

## Historical Overview of the Old Testament Prophecy and Prophetism: Its Application to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church

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**ABSTRACT:** *most talked-about and prominent topic in the Church is prophecy and prophetism, which is most misunderstood and misused. The subject is precisely defined and covered in both Testaments. Likewise, many textbooks and articles either explain the subject or reappraise it today. Despite being as ancient as the Bible, prophecy is as modern as the Church of Jesus Christ. The study focuses on how the gift of prophecy might strengthen the modern Church and individual Christians. Data for the study is gathered through a literature review, and discussion is done using the discursive and analytical approach. The entire discussion pitched its tent that prophecy is essential for the 21st-century Church. The results of this study show that God employs prophecy as a unique means of blessing His Church. The congregation of believers is the perfect setting for the Holy Spirit to speak to contemporary needs and circumstances. In the setting of the Christian assembly, the message's holiness is safeguarded and increased.*

**KEYWORDS:** old testament, prophecy, prophetism, 21st century, church.

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### INTRODUCTION

The subject of prophecy and prophetism is the most popular and pronounced today, but also the most misunderstood and misapplied in the Church. Across both Testaments, the subject is explicitly defined and discussed. Likewise, many textbooks and articles either explain the subject or reappraise it today. Although prophecy is as old as the Scripture, it is also as current as the Church of Jesus Christ. This paper contributes to the ongoing discussions on prophecy and prophets in some way and how it is applied to the Church of Jesus Christ today. It also draws comparative insights where appropriate because prophecy was present in Israel and many societies of the Ancient Near East (ANE).<sup>1</sup> The enormous scope of prophecy, both inside and outside Israel, poses a unique set of challenges. It can be challenging to formulate generalizations about Israel's prophets' functions, settings, and progression due to the enormous breadth and variety of the phenomena.

Furthermore, it will identify exceptions to the general principles when generalizations are made; what may have held for one prophet or group of prophets may not necessarily have held for another. Therefore, the writer has attempted to account for some of the diversity that was present within the movement in what follows without losing sight of the traits that tie the numerous prophetic figures and groups together. Data for the study is gathered through a literature review, and discussion is done using the discursive and analytical approach. The entire discussion pitched its tent that prophecy is essential for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century Church. This paper consists of six entries, excluding the introduction. The first is the clarification of the concepts of prophecy and prophetism. Second, is the discussion of prophecy and related phenomena in the Ancient Near East (ANE), with particular attention to the —prophetic letters from the Mesopotamian site of Mari. The third is a survey of Prophecy in Israel before the Exile. The fourth examines post-exilic prophecy, the fifth provides an in-depth application to the 21<sup>st</sup>-century Church from both testaments, and finally, it ends with a section of conclusion and reflections.

### The Concepts of Prophecy And Prophetism

The word —prophet most frequently translates to the Hebrew word *nābhi'*. This word is probably not Hebrew origin; the Akk *na'tu* seems the closest cognate, although the title *nabû*, —diviner, is now attested at Mari. In Hebrew, this probable loanword suggests that prophecy in Israel was not a phenomenon unrelated to ideas and practices outside Israel. Israelite prophecy can instead be understood as a concept and an activity that Israel shared with other cultures and peoples among whom the Israelites lived and experienced God. The biblical tradition also uses other words to describe persons who acted in how Israel saw its prophets behave. One passage claims that in former times the prophet (*nābhi'*) was known as a seer (*rō'eh*) (1 Sam 9:9). Two other terms also are occasionally used for the role: a man of God (*iš' hā'ēlōhim*) and visionary (*hōzeh*).<sup>2</sup>

These Hebrew words *nābhi'* (prophet), *rō'eh* (seer), *hōzeh* (seer), and *iš' hā'ēlōhim* (man of God) are very significant and they may have once had their unique connotations. For instance, according to Blenkinsopp, the term “man of God,” which is used to refer to critical early prophets like Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, originally meant a person of preternatural and potentially dangerous power; recall, for example, how Samson’s mother, intimidated by the awe-inspiring appearance of her heavenly visitor, took him to be a man of God (Judg, 13:6, 8).<sup>3</sup>

To draw conclusions based just on the use of these different names may not be appropriate. Scholars find identifying any particular nuanced O.T. usage of such characteristics challenging. In David’s court, for instance, Gad is referred to as a “*hōzeh*” and Nathan as a “*nābhi'*” although there is no obvious distinction in the duties the two played. Also, the standard Hebrew term for “prophet,” *nābhi'*, actually refers to “one who is called” or “one who is appointed” (with the implication that God calls the individual). Aaron Chalmers relates the Hebrew term to its Akkadian counterpart, *nabū(m)*, which means “to name, announce, or call.”<sup>4</sup> The question of whether the word should be interpreted in an active sense (e.g., “speaker, proclaimer”) or a passive one (e.g.,

“one who is named, called”) is still up for debate. Although either definition would fit the O.T.’s depiction of the prophets, there is a general favor within academic circles for the passive interpretation.<sup>5</sup>

When the priest Amaziah refers to Amos as a “*hōzeh*” in Amos 7:10–17, Amos responds, “I am not a *nābhi*” “as though the two names were, for all intents and purposes, interchangeable.”<sup>6</sup> As a result, scholars talk about a process of flattening out in which the various designations lost their unique flavor, and the term “*nābhi*” progressively came to be employed as a catch-all for all types of Israelite prophetic intermediation. This process is implied by 1 Samuel 9:9, which states that any specific roles that may have been initially connected to the various titles had been forgotten even from a reasonably early date: “the one who is now called a prophet (*nābhi*) was formerly called a seer (*rō’eh*).

### **Rophecy and Prophetism in the Ancient Near East**

The term “prophecy” has been used in various texts and ANE functions. The texts mentioned include prophecies or apparent prophecies, eschatology or apocalyptic, social or religious critique, and communications from gods that have been commissioned. The positions include lay priests (Egypt), skilled seers (Western Asia), and individuals who carry out a deity’s direct directives. Whichever specific definition of prophecy leads the comparative discussion of prophecy is chosen. For some, the prophet serves as a social critic; for others, it serves as a foreteller of the future; and for others, it serves as a charismatically appointed messenger. This paper concentrates on prophecy as an inspirational speech at the initiative of divine power, which is visible and typically intended at a third party; however, it must unavoidably refer to materials reflecting this broader range of definitions.

