

Lesson 9 for November 28, 2026

TESTING THE PROPHETS



"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world"

(1 John 4:1, NKJV)

God has always had prophets to guide his people on the right path. However, not all who claim to be prophets have been sent by God.

There were even true prophets who, driven by the desire for money, strayed from their mission and became false prophets. This happened with Shemaiah, who accepted a bribe to try to make Nehemiah sin (Neh. 6:10-13).

How can we distinguish true prophets from false ones? What guidance does the Bible give us to differentiate between them?





- Supernatural events
- Harmony with the Bible
- Exaltation of Christ
- Positive impact
- Fulfilled prophecies

SUPERNATURAL EVENTS

"How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe!" (Daniel 10:17 NIV)



The prophetic ministry is often accompanied by supernatural events, whether external (signs), or manifested in the prophet himself.

External supernatural events



Elijah vindicated his prophetic ministry by calling down fire to consume the unbelievers (2 Kings 1:10)



At the words of an anonymous prophet, the pagan altar of Bethel was destroyed (1 Kings 13:5)

Supernatural events in the prophet

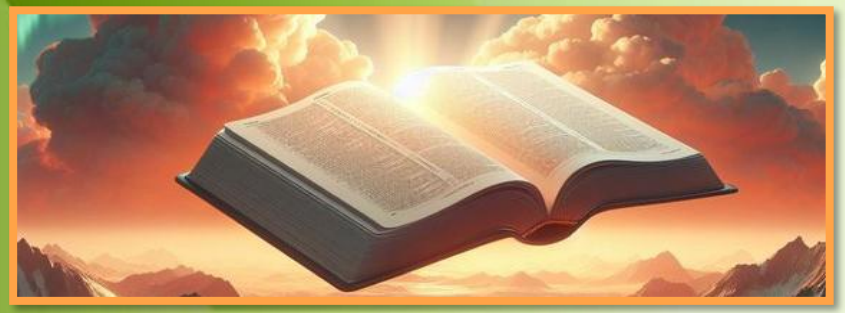


Daniel became weak and breathless during a vision (Dan. 10:17)



The apostle John fell to the ground as though dead upon receiving a vision (Rev. 1:17)

These supernatural events, by themselves, do not authenticate a prophet. False prophets can also perform supernatural signs through the power of the enemy (Rev. 13:13).



HARMONY WITH THE BIBLE

"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."
(Isaiah 8:20)



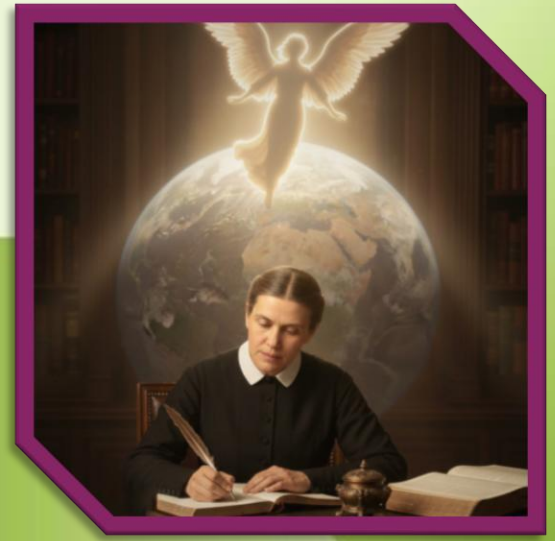
Isaiah 8:20 presents a clear standard for testing the truthfulness of a prophet: he must be in accordance with the law, the Pentateuch; and with the testimony, the later revelations through the prophets.

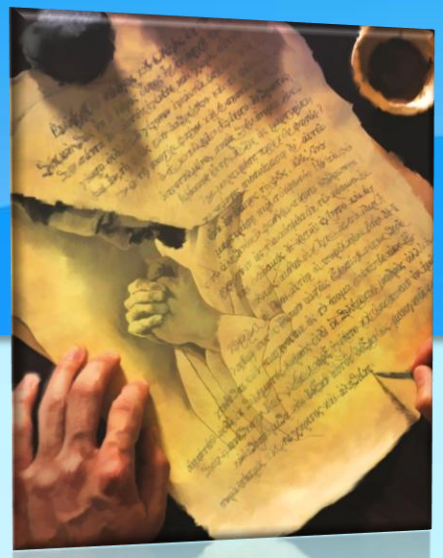
God has communicated His knowledge through the prophets according to His people's capacity to understand the messages. This is known as "progressive truth."

Thus, each age has had its "present truth" (2 Peter 1:12). But, since God is the one who communicates this truth—and He does not change (James 1:17)—each new revelation is in harmony with the preceding revelations (Jeremiah 28:8).

For this reason, any prophet whose message contradicts biblical teaching is a false prophet (Deut. 13:1-3).







