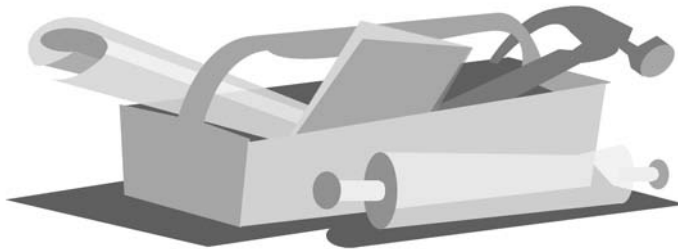


The Work of the Prophets¹



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 7

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 22:1–14; Isaiah 53; Matthew 3:7–10; 1 Corinthians 5:1–5.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘The prophet Moses brought Israel up from Egypt. The Lord used him to take care of them’ ” (Hosea 12:13, NIV).

AS THE BIBLE CLEARLY TEACHES, the life of a prophet was never easy. Ellen G. White's life was not easy either. She did not face the same kind of troubles that many of the Bible prophets did (jail, stoning, and so on). But she had plenty of troubles just the same. In the early years, she and her husband, James, struggled with illness and Satan's different attacks. She and James were very poor. They had to depend on others for a place to live and for furniture. Two of their four children died young. James wore himself out with travel, preaching, writing, and leading the young church until 1881, when he died at the age of 60. For the last 34 years of her life, Ellen G. White worked among people who were not very friendly. This week we will study some of her work. We will seek to understand how it was very much the same as the work done by the Bible prophets.

THIS WEEK'S LESSON UP CLOSE: Is the preaching of the gospel² in the New Testament different from the preaching of salvation³ in the Old Testament? Why were some of the Millerites⁴ against starting a new church? What were some ways prophets preached God's messages to His people?

1. prophets—men or women who are spokespersons for God. God gives prophets special messages to give to His people. Prophets also speak to God on behalf of His people. God may also give prophets warnings about what will happen in the future.

2. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news about salvation.

3. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life; being saved.

4. Millerites—followers of William Miller who believed Jesus would return to earth in 1844.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 8**PREACHING THE GOSPEL
(Romans 3:21–26)**

What do Genesis 22:1–14; Leviticus 4:27–31; and Isaiah 53 tell us about the gospel of salvation in the Old Testament?

The plan of salvation⁵ was explained to Adam and Eve as soon as they had sinned. It was also made clear in Abraham's test on Mount Moriah. And it was made clear in the sanctuary service⁶ started by Moses. The sanctuary service was made for farming people who lived closely with their animals. The sacrificed⁷ animals pointed to Christ's death on the cross. And the work of the priest pointed to Christ's ministry (work) for us in heaven.

According to John 1:29 and Romans 3:21–26, is the preaching of the gospel in the New Testament different from the preaching of salvation in the Old Testament?

The Old Testament people looked forward by faith to the Messiah (God's chosen One). But the New Testament looks back to Christ's finished work as our Savior. Both Testaments show what God has done to solve the problem of our fall into sin.

It is the same with the writings of

Ellen G. White. The Christ of the cross and the cross of Christ were the focus of her message. "Christ was made known to the first Bible leaders. He was made known in the sanctuary service. He was made known through the law. He was made known to His people and others by the prophets. He is the riches of the Old Testament. The life of Christ, His death, and His return to life are the treasures of the New Testament." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 126. "The death of Christ as an atonement [cleansing payment] for sin is the great truth. Around this truth all other truths gather together. . . . This is to be at the heart of every sermon given by our ministers [preachers]." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, page 315.



The Christ of the cross and the cross of Christ were the focus of Ellen G. White's message.

How much time do you spend thinking about Jesus and on what

5. plan of salvation—what God has done and is doing to save us from sin.

6. sanctuary service—the offering of animal blood as a payment for sin. The animal blood was offered in place of the sinner's blood. This service represented Jesus' dying on the cross for our sins. After Jesus died, this service was not needed.

7. sacrificed—when something or someone is given up to save another person or thing or to gain something that is wanted.

He has done for you? How much stronger would your faith be if you were to think more about Christ and His death for you?

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 9

GUIDING (LEADING) GOD'S PEOPLE (Acts 6:1–7)

Jesus chose Paul and the 12 apostles⁸ to lead and guide the early Christian church. Some of the apostles also had the gift of prophecy.⁹ According to Acts 6:1–7; 1 Corinthians 5:1–5; 1 Corinthians 7:10–16; Titus 1:5; and 1 John 4:1–3, what are some of the areas in which Paul and the apostles gave advice and guidance to the church?

