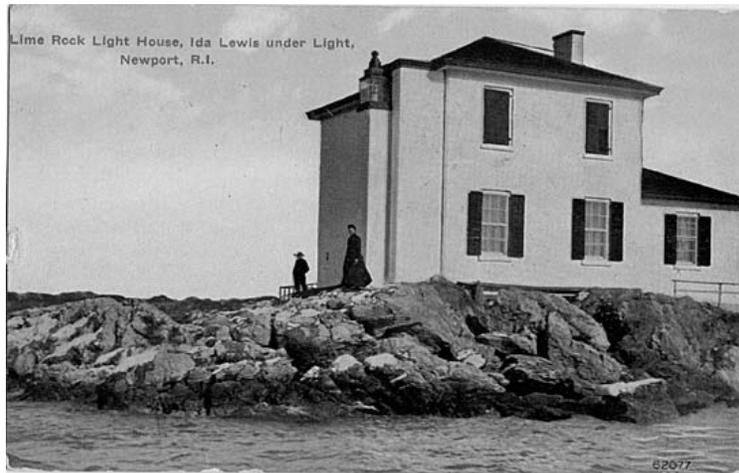


Let Freedom Ring!

11. Keepers of the Light: Two Heroines



Scripture: Isaiah 8:20

Introduction

“Ida, run quick! A boat has capsized and men are drowning. Run quick, Ida!”

It was 5:00 p.m. March 29, 1869. Ida Lewis, daughter of the Lime Rock Lighthouse keeper, had taken a few minutes to sit in her favorite chair near the hearth before preparing the evening meal. She had been sick with a cold and was warming her feet in hot water, collecting herself for the night’s work ahead. The Fresnel lens of the lamp burned whale oil. The lighthouse lamp, in its tower attached to the house, was lit at dusk. But that was only the beginning. The weights that supplied the oil must be wound at least once in the night and the wicks watched and trimmed as needed. A wintry gale was coming in, whipping the water around the Rhode Island lighthouse into a seething frenzy.

When Ida’s mother had gone to check the oil supply for the lamps for the night, she had spotted the two men clinging to their capsized boat. Barely visible through the falling snow, the two soldiers from nearby Fort Adams were drifting out of the harbor into the open channel toward the sea. She called the warning to her daughter.

Ida leaped to her feet, ignoring the time needed to put on her button-up boots, hat, overcoat, or shawl. She grabbed a towel, twisted it around her neck, and raced toward the boat. Her invalid father shouted after her, “It isn’t your duty to fish the addled of brain from the sea, Ida! Anyone who ventures out on such a night in a storm like this knows the danger. He should expect the worst!”

Ida barely heard her father. The icy gusts rattled the kitchen windows behind her. The door slammed shut. She was already nearly to the lifeboat skiff. She slipped her way across the bone-biting lime stones, her bare feet cut by the sharp edges of the rock. She called to her younger brother Hosea over her shoulder to come help her. Together they pushed the skiff off the small island with its lighthouse and into the sea.

Ida was at the oars in an instant, setting them against the overwhelming power of the sea, barking orders at her younger brother.

The sea rose high around them. Icy water poured over the small boat's rails. The snow, wet and storm driven, bit into their skin. Slowly they moved toward the desperate cries of the drowning men. Ida kept rowing, blocking out all else. She had to get to those men.

Later, one of the soldiers would recall his first impression on seeing Ida standing at the oars. "She's only a woman and she will never reach us." Fortunately, the soldier underestimated the slim 103 pound lighthouse keeper's daughter. The two soldiers from nearby Fort Adams were soon dragged over the stern of the boat from the sea by Ida and her younger brother.

It was Ida's fifth documented rescue. Over her lifetime, Ida Lewis would officially save the lives of 18 men and one sheep. The actual figures were probably closer to 25 people. She said it was simply a part of her job. The last thing she expected was worldwide fame as the most famous of America's lighthouse keepers.