EXALTATION OF CHRIST

"And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world" (1 John 4:3)

Any prophet who denies the historicity of Jesus, or does not make Him the center of his message, is a false prophet (1 John 4:3).

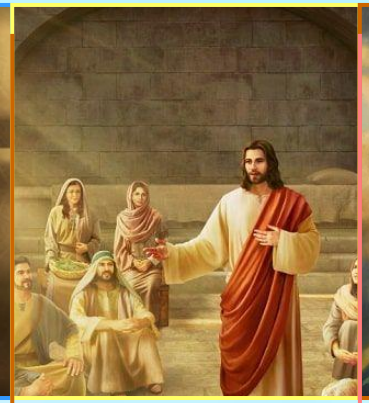
In harmony with this, the true prophet accepts these realities of Jesus:



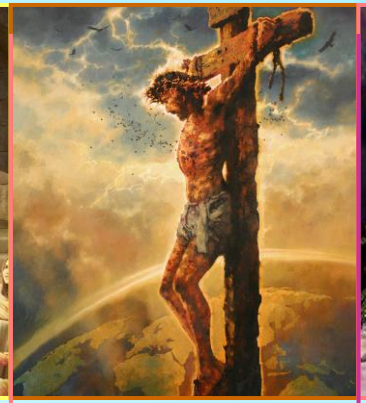
His divinity



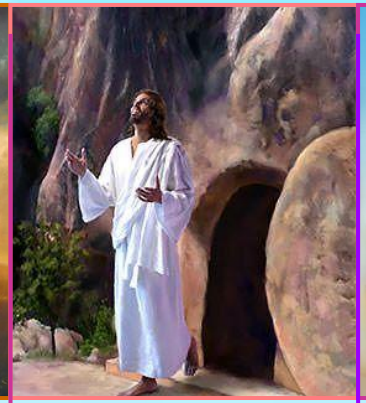
His incarnation



His sinless life



His atoning death



His resurrection



His intercessory ministry



His second coming

Prophets who are uplifting Jesus will not try to create their own following or promote themselves (Acts 4:12). They will be ready to serve and not to take advantage of those to whom they have been sent (Mark 9:35; John 13:16).

POSITIVE IMPACT

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?" (Matthew 7:15-16 NIV)



According to Jesus, prophets can be identified by their fruits (Mt. 7:15-16). These fruits are of two kinds, and both must be positive.





The fruit of the message

The message of the true prophet edifies, comforts, and calls to repentance (1 Cor. 14:3).



The fruit of the messenger

The prophet's life must be consistent with sound doctrine. For example, he cannot live in clear contradiction with any of the Ten Commandments (Jude 1:16).







As fallible human beings, prophets could make mistakes and commit sins: Jonah fled from God; Paul misjudged John Mark; Peter pretended to live as a Jew. But that was not their way of life.

FULFILLED PROPHECIES



"As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent"
(Jeremiah 28:9)



The prophet's role is associated with announcing future events (prophecies). Thus, a simple formula can be deduced to distinguish prophets: if the prophecy comes true, the prophet is true (Jer. 28:9); if the prophecy does not come true, the prophet is false (Deut. 18:22).

However, this formula has exceptions that we must understand correctly.

If a good thing is announced in the near future, it must always come to pass (Jer. 28:1-4, 15-17)



If a good thing is announced in the distant future, it may not come to pass because it is conditional (like Isaiah's prophecies about the future well-being of Israel if it accepted the Messiah).



Prophecies that foretell evil are always conditional. If there is repentance, fate changes (as happened with Nineveh after Jonah's preaching).



“The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.”

E. G. W. (The Great Controversy, p. 7)

“The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony. He will bring in spurious visions to mislead, and will mingle the false with the true, and so disgust people that they will regard everything that bears the name of visions as a species of fanaticism; but honest souls, by contrasting false and true, will be enabled to distinguish between them.”

E. G. W. (Selected Messages, book 2, p. 78)

APPENDIX: ELLEN G. WHITE ACCEPTED AS A PROPHET

Before accepting Ellen G. White as a true prophet, Adventists compared her person and her message with the biblical guidelines that allow the identification of true prophets.

SUPERNATURAL EVENTS	During her visions, Ellen displayed several supernatural events such as shortness of breath, or physical strength superior to normal (holding a heavy family Bible aloft for hours with one hand).
HARMONY WITH THE BIBLE	We cannot find anything in her writings that contradicts the biblical message. She herself always urged the study of the Bible and asked that her writings be examined in its light.
EXALTATION OF CHRIST	His central message was the same from the beginning: Christ and Christ alone.
POSITIVE IMPACT	Both those who knew her personally and those of us who have read her writings can confirm that her influence has been positive for our Christian experience.
FULFILLED PROPHECIES	For example, the prolonged American Civil War (forecast in 1861); or the fire that destroyed the Review & Herald facilities (forecast in 1901 and fulfilled in 1902).