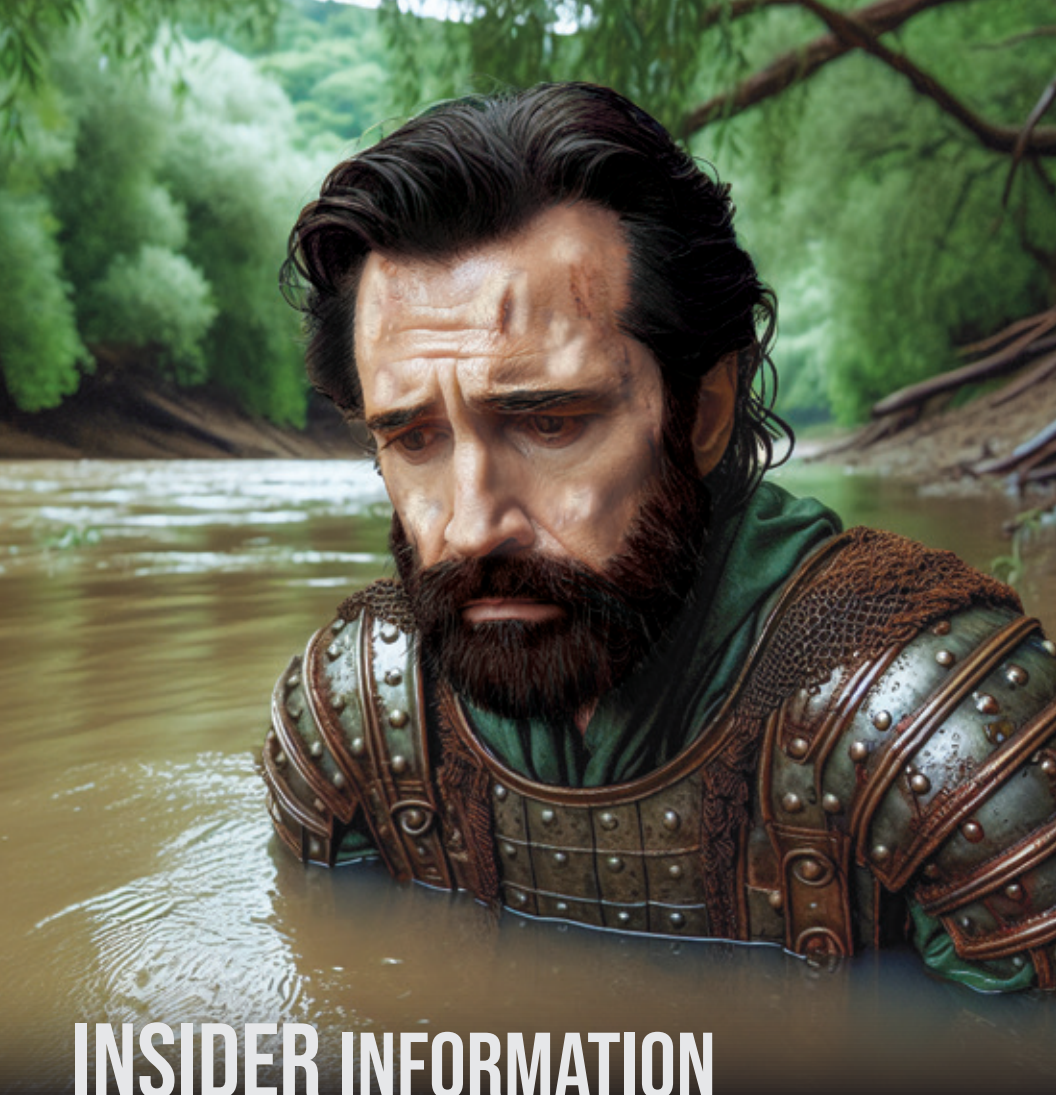




INSIDER INFORMATION



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Suffering from disease, the army general approached the door of Elisha, the man of God. He hoped to receive an immediate cure, but to his surprise and irritation, someone else appeared, claiming to speak on behalf of the man of God. Instead of restoring him to health then and there, the messenger delivered Elisha's strange instructions to dip himself seven times in the nearby Jordan River. Would this proud leader listen to the humble messenger even though his instructions were not what he'd expected to hear? The general's name was Naaman, and he wisely decided to listen to the messenger, even though he did not yet understand how it would help. It's a good thing he did. He returned home fully healed and praising God. You can read about Naaman's example of trusting God's messenger in 2 Kings 5.