Prophetic activity has been documented in Syria and Palestine as far back as 1300 BCE. The Ebla texts, which date to the middle of the third-millennium B.C.E and are located in northern Syria, have first been mentioned as proof of prophecy, but those assertions have not yet been proven. According to W.W. Hallo, inscriptions from around 1300 B.C.E show an office with the Akkadian names *ana I’ātu* and *Muna I’ātu* affiliated with the goddess *Ishara* from Emar (Meskene) on the Middle Euphrates.<sup>7</sup>

The second is the Ugarit text. There is no evidence that a messenger sent by gods ever existed, despite references to technical divination called “prophecy” and announcements of impending blessings called “prophetic” in the Ugaritic scriptures. Third, the Bible regularly refers to prophets of the Phoenician God Baal by the Hebrew name “*nā*” which is used for Israelite prophets (and even of Asherah). The prophets of Baal do not receive recognition as oracle-givers, although they share ecstatic behavior with the Israelite prophets.<sup>8</sup>

Another classic historical trace of prophecy is associated with Mesopotamia, says Huffman.<sup>9</sup>Ellis concurs with Huffman when he claims that a wide range of writings, including those from Babylonia, Assyria, and the Mari texts' home region—even if the Mari texts speak of a region that extends into N.W. Syria—come from Mesopotamia.<sup>10</sup>Gurney believes these books are related to the omen literature and contain prophecies *ex eventu* or forecasts that are cast as events (for instance, a monarch will arise...).<sup>11</sup>Numerous references to prophetic activity are found in manuscripts from Mari that date to the first half of the 18th century B.C.E. These references use a variety of titles. About a dozen gods are involved, about eighteen are mentioned, and many unknown prophets. Prophets of both sexes are mentioned. Approximately 4/5 of individuals possessing cultic titles are men. Men and women make up nearly equally as many of the untitled. According to A. Malamat, people with titles are often connected to specific deities even though they occasionally convey demands from other deities. Their regular bestowal of clothing and other articles from the royal stores—as well as occasionally their demands for such items—indicate their regularized, significant standing, comparable to that of standard letter couriers. Such titles include; *Āpilu/ piltu*, which means answerer; *Assinnu*, —cult functionary; *Muḥḥû/muḥḥûtu*, —ecstatic; *Nabû*, —diviner; *Qam (m) tum*, unclear title.<sup>12</sup>

A slight majority of those without titles are women, one of whom was a senior officer at Mari. Additionally, most insights come through dreams, a method that has not been confirmed for prophets with titles. One revelation involves ecstasy. The temple is frequently the locus of revelation. The context of the message is explained in a few of the paragraphs. Whether in actual life or through a visit in a dream, a temple is the customary location of revelation. According to Oppenheim, there is no concrete example of a revelation in response to a supplication of despair, although, in other texts, the revelation by an“answerer” or an“ecstatic” seems to respond to a favorable or unfavorable sacrifice.<sup>13</sup>The oracles primarily concern themselves with the king's problems because of the Mari archives' nature.

The prophet frequently refers to being “sent by the deity” while communicating a word from a deity. Would be speaking in the first person. The message might start with a phrase like “thus says” (the deity so and so). According to Dalley, most letters stray from this pattern and contain assurances to the king, warnings of risks, and promises of supernatural support.<sup>14</sup>Several deities make cultic requests in a special letter from an *āpilu*, which also pledges assistance for the king. In other instances, the king is reprimanded for not upholding the cultic requirements of the deity, such as by neglecting to supply pure water or the funeral rites for a forefather or ancestor. Addu of Aleppo and Addu of Kallassumakes more severe accusations against the king, who owes the deity his throne and has been negligent in his gifts and acceptance of the demands of the deity; what Addu has given, Addu may take away. Furthermore, the deity does not talk about self-interest because the king is responsible for treating everyone who appeals to him somewhat in his kingdom. A dutiful king will receive a huge prize.<sup>15</sup>

In Assyria, the characteristic of the reigns of Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.E.) and Ashurbanipal (668–627 B.C.E.) is their particular interest in a wide variety of modes of communication with the divine powers, including prophetic-type speakers. Esarhaddon adjures vassals not to conceal anything they hear that is derogatory to the crown prince, including any word from —a proclaimer (*raggimu*), —an ecstatic (*mahhû*), or —a dream interpreter. According to Tadmor, the existence of prophetic revelations, in particular, may reflect the influence of Aramean culture,<sup>16</sup> though none of the titles is Aramean in origin. Unlike the Mari texts, the N.A. texts do not point to a marginal status for the prophetic speakers. Again, the focus of the activity is the royal court. Many of the prophets, at least, seem to be attached to the court. Some of their prophetic titles include *Mahhû/mahhûtu*, —ecstatic; *Raggimu/raggimtu*, —proclaimer; *Šabrû*, —revealer; *Šêlûtu*, —(female) votary.<sup>17</sup>

### **Prophecy and Prophetism in the Pre-Exilic Era**

Prophecy is frequently associated with foretelling the future. According to the *Anslem Study Bible*, the prophet's primary interest is in current events concerning social and political circumstances. According to Oseik et al., they emphasize social justice, religious idolatry, public morality, and the correct use of authority. They also discuss inspiration, mercy, a hopeful future, as well as judgment and damnation.<sup>18</sup> After the division of the United Kingdom of Israel under Davidic authority, biblical prophecy began. Due to the affluence of the North and the prophet's responsibility to speak out against Israelite society, prophecy first appeared in the North. According to Groenewald, a prophet may suffer for his ideas, supported by the historical books and Jeremiah, which both reference the prophets' failures and, implicitly, their sufferings.<sup>19</sup> Matthew contends that a prophet "may not merely be defined as a fortune-teller, social activist, doomsayer, messenger, moralist, or even predictor of Jesus."<sup>20</sup>

To get insight into the culture of the biblical prophets, it is imperative to comprehend some historical elements better. The worship of Baal, the emergence of the Northern and Southern kingdoms' economies and societies, and political unrest are only possible causes of the growth of prophecy and prophetic writing.<sup>21</sup> Hebrew prophets were part of a society that embraced all facets of daily life, and they spoke directly to the populace rather than serving as the upper classes' aides while delivering grave prophecies. This is demonstrated through Moses and all the other prophets in the Bible.