Born February 25, 1842, Ida learned to keep the lighthouse lamp and to row a skiff from her father. Only four months after the family moved to Lime Rock to tend the lighthouse full time, Ida's father suffered a debilitating stroke. Ida's mother, busy with attending to her ill husband, increasingly left the duty of keeping the flame burning to her daughter. Ida became the unofficial keeper of the Newport flame, which guided thousands to safety in a day when the storm covered stars were the seaman's primary means of navigational aid.

I. Prophets as Keepers of the Light

Lighthouses and their keepers serve as symbols for the work of the gospel in American folklore and song. As a group, they possess characteristics similar to a specific group of individuals that have played a crucial role in God's dealings with mankind. These are prophets—individuals specifically called by God as His means of guiding, warning and strengthening His people.

- Lighthouse keepers and prophets are appointed to function at critical passage points for the safety of others.

- **Lighthouse keepers and prophets give warnings that allow others to make good choices.**
- **Lighthouse keepers and prophets must be faithful to their posts and keep the light shining consistently.**

**This evening, we will examine
what the Bible says
concerning prophets of God.**

II. The Truth About Prophets

The first truth is that God speaks through His prophets for the good of His people.

On one occasion when the people of God were under attack by a three fold army, a prophet arose to tell them they were simply to go out and look at what God would do to defeat their enemies the next day. The battle would not be theirs to fight, but God's. Good King Jehoshaphat believed the word of God through this prophet. If God were to fight the battle, their work was to praise Him for the victory He had promised them. How better to do this than to sing His praises? So the King ordered the temple choir to lead the army into battle at the place God had foretold the victory would occur.

II Chronicles 20, verse 20 tells of Jehoshaphat's words to the people as they started off in obedience to God's word through His prophet:

"Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful."

How did that battle turn out? Two of the three armies that had come to fight God's people turned on the other and destroyed them. Then the two that were left turned on each other and destroyed each other. All God's people had to do was to sing and watch as God fought on their behalf. When it was all over, it took them three days to bring all the plunder from the battlefield back into their city.

All this good came from trusting God's word through His prophet.

As we read of God's dealings with mankind, prophets have played a key role as a primary instrument through which God reveals His specific will, particularly in times of crisis.

- **When God planned to destroy the world with a flood, he raised up Noah to build an ark for the saving of all who would come into it. Noah's work and witness was God's means of communicating with all who would listen.**
- **When God determined to set aside a particular people that would be His means of blessing the world and through whom the Messiah would be born, He spoke to Abraham through dreams, visions and signs of His plan to make his offspring a great nation, to give him the land of Canaan, and to bless him.**
- **When God led the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, it was through Moses, a mighty prophet of God.**
- **It was the prophet Samuel, called as a child, who led Israel in the days of the Judges and anointed Israel's first kings.**
- **Elijah and Elisha played critical roles at time when the true faith among God's people was greatly endangered.**
- **Prophets foretold the destruction of God's people, the Babylonian exile, and the restoration that would follow—helping God's people survive the ordeal.**
- **Though not all true prophets helped in the writing of the Bible, the Bible was largely written by prophets of God.**

How critical of a role do prophets play in God's communication with His people? Amos chapter 3, verse 7 says:

"Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets."

In Matthew chapter 10, verse 41, Jesus says:

"Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward..."

God chooses prophets as His means of communicating His will to His people for their good. Receiving a true prophet and their message is of great importance. But weren't prophets something that was only for Bible times? Now that we have the Bible, isn't there no more need for such spokesmen? Let's look further to see the Bible's answer.

A second truth concerning prophets is that they were active in Bible times, and are predicted to remain an ongoing means of communication between God and His people in the Christian era also. This is particularly true of the time leading up to Jesus' Second Coming.

When Jesus returned to heaven, He promised the Holy Spirit to remain in His place. The Holy Spirit would function among those who accepted Jesus and the gospel—granting special abilities and gifts for the building up of the Church. The gift of prophecy is one of the spiritual gifts—an important gift mentioned in every listing of spiritual gifts in the New Testament. For instance, Ephesians 4:11-14 says of the Holy Spirit's work:

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

“ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.”

