

mark  
chironna

THE  
**PROPHETIC**  
PERSPECTIVE

Seeing and Seizing Our God-Intended Future



DESTINY IMAGE BOOKS BY MARK CHIRONNA

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PERSPECTIVE

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# Endorsements

Mark Chironna does an outstanding job of laying out biblical exegesis of the position and purpose of the church, the apostle, and the prophet. He brings clarity and doctrinal balance to the prophetic foundation of the Body of Christ. He masterfully weaves between the Old and New Covenants to demonstrate God's prophetic intent for our lives. I highly recommend this book.

Dr. Ché Ahn

Senior Pastor, HROCK Church, Pasadena, California

President, Harvest International Ministry

International Chancellor, Wagner Leadership Institute

The body of Christ has been waiting for this book! Dr. Chironna has written an in-depth biblical exposition on the five-fold ministry gift of the prophet. This is the most thoughtful, scriptural throughout, and prophetically insightful examination of the ministry of the prophet I've ever read! Dr. Chironna's powerful prophetic ministry has had a tremendous impact on my life. He is a well-respected, beyond reproach, world-class prophet of God who has written to us what he has lived in ministry for decades. I've often admired Dr. Chironna for his incredible intellect, and as I read through this amazing book, it became very apparent why the Lord would ask him to write this for us. His unique insights are based on extensive biblical study coupled with incredible prophetic insight, which culminates in giving us one of the most profound studies on the prophet ever written.

This is the book we've all been waiting for on the ministry of the prophet. Thank you, Dr. Chironna, for giving God's people this great gift!

DR. MICHAEL MAIDEN

Dr. Mark Chironna is one of the greatest communicators of our day. He has a unique ability to help unlock your personal destiny and help us as a church discover where we are, so we can get to where God wants us to be! This book is full of powerful prophetic insights and is a must read for every believer!

MARTHA MUNIZZI

Award-Winning Singer/Songwriter  
International Praise and Worship Leader

Dr. Chironna's book *The Prophetic Perspective* really hits the nail on the head. It outlines the proper attitude and motivation we should all be pressing into concerning the prophetic anointing. This important book shares the intent of the Father in prophetic operation, sharing what to avoid, what to pursue, and key points for activating the godly perspective of prophecy in the church and in the individual. It's these kinds of books that supercharge the reader, imparting an element of Christ's grace and anointing in their lives and ministries, and teach us all how not to squander the precious resources of the Lord.

JAMES MALONEY

Author, *The Dancing Hand of God* and *The Panoramic Seer*

In an age of revisionism and relativism, Mark's book *The Prophetic Perspective* has much to say about the consistent Kingdom role of the prophet in a constantly changing world.

Real prophets rise above logic and rationale to bring an intuition from another dimension. Prophets hear the voice of God, see the hand of God, and know the times of God. This is a valuable tool in understanding the ways of a prophet in the context of revealing the Kingdom.

GRAHAM COOKE

brilliantbookhouse.com

What does *that* mean? What was *that*? If you haven't asked these questions, you just haven't been to a Spirit-filled church! In his latest book, *The Prophetic Perspective: Seeing and Seizing Our God-Intended Future*, Dr. Mark Chironna will lead you through a biblical understanding of what all things prophetic mean so you will never have to ask the *that* question.

DR. SAMUEL R. CHAND

Author of *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code*

[www.samchand.com](http://www.samchand.com)

This is a much-needed book, bringing clarity in the midst of a plethora of prophetic ideologies that at times are confusing and others even deceptive, some even false. Mark Chironna lays a great foundation for prophets and the prophetic, embracing their value as well as taking us back to first things regarding the prophetic. He demystifies and recenters this God-given gift and office to the church. The Word and the Church!

BARBARA YODER

Mark Chironna has produced a vital book for the times in which we live. As a proven prophet for many years, Mark writes from experience as well as from a wealth of knowledge. God has declared that He will do nothing on earth without first revealing it to His prophets. The truths within this book can revolutionize your life and help you discover your prophetic destiny.

