

# Bible Studies for Adventists



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January 3 – 9, 2009

## Commentary on “The Prophetic Gift”

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### Day 1: Sabbath Afternoon, January 3, 2009

This lesson attempts to establish the idea that prophets are part of the life of the church. It further attempts to build a foundation that identifies prophets as ordinary, sinful men and women who nevertheless “walked with God”.

The memory verse for this week is Numbers 12:6 NKJV: “Then He said, ‘Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision; and I speak to him in a dream’”

The commentary asks why the predictions of some people come true and others do not. It continues by stating that Satan “uses false prophecies and prophets to mislead people. But we can take comfort in knowing God has His true prophets to make known His will.”

The last full paragraph says that the people to whom God gave the gift of prophecy “walked with God”, yet were not sinless. “They strove to live in harmony with God’s revealed will. They had a personal relationship with God, and in that context the Lord was able to use them in a special way.”

The E. G. White notes for this lesson are a quotation from *Education*, p. 63, in which E. G. White editorializes about Moses’ faithfulness to God, his humility, his realization of his weakness and inefficiency, and his belief that God “ruled his life in particular; and in all its details he acknowledge Him. For strength to withstand every temptation he trusted in Him.”

The Teachers Comments, page 19, under the heading “The Student Will”, states these objectives:

- **Know:** That God speaks to us through other people whom we call prophets.
- **Feel:** Respect and openness toward prophets and identify with them as fellow human beings.
- **Do:** Carefully consider the way in which prophets may speak to us and the church.

### Problems

This lesson is based on the unsupported assumption that prophets in the tradition of Moses and Abraham are part of the functioning of the church. First, the memory verse, Numbers 12:6, is lifted from a larger context with no explanation. The context was that Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses because he had married a Cushite woman, and they questioned whether God only spoke through Moses. “Has he not spoken through us also?” they asked (Numbers 16:2b, ESV).

God called them to the tent of meeting, appeared in a pillar of cloud, and called Aaron and Miriam forward. He then spoke this week’s memory verse to them. In verse 7 God continued by saying Moses was different from the normal prophet. He spoke to Moses not in visions and dreams but mouth to mouth because Moses was “faithful in all my house”. God then asked, “Why were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” God’s anger “was kindled against them, and he departed” (Numbers 12:9, ESV).

When God had departed, Miriam found she was white with leprosy, and God commanded that she be put outside the camp for seven days.

The attempt to use Moses as an example of what church members today can expect from a prophet is disingenuous. First, according to Numbers 12:1-9, Moses was different from a regular prophet. Even though the memory verse (Numbers 12:6) was lifted from the bigger context of God’s anger and discipline against those who spoke against Moses, it describes God’s relationship to “normal” prophets and states that God saw Moses differently. His job was different from that of a “regular” prophet.

Ellen White’s editorial comments about what Moses thought and felt have no basis in Scripture. They are her extrapolations about what she believed Moses was like. The Bible describes Moses’ obedience as well as his disobedience, i.e. his killing the Egyptian, his failure to circumcise his sons, his striking the rock twice, and as God said, “because you did not treat

me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel” (Deut. 32:51b) when he and Aaron claimed God’s role and asked the whining Israel, “...shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” (Numbers 20:10b, ESV).

We cannot assume or teach that Moses had any particular emotions, reactions, or feelings that the Bible does not reveal. The Bible reveals not only Moses’ faithfulness but also his disobedience. This lesson seeks to establish Moses as an example of a prophet of God; the biblical evidence, instead, reveals Moses as a unique individual in the history of Israel, one to whom we cannot look for an example of what we are to expect in the church.

Moreover, the lesson’s objectives reveal a goal that is not biblical. Hebrews 1:1,2 say this: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

Prophets were God’s way of communicating God’s will in Israel before Jesus came. In these last days, God’s will and self-revelation and the understanding of salvation have been revealed through Jesus. This passage in Hebrews leaves no doubt: there is to be no modern day prophet who will bring us any new knowledge of God or of salvation.

New Testament prophets taught the gospel and communicated God’s will to the early church and functioned as part of the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20). They speak for God for the purpose of building up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12). Nowhere does the Bible state or give an example of a New Testament prophet who gave new knowledge of the identity of God, of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit, or of how salvation is accomplished. Jesus is God’s final revelation.

Nowhere does the Bible ask us to consider prophets to be a unique gift from God to the church different from those with other spiritual gifts. In fact, Romans 12:6 states that believers have “gifts that differ according to the grace given to us”, and we are all “members one of another”. 1 Corinthians 12:11 further explains that all spiritual gifts “are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” In other words, our spiritual gifts are given according to God’s will, and we are to regard one another as peers and members of the same body.

The second lesson objective of feeling “respect and openness toward prophets” and identifying “with them as fellow human beings” is not part of the reality of the church. All members are sealed and filled with the Holy Spirit. Each member has at least one spiritual gift as God has seen fit to bestow it, and the gift of prophecy is neither more nor less important than any other.

Jesus is the final word of God’s will and purposes; prophecy in the New Testament is for the building up of the body, not for the teaching of new light or further information regarding God and His salvation. Even the goals of this lesson reveal an agenda that is unbiblical.

These lessons are driving toward the goal of presenting E. G. White as one more person in the tradition of biblical prophets, but the Bible clearly eliminates her as a candidate for a true prophet of God. In light of Hebrews 1:1-2, E. G. White and her testimonies cannot be messages from God. She goes beyond and alters the clear teaching of Scripture. She did not function as an inspired or even as a devotional voice in the biblical church which includes all those who are born again. Her venue was specifically Seventh-day Adventism, and she is not a recognized prophetic voice in God’s church.

This day’s lesson attempts to convince readers to see Moses as an example of a true prophet today and to think of prophets with messages of the future as potentially God’s voice to them. The Bible leaves no room for the work of a “modern prophet” with new light from God.

