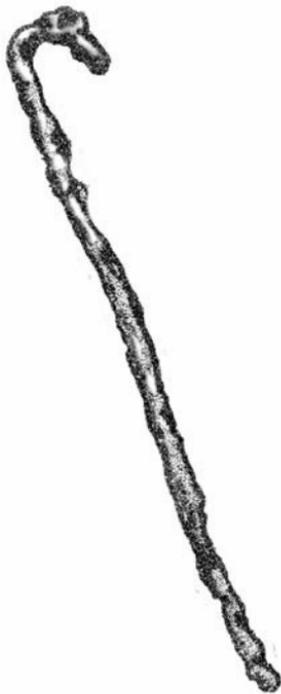


# The Prophetic Gift



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“And he said, ‘Hear my words: When there are prophets among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in visions; I speak to them in dreams’ ” (Num. 12:6, NRSV).

# Being Led by God

## INTRODUCTION

Heb. 11:24–26

The world's concept of the prophetic gift differs from that of the Seventh-day Adventist concept. Today, many so-called prophets attempt to predict the future. But one might have 13 true predictions out of 600, while another might have 10 true predictions out of 1,000. Many will agree that the ability to predict accurately is a God-given gift.

If God is omnipotent, then do you really think that He has a track record of 10 in a 1,000? After all, if a person can really tell you what is to come, then it must be from a Higher Source.

True prophets of God are human, so they are not perfect. However, they will walk closely with God and try to imitate His love for all. Second, God will always give true and accurate readings of things to come. He would never leave us any room for doubt as long as we believe.

**God's prophets . . . do not live as robots, trying to imitate what others did before them.**

Hebrews 11:24–26 speaks of Moses and how his faith led him to suffer with the people of Israel. He decided to suffer persecution rather than to live with the Pharaoh of Egypt. Moses was not perfect, so yes, he did sin. But he also went to

God for forgiveness and cleansing. God showed this prophet the future of Israel, Egypt, and even of himself. Moses' predictions were never wrong and never self-ish.

God's prophets do not speak for or from themselves. Rather, they speak and live for God. They do not live as robots, trying to imitate what others did before them. With the help of the Holy Spirit, they live holy lives, because they have learned to listen to God. They have learned to be compassionate, to utilize morality, and to seek honor from God, not other humans. If you were to compare the prophets and prophetesses of the Bible, you would see many contrasts, but only one comparison. Each was his or her own person, but all of them stood out in Jesus. I pray that we all will learn to truly follow Him and that all of God's people will share Him with the world so that together we can reap a plentiful harvest.

# Finding Waldo: True Prophets Amid Confusion

Sunday  
January 4

## EVIDENCE

Joel 2:28

From literature, movies, video games, and even news headlines, prophets and prophecies are continually thrust upon our minds. The main objective in the popular video game *Halo 3* is to defend humanity from the alien armies of a deluded prophet. One of the most famous human prophets is Nostradamus, whose vague prophetic quatrains are often distorted to fit notable events in attempts to prove his legitimacy. With this surge of fakes, we may become overwhelmed. Yet we are to take comfort in remembering that Jesus foretold the rise of false prophets when speaking to His disciples about the signs of the end times. Read Matthew 24:24, 25.

The Logos verses in Monday's lesson identify people whom we might not classify as prophets the way we think of Daniel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah as prophets. Yet these people possessed the prophetic gift and played key roles in the drama that is salvation. Genesis 20:7 speaks of Abraham. Exodus 15:20 identifies Miriam; and Deuteronomy 18:15 foretells the first coming of Jesus, Matthew 11:9–11 declares John the Baptist to be the greatest of the prophets, while John 6:14 recounts the testimony of people regarding Jesus.