DR. BILL HAMON

Bishop of Christian International Ministries Network (CIMN, VCCI)

Christian International Apostolic Network, CI Global Network

Author of 12 major books, such as *Prophets and Personal Prophecy* and *Apostles, Prophets, and the Coming Moves of God*

As a great ambassador for Christ, Dr. Mark Chironna raises the standard for us on what a true prophetic ministry looks like and what a true prophet today is to exemplify. Taking us on a journey of both Old and New Testament examples, Mark leads us on an adventure that is both exhilarating and fulfilling. He points us to the Word, he points us to character, and

he points us to our upward call in Christ Jesus. Be inspired as you read about God's eternal purpose and step into it for yourself!

DR. JAMES W. GOLL

Encounters Network, Prayer Storm, Compassion Acts

Author of *The Seer*, *Dream Language*, *The Lost Art of Intercession*,  
*The Lost Art of Pure Worship*, and many more.

The prophet Joel spoke of a last days' spiritual downpour that would become a supernatural deluge, drenching even the least likely, the disqualified, and the disenfranchised. This heavy rain would manifest in a flood of prophetic ministry that would be unrivaled in human history. In the midst of this outpouring, tares would take root in society. False prophets masquerading as the real deal would threaten to infest the entire field of dreams with deception. But God had a strategic plan to raise up true prophets who would equip an entire generation of saints. This prophetic army would unmask deceivers and release a pristine river of prophetic clarity into the earth.

Today we find ourselves right in the middle of Joel's river of revelation. The Holy Spirit is falling on people all over the world, which is creating a desperate need for prophetic fathers and mothers to train, equip, and deploy a mighty army and send them into the fray.

Mark Chironna is one of the most masterfully skilled prophets of our time. His manuscript, entitled *Prophetic Perspective: Seeing and Seizing Our God-Intended Future*, is more than a book. It's a field-training manual for multitudes of people who find themselves awakened to new spiritual dimensions and yet struggle to navigate the white waters of supernatural power. Mark's book is full of fatherly insights and godly wisdom. *Prophetic Perspective* will direct the misguided, inspire the disheartened, clarify the confused, and empower the masses. I highly recommend this book to everyone in this outpouring.

KRIS VALLOTTON

Co-Founder of Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry

Author of eight books including

*The Supernatural Ways of Royalty* and *Spirit Wars*

Leader, Bethel Church, Redding, California

*“And the prophets of God were with them, helping them”* (Ezra 5:2 NIV).

The prophetic ministry is often misused. Certainly, it is also misunderstood. But, the prophetic is integral to the health and forward movement of the church. We live in a time of spiritual confusion and ever-shifting values that seek to move us further and further off course. We need prophetic clarity more than ever. Thank you, Dr. Chironna, for a great resource to help the church to more fully understand and appreciate this vital ministry.

MIKE SERVELLO

Founding Pastor, Redeemer Church

Founder, Compassion Coalition

Mark’s brilliant work, *The Prophetic Perspective: Seeing and Seizing Our God-Intended Future*, is so desperately needed at this present time. The way that Mark explains the ascension gifts and the fact that God gave these as gifts so that we can be built up in love is of paramount importance. The ascension gifts are not curses but blessings to His people. Mark’s deep understanding of *kairos* makes this book stand out above all books written on the prophetic. I know the importance of timing. Could it be that Mark has done exactly that? This book, written at the right moment in time, could lead you not only to a powerful word but to a *powerful event*. This insightful book will give you an exegesis of existence from a divine perspective and move you from zero to hero. How? *Read the book!* You’ll never be the same. Welcome to the future.

KIM CLEMENT

Dr. Mark Chironna is one of a handful of people with whom I have casual conversations—and wish they were recorded after I hang up. This book is like a conversation with Dr. Mark, pregnant with insight after insight, page after page. He will not only upgrade your perception about all things operating under the banner of “prophetic” but all things vital to your own unique one of a kind calling and destiny will be clearer than ever before. Some books you buy to read later; this is a book to buy, read, and enjoy *now*.

