

# PANORAMA OF PROPHECY

A LIFE-CHANGING BIBLE STUDY!

## PROVING THE PROPHETS

1 Kings 22:1-40

### THE STORY ...



**A**hab, the wicked king of Israel, wanted to recapture the town of Ramoth-gilead from the Syrians. But he needed help, so he asked good King Jehoshaphat of Judah to join his campaign against their common enemy. Jehoshaphat said he was willing to join forces with Ahab, but that they should first seek God's counsel.

Ahab had forsaken the Lord years earlier to worship the pagan god Baal, so he called in 400 hired prophets to come before the two monarchs. With dramatic display, these false prophets said, "Go and fight the Syrians, and you will be victorious!" But King Jehoshaphat requested to hear from a true prophet of the Lord. Ahab said that there was one prophet of Jehovah left whose name was Micaiah, but he added, "I hate him, because he does not

prophecy good concerning me, but evil." Verse 8.

At Jehoshaphat's insistence, Ahab reluctantly sent a servant to fetch Micaiah. The brave prophet came and made a very unpopular prediction. He told Ahab that he would die in the battle with Syria. Now Ahab faced a tough decision. Should he believe 400 prophets who say nice things, or one lone prophet of the Lord?

Stubborn King Ahab persuaded Jehoshaphat to disregard the warnings of the prophet Micaiah and join him in the war. He thought he could outsmart the Lord by dressing in full armor and avoiding the front lines of battle. But Ahab learned too late that you can never escape the Word of God. During the battle, a stray arrow flying through the air struck Ahab in the joints of his armor, and he bled to death in his chariot.

Jesus warned that there will be many false prophets in the last days (Matthew 24:11). That is why we must know how to distinguish the true from the counterfeit. It may be a matter of life or death!



## THE STUDY

Fill in the blanks after reading each Bible text.

### 1. To whom does the Lord reveal His final plans?

**Amos 3:7** Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the \_\_\_\_\_.

### 2. Will there be both true and false prophets in the last days?

**Matthew 24:11** Then many \_\_\_\_\_ prophets will rise up and deceive many.

**Acts 2:17** And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of \_\_\_\_\_ Spirit on all flesh; your \_\_\_\_\_ and your \_\_\_\_\_ shall prophesy.

NOTE: Yes, there will be both true and false prophets in the end time. The Scriptures also teach that prophets can be either men or women.

### 3. What types of false prophets are specifically condemned in the Bible?

A. "One who practices witchcraft" Deuteronomy 18:10.

B. "A soothsayer." Deuteronomy 18:10.

C. "One who interprets omens." Deuteronomy 18:10.

D. "A sorcerer." Deuteronomy 18:10.

E. "One who conjurs spells." Deuteronomy 18:11.

F. "A medium." Deuteronomy 18:11.

G. "A spiritist." Deuteronomy 18:11.

H. "One who calls up the dead." Deuteronomy 18:11.

NOTE: Deuteronomy 18:9-12 says that all who do these things are an "abomination" to the Lord. For this reason, Christians should have nothing to do with them.

### 4. Will God's end-time church have the gift of prophecy?

**Revelation 12:17** And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ Christ.

**Revelation 19:10** I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

NOTE: As we learned in Lesson 16, God's end-time remnant church has "the testimony of Jesus," which is "the spirit of prophecy." By comparing Revelation 19:10 and 22:9, we see that the angel defines John's "brethren" that have the spirit of prophecy as "the prophets" and "those who keep the words of this book." In 1 Corinthians 1:5-8, Paul writes that the church will have "the testimony of Christ" and will "come short in no gift" until Jesus' second coming. So God's last-day church will indeed still have the gift of prophecy.

### 5. In what ways does God speak to a true prophet?

**Numbers 12:6, 8** If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a \_\_\_\_\_; I speak to him in a \_\_\_\_\_. ... I speak with him face to face.

**Zechariah 4:1** Now the \_\_\_\_\_ who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep.

NOTE: The Lord speaks to His prophets by visions, in dreams, face to face, and through angels. Crystal balls, palm readings, tea leaf deciphering, star gazing, and claiming to talk with the dead are not God's methods of communicating with a prophet.

### 6. Are miracles definite evidence of a true prophet?

**Revelation 16:14** For they are spirits of \_\_\_\_\_, performing \_\_\_\_\_, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world.

NOTE: No, miracles are not proof that someone is a true prophet. They prove only one thing—supernatural power. But supernatural power may come either from God or from Satan. That is why the Lord tells us: "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." 1 John 4:1.

### 7. What is the most important test of a prophet?

**Isaiah 8:20** To the \_\_\_\_\_ and to the \_\_\_\_\_! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

NOTE: The "law and the testimony" was an Old Testament expression for "Bible." In other words, a message from someone who claims to have a prophetic utterance from God must be compared with the Bible. We must test the prophet by the Bible, and not the Bible by the prophet. Any true prophet of God will always agree 100 percent with Scripture. This is the true test.

### 8. What is the second test of a prophet?

**1 John 4:2** By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that \_\_\_\_\_ has come in the flesh is of God.

NOTE: A prophet of God must acknowledge and teach the truth about Jesus Christ—that He was God in human form. True prophets must also exalt Jesus, not themselves. Most false prophets seek to draw attention away from God's Word and to their own ideas.

### 9. What is the third test of a prophet?

**Matthew 7:16** You will know them by their \_\_\_\_\_.

NOTE: This does not mean that the prophet will be perfect. God's prophets have always had faults. However, there must be consistency between what true prophets teach and the lives they live.

