

# The Gift of Prophecy<sup>1</sup> and God's Remnant Church<sup>2</sup>



## SABBATH—JANUARY 17

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Revelation 12; Revelation 14:1–12.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “The dragon [Satan] was very angry with the woman [God's church]. He went off to make war against the rest of her children. They obey God's commands and hold firmly to what Jesus has said” (Revelation 12:17, NIrV).

**NOAH AND HIS FAMILY** are the first remnant<sup>3</sup> in the Bible (Genesis 7:23). The idea of a remnant shows up again and again in Israel's history. The apostle<sup>4</sup> Paul speaks about a remnant (Romans 11:5) that includes Jews who have accepted Jesus. These Jews later become the backbone of the Christian church. In the book of Revelation, a remnant appears in the churches of Thyatira (Revelation 2:24) and Sardis (Revelation 3:4). A remnant also appears in chapter 12—the subject of this week's study.

From the early days up to the last days, God has His faithful ones in different faiths. God calls His faithful to come out of false religion's darkness. He says, “ ‘Come out of her [Babylon], my people’ ” (Revelation 18:4, NIrV).

**THIS WEEK'S LESSON UP CLOSE:** What do the symbols<sup>5</sup> in Revelation 12 represent (stand for; mean)? What past events are foretold in this chapter? What is the meaning of the “testimony of Jesus”<sup>6</sup> (verse 17, KJV)? What is the meaning of “the spirit of prophecy”?<sup>7</sup>

1. gift of prophecy—the ability to receive special messages from God and/or foretell future events.

2. remnant church—a small group of God's faithful believers; Seventh-day Adventists believe that they are members of the remnant church.

3. remnant—a small group of people who are faithful to God.

4. apostle—a disciple (follower) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel (the good news about Jesus) after Jesus returned to heaven.

5. symbols—objects, marks, signs, or persons that stand for, or mean the same thing as, other objects, ideas, or things.

6. testimony of Jesus—the spirit of prophecy. Seventh-day Adventists believe God gave Ellen G. White the spirit of prophecy.

7. spirit of prophecy—read Revelation 19:10. The spirit of prophecy is the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7–11, 28; Ephesians 4:11–13). This gift is the ability to receive special messages from God and/or foretell the future. God gave the gift of prophecy to Ellen G. White.

**SUNDAY—JANUARY 18**

**GOOD AGAINST EVIL: ACT 1  
(Revelation 12:1–6)**

**What is happening in Revelation 12:1–6?**

Revelation 12 uses symbols. The symbols describe the great controversy (war) between Christ and Satan. Chapter 12 describes what happens in the war from the time of Christ to the time of the end. In verse 1, John sees a glorious<sup>8</sup> scene. He sees a pregnant woman. She is “wearing the sun like clothes. The moon was under her feet. On her head she wore a crown of 12 stars” (NirV). The woman is more than just a woman. She is a symbol for the church, or for God’s faithful people. (Read Isaiah 54:5, 6; 2 Corinthians 11:2.) We know the woman is a symbol because John calls her appearance a “great sign” (NKJV). The woman’s glorious appearance connects her with Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness<sup>9</sup> (Malachi 4:2; Revelation 1:16).

**According to Revelation 12:6, the woman flees from the dragon into the wilderness.<sup>10</sup> There God takes care of her for 1,260 days. What is this verse talking about? What do the time periods symbolize (mean) in Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:14; and Revelation 13:5?**



**The woman John saw in Revelation 12 is a symbol of God’s faithful people.**

Until the nineteenth century, most students of prophecy<sup>11</sup> used the year-day principle<sup>12</sup> to understand the time period in Revelation 12:6. They understood that the 1,260 days meant the time of Satan’s attacks against the church during the Middle Ages. These attacks lasted for a period of 1,260 years.

Students of prophecy from 200 years ago had good reason, for using the year-day principle—and they still do. First, the whole chapter (Revelation 12) is filled with symbols. So, why then should the time part be accepted as actual days too, when the symbols are not accepted as real? Second, the books

8. glorious—having, or given, great beauty, praise, and honor.

