Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2026: *The Gift of Prophecy*
Lesson 9 "Testing *the* Prophets"

Read for this week's study

Daniel 10:7-19; Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Isaiah 8:20; John 11:25; Acts 15:36-39; Jeremiah 28:9, 15-17.

Memory Text

"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).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

I. Introduction
II. Role of the Supernatural
III. Harmony With the Bible
IV. The Incarnation of Christ
V. Positive Fruits
VI. Fulfilled Prophecies
VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration
Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. "The gift of prophecy is more valuable than any diamond, yet someone claiming this gift cannot simply be taken at face value. That claim must be tested. This week we will examine biblical prophets to uncover the biblical principles used to test their authenticity." (Sabbath afternoon)
2. What is the role of the physical phenomena that some prophets experience when in vision, for determining that the prophet is genuine? (Daniel 10:7-19; Sunday's lesson). How helpful are they when you are removed from the prophet by 200 or 2000 years?
3. Why would God put in the Bible a warning like we have in Deuteronomy 13:1-5? Many modern Christians ask the Bible to do something it was never designed to do: provide clear, uniform, timeless answers to every doctrinal, moral, or practical question. Faithful questioning means learning to live with life's (and the Bible's) complexity and letting it train us in discernment, humility, and spiritual maturity.
4. A passage like this shows that the cosmic conflict includes **religious deception**, not just open rebellion. Evil rarely appears only as godless atheism or overt wickedness. It often comes clothed in spirituality, charisma, signs, and authority. One of the deepest lessons of the cosmic conflict is that the enemy does not merely oppose God from the outside; he counterfeits from the inside. Deuteronomy 13 warns us that the decisive issue is

not, “Did something amazing happen?” but, “What kind of worship, allegiance, and picture of God does this produce?”

5. In the cosmic conflict framework, God must educate his people in **moral and theological discernment**. Israel is not to be miracle-addicted, novelty-driven, or authority-dependent in an uncritical way. They need to remember who redeemed them from Egypt and stay loyal to him. The warning thus forms a community who are anchored in prior self-revelation of God’s character and his covenant faithfulness, rather than in the miraculous or spectacular. Truth is measured by fidelity to the true character of God, not by religious impressiveness. Gullibility is not a virtue! If we are naively credulous, we accept every spiritual claim, we become easy prey for the enemy.

6. One of the paradoxes of God’s revelation is that later biblical prophets reveal additional insights into God’s plans and the way of salvation, but they do not contradict the basic principles and concepts already given by God. (Monday’s lesson)

7. Why do we need to connect 1 John 4:3 with 1 Corinthians 3:21-23? (Tuesday’s lesson) Paul starts with various teachers in Corinth (God uses all of them!) and then expands it to the world, then to include being alive or being dead, and then expands it to include everything in the present and the future. But he grounds the whole thing in Christ, who is bigger than any one teacher, set of ideas, the world, or life or death or the present or the future. Paul wants his friends in Corinth to enjoy the truth wherever they find it, to celebrate it and receive it as a good gift from the source of all things, from God.

8. Because religion has given people a lot of categories and labels and ideas which are not helpful, our experience of Christ will consistently transcend whatever boxes we have created. God wants us to have eyes wide open, affirm what should be affirmed, deny what should be denied and being rooted and grounded in the Christ who keeps insisting that all things are ours.

9. Wednesday’s lesson focuses on the positive fruits and Thursday’s lesson on fulfilled prophecies. How can we balance this so that neither becomes a single mechanical filter? God gives us tests of discernment not so that we become suspicious, closed, and controlling, but so that we can remain faithful, humble, and teachable.

10. Accuracy without godly fruit is dangerous, and apparent fruit without truth can also easily mislead. God often speaks through unfamiliar people, unexpected voices, and gifts outside our preferred categories. Jesus himself was rejected partly because he did not fit expected patterns. If we absolutize our discernment rules in a defensive way, we may protect ourselves not only from deception but also from God’s revelation. If we are fearfully closed, we will reject every unfamiliar movement of God. Therefore, let’s be rooted enough not to be deceived, and open enough not to miss God. God’s way is neither gullibility nor control, but wise openness. We need communal discernment, so that we resist deception without resisting the surprising freedom of the Spirit.

