

# The Trustworthiness of the Prophetic Gift<sup>1</sup>



## SABBATH—FEBRUARY 21

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 2 Samuel 7:1–7; 1 Kings 22:10–18; Jeremiah 43:2–4; Daniel 8:27.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘You can be sure that the Lord lives. And you can be just as sure that I can tell the king what my God says’ ” (2 Chronicles 18:13, NlrV).

**HAVE YOU EVER READ MODERN ATTACKS AGAINST THE BIBLE?** You will notice one thing: the attacks against the Bible are almost the same attacks against Ellen G. White. And one attack against Ellen G. White is that she is not honest because she quoted from other books.

But Ellen G. White has explained how she used the writings of others, and why. She even encouraged people to read certain books she used in writing her own works. This does not sound as if she were trying to hide her use of other books.

This week we will explore a little more about how inspiration works, both with Bible writers and with Ellen G. White.

**THE WEEK'S LESSON UP CLOSE:** What do we know about the trustworthiness of Bible prophets (special messengers)? If the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White are both inspired (coming from God) by the same Spirit, what is the relationship between them? What is the danger in believing that prophets are faultless? Can prophets give wrong advice?

1. prophetic gift—the ability to receive special messages from God and/or foretell future events.

**SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 22****THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE PROPHET (1 Kings 22:10–18)**

The year was 853 B.C. King Ahab of Israel invites King Jehoshaphat of Judah to go with him into battle against the Arameans. Jehoshaphat agrees. But Jehoshaphat requests that, before they go into battle, they ask for a word from the Lord. Jehoshaphat refuses to accept the word of the 400 prophets of Ahab. So Micaiah, a prophet of the Lord, is called.

**According to 1 Kings 22:10–18, how does Ahab’s officer try to influence<sup>2</sup> Micaiah? And what was the prophet going to do, no matter what would happen?**



**Micaiah warned King Ahab not to go fight, but Ahab did not listen. He was killed in battle.**

Micaiah’s message is not popular with the king. And the king sends Micaiah to prison for it (1 Kings 22:27). Micaiah warns King Ahab about going into battle. But he goes anyway and is killed. In a weak moment, King Jehoshaphat agrees to support King

Ahab. As a result, Jehoshaphat almost dies.

But Micaiah chooses to tell the truth, even though his advice is not popular with those in power. Throughout history, God’s prophets go through hardship because they refuse to change their testimony (message) to please their people.

During Ellen G. White’s lifetime, people questioned her trustworthiness. Some people believe that “prophets ‘should have full knowledge’ from the start of their ministry (work done for God). They believe that prophecies should never change, and their writings should be free of all mistakes. They also believe that the prophets should not copy material from other books. For them, prophets never give personal opinions in their writings.”—Adapted from Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1998), page 468. As we have seen in our study of Bible prophets, these beliefs about prophets come from a verbal-inspiration<sup>3</sup> idea that Seventh-day Adventists do not accept. If we do not accept this idea for the Bible itself, why should we require it of Ellen G. White?

**Have you ever had to give a message that was not popular? What pressures did you face?**

**MONDAY—FEBRUARY 23****THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE MESSAGE (Jeremiah 43:2–4)**

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

3. verbal inspiration—the belief that God chose all the words of the Bible and then gave them to the authors to write down.

A few months after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., Gedaliah was murdered. He had been chosen governor of Judah by King Nebuchadnezzar. The leaders and the people left in the land were afraid of attacks by the Babylonian army. So they turned to Egypt for safety. But they wanted to make sure that God was on their side. So, they asked Jeremiah to ask the Lord about their plan.

**According to Jeremiah 43:2–4, what was Jeremiah’s message? How did the people answer it?**

How interesting that thousands of years later, Ellen G. White (like Jeremiah) often has been blamed for encouraging her secretaries to illegally (against the law) copy most of what she wrote from other books. But, in the introduction to *The Great Controversy (War)*, Ellen G. White said that she had used other books: “In some cases a historian has put together events so as to give a clearer and more complete view of the subject. He has quoted these words from books. In the same way I have quoted material from published works.”—Adapted from page 14.

Does this give people a good reason for accusing Ellen G. White of copying the works of others? In 1981, the General Conference asked a non-Adventist copyright lawyer to study the matter. After spending more than three hundred hours researching, he decided that “Ellen G. White was not a copyist. He also decided that her works did not break copyright laws.”—Adapted from *Adventist Review*, September 17, 1981.

The reasons given were: (1) The books Ellen G. White used were not covered by copyright. (2) If they had been covered by copyright, Ellen G. White’s phrases and sentences did not show that she had broken copyright laws.

**Why is there always some doubt among God’s chosen people against the messages of the prophets? Can you look in your own heart and find part of the answer there? Explain.**

## TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 24

### “THUS SAYS THE LORD” (Jeremiah 1:4)

**According to Jeremiah 1:4; Ezekiel 9:1; and Hosea 1:1, who did the prophets say their messages came from?**

The prophets often said that their messages came from God.

The wording “thus says the Lord” (NKJV) appears more than four hundred times in the Old Testament. This wording shows that in the Bible God is speaking directly to the reader. The prophet’s responsibility was to bring these messages to the people to help them.