1 How does God desire to communicate with us?

1 Corinthians 13:12 “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”

God wants perfect communication with you the way He talked with Adam in the Garden of Eden. He told Adam everything he needed to know with no barrier between them (Genesis 2:16–17).

2 Why doesn't God talk with us directly with His own voice?

Isaiah 59:2 “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”

Matthew 13:15 “For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.”

Our minds are so corrupted and weakened because of sin that we don't listen to God communicating with us. His plan is to once again be with His people, connected so closely that He can talk with us directly, and even wipe the tears of sin from our eyes (Revelation 21:3–4).

3 What has God done to break through the communication barrier caused by sin?

Hebrews 1:1–2 “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ...”

God leaves no means untried to teach us, using “various” methods to reach our diverse minds. He communicates lessons through nature (Proverbs 6:6), as well as through miraculous illustrations of His love—like when He led Israel with a cloud (Exodus 13:21). The clearest message of all is Jesus, Himself; but we still often fail to understand His message. Another way God has communicated repeatedly with us is through His many different prophets.

4 What is a prophet?

Amos 7:15-17 “Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’ Now therefore, hear the word of the Lord Therefore thus says the Lord ...”

A prophet is a regular person from any walk of life whom God chooses to speak as His representative. God chose young and old, rich and poor, men and women to be His prophets. They may have lacked in



“The prophet is to deliver God’s message, even if it is difficult to hear.”

education, but God’s messengers always recognized His voice. When he submitted to God’s will, David represented God as a prophet, “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2). Anna, an 84-year-old woman, spoke as God’s prophetess (Luke 2:36–38). God chose young Jeremiah to be His prophet and said, “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. ... Behold, I have put My words in your mouth” (Jeremiah 1:7–9).

5 What does God expect His prophets to do with a message He gives them?

Ezekiel 2:7 “You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse ...”

The prophet is to deliver God’s message, even if it is difficult to hear. When God communicated through Samuel at a young age, he showed himself to be a genuine prophet. “Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him ...” (1 Samuel 3:18). The prophet’s spoken or written messages are God’s thoughts, expressed through that person’s words.

6 When God’s prophets speak, will people always accept the message God gives through them?

Jeremiah 43:2 “... And all the proud men spoke, saying to Jeremiah, ‘You speak falsely! The Lord our God has not sent you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to dwell there.’”

God’s people did not believe that Jeremiah’s prediction and command were truly God’s Word. In fact, many of God’s prophets were rejected by His people, and even killed. Jesus warned that those who refuse to hear God’s messengers would pay a high price, saying, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! ... See! Your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:37–38).

7 What message is often rejected when it is heard from God’s prophets?

Jeremiah 25:4–5 “And the Lord has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear. They said, ‘Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings ...’”

God earnestly wants to rescue His people from sin and death. We are wise if we will humbly listen when God’s prophets point out sins we are unaware of, and the sinful habits we try to hide. “... Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful ...” (Joel 2:13).

8 Have God’s prophets always fully understood everything they were shown or told?

Daniel 8:27 “And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king’s business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.”

God’s prophets have been ordinary people who did not possess all knowledge. However, they’ve trusted God enough to deliver His messages, even when they were not fully aware of the long-term significance of their words. Daniel, a prophet with the gift of wisdom (Daniel 1:17), grew in his understanding as he studied God’s message through the prophet Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2). Peter tells us that God’s prophets studied and prayed diligently to understand His messages more clearly: “... The prophets have inquired and searched carefully, ... searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1 Peter 1:10–11).

