MEMORY VERSE: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Hebrews 4:12, NKJV

LESSON STUDY INTRO

This week we will study the authority of canonical as well as non-canonical prophets.

1. Prophets speak as the voice of God (Sun-Tue)

- The prophet, as we have learned, is a spokesperson for God (Ex. 4:14-16 cf. 7:1; Rev. 19:10).
    - Divine revelation refers to the act of God disclosing His message to the prophet; divine inspiration refers to the process in which God guides the prophet in conveying the message to His people. While the prophets' messages were uniquely their own, they were still the voice of God speaking through the prophet.
        - "As He did with Moses and Aaron, God helps His prophets find the best way to deliver the message that He gives them." Qtly, Sun, par 3
- As such, the prophetic messages carried with them the authority of God.
    - When questioned regarding His own authority (Mt. 21:23-27), Jesus' response indicated that all prophets (see Dt. 18:15; Lk. 24:19; Ac. 3:20-22) receive their authority from the same place (Mt. 21:23-27; Jn. 7:17; 12:49; 14:10).
        - Jesus further recognized that if the leaders failed to acknowledge God's authority in His prophets, they would inevitably deny that same authority in every other manifestation, including in His Son (see Eze. 3:7; Lk. 10:16; 2 Chr. 36:14-16).
- The lesson then highlights at least 4 ways people tend to reject His authority as revealed through the writings of the prophets –
    - Looking for faults and criticizing the message and/or messenger
    - Using them to prove a point, but not for personal spiritual growth
    - Saying some parts are inspired with others aren't
    - Ignoring, or worse, neglecting the study of inspired writings

2. God used prophets to establish the church (Wed)

- God used prophets to guide the organization and leadership strategy of the church (Hos. 12:13; Eph. 4:11, 12; Jg. 4:4-8; 2 Chr. 20:14-17, 20; Ac. 6:1-7; 15:7-15; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 7:10-16; Tit. 1:5).
    - "No area of Israelite life was beyond the direction and guidance of God through His chosen messengers…. In a real sense, the prophetic gift operating in the early church played a critical role in its preservation and protections (Ac. 13:1, 2)." Qtly, Wed, par 2, 4

3. All prophets are of equal authority (Thu, Fri)

- As we have briefly studied before, not all prophets who wrote out their messages were included in the canon of Scripture.
    - These "literary, non-canonical prophets" include Gad, Nathan, Ahijah, Iddo, Shemaiah, and Elijah (1 Chr. 29:29; 2 Chr. 9:29; 12:5, 15; 21:12).
        - And while their writings were not in the Bible, they still held the full authority as messengers for God. For example, David – a canonical prophet – accepted the message from Nathan – a non-canonical prophet – as a message with the full authority of God.
- Ellen White, also, as a prophet of God, spoke with the full prophetic authority.
    - Some have assumed that Ellen White, as a non-canonical prophet, has a lesser degree of authority than the Bible prophets, often drawing from this statement –

> Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light. The Review and Herald, January 20, 1903

        - Few realize, however, that she used *this same expression* when speaking of John the Baptist (see DA 220.2). She is actually drawing from the language of Gen. 1:16 describing the sun and the moon. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, so the prophet reflects the light of the "sun of righteousness" (Mal. 4:2).
        - The ministry of any prophet, while having full authority, will never equal the *collective authority* of *all the prophets* as found in the Bible. Thus the Bible will always be "the foundation of the Christian's worldview and the basis of all revealed truth" as well as "the rule of faith and practice," (Qtly, Tue, par 1) – that by which everything else must be tested.

CONCLUSION

> What voice will you acknowledge as the voice of God? What power has the Lord in reserve to correct your errors and show you your course as it is?... This voice is heard in warnings, in counsels, in reproof. It is the Lord's message of light to His people. If we wait for louder calls or better opportunities, the light may be withdrawn, and we left in darkness. 5T 68.4