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2026 Q4 The Gift of Prophecy
Lesson 3 – Old Testament Prophets

by Lori Atkins

SATURDAY

Memory text is from 2 Chron 20:20:

> Jehoshaphat stood and said, 'Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established *(made firm / lasting / upheld / secure / reliable / faithful)*; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.'

What does this mean?
Was there magic in believing a prophet?
Is this teaching a version of the prosperity gospel?

Here is what one of the founders of the SDA church had to say about that text:

> The light of prophecy still burns for the guidance of souls, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." It shines on the pathway of the just to **commend**, and on the way of the unjust to **lead to repentance and conversion**. Through its agency **sin will be rebuked and iniquity unmasked**. It is progressive in the performance of its duty to **reflect light on the past, the present, and the future**. If those who have received the light will **appreciate and respect the testimonies of the Lord**, they will **see the religious life in a new light**. They will be convicted. They will **see the key that unlocks the mysteries that they have never understood**. They will **lay hold of the precious things that God has given them to profit withal and will be translated from the kingdom of darkness into God's marvelous light**. Those who despise the warning will be left in blindness to become self-deceived. But those who heed it, and **zealously go about the work of separating their sins from them** in order to have the needed graces, will be **opening the door of their hearts that the dear Saviour may come in and dwell with them**. He [God] has made provision that **all may be holy and happy if they choose**. Sufficient light has been given to this generation, that we may learn what our duties and privileges are and enjoy the precious and solemn truths in their simplicity and power. We are accountable only for the light that shines upon us. The commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus are testing us. If we are faithful and obedient, **God will delight in**

> **us, and bless us as His own chosen, peculiar people**. When perfect faith and perfect love and obedience abound, working in the hearts of those who are Christ's followers, they will have a powerful influence. (*My Life Today*, pg 4)

This lesson compares the gift of prophecy in the ministry of Old Testament prophets to what we know as a GPS system that helps travelers know where they are, where they are going, the best way to get there, and even provides warnings against hazards and things to avoid. Through their narratives, counsels, prophecies, poetry, and songs, we can discover much about the dozens of prophets who presented God's messages to the people… and the lesson focuses in on a few of the more noteworthy Old Testament prophets.

Who are some of your favorite OT prophets and why?

SUNDAY

The Humanity of the Prophets

The lesson directs us to James 5:17, 18 to see what James had to say about our friend Elijah. He was human just like we are, he was a man "subject to passions as we are", a man "with a nature like ours"…and isn't this true of every one of the prophets? How does that make you feel to recognize that they were all so similar to us? But what happened to Elijah right after the literal mountaintop experience on Mount Carmel against the prophets of Baal? Seems like he went from the highest of highs right down to the lowest of lows.

> It would seem that after showing such undaunted courage, after triumphing so completely over king and priests, and people, Elijah could never afterward have given way to despondency nor

> be awed into timidity. But he who had been blessed with so many evidences of God's loving care was not above the frailties of mankind, and in this dark hour his faith and courage forsook him…Had he remained where he was, had he made God his refuge and strength, standing steadfast for the truth, he would have been shielded from harm. The Lord would have given him another signal victory by sending His judgments on Jezebel…Into the experience of all there come times of keen disappointment and utter discouragement – days when sorrow is the portion, and it is hard to believe that God is still the kind benefactor of His earthborn children; days when troubles harass the soul, till death seems preferable to life. It is then that many lose their hold on God…Could we at such times discern with spiritual insight the meaning of God's providences we should see angels seeking to save us from ourselves, striving to plant our feet upon a foundation more firm than the everlasting hills, and new faith, new life, would spring into being… For the disheartened there is a sure remedy – faith, prayer, work. Faith and activity will impart assurance and satisfaction that will increase day by day…In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He knows your needs. He has all power. His infinite love and compassion never weary…And He will bestow upon His faithful servants the measure of efficiency that their need demands…Did God forsake Elijah in his hour of trial? Oh, no! He loved His servant no less when Elijah felt himself forsaken of God and man than when, in answer to his prayer, fire flashed from heaven and illuminated the mountaintop. (*Conflict and Courage,* pg 213)

Does this happen to you…where your faith journey feels like a roller coaster ride from the dizzying heights of the mountain top to the lonely, desolate valleys?