**With this surge of fakes, we may become overwhelmed.**

Finally, Hebrews 11:24–26 discusses the faithful Moses. In examining these verses, we discover a few characteristics of the prophetic gift and ways in which prophets/prophetesses interact with God and His people. They lead people in praising God, and they reveal God's character. They also prepare people to receive God; and above all, they selflessly minister to people while treasuring the experience of sharing in the afflictions of Christ. Are these the characteristics of the prophets in the media, literature, and popular video games? Certainly not!

With all the confusion of false prophets, many denominations have concluded that the prophetic gift ended with the disciples. This is contrary to Joel 2:28, where God tells us that as we approach the close of earth's history, "Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (NIV). Like finding Waldo among the look-alikes, we must diligently watch so that we may discern God's true messengers amid the flood of impostors.

## REACT

When Gabriel visited the prophet Daniel in Daniel 10:11, he addressed Daniel as "a man greatly beloved." What does it take to walk so closely with God that we may be referred to as "greatly beloved" by Him?

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# Prophets of the Word

## LOGOS

Gen. 20:7; Exod. 15:20; Deut. 18:15; Matt. 11:11; John 6:14; Heb. 11:24–26

### The Prophetic Office Among Males (Gen. 20:7)

Genesis 20:7 is the first time in the Bible we see the word *prophet*. In James 2:23, Abraham is called the “friend of God” (James 2:23, NKJV), a claim linked to his implicit obedience and willingness to sacrifice his long-awaited miracle child. However, when God calls Abraham a prophet in Genesis 20, it comes at a time when he doubts God’s protecting care and thereby lies about his wife being his sister. Even in the midst of such blatant sin, God demonstrates His graciousness in calling Abraham a prophet. Genesis 20:7 helps us understand that even when people of God make grave mistakes, He still considers them His workers, His prophets.

### The Prophetic Office Among Females (Exod. 15:20)

Exodus 15:20 is the first time in Scripture that we read the word *prophetess*. The crossing of the Red Sea was an astonishing display of God’s power on behalf of His chosen people. Miriam subsequently led the Israelites to ascribe praise to God. In Exodus 15:20, God shows His willingness to bestow the gift of prophecy on females. The bestowal of the prophetic gift to

Jesus defines a true  
prophet’s work.

Miriam is another demonstration that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; 1 Pet. 1:17).

### The Supreme Prophet (Deut. 18:15)

Deuteronomy 18:15 is a reference to the Prophet of prophets, namely Jesus Christ. Jesus is the flawless Prophet, unlike Abraham, whose sin brought on God’s displeasure; Miriam, who suffered leprosy for her sin (Num. 12:1–10); John the Baptist, who had doubts about the Messiah (Luke 7:18–23); and Moses, whose sin prevented him from entering the Promised Land (Num. 20:1–13). Jesus defines a true prophet’s work. We do ourselves mischief, and jeopardize our salvation, if we ignore what Jesus says. No prophet spoke more clearly and earnestly for God, about God, and to God, than did Jesus.

### The Greatest Earthly Prophet (Matt. 11:11)

What is it that makes John the Baptist greater than others before him? What John the Baptist had was the “enviable” honor of being the immediate forerunner

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of the Messiah. Other prophets talked about that Prophet, but John talked to that Prophet. Other prophets had visions of the Messiah, but John saw the Messiah. Other prophets heard the voice of that Prophet in visions and dreams, but John heard the voice of Jesus speak to him face-to-face, imploring him to baptize that Prophet (Matt. 3:15). No other prophet had the privilege of having the Son of God in his arms as he baptized Him. These things made John greater than others on earth, but Jesus said that if you make it to His Kingdom, you will be greater than this John. Let us strive to enter into God's kingdom (Luke 13:24).

### **From Prophet to King? (John 6:14)**

Jesus had just completed a miracle by feeding more than 5,000 people from one small lunch possessed by a lad. When He was in the wilderness—weak, vulnerable, and starving—He didn't create even one loaf to satisfy His personal hunger. Now, however, in another "desert place" (Matt. 14:15), Jesus takes five barley loaves and two fish, and creates food for thousands. Little wonder that the people thought that the long-awaited Prophet predicted in Deuteronomy 18:15 had arrived, and they wanted to make Him their King. It should be clear to us that if Jesus can provide for so many people at once, He can provide for us.

