

## 019 Equip The Saints 5 The Prophet

**I need to warn you now. This is a long study and you may need to take it in small pieces.**

To many folks there is quite a confusion related to Prophets and prophecy, the ability for all to prophesy and the gift of prophecy as found in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14.

In this study I hope to clear up some of that confusion. Now not all will agree with me, but that's all right, at least you have the opportunity to look at the scripture related to this subject for yourself and find your own conviction.

So here is our verse again.

*Eph 4:11*

*11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, **some to be prophets**, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,*

Now remember in our previous study we looked at the Greek meaning of the word "SET" or "APPOINTED"

*1 Cor 12:28*

*28 And God hath **set** some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*

Now there are those who teach, and I personally believe falsely, that these gifts and ministries were only for the early church.

There is a major problem with that teaching and that is the meaning of the word 'set', the word 'church'.

Christ Himself has 'SET IN THE CHURCH'.

Christ did the setting. No argument.

It was a 'setting' as in concrete as we saw in the previous study. There is nothing temporary about this. These ministries were set in as a fixture.

It was "in", not upon the Church. It was an inputting to be part and parcel of His church that He alone was going to build.

Further, "the Church". It was not part of the church. It was not the early church; it was in "THE ONE AND ONLY CHURCH". We use the term 'early church', but the Lord doesn't.

There is only ONE church and that is HIS church and it covers from the Old Testament saints right through to saints alive at His second coming. So if He has set anything in His church then it set in His one and Only church.

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Finally there is not scripture reference anywhere in the New Testament to these ministries being Temporary, or that they will cease.

There are those who would abuse the scripture on this by quoting scripture to try and prove that these ministries are not for today.

They miss quote

*1 Cor 13:8-11*

*8 Love never fails. **But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.***

*9 **For we know in part and we prophesy in part,***

*10 **but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.***

*11 **When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.***

This they say proves it is to pass away when the perfect comes and here they falsely claim that it is the Bible that is the 'perfect' to come.

The problem with that is, the Old Testament already existed and are they saying that is NOT also part of the perfect word of God?

But the biggest problem with their false teaching is, they don't continue reading the next few verses or any other scripture – But we will.

*1 Cor 13:12-14:3*

*12 **Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.***

*Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, **even as I am fully known.***

*13 **And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.***

**1 Corinthians 14**

*14:1 **Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.***

*2 **For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit.***

*3 **But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.***

Again

*Heb 7:28-8:1*

*28 **For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed **the Son, who has been made perfect forever.*****

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*2 Cor 3:18-4:1*

*18 And we, who with **unveiled faces** all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

*Rev 22:4*

*4 They will see **his face**, and his name will be on their foreheads.*

There is only one who is Perfect and that is The Lord Himself.

So when *that which is perfect is come* is the coming of the Lord. Heb 7:28, above.

We shall see 'face to face' cannot possibly mean looking at a book. It can only mean a person face to face.

*Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, **even as I am fully known.** 1Cor 13:12.*  
Being fully known can only be personal.

'They shall see His face' Rev: 22:4, because we also have unveiled faces 2 Cor 3:18.

*Eph 4:11-13*

*1 **It was He who gave** some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,*

*12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up*

*13 **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.*

The last point I will make on this issue is the verse itself. "He gave...Until we all" and there is no way we can say that we all have reached as yet, so these ministries are here by His design and anointing until HE and He alone removes them by His perfect and personal presence – His coming.

Why have I labored this here a bit?

Simply because I do not want you, because of false teaching, to miss all the wonders of what the Lord Himself desires for you.

**So let's look at our subject of the Prophet.**

There is a distinct difference between the manifestation or gift of prophecy as found on *1 Corinthians 12 and 14* and the gift ministry of a prophet / prophetess as found in *Ephesians 4:11*

I shall use the word 'manifestation or gift of prophecy' when referring to the gift of prophecy as in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, and the word **prophet** or prophetic ministry when referring to a prophetic ministry as in Ephesians 4:11

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We shall cover some basics about the gift ministry of a prophet (sometimes referred to as “a called prophet or prophetess”).

Many people are familiar with the ministries of apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. However, if we are to have everything that the Lord wants us to have as his Body, we must understand the ministry of the prophet and have prophets functioning in the Church.