### **The Call of the Prophets**

God specially called Israel's prophets to carry out a particular divine assignment. This dramatic "call experience" distinguished a prophet from others. Max Weber's work emphasized the charismatic and supernatural aspects of becoming a prophet's significant scholarly traction.<sup>22</sup> According to Blenkinsopp, the prophetic associations, also known as "the sons of the prophets," were primarily made up of people who were socially and economically marginalized, possibly as a result of internal or external pressures (such as the Philistine push into Israel's hill



country heartland brought about by limited resources, overpopulation, or a series of poor harvests).<sup>23</sup> These prophets may have been drawn from the ranks of males, possibly, especially younger sons, who were cast out of their families due to social, economic, or military pressures. Some, like Samuel, seem to have been devotees of a sanctuary, much like the monastic oblates of the Middle Ages. All signs point to their low social and economic status and, in the perspective of some of their contemporaries, their extreme eccentricity and irrationality.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the prophets who wrote for Israel were typically from the upper class. Jeremiah is reported to have originated from a Benjaminite priestly family that claimed descent from the Shiloh priesthood (Jer. 1:1), and Ezekiel was also a priest or a member of a priestly family (Ezek. 1:1–3). Despite not being of priestly stock, Amos seems to have lived a very comfortable life. In the book's title, he is described as a "sheep-breeder" (*nōqēd*, Amos 1:1), and in 7:14, he is also described as a "herdsman" and "dresser of sycamore trees." The title "*nōqēd*" is only used to refer to one other person in the OT, King Mesha of Moab, so it is important to keep that in mind despite some immediate inclination to dismiss Amos as an illiterate and uneducated agriculturalist (2 Kings 3:4). Therefore, it seems that Amos was not typical shepherd but rather a pretty wealthy sheep breeder who was in command of huge flocks and numerous shepherds. As a result, some scholars have concluded that Amos would have been a significant and well-respected member of his community's famous men.<sup>25</sup> Micah, whose connection to Moresheth shows he came from a "provincial," rural background, may be the exception to this view of the prophets who wrote as members of Israel's upper classes.

The oracles attributed to these prophets also suggest that they belonged to Israel's educated upper classes, in addition to the (albeit scant) biographical information as discovered within the prophetic texts themselves. According to Blenkinsopp, they have a reasonably good literary and rhetorical ability, are knowledgeable about global politics and history, and know Israel's role in these matters.<sup>26</sup> Also, either a man or female Israelite could become a prophet. There were no limitations based on gender, family history, social class, or economic standing. Despite this, likely, the majority of Israel's prophets who left written accounts (as well as some of the prophets who did not leave any) belonged to the educated upper classes, indicating that the advantages that this background brought may have also been advantageous to someone wishing to become a prophet.

### **The Training of the Prophets**

The line of reasoning goes that because the prophet had been called by God and given the divine word, there was no need for any prophetic tuition. However, this raises a question that needs more consideration because it is possible that at least some (if not all) of Israel's prophets had some education.<sup>27</sup> For instance, prophets of the temple or the cult may have undergone formal training in important cult centers, like the temple in Jerusalem. If the priests' example is any indication, other prominent temple employees (such as cult prophets) would have also undergone formal training to enable them to carry out their duties. It is also likely that a similar institution for prophets existed

if we assume that there was a school connected to the Jerusalem temple where priests were trained. Here, future prophets might have encountered several prophetic traditions and learned the fundamentals of prophetic speaking.

The instruction received by members of the prophetic guilds or societies (*benē hannebî'im*) may have been distinct. These organizations appear to have used a more apprenticeship- or discipleship-based approach to education, with each guild member studying under a more senior prophetic figure. As leaders of these organizations, Samuel (1 Sam. 9:18–24), Elijah (2 Kings 2:1–18), and Elisha (2 Kings 4:1–7, 38–41; 6:1–7, etc.) are all mentioned, and this certainly involved instructing their followers. The guild members are described as “sitting at his (Elisha’s) feet” in 2 Kings 4:38 and 6:1-2, respectively, which seems to imply a process of at least semi-formal training. The phrase “to sit at someone’s feet” is translated by Baumgartner as “to be a learner of.”<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, there is no indication of the precise nature of this teaching. However, when Lang refers to “the transmission of the prophetic heritage and widespread practice in meditation and ecstasy,”<sup>29</sup> which are defining characteristics of these communities, he is probably not too far off the mark.

However, what about the prophets who wrote? Are there any facts to support the idea that they had formal instruction? Contacting each prophet to respond entirely to this topic would probably be preferable. However, it is evident that, as a whole, they show a solid command of typical prophetic speech patterns, a familiarity with prophetic traditions and Israel’s history (cf. Jer. 28:8–9, which implies a knowledge of earlier prophets’ works), as well as a general understanding of the geopolitical circumstances of their time. While it is possible that such knowledge was learned by simple immersion in ancient Israelite society, it would appear more plausible that it was obtained through formal education. However, nothing in the prophetic books would rule out the prophets getting guidance in addition to their divine calling. However, it is impossible to say whether this was done formally or informally or whether this teaching was incredibly prophetic or had a broader scope based on the current information.

### **The Assignment of the Prophets.**

It is well known that the prophets of Israel were tasked with speaking the word of the Lord, which is a crucial component of what they did. While they were charged with spreading the message of the Lord, they were not limited to speaking. Israel’s prophets engage in various “symbolic actions” intended to convey God’s revelation visually. Although conveying God’s message to His people was the prophets’ primary duty, their work frequently went beyond this. They were in charge of representing humanity before God and representing God to people. This can be seen, for instance, in how different prophets helped the people by praying and offering to heal.

### **The Locations of the Prophets**

According to a careful reading of the O.T. text, there is strong evidence to imply that most of Israel’s prophets would have been found in one of Israel’s sanctuaries or at the royal court rather

than as lone, isolated beings. In other words, they were located in the centers of Israeli society. Chalmers suggests three places, as discussed below:<sup>30</sup>

First, Religious Centers: One of the nation's various sanctuaries, particularly the Jerusalem temple, would have been the most typical location to find a prophet in ancient Israel. Writing and non-writing prophets are connected to Israel's cultic institutions differently. As an illustration, throughout the early period of prophecy in Israel, it is discovered that prophetic bands or guilds, the "sons of the prophets" (*benē hannebi'im*), residing together in or close to Israel's major cultic centers, such as Bethel (2 Kings 2:3) and Gilgal (2 Kings 4:38). Similar language can be found in 1 Samuel 10:5, which describes "the band of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute and lyre before them, prophesying." However, it is unclear if this band of prophets had settled down at the high place or were passing among several sanctuaries. In either case, the local cult center would have been the most likely starting point for an Israelite looking for such a group.

