

# The Spirit Of Prophecy

From remarkable visions (numbering more than 2,000) to her voluminous body of literary works on a variety of religious themes, Ellen White enjoyed an extraordinary career, not only compared to women of her day, but also when compared to the most prominent religious leaders today.

In addition to these contributions, she was also a sought-after public speaker. (Her largest speaking engagement was before a crowd of 20,000 people.) Her public speaking usually focused on religious subjects, but often she was asked to speak on education, home life, health, and temperance.

In this section, we're going to look at each aspect of her ministry, rooted in her extraordinary visions regarding the return of Jesus Christ to her remarkable insights about health and education principles that were decades before her time.

## What Makes A Prophet?

Since the 1700s, Western society has placed an increasingly high value on science. This reaction to the superstition and fear that ruled the Dark Ages pushed the intellectual class to the opposite extreme — a complete denial of the supernatural. Today, this mindset remains pervasive. Yet, man's hunger for spiritual connection with the supernatural hasn't been completely snuffed out by modern rationalism.

One of the ways in which this hunger has manifested itself is in the modern interest in psychics. Two prominent modern psychics were Jeanne Dixon and Edgar Cayce. Cayce claimed that it was Jesus Himself who gave him insight. Dixon asserted that she was inspired by the same Spirit that moved upon Isaiah. These and other psychics wrote much, sounded convincing, but were largely discredited as time went on. However, their adherents did find a few remarkable coincidences that seemed to vouch for their credibility.

However, the Bible speaks very plainly regarding supernatural phenomenon, citing two sources from which they may emerge. Either they are from God, who speaks through "holy men ... as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21), or they are from the devil, who comes with "all power, signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

Fortunately, we are not left to wonder whether a messenger is from God or the devil. The Bible gives us 10 clear guidelines to help determine the origin of a prophet's supernatural ability. If the one claiming divine gifting fails even one of these tests, they cannot be considered a prophet of God. Indeed, the true prophet will pass all 10 with flying colors.

## 10 Tests Of A Prophet

The Bible provides ten key indicators that determine whether a person is truly receiving visions from God.

According to Scripture, true prophets ...

- Make predictions that "come to pass" (Jeremiah 28:9)
- Glorify God rather than themselves (John 16:13)
- Do not give their own private interpretations (2 Peter 1:20, 21)

- Point out sin (Micah 3:5–8)
- Warn of coming judgment (Isaiah 24:20, 21)
- Edify the church (1 Corinthians 14:3, 4)
- Give messages that harmonize with the Bible (Isaiah 8:20)
- Teach that Jesus came in the flesh (1 John 4:1–3)
- Have a Christ-like character (Matthew 7:16–20).
- Are obedient to the will of God (Deuteronomy 18:18).

Modern psychics simply don't measure up! Their predictions fail often. They sometimes seem more interested in acquiring fame than in glorifying God. They rarely point out sin or warn of judgment. They often espouse astrology, palm reading, reincarnation, and spirit communication—all of which are condemned in the Word of God.

What's worse, they don't adhere to biblical teaching, nor do they generally teach the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of Christ. And the fruits of their teachings, as well as their lives, are often out of harmony with the Bible. Jesus says of them, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16).

### **Testing Ellen's Gifts**

Ellen White's productive career was enhanced by her character. Generous, kind, and honest, she exemplified the Christian virtues she wrote about. For instance, despite the potential of living extravagantly off the royalties of her written work, she passed much of it on to the spread of the gospel, financially supporting church projects, and helping worthy students going to Christian schools.

For many years, she and her husband did not receive a salary, except that which was needed to provide food and clothing. Their home was a thoroughfare of visitors, workers and boarders, which they took in to assist others in their personal expenses. Domestic and office workers, who were needed to carry on church work, such as publishing, were often paid out of the White's personal funds.

Nor was Ellen an inaccessible intellectual. By all accounts, she was a friendly neighbor, a loving wife and mother, a diligent housekeeper, and a visitor of the sick and downtrodden. She was well acquainted with the woes of humanity too: losing two of her children to disease — a very common occurrence in the 19th century.

The life of Ellen was both conventional — she played the role of wife, mother, housekeeper and friend — and unconventional, as she responded to God's call to be His messenger. These two aspects of her person were balanced with uncommon finesse.

But none of this, her personal qualities nor her achievements, prove that she possessed a prophetic gift. Although she didn't choose to call herself a prophet, she did claim to convey messages from heaven. Why should we believe them? Her visions could have been lies or delusions and her writing could have been the product of hypergraphia or delusion.