### **Wise Choices by the Prophet Moses (Heb. 11:24–26)**

Moses' decisions paid off greatly for him, because at this moment He is in heaven with God. He could have had fame in Egypt and the surrounding nations, but Moses preferred the new name to be given by the King of heaven (Rev. 2:17; 3:12). He rejected the indulgence of sinful pleasure, choosing to suffer affliction with God's people in exchange for the purest pleasure found at God's right hand (Ps. 16:11). Moses might have reasoned like Paul that "our light and momentary troubles" are nothing compared to the eternal glory we will receive (2 Cor. 4:17, NIV), and that our suffering for Christ now cannot be favorably or remotely compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18). Moses bypassed the riches of Egypt, such as those revealed by Tutankhamen's tomb, in favor of being a joint heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

### **REACT**

1. Today, some people believe that women should hold no major offices in the church. Yet God blessed women in the Bible to be prophetesses. How can this inform our decisions regarding the role of women in the church?
2. List three things in your life and three things in your church that, like Moses, we would do well to give up.
3. Why do you think God kept Abraham in his position even though he made serious mistakes? What does that teach us about responding to church members who commit "serious" sins today?

Tuesday  
January 6

## Prophetic Gift? Role or No Role

### TESTIMONY

2 Tim. 3:16, 17

The prophetic gift was not given to replace or supersede the Bible. Ellen White speaks to the fact that messages from the prophets, including herself, are given to comfort, guide, instruct, and correct. She makes it clear that the Bible is the standard by which we are to test the teaching and word of anyone who professes to have the gift of prophecy.

In His Word, God committed to men and women the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures 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. Read 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

“Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to men through His word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the Word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings.

**“The Spirit was not given . . .  
to supersede the Bible.”**

And since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the Word.

“The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. Says the apostle John, ‘Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.’ (1 John 4:1).”<sup>1</sup>

Even though she was given the gift of the prophecy, Ellen G. White always directed her audience to the Bible. “If the *Testimonies* speak not according to the word of God, reject them. Christ and Belial cannot be united. . . . Do not, by your lack of spiritual discernment, make of this agency of God a rock of offense whereby many shall be caused to stumble and fall, ‘and be snared, and be taken.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

The gift of prophecy has an important role, but it will not and cannot replace God’s Word.

### REACT

1. Some people believe that Adventists place greater importance on Ellen White’s writings than on the Bible. What scripture can you give to refute this argument?
2. Why did God use prophets to give messages to the people?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

# Test the Prophetic Gift

## HOW-TO

Deut. 18:21, 22; Isa. 8:20; Matt. 7:16, 18–20; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 John 4:2, 3

How can we tell the difference between true prophets and false ones? Following are some biblical guidelines that can help us:

1. *Does the prophet's message agree with the Bible?* Isaiah 8:20 implies that the messages of any prophet ought to be in harmony with God's law and testimony. A later prophet must not contradict earlier prophets. The Holy Spirit never contradicts His previously given testimony, for God "does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17, NIV).

2. *Do the prophet's predictions come true?* Read Deuteronomy 18:21, 22. Also see Jeremiah 28:9. Though predictions may comprise a comparatively small part of the prophetic message, their accuracy must be demonstrated.

3. *Does the prophet recognize Christ's incarnation?* See 1 John 4:2, 3. The test here demands more than a simple acknowledgment that Jesus Christ lived on earth. True prophets must confess the biblical teaching of Christ's incarnation.

4. *Does the prophet bear good or bad "fruit"?* Prophecy comes through "men and women moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21, NRSV). We can discern false prophets by their fruit. Read Matthew 7:18–20. This counsel is crucial in evaluating a prophet's claim. It speaks first of the prophet's life. It does not mean that the prophet must be absolutely perfect. Scripture says that Elijah was a man of "like passions as we are" (James 5:17). But the prophet's life should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, not by works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19–23).