# SUPPLEMENT

*This section provides additional information for further study.*

## Modern-Day Prophet

In December of 1844, a group of young Methodist ladies were kneeling in prayer in Portland, Maine, when Ellen Harmon—a 17-year-old girl in frail health—received her first vision. As Ellen (who became Ellen White after her marriage to a young minister named James White) related what God had revealed to her, she continued to receive visions and dreams for about 70 years—until her death in 1915.

As was true for the biblical prophets, certain supernatural physical phenomena accompanied Ellen White during her visions. Like the prophet Daniel, she did not breathe while in vision and often initially lost physical strength (Daniel 10:8, 17). Some of her visions lasted as long as four hours, but she did not breathe the entire time. Doctors who examined her while she was in vision attested to this fact.

At other times, she was also given supernatural strength (Daniel 10:18, 19). Though Ellen weighed only 95 pounds, witnesses saw her hold a 17-pound family Bible in her outstretched hand for 30 minutes while in vision. These and other physical phenomena indicate that there is something supernatural about the experience of a prophet. However, they do not tell us whether the prophet is from God or from Satan. When faced with a supernatural claim to the prophetic gift, Christians must test the claim by the Bible to see if it is true.

## Applying the Four Biblical Tests

Let's look together to see whether or not the life and ministry of Ellen White meet the four biblical tests of a true prophet.

### First Test—Harmony with Scriptures

Read any one of Ellen White's books, and you will discover that it consistently leads you to the Bible and is in total agreement with Scripture. However, she did not regard her writings as an addition to Scripture. Their purpose was to call the attention of God's people to the Bible and bring them back to the Bible as the only source of truth. Notice Ellen White's emphatic declaration that the Bible is the only rule of faith: "In our time there is a wide departure from their doctrines and precepts, and there is need of a return to the great Protestant principle—the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty."<sup>1</sup>

She also wrote: "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."<sup>2</sup>

Although Ellen White emphatically stressed that her writings were never to be considered part of the Bible, they are nonetheless inspired. Many of God's greatest prophets—such as Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist—were inspired,

yet they did not write any books of the Bible. Ellen White's writings may be described as a lesser light leading to the greater light, the Bible. They act as an inspired commentary on Scripture, but the Bible is still the supreme authority.

### Second Test—Teach the Truth About Jesus

Ellen White's books—such as *The Desire of Ages*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, *Steps to Christ*, and *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*—all testify to her fulfillment of this test. She says nothing of herself in these volumes, but constantly points others to Jesus.

### Third Test—A Godly Life

The press, commenting on the death of Ellen White, said: "The life of Mrs. White is an example worthy of emulation by all. ... She was a humble, devout disciple of Christ, and ever went about doing good. ... She was honored and respected by all who appreciate noble womanhood consecrated to unselfish labor for the uplifting and betterment of mankind. Her death marks the calling of another noted leader of religious thought and one whose almost ninety years were full to overflowing with good deeds, kind words, and earnest prayers for all mankind."<sup>3</sup>

### Fourth Test—Accurate Prophecies

The few prophecies of the future made by Ellen White can be easily validated. The following prediction reads like this morning's newspaper, but was written before most modern means of travel were invented. "Disasters by rail will become more and more frequent; confusion, collision, and death without a moment's warning will occur on the great lines of travel."<sup>4</sup>

Ellen White lived during a time when doctors advocated smoking to benefit the lungs. Varying medical opinions existed, but no real scientific proof was available. Nutrition was an unknown science. Yet in this setting, Ellen White wrote volumes in the field of health and nutrition. Dr. Clive McCay, former professor of nutrition at Cornell University, said: "In spite of the fact that the works of Mrs. White were written long before the advent of modern scientific nutrition, no better overall guide is available today."<sup>5</sup>

The Bible predicted that in the last days the prophetic gift would appear. Evidence declares that Ellen White met every Bible specification for a true prophet. We would encourage you to obtain and read some of her writings and follow the biblical injunction to "Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good." 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21.

<sup>1</sup> *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), p. 204, 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1949), Vol. 2, p. 605.

<sup>3</sup> *Star* (St. Helena, California), July 23, 1915.

<sup>4</sup> *Messages to Young People* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1930), p. 90 (reprinted from article in *The Signs of the Times*, April 21, 1890).

<sup>5</sup> Clive M. McCay, "A Nutritional Authority Discusses Mrs. E.G. White," *Review and Herald*, February 26, 1959, p. 10.

## 10. What is the fourth test of a prophet?

**Jeremiah 28:9** *When the word of the prophet \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, the prophet will be known as one whom the LORD has truly sent.*

NOTE: A true prophet will not make false predictions. If a prophet is of God, the things he or she says will come to pass. However, accuracy alone does not automatically qualify a person as a true prophet. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 warns that false prophets can give signs that will come to pass and then use their influence to lead people to follow other gods. A true prophet must lead people to worship God according to the Bible.

## 11. What three things does Paul command regarding prophecy?

**1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21** *Do \_\_\_\_\_ despise prophecies. \_\_\_\_\_ all things; \_\_\_\_\_ fast what is good.*

NOTE: Paul says that we are not to despise, or reject, the gift of prophecy. Rather, we must test a prophet's messages by Scripture and follow what is good and true.

## 12. Whose counsel do we reject whenever we reject the words of a true prophet?

**Luke 7:28-30** *There is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; ... And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, ... But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ for themselves.*

NOTE: When we reject the words of a true prophet, we reject the counsel of God. A solemn thought! The Bible tells us to listen to God's prophets and promises that all who follow the counsel of a true prophet will prosper.

**2 Chronicles 20:20** *Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.*

# YOUR RESPONSE

*Since God still speaks through prophets, and since a true prophet's words are the personal "testimony of Jesus" to you, are you willing to test modern prophets by the Bible and follow the counsel of those who agree with Scripture?*

**ANSWER:** \_\_\_\_\_