

# Bible Studies for Adventists



These studies are NOT produced by or connected to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

January 31–February 6, 2009

## Commentary on “Testing the Prophets”

PHIL HARRIS

---

### Day 1: Sabbath Afternoon, January 31, 2009

The lesson for today centers on Fundamental Belief #18, "The Gift of Prophecy" which includes the following Biblical references: Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10. The purpose of this statement is to support the concept that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the "remnant church" because they have a last day prophetess. While Ellen G. White never claimed the title, "Prophetess", the church has recognized her as such. Therefore, the goal of this lesson is the support of Ellen G. White as prophetess.

The following passages are also recommended for this weeks study: Isa. 8:20; Jer. 18:6–10; Jonah 3; 4; Matt. 7:20; Gal. 2:11–14.

#### Problems

If we start at the beginning of the book of Joel, we learn that a Hebrew prophet is speaking to a Hebrew audience when he says in Joel 2:28,29; "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy".

In Acts 2:14-21, Peter quotes this same passage in Joel while speaking to another Hebrew audience. The setting and the context demand that this prophecy from Joel be Hebrew sons and daughters who prophesy.

In Heb. 1:1-3, God the Father speaks of his Son, Jesus Christ, as being the prophet for "these last days". God says that he is "the word of his power".

The context for Revelation should start at Chapter One, Verse One which begins with the statement; "The Revelation of Jesus Christ". Since "Revelation" and "prophecy" are synonymous terms, the opening statement declares Jesus Christ to be speaking prophetically. This entire book is the prophetic words of Jesus Christ, given to John via an angel. Rev. 12:17 simply states; "testimony of Jesus Christ". Rev. 19:10 adds the phrase; "Jesus is the spirit of prophecy". Nowhere in Revelation do you see the title of "Spirit of Prophecy" applied to anyone other than Jesus Christ.

If you begin with verse 19, in Isa. 8:20 we see that it is speaking of those who seek after "familiar spirits, and unto wizard".

Jer. 18:6-10 is a reminder to the "house of Israel" that God is in control and will not tolerate evil. While an important lesson, it is unrelated to the topic at hand.

In Jonah Chapters 3 and 4 we see where the people believed the prophet and repented of their sins. It is the prophet who is tested, by God. It is an important lesson for those who are a prophet of God but seems unrelated on how to test someone who claims to have a message from God.

In reading Matt. 7:20 we should back up to at least verse 15 to get the context. This is, however, a very good test of who is a prophet of God; "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them".

In Gal. 2:11-14, Paul confronts Peter for not maintaining the "truth of the gospel". Peter, like Jonah did for a time, hid from the true gospel message. Prophets, when not speaking 'in the name of God' are humans who still commit sin. The real question is; What are their words when they say, "Thus says the Lord"? In Sunday's lesson, we will see God deals with a false prophecy given in his name.

## Summary

- Jesus Christ, the Spirit of Prophecy, is the source of all prophecy. John the apostle who received the words of the prophecy in the book of Revelation did not carry this title, and neither does any other prophet of God.
- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,] full of grace and truth (John 1:1-3, 14 KJV).
- Clearly Jesus Christ, who is called "The Word" in the gospel of John, is the source of all prophecy, the entire Bible. That is why he is called; "The Spirit of Prophecy" in the book of Revelation.

---

## Day 2: Sunday, February 1, 2009

The theme of the lesson on this day concerns how God communicates with his messengers and maintains that it is primarily through dreams and visions.

### Problems

From reading Scripture, we learn that not all who receive a vision from God are prophets of God. In Gen. 41:1-40 we read where Pharaoh had a dream from God that he did not understand. In Daniel Chapter Two we read of Nebuchadnezzar who not only had dreams he didn't understand, but, he couldn't remember what they were. These examples illustrate the point that God may send any person he chooses a message but only a prophet from God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can provide the interpretation of a dream or vision.

This lesson provides several examples of how God communicates via dreams and visions. In Gen. 15:1 God speaks to Abram in a vision. In Num. 12:6-8 God called directly to Aaron and Miriam and says; " *If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream*". In Dan. 7:1 we also see where Daniel received "a dream and visions" that were from God.

