



## A TRUE PROPHET

### QUEST LESSON G-13

**The Problem:** This lesson is a supplement to lessons F-2 and F-3, Lesson F-2 discusses spiritual gifts to the church, including the gift of prophecy. Lesson F-3 deals with the work of inspired prophets and the Bible tests that should be applied in determining whether or not a particular person is a genuine prophet. Ellen G. White (1827- 1915) is identified as a genuine modern prophet because she passed all the tests and fits the Bible specifications.

Nevertheless, throughout the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White's claim to receive special revelations from the Lord has been violently attacked, and her life and character have been subjected to unfair and inaccurate criticism. Many have questioned whether Ellen White's interpretations of Scripture can be trusted. They complain that the doctrinal beliefs and prophetic interpretations of Seventh-day Adventists cannot be substantiated from Scripture alone. Without Ellen White's writings, so we are told, Adventism as a theological system cannot be demonstrated. Significantly, in this series of 100 lessons, every belief of the Adventist Church has been established from the Bible alone. We have deliberately avoided using Ellen White's writings as the basis of doctrine because we want the world to see that our beliefs are clearly taught in Scripture. Yet, every one of the doctrines discussed in this series of lessons is taught by Ellen White. Not only are her writings delightfully consistent with Scripture but they are specifically designed to lead the reader to turn to the Bible for salvation and spiritual guidance.

Every major criticism of Ellen White could also be leveled at Bible writers. Though she was a noble Christian woman of irreproachable character, she was a faulty human being; so were the Bible writers. Her writings contain some mistakes in factual details; so do theirs. She sometimes misunderstood God's communications to her; so did they. She used uninspired literary sources to help her convey her messages; so did they. She did not always acknowledge the sources which she used in writing her books; nor did they.

We would challenge the critic to produce one doctrine taught in the writings of Ellen White that cannot be found in the Bible; or to demonstrate that the influence of her work and writings has not been very spiritually positive, or to show that her prophetic forecasts have not been and are not being fulfilled; or to illustrate that Ellen White somehow detracts from the Christian message by depreciating the full deity or full humanity of Jesus Christ, or by, in some way, denigrating the significance of Calvary for the salvation of mankind.

There is no substitute for reading Ellen White's books for yourself. Accepting other people's criticisms without reading the author's works is to be ruled by prejudice. The only fair way to judge the effectiveness, Christian consistency, and doctrinal purity of any author is to read his or her works for yourself. Take Steps to Christ, Christ's Object Lessons, and Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing; read them carefully and compare them with the Bible. Read the Conflict of the Ages series: Patriarchs and Prophets, Prophets and Kings, Desire of Ages, Acts of the Apostles, and Great Controversy. Then you will discover what many of us have, that these books contain the hallmarks of inspiration.

In this lesson, we will compare Ellen White's life and work with that of Bible prophets as a means of demonstrating that, although she never claimed that her writings are an addition to the sacred canon or that they should be used as a substitute for it, her claim that they came directly from God for the instruction and guidance of His people in these final days of earth's history is thoroughly reasonable.

#### Objectives

First, we ask, are later inspired prophets authoritative interpreters of earlier prophets?

Second, do prophets ever sin or make mistakes in their personal lives? Do they need to be corrected by the Lord

Third, do the writings of prophets contain some mistakes in detail?

Fourth, do prophets sometimes misunderstand the inspired messages given to them?

Fifth, do inspired prophets use other sources to help them convey their messages?

