

The Blessings of the Prophetic Gift¹



SABBATH—MARCH 14

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 17:14; Exodus 34:27; Leviticus 11:1–8; Deuteronomy 6:4–7; Isaiah 44:8; Isaiah 49:6.

MEMORY VERSE: “The Lord and King never does anything without telling his servants the prophets [special messengers]” (Amos 3:7, NIV).

ALL THROUGH THE HISTORY OF THE BIBLE, the Lord worked through the prophets (including those who wrote no books of the Bible). He wanted them to encourage, uplift, and warn God's people. The prophets' messages might be unpopular at times. Often the reasons for their messages were misunderstood. But these prophets all had one goal in mind: to bless and benefit (help) God's church. And it was no different with Ellen G. White and her gift of prophecy.

This week we are going to look at some of the blessings that come to God's people through Ellen G. White's gift of prophecy. The Seventh-day Adventist Church as we know it today would probably not be here without the guidance God gave this movement through the spirit of prophecy.²

THIS WEEK'S LESSON UP CLOSE: Why and for what purpose did God choose Israel as His special people? How were the young people in Israel educated in Old Testament times? What health advice and tips did God give the Israelites? Why did the Israelites write God's Word on the door frames of their houses? How has the Lord used the gift of prophecy to bless and benefit the church?

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

2. spirit of prophecy—read Revelation 19:10. The spirit of prophecy is the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7–11, 28; Ephesians 4:11–13). This gift is the ability to receive special messages from God and/or foretell the future. God gave the gift of prophecy to Ellen G. White.

SUNDAY—MARCH 15**MISSION (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8)**

Read Deuteronomy 7:7, 8; Isaiah 44:8; and Isaiah 49:6. Why did God elect (choose) Israel as His special people?

God chose Israel to be His witnesses.³ All nations of the earth were to share in the blessings that He was to give to His people. Israel was to make known His praise (Isaiah 43:21), announce His glory among the nations (Isaiah 66:19), and be a light to the Gentiles (non-Jews).



God chose Israel to be a light to the world.

According to Matthew 28:19, 20, what is the mission (goal) of the Christian church? And how well is the church carrying out its mission?

The Christian church experienced two great periods of growth in its history. The first period was the time in which it was established in the first (A.D. 1–99) and second centuries (A.D. 100–199). The second was during the nineteenth century (A.D. 1800–1899), also called the century of mission. Following the great revivals⁴ of the eighteenth (A.D. 1700–1799) and early nineteenth centuries, the Christian church set up many Bible and missionary societies in Europe and America. Within 100 years it grew from 18 percent of the world population in the year 1800 to 34 percent in 1900.

In the early part of Seventh-day Adventist history, people of the church believed that the church was fulfilling God's command to teach all nations simply by preaching to the immigrants⁵ in North America. But in 1871, Ellen G. White wrote, "Young men should be training themselves by becoming familiar with other languages. In this way, God may use them as missionaries to preach His saving truth to those of other nations."—Adapted from *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, page 204.

Then in 1874 Ellen G. White had an impressive (amazing) dream of giving the third angel's message to the world. In the dream God told her: "Your ideas for the work are too limited. . . . The message will go in power to all parts of the world, to Oregon, to Europe, to Australia, to the islands of the sea, to all nations, tongues [languages], and peoples. . . . Your faith

3. witnesses—people who teach others about God by living and telling others about the Christian life.

4. revivals—the times when people become interested in God again and want to make their lives better.

5. immigrants—people moving into the United States from other countries.

is limited, it is very small. Your understanding [idea] of the work needs to be greatly enlarged.’ ”—Pages 208, 209, adapted.

How do we strike a balance between working for souls overseas and not neglecting the mission field in our own backyards?



Ellen G. White told God’s people in North America that His message must go to the whole world.

MONDAY—MARCH 16

EDUCATION (Genesis 18:19)

How were the young people in Israel educated in Old Testament times? What important principles can we learn from Genesis 18:19 and Deuteronomy 6:4–7, 20–25 about the spiritual part of all proper education?

Fathers taught Hebrew children what God had done for His people in the past, how they were to live in His presence, and what God’s promises were for the future. The children also learned skills to be successful members of their communities.

In the earliest days of Adventist history, our pioneers⁶ privately tried several times to set up a school for Adventist children, but none of the schools lasted long.



Hebrew fathers taught their children what God had done for them in the past.