The following examples show that God is not limited in the ways he chooses to communicate with mankind: Enoch, "walked with God"; Gen. 5:18-24. Jacob, wrestled with God and states, "I have seen God face to face"; Gen. 32:24-30. Moses, "talked with God" as where two people speak, face to face; Ex. 3:1-4:17; 33:7-11. In First Samuel Chapter Three God speaks to the young Samuel so clearly he believes it is Eli calling him from another room. Elijah, hears "a still small voice" in I Kings 19:9-15. Notice that Elijah walks outside the cave during the conversation with the Lord. He is awake and physically hears the voice of God.

In Isa. 6:1-10 we see where the prophet confesses to being an ordinary mortal full of sin. God cleanses him and prepares him to deliver his message to the people perfectly. In Jer. 28:1-15 we see how God deals with a false prophet and prophecy. Hananiah delivers a false message which he claims is from God. God corrects him with a prophecy that he gives to Jeremiah, his true prophet. Both prophets were ordinary men. One, controlled by his sinful nature perverted God's message. The other, moved by the power of God, spoke the truth perfectly.

In Jer. 18:6-10 Jeremiah explains what a conditional prophecy is. To paraphrase him; "if you repent of your sin God will relent of his curse on you. If you sin and refuse to repent, God will revoke the blessing he intended for you". This aligns with God's blessings and curses that Moses imparted to the Hebrew people just before his death, found in Chapters 32 and 33 of Deut. It should be noted that not all prophecies are conditional. The classic one is found in Gen. 3:14-19. Verse 15 is a specific prophecy of a coming Redeemer. This, along with the rest of this passage, is absolute. God would do what he said without fail. There are no conditions for mankind or any other created being to fulfill.

### Summary

- While God may communicate with a prophet primarily through dreams and visions, this is secondary to the way he speaks through his true prophets in such a manner that his perfect message is delivered to the human race without corruption. This is in totally contrast to false prophets who are mortally influenced by their human sinful nature. As made clear in Isa. 6:1-10, God cleanses the sin of a true prophet in such a way as to preserve his words perfectly.

---

## Day 3: Monday, February 2, 2009

The premise in today's lesson is that a true prophet of God will be in complete agreement with both the whole law and all of the other prophets of God; in other words, he will be in complete harmony with the whole Bible.

### Problems

Isa. 8:20 speaks of 'law' and 'testimony'. These are two terms that refer to the same overall entity—the word of God. The 'they' in this verse refers to 'disciples' in verse 16 who will be in complete harmony with all of God's word. In Deut. 4:44 we see that Moses gave the law to the people of Israel. In Verse 45, we see this law defined as "testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments". Deut. 31:9 simply says that Moses wrote (recorded) the law. By this, we understand that he is responsible for the writing of the first five books of the Bible and that they are the testimonies, statutes and judgments given to Israel by God.

The statement; "Every true prophet has made the writings of previous prophets the benchmark for his or her own ministry," is somewhat problematical. A true prophet of God simply communicates the message that God has given him and does not need to cross-check it with established canon. Each prophet's message is an inspired message from God, and it will automatically align with all God's other prophetic messages.

**For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* (II Peter 1:16-21 KJV).**

What is true is that each individual Christian must make Scripture the "benchmark" for determining if a prophet's words are in agreement with Scripture. This personal searching of the Scriptures is known as the Berean Principle.

**And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few (Acts 17:10-12 KJV).**

Why must harmony with the Bible be our final test.....? Consider the following passage:

**But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not (II Peter 2:1-3 KJV).**

In response to the question of why people choose to believe false prophets, consider this:

**I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when *they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;* And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (II Tim. 4:1-4 KJV).**

### Summary

- The real question is: has each of us tested the writings of Ellen G. White and determined if they fit the description of the warning Paul delivered to Timothy?

---

## Day 4: Tuesday, February 3, 2009

The recommended reading for today includes Jeremiah 18:6-10 which we have already looked at on Sunday. From this passage, we learn that some prophecies are conditional. If we turn from God and seek after sin, there is a curse. However, if we repent and turn from our sinful ways, God will bless us. In either case, the prophecy was fulfilled by the choice made. The prophecy of Jonah (Jonah 3:4) to the City of Nineveh is a classic case of where the people repented of their sins and God relented of the curse.