Notice that prophets are listed immediately after apostles. Prophets were to remain among God’s people for building up the body of Christ. Their work would not be finished until we all reach unity in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, fully reflecting Jesus. Their work would be one that would build up and stabilize the people of God and prevent them from being victimized by spiritual imposters and false teaching. Paul compared the church to a body. In this body, prophets might be compared with the eyes.

These eyes would be particularly important for God’s people living just before Jesus’ return. Revelation 12, verse 17 speaks of two marks of God’s end time people. Speaking in picture language that compares Satan to a dragon, God’s church to a woman and the woman’s children to the final people of God before the Second Coming, it says this:

“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”

The commandments of God are plain enough. It includes all the Ten Commandments as explained and applied in both the Old and New Testaments. But notice God’s end time people have a second mark as well: they “hold to the testimony of Jesus”. At the very least, this means they not only have a mind and heart to obey all of God’s commandments, but that they also accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. But the “testimony of Jesus” includes even more. Revelation 19, verse 10 explains this passage further. There John meets with an angel in vision and is overwhelmed with what he is shown. John writes:

“At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

The testimony of Jesus, one of the two marks of God’s end time people includes within it a special mention of the ongoing work of the spirit of

prophecy—that spiritual gift that would be needed by God’s people as they neared the end of the world’s history in particular.

An Old Testament prophecy dealing specifically with the work of the Holy Spirit in end times also affirms prophecy as an essential function in an era that would occur long after the Bible had been written, yet before Jesus’ return. In Joel 2, verse 28 God says:

"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."

Plainly the work of prophets would be needed until the time of Jesus’ return. But if a true prophet arose, shouldn’t their writings be included as a part of the Bible?

The third truth concerning prophets is that while the Bible was written largely through the work of prophets, not every genuine prophet—even among those who wrote—was a Bible writer.

Some true prophets we read of in the Bible never wrote anything at all.

- **John the Baptist was a great prophet, yet his message was spoken rather than written. In the Bible we have some quotes concerning his message and actions, but nothing written by him.**
- **Elisha, the Man of Miracles, served as a prophet after Elijah. Of his teaching, we have not one word recorded, only an account nearly 20 miracles that God performed through him during his ministry.**

Other true prophets wrote, but their writings do not appear as a part of the Bible. II Chronicles 9, verse 29 speaks of two such writing prophets whose writings are not a part of the Bible. It says:

“As for the other events of Solomon's reign, from beginning to end, are they not written in the records of Nathan the prophet, in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat?”

We know of Nathan the prophet from the story of his confronting King David over his sin with Bathsheba. Here we find that this true prophet wrote records from which the writer of the book of Chronicles depended for his source information. Yet no book of the prophet Nathan appears in the Bible. He was a true prophet. He was a writing prophet. Yet what he wrote is not a part of the Bible. We only know of his story because Bible writers referred to him.

The same is true of the visions of Iddo the seer another genuine prophet who wrote, but whose writings are not included in the Bible. Several times this prophet's work is mentioned, yet we have no specific record of what he wrote. His work, except as quoted by other in the pages of the Bible, was apparently God's means of communicating to the people living in his own time and place only.

A fourth Bible truth that must be considered is that there are both true and false prophets.

Knowing the difference between true and false prophets has always been essential for God's people. Often there were more false prophets present than true prophets. In the days of Elijah, he stood alone on Mount Carmel facing 400 prophets of the false idol god, Baal. At the end of time, Jesus warned against false christs and false prophets who would prove very deceptive. Yet why would Satan go to the trouble of putting so many false prophets into circulation if not to confuse people into disbelieving the true prophets God would also send?

To reject the words of a true prophet is to reject God's own appointed ambassador and spokesperson sent to do us good. To accept the words of a false prophet is to accept error and be led away from God. How can we accept what is true and reject what is false?

The purpose for the lighthouses established along the Atlantic seaboard of America was to provide unmistakable guidance for seamen in dangerous waters. Before lighthouses were built, fires were sometimes lighted along shore lines to help guide the ships at sea to safety. The problem was, pirates knew of this and built signal fires of their own. These fires promised safe passage, yet led ships to wreck on the rocks. Once the ships had been battered to pieces by the sea, the pirates

collected the goods that floated ashore. Lighthouses shone with distinctive light that could not be so easily duplicated. True prophets also have a distinctive light that differs from false prophets.