9 Did all of God’s prophets write a book that is included in the Bible?

Many of God’s inspired prophets spoke without writing anything that appears in the Bible, even though their messages were from God. Consider these few examples: Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Jehu (1 Kings 16:7), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Iddo (2 Chronicles 13:22), Nathan (2 Chronicles 29:25), John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11), and Agabus (Acts 21:10).

10 Will God give the gift of prophecy again, now that the prophets of the Bible are no longer among us?

Joel 2:28–29, 31 “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your

old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. . . . Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.”

Eight hundred years before Jesus, the prophet Joel was shown the time when the Holy Spirit would be poured out at Pentecost, following Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 2:1–2, 16–18). The scene God showed to Joel also extended much farther—to the days “before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31) when God would guide His people through prophets.

Ephesians 4:11–13 “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers . . . till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God . . .”

The gift of prophecy is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it continues in the church to the end, working continuously to bring mature faith and unity to the family of God. We can expect God’s church to have the genuine, biblical gift of prophecy when God chooses to give it.

11 How important will prophecy be in the church when Jesus comes?

Revelation 12:17 “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

God’s church (symbolized by a pure woman) will be under fierce attack from Satan’s deceptions when he knows his time is short (Revelation 12:12). God’s loyal worshippers will be easily recognizable because they keep all God’s commandments and have the testimony of Jesus. God’s



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commandments are easy to find in the Bible; but what is “the testimony of Jesus”? Two related interactions with an angel in the book of Revelation provide the answer.

Revelation 19:10 “And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”

The “testimony of Jesus” is also called the “spirit of prophecy.” Now look at a very similar experience when John is in the presence of a glorious angel again. Notice how “your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus” are described in this text:

Revelation 22:8–9 “... I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel Then he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.’”

“Your brethren the prophets” are the same ones “who have the testimony of Jesus,” which is “the spirit of prophecy.” The clearest testimony of Jesus is Jesus Himself—everything about who He is, what He said, and what He did as recorded in the Bible. The testimony of Jesus is a defining feature of God’s church at the end of the spiritual battle, just before Jesus returns at the Second Coming. God’s people will have a clear prophetic message that points others to God’s Word that speaks perfectly of Christ and God’s commandments. Satan will fight to cast doubt on this important message, but God’s truths will shine brightly.

12 Is everyone in the church chosen by God to be a prophet?

Ephesians 4:11 “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets . . .”

God calls some—but not all—to be His prophets. Isaiah responded to His specific call, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then he was commissioned and sent with a prophetic message, “Go, and tell this people” (Isaiah 6:8–9). Bible students and preachers who repeat and explain the prophets’ words in the Bible may have the gift of teaching or preaching, although they are not called by God as prophets.

13 When God chooses someone to be His prophet, will they be permanent messengers for God?

Judges 6:8 “... The Lord sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel . . .’”

This is one example of God sending someone with a specific, one-time message to share. Others have accurately shared God’s message

“The Bible gives five specific criteria for examining a prophet.”



but have later turned away from God. Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, gave a prophetic message (Exodus 15:20–21) but later was not authorized as God’s spokesperson (Numbers 12:1–8).

14 Is everyone who claims to be a prophet truly from God?

Matthew 24:11 “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.”

Matthew 24:24–25 “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.”

As Jesus taught about the time before He would return, He didn’t say there would be no prophets, nor that we should reject all prophets. Instead, He told us to be vigilant and to recognize the false prophets Satan would raise up as deceptive counterfeits to God’s genuine messengers. Jesus described false prophets as wolves “who come to you in sheep’s clothing” (Matthew 7:15). Their messages will sound good and appear to be powerful, but subtly turn attention away from clear Bible truths. We need to know the difference between a true and false prophet so we can recognize and follow every true message from God.

15 What reliable tests has God given us to identify who is a true prophet bearing His message?

1 Thessalonians 5:21 “Test all things; hold fast what is good.”

The Bible gives five specific criteria for examining a prophet. All five of these tests of a prophet are to be applied by observing that person’s complete life and message—and not just an isolated experience. No one needs to be deceived by messages that do not come from God.