The leaders of the early church faced many problems. Questions of right and wrong, backsliding, how the church should be organized, and other problems took up the time and attention of the early church. Prophets and apostles led the people of God to do the Lord's will.

Our church went through early struggles too. During the first 20 years of our church, there was no church organization.¹⁰ This meant ministers did not receive pay. Preachers worked at other jobs to make a living. Anyone

could preach if he felt God called him. As a result, there were many heresies.¹¹ Furthermore, church buildings and the Review and Herald press were owned by individual people. This created many problems. For years James White encouraged organization. But he had little success.

Then in 1854, Mrs. White wrote an article about church order. "The Lord has made known that people fear gospel order¹² too much. Church services should not be too formal. But order should not be forgotten. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth. And after He returned to heaven, His apostles encouraged order in church services. . . . The danger of those traveling [going from place to place to preach] whom God has not called was shown me. . . . This is a door at which the enemy comes in to attack God's people. I saw that this door can be shut. I asked the angel how the door could be closed. The angel said, 'The church must flee to God's Word and set itself upon gospel order, which has been overlooked and forgotten.' "—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pages 97, 100.

It took another six years until a church name was accepted in 1860 in Michigan. In 1861 the Michigan Conference was established (set up; started). In 1863 the General Conference was established.

8. apostles—the disciples (followers) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven.

9. gift of prophecy—the ability to receive special messages from God and/or foretell future events.

10. church organization—a system of leaders, rules, and policies (guidelines) that governs the decisions (choices) and actions of a church.

11. heresies—false teachings.

12. gospel order—a plan for guiding the church based on the way Jesus and His followers led the church.

People sometimes talk about not wanting to be part of an organized church.¹³ What are the advantages of being part of an organized church? How can you better serve the organized church? How can you help improve it?

TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 10

REPROVING (CORRECTING) SIN (Malachi 3:8–10)

According to 1 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 1:10–14; Amos 5:12; Malachi 3:8–10; and Matthew 3:7–10, what were some of the evils the prophets spoke against? What problems were going on back then that are still going on today?

Prophets were commanded by God to correct unfairness, to root out the worship of false gods, to warn against evil doing, and to speak against church worship that was too formal. At times it seemed to the prophets that they were the only ones standing against evil (1 Kings 19:14). But their protests were God's protests. They were given no matter what the results were.

How did Ellen G. White deal with the warnings God gave her to give to individuals (persons)?

Like the prophets of old, Ellen G. White had to warn others about sins



Prophets of Israel were commanded by God to correct His people and point out wrongdoing.

known only to them and God. It was a work she did not enjoy. “The lives of families and certain persons were shown to me in vision.¹⁴ It was often the case that what I was shown about them was secret and private. I was to scold them for these secret sins. I have worked with some people for months about wrongs that no one else knew anything about. These persons seem sad to others. They say they doubt God has accepted them. Then they put blame upon me. They act as though I were to blame for their sadness and doubt. . . . But God has given me the unpleasant work of correcting people for private sins. Let others judge as they may. I will never break the trust placed in me by those who are in the wrong or who are sorry for their sins. I will never make known to others what should be made known only to the guilty.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*¹⁵ for the Church, volume 1, pages 584, 585.

13. organized church—a worldwide group of believers governed by a system of leaders, rules, and policies (guidelines).

14. vision—a special message from God that is seen in the mind or in a dream or in a trance to help a person know God's will (plan).

15. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.



Ellen G. White often had to warn others about sins known only to them.

Imagine the Lord had given Ellen G. White a message to give you. What do you think that message would say? Why? Most important, how would you answer?

WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 11

COMMUNICATING (MAKING KNOWN) GOD'S WILL (PLAN) (Numbers 9:1–5)



Often, God told prophets to write out the messages He gave them.

According to Numbers 9:1–5; Jeremiah 37:16, 17; Ezekiel 4:1–6; and Colossians 4:16, what were some of

the ways the prophets gave God's messages to His people?

Prophets were commanded by God to give the people God's messages. Often, prophets were told to write out the messages received. Then not only the people living at that time but also all the people in the future would hear what God had to say.

Ellen Gould Harmon (Ellen G. White's name before she was married) received her second vision in December of 1844. God told her that she must go and tell others what had been shown to her. For several days, Ellen prayed that God would excuse her from this duty. But the words of the angel sounded again and again in her ears, " 'Make known to others what I have made known to you.' "—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, page 69.