## Summary

1. Moses is not an example of a “normal” prophet. The memory verse is taken out-of-context and attempts to describe what readers might recognize as a prophet today. The full context, however, describes Moses as unique and reveals God’s punishment of those who slandered him.
2. Hebrews 1:1-2 clearly say God spoke through prophets in the past, but in “these last days” He has spoken to us through His Son. There is no place for a modern prophet with new light or “present truth” that is different from that already clearly revealed in the Bible.
3. The New Testament gift of prophecy is for the purpose of building up the body of Christ, not for the purpose of giving the church new doctrines, new light, or “present truth”.

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## Day 2: Sunday, January 4, 2009

The text for this lesson in Genesis 20:7: "Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you, and all who are yours" (ESV).

The lesson introduces the use of the word “prophet” in the Pentateuch and states that prophets not only spoke for God but also acted as intermediaries between men and God. It continues by stating that three times Abraham was called God’s friend in the Old Testament and that, in spite of human reason, he believed God and became “the father of all those who believe.”

In the last paragraph of the lesson the author observes that it is incredible that Abraham lied to Abimelech in light of the fact that he was willing to sacrifice his son in Genesis 22. He concludes by observing that “The occasional manifestation of the remaining old nature in the believer, the backsliding of God’s children in all ages, and our own sad departures from the path of

righteousness are sufficient to explain the deplorable conduct of the “father of all those who believe.” How human Abraham was—moments of great faith, moments of deep lapses. What follower of Abraham’s God can’t relate?”

The lesson ends with these thought questions: “What encouragement can you take for yourself from the fact that, despite Abraham’s mistakes and lack of faith, God used him anyway, even mightily? How can we learn not to let our lapses turn us away from continuing to press on ahead in faith?”

In the E. G. White Notes for this day’s lesson is this passage from *The Story of Redemption*, p. 75: “The Lord selected Abraham to carry out His will. He was directed to leave his idolatrous nation and separate from his kindred. The Lord had revealed Himself to Abraham in his youth and given him understanding and preserved him from idolatry. He designed to make him an example of faith and true devotion for His people who should afterward live upon the earth. His character was marked for integrity, generosity, and hospitality. He commanded respect as a mighty prince among the people. His reverence and love for God, and his strict obedience in performing His will, gained for him the respect of his servants and neighbors. His godly example and righteous course, united with his faithful instructions to his servants and all his household, led them to fear, love, and reverence the God of Abraham.

“The Lord appeared to Abraham and promised him that his seed should be like the stars of heaven for number. He also made known to him, through the figure of the horror of great darkness which came upon him, the long, servile bondage of his descendants in Egypt.”

## Problems

This lesson misses the real significance of the story of Abraham. While it is true that Abraham was a prophet and mediating for others is one work of a prophet, the real significance of this story is not that Abraham was weak and sinned yet God used Him anyway. This argument, that prophets are “human” and not “perfect”, is a current argument being actively used in some circles to confirm Ellen White as a prophet (see for example the book *More Than A Prophet* by Graeme Bradford).

This story of Abraham’s lie to Abimelech, however, is not primarily a demonstration of God using a flawed person as His mouthpiece. Such an argument is a moot point at any rate since every human born is flawed.

Rather, this is an account of God’s sovereignty over mankind’s sin. The point is God’s faithfulness and glory, not the fact that God honors and uses sinners. Man is not the central figure of the Bible; God is, and man’s sin is never excused or overlooked. The fact that Abraham prayed for Abimelech demonstrates that Abraham repented and acknowledged his sin and obeyed God when he was confronted with his lie.

Moreover, this story in Genesis 20 demonstrates that God is sovereign even over fertility. Not only did God keep Abimelech from sleeping with Sarah, He also “closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife” (v. 17, ESV). Moreover, this incident occurs in the chapter immediately preceding the account of God causing Sarah to become pregnant, as He promised, with Isaac, the son of promise. The juxtaposition of the Abimelech account with the account of Sarah’s miraculous conception underscores God’s intervention.

First, the story removes any doubt that Sarah’s baby might have been conceived while in Abimelech’s court. Second, the story shows that God keeps His promises and accomplishes His purposes. He never intended for Sarah to be defiled by seed from one other than Abraham. Her baby would be the miraculous baby of promise, and God kept her pure. Third, God revealed Abraham’s self-deception by exposing Abimelech’s fear of God after Abraham’s excuse that he thought there would be no fear of God in Abimelech’s court. Fourth, God confirmed His intentions and sovereign power by first stopping the wombs of the women in Abimelech’s house and then healing them. In the very next verse in chapter 21, God visits Sarah and “did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son...” (ESV).

Moreover, the quotation from the *Story of Redemption* makes assumptions not taught in the Bible. The idea that God preserved Abraham from idolatry is an invention, not a biblical fact. Joshua 24:2 says this: “And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the Lord the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods’” (ESV).

While it is clear that God took Abraham away from his family’s polytheistic roots, the fact that this verse states that Terah worshiped other gods strongly suggests he taught his sons to worship other gods as well.

God’s call of Abraham was a call out of idolatry. The Bible does not teach that God preserved Abraham from other gods but that God called him from other gods, and Abraham obeyed.

Furthermore, E. G. White says Abraham’s character “was marked for integrity generosity, and hospitality.” She continues by saying he commanded the respect of his contemporaries because of his love for God and his strict obedience to God’s will.

The Bible does not say these things. Rather, the lesson itself leads by pointing out that Abraham lied deliberately instead of trusting God and carrying out His will. Furthermore, Abraham’s character was not “marked” for goodness. He was a depraved human just like everyone else. His recommendation was not that he bore a character suited to the role God called him to fill. Instead, the only reason Abraham became a great man of God was that he believed God (see Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:11). Abraham was the first person in the Bible of whom it was said, he believed God. Romans clearly explains that having true faith in God is the mark of those who are considered righteous before God.