Deuteronomy 13:1–4 “If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, “Let us go after other

gods”—which you have not known—“and let us serve them,” you shall not listen to the words of that prophet You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice”

TEST #1 – A true prophet leads people to complete obedience to God—including each of His Ten Commandments. A prophet of God will never change or minimize even one of God’s laws.

Jeremiah 28:9 “As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent.”

TEST #2 – A true prophet’s predictions come true. Not every prophet reveals coming events, but any predictions they make must come true. The future events God announces through His prophets are not easily anticipated common occurrences. They include the grand events of the plan of salvation and kingdoms of the world. Careful consideration must be given to predictions when their fulfillment depends upon man’s obedience to God. These are called *conditional prophecies*, because they will only be fulfilled if people meet the conditions set forth in God’s Word. Jeremiah 18:7–10 and Jonah 3:4–10 provide good examples of this.

1 John 4:1–3 “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God....”

TEST #3 – A true prophet exalts the truth about Jesus, including His eternal glory, His sinless life and ministry, His death for us, His resurrection, and His work in Heaven. Bible prophets often spoke of Jesus, directing us to trust His perfect righteousness.



“A true prophet leads people to complete obedience to God ...”

Matthew 7:15–17 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.”

TEST #4 – A true prophet lives as a worthy representative of God. Only Jesus has lived a life free from sin, but a true messenger from God will live according to the instructions God gives. This test requires time to examine the character and the life by the principles of God’s Word.

Isaiah 8:20 “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

TEST #5 – A true prophet speaks in complete agreement with Scripture. Every messenger is to be tested by comparing their messages with the standard of God’s prophets who have come before. God’s inspired Word does not change (Isaiah 40:8). A true prophet will not introduce new teachings that contradict or replace what God has already said. Instead, they will amplify the brighter light of God’s Word, so its message is unmistakable.

16 What has God revealed through His prophets about His future plans?

Amos 3:7 “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”

Isaiah 46:9–10 “... I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done ...”

God has described every event in His plan of salvation in the Bible, so the steps leading to Jesus’ Second Coming will not take us by surprise. The words of God’s prophets do not come with vague statements like “perhaps,” “maybe,” or “I think.” God especially wants us to understand the great prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation that focus on the coming events before Jesus returns.

17 What warning has God given to those who do not listen to God’s prophets today?

1 Thessalonians 5:19–20 “Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies.”

2 Chronicles 36:16 “But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy.”

Ignoring God’s chosen means of guiding us ends in death. Pharaoh learned this the hard way. He brought disastrous plagues on himself—and all of Egypt—when He rejected Moses as God’s prophet, and said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go” (Exodus 5:2). When we reject God’s prophets, even through partial or slow obedience, we reject God, Who the prophet represents (1 Samuel 8:7).

18 What promise has God given us when we believe and follow His prophets today?

2 Chronicles 20:20 “... ‘Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.’”

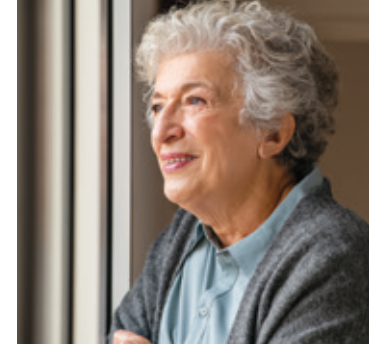
2 Peter 1:19 “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place ...”

Believing all God’s prophets gives us full light on the truths of His Word, enabling us to avoid Satan’s dangerous traps. God’s word of prophecy is our trustworthy guide as we prepare to meet Jesus. “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near” (Revelation 1:3).



“Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY LIFE TODAY?



1. The words of God’s prophets are on record in the Bible, but they can only help us if we spend time reading them. Which messages from God’s prophets do you want to understand better?

2. How can you use your Bible and prayer to apply the biblical tests of a true prophet today when someone claims to represent God?

3. The Bible promises that God’s true gift of prophecy will be present in His end-time church, but warns that there will also be false prophets before Jesus comes. Will you ask God to help you understand His Word so you can tell the difference?