#### I. Are Later Inspired Prophets Authoritative Interpreters Of Earlier Prophets?

The evidence from Scripture demonstrates quite conclusively that prophets who were chosen by God in later centuries provided inspired interpretations of earlier prophetic writings. We accept these interpretations because they came from the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

#### The Word

1. How did Paul interpret Moses' statements regarding works and faith? Romans 10:5-8; Galatians 3:12; Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 30:11-14.
2. What special emphasis did Paul give to a statement of Habakkuk? Romans 1:16; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38-39; Habakkuk 2:4.
3. What allegorical application did Paul give to an Old Testament command regarding oxen? 1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Timothy 5:18; Deuteronomy 25:4.
4. What allegorical application did Paul give to Abraham's marriages to Sarah and Hagar? Galatians 4:22-24.
5. How did Jesus interpret a statement of Daniel? Matthew 24:15; Daniel 8:13; 9:27.
6. What interpretations did Peter give to two Old Testament passages? Acts 2:17-21 compared with Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:25-28 compared with Psalm 16:8-11.

Explanation: We will discuss a number of the above passages in order:

Romans 10:5. The Apostle Paul twice quoted the statement in Leviticus 18:5 which teaches that the person who obeys God's laws "shall live in them." But Paul gives the statement a different meaning from that given it in the Old Testament context. As used by Moses, Ezekiel, and Nehemiah (Leviticus 18:5; Ezekiel 20:11, 13, 21; Nehemiah 9:29), the statement always means that God wants His people, because of their covenant relationship with Him, to obey His laws. They will have spiritual life now, and eternal life, if they will obey «God. The statement is not talking about righteousness by works, but obedience expected by God on the part of His people who are living by faith in Him.

Yet Paul relates the statement to the righteousness by works problem of ancient Israel: "For Moses describeth the righteousness, which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them" (Romans 10:5). Since the attempt to achieve righteousness by the law is impossible for fallen human beings, "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness" (Romans 9:31; cf. 9:30 10:10). Of course, Paul's teaching is thoroughly consistent with the rest of Scripture: (i) continuing life by law-keeping is possible only if the law is never broken; (ii) therefore, life by law-keeping is not possible for Israel, or any other people, because all have sinned (cf.; Romans 3:23). Nevertheless, Paul has given Leviticus 18:5 a meaning that it does not have in its context. Very possibly, that meaning was well accepted by the Jews "of Paul's day, but it was not the intention of the writer. Does anyone who believes in the inspiration of Paul's writings doubt the truth of his interpretation of Leviticus 18:5? Of course not! Surely, the Holy Spirit, speaking through the prophet, has a perfect right to give applications to Bible passages that He deems appropriate. Since "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21), we can only assume that Paul's use of Old Testament Scripture is quite consistent with the will of the Holy Spirit even if it is not strictly in agreement with the original context.

Because there were contemporaries of Paul who had serious doubts about his apostolic authority and the inspiration of his utterances, he was obliged to explain that his messages came from special revelations given by God (2 Corinthians 12:1-12). No doubt there were those who thought that accepting Paul's interpretations of Scripture would involve surrendering their own Spirit-directed capacity to draw conclusions regarding the meaning of the Old Testament. Careful thought would reveal to them that (i) the Holy Spirit never contradicts Himself, (ii) that Paul's interpretation of a passage was not always presented as the only possible one, and (iii) that for them to reject Paul's interpretation as false would be to contradict not man, but God.

Were the early Christians, therefore, in the position of having to regard Paul as a kind of pope? Not at all! The Pope of the Roman Catholic Church claims the exclusive right to interpret the Bible. And his interpretations are claimed to be infallible. [See Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, (St. Louis, Mo.: Herder, 1955), Systematic Index, p. 17; John L. McKenzie, S.J., *The Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), pp. 198-210]. The Pope claims infallibility in determining the meaning of any theological work. By contrast, Paul did not deny the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit for the individual Bible student. He did not claim that his interpretation of Leviticus 18:5, for example, is the only possible one. The Pope demands that Roman Catholics believe his Scriptural interpretations and doctrinal pronouncements, even though they may contradict the teachings of Bible writers. Paul's inspired utterances are always consistent with the rest of Scripture, and even when, as a canonical author under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he goes beyond the teaching of earlier prophets, he never discounts or contradicts their pronouncements. We accept Paul's claim to special revelation from God, but we do not accept the Pope's.

