

46. The Gift of Prophecy

“As the end draws near, and the work of giving the last warning to the world extends, it becomes more important for those who accept present truth to have a clear understanding of the nature and influence of the Testimonies which God in His providence has linked with the work of the third angel’s message from its very rise.” - 5T 654.

SELECTED REFERENCES

EW 133-143; 5T 654-691; [1] Pages 181-200. [4] Pages 198-213.

Memorize: Proverbs 29:18.

A. A SPECIFICATION OF THE REMNANT CHURCH.

Revelation 12:17 (cf. 19:10; 22:9); Proverbs 29:18; Isaiah 11:10-12.

“Speaking of the gathering of His children in the gospel age, which closes with the gathering out of the remnant church ‘from the four quarters of the earth.’ The prophecy says: ‘It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people.’ Isaiah 11:11.

“ ‘He lifted up His hand’ the first time to bring the exodus movement out of Egypt and into the earthly Canaan. Again He was to set His hand ‘the second time,’ this time to gather the ‘remnant’ of His children from all nations, represented in the prophecy by Assyria and other ancient nations.

“The first time, in order to lead the exodus movement, the Lord set in its midst the Spirit of prophecy. Then we would expect that when He sets His hand the second time to lead the advent movement, which is to gather out the ‘remnant’ church from all nations. He would set in its midst the same gift of the Spirit of prophecy, as one means for guiding and directing it. And the prophecy of the remnant church calls for that very thing. . . . [Revelation 12:17.]

“Explaining this phrase ‘the testimony of Jesus,’ as used in this prophecy, the angel said to the prophet, ‘The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.’ Revelation 19:10. The natural use of language makes it clear that by the Spirit of prophecy is meant the gift of prophecy, the Spirit by which a prophet speaks messages inspired by God. And the record makes this natural meaning doubly sure. In this verse in the nineteenth chapter which defines ‘the testimony of Jesus’ as ‘the Spirit of prophecy,’ the angel refuses to allow the prophet John to fall in reverence at his feet, saying: ‘See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and [the fellow servant] of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.’ . . . Therefore when the Scripture describes the ‘remnant’ church as having the ‘testimony of Jesus,’ it marks it as having in its midst the gift of ‘the Spirit of prophecy,’ the gift that is exercised through a prophet.

“Two distinguishing features of this remnant church were to be: They were to keep the commandments of God. They were to have the gift of ‘the Spirit of prophecy.’ . . . All along these two features have stirred the wrath of the dragon. . . . The ‘dragon’ made war against the exodus movement because it represented loyalty to God and His commandments. Isaiah 51:9. And the same dragon is wroth with the ‘remnant’ church because they ‘keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.’ Revelation 12:17.”-W. A. Spicer, in “Certainties of the Advent Movement,” pages 183-185.

B. “BEHIND IN NO GIFT, WAITING FOR THE LORD.”

1 Corinthians 1:6-8; Ephesians 4:8,11-15; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21; 1 Corinthians 12:28-31.

“This gift was in the New Testament church. It is one of the gifts for service that Christ bestowed upon the church as He ascended to heaven. [Ephesians 4:8,11,12.] But somehow in the long course of history, amidst the ‘falling away’ from the faith, the gift of the Spirit of prophecy was lost. It is a gift associated with loyalty to God’s commandments. The Scripture says: ‘Where there is no vision, the people perish’ but he that keeps the law, happy is he.’ Proverbs 29:18.

“But in the latter days the church is to come back to the primitive faith. The gospel message calls for reform, and for loyalty to the commandments of God ‘. And the prophetic picture of the last church represents it as keeping the commandments of God and having that gift of the Spirit of prophecy by which in former times God guided and led and preserved His people.

“Has such a gift actually been associated with the advent movement? Yes; in the very days of

1844, when the time came for the definite movement to be brought forth, the Lord laid the gift of the Spirit of prophecy upon an agent by whom messages from heaven were borne that have blessed and guided in the movement in a wondrous way.” - *Id.*, pages 188, 189.

“The apostles’ commission belonged to the Christian age, and embraced the whole of it. Consequently the gifts were lost only through apostasy, and will be revived with the revival of primitive faith and practice. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 we are informed that God hath set, placed, or fixed certain spiritual gifts in the church. In the absence of any Scriptural proof that He has removed or abolished them, we must conclude that they were intended to remain.”-R. F. Cottrell, in Introduction to “Spiritual Gifts,” in “Early Writings,” page 135.