4. God’s gift of prophecy is intended to change our lives. How can you treasure the words of God’s prophets so that their messages are not given in vain?

5. Who do you know that needs to hear what you have learned? “I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed” (Psalm 119:46).

Additional Notes:

WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS FOR ME IN THE GIFT OF PROPHECY?



God has not left His people in the End Times without a timely messenger. In the early 1800s, the attention of Christians throughout North America and many parts of the world turned to the timing of the Second Coming. While they suffered a bitter disappointment when Jesus did not return at the time they expected, a small group of believers returned to God’s Word for answers. As they struggled to understand certain passages of Scripture, God encouraged and instructed them by sending a very unlikely messenger. She was a physically weak young woman named Ellen Gould (Harmon) White, who had no education beyond the third grade.

Despite receiving harsh criticism throughout her life, as well as enduring physical struggles and losses, she faithfully shared the messages she received from God in over 2,000 visions. She did not seek followers for herself. She did not become rich, nor did she have buildings or movements named after her. Instead, Ellen and her husband James White dedicated their time, energy, and resources to encourage and support believers who were following the Bible, even when it was difficult or unpopular.

Her visions were repeatedly accompanied by verified physical phenomena, and her ministry included predictive prophecy, as well as guidance for the specific challenges Bible believers were facing as their movement of faith grew. For over 70 years, she delivered God’s specific calls for repentance as she was instructed in vision, even when they involved herself, her loved ones, influential leaders, or strangers she had never met. She never led anyone to hold what she said or wrote in place of the Bible. Rather, she directed people to “Let everything be brought to the Bible, for it is the only rule of faith and doctrine” (*From the Heart*, p. 31). God worked through her to point people to messages in the Bible that had been neglected and misunderstood. Since she was recognized as a messenger for God—even by skeptics—the details of her life were meticulously reported. And now, years later, we can examine her life and see that she met every biblical test of a messenger from God.

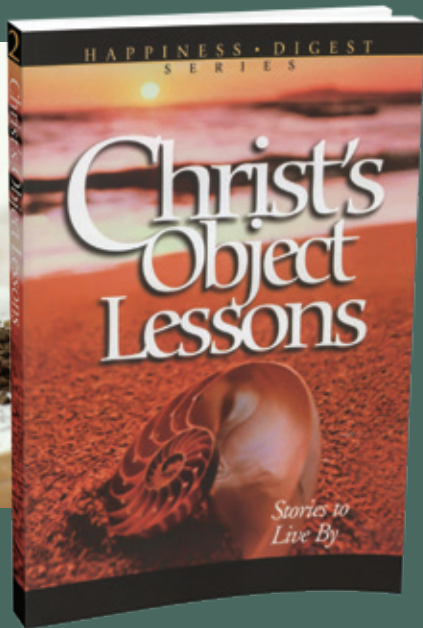
Her many books, thousands of articles, and other writings are on record for anyone to confirm that she spoke in harmony with the Word of God. Ellen White’s descriptions of her favorite topics—Jesus and salvation—enrich the lives of Christians around the world with a depth of devotion not found in any source outside of God’s Word. Her writings repeatedly turn our attention to the soon-to-be-fulfilled prophecies of Jesus’

return, and amplify the Bible message that God is working to “make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). Through her humble work, God’s people who have their eyes on His truth receive practical instruction for the important task we face today—to “prepare to meet your God” (Amos 4:12).

LESSON SUMMARY

- 1. God wants to be understood clearly by His people,** but sin has corrupted our minds so we are unable to hear Him speaking directly to us.
- 2. God communicates with us in many different ways,** including through His chosen prophets.
- 3. A prophet is a person who listens to God’s voice and is called to represent Him** by sharing His messages clearly.
- 4. Satan counterfeits God’s prophets** by raising up false messengers who appear convincing.
- 5. The Bible gives five clear tests** to confirm the prophets He sends.
- 6. The gift of prophecy** will be present in God’s end-time church.
- 7. We need God’s help to identify His prophets,** so we can believe and follow their messages.

Additional Notes:



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