Ellen G. White called her writings the lesser light leading men and women to the greater light (the Bible). (Read *Colporteur Ministry*, page 125.) While both the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White are light, their purposes are different: (1) The Bible is God’s message for all time and for all people. The writings of Ellen G. White are God’s message for a special time (the end

time) and for a special people, the remnant church.<sup>4</sup> (2) Her writings are not a new doctrine. Instead, they are meant to help the church in the time of the end. Her writings bring the reader's attention to the Bible. They do not replace the Bible.

**How can we avoid the trap of making Ellen G. White's writings equal to the Bible? Why is that so easy to do and such a big mistake?**



Ellen G. White's writings are the lesser light leading men and women to the greater light, the Bible.

**WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 25**

**GROWTH IN UNDERSTANDING  
(Daniel 8:27)**

**What do Daniel 8:27; Daniel 9:2; Galatians 2:11–16; and 1 Peter 1:10 tell us about the spiritual growth experience of Bible prophets?**

Having the gift of prophecy during

Bible times did not mean full knowledge of spiritual and other matters. Prophets received increased light as history happened. The prophets also had to study the Bible, just as Daniel did (Daniel 9:2). In Daniel 8:27 the prophet said, "The vision bewildered [puzzled] me. I couldn't [could not] understand it" (NIRV). About ten years later the angel Gabriel came and explained to Daniel the full meaning of the vision (Daniel 9:20–23).

The prophets knew only what God made known to them. The messages to one prophet often supported those given to others. So we should study and compare the different details to get a balanced and complete view of the messages from Heaven.



**Prophets did not receive all God's light at one time. God gave them what they needed when it was needed most.**

It was the same with Ellen G. White: "For sixty years I have been talking with heavenly messengers. And I have continued learning how God is always work-

4. remnant church—a small group of faithful believers; Seventh-day Adventists believe that they are members of the remnant church.

ing to bring souls from their errors to His light.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, page 71.

When we read the earlier writings of Ellen G. White along with her later works, we sometimes find that her later writings are different from her earlier writings. This difference makes clear to us her deeper understanding of God’s messages.

**What is the danger in seeing prophets as perfect, faultless, and having full knowledge in all areas of life?**

#### THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 26

#### WHEN PROPHETS GET IT WRONG (2 Samuel 7:1–7)

**What does 2 Samuel 7:1–7 tell us about what was wrong with Nathan’s advice to David? According to 1 Chronicles 22:8, why would God not let David build Him a temple?**

The prophet Nathan was a wise, thoughtful, and God-fearing man. But not everything a prophet says or does is done with God’s leading. When Nathan told David to build God’s temple, Nathan had spoken as a friend of the king and not as a prophet. Making a dwelling (building) for the God of Israel was something that most religious people wanted. But, then God told Nathan that he was wrong in telling David to go ahead and build His temple (2 Samuel 7:4–12). God also told Nathan that he had to go tell David so.

Ellen G. White was not faultless. And she never claimed that she was perfect. She changed her mind on issues and

was always open for more light.

We must remember that prophets are not always on duty. They are not always speaking for God. “There are times when common things must be brought up. Common thoughts must fill the mind. Common letters must be written. And information must be given from one to another of the workers. Such words, such information, are not given under the special leading of the Spirit of God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, page 58.

But as history has shown, if wrong counsel (advice) has been given by a prophet, God will act to correct the mistake.



**The prophet Nathan told David to build God’s house. But not everything a prophet says is done with God’s leading.**

**Some people love to focus on every mistake in the Bible or in the lesser light, which are the writings of Ellen G. White. What is so dangerous and unhealthy about that kind of attitude**

(feeling)? How can you protect yourself from falling into that trap?

### FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 27

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Question of Influence,” pages 62–67, in *Selected Messages*, book 3.

“Ellen G. White made clear claims about her ministry so that there are no doubts about them. She claimed to have seen things that could have come only from God. Either her claims are true or she was a crazy lady and/or a powerful liar.

“Ellen G. White claimed to have seen Jesus bring saved people into the Holy City. She claimed to have seen people living on other planets and angels protecting God’s people. She claimed to have seen, in vision,<sup>5</sup> Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. She saw what Satan had looked like in heaven before he sinned. She saw angels visiting Adam and Eve in Eden. She said that she saw the look on Adam’s face when he learned that Eve had sinned. She saw Jesus, in vision, and what His face was like after the wilderness fast. She saw the resurrection [return to life from the dead] of Jesus from the tomb. She saw an angel free Paul and Silas from prison. She saw Satan lead crowds of

lost people into the final rebellion [war] against God after the second resurrection. She said she saw, in vision, life in the new earth, and on and on.

“What does one do with these claims? Either we accept Ellen G. White as a prophet, or we believe she is a liar or a crazy person or someone who is led by the devil. These are the only choices that make sense.”—Adapted from Clifford Goldstein, *Graffiti in the Holy of Holies* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 2003), pages 172, 173.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Read over the argument above. The point is simple: Ellen G. White, by her claims, does not leave us many sensible choices about her ministry (work). From what we know of her life, her teachings, and the gift of writings that she has left for us, what is really the best and most sensible explanation for her life and ministry? Defend your answer.

❷ As with the Bible, some questions remain about Ellen G. White’s ministry. Do we focus on these few questions and miss the big picture of her work? Or do we focus on the big picture, knowing that some questions will remain?

5. 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).