“When Christ ascended up on high, He gave gifts unto men. Among these gifts were enumerated apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The object for which they were given was the perfecting of the saints in unity and knowledge. Some who profess to be pastors and teachers at the present day hold that these gifts fully accomplished their object some eighteen hundred years ago, and consequently ceased. Why not, then, throw aside their titles of pastors and teachers? If the office of prophet is by this text limited to the primitive church, so is that of the evangelist, rid all the rest; for no distinction is made. . . .

“All these gifts were given for the perfecting of the saints in unity, knowledge, and spirit. Under their influence the primitive church for a time enjoyed that unity. . . . How desirable such a state of things now! But apostasy with its dividing and blighting influence marred the beauty of the fair church, and clothed her in sackcloth. Division and disorder have been the result. Never was there so great a diversity of faith in Christendom as at the present day. If the gifts were necessary to preserve the unity of the primitive church, how much more so to restore unity now! And that it is the purpose of God to restore the unity of the church in the last days, is abundantly evident from the prophecies. We are assured that the watchmen shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. [Isaiah 52:8.] Also, that in the time of the end the wise shall understand. [Daniel 12:10.] When this fulfilled there will be unity of faith with all whom God accounts wise; for those that do in reality understand aright, must necessarily understand alike. . . .

“Paul had said. . . . in his second letter to the Thessalonians, ‘The mystery of iniquity does already work.’ Grievous wolves were now about to enter in, riot sparing the flock. The church was not then rising and advancing to that perfection in unity contemplated in the text, but was about to be torn by factions and distracted by divisions. The apostle knew this; consequently he must have looked beyond the great apostasy, to the period of the gathering of the remnant of God’s people, when he said, ‘Till we all come into [margin] the unity of the faith.’ Hence the gifts that were set in the church have not yet served out their time. . . .

“The prophecy of Joel, which speaks of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days, was not all fulfilled at the beginning of the gospel dispensation. This is evident from the wonders in heaven and in earth, introduced in this text, which were to be precursors of ‘the great and the terrible day of the Lord.’ . . . They reach to the day of the Lord, and to the deliverance of the remnant of God’s people: ‘For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.’ This remnant, existing amid the signs and wonders that usher in the great and terrible day of the Lord, is doubtless the remnant of the seed of the woman spoken of in Revelation 12:17, the last generation of the church on earth. . . . Are we not justified, then, in the conclusion that when the remnant are fully confirmed in the testimony of Jesus, they will come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?” - *Id.*, pages 139-143.

C. THE BURDEN GIVEN TO “THE WEAKEST OF THE WEAK.”

1 Corinthians 1:27-29.

“The Lord chose His own instrument for this purpose, selecting as His agent one who had not only surrendered all for Him, but whose life trembled in the balance, ‘the weakest of the weak.’ Within two months after the passing of the time, Miss Ellen G. Harmon [later Mrs. E. G. White], of Portland, Maine, then only about seventeen years of age, began to receive revelations from the Lord.”-L N. Loughborough, in “The Great Second Advent Movement,” page 202.

“Miss Harmon was at that time in a very critical condition of health. For a number of weeks she had scarcely been able to speak above a whisper; one physician had decided that her trouble was dropsical consumption. He said her right lung was decayed, and the left one considerably diseased, and that her heart was affected. He said he did not think she could live but a very short time at most, and was liable to drop away at any time. It was with great difficulty that she could breathe when lying down. At night she

obtained rest only by being bolstered up in the bed in an almost sitting posture. Frequent spells of coughing and hemorrhages from the lungs had greatly reduced her physical strength.

“At the time she had her first vision, she was staying at the home of Mrs. Haines. It was in the morning, and they were engaged in family worship. There were five persons present, all sisters in the faith. Others had prayed, and Miss Harmon was praying in a whisper, when the power of God came down in a most wonderful manner, manifestly affecting all who were present, and in a moment she was lost to all that was transpiring around her, she was in vision.”-J. N. Loughborough, in “Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists,” page 92.

In the first vision related by her (EW 15-20 and LS 64-68), it was made clear to her that it was not to be this one communication only, but that she was to be an agent in the hands of the Spirit for the bearing of messages and instruction from God in the work yet to be done in the advent proclamation to men.

“Like others, in this experience of the call of God, this young woman shrank from the responsibility. In her own eyes she was utterly unfitted for it. She was young. She was inexperienced. She was physically frail, due to an accident, and on account of this her education had covered only the common branches. She was in her own sight just the kind of agent the man called before her and excused, [Mr. Hazen Foss] had been told that the Lord would choose, ‘one of the weakest of the weak.’ Is not this the method often, of God’s selection?”

