

***The Prophetic Gift***  
***Confidence in the Prophetic Gift***

Lesson #13 for March 28, 2009

Scriptures: Psalms 41:9; Isaiah 53:4-6; Matthew 23:28-31; John 5:39; Acts 10:9-16,44-48; 17:11.

1. This lesson focuses on how we should read the Bible and the writings of Ellen White and how we determine what we should believe. Do we make a regular practice of carefully reading Scripture to determine what is truth? When deciding what we should do, do we primarily focus on our own personal wants and desires or the truth as revealed by God? As a physician I am constantly comparing what my patients tell me with what I can observe when I examine them. When we listen to advertisements on television or on the radio, or when we see one in the newspaper or magazine, we are comparing what we know with what the advertisement suggests. We practice this every day.
2. Why is it important that we focus on the Bible as our source of authority for all our teachings? Do you think that Seventh-day Adventists have gotten any of their doctrines exclusively or even primarily from Ellen White? Why do some people reject her writings without really having read them?
3. Today, we have an incredible wealth of material to study to discover what God has said to us. Not only do we have the original languages in which the Bible was written, but also we have many translations and even translations into many languages to try to determine what God's message to us is. We also have the writings of Ellen White.
4. While Enoch, Noah, and Abraham developed a trusting relationship with God without having any Bible of any sort, {*Signs of the Times*, February 11, 1897 par. 6} since the days of Moses, God encouraged His people to turn to the truth as revealed in His written Word.
5. The disciples went through a time of great disappointment. When Jesus died and was buried, they believed that all their hope was gone. They were hiding behind locked doors for fear of the Jews! They were certain that they would be next to be crucified. In 1844, the "Adventist church" also went through an early time of great disappointment. Following His resurrection when Jesus met with some of His lesser-known disciples on the road to Emmaus, what did He do? Why didn't He just announced who He was, point to the fresh scars in His hands, and say, "What are your questions? Here I am to answer them"? What did Jesus say to them? Having lived, worked, walked, taught, and performed miracles among them, why didn't He just point to those things rather than turning to the evidence in the Old Testament? How much evidence is there in the Old Testament to support the ministry of Jesus Christ? Is it possible that they had available to them some materials that have since been lost? But Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead! Wasn't that more convincing evidence than something hundreds of years old from the Old Testament?
6. What do you think Jesus said that was so convincing to these disciples from Emmaus as He quoted from the Old Testament? What caused them to say, "Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:13-35, *GNB*)

When was the last time the Old Testament caused your heart to burn within you? They did not have any scrolls with them, but Jesus said things that they already knew from the Old Testament that suddenly impacted their thinking as nothing else had! Did Jesus intentionally hide His identity until they had been convinced on the basis of Old Testament Scripture? What is it that they expected to hear? Had they perhaps memorized the Old Testament promises about the Messiah? What passages did they hear about every week in the synagogue? Where did they get these mistaken ideas about what Christ would do when He came? They had misapplied passages from the Old Testament that we now know apply to His second coming. There is no hint in the Old Testament that there ever would be more than one coming. If you were placing all your hopes on the promises of the Messiah from the Old Testament and you had to choose between focusing on Isaiah 53 suggesting that the Messiah would be bruised, etc., or on the promises of the Messiah coming with great power to punish or destroy His enemies—and maybe to destroy your enemies—which would you want to focus on?

7. Read Acts 1:6. What was it that the disciples were still hoping that Jesus would do for them and for their nation? After three years with Jesus, why was that still their big question? Why is it so hard for us to set aside our cherished hopes even when we find out they will not be fulfilled? Jesus, the greatest teacher this world has ever seen, had spent years with His disciples, and He still could not convince them of the truth about what was going to happen to Him. (Luke 18:31-34) Ellen White suggests that they were so steeped in the teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees that they could not get beyond those ideas despite all the efforts of Jesus. The early Adventists desperately hoped that Jesus would come again in 1844. God easily could have prevented the great disappointment in 1844. So, why did He allow it to develop in the way it did? In the future will there be great disappointments for God's people? How would we survive another great disappointment?
8. Why do you think Peter, Paul, and the other apostles always encouraged their followers and listeners to turn to the Scriptures to verify the things which they said? (Acts 17:11) Look at sermons recorded in the New Testament. They virtually all followed a similar pattern: here is what the Old Testament says; this is what happened in the life and death of Jesus Christ; so, what should be our response? Why did the people who knew Jesus' life so well on a personal basis turn to the Old Testament for evidence instead of simply telling the incredible stories that they had witnessed themselves? Was Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2) a reflection of what Jesus had said to the two on the road to Emmaus? (Luke 24:13-35) What about Stephen's speech? (Acts 7)
9. To your mind what is the most convincing evidence for the truth? Is it God's will as revealed through thousands of years of prophetic and apostolic ministry and writings? Only God can predict the future. (See Isaiah 40-55) No human can do that. Or are you more impressed by miracles which appear to come from the hand of God? Are you directed by personal impressions that come to you when you think about God? Why do some people find it easy to believe God's words while others seem to be "natural doubters"? When you want to witness to others, what do you turn to as the most convincing evidence for Christianity?
10. All through the Bible and all through the writings of Ellen White, we are encouraged to look to Jesus Christ. Do you see Jesus Christ clearly revealed in the Old Testament? What about in