What is a Prophet / Prophetess?

In spite of the fact that prophets were vital to God’s purposes in the Old Testament, the need for them today has been called into question because of the presence of the gift of the Holy Spirit in every believer.

On the Day of Pentecost, God began to unveil something He had hidden from mankind (and the Devil)—the Administration of God’s Grace.

*Eph 3:2-3*

*2 Surely you have heard about the **administration of God's grace** that was given to me for you,  
3 that is, **the mystery** made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.*

Today, in the Administration of Grace, the Lord Jesus Christ seals with the Holy Spirit every person who is born again.

*Eph 1:13*

*13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, **you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,***

That means every Christian has the ability to hear from God and prophesy

*Acts 2:17-18*

*17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters **will prophesy**, your young men will see visions; your old men will dream dreams.  
18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and **they will prophesy.***

*1 Cor 14:5*

*5 I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.*

*1 Cor 14:24*

*24 But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all,*

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Another reaction many people have, on hearing that every Christian can prophesy is to think that prophets are no longer necessary. However, a true study of Scripture (and indeed, the evidence of correct practice in the Church) reveals that is not the case.

Remember what I have said in these studies time and again. Never have a teaching or belief hanging or dependant on just one verse. There has to be a consistency of thought throughout the whole of scripture.

In our main reading in Ephesians 4:11 it says that the Lord has placed prophets in the Church along with the other ministries of apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, which we are looking at in this section.

Furthermore, there are other verses in the New Testament that mention prophets. We have pointed out 1 Corinthians 12:28 above, and there is Titus 1:12.

*Titus 1:12*

*12 Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."*

The book of the Acts of the Apostles confirms what the Epistles teach, and shows that prophets were active and important in the Church.

*Acts 11:27*

*27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.*

*Acts 13:1*

*13:1 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.*

*Acts 15:32*

*32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers.*

*Acts 21:10*

*10 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.*

Surely the Lord would not have specifically placed men and women in the Church with the gift ministry of a prophet if they did not perform a distinctly different role than other Christians who were operating the manifestation or gift of prophecy.

In contrast to the gift of prophecy that every Christian can operate, the gift ministry of a prophet is a specific calling of the Lord on a person's life.

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Thus the call to be a prophet is a job assignment, given to someone whether he wants it or not. The Old Testament scriptures make this very clear.

Isaiah knew he was called from birth:

*(Isa. 49:1b).*

*“...Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name”*

Amos describes the call of God upon his life:

*(Amos 7:14 and 15*

*“...I was neither a prophet nor a prophet’s son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel’”).*

With regard to prophets in the Church, the book of Acts confirms what Ephesians and Corinthians state doctrinally, that the Lord selects and specifically calls some men and women to be prophets.

Prophets were important in the establishment of the church at Antioch, the first church recorded that was composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

It was the prophet Agabus who foretold that there would be a severe famine in the Roman world during the reign of Claudius Caesar

*Acts 11:28*

*28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)*

(...And this famine is documented in secular Roman history).

Prophets were vital in getting the revelation from the Lord to set apart Paul and Barnabas and send them on their first missionary journey.

*Acts 13:1-3*

*13:1 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.*

*2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

*3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*

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The prophets Judas and Silas are specifically mentioned as exhorting and confirming the disciples in Antioch.

*Acts 15:32*

*32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers.*

It was Agabus the prophet who so graphically portrayed what would happen to Paul in Jerusalem.

*Acts 21:10-11*

*10 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.*

*11 Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"*

In fact, the only foretelling in Acts is given either by prophets or by the apostles Peter and Paul.

The book of Acts and the Epistles show clearly that the Lord still works through called prophets. They are not “just another believer because every Christian can prophesy,” as some have falsely taught.

Evangelists still exist in the Church even though every Christian can share his faith, there are still pastors even though every Christian can help people who are hurting, and there are still prophets in the Church even though every Christian can manifest prophecy.

Prophets are charged with being spokesmen for God just as they were in the Old Testament, and today they speak also for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Once we understand that the ministry of a prophet is the Lord's doing, and that they are very important to the health and wellbeing of the Church, we should be very interested in recognizing who they are and what we can do to help them in their job of being spokesmen so we can have the word of the Lord among us in a more powerful way.