11. God moves forward within history and transforms people. That’s why the Bible has such enduring power. It shows that we do not have to settle, that tomorrow does not have to be a repeat of today, that we do not have to be enslaved to fear or despair – that we can change, move forward, heal, and we can leave behind whatever needs to be left behind so that we can step into a better future that God has in store for us all.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Now just as God in many and various ways has sought to reveal to us the truth, so in many and various ways, Satan has sought to keep us from seeing and coming to know this truth that is so essential. He sought to deceive us into turning against this truth, even as we might be claiming to believe it. That is the perversity of it. Now recall that his special targets are loyal saints. History records that one of his most successful deceptions has been leading God's people into a certain grateful satisfaction that the Lord has blessed us with so much light that we really don't need to pursue it anymore. Not that we would call that pious satisfaction. We would be condemning that as something not to do. We'd rather call this gratitude that God had so favored us with so much truth that we become conservative and seek to discourage even further inquiry and further investigations. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #17, "Satan's Final Effort to Deceive" recorded May 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* http://pkp.cc/17MMCAG

So Paul says, test all things, let there be discernment. And you remember what's coming up, in Hebrews 5 at the end. It says the grownup people "have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil." Do you remember Ephesians last time?

> Let us no longer be children, easily swayed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men with their ingenuity in inventing evil, but let us grow up, and speak the truth in love.

Romans 12, you remember: "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may approve what is excellent." Jesus said there would be false prophets. John says test all the spirits. Then some people wonder, is Ellen White biblical on this point? Of course, I have found her biblical on all points. She is so biblical on this point. "God never asks us to believe anything for which He does not provide adequate evidence. And it is evidence that appeals to the reason. We must bring everything," she says, "within the bounds of reason, lest the enemy so come as to set everything in a disorderly way." She says don't call blind credulity 'faith'. It's the devil's substitute for faith. Presumption is the devil's substitute for faith.

And yet, is it not in the realm of religion—that's the only one—where we are invited to believe without evidence. And that's called very wonderful, because that's faith. And the more willing you are to believe without evidence, the more faith you have. Which would mean that the more you know what you believe in, the less faith you will need. Because eventually, when you really know, you won't need any more faith because you know. So if you really know God, then you don't need any faith. That doesn't make much sense, does it?

We shouldn't be using the word "faith" at all, because faith has come to mean "believing in something you know isn't so," or believing something for which you have inadequate evidence. The word in the Bible is "trust." And the Bible warns us against trusting people we do not know.

Don't even trust prophets who say, "I am a prophet of the Most High, and the angel of the Lord has told me this." "But he lied to him."

Look at all the warnings in the Bible. How about the one who says, "I am God." And he asks Christ to worship him. The father of lies. Of all the decisions we make, there is none that demands more that we inquire as to the evidence, than our decision about God. And yet people spend more time, almost, in selection of their toothpaste, than of their God. Because you don't choose your toothpaste by faith. You choose your God by faith. We even suggest in choosing a life's companion, do get to know her. But with God, don't let your head get in the way of your heart. But when you're choosing a wife, the dormitory dean will say, "Now, don't let your heart run away with you. Get your mind into this, now. Get to know her. Go home and see how she relates to her parents, and all these other things." That's old-fashioned, I know. But anyway, the thought is, do get to know her, before you make your decision. But when it comes to knowing God, oh, you can trust your heart. No, the heart only pumps blood. It has nothing to do with this at all.

A man thinks in his heart, in the Bible, doesn't he? So Paul urged them to be more discerning because of all the fakery and fraud that was going on. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Philippians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:* http://pkp.cc/69MMPOGIA66 (Part 1) http://pkp.cc/70MMPOGIA66 (Part 2)

You remember Jonah went to Nineveh, and he announced, forty days, then they will be destroyed. "And I have the Lord's word on that. My chart is right. Forty days, and you'll be destroyed." And when the forty days were up, he went out to see the fulfillment of the prediction, and it didn't come as he had anticipated. Then he turned to God and said, "I didn't think you'd go through with that, anyway. That's why I ran away. But you put so much pressure on me." And you think of the pressure! You know, if an evangelist was trying to avoid going to a certain city and he spent a while in the belly of a whale, that's pressure! And finally he goes and he gives the message.

And then he says, "God, you confuse me. You make me go and deliver the message, and then you don't come through with it. I'm angry!" And God says, "But aren't you pleased that the inhabitants of Nineveh have repented?" But Jonah was more concerned about his reputation. As an advent preacher, he'd given a prophecy, and a date. That's what the charts can sometimes lead us to do. And as you said, the greater concern is that God looked good. And that God did not destroy the inhabitants of Nineveh when they repented made him look very good, and it won some to repentance.

The appeal at the end is so moving in Jonah. "Don't you care that there are 120,000 people in that city that don't know right from wrong, and there are even a lot of cattle? Don't you care, Jonah?" But he didn't care about God's reputation. As we study the prophecies here, what do they say about God? Do the prophecies even leave room for delay, by the way? Well, the book of

Revelation certainly does. It even speaks of it. “Hold! Do not let these events occur until my servants are sealed in their foreheads.” It’s hard not to get into Revelation when we’re reading Daniel.