Early in her ministry,¹⁶ Ellen G. White also was told to write out the things shown to her. Messages to persons often were communicated (made known) to their receivers through letters (often called *testimonies*). Thousands of such letters were mailed from her home over the years. Of these Mrs. White wrote, "In these letters which I write, I am giving to you that which the Lord has given to me."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, page 67. When Ellen G. White died, she left behind about one hundred thousand (100,000) pages of printed and unprinted material.

What do the writings of Ellen G.

16. ministry—work done for God.

**White mean to you as a person?
Discuss your answer in class.**

THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 12

FORETELLING THE FUTURE (Isaiah 44:28)

According to Isaiah 44:28; Jeremiah 25:11; and Daniel 9:24–27, what are some of the Bible prophecies¹⁷ that have been fulfilled?

About 150 years before the time of Cyrus,¹⁸ Isaiah foretold that a king named Cyrus would bring back the Jews from Babylon and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. The prophecy was fulfilled, according to Ezra 1:1–4.

Jeremiah prophesied (foretold) the length of time the Jews would be prisoners in Babylon (70 years). Daniel prophesied the time of the first coming of the Messiah (God’s chosen One) almost 600 years before Jesus was born. Both prophecies give proof that the Bible is inspired.¹⁹

And with Ellen G. White, too, we can find many of her prophecies fulfilled. For example, on January 12, 1861, three months before the American Civil War started, Mrs. White received a vision in the Parkville, Michigan, church. There

she was shown battlefields covered with dead and dying soldiers. Ellen G. White told her listeners, “There are men in this house who will lose sons in that war.”—*Pacific Union Recorder*, March 7, 1912 (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years*, volume 1, page 463). No less than five families in the room that day lost sons in the Civil War.

In 1885, Ellen G. White prophesied, “Protestantism [the Protestant church] shall stretch her hand across the gulf²⁰ to grasp the hand of the Roman power. She shall reach over the abyss [deep pit] to clasp hands with spiritualism.²¹ . . . When these two things happen, we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, page 451.

At the time she wrote those words, Protestants and Catholics were “at war” with each other. In 1885, the ecumenical movement²² was still a long way in the future. But times have changed greatly. Just one example: On March 29, 1994, 39 leaders from Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church signed an agreement called “Evangelicals²³ and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission²⁴ in the Third Millennium.”²⁵ This agreement is

17. prophecies—messages from God that tell what will happen in the future.

18. Cyrus—a famous king of Persia who lived during the last part of Daniel’s life.

19. inspired—given by God.

20. gulf—the deep differences that separate or divide one group from another.

21. spiritualism—the false belief that dead people can come back as spirits.

22. ecumenical movement—an effort to combine (join) all churches under the control of one church.

23. Evangelicals—Christians who believe in (1) being saved by faith in Jesus; (2) the power of Jesus’ blood to cleanse the sinner from sin; (3) having a personal one-on-one relationship with Jesus; (4) the power of Scripture to guide our lives; and (5) the importance of preaching in the church service.

24. mission—the special duty (work) for Jesus that a church sends a person or a group out to do.

25. millennium—a span of time that lasts 1,000 years.

a shocking fulfillment of Mrs. White's prophecy about how the Protestant church would grasp the hand of the Roman power.

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 13

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Arthur L. White, "The Messenger of the Lord at Work," pages 73–89, in *The Early Years: 1827–1862*; Ellen G. White, "God's Law Immutable [Cannot Be Changed]," pages 433–450, in *The Great Controversy [War]*.

"The leading churches of the United States are joining together upon common points of doctrine [belief]. They shall influence²⁶ the state to enforce their laws and support their church organizations. Then Protestant America will have formed an image [copy] of the Roman power and laws. And punishment of those who disagree will surely follow."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 445.

Just as Ellen G. White wrote more than 150 years ago, the Protestants are the ones who are making this unity with Rome possible. There is still

much more to come. But these events are leading to an amazing fulfillment of Ellen G. White's prophecy. These events also give powerful proof of Ellen G. White's gift of prophecy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Do a little research, if you can, about the religious mood in America in the 1800s. Especially read about the relations between Protestants and Catholics. Bring what you learn to class on Sabbath. Discuss the prophecies Ellen G. White made during that time about Protestants and the Catholic Church.
- ❷ Talk about the bitter feelings that some people have toward organized religion. What are their complaints? Are they right about those complaints? If so, what can we do, as an organized church, to change some of those things that cause these bitter feelings?
- ❸ What are the wrong ways in which Ellen G. White's writings can be used? What kind of principles (rules) can we follow to protect ourselves from abuse?

26. influence—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.