Amos eventually travels to Bethel's northern refuge to deliver his word. These locations may have been appealing because of their particular religious purpose, but it is crucial to remember that they were also significant social hubs where people mingled and met. As a result, they offered the prophet a sizable, ready-made audience.

Given the Jerusalem temple's size and significance, it is possible that several prophets were discovered inside or close to its boundaries. Many scholars now acknowledge the existence of specialized "cult prophets," whose main prophetic activity would have been carried out within the Jerusalem temple, who would have derived their livelihood from the temple itself. There is evidence to suggest that some prophets may have lived within the temple itself (cf. Jer. 35:4). In reality, several texts unmistakably show that the House of the Lord served as a center for both priestly and prophetic activity (cf. Jer. 23:11; and Lam. 2:20). Although he appears to have had no formal affiliation with the organization, Jeremiah delivered a number of his oracles at the Jerusalem temple (Jer. 7 and 28), according to the written prophets. The possibility exists that Joel, Nahum, and Habakkuk were also cult prophets.<sup>31</sup>

Second, Political Centres: Prophets were also found in critical political locations, like the royal courts of Southern and Northern Kingdoms and religious shrines. Hutton has argued that the court was naturally the primary patron of prophetic intermediation because of its ideological primacy in the social structure and its control of money.<sup>32</sup>

The two "court prophets" most well-known for their contributions during David's rule were Nathan and Gad. The fact that Gad is specifically referred to as "David's seer" rather than "Yahweh's prophet" (2 Samuel 24:11) suggests the tight relationship between King David and his prophets. However, there is ample evidence to imply that these court prophets were active



throughout Israel's history, not just under David's rule. For instance, 1 Kings 22 suggests that the king of Israel had access to a large group of prophets—no less than 400—whom he could consult before starting a war. 1 Kings 18:19 provides proof that a sizable number of (non-Yahwistic) prophets felt at home at the royal court.

Although it is doubtful that any of the prophets who left writings served as “court prophets” in the traditional sense, it is evident that their job might put them near the country's monarchs on occasion. For instance, over about 30 years, Isaiah appears to have interacted with several of Judah's monarchs, especially Hezekiah; in contrast, Jeremiah is consulted by King Zedekiah (Jer. 21), and the Lord sends him to the palace to deliver a prophecy (Jer. 22).

Third, Independent Prophets: while there is ample proof that many of Israel's prophets, including some of the writers, might have been located within the major religious and political organizations of their time, a minority opted to exist apart from these. These prophets either made people seek them out on purpose or preferred to travel around while performing their duties. A notable illustration of such a self-reliant prophet is Elisha. Although he lives in Samaria, he is typically portrayed as a nomadic prophet who travels across Israel and the surrounding nations while fulfilling his prophetic duties. In several cases, the prophet took the initiative to offer the king of Israel advice (2 Kings 6:8–23). However, at other times Elisha himself has sought after. For instance, King Ben-hadad of Aram dispatched Hazael to meet Elisha when he arrived in Damascus to see if he would recover from his illness (2 Kings 8:7–10). Micaiah is another illustration of this kind of prophet (1 Kings 22). Micaiah is unconstrained by official links to the royal court, although the king of Israel is aware of him and seeks him out. Overall, it would be fair to classify the majority of Israel's prophets who wrote as belonging to this category. Most had no ongoing relationship with the nation's sanctuaries or royal courts, despite the possibility that they may have periodically done so to carry out their prophetic work.

### **Language of the Prophets**

The language of the prophets is probably what most strikes a reader today. They spoke in poetry, and some of the poetry the prophets created is virtually unmatched in world literature. On the other hand, some sayings are cryptic, crabbed, or tied to a particular setting to offer a clear meaning today. However, sometimes these passages contain striking images that can haunt the reader. The prophets understand themselves to be inspired by God and speak God's word. The most common evidence of this conviction is the ever-recurring “Thus says the Lord.” This kind of messenger formula is found elsewhere in the ancient Near East on the lips of an emissary from one monarch to the court. This form and formula are examples of the prophets' language, often containing oral forms or speech patterns from daily or routine life.

There are abundant examples of other borrowings from varied activities with specific speech patterns. The judge's court is one area that offered many such forms that prophets used to convey

their message: the summons of the judge, the charge of the prosecutor, the claim of the defendant, or the lament of those who were denied justice. Various prophets also imitated songs and parables. Even the funeral service seems to have contributed a frequent form used by the prophets, the “Woe oracle.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Psychological State of the Prophets**

The actual state has been the subject of much investigation and debate when receiving the divine word. Many scholars have found helpful comparisons with somewhat comparable phenomena from various other societies. Indeed, the choice of society and the kind of comparison one makes will influence the outcome. Comparisons with the mystics of various traditions,<sup>34</sup> with the visionaries among the Native Americans,<sup>35</sup> with intermediaries, ecstatic or possessed, of various cultures,<sup>36</sup> and many others have been critiqued. These studies shed some light on the prophetic experience, but the reader is left to decide the most appropriate and satisfying ones.<sup>37</sup>

Many believe that various Old Testament scholars have given the impression that the prophets of old were possessed by frenzy or mania in which their normal faculties were suspended. However, is no authority to compare the Hebrew or Christian prophets with the heathen soothsayer (the *mantis*) who worked himself into a religious frenzy, attempting to favor his observers by undergoing some spirit transport. One may agree with Patrick Fairbairn, a leading commentator on Old Testament prophecy, when he describes the prophetic unction as “the higher impulse stimulating (the prophets’) natural powers, and informing their minds with supernatural revelations but never destroying either their freedom or their proper individuality.”<sup>38</sup>

### **Themes of the Pre-exilic Prophets**

1. God. The God whom the pre-exilic prophets experience is a God who demands specific actions from human beings. The 8th-century prophets appear with a disturbing message: Israel has not lived up to its calling. The prophets see basic moral laws broken or ignored. The prophets proclaim that the God who stands behind those laws will come to uphold those demands. The first demand of the prophets was that the people worship only Yahweh. Coggins *et al.* assert that although the pre-exilic prophets did not make theoretical statements about the existence or (non)existence of other gods, they did require the Israelites to worship only the God of Israel. The reality of God demands that Israel worship Yahweh. Moreover, the proper worship of God requires one to treat one’s fellow human beings correctly. The prophets do not tolerate the worship of God that is not linked to proper behavior toward one’s neighbor.<sup>39</sup>