Now that we know the difference between the gift of prophecy and the ministry of a prophet, we need to understand how that difference plays out in the Church.

All prophecy, whether from a Christian operating the gift of prophecy, or from a called prophet, will be as the Spirit uses them. All true words of prophecy come from God or the Lord Jesus Christ, never from the speaker's mind.

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In the case of the gift of prophecy, the Lord limits himself to giving words of  
“...**strengthening, encouragement, and comfort**”

*1 Cor 14:3*

*3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.*

However, that is not the case with the ministry of a prophet. Christ appointed prophets speak the message the Lord gives them, whatever it may be. Both the gift of prophecy, and the ministry of a prophet are used by the Lord in the Church today.

To understand how prophets operate in the Church, we must understand how they functioned in the Old Testament.

The various Greek and Hebrew words that are translated “prophet” or “seer” help a lot in understanding both what a prophet is and how God works with them. By far the most common word translated “prophet” in the Old Testament is *nabiy*, which means “spokesman.”

First and foremost, the prophet is a “spokesman” for God. The prophet must be able to hear the voice of God and bring God’s words to the world.

Soon after Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden, God stopped talking openly to people and chose specific individuals through whom He would communicate to mankind.

Thus, by the first time the word “prophet” is used in the Bible, which was in the days of Abraham, (This is about 2,000 years after Adam), what a prophet did was no mystery to people

*Gen 20:7*

*7 Now return the man's wife, **for he is a prophet**, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all yours will die."*

When God spoke in a dream to Abimelech king of Gerar and identified Abraham as a prophet, Abimelech did not say, “Hey God, what is a ‘prophet’?” He knew exactly what a prophet was—a person who could hear the voice of God and communicate it to others.

The Greek word translated “prophet,” *prophetes*, also shows that prophets are God’s (or “the god’s”) chosen spokesmen. The noun *prophetes* is found in Greek writings as early as the 600’s B.C., and it is related to the verb meaning to publicly speak forth or make known.

The oldest occurrence we have today relates to a prophetic utterance at the oracle of Zeus at Dodona. Thus, ancient Greek language and culture confirms what the Hebrew language communicates: that even ancient pagan people realized that the words of the gods needed to be spoken forth and made known, and furthermore that the gods chose certain people through whom they spoke.

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The New Testament use of *prophetes*, or prophet, is in line with that and means “One who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his...spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received...”

Because the prophet speaks the message that God gives him to speak, it can be as varied as God wants it to be. This is an important point, because often people try to “put God in a box” and decide what a prophetic message would look like, as if we could tell God what to say.

It is difficult to categorize every type of message that prophets bring forth, but a short list will show some of the variation that occurs in the Bible. In some categories there are many examples, but we will look at just a few.

**Prophets:**

Tell what will happen in the future: 1 Samuel 10:1-6;

*1 Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him, saying, "Has not the Lord anointed you leader over his inheritance?"*

*2 When you leave me today, you will meet two men near Rachel's tomb, at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin. They will say to you, "The donkeys you set out to look for have been found. And now your father has stopped thinking about them and is worried about you. He is asking, "What shall I do about my son?""*

*3 "Then you will go on from there until you reach the great tree of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there. One will be carrying three young goats, another three loaves of bread, and another a skin of wine.*

*4 They will greet you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them.*

*5 "After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying.*

*6 The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person.*

Isaiah’s prophetic foretelling of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus,

*Isa 52:13-53:12*

*13 See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.*

*14 Just as there were many who were appalled at him — his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness —*

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*15 so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.*

*Isaiah 53*

*53:1 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*

*2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.*

*3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

*4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.*

*5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

*6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*

*8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.*

*9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.*

*10 Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.*

*11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.*

*12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

**Matthew 24:2;**

*4:1 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings.*

*2 "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."*

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The following are scripture references too many to post the actual verses  
*Acts 11:28, 21:11*

Speak of past events:

*Judges 6:7-10; 2 Samuel 12:7 and 8; Ezekiel 20:1-31; John 4:18.*

Strengthen (“edification” KJV):

*2 Samuel 7:8-12; Haggai 2:1-5*

Exhort:

*2 Chronicles 15:1-7; Isaiah 35:1-4; Haggai 1:3-12*

Comfort:

*1 Samuel 9:20; 2 Chronicles 20:15-17; Jeremiah 45:1-5*

Bless:

*Genesis 48:20; Deuteronomy 33:1; Joshua 14:13*

Curse:

*Joshua 8:26, 9:22 and 23; 2 Kings 2:24; Jeremiah 48:10*

Call out kings and ministries:

*1 Samuel 10:1, 16:13; 1 Kings 11:29-39, 19:15-19; 2 Kings 9:1-13*

Reprove (sometimes harshly)

*2 Samuel 12:1-14; Isaiah 22:15-25; Jeremiah 36:30 and 31; Malachi 2:3; Matthew 16:23, 23:12-36*

Foretell death or disaster:

*1 Samuel 2:27-36; 1 Kings 13:20-24, 22:17-37; Jeremiah 28:16, 29:21; Amos 7:14-17*

Direct:

*Judges 4:4-6; 2 Kings 4:1-7, 5:10, 6:8-10; Jeremiah 32:13-15*

Name (showing God’s opinion):

*2 Samuel 12:25; Jeremiah 20:3*

Reveal character and what is in a person’s heart:

*Isaiah 9:9 and 17, 29:13, 48:4; Jeremiah 2:21, 5:23; Ezekiel 14:2-4; John 1:47*

Interpret enigmas:

*Daniel 5:5-29*

Reveal what is going on from a spiritual perspective:

*2 Chronicles 5:20; Jeremiah 1:16; Ezekiel 5:11; Daniel 9:11; John 8:42-47*

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Furthermore, prophets: Can have messages for individuals:  
*1 Samuel 10:1-6, for groups: 2 Kings 3:12-19,*

For entire nations:  
*Amos 1:11-2:16*

Have given prophecies to people about a third party:  
*1 Kings 14:7; 2 Kings 1:3*

May deliver the message themselves, or through others:  
*2 Kings 5:10, 9:1*

May interpret other people's dreams:  
*Genesis 40:8-22, 41:15-28; Daniel 2:1-45, 4:4-37 (or their own as in Daniel 7)*

Might not get a revelation about a situation immediately:  
*Jeremiah 28:5-17 (Especially verse 11), 42:7*

May be called upon by God to act out their prophetic message:  
*Jeremiah 19:1-13, 27:2, 43:8-13; Ezekiel 4:1-3, 9-17, 5:1-4, 12:1-11; Hosea 1:2; Acts 21:11*

May get revelation they do not understand:  
*Numbers 12:6-8; Daniel 12:8; Zechariah 1:8 and 9*

The point of the above list is to show clearly that prophets speak what they hear from God or the Lord Jesus, and that can be as varied as God wants it to be. Of course, because the prophet is a prophet of God, he will not contradict what He has said in His written Word.

This brings up the fact that some people assert that God would not give a harsh word of reproof today because we live in the Age of Grace, but that assertion misses the point. The "grace" in the Age of Grace concerns what God has done for people through His Son: things like saved by grace and not by works, having permanent salvation, and being sealed with The Holy Spirit.

The "grace" in the Age of Grace certainly does not mean that we have the "grace" to live decadent lives without the Lord being upset and speaking frankly to us about it.

There are verses that apply to the Church that show God will still reprove and correct His people. The principle still stands:

*Luke 12:48*  
*...From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*

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Sin is still sin, and just as God was so upset by the sin and hardheartedness of his “chosen people” in the Old Testament that He occasionally reproved them harshly, He can get just as upset at His chosen children today. Actually, since we have more today, we could reasonably expect Him to get more upset. Because Scripture says,

*“For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God...” (1 Pet. 4:17a),*

God has some harsh punishment for those who turn from Him.

*Heb 10:29*

*29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?*

*1 Thess 4:6*

*...And that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you.*

Joseph Dillow writes:

“Once a man is born again in Christ, he is now in God’s family, and as any human father would, our divine Father takes a more personal interest in the moral behavior of those who belong to Him than to those outside the household of faith.”

One Hebrew word translated “prophet” shows that prophets speak what they hear from God (or today from the Lord Jesus), and they do not speak on their own.