The intended purpose of introducing an understanding of conditional prophecies is to offer an explanation of why some of Ellen G. White's prophecies are known to have failed.

### Problems

All God-given prophecies, including those that are conditional, are fulfilled—to the letter. In reference to the City of Nineveh of Jonah's time, it later reverted into sin, and God's curse was fulfilled. Interestingly, as it was in Jonah's day, it still takes a person two days to walk across the ruins of Nineveh, showing that every detail in the book of Jonah is true, not just the prophecy itself.

**But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:13-17 KJV).**

In order for this passage to be true, all prophecies given in Scripture from God must be true. In order for a prophecy to be true it must, by the very nature of a God-given prophecy, be totally true in every detail.

In the following verses Balaam is speaking to Balak the king of Moab. Balak wishes Balaam to change the blessing...the prophecy...he had just pronounced over Israel.

**God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it (Num. 23:19,20 KJV).**

Even Balaam, who we know was not the best of prophets, knew that God would not lie and that what came from God could not be repented of. Repent means to confess that what you did or said was wrong and to change your mind. God does not error or make mistakes, and therefore, does not need to correct what he has said.

Now, we turn to the case of Ellen G. White, the point of today's lesson and her prophecy:

**"I was shown the company present at the Conference. Said the angel: 'Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus'" (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, pp. 131, 132).**

These words were spoken in 1856. Originally, this prophecy was given as proof that return of the Lord was very need. No one thought to consider that it might be a conditional prophecy. Since then, all who were there at that conference have died. There are none left to suffer through the "seven last plagues".

In 1909, she wrote, "If every soldier of Christ had done his duty, if every watchman on the walls of Zion had given the trumpet a certain sound, the world might ere this have heard the message of warning. But the work is years behind. While men have slept, Satan has stolen a march upon us"(Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 29).

So, the question is: If God can not repent of what he says and admit that a previous blessing or prophecy was wrong or totally correct, how can Ellen G. White change what she said? There is no room for thinking that the 1856 prophecy was "conditional". Her words given in 1909 cannot undo what was said in 1856. The fact that the prophecies do not agree does not make her first prophecy "conditional". Their disagreement means that at least one (or both) of those prophecies was not from God, because God cannot lie or deceive.

Ultimately, Ellen's prophecies reflect on the timing and conditions of the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So, lets look at the Gospel of Matthew which has much to say about 'end time' events in Chapter Twenty-Four. While the whole chapter is worthy of study, we will only look at one short passage:

**But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matt. 24:36-39 KJV).**

The indication from these verses is that neither Satan, mankind or an angel could determine or affect the return of our Savior. According to Jesus, only the Father knows, and it is His sole authority as to when his return will be. It makes no mention of any 'work' we do or fail to do that controls the timing of his return. These verses indicate that Ellen's statement of 1909 is also false.

Paraphrasing John the Baptist in John 3:27, he says that a man can receive nothing of God unless it comes from God, and in verse 34 he says that he whom God sends speaks the words of God. In John 5:39 we find the words of Jesus concerning "eternal life" where he states that all Scripture speaks of him. In Isaiah 8:20, we need to back up to verse 19 to understand who it is that is being condemned. Wizards and their ilk need to preach from Scripture or there is no truth in them. In modern terms, that means to not turn to Nostradamus or Jean Dixon if you are seeking eternal truth...or any other person who adds to or takes away from Scripture.

**Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil (I Thess. 5:20-22 KJV).**

### Summary

- If the conclusion is that the prophetic statements of Ellen G. White, who claimed to be a messenger of God, have failed, what then does Scripture instruct you to do?

---

## Day 5: Wednesday, February 4, 2009

The central focus of the Christian faith is the nature and work of Jesus Christ.

**Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (I John 4:1-3 KJV).**

### Problems

Each and every Christian is the 'Beloved' addressed in the above passage. All Christians are commanded to test the spirits and see if they "confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh". This is vital because, as stated in Acts 4:12, "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved". Our salvation is at stake by who we confess to be our Savior.