III. The Bible Tests for a True Prophet

The Bible gives clear tests that allow us to know which prophets are true, and which are false. It reveals the distinctive light that will characterize a true prophet from the false light of imposters. Let's look at some of these tests together.

First, a true prophet's teachings will be in agreement with the Bible.

This is perhaps the most critical test of all—the way to sort the light houses from the pirate fires that lead to shipwreck. Isaiah 8, verse 20 says:

“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”

Many who have claimed the prophetic gift in modern times ignore the Bible entirely. Others claiming their own predictions, teachings, visions and interpretations of the Bible are essential to unlock its meaning. Still others claim to have received truths not found in the Bible that must be accepted in order for a person to be saved. If a prophet either ignores the Bible, claims to be greater than the Bible, or teaches contrary to Bible truth, we may know they are not from God.

After all, the true prophetic gift comes from the same source as that of the Bible writers. The Holy Spirit will no more lead a later genuine prophet to teach contrary to the Bible than the wind will blow a cloud through a mountain. Does the prophet's teaching agree with the Bible? Does the prophet believe that he or she is greater than the Bible? Or does the prophet accept the Bible as greater than them, and a test of their ministry?

Jeremiah chapter 23, verses 28 and 29 make the importance of judging the prophet by the Bible rather than the Bible by the prophet very clear. It says:

“Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?” declares the Lord. ‘Is not my word like fire,’ declares the Lord, ‘and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?’”

A second means of separating true prophets from false ones is in examining their teachings concerning who Jesus is.

False prophets are most often wrong about who Jesus is. Their teachings concerning Christ are at variance with the teachings of the Bible.

1 John, chapter 4, verses 2 and 3 says:

“This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.”

One false prophet will say Jesus was simply a prophet, not the unique son of God born into a human body as Scripture declares. Another will say of course he was in human flesh, since the father God is also a being of flesh and blood. Another will say that Jesus is both man and God, as are we all. Another will claim to have a connection with God, yet claim to be Jesus reincarnated or returned. Another may propose Jesus is a spirit brother to Satan. There are many falsehoods concerning Jesus true identity that arise from false prophets.

A true prophet accepts the Bible’s teaching on Jesus uniqueness. They will acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures. They will acknowledge Jesus as God come into human flesh in Bethlehem. A true prophet will agree with the Bible’s teaching concerning Jesus.

A third test of a true prophet is the fruit of their life and ministry.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus warned of false prophets and gave a sure test for recognizing their activity. He said:

"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 thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them." *Matthew 7:15-20*

What is the fruit of the prophet's life? Do they live in accordance with the Bible's teachings? Or do they employ their claims to excuse and even extend their own misconduct?

Some prophet's lives stand in stark contrast to the Bible's moral teachings. The ongoing influence of their conduct in those who look to them for moral leadership is readily apparent. Does the prophet's ongoing, personal moral conduct disgust even non-believers? If so, we may be certain they are not from God. A thing is not right because a prophet does it, even if he claims God told him to. A thing is right because God's Word as it appears in the Bible declares it to be right.

This is not to say a genuine prophet is invariably sinless, however. Abraham lied on more than one occasion when in fear for his life. Yet he was a true prophet. Moses killed an Egyptian and later spoke in a way that dishonored God. God kept him out of the land of Canaan as a result. Yet Moses remained a true prophet. David once committed adultery and murder. Yet when he was confronted by the prophet Nathan, he deeply repented. David was a true prophet through whom God foretold the coming of the Messiah. In general, genuine prophets live good lives that are sometimes marred by human failings. The only prophet who never sinned is Jesus Christ himself.