LANCE WALLNAU

Director, Lance Learning Group



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# Foreword

Dr. Mark Chironna has written another masterpiece. His profound yet practical insights, coupled with his writing skills, make this book an exciting journey. I was already hooked just reading the introduction. It is encouraging to read something about the prophetic that is neither reactionary nor careless in creating “new truth.” The *Prophetic Perspective: Seeing and Seizing Our God-Intended Future* disarms the cautious reader with unusual wisdom on a sensitive but important subject. Dr. Chironna explains the role and purpose of the prophet through solid biblical study while also embracing the thrilling moving of the Spirit. And that is quite an accomplishment. Each of us has a role in the unfolding plan of God for this planet. In the final pages of this book we come to God’s invitation to intimacy that releases transformation to the world around us. This book captures the core and purpose of the prophetic and gives us clarity of our role in seeing reformation in our lifetime.

BILL JOHNSON

Senior Pastor of Bethel Church, Redding, California

Author of *When Heaven Invades Earth* and

*Hosting the Presence*



# Introduction

*The prophetic purpose is much more radical than social change...* —WALTER BRUEGGEMANN, *The Prophetic Imagination*<sup>1</sup>

IF ASKED, MANY FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST WOULD SAY THEY ATTEND A prophetic church, have traveled to a prophetic conference, or have been impacted by the ministry of a prophet. In some circles, it is common to say, “Our worship team moves in the prophetic,” or “Sister Sally received her mantle at Brother Elijah’s Prophetic Academy,” or “That prophet had *a word* tonight!”

As relevant as it is to the Body of Christ, the word *prophetic* has become, to some, a catch phrase. Often the term is used to cover spiritual activity that is difficult to describe or classify. It is applied to experiences that seem to be more than the “usual” or to forms of ministry that reach more deeply into the heart and soul of the saint. Some refer to the prophetic when describing something that is new or unfamiliar.

If pressed to explain further, would they—or we—be able to explain what the word *prophetic* really means? The question is not rhetorical but practical. Even as you read this sentence, the realm of the prophetic is being discussed in the four corners of the 21st-century Church. The fact that it is

being discussed is good; the reality that it is viewed in wildly divergent and often tentative ways is, in part, the reason this book was written.

My point is not that diversity in the Body of Christ is suspect but that the prophetic need not be mysterious, confusing, or a source of contention. Along the way, you have probably seen evidence of it being all three. In some quarters, the prophetic is discussed as a kind of ecclesiastical curiosity, something that happens “somewhere, but not here.” In many pews and pulpits, mere talk of the prophetic denotes a cult underfoot. In other sectors, the prophetic is seen as an essential element of church life that enriches the spiritual walks of those who embrace it; and in some, the prophetic label sparks a note of elitism.

From every angle, the prophetic is a hot topic. Christian booksellers line their shelves with prophetic titles. Bible studies keep the dialogue open, and often fiery. Apostles, prophets, and other members of the fivefold ministry strive to clarify muddy waters and address misguided quests for spiritual goose bumps. Pastors guard their sheep, rightly warding off prophetic diletantes and sometimes inadvertently barring the ministry of God-sent ones whose callings and election are sure.

To approach the prophetic with gravitas is appropriate. To embrace its authentic manifestations is equally important. Prophetic expression is not a matter of religious curiosity but of spiritual genetics; it was mapped in the DNA of the Church by our Creator. Throughout the millennia, prophets have played a vital role in the unfolding of God’s eternal purpose. Prophetic acts and utterances are described throughout Scripture and continue to inform the workings of the Church of Jesus Christ as she fulfills her role in God’s ultimate plan of redemption and restoration.

Through the context of redemptive history, we will see that the truly prophetic is as real and God-honoring today as it was in Old-Testament times. In the coming pages, we will uncover our prophetic roots and explore the big picture of God’s purposes in this age. Three questions underlie our study:

1. What is the prophetic, and what are the hallmarks of the genuine article?

2. What are the outcomes effected by authentic prophetic ministry?
3. How are we to steward this aspect of spiritual life, individually and as the Body?

These questions and their implications are weighty because they demand careful consideration of God's intent. They also force us to reckon with what we believe or tacitly accept as being true. Doctrinal boundaries may be tested along the way; you may find yourself in complete agreement at one point and at odds the next. The process is not meant to be an affront, although by dint of the subject matter, offense may tug at your soul. Some will be surprised to find that *we* are the offended ones—even momentarily—when we stumble across *our* sacred cows and see them in a new, uncomfortable light.