The Hebrew word *nataph*, sometimes translated “prophet,” means to drop, drip, or distill. Its uses include rain distilling and dripping from the sky, words that “drop” out of someone’s mouth, and wine dripping from the mountains in Paradise.

Although prophets are called upon to “drop” words where and when God demands, the more obvious thing we learn from *nataph* is that God drops His words upon the prophet.

It means, as Strong’s Concordance says, “*to speak by inspiration.*” This means that the message the prophet brings is not his own message, but the Lord’s words, and furthermore it implies that many times the prophet may not know much of the message when he starts prophesying, but that the words “drop” upon him, i.e., he speaks them as he gets them from God.

An interesting note here is that my own father had no idea what he said when he prophesied. It had to be recorded or written down as he prophesied for him to find out afterwards. Now that is not to say or set some precedent that that is how it should be. That was just his personal experience.

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Two more Hebrew words that help us understand how God works in prophets are both translated “seer.” One is *raah*, which means, “to see” (as with the eye), and the other is *chozeh*, which means “one who has a vision” (from *chazon*, vision”).

By virtue of the gift of the Holy Spirit upon them and the revelation they received from God, prophets “saw” things that other people could not see. This was very apparent to the people around them, who used the term “seer” for the practical reason that they could see what was unseen by others.

As God gave him revelation, a prophet could “see” into the future.

*Dan 2:29-45*

*29 "As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen.*

*30 As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.*

*31 "You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue — an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance.*

*32 The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,*

*33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.*

*34 While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them.*

*35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.*

*36 "This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king.*

*37 You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory;*

*38 in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.*

*39 "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.*

*40 Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron — for iron breaks and smashes everything — and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.*

*41 Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay.*

*42 As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.*

*43 And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.*

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*44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.*  
*45 This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands — a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."*

Also into someone's heart

*Ezek 14:3*  
*3 "Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I let them inquire of me at all?"*

The word "seer" has another overtone as well.

Although there are well documented times when God spoke audibly to prophets, it seems the more common means of communication He used was visual revelation, even if the vision were in a dream.

Although it would be ideal if every dream and vision were crystal clear and self-explanatory, that is not the case. The method and content of the visions and dreams of God are His business, and He has purposely chosen to be unclear in some of His communication.

Although the tendency of most people is to blame the prophet for any unclear dream or revelation (and it is true that sin can cloud clear revelations from the Lord), this blame is often misplaced.

God can be perfectly clear when He wants to be, as many Old and New Testament records attest. Many biblical records show that God is purposely unclear.

*Num 12:6-8*  
*6 he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams.*  
*7 But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house.*  
*8 With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord*

Here it indicates that God spoke to prophets in riddles, while to Moses He spoke "face to face," i.e., clearly.

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The Bible has records of prophets receiving visions and revelations they did not understand. For example, Daniel did not understand the meaning of what he heard

*Dan 12:8*

*8 I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?"*

Zechariah was shown a vision that he did not understand

*Zech 1:8-9*

*8 During the night I had a vision — and there before me was a man riding a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, brown and white horses.*

*9 I asked, "What are these, my lord?" The angel who was talking with me answered, "I will show you what they are."*

Peter did not grasp what the Lord was communicating by the sheet full of unclean animals, argued with the Lord about it, and ended up "...wondering about the meaning of the vision..." (*Acts 10:17*).

There seem to be two primary reasons why God is sometimes purposely unclear. One is to drive people into deeper and more intimate communication with Him. Remember, the reason anyone gets any revelation in the first place is that God loves us, wants to help and bless us, and wants a relationship with us.

But He does not want to be thought of as only "the Provider" from whom we can get things and then go our own way. He wants us to have a relationship with Him.

How does a mother feel when she works hard to make a nice dinner and then kids come in and scarf it down in two minutes so they can watch a television show and leave without even saying "Thank you"? She wanted more from her children than just to be thought of as "the cook" or "the provider." So it is with God.

There is more to life than just providing for others. God wants our love and to have a relationship with us.

When there is unclear revelation, we are driven deeper and deeper into His heart as we seek understanding. We want to know what He meant, and that means we need to go to Him for the understanding.

