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Prophets
God's Spokespersons

“Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper” (2 Chronicles 20:20)
In the teachings and experiences of the Biblical prophets abound profitable lessons for a Christian today. Although inexhaustive in this article, Ellen G. White, the messenger of God, presents many lessons drawn from God’s spokespersons. In their messages and life experience, the overarching theme is that it is the voice of Jesus speaking through the prophets from the time of Adam to the end of time (Spirit of Prophecy, 3:210). The lessons drawn from the prophets encompass all aspects of a Christian wellbeing, namely: spiritual, physical, mental, and social.

Spiritual

It is hypocritical for a Christian to esteem the prophets, yet ignore their messages or teachings. Like the Pharisees and Scribes who adorned the tombs of the prophets, but sought to kill Jesus whose voice was speaking through the prophets, a hypocritical Christian cannot benefit from the messages of the prophets (Desire of Ages, 617).

Learning from the prophet Enoch, whom the Lord took to heaven without seeing death, we need to seek the purity of heart and conformity to the will of God. Alike Saul, when the prophet Samuel anointed him to be the first king of Israel and the Spirit took control of him, God gives us a new heart to aid us in battling the old natural inclinations of evil (The Youth’s Instructor, November 10 [1898]). And as the prophet Habakkuk, a Christian should have faith in God amidst forbidding circumstances, awaiting the Lord’s deliverance in His appointed time. The believer should take courage, for God is with him or her (Review and Herald, September 10, [1895]). As the Lord is being with us, we should be cheerful and not mournful in our Christian life.

In the realization of our accountability, we ought to direct our hearts to God and seek for strength and grace in earnestness. There should never come a time when a believer can think that a long life of Christian service can ameliorate for sin. Prayer is the only protection against the temptations of worldly riches and honor. Sometimes God grants our selfish desires so that through their bitter experience, we may come to the realization of their folly and consequently repent (Patriarchs and Prophets, 605).

A rebellious course like that of King Ahab finds satisfaction in the messages of false prophets. The Word of God is the only effective weapon against the teachings of the false prophets (Eph 6:17) (Selected Messages, 2:72 [1893]). Jesus warned of the false prophets, for they communicate with the spirits of the dead (Desire of Ages, 631).

Physical

Laziness and idleness are condemned in the lives of the would-be prophets Elisha and Amos. Both men were very active in their farming employments prior to God calling them to the prophetic ministry. Cooperating with God in humble tasks and working with faith and hope in little things, a Christian fits for higher duties with greater responsibilities. For Elisha, his menial job was to pour water on the hands of the prophet Elijah before he inherited a double portion of Elijah’s Holy Spirit (2 Kgs 3:11; 2:9, 5). Elisha ministered to the prophet Elijah in the uncertainties of the prophet. Like Elisha, a Christian should never look down upon menial work or look back or hesitate to take up God’s call or responsibility. It is by working that will make a person see something great and good in life (Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and
Students, 279).

To the youthful pastors who view themselves as above menial work, the lesson is that they should climb down from their pastoral elevation and do the necessary. They should trust in God, patiently persevering even when things look bleak (Review and Herald, October 7, [1873]). Whether locally serving or going on foreign missions, to consecrate one’s life for God’s ministry is paramount. In whatever position, a Christian needs to learn in the school of Christ (Testimonies to Ministers, 264).

Like the prophets we not only need to speak smooth words, but also cutting messages, a two-edged sword – the Word of God. A believer should be cognizant of the fact that God calls His people in their small and great engagements to be a witness for Him among the nations today, revealing the principles of God’s kingdom (Christ’s Object Lessons, 357). We are obliged, as Christians, to preach the gospel to the ignorant and lost like the prophet Jonah and likewise practice temperance as John the Baptist in order to turn people from their idolatry, gluttony, and extravagance (Testimonies to the Church, 3:62). We should bear the messages of truth regardless of consequences, sacrificing all that we have. A Christian is to be vigilant, working without the motive of gaining wages.

Mental

Education should be all-round. The prophet Daniel and his Hebrew friends determined to acquire such an education (Manuscript Release, 19:116). The schools of the prophets which the prophet Samuel established were places where young men would get endowed with the Holy Spirit and go out to preach the gospel. Similarly, the modern-day schools of the prophets (Church schools) are to carry out the gospel outreach. These messengers of God are to take the knowledge of God to the world (Loma Linda Messages, 535).

The schools of the prophets educated young men to magnify the law of God and make it honorable, leading them to maintain their allegiance to God. True education should honor and glorify God amidst false religions; and false prophets should be confronted with the truth – the Word of God.