2. Israel. The unfaithfulness of the people is what struck and disturbed the classical prophets. The time of infidelity in which the prophets lived seems to some readers an expected development in Israel’s history. The rise and history of Prophecy in Israel virtually coincide with the history of the monarchy. The monarchy allowed, perhaps encouraged, the so-called Canaanization of Israelite culture socially and religiously. The development of social and economic ranks or classes in Israel

led to the oppression of the poor and the needy. The rich grew more wealthy, profiting from the labour and losses of the lower classes. The prophets decry this deterioration of Israel's soul. The prophets feel the urge and conviction to speak out against this situation. Their speech is varied when the prophets charge their audience with this infidelity. They addressed various people on different occasions, so one expects variety in their collected sayings.<sup>40</sup>

The prophets' message also varied according to the time and the place of the speech and the people involved. Pre-exilic prophecy can generally be depicted as a prophecy of judgment. The prophets are the conscience of Israel, alerting it to the injustice and infidelity that each of the prophets sees. On both accounts, the rights of God and the rights of their fellow human beings, Israel has to be judged as having failed in the eyes of God. The pre-exilic prophets see Israel as unfaithful to the God who called them.<sup>41</sup>

### **Prophecy And Prophetism in the Post-Exilic Era**

The Babylonian Exile of the 6th century B.C.E. caused a sharp break in many of the traditions and institutions of ancient Israel. However, its effect on the character of prophecy was less marked than its social and political consequences; there is a clear line of continuity linking Amos and Isaiah of Jerusalem with Ezekiel,<sup>42</sup> Deutero-Isaiah, and Zechariah.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, prophecy gradually evolved into something very different from what had been known in pre-exilic Israel. By the N.T. period, the designation —of prophet applied to people in whom few of the characteristics of the pre-exilic prophets are discernible. Barton believes that this change, in turn, affected how people in the Greco-Roman period perceived the pre-exilic prophets.<sup>44</sup> At some point in the post-exilic age, the idea began to develop that prophecy in the strict sense of the word had ceased from Israel, though certain groups, notably the Qumran community and the early Christians, held that it had recently revived.<sup>45</sup> The interpretation of post-exilic prophecy has many disputed areas, and in general, it has not received as much scholarly attention as its pre-exilic counterpart.<sup>46</sup> Post-exilic Prophecy almost wholly lacks the antipathy to national cultic life, which is so marked a feature of the teaching of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. Perhaps this is because the cult had ceased to cause complacent self-satisfaction, preventing the people from hearing the prophetic warning that sacrifices would not save a nation steeped in social injustice. Instead, it had become the essential rallying point for renewal and reconstruction.<sup>47</sup>

### **Prophetic Experience**

In the post-exilic age, the most noticeable development is a greater emphasis on the *Spirit* of God as the motive force behind prophetic utterance. Ezekiel speaks of the Spirit of Yahweh transporting him from place to place, 3:12; 8:3; 11:1, 24). Trito-Isaiah contains a famous reference to the Spirit of Yahweh as the inspiration behind his Prophecy (Isa. 61:1), and throughout Haggai and Zechariah, there are repeated references to the Spirit (Hag. 1:14; 2:5; Zech. 4:6; 7:12. Joel 3:1–2—Eng. 2:28–29 explicitly refers to the gift of prophecy from pouring out of God's Spirit. As is

well known, references to the Spirit are rare in the pre-exilic prophets, so clear evidence of a shift in the understanding of the prophetic experience. Petersen asserts that it may be better to ask why the tremendous classical pre-exilic prophets avoid reference to the Spirit of Yahweh when both their predecessors and successors seem to take it for granted that this is the best language to use in the explanation of prophetic gifts.<sup>48</sup> A more significant shift may lie behind the increased interest in visions and dreams in post-exilic prophetic books. The passage from Joel just cited glosses the extension of prophetic gifts to all by saying,—Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall *dream dreams*, and your young men shall *see visions*.<sup>49</sup>

### **Application to the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Church**

The question that borders the mind is whether prophecy or prophetic gift is still relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century? In 1 Corinthians 14:39, Apostle Paul writes, “...my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.” If the modern Church accepts it and adopts it as her own, the incredible concept that the Early Church accepted would alter it. They were convinced that Jesus, who had physically walked among humans, now lived among them in the form of the Holy Spirit, an invisible being. The same Christ who had previously addressed them verbally now addressed His followers through the inspired words of His servants. This steady voice of Jesus in the Church is what Eugene Boring refers to as prophecy.<sup>50</sup> Even a cursory reading of the New Testament reveals the enormous range of prophetic activity that took place in first-century congregations. Paul’s letters, the book of Acts, and revelation are biblical texts that provide specific detail.<sup>51</sup>

Scripture indicates that the churches of the following fourteen cities were experiencing prophetic activity: Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Tyre, Caesarea, Corinth, Thessalonica, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and even Rome, the imperial Empire’s foreign capital. It appears that prophecy was familiar in the churches of Judea, Syria, Asia, and Italy, and One might safely infer that prophecy was widespread at that period since it was so frequently proclaimed and experienced.

Agabus, Judas, and Silas were prophets who traveled around the churches stoking the early Christian religion’s prophecy fire (Acts 15:22, 32; 21:10–11). Paul’s comment attests to the prophets’ extensive participation. Paul stopped in Troas while on a serious trip to Jerusalem and informed the Ephesian elders that “the Holy Spirit gravely testifies to me” (perhaps referring to prophecy), saying that “bonds and afflictions await me” in every city (Acts 20:23).

When a Spirit-filled Christian receives a “revelation” (*apokalupsis*) from God and then proclaims that revelation to the gathered Church under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Prophecy takes place during this dispensation period of the Holy Spirit. The Church is “enabled to know something from the perspective of the Kingdom of God” via such revelation, says Houston.<sup>52</sup> A prophecy’s fundamental structure is built on a few definitions: A Spirit-filled Christian (one of God’s people,

a spiritual mediator) receives a revelation from God and conveys it orally to the gathering Church (the general congregation of believers), all under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (inspiration, stimulation, prompting, encouragement, empowerment). This implies that the 21st-century Church must understand that prophecy and prophetism is:

### **God's Revelation**

The Church must have spiritual insight. Without a clear understanding of the divine will, there can be no prophecy. Even if it is fitting, it is not the outcome of a human intellect conjuring up an excellent religious idea. It is a divinely inspired message for the moment, a word from God, a communication from above. Paul prayed that God would “grant you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.” This prayer remains true for churches today. . .” (Ephesians 1:17–18).