### Who carried our sins to the grave?

Ellen G. White, with reference to Lev. 16:7-10, teaches the Satan is the Scapegoat who ultimately will carry our sins to 'the place unknown'. There is no Scripture reference to support this view.

**Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed (I Peter 2:24 KJV).**

**Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (Isa. 53:12 KJV).**

### When did Jesus sit down at the "right-hand of the Father"?

Adventist theology, based on Ellen G. White's teachings, believe that on the date of Oct. 22, 1844, Jesus entered the Most Holy of Holies and sat down at the right hand of the Father. Let's look at what the Bible has to say:



**God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, *sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high* (Heb. 1:1-3 KJV).**

According to the Bible, this heavenly "seating" happened long before 1844. See also I Peter 3:22.

### **What (or who) is the Seal of our salvation?**

Ellen G. White teaches that the Seal of the 'Remnant Church' (the true Body of Christ) is the Sabbath. The Bible has something different to say:

**In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, *ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory* (Eph. 1:11-14 KJV).**

### **What defiles the Body of Christ?**

Ellen G. White uses I Cor. 3:16,17 to support her Health Message on the premise that what we eat can defile the Temple of the Holy Spirit, our bodies.

If you start at the beginning of this chapter, you see that what really defiles the Temple of the Holy Spirit is worldly human ambition that causes us to make someone so important that we take our focus off of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

**But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man (Matt. 15:9-11 KJV).**

### **Could Jesus have sinned?**

In the *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1128, we find the following statement. Does this come from the Bible or is Ellen G. White the source?

**"But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. *He could have sinned; He could have fallen*, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden."**

According to Col. 1:19, in Jesus "all fullness dwell" of his Father. Whatever is true of the Father is also true of the Son. God can not and never will sin. Neither could Jesus; then, now or ever. See also; Col 2:9; Heb. 4:15; James 1:13.

### **Summary**

- There is a clear difference between what the Bible teaches and what Ellen G. White has to say. There is a choice to be made. Where are you to place your faith? Is it to be Ellen's Jesus or the Jesus of the Bible?

---

## **Day 6: Thursday, February 5, 2009**

The Biblically based theme of this lesson follows the agricultural concept that you can judge a tree by the fruit it bears and then apply this object lesson to how we can judge someone who claims to be a prophet of God.

### **Problems**

Gen. 12:12,13 tells part of the story Abram, where he acted deceitfully by hiding the fact that Sarai was his wife. In other words, in spite of his absolute faith in God, he had his weak moments of fear. Yet, read what God's word has to say about him in the book of Hebrews:

**By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise,**

**as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:8-10 KJV).**

In Jonah 1:1-3 we see a prophet of God who was either afraid or simply didn't want to take God's message to Nineveh, but eventually did as the Lord commanded him. He did obey God.

In Acts 15:36-39, we read the story where Paul and Barnabas had a parting of ways, yet they both continued on their missionary journeys with new partners. In spite of their differences they kept their focus on the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

In Gal. 2:11-14 we see where even Peter's conduct needed correcting. Even Peter, whom Jesus personally commissioned, had moments when he needed to be reproved.

### Summary

- In each of the examples cited above the frailties and flaws these men simply show the power of God. Great things were accomplished because of the power of God in their lives, not because they were great within their own right. To rework an old expression; "Its not who you are that counts, it's who you know".

---

## Day 7: Friday, February 6, 2009

Ellen White's personal apologetic from *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 67, is quoted to support her contention that her warnings about the shortness of time is from God. But what does the Bible say?

### Commentary

**For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect (Mark 13:22 KJV).**

Speaking of the return of Jesus Christ:

**But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father (Mark 13:32 KJV).**

**Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places....And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:10-12,17 KJV).**

This passage tells us that our spiritual armour includes *the word of God*. Now consider the following verse:

**For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18,19 KJV).**

**...knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 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. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed (II Peter 1:20-2:2 ESV).***

### Summary

- The Bible warns us that there will be false prophets in our age. We are admonished to put on the whole armour of God which includes the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Keeping Rev. 22:18,19 in mind, is there any room for adding in the words of Ellen G. White?