

BELIEF 18: THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

The Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Num. 12:6; 2 Chron. 20:20; Amos 3:7; Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 22:8, 9.)



WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PROPHECY

The gift of prophecy is given by God for building up [His church](#) and the common good of all. (1 Corinthians 12:7-10). This gift is given by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:4).

In Romans 4, we find that everyone has been given a measure of faith (verse 3), and that we each have a gift different from one another. Some have the gift of

prophecy, some are called into other forms of ministry, some teach, and some cheerfully serve and encourage others.

Just like all the spiritual gifts we can be given, the gift of prophecy is relevant and important for this current time. Having the gift of prophecy means a person receives messages or insight from God. It does not change who a person is.

Having the gift of prophecy doesn't mean standing on top of a rock, proclaiming vague statements about the future to anyone within earshot. Sometimes people can be used as prophets without even drawing attention to the fact that they are "prophesying."

The most important thing about any spiritual gift is that it opens the door for the Holy Spirit to work on others' hearts.

The prophetic gift can serve many purposes. The Holy Spirit has bestowed this gift upon people so they can:

- Provide profound spiritual encouragement
- Be a wake-up call to believers caught in a sin or struggle
- Provide additional insight and understanding to seekers
- Warn people of how the future either can or will unfold

Someone being used by the Holy Spirit in this way helps us to consistently live in a state of **growth** and readiness, especially in preparation for **Jesus' Second Coming**.



HOW THE PROPHETIC GIFT WAS DEMONSTRATED IN THE BIBLE

Throughout history, God has given revelations of His will for His people through those with the gift of prophecy.

"Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7, ESV).

We have numerous examples in [the Bible](#) that show the prophetic gift in use. God used people of all types, personalities, genders, ages, occupations, etc. to deliver His messages to others.

In the New Testament, many of Jesus' followers with this gift assisted in the founding and spreading of the early church. The church was *"built on the*

foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20, 21, NKJV).

This means **Jesus Christ** is the initial foundation upon which the apostles and prophets built and initiated the church's mission outreach. It was through prophets that the Holy Spirit selected Paul and Barnabas for their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1, 2) and gave direction as to where missionaries should labor (Acts 16:6-10).

Prophets also edified, united and protected the church (Ephesians 4:12-14, 1 Corinthians 14:3, 4). They often warned of future difficulties, such as famine (Acts 11:27-30), just like Joseph in Genesis 41. God worked through Joseph's prophetic gift as He gave him the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream, which led them to store their surplus grain for a famine seven years later.

Many with this gift delivered one significant message to a large group of people, such as Noah (Genesis 7-9), Jonah (book of Jonah) or Moses (Exodus – Deuteronomy).

Others used this gift to deliver a poignant message to a small group or an individual, such as Nathan (2 Samuel 7:4-17; 12:1-15), Samuel (1 Samuel 3, 9), Elijah (1 Kings 17-18) and Elihu (Job 32-35).



In the book of Judges we find Deborah, a prophetess (Judges 4:4) and a judge of Israel. She is one of the only judges to be described as having this gift.

Instead of large public proclamations, however, she “would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah in Benjamin and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to settle disputes” (Judges 4:5, CSB).

Many of her prophetic statements were delivered individually, such as with the military commander Barak of Kedesh. She informed him of God’s specific commands for where, when and how to lead his armies (Judges 4:6-23).

Several other women demonstrated the prophetic gift in both the Old and New Testaments:

- Miriam (Exodus 15:20, Numbers 12:2)
- Huldah (2 Kings 22:14, 2 Chronicles 34:22),
- Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14)
- unnamed, “the prophetess” (Isaiah 8:3)
- Anna (Acts 2:38)
- Philip the Evangelist’s daughters (Acts 21:9).

There is much diversity in the people the Holy Spirit used as prophets. Some were rich, some were poor. Some were of high status, some servants or farmers.

Some were well-received while others were despised, like Jeremiah. Some were eloquent while others were not, like Moses.

And there was Balaam, who dabbled in spiritualism and often acted out of greed or selfishness. However, his fear of the Lord was genuine, and he knew he could only speak the words God gave him. But oddly, because of his association with spiritualism, God used him to bless Israel when he was hired by a king to curse them! This demonstrated the power of God to the King of Moab (Numbers 22-24).

No matter the type or person or the type of message they were to proclaim, the Holy Spirit gave them the prophetic gift so they could help bring people back to Him or stay focused on Him, and to tell of the plans He had in store for His people.



**THE PROPHETIC GIFT IS A SIGN OF THE “REMNANT”
NEAR THE END OF TIME**

We are told that as the end of time approaches (or the “day of the Lord,” as many Bible verses describe it), this gift will be used all the more to assist the church through difficult times.