Romans 10:6-10. In verses 6-8 Paul quotes the Septuagint version of Deuteronomy 30:11-14, giving the passage a distinctive application to his righteousness by faith message. His point is that, when Moses taught that God's law should be written on your heart, he was teaching the same message of righteousness by faith proclaimed by Paul. A study of Deuteronomy 30:11-14 in its context reveals that Paul's interpretation is thoroughly correct. Moses emphasized that "the law can be kept if it is written on your heart (verse 14), and elsewhere he stressed that such an experience is possible only to the person who has faith in God (Genesis 15:6; Deuteronomy 6:4-6).

Romans 1:16. Paul's doctrine of righteousness by faith is supported by an accurate application of Habakkuk 2:4. "The just shall live by faith is just as much an Old Testament doctrine as a New Testament one.

1 Corinthians 9:9. The context is Paul's inspired instruction that "the ministry of the church should be supported financially and materially by the church members. He quotes Deuteronomy 25:4: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." But this Old Testament statement is obviously intended to be taken quite literally. Mosaic law stipulated that oxen were to be permitted to eat the grain as they walked round and round in the process by which it was threshed. Paul uses the statement as an allegory. The oxen represent the ministry of the church. As the oxen were to be allowed to eat the grain that was the property of the owner, the church's clergy were to be supported by receiving a percentage of the income of the members. Paul does not contradict the original meaning of the passage, but his metaphoric application provides a convenient sermon illustration.

Galatians 4:22-24. Here Paul uses Abraham's two marriages (to Sarah and Hagar), and the two sons that resulted (Isaac and Ishmael) as symbolizing the Old and New Covenants. Since Isaac was a miracle child, the son of promise, he symbolizes the new, or everlasting, covenant of righteousness by works. And since Ishmael resulted from Abraham's lack of trust in God to give him a child by Sarah, he represents the old covenant of works. The story is not applied in that way in the Old Testament, but the appropriateness of the application is very apparent. Abraham's marriage to Hagar was a lapse from his everlasting covenant relationship with God.

Matthew 24:15. Jesus referred to the "abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel (Daniel 8:13; 9:27). Jesus' interpretation meant that the little horn power of Daniel chapter 8 would be the enemy of the people of God right down to His second advent. Since Matthew 24 uses the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem as types of last-day events, we know that the great tribulation of verses 15-28 refers not only to the circumstances in A.D. 70 but to those just before the second coming of Jesus. Jesus has established for us that Daniel's prophecy is intended to teach that the little horn power, which establishes the "abomination of desolation," is not just the pagan Roman Empire, but the last day false religious system that will persecute the faithful people of God. Would anyone wish to question a Biblical interpretation provided by the Lord Himself?

Acts 2:17-21. Peter used Joel 2:28-32 to establish that the phenomenon of Pentecost was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit before the second coming of Christ. Peter does not argue that Pentecost was the only possible fulfillment of Joel 2. If he had not used the Old Testament passage, we might question whether it should be applied to an event centuries before the actual coming of Christ. But because Peter uses the passage we accept his application.

Acts 2:25-28. In the same sermon, Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11 and applies it to the resurrection of Christ. It would be difficult to conclude without any question that this passage should be applied to Christ if Peter had not interpreted it as he did.

The New Testament is an interpretation of the Old Testament. The later prophet received from the Holy Spirit the meanings of statements made by earlier prophets. We do not accept the applications made by the later prophet because they happen to result from his use of strict principles of interpretation. We accept them simply on the authority of 'the later inspired writer.

#### RELEVANCE FOR THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

1. Ellen White emphasized the Protestant doctrine that the Bible alone is the rule of our faith and practice:

"The Word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested." *The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

"God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith." *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

"The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. Man is fallible, but God's Word is infallible. Instead of wrangling with one another, let men exalt the Lord. Let us meet all opposition as did our Master, saying, 'It is written.' Let us lift up the banner on which is inscribed, The Bible our rule of faith and discipline." *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 416.

"Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God." *Evangelism*, p. 256.

2. Ellen White never put her writings ahead of the Bible, nor did she regard herself as a canonical prophet whose writings should be regarded as an additional sacred canon:

"The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God's Word is the unerring standard. The testimonies are not to take the place of the Word... Never do we want any soul to bring in the testimonies ahead of the Bible." *Evangelism*, p. 256.

"In His word, the Lord has plainly revealed His will to those who have riches. But because His direct commands have been slighted, He mercifully presents their dangers before them through the Testimonies [her writings]. He does not give new light, but 'halts their attention to the light that has already been revealed in His word.'" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 660, 661.

3. Even so, Ellen White regarded her writings as providing inspired interpretations of Scripture:

"How many have read carefully Patriarchs and Prophets, *The Great Controversy*, and *The Desire of Ages*? I wish all to understand that my confidence in the light that God has given stands firm because I know that the Holy Spirit's power magnified the truth and made it honorable, saying: 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' In my books, the truth is stated, barricaded by a 'Thus said the Lord.' The Holy Spirit traced these truths upon my heart and mind as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God, upon the tables of stone, which are now in the ark, to be brought forth in that great day when a sentence will be pronounced against every evil, seducing, science produced by the father of lies." *Colporteur Ministry*; p. 126.

"God would be pleased to see the Desire of Ages in every home. In this book is contained the light He has is given upon His word." Colporteur Ministry, p. 126.

"This is my work - to open the Scriptures as God has opened them to me." Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 8, 236.

"The testimonies God has given His people are in harmony with His word." Testimonies to Ministers, p. 402.

[Describing how early in the history of the church she received interpretations of Scripture in vision]:

"The power of God would come upon me, and I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error. As the points of our faith were thus established, our feet were placed upon a solid foundation. We accepted the truth point by point, under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit." Gospel Workers, p. 302.

"The Spirit of God would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me... A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God was plainly marked out before me." This Day With God, p. 317.

4. We can summarize the above study as follows:

- a. Ellen White's interpretations of: 'scripture, like Paul's, were inspired by the Holy Spirit. -Therefore they are authoritative.
- b. This does not mean that other interpretations of some passages, different from those of Ellen White's, may not be correct. Paul undoubtedly would have accepted an interpretation of Deuteronomy 25:4 that was different from the one he presented in 1 Corinthians 9:9. Some passages of Scripture are subject to a number of interpretations. Sometimes an inspired author is given interpretations that we would not have thought of.
- c. Like Paul, sometimes Ellen White takes passages of Scripture out of their immediate context and gives them meanings that would not result from a strict application of principles of interpretation. Like the Bible writers, she sometimes adapts passages from other inspired authors as a convenient means of conveying her message.
- d. Like Paul, Ellen White does not attempt to interpret the entire Scriptures, even though her teachings were quite consistent with it. In other words, there is still plenty of room for the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit to function in individual hearts and minds.
- e. But to deny the truthfulness of a particular Scriptural interpretation given by Ellen White is to reject the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. What was given to Paul and Ellen White by the Spirit is inspired truth.
- f. This does not mean that we have exalted Ellen White's authority above the Bible or that we have made her a pope. As pointed out above, the pope reserves the right to declare new doctrines that are not in the Bible. He also interprets Scripture consistently with the doctrinal understandings of the Catholic Church, even though the interpretations may be contradicted by inspired Bible writers. Ellen White's interpretations, like those of Paul, are in agreement with Scripture throughout and never are her doctrinal statements a contradiction of previously revealed truth.
- g. Paul was a canonical writer; hence the teaching of new doctrine was not impossible for him. The Bible records that: there were many non-canonical prophets who, like Ellen 'White, were given inspired counsels that were not intended to be part of the sacred canon and yet were thoroughly consistent with it. Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, Gad, Deborah, and Huldah are typical examples: Some of these non-canonical

prophets even wrote books (1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9: 29) that were accepted by Bible writers as authoritative.