The second reason that God (or the Lord) is sometimes unclear when He gives a revelation or a vision is that it causes people to work together. God is very desirous that His people work together, so He often gives out the "revelation pie" in pieces, so people have to get together to see the whole pie.

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We see this in the prophetic books in the Bible. There are many biblical topics that can be understood only by learning about them from several different books.

God gave one revelation to the prophet Jeremiah, another to Ezekiel, another to Daniel, etc, and only when they are taken together do we get the whole picture.

This is still true today, God giving a message through one prophet that is confirmed and developed by another prophet. Similarly, one prophet often has insights about the prophetic revelation that another prophet received, which sheds light on the original revelation.

Another reason for God to promote community and communication among the prophets is the need for prophets to mature in their calling. Being around other prophets helps a younger or less mature prophet grow and understand the revelation he or she is receiving.

As early as the time of Samuel, prophets were companying together.

*1 Sam 10:5*

*5 "After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying.*

Samuel is sometimes credited with starting what is called, “the school of the prophets.”

Prophets need to grow and mature in their walk with God helps us understand better how to relate to them, and also why the Lord says prophets are to “weigh carefully” each other’s words.

*1 Cor 14:29*

*Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.*

It is important to understand that even mature prophets can be wrong, or appear wrong, in what they say. For that reason, accountability to other prophets and to the Body of Christ is very important.

The prophetic minister must have the courage to deliver God’s message but also recognize that he or she does not stand alone. The goal of the prophet is not to tear down but to recover and build up. Building up the Body of Christ is a challenging goal that can be accomplished only by cooperation with, and accountability to, other believers in the Body of Christ.

Prophets, while calling others to account, must also be accountable.

In that light, every prophet must realize that he or she is engaged in a spiritual battle, and the primary weapon of that warfare is the Word of God.

The Lord’s prophets must strive to prophesy and interpret dreams and visions in accordance with the written Word of God, understanding that now we see through a glass darkly.

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Because people can still be influenced by their flesh and give inaccurate prophecies, all Christians are told to “weigh carefully” the prophetic words of others.

Because of their prominent position in the Body of Christ, and because it is easy to be influenced by the flesh, it is of utmost importance that prophets maintain holy and obedient lifestyles. God considers it “horrible” when prophets live sinful lives.

*Jer 23:14*

*And among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen something horrible: They commit adultery and live a lie. They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his wickedness.*

A prophet is to anchor his life in prayer, and focus on the Hope even when the task at hand seems hopeless. This requires determination and discipline.

Another quality the prophet must have is the courage to deliver God’s message no matter what the content. Because the fallen nature of man is constantly bringing him downward, a good portion of a prophet’s work comes in the form of reproof and correction.

This can easily be seen by reading the prophetic books and noting what the prophets said. Things are no different now in the Administration of Grace than they were in the Old Testament. The sin nature of man exerts a strong influence, which is why there is so much reproof and correction even in the Church Epistles. Speaking words of reproof and correction is rarely a blessing. The heavy nature of many prophetic utterances is why revelation from God was often called a “burden.”

For example:

Mal 1:1

*1:1 The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.*

KJV

Nah. 1:1

*The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite*

KJV

Hab. 1:1

*The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see*

KJV

Zech. 9:1

*The burden of the word of the LORD*

KJV

The NIV and many other more modern versions say “oracle” or some other similar translation, but “burden” is the most descriptive translation.

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The prophet must also develop the wisdom to deliver his message the way the Lord would have it delivered. This means that he must endeavor to have the heart of the Lord for people.

Because prophetic utterances can have a huge impact on the one receiving the message, it is very important that the prophet deliver the message with the same heart as the Lord would if He were here personally. The prophet still is required to have a shepherd heart for God's people.

That does not mean that the message will always be gentle ("...Get behind me, Satan..." was hardly gentle), but it does mean that it will be delivered the way the Lord would have it delivered.

It is a very difficult task to condense to doctrine the communication that a prophet receives by revelation and how it should (or perhaps should not) be communicated to others.

The mature prophet knows that sometimes the Lord communicates to him in a manner that is meaningful only to him, and a listener would only misunderstand a literal presentation of it. In such cases, the prophet gives the Lord's message, and not the literal vision or revelation he received, so that the listener gets the message that the Lord meant for him.