Joel 2:28-31 describes an increased activity of this gift the closer we get to the Second Coming of Jesus. The apostle Peter reemphasizes this passage of Scripture in Acts 2:16-18.

This refers to the **remnant of true believers**, with whom Satan is furious because no matter how hard he tries, he just can’t snuff out the spiritual fervor of God’s followers. The Holy Spirit bestows the gift of prophecy among this remnant to encourage these followers and hold fast to the *“commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17, NKJV)*.



HOW TO TEST THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PROPHECY

The Bible warns us that we may encounter false prophets who try to deceive us. And today, it’s almost a reflex to think someone is crazy if they claim to be a prophet, or to be exercising the prophetic gift.

But the Bible also tells us not to “*despise prophecies, but test all things. Hold onto what is good*” (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21, CSB).

1 John 4:1 also tells us to “*test the spirits*” to see if their messages are truly from God.

When reading through the Bible, there’s an easy way to determine when many people in the Bible are demonstrating the prophetic gift. Since having this gift means receiving and delivering messages from God, look for what some Bible scholars call the “prophetic introductory formula,” or phrasing similar to “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel...”

This is especially the case in the Old Testament.

However, it is possible and still common for the prophetic gift to be used even without this phrasing. Fortunately the Bible gives us guidelines for telling the difference between a prophecy from God, or information from elsewhere.

1. THE PROPHETIC GIFT WILL ALWAYS BE IN HARMONY WITH THE BIBLE.

We are warned that if prophets “*do not speak according to God’s word, it is because there is no light in them*” (Isaiah 8:20, NKJV). There are also several notes of caution throughout the New Testament about hearing a “different gospel” (Galatians 1:6-9) than what the Bible reveals (Romans 16:17, 18; Ephesians 4:14).

2. THE PROPHETIC GIFT WILL ALWAYS UPLIFT JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD, THE WORLD’S SAVIOR WHO BECAME FLESH AND DIED TO SAVE HUMANITY (1 JOHN 4:1-3).

Revelation 19:10 even says the “testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (NKJV). If anyone’s “message” goes against any who Jesus is and what He means to humanity, they are not exercising the true gift of prophecy as given by the Holy Spirit.

3. THE PROPHETIC GIFT WILL BE DEMONSTRATED BY SOMEONE WHO “BEARS GOOD FRUIT.”

Matthew 7:15-20 tells us to *"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"* (NKJV).

While no one is perfect all the time, our general habits—or our fruits—will ultimately show the priorities of our life. You might ask about the prophet in question, *do they practice what they preach?* and then, *if they're caught not doing so, do they confess and repent?*

4. THE PROPHETIC GIFT WILL ALWAYS GLORIFY GOD, NOT "SELF."

In today's trends of individualism, it can be easy for a self-exalting prophecy to sneak into a message that sounds good and true. But the glory is always to be God's. The Holy Spirit gives the gift of prophecy, and He can take it away as well. If anyone's words promote ideas about any human being able to save themselves, or obey the law themselves, or that God's grace isn't needed, that's a red flag.

When you hear a message from someone claiming to have the gift of prophecy, ask yourself, *At the heart of this message, who comes out with the glory or the recognition?* If the prophecy is sincere, the answer should clearly and unmistakably be God.

5. IF THE PROPHETIC GIFT INVOLVES INFORMATION ABOUT THE FUTURE, THERE SHOULD BE NO ROOM FOR ERROR.

This was the advice of the prophet Jeremiah when he said, *"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"* (Jeremiah 28:9).

If you look at the prophecies in the Bible that were fulfilled, you'll notice that things came to pass exactly as they were described.



ELLEN WHITE RECOGNIZED AS A MODERN PROPHET

Just as the Bible places great importance on the spiritual gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14), Seventh-day Adventists believe this remains just as true today. This gift can be used any time to edify and warn God's people, giving guidance on how to live now and how to prepare for the coming events and the end of the world.

One of the most prominent [co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church](#), Ellen G. White, demonstrated the gift of prophecy and also met the criteria of the above tests of a prophet.

Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. She also made clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. Her role was to point people back to the Bible—never to replace it or supercede it.

Ellen White insights proved useful for aspiring Bible scholars learning how to interpret or apply Scripture to modern times. She also used her gift to hold congregations and individuals accountable when their choices had an impact on their spirituality, fellowship, or leadership.

All in all, the spiritual gift of prophecy has special meaning within the Adventist denomination because of the role it played in the formation of its history. Adventists also look forward to when we will see many more people being used by the Holy Spirit in this manner, as we draw closer to Jesus' Second Coming.

For further information, visit <https://www.adventist.org/gift-of-prophecy/>