Abraham’s significance is not that he was a sinner whom God used anyway. His significance is that God sovereignly called him out of idolatry and promised to make him a great nation, and Abraham believed God. Because he believed God, he became the father of the all the faithful, both Jew and Gentile (see Romans 4:11). Because God chose him and promised to

give him seed, land, and a blessing, the nation of Israel came into being and Jesus became the promised Seed (see Galatians 3:16).

The final thought questions for this day do not take the reality of the new birth into consideration. Abraham's life is not primarily an example of why we don't need to be discouraged by our own failures and sin. Instead, Abraham's sin and God's response to it show that God does not allow anyone, even those He has called and blessed, to sin successfully. God reveals our sin and brings His own people to repentance. We are never instructed to take courage from the fact that God's uses those with a lack of faith. We are instructed to live by faith and to trust the sovereign God who is faithful to reveal our sin and bring us to repentance.

The underlying point of this Sabbath School lesson, that God's prophets were flawed and never expected to be "perfect", thus validating E. G. White as a prophet inspired the same way the biblical prophets were inspired, is a straw-man argument. God chose Abraham to fulfill a unique role in all of history. His story is not an example of "everyman's" qualification to be used by God. Rather, his story is a revelation of God's faithfulness to His own promises. Abraham is not primarily our example. He is our "father" if we have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus. Abraham's life glorified God because he believed God, and God accomplished His miraculous purposes through him.

## Summary

The story of Abraham lying to Abimelech is not a "normalization" of a prophet's sinful nature. Such a point is unnecessary because all men are depraved (Ephesians 2:3). Rather, the point of the story is that God is sovereign over even fertility, and it emphasizes that He kept His promise to give Abraham a miraculous heir through Sarah, and God protected Sarah from being defiled by strange seed.

Contrary to E. G. White's statement, the Bible does not say Abraham was protected from idolatry early in his life. Rather, Joshua 24:2 states that Abraham's father worshiped other gods, and the implication is that he taught his own sons to worship them also. God called Abraham out of idol worship, and Abraham obeyed and believed God.

Abraham did not have a character marked for greatness as E. G. White states. Instead, he was born by nature an object of wrath, just as is every human on earth (Ephesians 2:3), and he was counted righteous because he believed God (Genesis 15:6).

Abraham's story reveals God's sovereignty over men's lives and over His own plans. It is not a "normalization" of sinful prophets; rather, it reveals God's faithfulness to keep His promises and to count as righteous all who believe Him. The story of Abraham is not about taking courage from the fact that God will use people even if they sin. It is about the fact that God counts sinners as righteous if they believe Him, and He accomplishes His purposes even if people sin. Further, the story of Abraham underscores that God metes out consequences when people sin—even if their sin is inadvertent as in the case of Abimelech. God does not allow anyone to sin successfully forever—and He does not allow those who have faith in Him to sin without confronting and convicting them and bringing them to repentance. God never ignores or overlooks our sin.

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## Day 3: Monday, January 5, 2009

This lesson begins thus: "The first person called a prophet in the nation of Israel was Moses. Concerning his death, the statement is made, "since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. 34:10, NKJV). Abraham was the father of the nation of Israel, but Moses was the first prophet in Israel's history—an example for all the prophets who followed him."

The study continues by stating Moses was equipped to lead Israel by three qualifications: "his upbringing in Egypt, his strong faith in God, and his personal experience with the Almighty at the burning bush". Moreover, it explains that after the golden calf apostasy, Moses spent 40 days with God on Sinai and returned with his face shining (Exodus 34:28-35). It states this shining "was but a reflection of the divine glory (2 Cor. 3:7)" but further comments that this glorious shining served as evidence of his communion with God and served to restore "him to his rightful place of leadership. When the people realized where he had been, his role of leader and mediator that had been questioned was restored."

The Teachers Comments, p. 21, under "Step 1—Motivate" compare human flaws with the irritants around which pearls form in mollusks. In the next paragraph of the Teachers Comments, Moses' fear of speaking to Pharaoh is compared to the flaws of other Bible leaders that God helped them overcome, thus turning them into "pearls".

On page 23 of the Teachers Comments, the second paragraph under "II. Moses' intercession: The Work of a Prophet" says this: "We also learn that during the time that Moses related God's words to the people, his face was veiled. The veiling of Moses' face makes him a type of Christ. Jesus veiled His divinity with humanity in order to dwell with us. Veiled, Moses represented how God must reveal Himself to us; unveiled, God could not fellowship with us without destroying us. But veiled in humanity, He could fellowship freely with sinners in order to reunite humanity to heaven. The glory reflected in Moses' face equals the blessings to be received by God's commandment-keeping people through the mediation of Christ."

Finally, the E. G. White Notes for Monday, January 5, include this quotation from Signs of the Times, March 31, 1881: "For his transgression, Moses came under the dominion of death. Had his life not been marred with that one sin, in failing to give to God the glory of bringing water from the rock, he would have entered the promised land, and would have been translated without seeing death. But the servant of God was not long permitted to remain in the tomb. Christ himself with the angels who buried Moses, came down from Heaven, and called forth the sleeping saint, and bore him up in triumph to the city of God."

## **Problems**

First, to be sure, Moses' experiences were part of his preparation for his work of leading Israel. None of his experiences, however, would have equipped him for this work apart from God's call of him. In spite of his 40 years in Pharaoh's court, in spite of the burning bush, in spite of his faith in God, Moses still feared confronting Pharaoh. These experiences were not what qualified him to lead Israel. God Himself equipped Moses.

Moreover, Moses' fear of speaking to Pharaoh was not a modest flaw from which God made a "pearl". His reluctance was not humility but a lack of trust. God did not comfort Moses and reassure him; instead, Exodus 4:14 states, "Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, 'Is there not Aaron your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart'" (ESV).