Then, at the beginning of 1872, Ellen G. White received a vision⁷ about the proper principles (rules) of education.

In May of 1872 the General Conference committee agreed to accept responsibility for a locally operated church school in Battle Creek, Michigan. On June 3, the first official Seventh-day Adventist school opened its doors (there were 12 students). Two years later 100 students were enrolled in the newly

6. pioneers—first Adventist believers.

7. vision—a special message from God that is seen in the mind or in a dream or in a trance to help a person know God’s will (plan).

established Battle Creek College.

Today more than 6,000 Adventist schools, colleges, and universities serve more than one million (1,000,000) students around the world.

What should an Adventist school today be like? How should it be different from other schools? Make a list of things such a school should have in its program and discuss this list in class.

TUESDAY—MARCH 17

HEALTH (Exodus 15:26)

According to Exodus 15:26; Leviticus 7:22–26; Leviticus 11:1–8; and Leviticus 13:46, what health advice and tips were given to them by God?

Most Seventh-day Adventist pioneers were not health reformers.⁸ In a vision in 1848, Ellen G. White was shown that tobacco, tea, and coffee are harmful, but it took several years to make the members believe that they were harmful.

On June 6, 1863, Ellen G. White received a vision. In this vision God showed her the need for health reform (change for the better). “I saw that it was a sacred duty to pay careful attention to our health, and warn others to their duty.”—Adapted from *Selected Messages*, book 3, page 280. Two years later, on December 25, 1865, she was shown that Seventh-day Adventists should establish a health center. The

Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek opened its doors in 1866. It was the first of a network of more than 300 hospitals and clinics, which the church operates today.



In a vision, Ellen G. White saw that tobacco, tea, and coffee are harmful.

What can we say to those who claim that Ellen G. White copied the health message from other health reformers in her time?

Recent research into Ellen G. White’s health message has shown that her principles of health are very different from those of other health reformers in her time. “Modern medical science has supported a high percentage of her health principles . . . while the sources from which she supposedly copied had a low percentage of health principles that have proven right. This big difference shows that Mrs. White had health information that could not have come from any human anywhere at the time she lived.”—Adapted from Leonard Brand and Don S. McMahon, *The Prophet and*

8. reformers—people who make changes and improvements; those who give up one lifestyle for a better lifestyle.

Her Critics [Attackers] (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 2005), pages 87, 88.

The health message is a wonderful gift from God to us. Like all of His gifts, it can be and has been abused. How can we avoid turning this gift into a curse?

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 18

PUBLISHING (Deuteronomy 6:1–9)

According to Deuteronomy 6:1–9 and Deuteronomy 11:18–20, where were the Israelites to write the words of the law? And why do you think that command was given?

In Israel the purpose of writing God’s Word on the door frames of their homes was to help people remember God’s instructions. The writing reminded the people continually to keep God’s commandments.

What part did publishing play in the early history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

The publishing work in our church did not start from human wisdom. In 1848, Ellen G. White had a vision in the home of Otis Nichols in Dorchester, Massachusetts. When she came out of it, she said to her husband, James, “I have a message for you. You must begin to print a little paper and send it

out to the people. Let it be small at first; but as the people read, they will send you money with which to print. And it will be a success from the first. From this small beginning it was shown to me to be like streams [beams] of light that went clear round the world.”—Adapted from *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, page 125.

“ ‘Streams of light that went clear round the world’ ”! How could that be? Jesus was coming soon. The number of Adventists were so few. There were no wealthy persons or great thinkers among them. The world was unbelieving. And yet here was a young woman who prophesied⁹ that a work of publishing, to be started by her poor husband, would grow until it would go around the world? More than six months went by before James White could make even the smallest beginning. He arranged on a charge account for the printing of one thousand copies of an eight-page paper. Today the Seventh-day Adventist Church owns more than fifty publishing houses. And the message is being printed in more than two hundred twenty languages.

What has been the influence¹⁰ of the printed page in your own spiritual experience?

THURSDAY—MARCH 19

THEOLOGY¹¹ (Genesis 1:1–3)

All through the history of the Bible, God has used the gift of prophecy¹²

9. prophesied—said what would happen in the future; foretold.

10. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.

11. theology—the study of God.