9. righteousness—God’s character (the qualities, such as goodness and love, that make Him who He is). God’s character, or righteousness, is given to us by faith; holiness.

10. wilderness—an area in which few people live that is not used for farming and is more or less in its natural state.

11. prophecy—a special message from God, often an explanation of what will happen in the future.

12. year-day principle (rule)—a day in prophecy time equals one year (read Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6).

of Daniel and Revelation describe time in different ways: “time and times and half a time” (Daniel 7:25; Daniel 12:7; Revelation 12:14, NKJV), “forty-two months” (Revelation 11:2; Revelation 13:5, NKJV), and “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (Revelation 11:3; Revelation 12:6, NKJV). These descriptions are not the natural way of describing an actual time period of three and a half years (read Luke 4:25; James 5:17). For these reasons and others, Seventh-day Adventists believe the 1,260 days equal 1,260 years.

**42 MONTHS=  
1,260 DAYS=  
3½ YEARS**

The year-day principle of the Bible: in Bible prophecy one day stands for one year. So 1,260 days is really 1,260 years.

**What are some of the common symbols popularly used in your own culture?<sup>13</sup> What purpose do they serve? How does the way symbols are used around you help you better understand the way the Bible uses symbols?**

13. culture—the way people live, dress, think, eat, and socialize with one another.

14. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

15. influence—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

16. Pilgrims—Christians who left Europe for America in the seventeenth century to escape attacks against them for their beliefs. They came to the New World to practice their beliefs and worship God freely. The first Pilgrims came from England and settled in New England at Plymouth in 1620.

**MONDAY—JANUARY 19**

**GOOD AGAINST EVIL: ACT 2  
(Revelation 12:13–17)**

Revelation 12:7–12 describes another part of the story of good against evil. This part of chapter 12 focuses on the fall of Satan in heaven. It tells how he was thrown down to the earth. We also learn how the great controversy (war) began, in another part of the universe.<sup>14</sup> The action that goes on back and forth between heaven and earth should tell us how events on one side influence<sup>15</sup> events on the other side. Truly, we are in the middle of a great battle between Christ and Satan!

**Revelation 12:13–17 picks up the story from verse 6 and describes attacks against the Christian church. First, the Roman Empire attacked the Christian church. Later, the backsliding Roman Church attacked God's true believers. What do the symbols here represent (mean; stand for)?**

In these verses, a flood of water is sent against God's people. The flood is a symbol of armies fighting against God's people (Jeremiah 46:7, 8; Jeremiah 47:2; Daniel 9:26). In Revelation 12:16, the earth is described as helping the suffering church. In 1620, the first Pilgrims<sup>16</sup> escaped from attacks against them in Europe. They

## Lesson 4 THE GIFT OF PROPHECY AND GOD'S REMNANT CHURCH

arrived on the American continent.<sup>17</sup> On this new continent the Pilgrims found a safe place to live. The attacking armies of the European powers could not reach them in the new land. So, in a way, the new continent of America swallowed up the attacking armies.

Revelation 12:17 describes the time after the 1,260-day period. (This period ended at the close of the eighteenth century.) At that time, Satan realizes he is unable to wipe out God's faithful people. He is angry with a special group called "the rest of her [the church's] children" (NirV). This special group is the same as "the remnant of her seed" (KJV).



In 1620, the first Pilgrims came to America to escape attacks against them.

**According to Revelation 12:17, what is the first mark of this special remnant? How do Matthew 24:20; Romans 3:31; Ephesians 6:1, James 2:9–11; and 1 John 3:4 help us understand what "the commandments of God" means?**

How much simpler could God have made the meaning of Revelation 12:17? The end-time remnant will be very special. It will keep the commandments of God, including the seventh-day Sabbath.

**How strong are you about God's call that we keep His commandments? How can you be sure that the Lord commands us to keep them? How do you answer people who think we do not need to keep all the commandments, especially the Sabbath?**

### TUESDAY—JANUARY 20

#### THE TESTIMONY<sup>18</sup> OF JESUS (Revelation 12:17)

Obedying God's law is the first mark of the remnant church. The second mark of the remnant church is "the testimony of Jesus."