Social

The lessons of hospitality and kindness drawn from the treatment of the prophet Elijah by the widow of Zarephath is profound. Similarly, the hospitality and kindness shown to the Lord and His two angels by the prophet Abraham is impressive. A Christian should be welcoming and kind. Poverty and meagre resources should not make us scale down on our spirit of hospitality and kindness (Testimonies to the Church, 6:347). A believer, like the prophet David, needs to forbear and not judge. David forbore with king Saul and spared his life.

David did not take advice from religious men who were sinning against God. Likewise, a Christian should not connect himself or herself with those who do not fear God. Like the prophet Elijah who ran ahead of King Ahab to the entrance of the gate of the city of Samaria, we need to show respect to those who are in authority even though they may be evil rulers (Review and Herald, October 7, [1873]).

Concerning marriage, its rights and happiness should be carefully guarded, even at great cost, because unless guarded, it can bring untold harm to the parties involved (Daughters of God, 28). A good example is the discord brought by such unguardedness in the home of the prophet Abraham, including his grandson Jacob. In the case of Abraham, his wife Sarah caused him to take Hagar as wife who became arrogant and insubordinate to Sarah eventually causing Abraham to banish Hagar into the desert. For Jacob, Leah was not loved and a bitter rivalry ensued between Leah and her sister Rachel that drew in their maids, causing Jacob to marry four wives.

“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.”

( Ellen G. White, My Life Today, 42)
Mrs. White firmly believed that God had given her the prophetic gift, but she did not prefer the term “prophet” to describe her work. She wrote:

Some have stumbled over the fact that I said I did not claim to be a prophet; [reference is here made to a discourse given at Battle Creek, October 2, 1904, in which she said, “I do not claim to be a prophetess.”—compilers.] and they have asked, “Why is this?”

“I have had no claims to make, only that I am instructed that I am the Lord’s messenger, that He called me in my youth to be His messenger, to receive His word, and to give a clear and decided message in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Early in my youth I was asked several times, Are you a prophet? I have ever responded, I am the Lord’s messenger. I know that many have called me a prophet, but I have made no claim to this title. My Saviour declared me to be His messenger. “Your work,” He instructed me, “is to bear My word. Strange things will arise, and in your youth I set you apart to bear the message to the erring ones, to carry the word before unbelievers, and with pen and voice to reprove from the Word actions that are not right. Exhort from the Word. I will make My Word open to you. It shall not be as a strange language. In the true eloquence of simplicity, with voice and pen, the messages that I give shall be heard from one who has never learned in the schools. My Spirit and My power shall be with you.

Be not afraid of man, for My shield shall protect you. It is not you that speaketh: it is the Lord that giveth the messages of warning and reproof. Never deviate from the truth under any circumstances. Give the light I shall give you. The messages for these last days shall be written in books, and shall stand immortalized, to testify against those who have once rejoiced in the light, but who have been led to give it up because of the seductive influences of evil.

Why have I not claimed to be a prophet?—Because in these days many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word “prophet” signifies.” (Selected Messages, 1:31, 32)

Note in the selection above that she does not deny that she is a prophet. Rather, she says, “I have had not claims to make.” When she asks rhetorically, “Why have I not claimed to be a prophet?” her answer is not, “Because I am not one,” but rather she gives two reasons: “Because in these days many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word ‘prophet’ signifies.” Neither of these is a denial of her having the prophetic gift. A prophet is a messenger from God, “to receive His word, and to give a clear and decided message in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

As for Old Testament prophets, Jeremiah’s having told about his own call, in which God said that He was appointing Jeremiah a prophet to the nations (Jer 1:5). Furthermore, Jeremiah 20:2 speaks of Jeremiah in the third person as “Jeremiah the prophet.” If we believe that Jeremiah was the author of the entire book, this is a place where a prophet calls himself a prophet, even if it is in the third person. For the most part the Bible prophets did not call themselves prophets, but rather did what Mrs. White did, which was to say that the word of the Lord had come to them, they had a message from God, they had received a vision, etc.
The prophetic calling is not a career that one may study for, such as elementary school teaching or the practice of law. Prophets are chosen by God. Men and women should seek the fruits of the Spirit, but the gifts of the Spirit are just that—gifts.

But the Bible also refers to the “sons of the prophets” and the “company of prophets,” especially in the days of Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha. (1 Sam 10:5, 10; 1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5; 4:38; 5:22; 6:1) It seems that Samuel inaugurated the “school of the prophets” to educate teachers to assist parents in the training of their children for lifelong usefulness and service. Though not directly inspired as was Samuel, the young men in these schools were “divinely called to instruct the people in the works and ways of God.” (Education, 46)

The question as to whether all can be prophets becomes exceedingly practical. On one occasion Ellen White was asked: “Do you think we must understand the truth for ourselves? Why can we not take the truths that others have gathered together, and believe them because they have investigated the subjects, and then we shall be free to go on . . . ? Do you not think that these men who have brought out the truth in the past were inspired of God?”