God did not make a "pearl" out of Moses' fear; He bypassed Moses as spokesperson to Pharaoh. He did not miraculously remove Moses' fear and make him eloquent. Rather, He provided Aaron to speak for him. God did not thwart His own purposes because of Moses' fear. Moreover, the Bible clearly states that the Lord's anger was kindled against Moses. This event was not initially a moment of God "redeeming" a weakness. It was an insight into Moses' lack of faith, into God's anger against Moses' reluctance, and into God's gracious provision to accomplish His purposes to have Moses become the leader of Israel without Moses' reluctance to speak crippling God's purposes.

## **Jesus' body not a veil for God**

One of the most glaringly unbiblical teachings in this lesson is the Teachers Comment analyzing Moses' shining face. First, God did not send Jesus as a veiled presence of Himself in order to fellowship with us without destroying us and thus to "reunite humanity to heaven". Rather, Jesus came as a human in order to redeem humans, not to make God "unthreatening" and accessible. Jesus' humanity was for the purpose of delivering "all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery" (Hebrews 2:15, ESV). Jesus had to become human in order to pay for humanity's sin. Hebrews 2, especially verses 14-18, explain why Jesus had to be human. There was no way for Jesus to bring God directly into fellowship with humans apart from His shedding blood (Hebrews 9:16-28). Only Jesus' human blood and broken body could open a new, living way for us to the Father (Hebrews 10:19-22). Jesus came as a man, yet all of Deity was in Him even as He was human, making peace through His blood (Colossians 1:19).

Jesus did not come to make God accessible to us by veiling Him for us. Rather, He came as a man in order to redeem mankind and to pay for man's sin, making peace by the shedding of perfect human blood and opening a way to the Father through His broken human body which He gave as a substitute for ours.

## **Veil not for hiding God's glory**

The second unbiblical point is that Moses' veiled face "makes him a type of Christ." In fact, the Bible overtly states why Moses' face was veiled and what that represents to Christians. It had nothing to do with making him a type of Christ.

Exodus 34:29-35 tells the story of Moses descending from Mt. Sinai, not realizing his face was shining with God's glory. The text does not say that Moses put the veil over his face in order to conceal the glory. It does say that Aaron and the people were afraid when they saw the glory, but Moses called them and talked to them.

"And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face." Moses donned the veil not before he spoke in order to calm their fear but after he spoke to Israel. The passage continues: "Whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him."

Contrary to what we were taught, Moses did not put a veil over his face to protect the people. He kept his face uncovered after talking with God until he spoke to Israel so all the people would see his face shining. He put the veil on only after he finished speaking and wore it until the next time he met God in the tabernacle.

2 Corinthians 3:7-18 explains this phenomenon further. Verse 13 explains that Moses would put the veil over his face so people would not see that the glory was fading. Indeed, the Exodus passage supports Paul's analysis.

Further, this passage from 2 Corinthians explicitly states that Moses' veil represents the fading glory of the Sinai covenant. The "letters on stone" were a "ministry of death" (v. 7). It came with great glory, so much glory that Israel could not gaze on Moses' face. But, Paul argues, if this ministry was glorious, "will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?" (v. 8). The ministry of condemnation (the law—v. 9; Romans 3:20) had glory, but "the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory" (v. 9).

The Mosaic covenant—the old covenant—"once had glory" but "has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it" (v. 10). The old covenant "was being brought to an end" even though it came with glory. The ministry of the Spirit, the new covenant, "is permanent", and how much more will it have glory (v. 11).

Because we have "such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end" (v. 12-13).

Next comes one of Paul's clearest, most powerful statements of the difference between the old covenant and the new, and the reason we cannot "live" in both at once:

"But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (v. 14-17).

Whenever Moses—the Law—is read, a veil covers the heart! When one turns to the Lord Jesus, that veil is removed. If we look backwards at the Law from knowing Jesus, the Law is shown for what it is: a mere shadow of the reality that is in Christ Jesus (Colossians 2:17). Focus on the law keeps us from experiencing the reality and freedom of Jesus and of living by the Spirit.

Moses' veil did not symbolize Jesus veiling the presence of God so He could commune with us. On the contrary, Moses' veil represented the fading glory of the old covenant—the fading glory of the "letters on stone"—and Moses hid his face from Israel in a symbolic action that represented his hiding from them the fading glory of their Sinai covenant with God. Until Jesus came, that covenant was the covenant they were morally obligated to keep. When Jesus came, however, that covenant was fulfilled, and the ministry of the Spirit replaced the ministry of death over which the law presided.

Now "we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (v. 18).

The lesson states that the glory on Moses' face "equals the blessings to be received by God's commandment-keeping people through the mediation of Christ." This statement overtly contradicts 2 Corinthians 3:7-18. The glory on Moses' face had nothing to do with any supposed blessings for God's "commandment-keeping people through the mediation of Christ." The biblical passages reveal that the glory was a reflection of God's own glory, and 2 Corinthians explains that the surpassing glory God's people receive is from the new covenant, from the ministry of the Spirit by whom we live—not from reading and living by the law. Even during the time of Israel the law "was being brought to an end" (v. 12), and the fading glory on Moses' face represented the eventual ending of the Sinai covenant with the law at its heart. Never does the Bible say that Moses' shining face represents the blessings that come from keeping the commandments.

### **Moses didn't "miss" translation**

Finally, the E. G. White quotation above from Signs of the Times is blatantly extra-biblical. Nowhere does the Bible suggest that Moses would have been "translated" if he hadn't failed to give God the glory of bringing water from the rock. Never is such an idea even hinted. Further, the Bible does not say or suggest that Moses was resurrected. The statement that "Christ himself with the angels who buried Moses, came down from Heaven, and called forth the sleeping saint, and bore him up in triumph to the city of God" is an invention without Biblical support.

This notion is attached to a somewhat obscured but powerful foundational teaching of Adventism, that Jesus is Michael the archangel in Jude 9 who contended with the devil over the body of Moses. Jude does not state that Moses was resurrected; the contention over his body is never clarified, nor does the passage say that Moses was raised from death.

The further argument that Moses appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, thus assuming that he must have been resurrected, is also unfounded in the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 and in Philippians 1:22-23 Paul clearly states that upon death, believers are with Jesus—a condition very much better than remaining in the mortal tent of the body.