The Lord often uses harsh words or striking images to create impact, perhaps like a figure of speech makes an impact in literature. Mature prophets do not assume that stark imagery is literally true, but nor do they discount that it may be. The prophet's task is to discern the truth being conveyed, and then to communicate that truth as accurately and lovingly as possible.

This communication may take a number of forms and will not always be accepted or understood. A wise prophet will seek the Lord for wisdom concerning the details, timing and wording for each situation. He or she may also seek counsel of trusted advisors or more seasoned prophets. This however, provides no guarantee that the message or the prophet will not be criticized or disregarded.

Just as prophets get acclaimed and praised when their prophecies are a blessing, they are derided and persecuted when their prophecies are unexpected or unwanted.

Prophets must accept this in order to forestall temptations of disobedience, self-pity, envy, bitterness, and hardheartedness, and to be able to see and hear clearly the revelation that the Lord wants communicated.

Each prophet must develop his own relationship with the Lord Jesus so that the Lord can communicate to him in a way that he understands, even if others do not. There will be times when it would be detrimental for the prophet to repeat exactly what the Lord gives to him because the images would be misunderstood.

Each prophet must learn from experience how to correctly understand the messages and images he receives from the Lord, and then prophesy to others in a way that is helpful and appropriate.

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One of the great services that the prophets of old performed was to help people who needed to know what to do about specific situations. 1 Samuel 9:9 shows that people regularly went to prophets to get information they needed.

*1 Sam 9:9*

*9(Formerly in Israel, if a man went to inquire of God, he would say, "Come, let us go to the seer," because the prophet of today used to be called a seer.)*

Knowing the right thing to do in a specific situation has always been a challenge, and the adversary has worked hard to deceive God's people by providing demonic sources of spiritual information.

Many people today call a psychic hotline or go to a medium, tarot card reader, or "spiritual advisor" when they need advice, and many others read the daily horoscope to find out what to do or not do on a given day.

The fact that prophecy has been weak and even nonexistent in the Church has added to the problem.

Although some people who look to demonic sources of information are Christians, they may not know that what they are doing is a sin in the eyes of God, and they usually do not have a clue that they can tap into their gift of the Holy Spirit to get a message or word of knowledge and a message or word of wisdom, or go to a prophet in the Church for help and direction.

There has always been spiritual advice available, both good and bad. That is why the Bible mentions and forbids the practice of divination, consulting mediums, astrology, etc.

*Deut 18:9-12*

*9 When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there.*

*10 Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft,*

*11 or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.*

*12 Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord, and because of these detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you.*

Kings have always surrounded themselves with men who claimed to have supernatural knowledge.

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Pharaoh of Egypt is one example (Gen. 41:8) and Nebuchadnezzar is another (Dan. 2:1-3). Even though the majority of the sources of spiritual advice most people today know about are demonic, there is also spiritual advice available from the one true and loving God.

The Bible has many examples of people going to a prophet to seek the will of God, and He got very upset if they went to other spiritual sources. Divination, mediums, astrology, etc., were all forbidden.

God wanted the people to seek Him, and that usually meant through the prophets or priests. In the Old Testament, people knew that if the Lord had any guidance for them, they could get it by going to a prophet.

Examples of people seeking prophecy for specific reasons include:

- 1 Samuel 9:6 Saul went to Samuel to find his lost animals.
- 1 Samuel 9:9 The people of Israel went to the prophet to inquire of God.
- 1 Samuel 22:15 David had sought the will of God from Ahimelech the priest.
- 1 Samuel 23:1-12 David four times sought God's will through Abiathar the priest.
- 1 Samuel 28:6 Saul sought information from prophets, but there was no revelation.
- 1 Kings 14:1-3 Jeroboam sent to Ahijah the prophet to find out about his child.
- 1 Kings 22:4-28 Jehoshaphat sought a prophet to find out if he should go to war.
- 2 Kings 3:11 Jehoshaphat sought the will of God from Elisha.
- 2 Kings 4:1-7 The widow sought the help of God from Elisha.
- 2 Kings 4:21-37 The Shunammite woman sought the help of Elijah for her dead son.
- 2 Kings 5:3 The maid wanted Naaman to visit the prophet in Samaria.
- 2 Kings 8:7 and 8 Hazael sent to Elisha to see if he would recover from his sickness.
- 2 Kings 19:1-7 Hezekiah sent to Isaiah to find out about the Assyrian attack.
- 2 Kings 22:11-20 Josiah sent to Huldah the prophetess to find out what to do.
- Jeremiah 21:1-14 Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah to know if Jerusalem would be delivered.
- Jeremiah 37:17 Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah to see if there was a word from the LORD.
- Jeremiah 38:14-26 Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah to ask him questions.