The issue is not that a true prophet is entirely without sin, but rather that the general course of a prophet's life is not lived in ongoing opposition to the teachings of the Bible. Apparently, there may be an occasional bad apple even on a good tree. True prophets may fall into sin on occasion. When they do, they repent and acknowledge the sin as sin. A false prophet, on the other hand, seeks to justify conduct that is

contrary to the Bible's teaching on the basis of his or her own authority. Such a prophet life and influence is like a tree full of bad apples.

A fourth test of a true prophet is that their predictions are accurate and that they lead people toward the God of the Bible rather than away from Him.

“But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true.” *Jeremiah 28:9*

Time is a great revealer of false prophets. Among the psychics and fortune tellers of our day, many speak of a “batting average”—or how many of the prophet's predictions prove accurate. The Bible holds a higher standard. If a prophet made a prediction that did not come true, they were to be rejected. In fact, a false prediction was cause for a prophet to be killed. In King Ahab's day, a prophet of God predicted Ahab would meet his death if he went up against the city of Ramoth Gilead in battle, and that the battle would be lost. The king put the prophet into prison until the outcome of the battle either proved or disproved his words. The prediction was accurate.

A true prophet makes accurate predictions. But a true prediction alone is not in itself enough to establish a prophet as sent from God. False prophets may make true predictions, too.

Moses warned against such in the 13th chapter of Deuteronomy. He said:

“If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer.

“The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the Lord your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached

rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way the Lord your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.” *Deuteronomy 13:1-5*

The real question is not whether a prophet, psychic, or wonder worker makes an accurate prediction or displays genuine supernatural ability. There is more than one source for the supernatural. Some comes from God, and some from Satan. How can we tell the difference between them?

The true prophet of God will ever lead people to the God of the Bible rather than from the God of the Bible. If the Bible is ignored by someone displaying supernatural gifting, we may be sure they are not from God. If the person’s teaching leads people away from the great truths of the Bible, we may know they are not from God and that the source of their supernatural ability is not to be accepted.

IV. A True Prophet May Be Either a Man, or a Woman, and Either Young or Old

We have noticed several test of a true prophet. There are two things that are not tests of being a prophet, however.

The first is the matter of age. A prophet may be of any age.

Little Samuel was called to be a prophet when he was still a child living in the temple with the priest Eli. Jeremiah was also a mere teenager when God called him to serve as a prophet. Joseph was the next to youngest of 12 brothers when God gave him prophetic dreams. Daniel was still in Nebuchadnezzar’s college when God gave him a rerun of the king’s forgotten dream with its proper interpretation.

On the other hand, Samuel remained a prophet until his death as did Abraham, Moses, and many others. God may choose to pour out His prophetic spirit on young or old.

A second matter concerns a prophet's sex. They may be either male or female, married or single.

While female prophets are less common in the Bible record than male prophets, they appear in both the Old and New Testaments. When the Israelite nation had crossed the Red Sea, Moses' sister, Miriam led the women in praise to God. Of her the Bible says:

"Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing." Exodus 15:20

Another woman prophet in the Old Testament is the lady judge, Deborah. Judges 4, verse 4 says of her:

"Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time." *Judges 4:4*

Through Deborah, Israel was able to throw off the yoke of her oppressors.

But women prophets are not confined to Old Testament times. In the book of Acts, prophets were present, also. They are mentioned in equality with prophets who are men. Acts 21, verses 8 through 10 speak of four sisters who were all prophetesses, and also a male prophet in the early Christian church. Dr. Luke says:

"Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea." *Acts 21:8-10*

Like lighthouse keepers, prophets can be of either sex and either young or old. The important thing is whether their light is genuine, or false.

IV. A Modern Prophet—Ellen G. White

What have we seen so far?

- **We have seen prophets are a very important link between God and man. In fact, the Bible says that God does nothing except He reveals His purposes to a prophet in advance.**
- **We have seen that the prophets were active in both Old and New Testament times. We have seen that the Bible clearly affirms that God reserves the right to continue to speak to His people through prophets in the Christian era as well.**
- **We have seen prophets were writers of the Bible, but that some wrote nothing at all, while others who wrote were not included in its pages except by being mentioned by others.**
- **We have seen there are both true and false prophets, but that the Bible gives clear guidelines by which we may distinguish between them. These guidelines include whether their teachings agree with the Bible, whether they are correct in their views of Jesus, whether their predictions come true, and whether their lives are in agreement with the Bible's teachings.**
- **We have seen also that prophets may be young or old, men or women, and married or single.**

A big question remains: If it is true there may be prophets in modern times, and that we may recognize them as such, are there any? Does God still appoint such lighthouse keepers for the good of His people?