- h. Ellen White, like earlier non-canonical prophets, has all of the same inspired authority that Paul possessed, except that she was not chosen to present any new doctrine. She was commissioned by the Lord to present Spirit-inspired interpretations of that which has long been revealed in the canonical Scriptures. Surely any message that comes directly from the Holy Spirit is authoritative truth. Such were the messages given to Ellen White.

## II. Do Prophets Ever: Sin Or Make Mistakes In Their Personal Lives? Do They Need To Be Corrected By The Lord?

We will allow the Bible to answer the question.

### The Word

- 7. Of what serious sins was David guilty? 2 Samuel 11:2-17; 12:7-9; 1 Chronicles 21:1-14.
- 8. What sins did Solomon commit? 1 Kings 11:1-14.
- 9. How did Peter sin after the resurrection of Jesus? Galatians 2:11-14.
- 10. What did the Apostle John say about sin in the experience of every human being? 1 John 1:8; (compare Romans 3:23).

Explanation: Commenting on the sins in the lives of these great Bible writers, Ellen White wrote:

"If they had been without foible they would have been more than human, and our sinful natures would despair of ever reaching a point of excellence. But seeing where they struggled and fell, where they took heart again and conquered through the grace of God we are encouraged, and led to press over the obstacles that degenerate nature places in our way." Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 12.

Writing of her own character weaknesses, Ellen White said:

"I do not claim infallibility or even perfection of Christian character. I am not free from mistakes and errors in my life. Had I followed my Savior more closely, I should not have to mourn so much my unlikeness to His dear image." Letter 27, 1876 (Quoted in Robert W. Olson, One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White, p. 47).

Relevance: Ellen White was a very godly woman, whose character was often extolled by those who did not believe in her prophetic role. Yet she was a faulty human being. Like Bible prophets, she grew spiritually by reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

## III. Do The Writings Of Prophets Contain Some Mistakes In Detail?

Although the divine truth they presented was infallible, Bible prophets sometimes made mistakes in regard to factual details that were not revealed by the Holy Spirit.

### The Word

- 11. What apparent mistake did Matthew make in citing the Old Testament? Matthew 27:9; compare Zechariah 11:12-13.
- 12. What problem do you see in the description of the furniture of the sanctuary given in the book of Hebrews? Hebrews 9:3-4,
- 13. What mistake did the writer of the book of Judges make in regard to the name of Moses' father-in-law? Judges 4:11; compare Numbers 10:29; Exodus 2:16-21.

Explanation: It seems that Matthew really intended to cite Zechariah, not Jeremiah. The writer of Hebrews does not have the altar of incense in the holy place of the sanctuary but places the "golden censer" (KJV) in the most holy place. The Greek word used is thumiaterion, which may mean either "censer," or "altar of incense." Various attempts have been made to explain the apparent mistake. It would appear that the writer of Judges identified Moses' father-in-law as Hobab, whereas he was Moses' brother-in-law. Moses' father-in-law was Reuel (Exodus 2:16-21), or Raguel (Numbers 10:29).

These are a few of the apparent factual difficulties that can be detected in various places throughout the Scriptures: The reader who firmly believes in the inspiration of the 'sacred volume is likely to respond by saying, "So what?" None of these little discrepancies change the teachings of the Bible one iota, and none of them has any bearing on the special message of the passage in which they are contained. The Holy Spirit gave the prophet an inspired message, which the prophet wrote in his own words. There was room for an element of human error.

#### Relevance For The Writings Of Ellen G. White

Ellen White sometimes made mistakes in narrating Biblical and historical events. But such errors in no way detracted from the inspired message that she conveyed. The Great Controversy, for instance, was not written as a history Book. The historical data is used to contribute to the historical interpretation. It is the interpretation that was given by the Lord, not the historical detail. To criticize the book on the basis of certain historical discrepancies is to miss its point entirely. Ellen White wrote in the introduction to The Great Controversy:

"As the Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His Word, and the scenes of the past and the future, I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially so to present it as to shed a light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future." p. xiii.