If one takes the words of the Bible at face value without the interpretation of Ellen White to re-state the clear meaning of the words, the presence of Moses at the Mount of Transfiguration is understood as an act of God that is possible because the spirit of Moses never stopped existing.

If one insists that Moses was resurrected, one must rewrite multiple Bible passages. It requires identifying Michael the archangel as Jesus. Daniel 10:13, however, identifies Michael as "one of the chief princes". Jesus is not "one of" any group. He is the One and Only begotten Son of God. Further, Jesus is not in any sense an angel, nor did He ever take on angelic form to help them. Hebrews 2:16 states, "for surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham." Moreover, Jesus was never an angel whom God exalted and established as His Son (see Hebrews 1:3-5).

The notions that Moses would have been translated had he not sinned at the rock, that Moses was resurrected, that Christ and the angels came and "bore him up in triumph to the city of God" are fictions never remotely supported by Scripture.

### **Summary**

1. Moses' fear of speaking to Pharaoh is not an example of humility or of a flaw which God redeemed by transforming it into a pearl of strength or other value. Rather, it was a lack of faith which elicited God's anger but also His provision. God did not excuse Moses, but He provided a way that Moses would still have to go before Pharaoh and become the leader of Israel even though he feared speaking.
2. The veil over Moses' face was never a symbol of Jesus veiling divinity so God could fellowship with mankind. Rather, Jesus came as a man in order to provide a substitutionary atonement for each person who believes in Jesus. Because humanity sinned, the penalty required a perfect human sacrifice. Jesus—God the Son—came as a sinless man to offer a sinless human sacrifice. God could not fellowship openly with mankind unless the claim of sin and the curse of death

were removed from man. Jesus came as a man in order to live as a sinless human and to die as a perfect sacrifice for the sin of all mankind—thus opening a new, living way to the Father (Hebrews 10:19-22; 9:16-28).

3. Moses' veil represented the fading glory of the law and the old covenant. Second Corinthians 3:7-18 explains that a veil remains over the heart of any who turn to the law and read Moses, but whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. We reflect increasing glory—glory that surpasses the fading glory of Moses' face—as we live in the ministry of the Spirit instead of under the glory of the law that has come to an end in Christ (Galatians 3:15-17).
4. The Bible never hints that Moses would have been translated if he hadn't acted in anger and pride when he struck the rock. Further, the Bible never hints that Moses was resurrected—or that Michael the archangel was Jesus in Jude 9. Rather, Daniel 10:13 identifies Michael as "one of the princes", merely one archangel among others. Believing that Moses was resurrected or that God intended for him to be translated adds to the Bible.

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## Day 4: Tuesday, January 6, 2009

In Tuesday's lesson the point is to show that there were prophets in Israel from the time of Moses to the time of John the Baptist. They "came from all walks of life"; from the priestly line, from the royal tribe of Judah; they were government officers like Daniel and farmers and shepherds like Elisha and Amos.

The last paragraph makes the point that the "Bible itself is the work of these prophets, delivering the messages that God gave them...No matter the flaws in their characters (with the radical exception of Jesus), these human beings, flesh and blood like us, were used by the Lord to proclaim His messages, messages that still are being proclaimed today..."

Finally, the lesson ends with thought questions: "Which prophet can you relate to the most? Which prophet speaks the clearest to you, and why? What have you taken from that prophet's life and message? How are you able to apply what you've learned to your life in a way that changes you for the better?"

### Problems

While this lesson is fairly straightforward, still the underlying intent is to normalize Ellen White by leading the reader to see biblical prophets as normal, diverse humans among whom Ellen White is just one in a long line.

Even the "thought questions" focus on the humanity of the prophets, eliciting personal responses to the personal experiences of the prophets—even asking for personal responses to the prophets' messages.

The subtle deceptive twist in this lesson is drawing the reader's attention toward the person of the prophets, not to their role as bearers of God's eternal word. It was never the prophets who were "special"; it was always their messages. God delivered His own thoughts and revealed His own will through them.

The Bible never asks us to evaluate the authenticity of a prophet by his or her social status or personal life. Rather, we are asked to evaluate prophets on the basis of their messages.

The Bible gives clear guidelines for evaluating the messages of prophets to determine whether or not they are from God. Deuteronomy 18:20-22, for example, states, "But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?'—when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him."

If prophets claim to speak in God's name but deliver messages that do not come true, they are false prophets. In the time of Israel, such a prophet was to be killed.

Through Ezekiel God said, "My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and who give lying divinations. They shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord God" (Ezekiel 13:9, ESV).

Again in Ezekiel 22:38 God says, "And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord God,' when the Lord has not spoken."

In Matthew Jesus is quoted: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15, ESV).

"And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray" (Matthew 24:11, ESV).

"For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24, ESV).

Peter wrote, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1, ESV).

John said, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

Paul further identifies the false teachings that a false prophet would promulgate: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:1-5, ESV).

He warns further, "Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God" (Colossians 2:18-19, ESV).

In Galatians Paul's warning is especially strong. Twice he delivers a curse for anyone teaching a "gospel" other than the clear gospel he taught and learned from the risen Christ: "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9, ESV).

Never does the Bible ask us to accept a prophet or evaluate our response to a prophet based on the prophet's personality or weaknesses. Rather, our instructions are clear: a prophet is to be evaluated based on his or her message.

If they claim to speak in God's name, then their prophecies must come true, and their messages must match what has already been taught in the Bible. Any message different from the clear gospel presented in the Bible is a false message, and the prophet or teacher delivering such a message must be rejected.

## Summary

1. The lesson asks us to notice that Israel had prophets from the time of Moses to the appearance of John the Baptist. They were from all walks of life and from a variety of temperaments and backgrounds.
2. The evaluation of a prophet based on his or her personal qualifications or limitations is not a biblical test of a prophet. We are never asked to evaluate a prophet based on their person or environment.
3. We are asked to evaluate the prophet's message based on the clear teaching of Scripture. If they teach anything other than the gospel clearly taught, they are accursed, and we are to reject their messages.