There is a spiritual war going on between God and the Devil, and each person must choose the source from which he or she will get their information. It is sad that the prophetic word in the Church has been so weak, or even nonexistent; that people are flocking to psychic hotlines, tarot cards, astrology, and mediums to get the information they want.

As the ministry of the prophet is restored in the Church, Christians will be able to seek information from the Lord's prophets rather than demonic sources.

Of course, many of the questions that people ask on psychic hotlines are not the kind of questions the Lord will give an answer to, but the prophets could tell that directly to the one asking.

A study of the biblical examples of people seeking prophecy reveals that the prophet does not always have to rely solely on revelation for information.

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For example, in the record of the widow who asked Elisha for help

*2 Kings 4:1-7*

*4:1 The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves."*

*2 Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil."*

*3 Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few."*

*4 Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side."*

*5 She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring.*

*6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing.*

*7 She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."*

Elisha got the details of the situation from the widow herself before he got the word from the LORD.

If you are called as a prophet, you should desire to restore the position of the prophet in the Church and be blessed at the opportunity to seek the Lord for people. Then if you get a word, wonderful. If not, the person is no worse off than when he came to you.

Similarly, we in the Church should be encouraging the prophets and looking to them to help us get direction from the Lord in our lives.

Some people say: "Well, the only reason people in the Old Testament had to go to prophets was because they did not have the Holy Spirit and could not go to God for themselves."

That thinking is not correct. While it is true that most people did not have the Holy Spirit upon them, some who did still sought information from prophets. David and other kings had prophets in their courts, and a study of David's life shows that he regularly asked prophets for information even though he had the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes, when a person is in a really difficult situation, it is difficult to calm down enough to hear the voice of the Lord. It is usually much easier for someone who is not as close to the situation to hear from the Lord.

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The ministry of the prophet is not in evidence in the Church as it should be, nor, I believe, as the Lord wants it to be.

Where are the prophets who warn us of destructive weather or economic disaster? Where are the prophets who call out the ministries in our churches? Where are the prophets who advise our army and our government, and indeed, give personal advice and direction so people will see that there is a God in heaven?

In Amos 3:7, God said,

*Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.*

Yet, today, much happens without any prophetic input at all. Every Christian can hear from the Lord, and should push himself to do so. But we also need to pray and ask the Lord to continue to add prophets to the Church so that we can have more of his words and wisdom as it applies to specific situations.

We also should do more to encourage the prophets to hear the call of the Lord and develop themselves in their ministries. We need to support them as they grow in their walk, encouraging them to be pure and holy so the word they hear will be pure and not compromised by the flesh (this applies to all of us as Christians who want to hear from the Lord).

Are we afraid that bold prophets would be dictators? Are we, as the Israelites of old, so entangled in the flesh that we do not want prophets who can see into our hearts and call us to account? Are our lives so full already that we do not want prophets directing us to do more than we are already doing? Are we so unwilling to listen and change that the Lord simply will not speak?

We, God's Church and Christ's Body, must be willing to seek first the kingdom of God in order to have the ministries Christ has given work effectively in the Church.

“Lord Jesus, if it was God's heart in the Old Testament not to act without telling His prophets, that must be your heart today. Yet there are so many areas in which we are blind and deaf. Has our sin driven you away from us? Have our efforts to know you been half-hearted and self-serving? Help us to be deserving of your active participation in our lives. Help us to want to hear clearly from you. Lord Jesus, raise up and energize a company of prophets, men and women who will boldly and clearly bring your words to your Church. Amen.”

If you desire to read further related to prophets, then go to my website and click in the “Resource and Links” tab. There you will be able to read and download an “E-book written by a friend of mine Patrick Carey who has allowed me to have this resource free of charge.