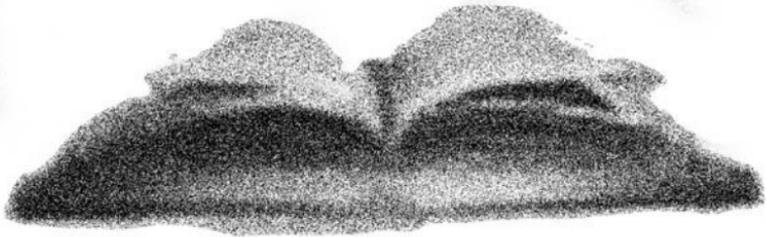


The Message of the Prophets



“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:16, NKJV).

One Who Speaks Forth God's Message

INTRODUCTION

Deut. 18:18

“Deuteronomy 18 presents a prophecy that was completely fulfilled only in the ministry of Jesus. It serves as a basic passage to help in understanding the work of the prophet. The heart of the matter is expressed in these words: ‘I . . . will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.’ Deuteronomy 18:18. The ‘prophet’ referred to in the verse is a *nabi*—a man who speaks forth God’s message.”¹

“The Greek word translated ‘prophet’ is *prophetes*, which means ‘one who speaks forth.’ . . . *Prophetes* is used as the equivalent of *nabi*; both words infer a recognition of the prophet as a speaker for God.”²

God revealed His will to His prophets through visions or dreams or by speaking directly to them. They were instructed to deliver the message orally, in writing, or through enactment.

Are we listening to and obeying the messages given to us through His prophets?

There were prophets who wrote portions of Holy Scriptures, prophets who wrote none of Scripture, and prophets who only gave oral testimony. Hosea received an oral message from God to marry an adulterous

woman in order to send a message and warning to Israel. Moses was given oral instruction to go down to Egypt and give Pharaoh a message. Daniel and John faithfully delivered God’s messages. God also used the prophetesses Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah to communicate His will to His people.

Ellen G. White, also a prophetess, received messages from God for His end-time church. She was instructed to speak and to write what God revealed to her through visions. From Genesis to Revelation, God has used the prophets to speak to the people for Him and to make known His will. The prophet to God’s remnant church speaks the same messages to us today.

Since the prophets are God’s spokespersons, we must ask, Are we listening to and obeying the messages given to us through His prophets?

1. T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You*, pp. 52, 53.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

The Test of a True Prophet

EVIDENCE

1 John 4:1, 2

Throughout history prophets have been used to deliver a specific message to God's people. Usually when His people strayed from His commands, He sent a message of warning through one of His messengers.

There were many false prophets with messages of deception. First John 4:2 states that those prophets who acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and has come from heaven, are of God.

In 1 Kings 22, we find Micaiah, God's messenger, at odds with four hundred other prophets who were not of God. True prophets will deliver their message even though they may be vastly outnumbered and carry an unpopular message. Some believe that there has been no need for a prophet since the last of the Bible was written. However, the Bible predicts the need for and the coming of the Spirit of prophecy in the end time.

We have a specific message: He's coming back to claim His own. We must be ready when He comes! But the odds are against us: the Advent message is not necessarily a popular one, but we deliver it anyway.

But the odds are against us.

We must only deliver what God has told us. Our message is not charismatic or cult based. It does not lead in some new direction or to a new philosophy. It does not lead us away from the Scripture but directly back to the Scripture!

The prophet, Ellen G. White, has been under fire from forces both outside and inside the church. To listen to someone else from either the pro or the con side without doing your own testing leaves you vulnerable to the forces of evil.

Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth" (NRSV). We are urged to study! How can we test Ellen White if we haven't studied the Word?

Remember, God's prophets can only deliver what He has told them. He does not contradict Himself.

REACT

1. Why is so much of Ellen White's material under attack from inside the church?
2. How would you characterize your impression of the Spirit of prophecy as it relates to our church?

Monday
March 2

“A New Affection”

LOGOS

Exod. 20:1–17; Leviticus 16; Matt. 24:24–36; Rom. 3:21; Heb. 8:1, 2; 9:23

Ancient Imperial Walls Versus God’s Plan (Exod. 20:1–17; Leviticus 16)

Centuries ago, the Chinese constructed a massive wall to keep the barbarians from overrunning the Middle Kingdom. Centuries ago Emperor Hadrian decreed a wall across most of the width of England to keep back the savage Picts and Scots. Today, both walls are crumbling tourist curiosities, and the peoples have long since merged into other entities.

Centuries ago, a Christian church erected an array of edicts and traditions to protect its growing secular power. In so doing, it created the doctrinal equivalent of those ancient imperial walls. Old and New Testaments seemed irreconcilable. It took a Martin Luther to rediscover the fact that “the just shall live by faith.”

He is moved by compassion
by our plight.

But biblical tourism, like its secular equivalent, tends to rebuild the walls for the curious uninformed. Even Adventists are not immune to the idea that the “ancient regime” of the Old Testament was swept

away by “grace.” This puts us into the pagan model of sacrifice for its own end, and ignores the bigger picture of Heaven’s plan to reclaim God’s entire creation.