As I was reviewing this before coming, it’s significant to me how Jesus commented on the purpose of prophecy. Not just Daniel, of course, but others; but there are so many in Daniel that are so specific. Look at Matthew 24. Jesus himself made some prophecies, and he commented on the purpose of them. Matthew 24:25. You remember they asked how soon he would come. “Well,” he said, “several things will occur before I come.” In fact, verse 23:

> Then if anyone says to you, “Lo, here is the Christ!” or “There he is!” do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Lo, I have told you beforehand [suggesting that he had warned them in advance, so they’d be prepared].

But he gave an additional reason in John 13:19. And I think prophecies have these dual purposes, suggesting it does pay to work them out, indeed. There is warning, unless, of course, we misinterpret them and are looking for the wrong thing. So it pays to study carefully. But an additional reason is given in 13:19: “I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Daniel, recorded February 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

http://pkp.cc/39MMPOGIA66 (Part 1) http://pkp.cc/40MMPOGIA66 (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

I am afraid of anything that would have a tendency to turn the mind away from the solid evidences of the truth as revealed in God’s Word. I am afraid of it; I am afraid of it. We must bring our minds within the bounds of reason, lest the enemy so come in as to set everything in a disorderly way. {2SM 43.2}

The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true, that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested. {4SP 411.1}

The way in which Christ worked was to preach the Word, and to relieve suffering by miraculous works of healing. But I am instructed that we cannot now work in this way; for Satan will exercise his power by working miracles. God’s servants today could not work by means of miracles; because spurious works of healing, claiming to be divine, will be wrought. {1NL 105.4}

Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures.—*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, April 13, 1891. {1SM 43.2}

The Bible is our guide in the safe paths that lead to eternal life. God has inspired men to write that which will present the truth to us, which will attract, and which, if practiced, will enable the receiver to obtain moral power to rank among the most highly educated minds. The minds of all who make the Word of God their study will enlarge. Far more than any other study its influence is calculated to increase the powers of comprehension and endow every faculty with a new power. It brings the mind in contact with broad, ennobling principles of truth. It brings all heaven into close connection with human minds, imparting wisdom and knowledge and understanding.—YI, Oct 13, 1898, (SD 70.) {1MCP 98.1}

Could our spiritual vision be quickened, we should see souls bowed under oppression and burdened with grief, pressed as a cart beneath sheaves, and ready to die in discouragement. We should see angels flying quickly to the aid of these tempted ones, forcing back the hosts of evil that encompass them, and placing their feet on the sure foundation. The battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world, and on the issue of the spiritual conflict eternal destinies depend. {PK 175.3}

In the vision of the prophet Ezekiel there was the appearance of a hand beneath the wings of the cherubim. This is to teach God's servants that it is divine power that gives success. Those whom God employs as His messengers are not to feel that His work is dependent on them. Finite beings are not left to carry this burden of responsibility. He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, will carry forward His work. He will thwart the purposes of wicked men and will bring to confusion the counsels of those who plot mischief against His people. He who is the King, the Lord of hosts, sitteth between the cherubim, and amidst the strife and tumult of nations He guards His children still. When the strongholds of kings shall be overthrown, when the arrows of wrath shall strike through the hearts of His enemies, His people will be safe in His hands. {PK 176.1}

While there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power to meet the wants of men in the different ages, God's work in all time is the same. The Teacher is the same. God's character and His plan are the same. With Him "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1:17. {Ed 50.3}

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour's life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings,—all are enlisted in behalf of man's redemption. {SC 21.2}

It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light, and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day

study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought, and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help, we are to form our opinions for ourselves, as we are to answer for ourselves before God. {RH, June 28, 1906 par. 7}

But beware of rejecting that which is truth. The great danger with our people has been that of depending upon men and making flesh their arm. Those who have not been in the habit of searching the Bible for themselves, or weighing evidence, have confidence in the leading men and accept the decisions they make; and thus many will reject the very messages God sends to His people, if these leading brethren do not accept them. {TM 106.4}

Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself. {DA 671.1}

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters (Letter 406, 1906). {6BC 1074.2}

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. {DA 22.1}

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to reveal, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. . . . {8T 265.5}

Christ revealed all of God that sinful human beings could bear without being destroyed. He is the divine Teacher, the Enlightener. Had God thought us in need of revelations other than those made through Christ and in His written word, He would have given them. {8T 266.1}

Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan's charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again arise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all are secure from apostasy. By love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union. {DA 26.2}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, a God of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. By the world's Redeemer the thick darkness with which Satan had enshrouded the throne of the Deity was swept away, and the Father was again manifest to men as the Light of life. {RH, February 15, 1912 par. 4}

God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. {FLB 129.2}

Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {8T 286.4}