Are there other examples of this in the Old Testament?

Are there ways to guard against that? David in the Psalms.

What other OT prophets most notably struggled with their own "humanity"?

- Noah – had a drinking problem
- Isaac refused to follow God's revealed will
- Rebekah was a deceiver
- Jacob was a deceiver and polygamist
- Judah (the x-times great grandfather of Christ) had a child with his daughter-in-law who he thought was a prostitute
- Rueben had an affair with Jacob's concubine Bilhah
- Moses was a murderer and reluctant leader
- Aaron built a golden calf and led the people in idolatry and failed to discipline his sons
- Eli was a poor father

- Samuel was a poor father
- David was a man of blood, an adulterer, murderer, and polygamist
- Solomon was a mega-polygamist, built temples to false gods and sacrificed his son to Moloch
- Jonah was a racist
- The twelve Apostles were arrogant, proud and constantly strove for supremacy
- Martin Luther was a racist and an alcoholic

What does this tell us about God and what He values?
Behaviors or a trusting heart?
Bad deeds or a humble willingness to repent and be healed?
What does this tell us about how we should treat others when we know about some sin in their lives?
Does a person have to have perfect behavior in order to be a prophet?
What IS necessary in order for a person to be one of God's servants? A willingness to trust God and grow with God over time.

What are we to think of this long list of flawed prophets, priests, kings, and disciples who were used by God in spite of (or even BECAUSE of) their character flaws – get your minds around that. Our part in vindicating and glorifying/revealing God's character is the very real transformation of our hearts, minds, and characters that takes place when we are won back to trust and open our hearts to His Holy Spirit so He can heal us and transform us and remake us to be like Christ. Mrs. White describes this as being covered in the robe of righteousness.

> This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us…When we submit ourselves to Christ the heart is united with His heart; the will is merged with His will; the mind becomes one with His mind; the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; **we live His life**. This is what is means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. (*Signs of the Times*, 11/22/1905 Par. 5))

Does this sound like we are candy coated rotten apples being covered in the pretty robe so God can't see how wicked we really are?
Does any of that sound legal or forensic or having to do with deeds and record books and accounting?

So. when Moses, with the entire unfallen universe looking on, offered to have his name removed from the book of life **for eternity(!)** in order to save the Israelites, doesn't it make his testimony much more powerful to know that he started out as a murderer and a reluctant leader?

What if we didn't know about David's adulterous and murderous past?

Peter's cowardice and pride and predjudice?
Paul's Isis-like persecution of the first Christians?

To me (and to the onlooking universe), it is these selfish fear-driven motivations being transformed into selfless love, these carnal character trait corrections that stand as of the most powerful evidence that God exists…and that his healing methods and design principles work – NOT in record books, not in a legal accounting, not in a false dichotomy where we are declared righteous and healed even though we wicked and terminal – but in REALITY, in the hearts, minds, and characters of those who trust Him! And really, if we have ANY hope at all of being involved in this process, of having the chance to be His servants and messengers, we have to be encouraged and know that God CAN use us – WANTS to use us, flawed and damaged as we are, to work for Him and with Him, to reach out to others and share the message God has given us.

Christ said in John 14,

> The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even **greater things**, because I, on my way to the Father, **am giving you (us) the same work to do that I have been doing**.

This story…our story of redemption…of being once lost but now found, of being blind but now being able to see, of His amazing grace that saved a wretch like me…the story that we will be telling and singing for all eternity…the angels don't have this story to tell, Jesus Himself doesn't have this story to tell – sharing that story with others is up to us.

MONDAY

Identifying True Prophets

Let's do a little review here to see if you have been listening over the last two weeks and define what is a prophet?