**According to Revelation 1:2, 9; Revelation 19:10; and Revelation 20:4 (NIV), what does "the testimony of Jesus" mean?**

The "testimony of Jesus" means one of two things. The first meaning of the "testimony of Jesus" (NEB, RSV) is our witness. Our witness is what we tell others about Jesus. The second meaning of the "testimony of Jesus" (NIV, NKJV) is the testimony Jesus gives us about Himself.

17. continent—one of the great divisions of land (such as North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and Antarctica) on the globe.

18. testimony—the truth God makes known to us about Himself. This truth includes Jesus' love for us as shown in His death on the cross for our sins.

## Lesson 4 THE GIFT OF PROPHECY AND GOD'S REMNANT CHURCH

A study of the word *testimony* in John's letters helps us understand the meaning of the word in Revelation. In John's letters, the word *testimony* often points to Jesus' own testimony about Himself (John 1:19; John 3:11, 32, 33; John 5:31).

So, in the book of Revelation, the "testimony of Jesus" means Jesus' testimony about Himself. The same is true in Revelation 1:9. John begins this verse by telling us who he is. Then he tells us he is on the island of Patmos because of "the word of God" and the "testimony of Jesus" (NIV). The closeness in meaning between the "word of God" and "the testimony of Jesus" is very clear. We must follow the rule of interpreting (explaining) scripture (verse) with scripture (verse). In other words, we should let the Bible explain itself. The verses in one part of the Bible can help us understand the verses in another part. This rule will help us know that in Revelation the "testimony of Jesus" always means the truth Jesus gives us about Himself.

**How has Jesus made Himself known to you? Would you like to know Him better? What is the only way you can?**

**WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 21**

### THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY (Revelation 19:10)

**Revelation 19:10 says, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (NIV). In all the Bible the words "spirit of prophecy" appear only in this verse. What does it mean?**

The wording in the Bible that comes closest to "spirit of prophecy" is found in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10. There Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives the gift of prophecy, among other gifts (*charismata*). The person who receives this gift is called a prophet.<sup>19</sup>

In Revelation 22:8, 9, those who have the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10) are also called "prophets."



**The angel told John not to worship him. Like John, the angel was one of God's special messengers.**

"I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel. He is the one who had been showing me these things. But he said to

<sup>19</sup> prophet—a man or woman who is a spokesperson for God; God gives a prophet special messages to give to His people. A prophet speaks to God on behalf of His people. God may also give a prophet warnings about what will happen in the future.

me, 'Don't [Do not] do that! I serve God, just as you do. I am God's servant, just like the other prophets and all who obey the words of this book. Worship God!' " (Revelation 22:8, 9, NlrV).

Both verses describe the same thing. John falls at the feet of the angel to worship. The words that the angel speaks to John are almost the same in both places. But the difference, though small, is important. In Revelation 19:10, the "brethren [believers]" (KJV) are the ones "who hold to [have] the testimony of Jesus" (NIV). In Revelation 22:9, the brethren are called "prophets."

Again we must follow the rule of interpreting (explaining) scripture (verse) with scripture (verse) and allow the Bible to explain itself. So, Revelation 22:8 helps us understand that "the spirit of prophecy" in Revelation 19:10 is the gift of prophecy. It is not given to every member. Instead, it is given only to those who have been called by God to be prophets.

Seventh-day Adventists are not the only ones who believe the "brethren" in Revelation 19:10 are prophets. Lutheran scholar (thinker) Hermann Strathmann also believes the "[brothers] who have the testimony of Jesus" (NJKV) in Revelation 19:10 are prophets: "The brothers are not believers in general, but the prophets. . . . If they have the *marturia Iesou* [the testimony of Jesus], they have the spirit of prophecy. So, they are prophets."—Adapted from *Theological*<sup>20</sup> *Dictionary of the New*

*Testament*, volume 4, page 501.