Not until we subject her ministry to the 10 tests of a true prophet can we know if her gift was genuine prophecy or pure madness. We'll do just that in the next section.

## The Test Results

Unfortunately, no DNA testing for prophets exists. But there are the biblical criteria that have been outlined for us. Let us now turn our attention to testing the ministry and gifts of Ellen White with our biblically based testing process.

### **A true prophet's predictions will "come to pass" (Jeremiah 28:9).**

The fulfillments of this test in the ministry of Ellen are many, but one of the most startling may be the 1906 San Francisco/Oakland earthquake. Having received warnings of impending judgment upon the city for many years prior, she had her final and most detailed vision regarding its destruction on April 16, 1906. She saw houses "shaken like a reed in the wind" and buildings falling to the ground. "Pleasure resorts, theaters, hotels, and homes of the wealthy were shaken and shattered. Many lives were blotted out of existence, and the air was filled with the shrieks of the injured and the terrified. ... It seemed that the forbearance of God was exhausted, and the judgment day had come."

Historical accounts reveal that two days later there was no sign of impending doom until 5:12 a.m., when the San Andreas fault slipped over nearly 270 miles, crumbling the very foundations of the city. In its wake, the quake left 490 city blocks in a state of total devastation and more than 225,000 homeless people, along with over 800 dead and 1,500 injured. Several insurance companies went bankrupt trying to meet the claims.

If this was the only example of a prediction fulfilled, we could chalk it up to a lucky guess. But consistently, Ellen's predictions concerning political, religious, and personal affairs were fulfilled. The exception to these are her "conditional prophecies"—or predictions of God's judgment that did not occur because the behavior of people changed in response to those warnings.

We'll share many more of her incredible visions later. For now, what about the other tests?

## The Test Results Pt. 2

### **A true prophet will glorify God rather than himself (John 16:13).**

The central theme of Ellen's writings was The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. Her efforts were always aimed at bringing people to the matchless grace of Christ. Her famous Conflict of the Ages books begin and end with the phrase "God is love." She said, "We must gather about the cross. Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion." She added, "Make Christ first and last and best in everything."

Few communicators of her caliber refrained from taking credit and glory for themselves. In spite of her great accomplishments, Ellen felt a perpetual sense of dependency upon God. Of public speaking, she said, "When I am about to speak to the people ... I have such a sense of weakness that it seems like an impossibility to stand before the congregation." She would then pray, "Jesus, I hang my helpless soul upon Thee; Thou will not suffer me to be brought into confusion."

### **A true prophet does not give his own private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20, 21).**

Ever a servant of God and man, a true prophet relates information received through revelation, then submits that information to the scrutiny of the body of believers. These believers are to take the prophet's word and compare it with the Word of God, as did the Bereans of Acts 17. These students both "received the word with all readiness of mind,"

and “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Proving the message of Paul by comparing it with scripture was part of the process of incorporating his teaching into the church.

Similarly, Ellen called believers to a decision concerning her writings: “My work ... bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies [“the testimonies” was the term she often used for her writings, especially counsels to the church] are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil.” She went on to admonish believers to apply the same test to her messages as they would apply to any: “If the Testimonies speak not according to the word of God, reject them.” Truly Ellen’s ministry bears the evidence of accountability toward both God and man.

### **A true prophet points out sin (Isaiah 30:10).**

In a warning to Judah, Isaiah pointed out one of their sins. “The rebellious people ... which say ... to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.” It is our natural bent to want to hear soothing assurances from the lips of religious leaders. Paul told Timothy that the time would come when [even church members] will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3,4).

From the outset of her ministry, Ellen knew that she would be asked to deliver messages of reproof to many. Not only did her shyness make this an excruciating task, but she was often estranged from those who preferred denial. It was such times she said, “The unpleasant duty has been laid upon me to reprove wrongs and to reveal hidden sins.”

### **The Test Results Pt. 3**

#### **A true prophet warns of coming judgment (Isaiah 24:20, 21).**

Not only did Ellen White warn of the destruction of San Francisco and Oakland, but other large cities such as Chicago. She also warned of judgments on her own church’s institutions for unchristian practices, such as publishing degrading literature.

#### **A true prophet edifies the church (1 Corinthians 14:3, 4).**

A perusal of her writings reveal that the bulk of them were counsels for the church. Her 5,274 page, nine-volume series called Testimonies for the Church consist of “advice, visions and counsel dealing with institutional development, church organization, home and foreign mission endeavors, social and health reforms, etc.”