Prophecy occurs under the influence of God's Spirit. The words spoken while a person is “in the Spirit” come not from reflection, premeditation, or study but are initiated by God to benefit His people (Acts 13:2; 19:6; 21:11; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 29–31.) This revelation “occurs when a Christian either hears, sees or senses a prompting from the Holy Spirit and speaks what he or she has received.”<sup>53</sup> James D. G. Dunn comments: “For Paul prophecy is a word of revelation. . . . It is a spontaneous utterance, a revelation given in words to the prophet to be delivered as it is given (1 Cor 14.30). At this point, Paul stands wholly within the (Hebraic) tradition of prophecy as inspired utterance.”<sup>54</sup> Paul advises against being irrational or insane when one prophesies in Church (1 Corinthians 14:32). The individual who believes that biblical prophecy is an ecstatic out-of-body experience in which the person loses their sanity is frequently someone who has not experienced one of the “utterance gifts”—prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10). These texts make it clear that a revelation intended for prophecy is not recognized prophecy unless it is conveyed, announced orally, to the gathered Church by a Spirit-filled Christian (Acts 13:2; 19:6; 21:11; 1 Corinthians 14:3; 14:29–31).

### **A Gift to the Church**

God utilizes prophecy, in particular, to bless His Church. The congregation of the faithful is the perfect setting for the Holy Spirit to address current issues and circumstances. It has already been mentioned that prophecy is more than a powerful religious idea. Furthermore, whatever how stunning, prophecy is not reliable merely because a notable community leader or a gifted churchgoer delivers it. The Holy Spirit's inherent involvement in the speech distinguishes prophecy. Due to the Holy Spirit's association with the uttered word, prophecy is “anointed.” As a visual representation of God's encompassing power, Samuel anointed David. As a result, Spirit-filled individuals frequently use the word “anointed” to characterize the work or empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit prompts and moves the speaker to continue. People are delighted by what they hear because of the message's divinely enhanced content and delivery. The message, if from God, has that unique “bell-tone” quality that brings peace and assurance.



### **Not Public Address**

The discussion of tongues and prophecy in chapters 12–14 of 1 Corinthians is always a tough challenge for Bible interpreters and translators who make their way through the book. Greek verbs vary, demonstrating that prophecy is distinct from preaching or teaching. Therefore, it is sometimes thought that the public proclamation of the Bible constitutes a prophecy. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, William Barclay said: “This chapter is challenging to understand because it deals with a phenomenon which, for most of us, is outside our experience.” His solution is to treat the gift of prophecy as “the gift of forth-telling the truth so that all can understand it.”<sup>55</sup>

The New Testament writers adopted the Greek word *prophetein* “to prophesy” (from *pro*, meaning “forth,” and *phemi*, meaning “to speak,” and continued its use) that the Septuagint consistently uses when translating Hebrew words for “prophecy.” Hebrew and Christian’s Scriptures frequently use the same word, demonstrating the word’s historical continuity.<sup>56</sup>

As Barclay noted, prophecy is forward-telling or speaking forth, but it goes beyond the straightforward statement of a lecture or sermon. Prophecy is not prepared oratory, which involves researching a topic before making a speech or presentation. It is not a sermon that has already been planned and delivered.<sup>57</sup> It is the empowered delivery of a divine insight that comes in a flash (or as a “now-word”)<sup>58</sup> to bring spiritual insight to that moment. The early Church realized there was a clear difference. Prophecy to them was “the communication of a word received directly from God, under the operation of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>59</sup> J. Rodman Williams points out that “there is no ‘scheduling’ of prophecy: it just happens.”<sup>60</sup> It is a direct word from God to His people delivered through a divinely inspired speech.

Paul is cautious about distinguishing between prophecy and teaching when defining the roles and gifts of the Church (Romans 12:6–7; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:6; Ephesians 4:11). The only logical conclusion is that prophecy is distinct from preaching or teaching. Teachers and preachers use previously well-known content and make it pertinent. Due to the necessity for human inventiveness, prophecy bypasses reason and occurs right now.<sup>61</sup> While teaching and preaching convey an in-depth knowledge of God’s rules for living, developing, and serving, prophecy transmits the specific purpose of God in an ad hoc manner for a current situation.<sup>62</sup>

Prophecy is the knowledge the Holy Spirit bestows in a moment of inspiration. The declaration of God’s thinking is frequently made with greater vigor than ordinary speech because of the overwhelming impression of God’s presence and might. Agabus, the prophet’s prophecy of famine in Acts 11:27–30, could have only come through divine insight; neither inquiry nor study could have provided it.

Notwithstanding, preaching, teaching and prophecy with in hand and collaborate. The local Christian community grows more numerous and wholesome in solid doctrine due to these essential

talents, which both require the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Preaching and teaching go hand in hand with prophecy; at Antioch, for example, teachers and prophets collaborated (Acts 13:1). According to David Schoch, Prophecy ought to be used in conjunction with preaching.<sup>63</sup> Prophecy's purpose is to strengthen the local Church, personalize the grand, overarching truths of Scripture, and make them come to life in a familiar, everyday context. These inspired prophetic utterances are to be scrutinized and judged, but they should not take up as much time in the assembly as preaching and teaching. True prophecy does not conflict with the Bible, take the place of the Bible, or attempt to control the Church. Likewise, prophecy should not be discounted or minimized.