Her answer is instructive: “I dare not say they were not led of God, for Christ leads into all truth; but when it comes to inspiration in the fullest sense of the word, I answer, No.” (Review and Herald, March 25, 1890)

The issue is not concerning the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit that all committed believers should experience daily. Paul faced a similar issue in 1 Corinthians 12, and he asked: “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?” (1 Cor 12:29). The answer implied was “No.”

In modern times, “prophetic preaching” is often understood in terms of anyone who seeks to interpret and proclaim the Word of God, especially in terms of social issues. If that preaching or writing is done with special earnestness and drama, the effort is described as a prophetic tone. However, to assert that such proclamation is evidence that one has the gift of the Spirit of prophecy would be wrong. All the tests of the genuine prophet must be applied.

Jack Provonsha, long-time professor of Christian Ethics at Loma Linda University, pointed out three ways in which prophets differ from others of God’s people: (1) Prophets are chosen, “not because their comprehension and transmission would be flawless, but because they are the best vehicle” available; for example, their perceptions are “less skewed by character and experience than others.” (2) Prophets are given a voice because they “command attention”: their contemporaries “see in them someone special, someone different from the ordinary.” (3) Prophets are given “special communications” from God, sometimes in “extraordinary ways,” and other times “in rather ordinary ways, such as thoughts, impressions, and intuitions, which were perceived by the prophet as the prompting of the Spirit.” (Jack Provonsha, A Remnant in Crisis [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1993], 57, 58)

Some have advocated the view that all believers have the gift of prophecy in the sense that each believer has the ability to distinguish between inspired and uninspired writings—that is, their own judgment determines what is inspired and what is not when reading the claims of a genuine prophet. This position is not taught in the Bible.
Know the Prophets

Identify the following prophets and fill in their names. Also try to read more about them and what they did for God.

**Name:**

He was a prophet in Israel. The Lord asked Him to marry a prostitute to demonstrate how much God loves us though we sin against Him severally.

**Name:**

Her husband died only seven years after her marriage. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. She was a widow until the age of 84. She was present at the temple when Jesus was dedicated.

**Name:**

She was a judge in Israel. She is the only female judge mentioned in the Bible. She went with Barak to war against Sisera and the Canaanite army and all the army of Sisera was slain.

**Name:**

He and his friends refused to defile themselves with the King’s food. He interpreted the dream of the King when all others failed. He wrote about end time prophecies.

**Name:**

The Lord asked him to make a yoke and put it on his neck, to symbolize that the Israelites will be required to serve Nebuchadnezzar in captivity.

**Name:**

He was imprisoned in the island of Patmos and while there, the Lord revealed to him great things about what will be in the future.

**Name:**

He challenged the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel to prove whether the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob is the true God or their god Baal.

**Name:**

Son of God, Savior of the world and the only one by whom we can have everlasting life according to John 3:16.

**Name:**

Messenger of the Lord to the Remnant Church of Christ. She wrote many books that are still relevant today.
Appreciating God's Blessings

Official opening of E. G. White Study Center in Beira, Mozambique, and participants of the Spirit of Prophecy Symposium at the same location.

The director of the E. G. White Estate, Elder Jim R. Nix during the SOP Symposium at Helderberg College, South Africa.

Left to right: Dr. Anna Galeniece, Dr. Alberto Timm, Elder Jim Nix, and Dr. Merlin Burt during the SOP Symposium at Helderberg College.

The SID Spirit of Prophecy Coordinator, Dr. Super Moesi at Helderberg College, South Africa.

Left to right: Dr. Adelowo Adetunji, Director of E.G. White Research Center, Babcock University; Dr. Ademola Tayo, Vice Chancellor, Babcock University; Elder Jim R. Nix, Director, E.G. White Estate; Dr. John Enang, SOP Coordinator, WAD.

Part of the people present at the dedication of the new building for E.G. White Research Center at Babcock University, Nigeria.

A SOP Symposium was held at Babcock University right after the dedication of the new building.
The book *The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Church* is an excellent tool for every teacher, pastor, and church administrator who wants to get better acquainted with the gems of the spirit of prophecy which the Lord graciously bestowed upon His Church prior to His second coming. The content of this volume presents the material that promotes the study of the Bible and the readership of Ellen G. White books. This book is long overdue!

Blasious M. Ruguri, DMin
President, East-Central Africa Division

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