*The Desire of Ages*? Do the Ten Commandments reveal Jesus Christ? What do the stories of the flood (Genesis 6-8) and the killing of the firstborn in Egypt (Exodus 12:29-32) teach us about Him? What does the book *The Great Controversy* tell us about Jesus Christ? All of these are records of the actions of Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:4)

11. When reading from Scripture or from the writings of Ellen White and finding directions regarding how we should live, do we first ask ourselves what does this tell us about Jesus Christ? Or, do we consult our own personal preferences?
12. Do you hesitate to read the writings of Ellen White for fear that you might find something that you are instructed to do which you do not want to do?
13. Through this entire series of lessons, repeatedly we have been told that we must recognize the Bible as our only source of doctrine and authority. Why is that important? If we want to witness to others, we must get our evidence only from Scripture—which hopefully they will recognize as having authority. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church that you personally know, do you believe any of your doctrines and teachings have come from Ellen White rather than from the Bible? Does Ellen White give us a new emphasis or new understanding of some teachings? If we turn to Ellen White for our source of authority when speaking to non-adventists, what would keep them from using the book of Mormon, or the Qu’ran, etc. When “doing” public evangelism, why do Adventists almost always start with the prophecies of Daniel? Why do you suppose that Genesis and Daniel have been the two books of the Bible that have been most vigorously attacked by the Devil. Genesis tells about God’s creative power, and Daniel demonstrates God’s ability to predict the future. Satan cannot do either of those things!
14. Many of us believe that the understanding of the great controversy that Ellen White espoused is a tremendous help in understanding the Bible. Others who are critical of Ellen White believe that the great controversy doctrine is not found in the Bible. In your own personal study of Scripture, have you clearly seen from the Bible the great controversy over God’s character and government and Satan’s misrepresentations of God? (See the handout entitled “The Great Controversy Described in Scripture” which is posted in the “General Topics” section of the Teacher’s Guides on the website, [Theox.org](http://Theox.org)) Can you think of any doctrine or teaching that you personally hold that comes primarily—or even exclusively—from the writings of Ellen White? The great controversy is clearly described in Scripture, but Christians have not recognized it. Ellen White simply focused our attention on it.
15. Ellen White has given us many small details about biblical stories which are not found in the Bible. Should we discount those details? Do they help us to understand the overall story? Do they change the overall meaning of the story? Do they help to make the biblical stories clearer? Do they encourage us to read the Bible stories more carefully? Does *The Desire of Ages* help us to understand the gospels? Absolutely! If one goes back and compares carefully, one will find almost everything that Ellen White wrote is supported by the biblical record. Most of us have seen pictures that have two different faces in them. Some observers see one face while others see the other face in the same picture. Do we do that with the biblical record?

16. As many of us look at the Bible stories beginning from Genesis 1, we believe that the best way to read those stories is to ask one question: What does this story/passage say to us about God? By doing that, are we distorting the original intent of the Author/authors? Do we agree that all the way from Genesis to Revelation, the Scriptures are primarily a revelation about God? How well do we know “the Jesus of Scripture”? Who was the God of the Old Testament? (1 Corinthians 10:1-4; John 5:39; Luke 24:44) Was It really Christ? Clearly, God wants us to believe that the entire Scripture is a revelation of Himself. Could the same be said about the writings of Ellen White? Does Ellen White give us a clear revelation of the truth about God? Are all of the 100,000 pages she wrote a clear revelation of the truth about God? Have you ever thought that the writings of Ellen White were in contradiction to any portion of Scripture? The author of the book, *The White Lie* had someone point out to him that all of the arguments that he had brought against Ellen White had also been brought against the Bible. What was his response? “Don’t you try to destroy my Bible to save your Ellen White!” Many of the arguments against Ellen White are very old.
17. Scholars who have carefully looked at the criticisms against the writings of Ellen White have recognized that every one of them has been leveled at Scripture as well! Do you have any serious reservations about the Bible—or even a portion of the Bible—and whether it should be believed? What about the writings of Ellen White? Can we safely ignore any of God’s messages to us?
18. There are those who believe that biblical writers contradict each other. Some would place James in contradiction with Paul. While it is true that each Bible writer may have his own individual emphasis, we must study the Scriptures to recognize the central themes and the consistent picture through all. The same must be true of our reading and understanding of Ellen White. Even when he was facing death, Paul begged Timothy to bring him his documents and his parchments so that he could be as close as possible to God’s Word. (2 Timothy 4:9-13) Paul knew that he was about to be beheaded, but he was still focused on how he could spread the gospel through a better understanding of Scripture!
19. In our busy lives with all the pressures of work and social activities and all the entertainment available, do we really make God’s Word—both through the Scriptures and through the writings of Ellen White—our primary study?
20. The Pharisees in Christ’s day believed what they wanted to believe and manipulated Scripture to try to support their own ideas. Do we sometimes do the same? (Matthew 23:28-31)
21. Have you tried to carefully explain to another Christian why you believe the Bible, or why you believe the writings of Ellen White? Read 1 Peter 3:15. Are you prepared to give a reason for the hope that is within you to anyone who asks? The old county hospital motto for teaching medical students was: “See one. Do one. Teach one!” (It is not really that simple!) But it points out the fact that preparing yourself to teach someone else makes it much clearer in your own mind. When I first heard Dr. Graham Maxwell explain why Jesus had to die, I was so excited about it that I wanted to tell others. I already had a degree in theology, and I had never heard such an explanation before! But when I tried to explain it to others, I lost my way in the logical sequence of the explanation that had seemed so clear to me. I had to go back and go over

