

The Reluctant Prophet

Examining the Life and Ministry of God's Modern-day Messenger

Nineteenth century America was a busy time for luminaries. In 1823, the Latter-day Saints' founder Joseph Smith received a visitation by an alleged prophet named Moroni. Beginning in 1844, Andrew Jackson Davis, the father of modern spiritualism, began to practice magnetic healing. In 1878 the founder of the Watchtower society, Charles Taze Russell, proclaimed the rapture of the saints (it never came). Mary Baker Eddy developed her method of mystical healing called "Christian Science" in 1866.

Why so many would-be prophets in such a short span of time? Perhaps the enemy was seeking to distract minds away from a very special prophetic gift that would emerge in 1844.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been criticized for teaching the divine inspiration of the writings of church pioneer Ellen White. Detractors claim that her childhood head injuries caused the visions she received. And it is true that at the age of nine a schoolmate struck her nose with a stone, causing lifelong health complications.

While this study can't address those claims in detail, such resources exist.¹ What we will do is consider how, in spite of her physical infirmities, God used her mightily and prophetically. And isn't it just like God to use "the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27)?

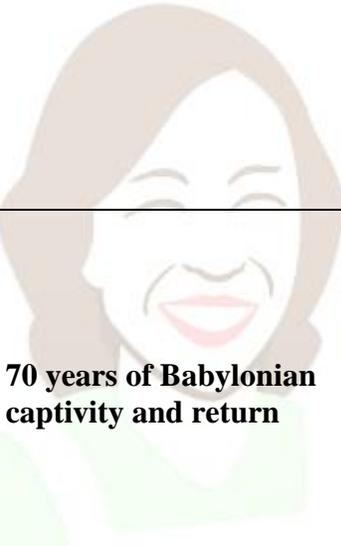
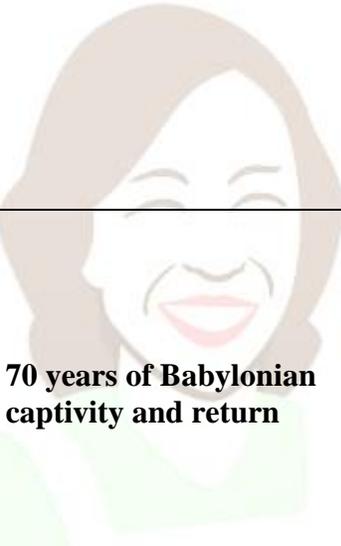
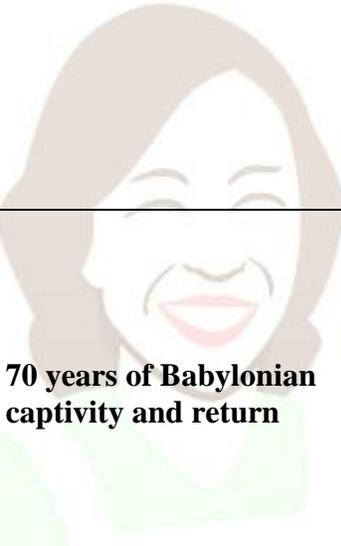
The gift of prophecy connects strongly to the establishment of a church. In their lists of spiritual gifts, both Ephesians 4:11 and Romans 12:6 list "apostles and prophets" first. Can we conclude that prophecy is as essential as apostleship in the establishment of a church or movement? Yes.

"Prophet" contains the pronoun "pro," which means "before." Prophets have the unique ability to penetrate the veil of time. Prophets have a vision for the future of the church, communicated to them through visions and dreams (See Numbers 12:6). According to the wise man, when this visioning ability is absent, the "people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). In Lamentations 2:9 Jeremiah speaks of backslidden, depraved Israel: "The law is no more, and her prophets find *no vision* from the Lord."

Prophets work in a pattern that resembles the passing of a baton. It follows a basic A-B-C order, in which one prophet, "A," predicts "B," a period of time for God's people, followed by another prophet, "C," leading out in the fulfillment of the prophecy.

For example, Abram (A), prophesied 400 years of Egyptian captivity and release (B), which was fulfilled when Moses (C) led out in the Exodus.

¹ <https://whiteestate.org/legacy/issues-visions-html/>

A	B	C
This prophet predicted this and this prophet led out in its fulfillment.
<p>Abram</p> <p>“Then He said to Abram: ‘Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions’” Genesis 15:13-14.</p>	<p>400 years of Egyptian captivity and release</p> 	<p>Moses</p> <p>“And the LORD said: ‘surely I have seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry. . . So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land’” Exodus 3:7-9.</p>
<p>Jeremiah</p> <p>“For thus says the LORD: ‘After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place’” Jeremiah 29:10.</p>	<p>70 years of Babylonian captivity and return</p> 	<p>Haggai</p> <p>“Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah. . . prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah . . . and Zerubbabel . . . rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them” Ezra 5:1& 2.</p>
<p>Daniel</p> <p>“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks” Daniel 9:25.</p>	<p>483 years until the Messiah</p> 	<p>John the Baptist</p> <p>“As it is written in the Prophets: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.’” John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. . . ‘the time is fulfilled,’” Mark 1:2-4 & 14.</p>
<p>Daniel</p> <p>“For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed” Daniel 8:14.</p>	<p>2300 years until the cleansing of the sanctuary in 1844</p>	<p>Contemporary prophet ?</p>

Notice that Daniel's prediction ended after the canon of Scripture was completed. This means the prophet who brings his prediction to fulfillment will be a contemporary prophet.