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

to protect His people from making mistakes in theology or religion. It was no different with the ministry of Ellen G. White. In the early days of our church Ellen G. White had to fight many strange ideas. Some people claimed to be perfect. Others said that no more work should be done. And some kept setting times for Christ's return. During the Kellogg¹³ crisis at the turn of the century, Ellen G. White's advice saved the church from pantheism.¹⁴ At the same time, almost by herself, she led the church from a semi-Arian¹⁵ (a belief that Jesus was not God) to a Trinitarian belief.¹⁶ When A. F. Ballenger tried to change the sanctuary teaching, she took a strong stand against it. Ellen G. White also had a strong part in keeping the church of her day from falling deep into legalism.¹⁷ Along with A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, she was a great supporter of salvation (being saved) by faith in Christ alone, without depending on the law for salvation.

After her death, her writings continued to give guidance to the church. In more recent times, her writings provided clear direction on the issue of Creation, which is coming under attack even from Seventh-day Adventists.

According to Genesis 1:1–3; Exodus 20:8–11; Psalm 33:6; and

Isaiah 42:5, what does the Old Testament teach about the beginning of human life?

According to the Old Testament the Lord created life on our earth in six days. The Hebrew word translated "day" in Genesis 1 is *yom*. Whenever this word in the historical books of the Bible is followed by a number, it always means a real 24-hour period. (Read, for example, Genesis 7:11 and Exodus 16:1.) In resting on the seventh day of the Creation week, God established the Sabbath as a lasting memorial of His completed work of creation. In short, we are on firm Bible ground by staying close to a real six-day Creation.

Ellen G. White has been dead for almost one hundred years. But her words strongly support this great Bible truth: "I was then carried back to the creation and was shown the first week. In that week God did the work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day."—Adapted from *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 3, page 90.

The Bible gave a clear testimony¹⁸ on Creation. Ellen G. White gave strong support for it. But there are still some among us who argue that God used millions of years of evolution¹⁹ to create human life. What

13. Kellogg—a doctor by the name of John Harvey Kellogg believed wrongly that God was in everything, even in non-living things. This false idea was called pantheism.

14. pantheism—the idea that God is in everything.

15. Arian (belief)—a belief started by a man named Arius, who taught that there was only one God, the Father.

16. Trinitarian belief—a belief that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are Three Persons united (joined together as One) in one God.

17. legalism—the practice of believing that one can earn salvation (the act of being saved) by obeying the law.

18. testimony—a statement; a witness.

19. evolution—the belief that we became humans (men, women, or children) by slowly changing from a lower form of life to a higher form of life.

examples can you find from the Bible of people getting so caught up in the beliefs of their time that they lose sight of important truth? How can we protect ourselves from falling into the same tired, old trap?

FRIDAY—MARCH 20

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Teaching and Healing,” pages 139–160, in *The Ministry of Healing*; “Source and Aim of True Education,” pages 13–19; “Relation of Education to Redemption,”²⁰ pages 28–30, in *Education*.

Many of the principles of healthful living found in the writings of Ellen G. White already were taught in a limited way by other health reformers of her day. But in their teaching we find many errors that Ellen G. White avoided because of the instructions she received from God. For example, Sylvester Graham and James Jackson, two well-known health reformers in Ellen G. White’s day, both taught “Don’t [do not] eat salt.” But Ellen G. White wrote, “I use some salt, and always have. Salt is not harmful. Instead, salt is really important for the blood.”—Adapted from *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, page 162.

Among the other errors that were taught by health reformers in the nineteenth century and that Ellen G. White avoided were: Do not cut your hair. Do not drink water—get your liquids from fruit only. When eating meat, eat mostly the fat. Overweight

people are healthy people. Do not use soap, etc. (Read Leonard Brand and Don S. McMahon, *The Prophet and Her Critics*, pages 77, 78.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① As a class, go over your answer to Monday’s final question.

② We now live in the day and age of science. For many people science is the only way to know truth. How interesting that of all the things we teach (the Second Coming, salvation by faith, the state of the dead, and so on), only one can be proven scientifically: our health message. Think about what that idea means.

③ As Seventh-day Adventists we strongly believe that all our doctrines (beliefs) need to come from the Bible and the Bible only. At the same time, if we believe that Ellen G. White had the gift of prophecy, should we not believe more seriously in her writings on doctrine too? How do we find the right balance in how we use her writings to deal with theological (religious) issues?

④ As with the Bible, there are things about Ellen G. White’s writings that we do not understand. How can we protect ourselves from falling into the trap of focusing only on what we cannot understand and missing the larger point of what she wrote?

20. Redemption—the process (method or way) through which Jesus saves us. He buys us back from sin and sets us free through His death on the cross.