Teaming her gifts with the administrative knowledge of her husband, she helped nurture a denomination that grew in her lifetime from a handful of scattered followers to a total of 136,879 members attending 3,876 churches.

#### **A true prophet’s message harmonizes with the Bible (Isaiah 8:20).**

Each of her books has literally hundreds of scriptural references. The Scripture Index to 77 of her principal books, not counting periodical articles, contains approximately 30,000 references. Her writings are to the Bible what a state map is to a national map. They agree with the Word without merely reiterating it. In some areas, her writings provide additional detail for present-day application. This is done in such a way as to reinforce, rather than detract from, the message of Scripture.

Another helpful analogy of her writings flows from her own pen. She called her writings “a

lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.” This analogy has been experienced by countless seekers who are led to understand and revere the Word of God through her writings.

#### **The Test Results Pt. 4**

##### **A true prophet teaches that Jesus came in the flesh (1 John 4:1-3).**

Of Jesus’ incarnation, Ellen’s own words are: “[God] gave [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.”

##### **A true prophet has a Christian character (Matthew 7:16-20).**

The New York “Independent” published the following at the time of Ellen White’s death in 1915: “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.”

A coworker of 23 years described her thus: “Mrs. White’s life far transcends the life of anyone I have ever known or with whom I have been associated. She was uniformly pleasant, cheerful and courageous. She was never careless, flippant, or in any way cheap in conversation or manner of life. She was the personification of serious earnestness regarding the things of the kingdom. I never once heard her boast of the gracious gift God had bestowed upon her, or of the marvelous results of her endeavors.”

##### **A true prophet is obedient to the will of God (Deuteronomy 18:18).**

Before Ellen White received her first vision, Hazen Foss was called to the prophetic ministry. Foss hesitated to obey, dreading the ridicule and rejection such a life would entail. His disobedience persisted through a second vision from God. Fearing that he had grieved away the Spirit, he called a meeting to relate the first vision, but his mind was blank. Finally he said, “It is gone from me; I can say nothing, the Spirit of the Lord has left me.”

Some time later, Mr. Foss was witness to Ellen’s ministry and recognized that the gift had been passed on to her. He pled, “The Lord gave me a message to bear to His people. And I refused after being told the consequences; I was proud; I was unreconciled to the disappointment.” He went on to say that he believed he was a lost man.

Ellen’s willing obedience to the call of God wasn’t without a struggle. When first called to travel, she said, “It seemed impossible for me to perform this work ... the trials attending it seemed more than I could endure ... I coveted death as a release from the responsibilities that were crowding upon me ... despair again pressed upon my soul.” Finally, through prayer and counsel, she surrendered to the will of her heavenly Father, and began her lifework as God’s messenger.

#### **The Mark Of A Miracle**

Jesus described the job He gave to His disciples in this way: “These signs shall follow them that believe; in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover” (Mark 16:18).

Jesus knew the difference between genuine and false signs. Ever since Moses and Aaron dueled with Pharaoh's magicians (who could mimic most of the miracles) Satan has made it his purpose to compete with divine power. Why? Because signs and wonders act as advertising. A cured demoniac, an unknown tongue spoken, a rattlesnake held in the hand — these kinds of supernatural events cause the masses to stand up and take notice. Heads snap around to see things we don't see every day.

That's why caution is in order. Because they have two potential sources, signs and wonders aren't conclusive evidence that God is working. But they are evidence that something exceptional is going on.

Before looking at some of her most remarkable visions, let's see how the manifestations of this supernatural power compare to the Bible and how they were seen by Ellen's peers.

### **Vision Manifestation**

God was working through Ellen White, and He didn't want it to pass by unnoticed. So He manifested his divine power in interesting and concrete ways — especially at the outset of her ministry, before there was sufficient long-term evidence of her validity. Consider, for instance, her physical state during visions, and how it paralleled the Bible prophet Daniel's state as put forth in Daniel chapter 10.

**Daniel was guided through his vision by a “certain man, clothed in linen” (vs. 5, 6).** Ellen spoke of her “guide,” and “the angel” or “angel messenger” or “young man,” who led her through her visions.

**Daniel was “left alone” (vs. 8), unaware of his surroundings, in a trance-like state.** Ellen was “utterly unconscious of everything transpiring around her.”

**Daniel was first weak, but then strengthened to stand (vs. 8, 11, 18).** Ellen would often lose her strength temporarily and sit, but then later stand.