Think back to the dark ages. When the early church displaced fundamental truths and piety with pagan rites and practices, the people perished for lack of vision. The church descended into formalistic superstition. Bibles were chained to monastery pulpits, unavailable to the common people.

But then reformers came to dispel the darkness. First, the bright beams of the Great Reformation in the 16th century dawned. Champions of the faith such as Wycliffe, Luther, and others placed the Bible into the hands of the people, and truths obscured for centuries began to surface. During the 1700s, the Great Awakening saw an intensified interest in the Scriptures in the Western world.

At this time the gift of prophecy reemerged. The Second Advent Movement had led many to believe in Jesus' soon coming. A group of dedicated Christians from Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and other churches began to pray for light. As they searched the Scriptures, they discovered the seventh day Sabbath, the great memorial of Creation, which God had said to "remember." This led to a "Sabbath reform." As their little movement grew, God sent the gift of prophecy into their midst to establish and strengthen it.

Consider these facts:

-Through the prophet Joel, God promised, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . before the coming of the great and awesome *day of the Lord*" (Joel 2:28 & 31).

-Paul advised, "Come behind in no gift; waiting for the *coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Corinthians 1:7).

-Revelation says that the church through which God communicates His end-time message to the world has the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12), the gift of prophecy (Revelation 19:10), and keeps all the commandments of God (Revelation 14:12).

These passages tell us that the closing scenes of earth's history will feature a revival of the gift of prophecy.

Jesus warned against false prophets. He said "They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). But if all prophets were false, He'd have warned against all prophets! Paul said, "Despise not prophesying" (1 Thessalonians 5:20).

Fortunately, God has given us Biblical tests to which we can subject prophets to sort out the good, the bad and the ugly. Here are five of them:

- Biblical- the prophet's message will harmonize with Scripture.
- Authentic- the prophet's life will reflect their message.

- Christ-centered- the prophet’s teaching will be Christ-centered.
- Accurate- the prophet’s predictions will come true.
- Edifying- the prophet’s influence will uplift and strengthen the church.

Test	Text
Is the prophet’s message biblical ?	“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” Isaiah 8:20.
Does the prophet’s life authenticate their message?	<p>“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” Deuteronomy 13:1-3.</p> <p>“Beware of false prophets. . . You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?” Matthew 7:15& 16.</p>
Is the prophet’s teaching Christ-centered ?	“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” 1 John 4:1& 2.
Are the prophet’s predictions and insights accurate ?	“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.
Does the prophet’s influence edify the church?	“But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church ” 1 Corinthians 4:3& 4.

Is there a contemporary prophet who passes these tests? Yes. Let’s talk about her.

Ellen G. White made a remarkable contribution to the world of literature, spilling forth in her lifetime 25 million words, which formed more than 5000 periodical articles and 49 books. She is, according to one researcher’s probe into the Library of Congress, the fourth most translated author in the history of literature and the most translated female author of all time.²

Beyond literary achievement, her work bore the mark of a true messenger of God. Her first vision was received as a mere teen soon after the Great Disappointment of 1844. Through this vision, hope was delivered to the discouraged Advent believers. After this vision came thousands more. As her gift matured, she produced books of greater and greater spiritual and literary quality. For 70 years she ministered diligently for Jesus.

² <https://ellenwhite.org/correspondence/184569>

Test	Ellen White
Is the prophet's message biblical ?	The index to 77 of her principle books, not counting periodical articles, contains approximately 30,000 Scripture references.
Does the prophet's life authenticate their message?	The New York <i>Independent</i> published the following at the time of her death: "She was absolutely honest in her belief in her revelations. Her life was worthy of them. She showed no spiritual pride and she sought no filthy lucre. She lived the life and did the work of a worthy prophetess." ³
Is the prophet's teaching Christ-centered ?	From her own pen, "He [God] gave Him [Jesus] not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature." ⁴
Are the prophet's predictions and insights accurate ?	The fulfillments of Ellen White's predictions are too numerous to list here, but the most striking may be the San Francisco/Oakland earthquake. Her final warning came in April of 1906. She saw houses "shaken like a reed" and buildings falling to the ground, and heard "shrieks of the injured and the terrified." ⁵ Two days later, at 5:12AM, the San Andreas fault slipped nearly 270 miles. The ensuing quake left 490 city blocks in a state of total devastation.
Does the prophet's influence edify the church?	Her 5,274 page, nine-volume series called <i>Testimonies for the Church</i> consists of "advice, visions and counsel dealing with institutional development, church organization, home and foreign mission endeavors, social and health reforms, etc." ⁶

