

Old Testament Messengers



SABBATH—OCTOBER 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: James 5:17, 18; 1 Kings 22:1–14; 1 Samuel 8:4–22; Exodus 15:20; Jeremiah 14:1–15.

MEMORY VERSE: “Early in the morning all the people left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they started out, Jehoshaphat stood up. He said, ‘Judah, listen to me! People of Jerusalem, listen to me! Have faith in the LORD your God. He’ll take good care of you. Have faith in his prophets [special messengers]. Then you will have success’ ” (2 Chronicles 20:20, NIV).



In times past, God used His messengers or prophets to help His people find their way to heaven.

GPS helps travelers know where they are on Earth. GPS helps people know where they are going, too. GPS also warns travelers against danger. In the same way, spiritual travelers on their way to heaven need help getting there, now and in the future. In times past, God used His messengers, or prophets, to help His people find their way to heaven. God’s messengers in Old Testament times wrote stories, gave advice, special messages, poems, and songs. Their writings tell us a lot about their lives.

This week’s lesson looks at some of God’s messengers in the Old Testament. Their lives help us better understand their special gift. As we’ll see, God’s messengers were people, the same as you and me. They were weak. At times, they felt fear, anger, and no hope. Life wasn’t always easy. Often, they suffered hard times and troubles, in the same way as anyone else.

If prophets suffer the same as anyone, can we learn from looking at the lives of a few of these servants of God?

A HEART WITH NO PRIDE (James 5:17, 18)

As we saw last week, the Lord used Elijah to do a powerful work.

What does James say about Elijah? Read James 5:17, 18 for the answer. What do you think James means when he says that “Elijah was a human being [person], just as we are” (James 5:17, NlrV)?

Elijah’s success on Carmel was amazing (1 Kings 18)! God used Elijah to do wonderful work. One of the most powerful miracles in Old Testament history happens in this story: Elijah made fire come down from heaven (1 Kings 18:38)! You would think that Elijah would be very happy and excited after doing that miracle.

Read 1 Kings 19:1–16. What does this story tell us about how Elijah felt after the miracle on Carmel?

“Then he [Elijah] traveled for one day into the desert. He came to a small bush. He sat down under it. He prayed that he would die. ‘LORD, I’ve had enough,’ he said. ‘Take my life. I’m no better than my people of [from] long ago’ ” (1 Kings 19:4, NlrV). For sure, Elijah is very sad. The question is, “Why is Elijah sad?”

Maybe the answer is found in Elijah’s words: “ ‘Lord, God of heaven’s armies, I have always served [worked for] you the best I could. But the people of Israel have broken their agreement [promise] with you. They have destroyed your altars. They have killed your prophets [messengers] with swords. I am the only prophet left. And now they are trying to kill me, too!’ ” (1 Kings 19:10, ICB). Does Elijah believe that he didn’t do a good job? Maybe he feels that he failed to serve God as well as he should. Whatever is going on here, we can see that Elijah suffers the same as we do.

Are there times in your life when you feel you didn’t do a good job? What Bible promises can you believe in that can help you during these times?



One of the most powerful miracles in Old Testament history happens in this story: Elijah made fire come down from heaven (1 Kings 18:38)!

GOD'S REAL MESSENGERS (1 Kings 22:1–14)

In the early history of Israel, God warned His people against false messengers or prophets (Deuteronomy 18:20). God also helped His people to know who His real messengers were.

God's prophets announced God's messages, even if their messages upset people in power.

Read 1 Kings 22:1–14. What does this verse tell us about God's messengers and how they behaved?

King Ahab hated Micaiah. Micaiah was God's messenger. King Ahab said, " 'I hate him because he will not say anything good about me when he speaks for the LORD' " (1 Kings 22:8, ERV). These words tell us a lot about Ahab. (He was not a very good person, was he?) The king's words tell us even more about Micaiah. He was not afraid to say the truth, even to the king.

Micaiah stood alone against 400 false messengers. He announced the Bible truth that God gave to him to share. King Ahab tried to force Micaiah to change his message (1 Kings 22:13, 14). But Micaiah refused to change God's word. He stayed loyal to God and the work He gave him to do.

Read 1 Samuel 9:3–14. What do these verses tell us about what other people thought about God's messengers?



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In 1 Samuel 9:3–14, Kish sends Saul, his son, to look for his lost donkeys. Saul's servant says to him, " 'There is a servant of God who lives in this town. Everything that he says will happen really happens. So people respect him very much. We should go to meet him. Perhaps [Maybe] he will tell us which way we should go from here' " (1 Samuel 9:6, EASY). The servant is talking about Samuel, God's messenger. The servant's words help us understand that people expected God's messengers to be honest and loyal to God. God chose His messengers to show His love. At the same time, God's messengers are human. So, they are not perfect at all.

LOYAL TO GOD (1 Samuel 8:4–22)

Read 1 Samuel 8:4–22 and Leviticus 8:10–13. Many of God’s messengers worked with kings and religious leaders. How did God’s messengers help these leaders?