**Daniel said, “neither is there breath left in me” (vs. 17).** Ellen did not breathe while in visions, which lasted up to three hours!

Often during public visions, anyone who wished could examine her., Dr. Drummond, a local physician who had once declared her visions were the product of mesmerism, jumped at the opportunity to examine her while in vision. After giving her a thorough examination, he turned very pale and remarked, “She doesn't breathe.” Skeptics would pinch both her nostrils and mouth, and even hold a mirror before her mouth while she was in vision. Both techniques proved that she simply didn't breathe while in a vision, not even when she spoke.

In another incident, a physician named Dr. Brown claimed that her visions were the product of spiritualism, and that he could control them. When the opportunity arose, Dr. Brown examined her, but before it was complete, he turned deathly pale and began to shake. “She does not breathe,” he shuddered, making his way to the door.

The people at the door said, “Go back, and do as you said you would; bring that woman out of vision.” But the doctor, sufficiently spooked, grabbed the doorknob. “Doctor, what is it?” the people at the door persisted. “God only knows,” he replied.

But as dramatic as this story is, it doesn't match the drama of the visions themselves. Let's now turn our attention to some of her most extraordinary visions.

### **Life-Changing Visions**

Amazingly, in one vision, events concerning the yet-to-happen Civil War were revealed to Ellen. At the time of the vision, the firing on Fort Sumter, which marked the beginning of the war, was yet three months away. After this vision, Ellen solemnly surveyed the room and said, "There are those in this house who will lose sons in that war." This is especially remarkable given the fact that the prevailing sentiment throughout the North and the South was that war was unlikely, and if it came, it would be brief and result in few casualties. Her extended predictions were astonishingly accurate.

Often highly personal information was revealed in vision. While in Oswego, New York, in 1850, the White family was conducting an evangelistic meeting. The county treasurer, also a lay preacher, was publicly demeaning James White. A young couple attending his meetings went to Ellen asking for clarification. In vision, Ellen saw that the troubled questioner would know within the month what to believe. Within that month it was discovered that the man had stolen \$1,000 from the county and his credibility was ruined. The young couple became lifelong members of the church.

In another incident in the early 1870s, James and Ellen attended a camp meeting in Wisconsin. After arriving late, James sat down while Ellen walked straight to the front and stood before the pulpit where a man was preaching. Pointing her finger at him, she said that she had heard his voice in vision. She went on, "Brother, I know a woman in Pennsylvania with two little children. That woman calls you husband and those children call you father and they are hunting everywhere for you and they can't find you. They don't know where you are. Right over there is another woman with six children hanging to her skirts and she calls you husband and they call you father. Brother, you have no business in that desk!" The man lunged for the tent flap and disappeared. His brother remained in the meeting and confirmed the truth of Ellen's words.

While none of these signs and wonders absolutely confirmed that Ellen possessed the gift of prophecy, they certainly drew attention to her ministry in a manner that prompted deeper investigation. For instance, today we can observe the long-term validation of her gift by science. Time and time again her counsels regarding health, spirituality, world events, and scores of other issues proved true.

Let's look at some of her counsel on health that have proven to be utterly remarkable and well ahead of her time.

### **Visionary Health Insight**

Jesus said, "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe" (John 14:29). Jesus doesn't expect His followers to exercise blind faith. Our confidence in His promise is based upon evidences we have already seen of His goodness and power. As we exercise faith, it grows from a tiny seed to a strong tree that can bear the winds of falsehood and unbelief.

In His promise to the disciples, Jesus acknowledged faith's cumulative quality. He capitalized on it by telling them not just what would build their faith, but how it would be built. They would see the fulfillment of His words, and they would believe. This would

enable them to believe His words before they were fulfilled.

Seeing the fulfillment of the words of Ellen White works similarly. She is a mere vessel through which Christ's Spirit has worked. Yet her words have been consistently proven true by science and experience. Let us consider her teachings in the light of modern-day research.

### **Tobacco**

The fact that in 1864 Ellen spoke of tobacco as a "slow, insidious, but most malignant poison" doesn't impress us today given the fact that medical science has so completely unveiled the deadly effects of smoking. But we must remember that it was not until 1957 that the American Cancer Society concluded that smoking was a factor in lung cancer.