Discomfort may be an unavoidable part of our prophetic study, yet the intent is positive: First, to raise questions that test our notions of fundamental truths; second, to promote unity in the Body of Christ; and third, to encourage the Church to operate in the fullness of her calling in this pivotal age.

## **Who Are We?**

We will consider our three underlying questions from a variety of platforms and with a snapshot of today's Church in mind. Before we frame our snapshot, we need to establish some Scriptural baselines. One is the apostle Paul's inspired characterization of the Church of Jesus Christ:

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of **God's household**, having been **built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone**, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).*

Paul's words are threaded with spiritual identity markers. He explains that we are not outsiders but members of a spiritual household—the spiritual household for all eternity. Our assignments are unique and cause us to fit together in the matrix of divine purpose. *Yes!* Each of our lives is meaningful because it is uniquely fashioned by God!

Because these truths are at the crux of everything God's people are and do, Paul's words will come up often in our discussion. As we begin our journey, three points are key:

1. *The household of God is dynamic.* Ephesians 2:22 says that we are “*being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*” This building process is ongoing. We are not so much *building* as *being built*. God's structure could not be conceived or erected by human design. Neither can it be sustained by human works. We are being built by God Himself, with His eternal purpose in mind. Our part is to cooperate with Him, in the Spirit.
2. *God's household has been built upon a particular foundation.* Ephesians 2:20 describes it as a “*foundation of the apostles and prophets.*” Interestingly, there is no mention of the remaining fivefold ministry offices of evangelist, pastor, and teacher (see Eph. 4:11-12). The construction of the foundation is important; the right foundation lends strength and enhances function. This is certainly true of the Church that is, even now, “*growing into a holy temple in the Lord.*”
3. *Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone.* He is our center of gravity in all things, the mortar in our structure, and the source of all we are called to be and do. The Chief Cornerstone binds together all other stones—the members of Christ's Body whom Peter described as “*living stones, [who] are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet. 2:5).

Another aspect of our New Testament identity was disclosed by Peter who said, “*It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed’*” (Acts 3:25). We will explore the implications of Peter’s words in later chapters. Suffice to say for now that we are the sons and daughters of the prophets, the seed of Abraham, and the children and beneficiaries of the covenant God made with the father of the faith.

Although we are the spiritual descendants of the prophets who came before us, New Covenant prophets are not entirely modeled after the lineage beginning with Abraham and ending with John the Baptist. Old Covenant prophets operated in a different arena from Ephesians 4:11 prophets. The prophets who minister at your church will not find their words being added to canon the way Isaiah’s and Jeremiah’s were. Nor will modern prophets foretell the first coming of the Messiah as those before Christ did. Instead, the New Covenant prophet is one sent by Christ “*for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ...*” (Eph. 4:12). The New Covenant prophet is of a different order and follows a post-ascension template.

One more point of clarification: many interpret canon to say that the tongues (and other gifts) first seen on the Day of Pentecost and elsewhere in the New Testament have ceased. I find no biblical support for this position. In fact, Peter preached in Acts 3 as one who was baptized in the Holy Spirit. He was one of 120 in the Upper Room who declared the wonderful works of God. So the “sons of the prophets” are more accurately described as *the Church baptized in the Holy Spirit*.

Now for our snapshot.

## **Where Are We?**

The Church is a supernatural entity unlike any in our world. Despite her failures and missteps, untold testimonies reverberate through the household of God—stories of indescribable miracles, life transformations, and global impact. The Church’s significant strengths flow from the Chief Cornerstone and work through those who are *in Him* (see Rom. 12:5; 1 Pet. 5:14).

Because our purpose is to advance His cause, we are also called to judge ourselves honestly. We must be quick to identify our weaknesses and eager to know what they reveal about our alignment with God's eternal purpose.