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## Day 5: Wednesday, January 7, 2009

The purpose of this lesson is to establish that there were prophetesses in Israel. The texts are Exodus 15:20-21, Judges 4:4-10, and 2 Kings 22:11-20. The Exodus passage names Miriam as a prophetess and tells of her leading the women in dancing as she sang a song of God's victory over the Egyptians. Judges 4:4-10 tells of Deborah, the prophetess who judged Israel and went into battle with Barak. 2 Kings 22:11-20 tells of the prophetess Huldah, a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah, who, during the reign of Josiah, delivered the message of God's judgment against Judah for its apostasy, but gave word to Josiah that God would not bring the disaster until after his death because he had a penitent heart.

In the Teachers Comments on page 25, under "III. Women Prophets: Miriam and Deborah", the comments suggest that Miriam could be viewed as "organizing the first women's ministry department of God's church." It further elaborates on Deborah's influence during the time of the judges—a time of which the Bible says, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in His own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25). The lesson says this about Deborah: "Deeply spiritual, she ascribed all praise for the victory over the Canaanites to God (vss. [5]:3-5, 13); she did not take any glory for herself or Barak.

This is the description of Deborah leading Barak into war in the Teachers' Comments: "So great was her influence that the great warrior Barak, whom God called to deliver Israel from their enemies, refused to go into battle without Deborah marching with him. Her presence would make it clear that the undertaking was God's will. Barak, a strong and brave warrior, submitted himself to her prophetic guidance. Deborah, though female and no warrior, did not refuse to lead Israel into battle. God shows us through her story that He does not limit Himself to the male gender in calling prophets."

## Problems

Again, the purpose of this lesson is to normalize Ellen White and her role within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The author seeks to present female prophets—prophetesses—as a typical means of God's communicating with His people.

The Old Testament does name Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah as prophetesses. In fact, the Old Testament mentions two more prophetesses as well. Isaiah 8:3 says Isaiah's wife, who is not named, was a prophetess. Nehemiah 6:14 names a fifth prophetess—but she was a false prophetess: Noadiah, who attempted to deceive Nehemiah during the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem.

The lesson fails to present the implications of the story of Deborah and Barak. First, Deborah was "judging Israel" during this time of apostasy and evil. Judges 4: 1 states, "And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died." Deborah called Barak and apparently reminded him of God's call to him: "Has not the Lord, the God of Israel, com-



manded you, 'Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun' (Judges 4:6b, ESV).

Barak, however, was afraid and said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go" (Judges 4:8). He was anything but courageous. He did not trust God to accomplish what He had called him to do, and he insisted a woman go with him into battle. The Teachers Comments say that Barak's request was the result of Deborah's great esteem and influence and that her "presence would make it clear that the undertaking was God's will". Barak, the lesson further states, submitted to her prophetic guidance.

The biblical account, however, suggests otherwise. Barak was apparently weak. Instead of trusting God, he insisted the prophetess go with him. Deborah agreed, but she also foretold that Barak would not get the glory for the victory to which God had called him. Rather, God would deliver Sisera, the enemy, into a woman's hand:

"And she said, 'I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.' Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh" (Judges 4:9, ESV).

Indeed, Jael deceived Sisera and killed him with a tent peg through his head. To be sure, Barak pursued Sisera's army, and Barak's men killed all of them. Sisera, however, escaped, and Jael finally killed him.

Because of his refusal to go on his own, however, Barak did not receive the credit for the ultimate victory over his enemy. A woman is remembered for killing the oppressor.

The Teachers Comments say that Barak was a "strong and brave warrior" who submitted to Deborah's authority, and the author then concludes that this story demonstrates "that [God] does not limit Himself to the male gender in calling prophets."

This conclusion is contrary to the biblical account. The book of Judges is clear that Barak was denied the glory of victory because of his refusal to go into battle without Deborah. Not only was he denied the honor of killing the enemy leader, but a woman was given that honor.

The story of Deborah does not demonstrate that God raises up prophetesses to lead men. Rather, it demonstrates that there are consequences for people who are afraid to embrace what God has called them to do.

Furthermore, the New Testament is clear that today, in the church, we are not to expect prophets with new light or "present truth" not already revealed in the Bible. Hebrews 1:1-2 clearly state that God has spoken to us in Jesus in these last days. Moreover, the "spirit of prophecy" is, according to Revelation 19:10, "the testimony of Jesus". This phrase is clear: the words of Jesus and the witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The new covenant gift of prophecy is always the witness of Jesus and His completed work. People claiming to be prophets but bearing testimony that adds to the gospel or gives new instructions for living are not true prophets of God.

"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9, ESV).

"But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1, ESV).

The Seventh-day Adventists cannot legitimize Ellen White's role and continuing authority in their organization by referring to the stories of Miraim, Deborah, or Huldah. Ellen White's influence was completely different from theirs, and those Old Testament stories do not demonstrate the divine sanction claimed in the Sabbath School lesson.

Moreover, in the new covenant, prophecy is clearly for the edification of the body of Christ, to build it up and bring people into spiritual maturity and the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13) by the declaration of the message of Jesus and His finished work of salvation (Revelation 19:10).

## Summary

1. The story of Deborah does not demonstrate God's approval and appointment of a woman to lead a man spiritually. Rather, this story demonstrates the consequences of Barak, a warrior, refusing to go to battle unless the prophetess went with him. The final destruction of Sisera, the leader of the enemy forces, was given into the hands of Jael, a woman.
2. In the new covenant there is clear teaching that Jesus is God's final word to us (Hebrews 1:1-2). No new light or present truth will be given through a prophet.
3. The New Testament gift of prophecy is the "testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 19:10), that is, the message from Jesus Himself as well as the personal witness of Jesus and the gospel from those who know Him. The purpose of this witness is the building up of the body of Christ into unity and spiritual maturity until all experience the fullness of Christ.
4. Ellen White's role and authority cannot be validated based on the stories of Miraim, Deborah, or Huldah. None of them wielded the power which Ellen White did. Further, her authority cannot be validated from the New Testament account. Rather, her teachings must be scrutinized by the biblical directives. If she does not teach the same gospel Paul taught, according to Galatians 1:8-9, the gospel which was revealed to Him by the Lord Jesus, she—as well as anyone else who preaches another gospel—must be condemned. She cannot be considered a true prophet of God.

