

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Fourth Quarter 2026: *The Gift of Prophecy*

Lesson 6 “The Prophetic Writings”

Read for this week’s study

Exodus 17:14; Isaiah 13:1; Jeremiah 36:17, 18; Romans 16:22; Luke 1:1-4; Jude 14, 15;
2 Corinthians 4:7.

Memory Text

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Call to Write
- III. Literary Genres and Styles
- IV. Literary Assistants
- V. Literary Sources
- VI. Divine Message and Human Imperfections
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The Bible describes three major ways that prophets communicated God’s messages: 1) orally, 2) through writing, and 3) through symbolic actions and dramatizations. This week’s lesson focuses on the writings of the prophets, their use of literary assistants, and how to deal with passages that are difficult to understand. According to Romans 15:4, what is the purpose of inspired writings? (Sabbath Afternoon).
2. Prior to the time of Moses, God used direct oral communication with audible voices or in dreams, or through angels. What was the very first mention of writing in the Bible (Exod 17:14)? According to Jeremiah 36:2-3, what was God’s purpose in asking Jeremiah to write? What would you say to someone who thinks we can’t trust the Bible because we don’t have the original manuscripts? (Sunday)
3. The Bible contains a wide variety of writing styles; poetry, narrative, court records, letters (to individuals or communities), diaries (Numbers 33), prophetic oracles,

apocalyptic, prayers, covenant lawsuits, and songs. Read Isaiah 17:7. What kind of poetry is that? What does the use of poetry tell you about God? There is also in the Bible the use of devices like metaphor (Psalm 23:1; John 6:35) and hyperbole (John 21:25; Matt 19:24). What do these tell you about God? (Monday)

4. Did prophets immediately write down what God shared with them, or did they sometimes get help in expressing the thoughts that they received from God? Read Jeremiah 36:17-18; Romans 16:22. (Tuesday)
5. The Bible also exhibits evidence that its authors used literary sources. See Ecclesiastes 12:9-10, Proverbs 31:1, 1 Kings 11:41, Luke 1:1-4, Acts 17:26-28, and Jude 14-15. (Wednesday)
6. What does Paul mean when he writes that the knowledge of God is like a treasure hidden in “clay pots” (2 Cor 4:7)? Which is your favorite biblical example of an inspired writer who demonstrated major character flaws? Why did God choose to use fallible human beings rather than sinless angels as agents of His revelation? (Thursday)
7. When we look at the phenomena of inspiration as seen in the Bible, Ellen White’s experiences and even shortcomings seem quite similar to the experiences and shortcomings of the biblical prophets. Many of the criticisms directed at her would for similar reasons be directed at the biblical prophets if they were alive today. (Friday)
8. Like Paul, Ellen White employed literary assistants. They were not ghostwriters or co-authors. But the great volume of work she produced would not have been possible without them. She was an avid reader, but she was not a trained researcher. With the help of these assistants, she quoted and adapted material from many historical and spiritual sources, including “Biographies of Christ” that were sometimes quite creative with the biblical material. She recommended to her readers many of the books she had utilized herself, so there seems no intent to deceive. Be that as it may, “In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it” (1 *Selected Messages*, 37). She also grew and matured in her skills as a writer and in her understanding of theological themes, especially regarding the character of God. Many of those who knew her the best were convinced that she was a modern-day, non-canonical prophet of God. (Friday)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Now as you know, all the original copies of the Bible have disappeared. There are hundreds and thousands of hand-written copies though that have come down to us through the years and no two of them are the same, which could distress a person who doesn’t know better. But if you have had a chance to see these manuscripts, hundreds and thousands of them, and note what the differences are like, you would be moved rather to say that no other ancient document has

been preserved with such care and accuracy as the books of the Bible. That's why I put that comment at the bottom of the sheet by the noted scholar who spent a lifetime studying such matters, who said, "You can pick the Bible up with confidence and say, for all practical purposes, we have the word of God."