We know in the most general sense that the world is moving the way it has since the Fall of Man—with no conscious awareness of God's eternal purpose being wrought in the earth. Absent this awareness, the world is naturally predisposed to resisting God's intent. Because it is comprised of human beings, the Church experiences similar areas of misalignment. When John wrote the Book of Revelation, it was sent, not to the world, but to God's called-out company. It is startling to note that the resurrected Christ assessed most of the Church in Asia Minor to be in decline—mere decades after His ascension. He warned the Church, saying: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches...”* (Rev. 2:7).

## **Signs of Decline**

The decline of the Church did not catch Jesus by surprise in the first century, and it won't now. As the writer of Hebrews explained, *“We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, [we have] One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb. 4:15). Our Savior loves us enough to expose our flaws to His light so that we can address them. The following are some of key signs of decline in our modern age:

### ***Doctrinal Drift***

Jesus' words to the early Church should command our attention today. On a macro level, errant and even blatantly false doctrines have infiltrated Church ranks. Among these is universalism. While the biblical view of salvation rests in justification *by faith* in the finished work of Christ, universalism asserts that all people will ultimately be saved because all are predestined for redemption.

Another notable shift is the belief that we have already entered the Kingdom age. This line of reasoning asserts that the Church has been replaced by the Kingdom in God's agenda. The question is: How can we separate the Church and the Kingdom when Jesus did not do so? He said

that the Kingdom was at hand even as the Church was about to be birthed (see Matt. 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:15).

A third example of errant doctrine is the Emergent Church Movement, which skirts the issue of sin and dilutes foundational truths, such as Bible inerrancy. This approach highlights God’s grace but fails to disclose that our loving Savior endorsed the commands of Scripture, saying: “*Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill*” (Matt. 5:17).

On the opposite end of the spectrum from Emergent Church philosophy is the stringency of legalism, which encourages followers to earn their salvation, as though holiness were achieved through performance and not grace. Legalism focuses on the outward man or woman to such a degree as to forget that God is concerned with the condition of the heart. Romans 2:29 refers to true circumcision as being inward: “*that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.*”

### ***The Superficial Church***

Church decline can also be seen in an overemphasis on church size. Instead of focusing on the integrity of the foundation (made of apostles and prophets) and the mission to make disciples, some church leaders approach their stewardship as a franchise-type operation geared to attracting the masses. It is not necessarily the business structure that taints; every church needs a well-functioning structure. The distortion enters when churches are thought to be validated by prescribed growth patterns. Preoccupation with numbers makes seeker-friendly formats attractive. Often, the quest for popularity trumps the bearing of truth—in the local community, among visitors, and within the larger Christian community.

A natural outgrowth of this business “model” and a recurring characteristic overall is the tendency for churches to become spiritual social clubs, something churches were never called to be. Instead of being salt and light to their communities, churches end up promoting names and events. It is as though God’s purpose is not to draw people to Himself but to personalities and experiences. Celebrity culture (disguised as Kingdom expansion) and

the desire of church attenders to be entertained serve hand in glove to breed theological shallowness. Paul warned of this tendency:

*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires...*  
(2 Timothy 4:3).

The shallow state is diametrically opposed to Christ's intent to "*fill all things*" (Eph. 4:10). It reduces the Christian walk to a series of formulas, confessions, and Scripture memorizations that require no critical thinking or depth of relationship with Christ. Shallowness suppresses any appetite for the strong meat of the Word (see Heb. 5:12-14) while simultaneously nourishing a drift from sound doctrine. Instead of worshiping God in spirit and truth (see John 4:24), believers end up worshiping the latest revelation and those who deliver it.

It is easy to see how these tendencies stunt spiritual growth and maturity and render churches ineffective. Instead of feasting on a diet of transforming truths, attendees snack on sermonettes. As a result, the nature of covenant is misunderstood and basics such as tithing are cast off and even derided as being old-fashioned or out of touch.

These symptoms reveal an ailment that is eating away at many churches: it is the disconnect from God's intentionality in filling all things in Christ (see Eph. 4:10). Where the ailment goes untreated, churches become Christian ghettos in which believers focus on self, seek after signs, and fail to transform the world outside their doors.