### **For the Edification of the Church**

In 1 Corinthians 14:3, the verse most frequently quoted by commentators to explain the purpose and function of prophecy, Paul says, "One who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation." Glenn Foster summarizes this verse: "Prophecy edifies; it builds up the believer; it exhorts; it stirs up the believer; it comforts; it cheers up the believer."<sup>64</sup> Prophecy uses the Holy Spirit in a unique way that edifies rather than replacing other acts that do so. Prophecy stands out as the most significant of all the Spirit's operations in strengthening the fellowship, says J. R. Williams. This prophecy-based edification, also known as upbuilding, entails solace, inspiration, stimulation, exhortation, and strengthening. God commands His people to live their lives by His Word.<sup>65</sup> According to Bill Hamon, Prophecy is significant in church life since it is the gift a congregation needs most to grow. Prophecy is a "shotgun" talent that can bless many people at once, unlike the other eight targeted "rifle" gifts that often bless one particular individual or perhaps a few.<sup>66</sup>

God's will is most clearly revealed in prophecy, which is essential because it is a revelation from God for the occasion when the congregation is gathered. According to Michael Harper, it is a unique anointing that the sovereign Spirit grants at a predetermined time for a specific purpose.<sup>67</sup> God has something to say right now, and prophecy is timely and relevant to the needs and spiritual condition of the local Church. According to Grudem, "Prophecy, then, is superior to the other gifts since the revelation on which it depends allows it to be tailored to the unique requirements of the present, needs which may only be known to God (cf. Rom 8:26-27; 1 Cor 14:25)."<sup>68,69</sup>

### **CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS**

There seems to have been no standard prerequisite for a person to become a prophet in Israel. Divine inspiration made a person a prophet, what caused the prophet to speak out, and what made others listen to the prophet as a legitimate spokesperson for the divine. In the early period, a popular conception is that —the Spirit of the Lord speaks through the individual (1 Sam 10:10; 1 Kings 22:24). Later terminology preferred —the word of the Lord came to the person (Jer 1:2, 4;

Ezek 1:3). The general idea remains: the prophet is the one who can speak in the name of God. Prophets came from all walks of life. Indeed, some have had many experiences and a deep acquaintance with various aspects of life and work in Israel. They claim or are given backgrounds as varied as a shepherd, priest, agriculturalist, or scribe. They spoke where and when they thought they would be effective. They frequently spoke, no doubt, in places where people most readily gathered—the marketplace, the temple, the city gates (cf. Jer 7:2). They may have spoken less formally in other places as well. A distinction has sometimes been made that, for some interpreters, marks a dramatic development in the history of Israelite Prophecy. Many early prophets speak only to individuals, especially kings or other officials, while other later prophets address large groups of people—rhetorically, the whole nation, or an entire city. This variation undoubtedly depends on whom the prophet thinks is the appropriate recipient of a particular utterance, whether that message is a threat or something else.

To the 21<sup>st</sup> century church, prophecy:

1. It is a spontaneous supernatural manifestation of God made possible by the Holy Spirit speaking through people in their languages to edify the Church. Prophecy is the gift by which God communicates a word to a specific person or the entire Christian community.
2. God employs a person to communicate to men His thoughts on the issue at hand, His plans for the future, and any current information that He feels the men should be aware of. It is not always possible to forecast the future through prophecy (although this frequently happens). Through the tongue of one of His people, God spoke directly to the circumstance at hand. In Prophecy, God communicates. That is how straightforward, profound, and shocking it is. For the message to be spoken in man's language, it takes the work of the Spirit upon and within the human mind.
3. The writer agrees with David Hill that a Christian who regularly or infrequently serves as a divinely inspired and called speaker within the Church and is compelled to publicly communicate understandable and authoritative revelations or messages to other Christians and the Christian society is known as a prophet of God.<sup>70</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> A fact that the OT itself acknowledges; see Jeremiah 27:1–15, which mentions the presence of prophets in the neighboring nations of Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Phoenicia.

<sup>2</sup>K. Koch, *The Prophets*. 2 vols. (Philadelphia: np., 1983), 84.

<sup>3</sup>J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel: Revised and Enlarged* (Louisville: WJKP, 1995), 125-6.

<sup>4</sup> Aaron Chalmers, *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel* (London: SPCK, 2012), 42.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>R. Hutton, *Charisma and Authority in Israelite Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 116.

<sup>7</sup>W. W. Hallo, "Akkadian Apocalypses." *IEJ* 16: 1966, 231–42.

<sup>8</sup>S. A. Kaufman, "Prediction, Prophecy, and Apocalypse in the Light of New Akkadian Texts." *PWCJS* 6/1: 1977,221–28.

<sup>9</sup>H. B. Huffmon, "Prophecy in the Mari Letters." *BAR* 3: 1970, 199–224.

<sup>10</sup>M. de J. Ellis, "The Goddess Kititum Speaks to King Ibalpiel: Oracle Texts from Ishchali." *MARI* 5: 1987, 235–66.

<sup>11</sup>O. R. Gurney, "The Babylonians and Hittites." in *Oracles and Divination*. ed. M. Loewe and C. Blacker (n.p: Boulder, CO., 1981), 142-73.

<sup>12</sup>A. Malamat, "A Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy: The Mari Documents." *AIR*, 1987, 33–52.

<sup>13</sup>A. L. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*. *TAPhS* 46/3 (Philadelphia: np., 1956).

<sup>14</sup>S. Dalley, C. B. F. Walker, and J. D. Hawkins, *The Old Babylonian Tablets from Tell al Rimah* (London: np., 1976), 65.

<sup>15</sup>H. Hunger, and S. A. Kaufman, "A New Akkadian Prophecy Text." *JAOS* 95: 1976, 71–75.

<sup>16</sup>H. Tadmor, "The Aramaization of Assyria: Aspects of Western Impact." in *Mesopotamien und Seine* Vol. 2., 1982, 449–70

<sup>17</sup>A. K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts* (Toronto: np., 1975), 123.

<sup>18</sup>C. Osiek, and L. J. Hoppe, *Anselm Academic Study Bible: New American Bible* revised edition (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2013), 23.

<sup>19</sup>A. Groenewald, "Prophetic Witness in the Hebrew Bible: From Prophetic Word to Prophetic Books." *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*, 66(1),2010, 1-7. doi:10.4102/hts.v66i1.899

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>21</sup>H. Peels, and S. Snyman, *In The Lion Has Roared: Theological Themes in Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Prickwick Publications, 2012), 234.

<sup>22</sup>M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

<sup>23</sup>J. Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel*, LAI. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995a), 133-4.

<sup>24</sup>J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel: Revised and Enlarged*(Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 32-33.

<sup>25</sup>Chalmers, 49.

<sup>26</sup>Blenkinsopp, 1995a: 141-2.

<sup>27</sup>Chalmers, 53.

<sup>28</sup>B. Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority: An Essay in Biblical History and Sociology*, *SWBAS* 1 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), 95.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>30</sup>Chalmers, 42-46.