Remember God has used several methods to communicate with fallen humans over the course of history:

- Face to face as with Adam/Eve, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, etc.
- Nature and "what He has made" (Romans 1:20)
- Through dreams and visions
- Through scripture
- Through our life experiences
- Events, circumstances, reality (signs of the times)

- Through angels
- Through other people – His servants/messengers (Jonah, Isaiah, Elijah, etc.), ie, His PROPHETS!
- Through prophecy (foretelling future events)

So how do we determine who is a prophet?
Does a prophet mean only prognosticating future?
Is a prophet only a person who has had a supernatural vision, dream, or face to face communication with a heavenly angel?
Or would a prophet be anyone who is enlightened and directed by the Holy Spirit to take a message from God to others?
Is there a difference between someone directed by the Holy Spirit to take a message to someone or some group and the special gift of prophecy?

I believe the special gift of prophecy to be the supernatural enlightenments that occur through God's actions, whether visions, dreams, or direct communications with angels, or even God Himself. But I also believe that in Scripture, the prophets of God are God's spokespersons, people who are enlightened and empowered by the Holy Spirit to take the message God has given them at that time to others, usually a specific group of people…and the Bible repeatedly refers to these folks as the "servants of God."

According to Easton's Bible Dictionary:

> PROPHET — (Heb. nabi, from a root meaning "**to bubble forth, as from a fountain**," hence "**to utter**", comp. Ps 45:1). This Hebrew word is the first and the most generally used for a "prophet." In the time of Samuel another word, ro<eh, "**seer**", began to be used (1 Sam. 9:9). It occurs seven times in reference to Samuel. Afterwards another word, hozeh, "seer" (2 Sam. 24:11), was employed. In 1 Ch. 29:29 all these three words are used: "Samuel the seer (ro'eh), Nathan the prophet (nabi'), Gad the seer" (hozeh). In Josh. 13:22 Balaam is called (Heb.) a kosem "**diviner**," a word used only of a false prophet. The "prophet" proclaimed the message given to him, as the "seer" beheld the vision of God. (See Num. 12:6, 8). **Thus a prophet was a spokesman for God; he spake in God's name and by his authority** (Ex. 7:1). **He is the mouth by which God speaks to men** (Jer. 1:9; Isa. 51:16), **and hence what the prophet says is not of man but of God** (2 Pet. 1:20, 21; comp. Heb. 3:7; Acts 4:25; 28:25). {Easton, M.G.: Easton's Bible Dictionary. Oak Harbor, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, c1897}

What is a false prophet and how can someone be a false prophet?

They can knowingly and willfully lie and mislead, they can be duped and think they are on God's side when they are not, they can be inspired by the false spirit, they can make a human mistake?

Are prophets infallible?

Based on that list we just went through, obviously not.

Can a prophet receive a vision and not know what it means?
Did Daniel know what his visions meant?
Can a prophet, after having a vision, interpret the vision without God's insight and thus the vision be from God but the interpretation be their honest, best understanding at the time?
Is everything written by someone with the gift of prophecy a direct revelation from the Lord?

So how do we know who is a **true** prophet?
Why can't false prophets just wear FALSE stamped on their foreheads so we can know to disregard their message?
How do we distinguish between true and false prophets?
Can only true prophets perform miraculous signs and wonders?
Do only true prophet's prophecies and predictions come true?
Does the "test of the prophets" apply to every single thing the prophet says, does, or writes?

What if a prophet gets a message from God that contradicts a message previously sent by God?
What then?
Did Abraham get a message from God to sacrifice Isaac?
Did he later get a message contradicting that?
Did Balaam get a message from God not to go with the pagan emissaries?
Did he later get a message to go?
Did Jonah get a message that God was going to destroy Nineveh?
Did God do something different?
Did God tell the Israelites through Samuel, no kings?
Did God then **through Samuel** pick their first two kings?

> And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. (Moroni 10:4)

> To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures. (General Conference Daily Bulletin, April 13, 1891)
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> True inspiration never rejects true inspiration, but is in harmony with the Bible. Anything that leads away from the word of God is proved to be inspired from beneath. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. (*Review & Herald*, August 27, 1901 par. 3)
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> We should not take the testimony of any man as to what the Scriptures teach, **but should study the words of God for ourselves**. **If we allow others to do our thinking, we shall have crippled energies and contracted abilities**. The noble powers of the mind may be so dwarfed by lack of exercise on themes worthy of their concentration as to lose their ability to grasp the deep meaning of the word of God. The mind will enlarge if it is employed in tracing out the relation of the subjects of the Bible, comparing scripture with scripture and spiritual things with spiritual. (*Steps to Christ*, pg 89)

What does the Bible teach about discernment of Spiritual things?