Ellen White's son, W. C. White, who worked with her for years explained:

"The framework of the great temple of truth sustained by her writings. was presented to her clearly in vision. In some features of this work, information was given in detail. Regarding, some features of the revelation, such as the features of prophetic chronology, as regards the ministration in the sanctuary and the changes that took place. in 1844, the matter was presented to her many times and in detail many times, and this enabled her to speak very clearly and very positively regarding the foundation pillars, of our faith.

"In some of the: historical matters such as are brought out in Patriarchs and Prophets and in Acts of the Apostles, and in Great Controversy, the main outlines were made very clear and plain to her, and when she came to write these topics, she was left to study the Bible and history to get dates and geographical relations and to perfect her description of details." Selected Messages, vol 3. P. 462

The minor human errors in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White should not cause anyone to doubt their divine Source. The Lord's purpose is to present a special spiritual message to our hearts, not to give us every little factual detail untinged by the slightest human error. Since He did not dictate the words to the inspired writers, there was always the possibility that an element of human error would creep in.

#### IV. Do Prophets Sometimes Misunderstand The Inspired Messages Given To Them?

Since they are fallible human beings, it would, indeed, be very unusual if they did not sometimes misunderstand.

#### The Word

14. What suggestions do we have that Daniel did not understand all that was revealed to him? Daniel 9:1-3; 12:4.
15. How did Peter misunderstand a vision given to him by the Lord? Acts 10:9-17.
16. What information given to them by Jesus did the disciples misunderstand? Mark 9:31-32; Luke 24:21, 25, 26; John 20:8-9; Acts 1:6.

Explanation: The vision of Daniel 8 was given in “the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar” (Daniel 8:1). That was the year 551 B.C. The events of Daniel 9 occurred in “the first year of Darius,” or 538 B.C. Hence, there were 13 years between the two visions. The first part of Daniel 9 indicates that Daniel had not understood the Daniel 8 vision. He could not reconcile the time prophecy of that vision (verse 14, the 2,300 days or years reaching down to the end of time) with the 70 years of captivity predicted by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11). Hence, Daniel prayed to the Lord for understanding. The answer is recorded in Daniel 9:21-27. Gabriel came to explain to him the Daniel 8 vision. It is doubtful that even then, Daniel understood the real significance of the time prophecies. Later, he was told that his book would be sealed “even to the time of the end” (Daniel 12:4). Only then would the time prophecies identifying the time of the end be understood. The indications are that at least for 13 years, Daniel did not understand the significance of a vision that he had received from God, and it is possible that he never fully understood it.

Acts 10:9-17 tells us that Peter did not at first understand the vision of the unclean animals that he was commanded to kill and eat. Given his predilection for only clean meats, it is not surprising that he objected to the divine command. There are many in our world today who still do not understand his vision. The Lord was not telling Peter that now he could eat unclean meats. He was using the animals as a symbol of the Gentiles whom the Jews rejected, but whom He was leading to enjoy His cleansing grace. (See the remainder of the chapter).

The disciples of Jesus consistently misunderstood the nature of the kingdom He was establishing. They hoped for an earthly kingdom with Israel as the leading nation. They could not grasp the significance of His predicted death and did not understand when He told them He would rise on the third day. When they preached, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:7), they meant something quite different from what Jesus intended (Matthew 4:17). They did not realize that the kingdom then at hand was solely the kingdom of grace and that the kingdom of glory would come only later. They were so enamored with the concept of national glory that they could not understand Christ’s message.

Relevance For The Work Of Ellen G. White:

Ellen White at first misunderstood the correct time to commence the Sabbath. She had been told in a vision, “From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbaths,” but she thought for a time that ‘even’ was six o’clock, as Joseph Bates taught. Later she received a vision correcting the misunderstanding. (See R. W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions*, pp. 54-55).