<sup>31</sup>Chalmers, 44.

<sup>32</sup>Hutton, 109.

<sup>33</sup>It is sometimes claimed that no area of Israelite life was untouched by this borrowing of forms that appear in the prophetic books. The preexilic prophets who preach a coming catastrophe sometimes can be found using a form, or parts of it, that has become standard in many analyses of prophetic speech, the —reproach and threat. The ideal form is “Because you have done this evil, therefore, thus says the Lord, disaster will come upon you.” One finds many other terms to describe the two parts of the form: invective, reason, accusation for the reproach, and judgment, sentence, verdict for the threat. The analysis of this form shows that, regardless of the way in which the prophet receives the word of God, the prophet does contribute personal reflections and reasoning, which the prophet speaks before giving the divine decision of judgment.

<sup>34</sup>J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* Oxford: 1962.

<sup>35</sup>T. W. Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activity* (Minneapolis: 1989).

<sup>36</sup>R. R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: np., 1980).

<sup>37</sup>A. G. Auld “Poetry, Prophecy, Hermeneutic: Recent Studies in Isaiah.” *SJT* 33: 1980, 567–81.

<sup>38</sup>Patrick Fairbairn, *Prophecy: Viewed in Respect to Its Distinctive Nature, Its Special Function, and Proper Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker T. & T. Clark, 1976 reprint from 1865), 14.

<sup>39</sup>In addition to the demands that God puts on human beings, the prophets also point to the love that God has for humanity and for Israel in particular. God’s love extends to humans even in the face of unfaithfulness and of backsliding. The images that the prophets use for the love of God are themselves revealing. Parent, teacher, healer, counselor—these are some of the roles that the prophets give to God, roles that reveal the concern and passion God has for people. R. Coggins, A. Phillips, and M. Knibb, *Israel’s Prophetic Tradition*. (Cambridge: 1982).

<sup>40</sup>A. Heschel, *The Prophets: An Introduction*. 2 vols. (New York: np., 1962).

<sup>41</sup>D. L. Petersen, *The Roles of Israel’s Prophets* JSOTSup 17. (Sheffield: 1981).

<sup>42</sup>J. D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration in Ezekiel 40–48* (Missoula, MT.: 1976).

<sup>43</sup>M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: 1985).

<sup>44</sup>J. Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* (London: 1986).

<sup>45</sup>R. P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Tradition* (London: 1979).

<sup>46</sup>P. R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration* (London: 1969).

<sup>47</sup>R. R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: 1980).

<sup>48</sup>D. Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy* (Missoula, MT.: 1977).

<sup>49</sup>In any case, preexilic prophets are not uniformly opposed to visions: both Amos (7:1, 4, 7; 8:1; 9:1) and Isaiah (6:1) report visions which enshrine the word Yahweh is speaking to his people, and they show no embarrassment about this mode of revelation—unless these reports are the work of postexilic redactors. At all events postexilic prophets and the collectors of the oracles seem to have regarded visions as the normal method by which God communicates with his messengers; and sometimes the visions in question are detailed and full of symbolism, a kind



of pageant played out in front of the prophet's eyes, each incident within which has allegorical significance (see, for example, the vision reports in Zechariah 1–6). Amos' visions already contain a symbolic component. In that a commonplace object (a basket of summer fruit, a plumb line) is given a deeper meaning, often through wordplay (cf. also Jer 1:11–12). But in the postexilic period the visions become lengthier, and sometimes a whole drama is acted out in symbolic form, requiring interpretation (often by an angel) before its significance can be grasped by the prophet and communicated to his hearers. The earliest example of this is Ezekiel's vision of the coming fall of Jerusalem, recorded in Ezekiel 9. In later apocalyptic works such visions become deliberately obscure and riddling, so that it is quite impossible to understand them without the appended explanation. Such is the case, for instance, with the visions of Daniel, or (outside the Bible) of Enoch in the various books attributed to him.

<sup>50</sup>M. Eugene Boring, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus: Christian Prophecy in the Gospel Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 38.

<sup>51</sup>Matthew 7:15, 22; 24:11; Luke 1:67; John 11:51; Acts 2:17; 11:27; 13:1–2; 15:28, 32; 16:6; 19:6; 20:23; 21:4, 9–11; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 11:4–5; 12:10, 28–31; 13:2, 8–9; 14:3, 4–6, 22, 24, 29, 31–32, 39; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:20; 1 Timothy 1:18; 4:1, 14; 1 Peter 1:10; 1 John 4:1; Revelation 1:3; 10:7, 11; 11:3, 6, 10, 18; 16:6, 13; 18:20, 24; 19:10; 22:6–7, 9–10, 18–19.

<sup>52</sup>Graham Houston, *Prophecy: A Gift for Today?* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1989), 97.

<sup>53</sup>Jack W. Hayford, *The Beauty of Spiritual Language* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 121.

<sup>54</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 228.

<sup>55</sup>William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975 revision), 127–128.

<sup>56</sup>Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 8.

<sup>57</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), xx. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, The New International Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 595.

<sup>58</sup>Houston, 96.

<sup>59</sup>I. Howells, *Prophecy in Doctrine and Practice* (Penygroes, Dyfed, Wales: Apostolic Church Training School, 1931), 2.

<sup>60</sup>J. Rodman Williams, *The Era of the Spirit* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, 1971), 28.

<sup>61</sup>Ernest Best, "Prophets and Preachers." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 12 (1959), 129–150.

<sup>62</sup>Graham Cooke, *Developing Your Prophetic Gifting* (Kent, Sussex, U.K.: Sovereign World, 1994), 18.

<sup>63</sup>David Schoch, *The Prophetic Ministry* (Long Beach, Calif.: Bethany, 1970), 22.

<sup>64</sup>Glenn Foster, *The Purpose and Use of Prophecy* (Glendale, Ariz.: Sweetwater, 1988), 33.

<sup>65</sup>J. Rodman Williams, *The Era of the Spirit* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, 1971), 26–27.

<sup>66</sup>Bill Hamon, *Prophets and Personal Prophecy* (Shippensburg, Pa.: Destiny Image, 1987), 57.

<sup>67</sup>Michael Harper, *Prophecy: A Gift for the Body of Christ* (London: Fountain Trust, 1964), 19.

153. <sup>69</sup>Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1988),

<sup>70</sup>David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 8-9.