But what about all the translations? There are about two thousand languages on earth and there are Bibles, at least parts of the Bible, in almost every one of those languages. And hundreds of translations in English! For a little while I contemplated bringing mine from home and displaying them here—until I measured them and found I would need a table twenty-eight feet long. And I only have a few. I have about 150 and there are many more than that. Fear of versions is lessening now. No one is prepared to burn the *Revised Standard* version, as someone did when it first appeared, in Akron, Ohio. The address of that public burning was appropriately Furnace Street, Akron, Ohio. I have a photograph of it in a newspaper. The right attitude towards versions, I think, is in our *King James* preface. I wish it were still there. You see nobody wanted the *King James* when it first came out. It wasn't just the size, the words were changed and the men who prepared this great Bible say in the introduction: "Hath the Kingdom of God become words and syllables? Why should we be in bondage to them when we may be free?"

You see, as Hebrews says, "in many and various ways" God has spoken to us through the years. And in many and various ways those words have been translated into English and most of the other languages on this earth. How else could the gospel go to all the world? How could people find out about our God? And so my recommendation would be to take the Bible (or preferably the versions, plural, of your choice) and let's sit down together, and take up the fourth question, next week. Having these magnificent opportunities—never has the Bible been so readily available. And having all this evidence so readily available, let's read it. Can we confidently come to the conclusion that we understand the meaning? That the evidence is really there, the Bible can be trusted? And, as some of us who have spent a lot of time reading these versions believe, the Author who is behind the Bible can be trusted because there is trustworthy evidence in the record. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #5, "The Record of the Evidence" recorded February 1984, Loma Linda, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/5MMCAG>

Right now, the General Conference has employed an individual or two to carefully research the writings of Ellen White, the sources that she used, and so forth. That is pure, unadulterated higher criticism. That's what it's all about. So it's a very interesting thing. As a church we have tended to condemn higher criticism, and we are paying somebody to conduct higher criticism of Ellen White.

To be consistent, we should do higher criticism on the Bible. Why not? When we talked about Peter and Mark writing the gospel, that's higher criticism, you see. There's nothing wrong with higher criticism. It's like viewing the source of a document, like a river. The closer you get to the source of the river, the higher it is. So when you are asking, "Where did this book come from? Who wrote it? When? To whom? Under what circumstances? Where did the ideas come from?" That's higher criticism. When you get lower down, all you are concerned about is, "Do we have the right words?" That's otherwise known as textual criticism. When we consider whether these words were in the manuscript or not, that's lower criticism, or textual criticism. There's nothing arrogant about "higher". It isn't called higher because it assumes a certain arrogance on the part of the critics. It's that you're coming a little closer to the sources. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Mark, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/53MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/54MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Recommended Further Study:

Conversations About God #5 "The Record of the Evidence" is available at:

<http://pkp.cc/5MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers. {7BC 945.9}

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the Word of God (MS 24, 1886). {7BC 945.10}

The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes. {YRP 225.2}

The stamps of minds are different. All do not understand expressions and statements alike. Some understand the statements of the Scriptures to suit their own particular minds and cases.

Prepossessions, prejudices, and passions have a strong influence to darken the understanding and confuse the mind even in reading the words of Holy Writ. . . . {YRP 225.3}

“The Bible points to God as its Author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all ‘given by inspiration of God’ (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by his Holy Spirit had shed light into the minds and hearts of his servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed, have themselves embodied the thought in human language.

{RH, August 30, 1906 par. 5}

“The ten commandments were spoken by God himself, and were written by his own hand. They are of divine, and not of human, composition. But the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, represents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ John 1:14.

{RH, August 30, 1906 par. 6}

“Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony.

{RH, August 30, 1906 par. 7}

“As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of a subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind; a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life. {RH, August 30, 1906 par. 8}

“God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do His work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, none the less, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect

expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.” {1SM 26.1}

He who called the fisherman of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God. {DA 297.1}

All heaven is interested in the work going on in this world, which is to prepare men and women for the future, immortal life. It is God’s plan that human agencies shall have the high honor of acting as co-workers with Jesus Christ in the salvation of souls. {5T 573.3}

God is not dependent upon men for the advancement of His cause. He might have made angels the ambassadors of His truth. He might have made known His will, as He proclaimed the law from Sinai with His own voice. But in order to cultivate a spirit of benevolence in us, He has chosen to employ men to do this work. {CS 20.1}

God might have committed the message of the gospel, and all the work of loving ministry, to the heavenly angels. He might have employed other means for accomplishing His purpose. But in His infinite love He chose to make us co-workers with Himself, with Christ and the angels, that we might share the blessing, the joy, the spiritual uplifting, which results from this unselfish ministry. {SC 79.2}