In spite of these truths, Ellen White did not claim to be a prophet. In her own words, "Little heed is given to the Bible and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the 'Greater Light.'"⁷ She championed the Holy Scriptures as the final court of appeal in all doctrinal questions. She didn't put her writings on a level of authority with the Bible, nor should we. Her messages work like a flickering candle helping us grope our way back to the enduring torch of truth.

The Takeaway

We could easily fill pages with affirming tests of Ellen White's prophetic gift. But one test you can perform—the test of personal experience. Why don't you sample some of her writing, such as her pocket-sized volume on practical Christianity called *Steps to Christ*, or her great work on the history and prophetic future of the Christian faith called *The Great Controversy*? If you will road-test her writing, you will find that they speak to your soul and point you to Jesus.

³ The New York "Independent," August 23, 1915, quoted in *The Later Elmshaven Years*, by Authur White, p. 444.

⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

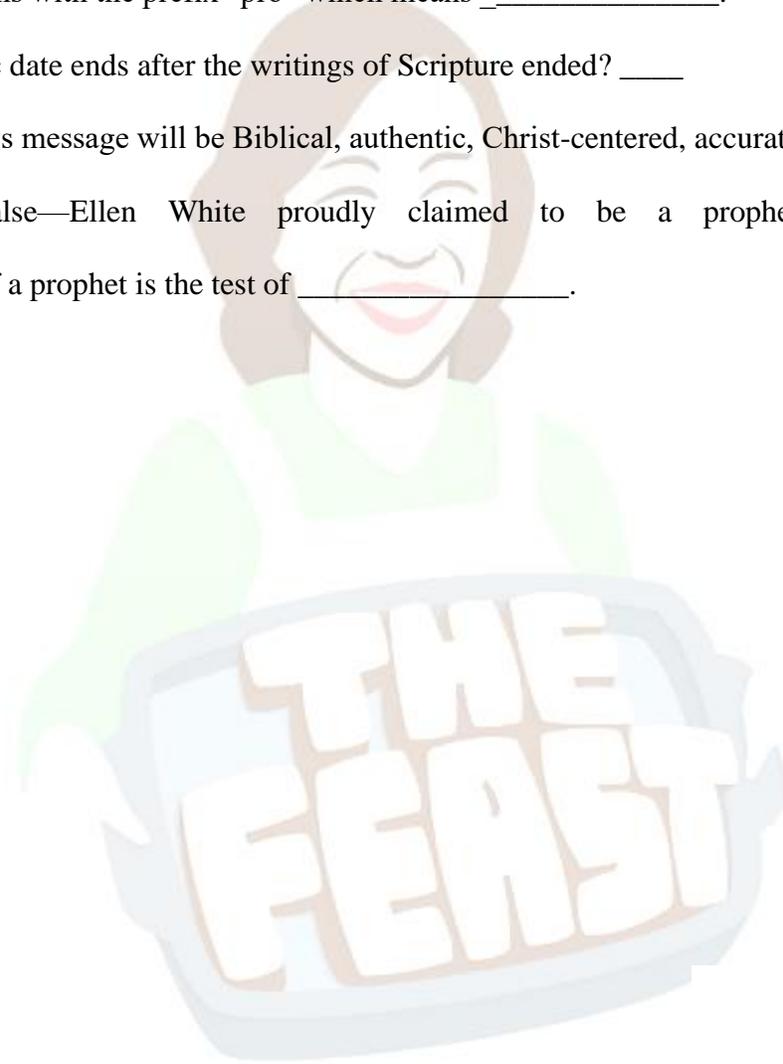
⁵ *Testimonies*, v. 9, p. 92.

⁶ Rene Noorbergen, *Ellen G. White, Prophet of Destiny*, p. 8.

⁷ Ellen White, *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 125.

Quiz

1. The prophetic gift of Ellen White emerged in _____.
2. What significant movement was taking place around that time? The _____
3. God uses the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are _____.
4. “Prophet” begins with the prefix “pro” which means _____.
5. What prophetic date ends after the writings of Scripture ended? _____
6. A true prophet’s message will be Biblical, authentic, Christ-centered, accurate, and _____.
7. True or false—Ellen White proudly claimed to be a prophet. _____
8. The best test of a prophet is the test of _____.



1. 1844
2. Second Advent Movement
3. Mighty
4. Before
5. 1844
6. Edifying
7. False
8. Personal experience

Answer Key