The Bigger Picture (Hebrews 12)

On the mount of blessing, Jesus outlined the moral landscape of God’s kingdom. As with other parallels between the Old and New Testaments, this one gave fuller meaning to the first. It did not replace it. Read Matthew 5:17.

The law was words on stone. It was God instructing a simple people how to relate to Him. The law was played out in ritualized form for an often uncomprehending people. It was the backdrop for prophetic utterance through the centuries covered by the Old Testament. It cannot be construed as evidence of a false way to God. It is God progressively extending Himself as human capacity and need required.

Paul is correct in Hebrews when he speaks of the necessity of faith. Read Hebrews 11:6. But this is not the faith of presumption or something of the “I’m all right, you’re all right,” school of theology. This faith makes effective what God has always wanted to do for us—implant within us the mindset of love, the divine character.

Paul makes very clear what is going on when he brings up Sinai in Hebrews 12. He reminds us of the fear that came upon those people gathered there around the mount as Moses received the tables of the law from God's own hand. "But you," he says to his New Testament readers, "have come to Mount Zion and . . . to Jesus" (verses 22–24, NKJV). Of course, the "new" covenant or agreement is more effective, because the Lamb prefigured in the sanctuary has been fully revealed as the Son of God sacrificing Himself for us. However, this in no way relieves us of responsibility. Read Hebrews 12:26, 28.

Love's Evidence (Matt. 9:1–6)

Years ago in Australia, I was troubled by the developing confusion over faith and works. Far too many people were coming to the dangerous conclusion that we "are"—present continuous tense—fine with God so long as we give a Cain-like offering of the good deeds that we think appropriate. On one occasion, I asked if we were not confusing legalities with practicalities. The legality, of course, is the right God obtained by allowing His Son to die the death that sin demands of us. It was the right to save us in spite of past disobedience (Rom. 3:25). The practicality is how He now works with us to instill within us obedience and love—that holiness, without which one cannot see God.

In the generation before the American colonies formed themselves into a new republic, there was a spiritual stirring, known as "The Great Awakening." Practical godliness became a goal for many as they rediscovered great biblical truths. Popular English revivalist George Whitefield toured the colonies and shook the status quo. Perhaps the major revivalist in the colonies themselves was Jonathan Edwards. He is remembered for his sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." However, that does not accurately represent the true godliness and central logic of the revival. Another of his sermons better relates to the point of our texts for this week and the need to see a harmony between grace and law. This sermon was titled "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection."

God has loved us with "an everlasting love." But our human affections tend to wax and wane. The "New Covenant" is God's love made evident through action—the prefigured sacrifice "made manifest."

There is no wall high enough to hide the loving reality of what God has already revealed to us. He is moved by compassion by our plight.

As with the man sick with palsy, God tells us, " 'Your sins are forgiven you. . . . Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house' " (Matt. 9:2–6, NKJV). He expects us to walk in the Way. To do otherwise is to show that we are not made whole.

REACT

Leviticus 16 gives an excellent overview of the sin problem. In what ways does this chapter cover more than the death and resurrection of Christ?

Tuesday
March 3

Prophets Old and New

TESTIMONY

2 Pet. 1:20, 21

Seventh-day Adventist doctrines are based completely on the Bible. Many do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. A small group of Adventist pioneers such as Hiram Edson and Ellen G. White spent time searching the Scriptures for truth. They often remained together, sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word, in order to understand its meaning and to prepare to teach it with power. In vision, God gave Ellen White a clear explanation of the passages with instructions on how to teach it effectively to others.¹

In the same way, God used prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel to preach future events to the people in their day as well as for the last-day church. They also spent time in fervent prayer and study and developed a strong relationship with God. Thus, they spoke prophecies concerning Christ, His mission, and His priesthood; the fall of Jerusalem; the rise and fall of kingdoms; and the end of time. Their words were solely inspired by the Holy Spirit. Deuteronomy 18:18 says,

**“Heed the instruction; follow
the light.”**

“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him” (NIV).

Ellen G. White says that we should “study the testimonies.” She states that they “are written for our admonition and encouragement, upon whom the ends of the world are come. If God’s people will not study these messages that are sent to them from time to time, they are guilty of rejecting light. . . . God is sending instruction to His people. Heed the instruction; follow the light. The Lord has controversy with His people because in the past they have not heeded His instruction and followed His guidance.”²

Today, if we would pray, search the Scriptures diligently, and develop a solid relationship with Christ, we would be prepared to be a light that shines to the world.

REACT

1. What does the Bible say about how we should study? See Isaiah 28:10.
2. How often should we use other sources to help shed light on the Bible?
3. What other sources would be suitable to use?

1. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 206.

2. *Ibid.*, book 3, p. 358.