For a few years after 1844, Ellen White misinterpreted her first vision. She thought that the door of mercy had been shut for the entire world. But subsequent revelations from God opened her understanding. By January 1850, she had thoroughly decided that even though the door of mercy had closed for some individuals, it had not for the world at large. Years later, she wrote:

“With my brethren and sisters, after the time passed in forty-four, I did believe no more sinners would be converted. But I never had a vision that no more sinners would be converted.” *Selected Messages*. Book 1, p. 74.

She explained that it sometimes took several visions from the Lord to clarify a point in her mind:

“Often representations are given me which at first I do not understand. But after a time they are made plain by a repeated presentation of those things that I did not at first comprehend, in ways that make their meaning clear and unmistakable.” *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 56.

#### V. Do Inspired Prophets Use Other Sources To Help Them Convey Their Messages?

There is a great deal of evidence that Bible writers borrowed from non-inspired sources in the process of preparing their books. Usually, they did not acknowledge the sources from which they received their materials.

## The Word

17. How do we know that Luke used other literary sources to help him write his Gospel? Luke 1:1-3.
18. What evidence do we have that the writers of Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) borrowed wording from one another or from another common source?

Compare the wording used by the Gospel writers in the following passages:

Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:5-12; Luke 5:20-26.

Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5.

19. Whose wording did Micah borrow? Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4.

Explanation: The wording in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) is identical in many passages. Even grammatical features are copied. For example, the ellipsis in Mark 2:10 is identical in Matthew 9:6, and Luke 5:24. It has been accepted by most scholars that Matthew and Luke copied from Mark, as well as another common source. Whether or not that suggested solution to the Synoptic Problem is correct, the fact remains that the Gospel writers copied heavily from sources in writing their books. The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the Synoptics, consisting of 661 verses. Almost all of Mark's material occurs in Matthew and Luke. There are only about 30 of Mark's verses that are only in Mark. Not only is there a lot of agreement in the arrangement of the material; many passages show close agreement in wording.

Commenting on the borrowing of the Bible Writers, R. W. Olson writes:

"Paul quoted the Greek poets Aratus (Acts 17:28), Epimenides (Titus 1:12), and Menander (1 Corinthians 15:33). Jude quoted the so-called "book of Enoch" (Jude 14, 15). John the Revelator apparently drew many lines from the book of Enoch. Note the following citations:

'After that, I saw... a multitude beyond number and reckoning, who stood before the Lord of Spirits.' Enoch 40:1 (cf. Rev. 7:9).

'After that, I saw... and behold a star fell from heaven.' —Enoch 86:1 (cf. Rev. 9:11).

'They were all judged and found guilty and cast into this fiery abyss.' —Enoch 90:26 (cf. Rev. 20:15).

'And the first heaven shall depart and pass away, and a new heaven shall appear.' —Enoch 91:16 (cf. Rev. 21:1).

'The horse shall walk up to the breast in the blood of sinners.' —Enoch 100:3 (cf. Rev. 14:20).

'Their names shall be blotted out of the Book of Life.' Enoch 108:3 (cf. Rev. 3:5).

"The book of Enoch was known to have been in circulation as early as the middle of the first century B.C., some 150 years before John wrote the book of Revelation. John's evident choice of the language of an earlier unknown author is no reason to question the inspiration of his own book. Those lines, previously penned by another, helped him to say what he wanted to say, so he felt free to use them." (Olson, One Hundred and One Questions, p. 106; see also p. 107 where Olson gives a list of parallels between the apocryphal books and the New Testament).