it several times before I could explain it. In order to make sure that Scripture is clear in our minds, we need to try to explain our beliefs to someone else, preferably to several others to see if they “get it.” How different would the progress of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in our day be if every member made it his task to understand every doctrine clearly enough so that he could explain it to others?

22. In Jesus’ day He attracted a great deal of attention by miraculous healings and miraculous things which He did. Are those miracles more impressive to you than the words which He spoke? What should be the role of miracles in establishing our beliefs? If you saw a miracle happen at church, what would be the first thing that you would say to anyone who asked you about church that day? Do you think that God should be using more miracles in our day to convince people of the truth? What is the relationship between miraculous acts and the truth about God? Today, we see television evangelists performing what might appear to be miraculous healings and then saying, “God is the one giving me power to do these miraculous things. Therefore you should believe what I say.” Is that ever a safe approach to take? Will Satan perform great miracles at the end to try to deceive even “the very elect”? (Matthew 24:24; Revelation 13:13,14) We had better be prepared! The Devil is coming with fantastic miracles. After he has performed a number of miraculous deeds, should we then believe what he tells us? Why does the Bible tell us about the importance of knowing for sure what is truth? “If we obey God’s commands, then we are sure that we know him. <sup>4</sup>Those who say that they know him, but do not obey his commands, are liars and there is no truth in them.” (1 John 2:3,4, *GNB*)
23. What are the real reasons why some people oppose and disbelieve the writings of Ellen White?
24. *The Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Friday, March 27, 2009 says:
- Opposition or indifference to the writings of Ellen G. White usually is the result of
- (1) a failure to read enough of her writings to recognize and understand her overall and well-balanced instructions;
  - (2) a failure to understand the proper relationship of her writings to Scripture;
  - (3) a failure to recognize the true nature of divine inspiration; [Prophets must be understood in their context. They are human beings. Revelation suggests that there will be a whole group of people testifying to the truth like “prophets” in the end of time. They will be called the 144,000.]
  - (4) a failure to recognize the principle of time and place in connection with the counsel she has given;
  - (5) a failure to acknowledge that her counsels are still relevant today;
  - (6) a failure to recognize that while sufficient evidence is given to convince the honest in heart, the Lord does not remove the opportunities for doubt; [SC 105]

- (7) an unwillingness to make a personal sacrifice of some cherished habit or practice that seems out of harmony with the counsels given in the writings of Ellen G. White. [Is this the real objection behind many other objections?]

25. *The Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Friday, March 27, 2009 also says:

Most opposition to the Spirit of Prophecy would disappear

- (1) if people would stop using some pet sentence or paragraph as a club with which to hit somebody else;
- (2) if everyone would apply the counsels to themselves instead of trying to apply them to someone else;
- (3) if we would not quote her without knowing where the quote is found (there are too many apocryphal sayings in existence);
- (4) if we would not discuss something she wrote without having studied everything she wrote on a particular topic (partial knowledge can be more dangerous than no knowledge at all);
- (5) if we would recognize that people's failure to live up to or carry out the counsels that Ellen White has given has nothing whatsoever to do with the reliability of the visions and instructions. [The truthfulness and reliability of the prophetic message never depends on how well God's people are following that instruction. If you do not believe that, consider the Old Testament!]  
—Based on Denton E. Rebok, *Believe His Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: The Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1956), pp. 309-312.

Do we know Jesus Christ so well that when the Devil comes claiming to be Jesus Christ, we will be able to say to his face, "You are not the Jesus Christ of the Bible"?

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