Seventh-day Adventists believe this answer is "yes". We would like to introduce you briefly this evening to someone who filled a prophetic role in the rise of our movement. We believe fulfills the Biblical tests identifying a true prophet. This person's name is Ellen G. White.

Ellen White was a woman of remarkable spiritual gifts. She was a contemporary of the lighthouse keeper Ida Lewis, though the two never met. Ida concerned herself with the physical light of the lighthouse and with rescuing those in distress from drowning. Ellen White concerned herself with reflecting the spiritual light of God's Word and applying

the principles of the Bible to the everyday life of the growing Adventist movement.

Ellen White's life is a study in ironies:

- *As a girl, Ellen was very sickly. Yet her life's work has brought millions of extra years of healthy life to others and launched a strong medical missionary movement.*

Due to a severe injury she received as a girl when an older girl threw a stone that struck her in the face, Ellen White nearly died. She was disfigured, bedridden, and not expected to live to adulthood. She was a frail 17 years old and largely confined to a wheel chair when she received the first of the 2,000 visions over the course of a 70 year ministry. One of the results of those visions is an emphasis on practically applying forgotten Biblical Secrets of Health. Her visions identified tobacco as a “slow and malignant (that is cancerous) poison” at a time when doctors were recommending smoking for lung ailments! This emphasis on healthful living as a part of our service to God has bore very good fruit within the movement Ellen helped to found. Following Ellen White's health recommendations that were far ahead of their time, Adventists are now one of the three longest living groups on the planet. A string of hospitals and clinics has proved “the right arm of the church” as Ellen White predicted it would.

- *Not able to attend school past the 3rd grade, Ellen White led in the launching of one of the largest church operated school systems in the Christian world.*

Due to her early injury, Ellen was never able to complete a formal course of education beyond the third grade. Yet she highly valued opportunity for education and worked as a launcher of schools. It is specifically through Ellen White's counsel that “every church should have a school” that the Adventist education system took root and grew. Today the Seventh-day Adventist church is sometimes called “a school system disguised as a church” due to its strong emphasis on a Christian education that prepares students not only for service in this life, but for the wider service in the life to come.

Here in North America, the school system first launched in response to Ellen White's visions and leadership has grown remarkably. There are more than 1,000 K through 12 schools, 15 colleges and universities, and a total of approximately 65,000 students. World wide the Adventist education network contains 7,000 schools, colleges and universities, with approximately 69,000 teachers and one million, three hundred and thirty seven thousand students. Robbed of educational opportunities due to her childhood injury, Ellen White was used by God to launch a school system that is worldwide.

- *Unable to concentrate enough to write as a school girl, Ellen White became the most translated woman writer in the history of literature. She is the most translated American author of either gender. Her writings include more than 5,000 articles, 40 books and 50,000 additional pages of manuscripts—which have been compiled into more than 100 titles in English.*

Following her injury as a child, Ellen attempted to return to school. She found the words blurred before her eyes and the lines ran together. Repeated attempts to write proved her unfitted to continue her education. Yet after her first vision and the need to communicate what God had shown her, Ellen White became one of the most prolific writers of all time. It was through these writings that she practically applied the principles of the Bible to every day life, recorded her visions, and gave council and aid to the growing Adventist movement. *The Desire of Ages*, from her multi-volume Conflict of the Ages series was once called, “the finest book on the life of Christ in the English language outside the New Testament” by the head of the Library of Congress. Her nine-volume set *Testimonies to the Church* provide council to the Adventist movement as a whole.

