’s plan for our redemption. Haynes observed:

She writes of Him as the Saviour of the world, are Advocate and Judge, the King who will reign in righteousness, . . . the world’s rightful King, the true Sacrifice, the only and sufficient Saviour, and the Coming King. – *Gift of Prophecy*, pp. 164-165.

And further:

She has been unfalteringly true to the historic Christ and historic Christianity, not swerving a heir’s breathe from the great doctrines of the atonement, His pre-existence, Hid divine incarnation, His deity, His divine Sonship, His virgin birth, His miracle-working power, His divine authority, His substitutionary and expiatory death, His literal resurrection, His ascension, His mediatory and intercessory priesthood, His bodily, visible, personal, and imminent coming again. – *Ibid.*, p. 164.

As far back as 1866, Uriah Smith, a pioneer worker, commented on her messages:

They lead us to Christ. Like the Bible, *they set Him forth as the only hope and only Saviour of mankind.* They portray before us in living characters, His holy life and His godly example, and with irresistible appeals, they urge us to follow in His steps. – *Review and Herald*, June 12, 1866, p. 9. Quoted in *Our Firm Foundation*, vol. 1, pp. 225, 226. Italics supplied.

There are four E. G. White books in the life and teaching of Christ: *Desire of Ages*, *Mount of Blessing*, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, and *Christ Our Saviour*; also a considerable portion of *Ministry of Healing*. Wonderful books to have in a personal Library.

How Fulfilled Prophecy Is a Test of a True Prophet

When the word of a prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known that the Lord hath truly sent him. – Jeremiah 28:9.

The test of fulfilled predictions is one of the four essential tests of a true prophet. On this point D. E. Rebok declared:

Prophets have been God’s chosen spokesmen, and through them He has made known things to come. Hence it is but natural for men to watch his eager interest to see whether such predictions actually come to pass. A failure of fulfillment would obviously become a factor in acceptance or rejection of the one claiming to be a prophet. – *Our Firm Foundation*, vol. 1, p. 218.

In studying the predictive element in a prophet’s work, we need to keep in mind the principle of the conditional nature of certain of God’s Promises. Of this C. B. Haynes wrote:

It should be noted that some prophecies are conditional, their fulfillment being dependent upon the attitude of the people to whom they are addressed. The fact that Jonah, directed by the Lord, declared, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4), whereas the repentance of the people averted or deferred the threatened judgment, does not prove that he was a false prophet. Such seeming failure of the prophetic utterance, either of promise or of threatening, is clearly set forth thus: (quoting Jeremiah 18:7-10]. – *The Gift of Prophecy*, p. 117.

Mrs. White Predicted Future Events That Were Fulfilled

While the work of Mrs. White was more like that of Moses who made very few predictions, yet a number of predictions from her pen have been or are being fulfilled. So important is this topic that it will be touched on in other lessons, and one entire lesson (23) will be devoted to it. Among other items we shall recognize the fulfillment of the 1848 prediction concerning our publishing work. The predictions in 1849 and 1852 concerning the development of Spiritualism. The prediction of coming world conflict, published in 1890.

In this present lesson we shall refer only to Mrs. White’s prediction in 1902 that the judgment of God would fall upon San Francisco, California. Four year later – on April 18, 1906- the tragic earthquake and fire which devastated the pleasure – mad metropolis fulfilled her prophecy. Because of limited space here, you are referred to your *Treasure Chest* for this choice item.

Fruits of a Prophet’s Life and Work

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thrones, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeht forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. . . . But their fruits ye shall know them. – Matthew 7:16, 17, 20.

This test is far reaching, first, what of the life of the individual who claims the prophetic gift? On this point, C. B. Haynes wrote:

True prophets will lead holy, upright, consistent lives, which will influence men for good. It was “holy men of God” who were moved by the Holy Ghost to produce the ancient prophecies. This is a very important test, – *The Gift of Prophecy*, p. 124.

Then it is appropriate to examine the fruit of the prophet’s teachings as seen in the lives of men and women who follow the counsel given, and in the works which may have been called into being as the result of the prophet’s messages.

Testing Mrs. White’s Work by Its Fruits

Well over a century passed since Ellen White began her work as special messenger of the Lord, and several decades have passed since her death. This has given ample time and abundant opportunity to observe the fruit of her life and her work. What has it been?

D. E. Rebok observed:

Seventy years is a ling time to live and work before the public, under the critical eyes of millions of people, largely skeptical, doubtful, uncertain, suspicious, and in some cases hostile. If any faults, errors, or inconsistencies existed, they would be exposed by great satisfaction by opponents. Mrs. White lived in various places, in New England, Michigan Switzerland, Australia, and California. She traveled extensively in many parts of the United States, Europe, and Australia; *but the fruit of her life and labors attest to her godliness, her sincerity, her zeal and earnestness*, her upright and noble character, and her consistent Christian conduct. – Our Firm Foundation, vol. 1, p. 225.

Her godly life, deep faith, and profound experience in the things of God eminently qualified her to speak with such power and to write with such conviction that sinners have been and still are being lifted higher in spiritual life and practice. G. I. Butler noted these influences upon the church while Ellen White was still comparatively young:

We find we prosper spiritually when we heed them [her counsels], and suffer a great loss when we neglect them. We have found their guidance to be our safety. They never have led us into fanaticism in a single instance, but they have ever rebuked fanatical and unreasonable men. They everywhere direct us to the Scriptures as the great source of true instruction, and to the example of Jesus Christ as the true pattern. – *Review and Herald*, Jun 9, 1874.

(Coming! Lesson 15, “Glimpse of a Noble Christian Life,” will give you a thrilling human-interest story of Mrs. White’s way of life.)

Additional Evidence of Inspiration

The messages of the prophet, whether written or oral, should be –timely and applicable to life’s emergencies. (This will be treated more fully in Lesson 20, “Integrity and Timeliness of the Prophetic Messages.”) Practical and helpful in everyday life. Highly spiritual and restorative. (Read prayfully Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 671-676. Acquaint yourself with the entire section in volume 5 entitled “Influence of the ‘Testimonies,’” pp. 654-691.)

Also, the true prophet is not the victim of impression, impulses, or feelings. Nor will he be influenced by his contemporaries, in the messages he bears. (Lesson 20) The manner in which the visions are given – the physical phenomena – is also an important evidence, though not a *test*.

In succeeding lessons we shall have abundant opportunity to demonstrate that the evidence of inspiration here suggested were unquestionably present in the life and ministry of Ellen White. Her contemporaries recognized this, as do many thousands who now likewise believe her work have been of God. D. E. Rebok’s testimony is expressive of their faith and belief:

I believe that the writings of Ellen White describe what God wants of me and what God will do for me Through His Son Jesus Christ. They are words of beauty and of power. They present before me the pattern for the Christian life. I accept her words as she has declared them to be, words of reproof for the “erring,” words of encouragement to the “meek and lowly,” words of “counsel,” “instruction,” “correction.” – *Believe His Prophets*, pp. 315, 316.