At times, God’s messengers worked with kings. Sometimes their experiences were good. Other times, their experiences were awful. God’s messenger Samuel had a terrible experience when Israel asked for a king (1 Samuel 8:4–22). This sad story shows us an important lesson. In every age, God’s people must be careful not to want to be the same as the people around them (1 Samuel 8:5). In the story in 1 Samuel 8, the people didn’t really understand the terrible things that would happen when they got a king (1 Samuel 8:11–18). Of course, God told Samuel to warn His people. But the people wanted a king anyway. So, soon Samuel poured oil on the head of Saul to show that God chose him. Then Saul became Israel’s first king.

In the Old Testament, the books of 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles tell us about the lives of Israel’s kings. More kings did evil than good. One job of God’s messengers was to help evil kings come back to God and obey Him. Many of these kings hurt or killed God’s messengers. These evil kings caused God’s people to break His law (1 Kings 18:4–19; 2 Chronicles 24:20–22).

Many of God’s messengers also worked with Israel’s religious leaders. Moses is an example of one of these messengers. Moses poured oil on Aaron and his sons to show that God chose them as Israel’s first religious leaders (Leviticus 8:10–13). Sometimes God used His messengers to warn the religious leaders (read Hosea 6:9; Malachi 2:1–3). A powerful example is when the man of God warns Eli about his evil sons (1 Samuel 2:27–36).

God’s messengers were also teachers (2 Chronicles 34). God’s messengers announced His messages to the religious leaders and kings, too (Jeremiah 5:31; Ezekiel 22:26). Sometimes God’s messengers also told the leaders of foreign countries about God’s plans. We can read some of these messages in the Old Testament (Isaiah 60:1–3; Isaiah 62:1, 2). Sometimes God asked His messengers to write down His messages (2 Chronicles 13:22). God’s messengers were men and women of prayer. They obeyed God’s commands. They served Him and His people with their whole hearts (Jeremiah 42:4; 2 Kings 22:15–17).



Sometimes God asked His messengers to write down His messages (2 Chronicles 13:22).

SPECIAL MESSENGERS WHO WERE WOMEN (Exodus 15:20)

Read Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; and Nehemiah 6:14. What do these verses teach us about some of the people that God chose to be His messengers?

The Bible shows us that God, at times, chose women to be His messengers. (Read Exodus 15:20 and Luke 2:36.) In Micah 6:4, Miriam is included with Moses and Aaron as a messenger that God sent to His people. Miriam sang a special song to honor God after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20, 21). But Miriam was also a sinner, the same as any human. She had evil feelings in her heart against Moses and his Ethiopian wife. So, God punished her (read Numbers 12:1–10).

Deborah is another woman who was God's messenger. Deborah also helped lead Israel in a terrible time (Judges 4:1–4). Her song (Judges 5:2–31) showed what God did to save Israel.

Read 2 Kings 22:11–14. Why did King Josiah's men go to Huldah? What does this story tell us about the important work that Huldah did in Israel?

Huldah was a messenger from God. The top leaders in King Josiah's government met with her (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22) after they read the "Book of [about] the Law" (2 Kings 22:8, ERV) to the king. (We believe this book was the book of Deuteronomy.) After the king heard the words in this book, he "tore his clothes" (2 Kings 22:11, ERV) to show that he was very upset. The king understood that Israel wasn't following the teachings in the Book of the Law. The book warned that bad things would happen to Israel if they didn't follow its teachings. The king believed these warnings. So, he sent his men right away to Huldah. God gave Huldah a message. Soon He would punish the kingdom of Judah. King Josiah made many changes for the better because of Huldah's messages. The king's changes helped God not to punish His people during King Josiah's time.

God's messengers were people who needed His love and forgiveness, the same as you and me. What hope do their stories give you?



Miriam sang a special song to honor God after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20, 21).

FALSE MESSENGERS (Jeremiah 14:1–15)

When God does something, Satan always tries to copy it. God chose men and women to be His messengers. So, Satan also chose people to be his messengers. Satan used these messengers to try to destroy God's work and His people. How can we know God's real messengers from the false messengers that Satan sends?

Read Jeremiah 14:1–15. What is happening in these verses? What does the Lord think about false messengers?

In Jeremiah 14, God gave Jeremiah a message. The message was a warning for the kingdom of Judah. God would punish Judah with war, food shortage, and disease. False messengers at the time said that Jeremiah's message wouldn't happen. Jeremiah talks about the false messengers: "Then the LORD said to me, 'Jeremiah, those prophets [messengers] are telling lies in my name. I did not send them or command them or speak to them. Their prophecies [messages] came from false visions [dreams], worthless [useless] magic, and their own wishful [foolish] thinking' " (Jeremiah 14:14, ERV).

False messengers are evil. Often their messages come from the false gods they worship (Jeremiah 23:13, 14). But God did not send these messengers to His people (read Jeremiah 23:26; Ezekiel 13:2).

