

2. The Call of a Prophet (4Q 2026 Gift of Prophecy)

Biblical material: Gen. 15:6, Gal. 3:6-9, 1 Kings 18:19-39, Isaiah 53, Dan. 2:46-48, Mark 1:2-5, Matt. 11:1-6; Isaiah 6:8.

Quotes

- Words of prophecy in the mouth are no infallible evidence of a principle of grace in the heart. *Matthew Henry*
- Prophecy is not given to make men prophets, but as a witness to God when it is fulfilled. *Isaac Newton*
- I would not give much for prophetic intelligence if it does not begin, continue and end with the person, work and glory of Christ. *H.H. Snell*
- Prophecy is like the German sentence—it can be understood only when we have read its last word. *Augustus H. Strong*
- God gave the prophecies, not to gratify men's curiosity by enabling them to foreknow things, but that after they were fulfilled they might be interpreted by the event, and His own providence, not the interpreters, be thereby manifested to the world. *Isaac Newton*
- We are trying not so much to make God listen to us as to make ourselves listen to him; we are trying not to persuade God to do what we want, but to find out what he wants us to do. It so often happens that in prayer we are really saying, 'Thy will be changed,' when we ought to be saying, 'Thy will be done.' The first object of prayer is not so much to speak to God as to listen to him. *William Barclay*

Questions

How are we to understand the call of the prophets, especially when it's not specific as in the case of Isaiah? How was Abraham a prophet? Who defines what a prophet is and does? Why have there been so few prophets in modern times? How does a prophet measure success? In the context of the great controversy, how does a prophet operate?

Bible summary

Genesis 15:6 tells us that "Abram trusted what the Lord said, and so the Lord counted Abram as being in a right relationship with him." Paul adds to this in Galatians 3:6-9, saying that nobody is made right with God by keeping the law. 1 Kings 18:19-39 noted that there were 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah, Isaiah 53 is the key prophecy about the suffering servant Messiah. Daniel 2:46-48 is King Nebuchadnezzar's acknowledgement of the true God. Mark 1:2-5 cites Isaiah regarding John the Baptist. Matthew 11:1-6 details John's question, asking if Jesus was the expected Messiah. Isaiah 6:8 is Isaiah's positive response to the Lord's asking "who will I send?"

Comment

It's interesting that the Biblical material begins with Genesis 15:6, referring to Abraham. Even more significant is Genesis 20:7, in which God speaks to Abimelech and calls Abraham "a prophet." We don't usually use this verse in connection with the subject of "the prophetic gift." So what did God mean?

Abimelech had taken Abraham's wife Sarah, because Abraham had told Abimelech she was his sister. God had to intervene to prevent this bigamous situation, and tells Abimelech the truth, and to send Sarah back to her husband Abraham. It's then that God also says that Abraham is a prophet, and that he and will pray for Abimelech to save his life, even though Abimelech was innocently unaware of the sin he was about to commit.

So here we have a lying prophet praying for the one he had deceived! This reveals to us that even though Abraham spoke for God, he was no "saint," and had his own faults and failings. This

practical story helps us realize that prophets are all-too-human, and yet God still speaks through them.

Added to this is Exodus 15:20, which identifies Aaron's sister Miriam as a prophetess, and records her song of celebration. Again this is significant in the light of later events when both Aaron and Miriam made errors of judgment. It also points to God's using women to speak for him as well as men.

In Matthew 11:11 Jesus identifies John the Baptist as the greatest born of women. John followed in the line of the prophets, and was of course the one announcing the good news of Jesus' coming. Yet Jesus as the revelation of God was greater than any prophet.

The expectation of "the Prophet" led some to conclude that he had come in the form of Jesus (John 6:14). They were led to this conclusion by the miracles Jesus performed. Of course Jesus was "more than a prophet" since he perfectly revealed God.

The story of Moses mentioned in Hebrews 11:24-26 reveals that prophets are frequently rejected and persecuted (Jeremiah could also be mentioned here!) Yet their faithfulness to the message they were given was critical, and that was the reason for God's commendation. The prophetic gift is so God can speak through them to us.

The essential aspect of the prophetic call is that it is not a human decision. The call comes from God, and the prophet functions as the channel for God's messages to his people. In so many ways, the Old Testament prophets were at odds with the religious system that had developed. While the role of the priests was to represent God and to instruct the people, all too often they had failed to encourage a personal relationship with him. Instead their function had devolved to a formal program of worship and a devotion to simply meeting requirements.

The prophets were called to challenge all this and to invite God's people to true and meaningful lives lived together with their heavenly Father. In this way the prophetic call was God's way of challenging those who followed him to a deeper understanding and commitment to a community that truly trusted him.

Ellen White Comments

The prophetic call came to Elisha while with his father's servants he was plowing in the field. As Elijah, divinely directed in seeking a successor, cast his mantle upon the young man's shoulders, Elisha recognized and obeyed the summons. He "went after Elijah, and ministered unto him." 1 Kings 19:21. It was no great work that was at first required of Elisha; commonplace duties still constituted his discipline. He is spoken of as pouring water on the hands of Elijah, his master. As the prophet's personal attendant, he continued to prove faithful in little things, while with daily strengthening purpose he devoted himself to the mission appointed him by God. {Ed 58-9}

During the years since the Lord first manifested Himself to the son of Hannah, Samuel's call to the prophetic office had come to be acknowledged by the whole nation. By faithfully delivering the divine warning to the house of Eli, painful and trying as the duty had been, Samuel had given proof of his fidelity as Jehovah's messenger; "and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." {PP 589-590}

The prophet John was the connecting link between the two dispensations. He was the lesser light which was to be followed by a greater. He was to shake the confidence of the people in their traditions, call their sins to their remembrance, and lead them to repentance; that they might be prepared to appreciate the work of Christ. God communicated to John by inspiration, illuminating the understanding of the prophet, that he might remove the superstition and darkness from the minds of the honest Jews, which had, through false teachings, been gathering upon them for generations. {2SP 83-4}