This principle also refers to the influence of the prophet on others. What results accrue in the lives of those who accept the messages? Do the prophet's messages equip God's people for mission and unify them in their faith (Eph. 4:11–16)?

Any person claiming to have the prophetic gift should be subjected to these biblical tests.

**The prophet's life should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit.**

Thursday  
January 8

# The Gift of Prophecy

## OPINION

Deut. 18:15; Matt. 11:11; Heb. 11:24–26

The prophetic gift is often understood as belonging to those to whom God has revealed the future or what He wants His people to know. It is a gift that can come only from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, its restrictions and limits are imposed by God. This gift can be shown in many ways. Singing and dancing can be a way to show God's prophetic gift. This is how Miriam expressed it in Exodus 15:20.

According to 1 Corinthians 14:3 and Deuteronomy 18:15, the reason for giving the prophetic gift is to correct and comfort people, while uplifting God. John the Baptist was a prophet. His purpose was to prepare people for the coming Savior. He not only spoke about Jesus before his anointing, he spoke about Him afterward as well. Jesus Himself gave John the highest honor that God can give any person when He said that there was none greater than John (Matt. 11:11). John 6:14 speaks of how certain people accepted Jesus because they accepted the miracles He performed. Moses himself prophesied just by choosing to suffer with the peo-

**The more we see God, the  
more we want to please  
Him.**

ple of God rather than to be called the son of Pharaoh (Heb. 11:24–26).

There is no limit to this beautiful gift or how it is shared. Romans 12:6 says, "Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." True faith comes from unconditional trust and

striving fully for complete obedience through the help of the Holy Spirit.

The more we see God, the more we want to please Him. As we change, the Spirit strives with us more and more. He only is the Giver of gifts. We must trust God and rely on the Spirit. First Corinthians 13:2 says, "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (NKJV). This love is love for our fellow human beings. It also refers to what Jesus spoke of in Luke 6:27, when He said love your enemy. Loving God and others is the sum of the Ten Commandments (Matt. 22:34–40). The prophetic gift, which is used to help others see God, can be obtained only by us first knowing the God of love (1 John 4:7–13).

## REACT

1. How can our actions be a way of showing God to the world?
2. Is there anything that keeps you from showing God's work within you?

# A Prophetic Purpose

## EXPLORATION

Num. 12:6; Joel 2:28

## CONCLUDE

God's purpose for humanity always has been communicated by His prophets. The men and women chosen to lead His people were innately human in their mistakes. That is an unavoidable fact from which we all must learn. However, by sending His Son, Jesus, to intercede for humanity, God provided a flawless, sinless Prophet—the ultimate Spiritual Leader who passed the test of faith and the test of time. God's leading of His people continues today in the cluttered, postmodern world of fortune-tellers and predictors of the future. That is why the Bible devised a spiritual test that all true prophets must pass, so that all of God's Scripture-following children may discern the truth in this unraveling world.

## CONSIDER

- Watching the Weather Channel or collecting the weather page from the newspaper for a week and logging in the predictions, then cross-referencing these predictions with the actual weather. What do the results tell us about modern-day predictions, even when they're based on computer models?
- Listing all of the Bible's prophets and creating a checklist to see if they meet the four important requirements of being a true prophet.
- Predicting who will win the next great sports event in your country based on current statistics and recent history. List your choice, and see if you were correct.
- Writing a brief biography about Ellen G. White that includes all of her prophetic gifts.
- Watching a science fiction film about the future and comparing today's reality with the way the film's producers viewed the future.
- Journaling all of your dreams and interpreting them with God's purpose for you in mind.
- Talking to a much older person about the past and the way life was many years before you were born.

## CONNECT

Ellen G. White, *Beginning of the End*.  
Clifford Goldstein, *1844 Made Simple*.

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