### ***The Echo Chamber***

*The* message of the Church is the testimony of Jesus Christ: He died. He was buried. He was raised on the third day, after leading captivity captive (see Ps. 68:18 NKJV; Eph. 4:8 NKJV). And—hallelujah!—He will come again.

As followers of Christ, we *believe* this and declare it to be so. These are the truths we ratified in our hearts when we accepted Him as Savior and Lord. Oddly enough, the unanimity of the true Church in this regard may

help to explain a subtle weakness seen throughout the Body—namely, a sense of familiarity that manifests in several ways.

If you have been in the Church any length of time—and especially if you are a new believer—you are aware of the Christian dialect. Every Christian stream has its own lingo. Buzz words emerge and become passkeys to facilitate and affirm our shared beliefs and experiences. Lingo is a unifying element in any community. The danger is not in the vocabulary but in the degree to which we unconsciously regurgitate ideas and internalize “scripts” without questioning or understanding them. Even Scripture, our fundamental unifying language, can become so familiar as to be tuned out.

We have all been there: John 3:16 is read and our eyes glaze over. The unconscious mind declares: “I already know *that*.” This response inoculates us against the impact and enormity of God’s truth. The learning switch flips to the “off” position and we become spiritual know-it-alls—unteachable experts so familiar with God’s Word that fresh fruit cannot be manifested in our lives. His stated purpose of “*growing [us] into a holy temple*” that is “*fitted together*” (Eph. 2:21) is neutralized and the Church becomes little more than a spiritual echo chamber.

### re·duc·tion·ism

“The practice of simplifying a complex idea, issue, condition, or the like, especially to the point of minimizing, obscuring, or distorting it.”<sup>2</sup>

Theologians have a name for this malady: it is called *reductionism*. In an age when Bible teaching is available 24 hours per day via cable, satellite, radio, podcast, broadcast television, and the Internet, it is easy to embrace the mistaken belief that we know it all. We unwittingly reduce truth to formulaic frozen meals we can store and reheat as needed. Self-satisfied and well-stocked with truth, we lose sight of our need and grow cold in our hearts. When the pastor speaks of sin, we assume the admonition is for

someone else. We pat ourselves on the back and order the sermon CD for someone who doesn't know as much as we do.

Reductionism is costly: the more we think we know, the less God reveals. Sometimes, the very answer we seek is drowned out by the white noise of the echo chamber. Matthew 13:15 describes the problem and the price:

*For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them.*

.....  
*Sometimes, the very answer we seek is drowned  
 out by the white noise of the echo chamber.*  
 .....

### ***Pride Versus Grace***

In his Bible paraphrase known as *The Message*, biblical scholar Eugene Peterson renders a well-known passage in an unforgettable way:

*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me—watch how I do it. **Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.** I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with Me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly (Matthew 11:28-30 MSG).*

“*Unforced rhythms of grace.*” The phrase evokes the unbounded freedom Christ offers. Though the life of faith has its challenges, the cross did not purchase a brand-new life of drudgery. Instead, Jesus continues to offer relief to the “*weary and heavy-laden*” (Matt. 11:28). He is aware of our inclination toward self-effort. He knows how unnatural it is for us to abandon our performance orientation, even after His finished work rendered our own works counter-productive. The apostle Paul addressed the issue in his letter to the Galatians:

*Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Galatians 3:2-3)*

Among the world's weary and heavy-laden souls are those who seek recognition through self-righteousness. Two thousand years after Paul's epistle, and hundreds of years after the Reformation, much of the Church is *still* trying to fulfill His will through works of the flesh. Instead of simply yielding and allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us, we frustrate His grace by trying to prove that we are good enough and can achieve enough. In reality, we try to redeem ourselves.

Afraid to be seen as "less than" perfect (remember that our imperfection is the very reason Christ died for us), we slip into a brand of pride known as false humility. We try and try to please God and to reflect Him in our *doing*. Instead He desires that we release *His* power by simply *being* His children—bought, paid for, and humbled by His love. As long as we choose the forced rhythms of our own works, we are disqualified from entering the glory of His. Jesus revealed as much when He said, "*I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to infants*" (Matt. 11:25).