Uneducated beyond the 3rd grade, her writings cover a broad range of subjects, including religion, education, social relationships, evangelism, prophecy, publishing, nutrition and management. Ellen White's life-changing masterpiece on living the Christian life, *Steps to Christ*, has been published in more than 140 languages. (We have a free copy of that book for you at the close of the meetings this evening.)

- *Born on a small farm near the village of Gorham, Maine, in the northeastern part of the United States, Ellen White specifically*

influenced the world-wide spread of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that now exists in more than 200 nations.

Ellen White's visions spoke of the growth of the Adventist movement in terms that seemed grandiose for her day, yet proved to be accurate. She told her husband James White that he was to start a little paper to present the Bible truths for the end times. She said she had seen beams of light coming from this humble publishing venture that would go around the world. What a lighthouse! James published the first edition of 3,000 not knowing how he would pay for the printing. Today 50 publishing houses around the world print Adventist literature in many languages. Ellen said God had shown her that the time would come when more people would enter the Adventist movement in a day on an ongoing basis than the 3,000 baptized on the Day of Pentecost. Currently, that number is very nearly matched.

Seventh-day Adventists are remarkably wide spread as a church organization for the mere century and a half of our official existence. Many denominations centuries older than our own have their membership confined to a handful of countries. Why have Adventist's spread so rapidly? The answer is Ellen White's insistence that we take the Bible's teaching that the final Three Angels Message of Revelation 14 going to "every nation, tribe, tongue and people seriously".

Ellen White urged the General Conference president, the top functional leader of the Adventist denomination, to send out foreign missionaries. He failed to act on her message. Later he came and asked her advice on another matter. She told him, "Until you do as God has shown me should be done and send out foreign missionaries, He will tell you nothing more through me." The General Conference president, to his credit, paid heed. He turned the church headquarters into a world mission training and deployment center, thus launching the world wide work of a denomination that was largely confined to members in the North Eastern United States in his day.

Today more than nine out of ten Seventh-day Adventists live outside of America. That fact may be directly traced to the influence of Ellen White, the girl born on a small farm in Gorham, Maine. So the light from the gospel lighthouse shone ever further.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Mrs. White was more than simply a gifted writer. They believe she shows the marks of a genuine modern prophet as specified in the Bible. Her work, appointed by God was to serve as his special messenger to draw the world's attention to the Bible and to help prepare people for Jesus soon return. Her writings apply the Bible's teaching. Her primary source of unique insight were the 2,000 visions and dreams that varied in length from less than a minute to nearly four hours. It was based on the knowledge she received from this source that she wrote out and shared the light God gave her. Sometimes Ellen drew selectively on writings already in existence that coincided with her revelations to more adequately clothe her thought—a method of research and composition employed repeatedly by prophets whose writings appear in the Bible.

Recently, the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists published the book Seventh-day Adventists Believe... This book gives the Adventist view of the relationship between the writings of Ellen White and the Bible. It says:

“The writings of Ellen White are not a substitute for Scripture. They cannot be placed on the same level. The Holy Scriptures stand alone, the unique standard by which her and all other writings must be judged and to which they must be subject.”
(*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Washington D.C., 1988, p. 227).

Yet, as Ellen White herself noted:

“The fact that God has revealed His will to men through His Word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Savior to open the Word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings.” (*The Great Controversy*, p. vii)

Simply put, the Bible shaped Ellen White more than any other book. Ellen White shaped the Seventh-day Adventist movement more than any other single individual.

As Ellen White neared the end of her life, her energies were devoted to two matters in particular. The first was to complete the writing out of the things God had given to her. The other was an increasing interest in

the young people of the church—those who would continue walking in the direction she had walked once she was gone.

Late in 1905 *The Ministry of Healing*, a book dealing with the healing of body, mind, and soul, came from the press. *Education* had been published in 1903, and two volumes of the *Testimonies for the Church*, volumes 7 and 8, were issued in 1902 and 1904, respectively. *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, was published in 1909. In 1911 *The Acts of the Apostles* appeared. In 1913 *Counsels to Parents and Teachers* was issued, and in 1914 the manuscript for *Gospel Workers* was finished and sent to the press. The closing active months of Mrs. White's life were devoted to the book *Prophets and Kings*.