“After coming out of the vision, and considering the work to which the Spirit had called her, she felt it an impossible task. . . . She could not refuse God’s call. And there upon her face before God, begging for release, she yielded her heart to Him, and accepted the call to the seemingly impossible. And for more than seventy years she lived to bear messages of counsel and warning and instruction by the Spirit of prophecy in the advent movement. And still the written and printed instruction so given is a guide and blessing in all the manifold departments of this growing, expanding work. The gift still speaks through these volumes of instruction, though the agent sleeps in the grave.”-W. A. Spicer, in “Certainties of the Advent Movement,” page 195.

D. THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE TESTIMONIES.

2 Peter 1:19; 2 Chronicles 20:20; Ephesians 4:12,16; 5:27; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 4.

1. The gift of prophecy is for believers in the gospel, the church. 1 Corinthians 14:22. “To leave men and women without excuse, God gives plain and pointed Testimonies, bringing them back to the word that they have neglected to follow.”5T 663.

2. For the perfecting and final preparation of the church to meet the Lord. “The written Testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. . . . Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies simplified the great truths already given, and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse.” - 5T 665.

3. That the gift may be confirmed among those “waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ,” to the end “that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord.” 1 Corinthians 1:7, 8. The Testimonies bear “the stamp of God, or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil.” - 5T 671.

4. Given in God’s love and for aid and profit in attaining to God’s ideal for His children; as well as to warn them of the new and subtle schemes of Satan to overcome them. the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” 1 Corinthians 12:7. Therefore “it is Satan’s plan to weaken the faith of God’s people in the Testimonies. “ - 5T 672.

5. This gift is absolutely necessary to enable the church to attain to the high standard where she will be “holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in His sight.” Colossians 1:22. This wisdom is far beyond any human being to reveal, as an earnest perusal of the writings reveals. The servant of God states emphatically, “I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision -the precious rays of light shining from the throne.” - 5T 67.

6. To “bring forth,” organize, direct, warn, and encourage the remnant church in its travels among the pitfalls of the enemy to the glorious abode above. “It was this gift of the Spirit of prophecy, even in the early days when the agent was so young and inexperienced, that pointed out right ways when strong men of larger experience were at a loss to know how to turn. It was exactly this gift that was needed to give the pioneers the faith and courage-little band as they were, men of the Gailean fisherman type, with no money, having spent their all in the former work before 1844. It was this gift, I say, which rallied the courage of these pioneers to lift up their eyes and undertake to carry a message to all the world. Without such a token

of a divine call to so great a work, the undertaking of it would have seemed a most reckless adventure. [These things do not come by chance or by human devising.]” -W. A. Spicer, in “Certainties of the Advent Movement,” page 198.

7. Not only for the church organization and its united progress and problems, but for the individual. Its messages pierce, as the eye of God, into the inmost being, and reveal sins and imperfections, bringing them clearly into the individual consciousness. Thus the earnest one flees to Christ in prayer, and upon bent knee seeks peace from heaven. For the humble, honest hearted one recognizes in the writings of the Spirit of prophecy the same loving voice he has heard in the Scriptures, and he rejoices to follow wherever that voice may lead, be the price what it may. Such a one will not be deceived as to his own standing before God, and having made everything right, awaits the coming of his Lord in peace.

“If some who claim to be of the remnant church refuse to heed the light and the counsel of God’s leadership through the gift of prophecy, and in anywise question the authority of the Testimonies which God has so manifestly dictated, how shall such be ready for the crises just before them. Or how shall they be prepared for the personal appearing of the Son of God. For the remnant is to be behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of the Lord. When the Lord shall appear in glory to gather His own elect, and the doubters of Israel will not be privileged to hear the sweet voice of the Master, ‘Well done,’ who will be to blame?”-F. C. Gilbert, in “Divine Predictions,” pages 20, 21.

KEY TEXTS

Revelation 12:17; 19:10 Ephesians 4:11-15 Joel 2:28-32
1 Corinthians 1:6-8 2 Peter 1:19 1 Corinthians 12:27-29

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. How does the advent movement compare with the exodus movement?
2. List briefly the leading purposes of the Testimonies.
3. Explain 1 Corinthians 13:8.
4. How did the calling and attitude of Miss Harmon conform to the experience of former true prophets?
5. What place have the Testimonies in the individual work of character building?

TEST QUESTIONS

Answer With Ample Bible Proof

1. Had God promised the prophetic gift at the second gathering of the remnant? When is this applicable?
2. Had the prophetic gift completed its work before the Christian age, or at any time during it?
3. What reasons have we to believe that the last phase of the church has been given this gift since its rise?
4. What work is the gift intended to accomplish, and how?
5. How is the perfected church described in waiting for her Lord?