Overcoming Prophetic Arrogance

Wednesday
March 4

HOW-TO

Leviticus 16; Pss. 8:3, 4; 23; Rom. 3:27, 28

When I was high school age, I remember my excitement over the game of basketball. I enjoyed watching it, but I really enjoyed playing. While dribbling, passing, and shooting jump shots or layups were all enjoyable parts of the experience, I really enjoyed dunking the ball the most. I spent hours doing different leg exercises trying to increase my vertical leap. I researched as to which leg was better to jump off from and which angle was best for success. I started feeling rather good about my dunking.

But then I took a trip to visit my brother. He was in college and invited me down to the gym to play a few games of half-court with some of his friends. I was proud when one of the guys asked me to show him a dunk. I flew what I felt was high off the ground and slammed the ball with confidence. He smirked. Wasn't he impressed?

Then he said to my brother, "Hey Bob, why don't you show him one of yours." At first, my brother resisted; but after much coaxing, he agreed. He leisurely jogged up to the basket and then proceeded to jump considerably higher than I did, taking the ball down to his feet while in the air, and then dunking it with two hands with time to spare. Talk about instant humility!

I . . . slammed the ball with confidence.

As Adventist Christians, we often yield to the temptation of arrogance, because we study our Bibles and know the commandments, the prophecies, and healthful lifestyle principles so well. If you find yourself sensing that this is an area God wants you to work on, here are some questions to help you focus:

Where is your focus? The story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38–41 teaches us a great deal about the importance of focus. Take time to review the attitudes of these sisters.

Does knowledge or Jesus save you? Romans 3:27 points out that our salvation is only through faith in Jesus, not of our own works.

So what is there to brag about? Paul says that he will "glory" in his infirmities so that the power of Christ will be on him (2 Cor. 12:9).

Thursday
March 5

The Gift of Prophecy

OPINION

2 Kings 19:32–34; Jude 20

When I was a little girl, birthdays were always so exciting, especially when it was time to open the gifts. I can count only one time when I was disappointed, but I managed to work through it and enjoy the gift anyway.

I never thought about how wonderful the gift of prophecy can be to us. Better than gold or silver, the gift of prophecy gives us hope and a promise. God knew that His children would need hope and direction along life's journey, so he placed in His Word promises and encouragement as well as warnings which were repeated time and again through His prophets.

God inspired prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, who constantly instructed, guided, and warned the people of the pitfalls of prosperity or impending doom and destruction if they refused to heed His warnings. When Sennacherib, king of Assyria, threatened to overtake Hezekiah, king of Judah, Hezekiah immediately sought word from the Lord through Isaiah. Because Isaiah was a God-fearing man, he was able to advise Hezekiah. Through Isaiah, God told Hezekiah what would happen. Read 2 Kings 19:32–34. Sennacherib never did enter the city. One hundred and eight thousand of his

men were killed, and eventually, he died at the hands of his own sons.

The greatest gift of prophecy is knowing the final outcome.

God has never left His children without guidance. Even today, we have the same awesome gift of prophecy to help us navigate the final events. The prophecy helps us know that even though disasters will strike, God is in control. As we study the Scriptures and watch the signs of a world rapidly wrapping up, we need not fear the future. The greatest gift of prophecy is knowing the final outcome—the end of evil itself.

Prophets of old foretold of impending disaster, but they also gave the people hope in the coming Savior. The gift of prophecy inspires us to persevere and to be transformed in the image of Christ. The gift of prophecy teaches us that what God says, He does. He has instructed His prophets to warn all the people that He's coming soon, to be prepared and stay ready.

At times, it appears that Satan is winning the battle. Many people become confused and disillusioned, but the gift of prophecy helps us discern which path is the right path. Prophets and their messages encourage and inspire us to continue our journey, to look beyond what we can physically see and understand, and to remain faithful to the One who promises us eternal life. What a hope we have in the gift of prophecy

Patricia Maxwell-Mosby, Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A.

Learning to Hear

EXPLORATION

Deut. 18:18; 1 John 4:1, 2

CONCLUDE

The Bible is about God wanting to communicate with His people and to restore the relationship He enjoyed with humans before the Fall. One of the ways He has accomplished these goals throughout history was to give specific messages to specific people. Often these messages were not easy to hear, because they were given in unusual ways and because they were challenging or even frightening. But they were always evidence of God's love and His deep desire to reconnect with His people.

CONSIDER

- Going outside to an open place such as a forest or a park. How many distinct sounds can you hear and identify? Notice that the longer you are there, the more sounds you can pick out. Reflect on how this is like listening to God's voice.
- Finding people in your church or community who are spokespersons for a corporation, a community group, or another person. Interview them about their job and what it means to be a spokesperson. How does their job compare to a prophet's job?
- Thinking of people who are famous or are in the news at the moment. Imagine what your life might be like if you chose to live by what they say and do. Write a description or create a visual artwork to represent what your life might be like if you "followed" them. Include potential positives and negatives.
- Watching a sporting match or competition. Focus on the umpire and referee. What is their role in the game? How do they fulfill that role? How is their role like that of a prophet? How is their role different from that of a prophet?

CONNECT

Prophets and Kings, chap. 25, "The Call of Isaiah"; Graeme Bradford, *Prophets Are Human*.