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## Day 6: Thursday, January 8, 2009

This lesson introduces the subject of New Testament prophets. The texts for the lesson are Luke 1:67; John 1:6,7; Acts 11:27,28; Acts 13:1; and Revelation 1:1-3.

Luke 1:67: And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

John 1:6, 7: There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

Acts 11:27, 28: Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius).

Acts 13:1: Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Revelation 1:1-3: The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

The text of the lesson explains that the difference between apostles and prophets is that “apostle carries the concepts of mission and representation.” It further points out that some of the apostles were prophets, but not all apostles were prophets.

Then the lesson moves to addressing John the Baptist and Jesus’ statement in Matthew 11:11: “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” The lesson closes with this paragraph:

“John the Baptist was the greatest prophet in the sense that it was his privilege to announce the coming of Christ, to whom all the prophets had borne witness (see Luke 24:27; John 5:39, 46). Like Abraham, all the Old Testament prophets looked forward to the day the Messiah would come (1Pet. 1:10, 11), but John saw Him in the flesh. Hence, in some sense, the prophetic office in the Old Testament reached its climax in John. At the same time, John the Baptist was only at the door of the kingdom of grace, looking in, while the least follower of Jesus can look back and rejoice in the fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies through Christ.”

In the *E. G. White Notes* for this day’s lesson is this excerpt from the *Review and Herald*, April 8, 1873: “The religion of the Jews, in consequence of their departure from God, consisted mostly in ceremony. John was the lesser light, which was to be followed by a greater light.... Those who were privileged with being with Christ when he walked a man among men, and listened to his divine teachings under a variety of circumstances while preaching in the temple—walking in the streets, teaching the multitudes by the way side, and in the open air by the sea-side, and while an invited guest seated at the table, ever giving words of instruction to meet the cases of all who needed his help; healing, comforting, and reproving, as circumstances required—were more exalted than John the Baptist.”

### Problems

First, listing Zechariah as a New Testament prophet is inaccurate. While his story does appear in the New Testament, Zechariah was a levitical priest working in the temple prior to the crucifixion of Jesus when the temple veil was torn. Until that time, Israel was supposed to practice all the requirements of the law. Zechariah was actually functioning as an Old Testament prophet, still within the old covenant.

Next, Ellen White’s statement that John was a lesser light that was to be followed by a greater light deserves some notice. The only biblical passage that lends support to this claim is found in John 5:35-36 where Jesus is explaining His own commission. He refers to John who “has borne witness to the truth”: “He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.”

In this passage Jesus explains that John bore testimony to Jesus’ work and points out to the Jews that they were happy to listen to John. Jesus, though, has a greater testimony than John, but they did not believe Him.

This reference to John being a shining lamp is the only reference to John as a “light”. In John 1:6-8, however, Jesus specifically said that John bore witness to the light, but he was not the light. Rather, the true light was coming into the world—and that true light was Jesus.

This “lesser light-greater light” comparison is significant since Ellen White is often called, within Adventism, the “lesser light” which leads to the “greater light” of the Bible. Her comparison of herself with John the Baptist is disingenuous. God sent John to witness of the immediate coming of Jesus. Jesus, according to Hebrews 1:1-2, is God’s final word to us. There is no more preparatory “light” that witnesses to the coming of truth. With the Bible already written, there is no need of a lesser light to lead to Jesus or to the Bible. Nowhere does the Bible hint that there would be any further “lamp” witnessing to the coming of Truth. Truth has already arrived.

### **Greater than John**

Moreover, the claim that John was the greatest of the prophets because he announced the coming of Christ but that all who listened to Jesus during his time on earth were greater than he is also unsupported in Scripture.

What Jesus actually said was that the least person in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist. The definition of a member of the kingdom of heaven is found in John 3:5-6: “Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

A member of the kingdom of heaven is one who has been born of the Spirit. He or she is not merely one who listens to Jesus’ teachings and affirms them. Rather, a member of the kingdom of heaven must be one who is born again. Being born again is not a metaphor for affirming Jesus or assenting to truth. Rather, verse 6 states explicitly: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

The people who followed Jesus throughout Judea did not become members of the kingdom of heaven by being His followers. They only became members of the Kingdom if they placed their trust in Him and received the Holy Spirit after Pentecost.

The reason John was greater than all the prophets was because He personally saw and pointed out the living Messiah. All previous prophets foretold His coming; John was able to point to Him in person and declare, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

Revelation 19:10 identifies the spirit of prophecy as the testimony, or witness, of Jesus. John had the privilege of personally witnessing to the presence of the Lamb of God. This privilege meant he was greater than all previous prophets; his was the greater honor.

The reason the least member of the kingdom of heaven is even greater than John is not, as Ellen White stated in the Review and Herald, because they experienced Him in person. If being in Jesus’ physical presence was what make people greater than John, then Jesus’ words would have applied only to the people in Judea during Jesus’ incarnation on earth.

The statement, though, was without time limit: the least in the kingdom of God is greater than John. The real reason kingdom members are greater than John is that, instead of merely being in the presence of Jesus, they are indwelt by the Living God, the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Jesus said it was good for His followers that He go away. If he did not go, He could not send the Holy Spirit to them (John 16:7). All those who place their faith in Jesus, ever since Pentecost, experience the indwelling Holy Spirit. Because they know Jesus and are indwelt by God Himself, because they have been made alive by the resurrection power of Jesus (Romans 8:10-11; 5:10; Ephesians 2:4-6), they can personally bear witness to the resurrected Christ. John the Baptist only bore witness to the incarnate Christ before His death.

