

Faith in the Gift of the Prophets (Special Messengers)



SABBATH—MARCH 21

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 41:9; Isaiah 53:4–6; Matthew 23:28–31; John 5:39; Acts 10:9–16, 44–48; Acts 17:11.

MEMORY VERSE: “Jehoshaphat stood up. He said, ‘Judah, listen to me! People of Jerusalem, listen to me! Have faith in the Lord your God. He’ll [He will] take good care of you. Have faith in his prophets. Then you will have success’ ” (2 Chronicles 20:20, Nlrv).

SOME PEOPLE WERE INTERESTED IN JOINING the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They had come to accept the teachings of the church through their study of the Bible. But they had questions about Ellen G. White. After all, with so many false prophets and false teachers out there, they wanted to be careful. The preacher understood their concerns. He said to them, “This is something you have to come to on your own, with the Holy Spirit’s leading. Take time to read her writings. Some things will make sense to you right away. Other things you might have questions about. But just read the books yourself and then come to your own decision (choice) about them. In the end, her writings are really the best and greatest testimony¹ about where they came from.”

THIS WEEK'S LESSON UP CLOSE: Why must the Bible have the final say on doctrine? How important is Bible study in our lives today? What happens when people refuse to accept the word of prophecy?² What part should miracles³ have in strengthening our faith? Why do people rebel against the gift of prophecy?⁴

1. testimony—a statement; witness.
2. prophecy—a special message from God, often an explanation of what will happen in the future.
3. miracles—extraordinary (amazing; great) events believed to be a sign of the power of God. Examples of miracles are Peter walking on water and Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.
4. gift of prophecy—the ability to receive special messages from God and/or foretell future events.

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SUNDAY—MARCH 22

AUTHORITY⁵ OF THE BIBLE (Acts 10:44–48)

According to Luke 24:13–17 and Acts 10:9–16; 44–48; how is the experience of the disciples (followers of Jesus) after the Crucifixion⁶ the same as the experience of the early Advent believers after the Great Disappointment⁷ in 1844?

The disciples experienced their great disappointment at the Crucifixion. They had hoped Jesus would free Israel from Roman control (power). They watched Him ride a donkey into Jerusalem in fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy. They were sure that He would set Himself up as their King, drive out the Romans, and set up God's kingdom on earth.



The disciples experienced the greatest disappointment of their hopes when Jesus died.

5. authority—influence or power.

6. Crucifixion—the death of Jesus on the cross.

7. Great Disappointment—back in the 1830s and early 1840s, William Miller preached that Jesus would come in 1844. He started a movement of believers who waited for Jesus' return. But Jesus did not come back in 1844. This led to the Great Disappointment. After this, a group was started which led to the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

8. sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times.

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

10. pioneers—the first Adventist believers.

11. Bereans—people who lived in a Greek city-state named Berea. They were well-known for being careful students of the Bible.

Even after Jesus was with them after He rose from the dead, His disciples still were carrying false ideas about His coming. How does Acts 1:6 explain what this meant?

The early Advent believers also experienced a great disappointment. William Miller mistakenly believed that the sanctuary⁸ in Daniel 8:14 was the earth. Bible study and God's actions helped the disciples to change their mistaken views. In the same way, the early Advent believers better understood the sanctuary truth through their study of the Bible, with God's help through Ellen G. White's work.

Ellen G. White's gift of prophecy⁹ was helpful. But our pioneers¹⁰ were determined to support doctrines (church beliefs) with the Bible, not with the gift of prophecy.

Today, too, Seventh-day Adventist beliefs must be based on the Word of God alone. When we are sure that our doctrines are based on the strong foundation of the Bible, we can truly put our trust in the gift of prophecy.

MONDAY—MARCH 23

INTO THE WORD (Acts 17:11)

Why did the Bereans¹¹ study the Bible every day to learn if what Paul

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said was true? Why did they not trust his words?

Paul preached about Christ from the Bible. Paul showed that Jesus was the promised Messiah. For this reason the Bereans who heard him with an open mind wanted to study the Bible for themselves to learn if these things were true.

What do Proverbs 2:1–6; Isaiah 34:16; Matthew 4:4; and Revelation 1:3 tell us about the importance of the study of the Bible?



God gave His Word to us as an example of Himself.

In the introduction to *The Great Controversy*, Ellen G. White wrote, “In His word, God has given to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Bible has to be accepted as an authoritative (having power), faultless showing of God’s will. It is the example of character, the teller of doctrines, and the test of experience.”—Page 9, adapted.

Why did the prophets throughout history advise God’s people to read and study God’s Word? The reason is simple: God “gave His word to men as an

example of Himself. Every new truth understood is a fresh example of who its Author [God] is. The study of the Scriptures [Bible] is God’s way of bringing men into closer connection with their Creator. It also gives them a clearer knowledge of His will. The Bible is the tool of communication between God and man.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, page 69.

Ellen G. White’s writings are never to be used in place of the Bible. She spent her life trying to get church members to read the Bible and make it the rule of faith for their lives.

What are ways that you can get more out of your own Bible study? How can you make your time in the Bible more profitable (rewarding) than it is now?

TUESDAY—MARCH 24

**POINTING TO JESUS
(Psalm 16:9, 10)**

What do Psalm 16:9, 10; Psalm 41:9; Isaiah 53:4–6; and Micah 5:2 tell us about Jesus?

The Bible authors from Moses to the apostle¹² John directed their readers to the One (Jesus) who would come first to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21) and a second time to deliver (save) them from sin (Revelation 21:4).