When she gave her counsel, her words were not easily discernable. After smoking increased during World War I, it took about 20 years before its menacing harvest was reaped in the form of lung cancer and other diseases. Subsequently, medical science has proved the link between smoking and coronary heart disease, heart attacks, strokes, osteoporosis, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and miscarriage — as well as lung and a host of other cancers. Amazing, given the fact that at the time Ellen gave her counsel, cigar smoke was used as a cure for lung disease!

### **Remarkable Health Counsel**

#### **Cancer**

Probably the most radical thing Ellen White said about cancer was that it was a "germ." She claimed that these germs were most often communicated to humans through the consumption of animal flesh, which was becoming "more and more diseased."

Not only has vegetarianism become more popular since that time, the "germ" theory has also been proven. In 1956, Dr. Wendell Stanley, a virologist at the University of California, asserted that "viruses cause most or all of human cancers." As research progressed, Robert Huebner, the chief of the Laboratory of Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health concluded that, "there isn't the slightest doubt in our minds that human cancers are caused by viruses."

#### **Prenatal Influence**

Again the forerunner, Ellen cited the importance of prenatal influences as early as 1865. "The irritability, nervousness, and despondency manifested by the mother, will mark the character of her child," she said, later adding, "the well-being of the child will be affected by the habits of the mother."

Ninety-four years later, Dr. Ashley Montagu confirmed that "mothers undergoing periods of severe emotional distress during pregnancy frequently have infants which exhibit evidences of irritable and hyperactive nervous systems."

#### **Sunlight**

In 1865, Ellen recommended fresh air and sunlight in the home as a means of air purification. She wrote: "Rooms that are not exposed to light and air become damp ... The atmosphere in these rooms is poisonous, because it has not been purified by light and air."

Approximately 80 years later, Dr. Lawrence P. Garrod, professor of bacteriology at the University of London, studied the effects of sunlight on the level of bacteria in the dust of

sickrooms. He found that, “ordinary diffuse daylight, even in England, can be lethal to bacteria.”

## **Remarkable Health Council Pt. 2**

### **Excess Sugar**

In 1890, Ellen White warned against the effects of excess sugar consumption, saying that it tended to “clog the system.” In 1905, she said, “the free use of milk and sugar taken together should be avoided.”

Now the jury is in on the sugar’s culpability in adult-onset diabetes. In addition, science has shown that foods that feature large amounts of milk and sugar — such as puddings and ice cream — tend to raise serum cholesterol and can contain oxidized cholesterol, a culprit in atherosclerosis.

### **Fresh Yeast**

In 1905 Ellen said that “bread should be light and sweet. Not the least taint of sourness should be tolerated. The loaves should be small, and so thoroughly baked that, as far as possible, the yeast germs shall be destroyed.” This counsel cut directly across the then-current health fad of eating live yeast for B vitamins. Since then, research has shown that live yeast cells actually take up B vitamins in the system!

### **Nutrition**

The contribution Ellen White has made to the field of nutrition is incalculable. At a time when meat was thought to be mandatory for strength and vegetarianism was virtually unheard of, she churned out pages of counsel recommending a plant-based, unrefined diet.

Since then, medical science has confirmed the benefits of a plant-based diet, and correspondingly the dangers of a high-fat, animal-product based diet. Most recently, National Geographic magazine published a cover article on longevity, which featured Seventh-day Adventists. The article calls Ellen White “an early figure who helped shape the Adventist Church,” and says that because of her vegetarian-diet prescription, Adventists, “rank among America’s longevity all-stars.”

### **An Inescapable Conclusion**

A Jewish physician named Robert Cohen was so impressed with Ellen White’s dietary advice that he published a book of her teachings, titled *God’s Nutritionist: Pearls of Wisdom from Ellen G. White*. In the book’s forward, he says, “She was a nutritionist with facts as up-to-date as those found in this morning’s nutrition journals.”

The weight of evidence in favor of more plant foods and fewer animal foods in the diet has resulted in many recent changes in mainstream authorities, such as that found in *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. These guidelines advocate plant-based nutrition by advising us to “choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains,” and, “a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.” In addition, we are told to “choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat” and to limit our “intake of sugars.”

Science is substantiating what Ellen said more than a century and a half ago — that the healthiest diet is comprised primarily of fruits, nuts, grains, and vegetables.

That same inspired source spoke on a myriad of other topics. Relationships, church organization, biblical interpretation, ethics, morality, psychology, parenting, and education are just a few of them. The confirmation of her gift in the areas already cited should give everyone confidence to believe her in areas that can't be as easily proven by science.

Why not take advantage of the benefits of this gift and learn more about the ministry and counsel of Ellen G. White today?