John died before Jesus’ crucifixion. The least person in the kingdom of heaven, however, bears witness to the living Christ who has conquered death and given life to all those who believe in Him.

### **Summary:**

1. Zechariah actually functioned in the role of an Old Testament prophet, not a New Testament prophet.
2. The Bible does not present John the Baptist as a “lesser light” leading to the “greater light”. While Jesus did compare him to a bright lamp in whose light the Jews were happy to walk for awhile, the rest of Jesus’ message was that the Jews were refusing to believe Him, the one who bore the true light from heaven. John 1 explains that John was not the light; Jesus was the light. The Adventist comparison of Ellen White to John, calling her the “lesser light” that points to the “greater light” of the Bible, is a false comparison.
3. The reality that made John the Baptist greater than all the Old Testament prophets was that he bore witness to the living, present Messiah rather than merely foreshadowing Him.
4. The fact that makes the members of the kingdom of heaven even greater than John has nothing to do with sitting in His physical presence and listening to Him. Rather, the fact that makes them greater is that they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit—God Himself—and bear personal witness to the resurrection Jesus who has brought their own spirits from death to life.

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## Day 7: Friday, January 9, 2009

Friday's lesson consists of three quotations from Ellen White. The first from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 130, says this: "During his stay in Egypt, Abraham gave evidence that he was not free from human weakness and imperfection. In concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, he betrayed a distrust of the divine care, a lack of that lofty faith and courage so often and nobly exemplified in his life."

The second is from the devotional compilation, *Conflict and Courage*, p. 81: "Moses had been instructed in regard to the final reward to be given to the humble and obedient servants of God, and worldly gain sank to its proper insignificance in comparison. The magnificent palace of Pharaoh and the monarch's throne were held out as an inducement to Moses; but he knew that the sinful pleasures that make men forget God were in its lordly courts. He looked beyond the gorgeous palace, beyond a monarch's crown, to the high honors that will be bestowed on the saints of the Most High in a kingdom untainted by sin. He saw by faith an imperishable crown that the King of heaven would place on the brow of the overcomer."

The third quote is another from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 330: "The glory reflected in the countenance of Moses illustrates the blessings to be received by God's commandment keeping people through the mediation of Christ. It testifies that the closer our communion with God, and the clearer our knowledge of His requirements, the more fully shall we be conformed to the divine image, and the more readily do we become partakers of the divine nature."

### Problems

As discussed earlier this week, the real essence of the situation with Abraham was not that he displayed "human weakness and imperfection". All humans are weak and imperfect, and our mortal flesh remains weak and imperfect until we are glorified at Christ's return.

Romans 3:20-22 clarifies that righteousness is never connected to works of the Law. Rather, the righteousness "of God through faith in Jesus Christ" is the inheritance "of all those who believe". Abraham's lie in Egypt, like his lie to Abimelech, was an event in which God demonstrated His sovereign intervention, protection, and accountability. Abraham responded to God's intervention. Even Sarah's submission to Abraham was counted as a mark of spiritual maturity, as Peter explains: "For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening" (1 Peter 3:5-6, ESV).

God does not "excuse" human weakness. Abraham was not "excused" for his lack of faith. Neither does our human weakness mean we are not alive in Christ. Human weakness is the wrong focus. As Christians, we are either trusting God and surrendering to Him, or we are not. God does not ask us to reach perfection; He asks us to trust Him and to live by the Spirit (Romans 8).

### Moses glory not symbol of commandment-blessings

The quotation about regarding Moses also received attention earlier this week. To reiterate: the glory on Moses' face did not illustrate "the blessings to be received by God's commandment keeping people through the mediation of Christ."

The Bible reveals something completely different. The glory on Moses' face reflected God's own glory, but Moses hid his face in order to hide the fact that the glory was fading. 2 Corinthians 3:7-18 overtly state that Moses' veiled glory represented the fading glory of the Law and the old covenant. Far from representing the blessings for God's commandment-keeping people, the episode with Moses represented the fact that the glory of the law was fading.

We, the recipients of the new covenant which Jesus keeps with the Father for us, live with unveiled faces. We who live by the ministry of the Spirit instead of by the letter in stone reflect glory that is increasing rather than decreasing.

Ellen White completely misrepresented Moses and the glory on his face which he covered. She completely missed the real point of 2 Corinthians 3.

God has given us His glory in Jesus, and when we place our trust in Him, we receive the glory of the ministry of His Spirit. Moses and his veil represented a covenant that was fading away. We with unveiled faces reflect the glory in the face of Christ.

### Called to glory

Our glory comes to us not through the law but through God's "precious and very great promises", as Peter states: "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (2 Peter 1:3-4, ESV).

No prophet of God would write commentary that completely reversed the message of the Bible. Ellen White's interpretation of Moses and veiled face misses completely the real point of 2 Corinthians 3.

## Summary

1. The Bible never asks us to become free of human weaknesses. Abraham's lies were not primarily examples of a still-imperfect man of God. Rather, they were moments of failure when God demonstrated His sovereign power and accomplished His purposes in spite of Abraham. God intervened and rescued people, disciplined Abraham, and revealed His just nature. God asks us to surrender to Him and trust Him, not to "become perfect" in behavior.
2. Moses' shining face did not represent God's blessings for commandment-keeping people. 2 Corinthians 3 is explicit that Moses' veiled face represented the fading glory of the old covenant which was replaced by the glorious ministry of the Spirit. The letters in stone were passing away. The ministry of the Spirit is eternal. We, with unveiled faces, reflect the glory in the face of Christ. The law was far less glorious than the new covenant which is reflected in our unveiled faces with increasing intensity.
3. The glory we receive is not connected to commandment-keeping. Rather, God calls us to glory and excellence and grants us His "precious and very great promises". There are the source of our glory!