False messengers often preach popular views or ideas. That's what happened in 1 Kings 22. In this story, Ahab commanded 400 'messengers' to give him advice. All of the false messengers told the king to fight against Ramoth-Gilead. Then Ahab asked Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, what to do. Jehoshaphat told Ahab to talk to Micaiah, God's messenger. One of the false messengers told Micaiah to tell Ahab what he wanted to hear: " 'Look. The other prophets [messengers] agree. All of them are saying the king will have success. So agree with them. Say the same thing they do' " (1 Kings 22:13, NIV).

Micaiah felt the same terrible pressure to lie that the false messengers felt. But Micaiah refused to lie. He waited for God to tell him what to say (1 Kings 22:14).

Following the popular view or doing the popular thing is always easy. Why is that never a good idea?



Satan used these messengers to try to destroy God's work and His people.

NOT PERFECT, BUT WILLING TO SERVE

As we saw already, being God's messenger is never easy. The lives of the Old Testament messengers show us this truth. Ellen G. White also felt the same fears and worries that the Bible messengers felt. As we learned last Friday, Ellen Harmon [White] was young, shy, and in poor health when God chose her to be His messenger. God gave her a second dream as proof that He chose her. But she was worried about being God's messenger. She wrote:

"About a week later, God gave me another dream. He showed me the troubles I must suffer. I must go and tell other people what He showed me. People would try to stop me. I would suffer much. . . . This dream upset me very much. My health was poor. I was only 17 years old. . . . I prayed that God would choose someone else. But He continued to say to me, 'Tell other people what I showed you.' I didn't want to go out in public. I was very shy. . . . I wanted to die. Then I wouldn't have to do the things God asked me to do."—*Spiritual Gifts*, volume 2, pages 35, 36, adapted.

Do you see that Ellen Harmon [White] said she wanted to die? Then she wouldn't need to be God's messenger. Ellen Harmon [White] prayed long and hard. Her friends encouraged her. Finally, she accepted the work God gave her. For the rest of her life, she served God. She gave her life to the Lord "to do everything He asked me to do."—Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 2, page 38.

Ellen G. White's writings became powerful in the lives of church members, then and now. But Ellen White was human. She had her own personal problems. She was often sick. She had family problems, too, at times. Her life teaches us an important lesson: God chooses people who aren't perfect but who are willing to serve Him.

The Holy Spirit helped Ellen G. White to write down God's messages. Ellen White's writings encourage church members and connect them with Bible truth. Ellen White helped the Seventh-day Adventist people to become a church, in 1863. In later years, Ellen White's writings helped start the worldwide health work and many schools. For sure, the most important thing that she gave the church was her writings. She wrote nearly 100,000 pages. Ellen G. White's writings continue to help people worldwide today.

To learn more, visit <https://whiteestate.org/absg/3>.



The Holy Spirit helped Ellen G. White to write down God's messages.

FROM CRIMINAL TO CHURCH LEADER: PART 2

Marek's life started to change as he read *The Great Controversy* in Poland. Marek decided to keep the 7th-day Sabbath. He also wanted to stop smoking but couldn't.

On the Sabbath, Marek passed a street poster. The poster advertised a five-day stop smoking class at a Seventh-day Adventist church. Marek never heard of that church before.

Marek went straight to the church. He arrived at 2 o'clock that Sabbath afternoon. The church would have been empty at that time. But a group of Bible booksellers was there. They invited Marek to come back next Sabbath morning.

Marek went back the next Sabbath and enjoyed the sermon. Marek was amazed at the love the church members showed him. He learned that a big group of young people was meeting the next Sabbath. The members invited Marek to go.

The next Sabbath, Marek waited for some church members to come to take him to the meeting. He heard two voices in his heart. One voice said, "Don't go. Enjoy the nice weather." The other voice said, "You really need to go to this meeting." So, Marek decided to continue waiting.

The church members arrived and took Marek to the meeting. The meeting amazed Marek. Every word touched his heart. The preacher was a British pastor from London. The pastor talked until noon. Then he said, "I know I need to end now. But I know there is somebody here who needs Jesus."

Marek thought, "Who told the pastor about me?"

Then the pastor shared his personal story. He was born into a religious family. But he left the church. He used drugs and drank. Both his church and his mother stopped praying for him.

The pastor said, "Then I met Jesus. He lifted me up from the bottom where I was. Now I am here to tell you about His power. Jesus can change your life, too. If you want Jesus to change your life, just come here to the front."

Marek looked at the crowd of 1,000 people and sat back in his seat with fear. He didn't want to go forward in front of that big crowd of people.

The pastor said, "Don't think about people looking at you. Just come forward. Your coming forward is between you and God."

Marek stood up. He couldn't sit anymore. His heart pumped fast as he walked to the front. As the pastor prayed, Marek understood for the first time God's plan to save sinners. Marek started to cry. Nothing could stop his tears. But Marek also was excited and happy.

Today, Marek is happy he decided to give his life to Jesus. He now serves as a church leader in Poland. He continues to share his faith with other people.

INSIDE
Story
by MISSION EDITOR



Marek's heart pumped fast as he walked to the front.