Ellen G. White followed in the footsteps

¹² apostle—a disciple (follower) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel (good news about Jesus) after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven.

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of the Bible prophets. She did so by always pointing people to their Savior Jesus Christ. “You might have a bad past. You might feel very discouraged about your present situation. But if you will come to Jesus just as you are—weak, helpless, and depressed, our merciful Saviour will meet you a great way off. He will throw about you His arms of love and His robe of righteousness [holiness].”—Adapted from *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 9. And she warned ministers to make Christ the center of everything.



If you come to Jesus just as you are, He will throw His arms of love around you.

Ask yourself: How well do I know Jesus? What does your answer tell you about yourself and your spiri-

tual life? What changes might you need to make?

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 25

THE BLOOD OF THE PROPHETS (Matthew 23:28–31)

What do Jesus’ words in Matthew 23:28–31 have to say about how certain people have felt about the prophets? What lesson can we learn from these words ourselves?

Among us, as in Israel of old, there are people who in different ways are working to destroy confidence (faith) in the prophetic¹³ ministry (work) of Ellen G. White. It has been that way from the beginning. And we can be sure it will continue right to the end too. Just about every charge against her and her works is almost the same as the charges against the prophets of old and against the Word of God itself.

Reasons for these attitudes (thoughts and feelings) differ (read Friday’s study). Some people have criticized (attacked) her writings unfairly. Others have gone too far in trying to answer these unfair attacks. Others have a false understanding of how inspiration¹⁴ works. Because they do not understand her writings, they have turned against them. Some speak from very little knowledge. Others, perhaps, from hate. Fortunately, we are not to judge reasons or hearts. We simply have to be able, as Peter wrote, “to give an answer to anyone

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

14. inspiration—the process by which the Holy Spirit influenced (caused) the prophets (special messengers) to have certain thoughts or feelings.

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who asks you about the hope you have. Be ready to give the reason for it. But do it gently and with respect” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV). In the end, each one of us will have to make a choice for ourselves about the reasons we believe.

What are your own attitudes about the writings of Ellen G. White? Why do you have them? Think through your reasons for those attitudes. Are you open to change, if need be?

THURSDAY—MARCH 26

THE GIFT AND MIRACLES (Matthew 4:24)

Read Luke 24:13–27 about the story of Jesus and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. What did Jesus point them to in order to make them believe that He was really the Messiah? Why is that answer so important to us, in light of the gift of prophecy?



Jesus feeds the 5,000 (Matthew 14:14–21). His miracles gave a powerful witness to His power as God.

Jesus did all His miracles while He was on earth. But He pointed the two

disciples to the Word of God. From the Bible alone He taught them the truth about His death and return to life from the dead.

This point should not be overlooked. Over the years, there have been many stories of the miraculous ways in which the Lord worked through the ministry (work) of Ellen G. White. Some of these stories can be proven more easily than others. But our belief in the gift of prophecy should not depend on stories of miracles. Miracles might play an important part. But the greatest test must always be the Word of God and how the gift follows the Bible. Miracles are fine. But they are not the final test. They mean nothing if the teachings do not follow the Bible.

As with the inspiration of the Bible, questions remain about the gift of prophecy in the life of Ellen G. White. But, the gift speaks for itself and gives the best testimony about itself. Still, there are unanswered questions that we who “see only a dim likeness of things” (1 Corinthians 13:12, NIV) might still have.

FRIDAY—MARCH 27

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Attitudes Toward the Testimonies,” pages 40–48, in *Selected Messages*, book 1.

Disagreement or an uncaring attitude about the writings of Ellen G. White usually comes from (1) a failure to read enough of her writings to recognize and understand her well-balanced instructions; (2) a failure to understand the

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proper relationship of her writings to the Bible; (3) a failure to recognize the true nature of God's leading; (4) a failure to recognize the principle of time and place in connection with the counsel (advice) she has given; (5) a failure to admit that her counsels are still useful today; (6) a failure to recognize that while enough proof is given to make the honest in heart believe, the Lord does not remove the opportunities (chances) for doubt; and (7) an unwillingness to make a personal sacrifice of some favorite habit or practice that does not follow the counsels given in the writings of Ellen G. White.

Most arguments against the Spirit of Prophecy would disappear: (1) if people would stop using some pet sentence or paragraph as a club to hit somebody else; (2) if everyone would use the counsels for themselves instead of trying to use them for someone else; (3) if we would not quote her without knowing where the quote is found; (4) if we would not discuss something she wrote without having studied everything she wrote on a certain topic (knowledge in part can be more dangerous than no knowledge at all); and (5) if we would recognize that people's failure to follow the counsels that Ellen G. White has given has no connection with how accurate (perfect) her visions

and instructions are.—Adapted from Denton E. Rebok, *Believe His Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1956), pages 309–312.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① As a class, talk about the blessings the Adventist Church has received from the ministry of Ellen G. White. What are some of the favorite quotations? How has Ellen G. White's writing personally influenced¹⁵ each member's spiritual growth? At the same time, what struggles have people sometimes had with her writings? What was the cause of those problems? How can we help people work through them?
- ② Many new people coming to the Seventh-day Adventist Church have questions about Ellen G. White. What are some methods we could use in helping them reach a balanced understanding of the gift of prophecy?
- ③ What have you learned this quarter that helps you better understand the work of the Spirit of Prophecy? What positions have you had to change? What new insights (ideas) have you gained? What questions still remain?

15. influenced—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.