> The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. (1 Cor 2:14, NIV)

What does that mean?
Doesn't it mean that our carnal minds, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, cannot comprehend the things of God?

Then, wouldn't that mean that whoever writes the truth is only able to do so because the Holy Spirit enlightened their minds?

If Billy Graham speaks or writes the truth, who enabled Him? Max Lucado?
You, your pastor or Ellen White?

To the degree someone presents the truth about God they are only able to do so because of the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Is the truth spoken by a prophet any purer than the truth spoken by a church member, teacher, preacher, lay leader?

So the question as we will see, the only truly important question is, is the person speaking truth?

What is more important than being able to tell who is a prophet from God and who is not a prophet of God? Becoming a friend of God so that you can learn to think for yourself and discern the right from the wrong. So that even if an angel from heaven comes with another message you won't be deceived.

Even with a genuine prophet of God are we to accept whatever he says or are we to think about it, examine it with our God given reason and only when we are convinced by evidence that appeals to reason apply it to our own lives?
Is everything a genuine prophet says applicable to all people in all times?
Did Paul say that a woman should not teach men?
Are there examples in Scripture where women did teach men?

Then is this inspired direction universal in its application or local to a specific situation? Are we ever supposed to surrender our thinking to another – even a prophet? Or are we always to retain our own judgment, weigh the evidence, commune with God for ourselves to understand the truth of it, and with a Holy Spirit enlightened mind, come to our own conclusion as to how we will respond to the message from the prophet and apply it to our lives?

Romans 14:5, we are to be fully persuaded in our own minds.

Consider these two scenarios: A calculus teacher puts a problem on the board: you have no idea how to do calculus, but the teacher is a long-time friend who after putting the problem on the board, tells you the answer and you believe him, OR you have learned from your long-time friend the principles of mathematics and how to do calculus and as he tells you the answer, you understand the calculations and, realizing his answer is correct, believe him. Is there a difference in these two types of belief?

What kind of belief does God want us to have in His prophets? In Him?
What are all of God's prophets trying to accomplish?
Move people into a saving relationship with God!

> This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. (Heb 8:10,11)

If/when we experience the fullness of this New Covenant relationship, will there be a need for prophets?

So.. are you a prophet?
Could you be a prophet?

Asking myself that question makes me twitch a little bit, maybe even cringe…but I also believe we are going to have to get a lot more comfortable wearing that title.

Do you believe like I do that you/we have been given a special message from God.. maybe even a picture of God, a perspective of His character, His law, His principles and methods and governance that is relevant to this specific time in human history…perhaps the one that was originally given to advent church to proclaim, but since they have gone off mission God has given His message others – just like the king whose servants refused his invitation to the feast so he invited others to come?

And do you feel blessed to have this new paradigm and this new perspective on how he runs His universe, and do you feel called by Him and empowered by the Holy Spirit to share and give to this liberating message to others?

Maybe not to an entire nation, maybe not even to an entire denomination...but to your family?
Your neighbors?
Your coworkers?
Your students?
Could you be their Moses or Elijah or Samuel?
Based on all the definitions we've just discussed, what would you call yourself then?

Maybe if there was another term - smaller than major, even less than minor - miniscule? microscopic?

Honestly, there is no other reason I would be standing up here right now. I would for sure be back in the control room with my face hidden behind a computer rather than in front of a camera, but maybe we have to get more comfortable with being uncomfortable.

In the end of time when Satanic delusion reaches a crescendo only those who have developed the ability to think for themselves and weigh the evidence will be safe from being drawn into the power of the lie.

> The Lord designs to warn you, to reprove, to counsel, through the testimonies given, and to impress your minds with the importance of the truth of His Word. The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. Man's duty to God and to his fellow man has been distinctly specified in God's Word; yet but few of you are obedient to the light given. Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse. (*Faith I Live By,* pg 295)