**THURSDAY—JANUARY 22**

**THE REMNANT CHURCH  
(Revelation 14:6–12)**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a special church, marked by Bible prophecy. God formed this church for a very special purpose. He calls us to preach the three angels' messages<sup>21</sup> to a dying world.

**How does Revelation 14:6–12 help us understand some of the characteristics<sup>22</sup> of God's end-time people? In what ways are we right in thinking we are part of the remnant church?**

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe we are members of God's remnant church. However, our connection with the remnant church does not give us any special standing with God. You can be part of His remnant and still be lost. Being a member of a church does not mean you will be saved. We are saved as persons, not as a church. It is a great honor and responsibility to belong to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have a sacred calling. But being a member of this church does not mean you are saved anymore than being a Hebrew in early Bible times meant you were saved (Jeremiah 8:20).

20. theological—having to do with the study of God.

21. three angels' messages—read Revelation 14:6–12. The three angels' messages are recognized as the Seventh-day Adventist message for today's world.

22. characteristics—what the character (who the person is) is made of; the things that make a person who he or she is, such as patience, kindness, hope, laziness, anger, and so on.

**What is the only way you can be saved? And how can you be sure you are saved?**

**FRIDAY—JANUARY 23**

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Spirit of Prophecy,” pages 7–16, in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 1; “Historical Prologue,”<sup>23</sup> pages vii–xxxii, in *Early Writings*.

“One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is a mark of the remnant church. It was part of the ministry [work] of Ellen G. White. She was the Lord’s messenger. Her writings bring truth to God’s people. This truth comforts, guides, instructs, and corrects God’s church. Her writings also make clear that the Bible is the standard<sup>24</sup> by which all teaching and experience must be tested.”<sup>25</sup>—Adapted from *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, 2005 edition, page 247.

A study of the idea of the remnant in the Old Testament shows a few interesting characteristics. Perhaps the most important one is that all through the Bible, the remnant were those who were living with more light (knowledge) than others. Noah had the light about the coming flood. Abraham had the light about the true God. The nation of Israel was worshiping the Lord in the

sanctuary.<sup>26</sup> But their pagan<sup>27</sup> neighbors were sacrificing<sup>28</sup> children on their altars.<sup>29</sup> Or they were bowing down to statues of cats and bulls and other animals. In short, the idea of the remnant deals with a revelation<sup>30</sup> of truth and of God’s character.<sup>31</sup> As Thursday’s study points out, being part of the remnant means only that you have great light. And with that light comes important responsibilities. Being part of the remnant does not mean you are saved just because you belong. It also does not mean that those who are not part of the remnant are lost. It is a sad fact of Bible history that many of those who were part of God’s remnant failed to live up to the light they were given. Oftentimes they rebelled against it.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- ❶ What important message does Luke 12:48 give to those who believe they are part of the remnant church?
- ❷ If we claim we are the “remnant church,” does this mean we believe we are better than other people who do not belong? But, at the same time, why does it make sense that God would have a special people with a special message in the last days? Or does it, really? Discuss.

23. prologue—an introduction to a book or play.  
 24. standard—example, guide, principle (rule), or law.  
 25. tested—to prove something to be true or false, good or bad.  
 26. sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times.  
 27. pagan—having to do with the worship of idols (false gods) or nature instead of God.  
 28. sacrificing—putting a person or an animal to death to gain the favor of a god.  
 29. altars—structures that are raised off the ground or special places on which sacrifices (gifts) are given to a god.  
 30. revelation—the many ways God makes Himself known to us.  
 31. God’s character—who God is; having and understanding the character of God is the same as being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God’s law (Ten Commandments) shows us His character.

## Lesson 4 THE GIFT OF PROPHECY AND GOD'S REMNANT CHURCH

③ Being in the remnant does not mean you will be saved just because you belong. So, then, what is the advantage<sup>32</sup> of being part of it?

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<sup>32</sup>. advantage—a thing, an event, or a condition (the way something is right now) that can help a person gain what he or she wants.