## Relevance For The Writings Of Ellen G. White

In explaining why Ellen White borrowed from other writers; R. W. Olson makes four points:

1. "First, it was to help her express well what she had seen and heard in her vision. She often alluded to her sense of inadequacy at the task of putting divine thoughts and scenes into human language. With only three grades of

formal schooling, she found that reading widely aided her. She was on the alert for clearer and better expressions to use in the composition of her articles and books... W. C. White states:

‘In the writing of her books, she has sometimes found it very difficult and laborious to put into language the scenes presented to her, and when she has found in the language of another correct representation of the thought presented to her, she has sometimes copied sentences and paragraphs, feeling that it was her privilege to utilize the correct statements of other writers, of the scenes that have been presented to her. ‘—W. C. White to J. J. Gorrell, May 13, 1904.” (Olson, One Hundred and One Questions, p. 71).

2. “Second, she borrowed historical, geographical, chronological, and other details not revealed to her in vision... Ellen White laid no claim to having received all the minutiae of her historical information in vision. She stated:

‘The great events which have marked the progress of reform in past ages are matters of history, well known and universally acknowledged by the Protestant world; they are facts which none can gainsay. This history I have presented briefly.’—The Great Controversy, p. xiii.” (R. W. Olson, One Hundred and One Questions, p. 71).

3. “Third, at times the Lord led her to the discovery and use of beautiful gems of truth in the works of other authors. W. C. White and D. E. Robinson have written:

‘She was told that in reading religious books and journals, she would find precious gems of truth expressed in acceptable language and that she would be given help from heaven to recognize these and to separate them from the rubbish of error with which she would sometimes find them associated.’—Brief Statements, p. 6.” (R. W. Olson, One Hundred and One Questions, p. 72).

4. “Fourth, she appropriated some of the doctrinal writings of her fellow workers, since they had developed their doctrinal concepts by mutual study. W. C. White and D. E. Robinson state:

‘When tracts and pamphlets were published, the expositions of truth therein presented frequently represented the results of the united, concerted study, and the forms of expression by the several writers were very similar and sometimes identical. All felt that the truths to be presented were common property and wherever one could help another or get help from another in the expression of Biblical truths, it was considered right to do so. Consequently, there were many excellent statements of present truth copied by one writer from another. And no man said that aught which he wrote was exclusively his own.’... Brief Statements, pp. 10, 19.

“In her Introduction to The Great Controversy, first in 1888 and again in 1911, Ellen white acknowledged her borrowing not only from historians but also from ‘those carrying forward the work of reform in our time’ (p. xiv). She here appears to have in mind such writers as Uriah Smith, J. N. Andrews, and James White.” (R. W. Olson, One Hundred and One Questions, p. 73).

For a full discussion of Ellen White’s literary practices see: Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1951); Robert W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G White Estate, 1981); Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White, 6 volumes* (Washington, D.C.: Review and herald, 1981 – 1986).

## Conclusion And Appeal

As we draw this series of 100 Bible lessons to a close, it is with an earnest desire that the reader will find Christ as he turns to the Scriptures for the answer to his need. The sacred volume presents a magnificently symmetrical and coordinated body of truth. Not only does it identify our era as the final one before the second coming of Jesus, but also it enables us to understand the means by which we can be prepared spiritually to meet our returning Lord. Although the inspired messages given by Ellen G. White were not intended to replace the Bible or to comprise an addition to the sacred canon, they are given to us by God as a clarification of divine truth for our further comfort and guidance through the stormy days just prior to the second appearing of Christ.

Dear Bible student, have you placed your life entirely in the hands of Jesus Christ? Are you conscious that your past sins are forgiven, and that Christ is daily giving you the grace to live for Him? Is Christ the most important Person in your life, so that no other relationship or affection in any way hinders His empowering work in your heart? Is your love for Him so strong He orders for your present existence? And do you have the constant inner assurance, given by the indwelling Holy Spirit, that you have present salvation in Christ, and that, because of your determination to retain your relationship with Him you will soon enjoy eternal life with Him? Can you say with the hymn-writer, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine?"

We pray that, having searched the Word for yourself, you can give a positive answer to every one of these questions.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude 24, 25).