Ellen White's last public appearance was before a group of college students in one of the educational institutions her counsel had helped launch. She had finished speaking and was returning to her seat, when suddenly she paused. She turned and carefully retraced her steps until she stood facing the students a final time. She held her Bible high above her head and said, "Young people, I commend to you this Book!" Those final words of public ministry summed up the thrust of her life's work and teaching.

A short time later, on the morning of February 13, 1915, as she was entering her study room at Elmshaven, Ellen tripped and fell. When she was unable to stand, help was summoned. An X-ray examination disclosed a break in the left hip, and for five months Mrs. White was confined to her bed or wheelchair. Friends and relatives who visited her during the final weeks of her life said Ellen was cheerful. She had the sense of having faithfully performed the work assigned her by God and was confident that the Adventist movement would achieve its purpose. Ellen White died July 16, 1915, at age 87. She was laid to rest beside her husband in the oak Hill Cemetery at Battle Creek, Michigan.

She had lived to see the Advent movement grow from a handful of believers to a world-wide membership of 136,879. By the year 2000, that movement had broadened to exceed 11 million members in over 200 countries worldwide.

Appeal

In the Bible, God told the prophet Ezekiel:

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me."

Ezekiel 33:7

That image of a watchman standing faithfully is shared by the two heroine's of this evening's presentation. Both Ida Lewis, the lady lighthouse keeper of Newport, Rhode Island, and Ellen White, the lady prophet of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, are known worldwide for their contributions and selfless service to others. Ida trimmed the lamp and pulled sinking strugglers from the freezing sea to safety. Ellen's light was the Word of God and the unique work of the Holy Spirit in the visions and dreams that informed and empowered her ministry. True freedom comes from knowing the truth so we can make sound decisions for now and forever.

Ida Lewis's final official rescue occurred when she was 63 years old--three years before her death. By then she was famous, the recipient of many state and national awards and honors for her heroism. Her hometown of Newport declared the 4th of July "Ida Lewis Day". 4,000 people turned up to wish her well, to hear speeches made in her honor, and to see her receive a gift skiff for her work. In the years that followed, up to 10,000 visitors a year crossed over to her lighthouse, including many of the most influential people in America. Sometimes Ida would shake hands with 600 visitors in a day. All had come to meet the celebrity lighthouse keeper. Even the President of the United States had made a point of meeting her when he visited Newport.

Ida's final rescue, ironically was of a woman who had fallen from a skiff while in the process of coming to see the lady lighthouse keeper. Mrs. Lewis had attracted so much attention, she was having to rescue her callers!

As for our other heroine, Ellen White, through her writings many are still finding the light of God's truth and the Bible's teaching falling on their pathway. Many still trace their own decision to turn to Christ and

the teachings of His Word for our time to their reading of *Steps to Christ*, or *The Desire of Ages*, or *The Great Controversy*. The work of a lighthouse keeper and rescuer of the drowning must of necessity end when life does, even though Ida Lewis' fame continues on. But the work of the gospel lighthouse keeper, Ellen White, continues through her writings and through the movement God appointed her to guide in its critical beginnings.

All who faithfully serve as prophets find themselves enemies of those who refuse the good God intends through their ministry. Ellen White's work aroused opposition in some quarters, too. Yet one of her bitterest critics who attended her funeral is reported to have said, "There goes a true Christian woman. Anyone lives as she lived and believes what she taught will certainly arrive in heaven at last."

This evening, we would encourage you to accept and read a gift copy of Ellen White's most widely translated and published work, *Steps to Christ*. You may also wish to purchase other of her writings to see for yourself the force of her words and judge for yourself her humble exalting of God's Word with clarity and power.

This evening if you would like to learn a little more about Ellen White, the most remarkable end time prophet of the Adventist movement, we would ask you to come forward for your copy of *Steps to Christ*.

Note: Have sufficient copies of [Steps to Christ](#) available for those likely to be in attendance, particularly any visitors. Review the Five S's of Adventism with those who come forward for them, emphasizing "The Spirit of Prophecy".