## **Where Is God Leading Us?**

To understand where God is leading the Church, we need to establish two basic but profound points. The first point involves the message of the Church, which is the testimony of Jesus Christ. For 2,000 years, the message has been heralded; but in some quarters, liberties have been taken, and the authentic message must be recovered.

### ***Recovery of the Testimony***

It may surprise you to hear that the testimony of Jesus Christ is not the foremost message in every church that names Him. All streams of Christianity have produced pockets of overemphasis on something other than the pure testimony of Christ. It may be a fixation on signs and wonders, a preoccupation with the handling of snakes, a social gospel, such as liberation theology, or any of the doctrinal divergences already mentioned. The bottom line is this: wherever and to whatever degree *any* message is elevated above the testimony of Christ (God's *intended* message for the Church), God will lead us to recover the testimony in its entirety.

Just as He addressed the seven churches in the days of John the Beloved (see Rev. 2-3), He addresses us today and re-centers us on our first love (see Rev. 2:4). One of the primary means of testimony recovery is the ministry of the prophets whose job it is to assess the condition of the Church.

### *Alignment With God's Intent*

Our second point involves the fact that God is intentional, while we tend to be fickle. We will discuss God's intentionality more in coming chapters; for now we need to establish the fact that His intentions are unwavering. When *we* waver, He calls us back on track—*His* track—and shows us how to recapture His intent. We need not wander from it, even accidentally; we need only ask the Holy Spirit to impress His intent upon us so we can become as deliberate about His Kingdom business as He is.

Many elements of His intent have already been revealed in Scripture. For example, we know that God intends for all things to be summed up in Christ (see Eph. 1:10). We also know that He intends for the Body of Christ to be “*fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part...*” (Eph. 4:16). He has already declared His desire for His “*manifold wisdom... [to] be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places*” (Eph. 3:10).

Whether we get on board with God or not, His intent is backed by divine purpose and *will be* accomplished. The question is whether we will choose to cooperate. It is the same challenge faced centuries ago, when Mordecai learned that Haman, an enemy of the Jews, had secured permission from King Ahasuerus to destroy the Jewish people (see Esther 3 and 4). Because Esther, Mordecai's cousin, was Ahasuerus' queen, Mordecai asked her to “*implore [the king's] favor and to plead with him for her people*” (Esther 4:8).

Esther had a lot on the line. She knew that approaching the king without being summoned by him would risk her favored position and even her life (see Esther 4:11). But as one of God's covenant people, she was uniquely situated to make a difference, and even to affect history. Mordecai saw Esther's predicament plainly and reminded her that, because of her Jewish heritage, her life was already in jeopardy (see Esther 4:13). Esther stood to lose everything whether she acted or not.

Mordecai stripped the dilemma of its horns with his unforgettable words:

*If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?* (Esther 4:14)

Conviction came by way of truth and brought Esther into alignment with her assignment. She agreed to risk everything and make God's eternal purpose her own. As a result, Haman was executed, Mordecai was promoted to second in command under the king, Esther continued her reign as queen, and God's people were preserved. God's intent was accomplished through the obedience of a woman who chose to answer His call, in His timing, whatever the cost.

There was a moment of truth when God's intent became Esther's. It was the moment when she said: *"...I will go in to the king...and if I perish, I perish"* (Esther 4:16).

An "Esther mentality" will serve the modern Church well in the fulfillment of her calling. It requires us to be humble and teachable, positioned to hear His voice and embrace His intent rather than our own. It also means recognizing our standing as God's covenant people—those grounded in the blessings and sanctions of covenant life. Once the glories of God's covenant become wedded to our identity as a Body, we will desire nothing less than He desires. Counterfeits will lose their appeal; celebrity culture and codling messages will fall by the wayside.

### ***Steadfastness***

He is also leading us to become a steadfast people, not *"tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming..."* (Eph. 4:14), but rooted and grounded in God's intent, as Paul was. The apostle endured being whipped, beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked; he weathered dangerous journeys,

persecution, sleep deprivation, hunger, thirst, and exposure to the elements (see 2 Cor. 11:24-29). With so many impediments against him, what was on Paul's mind? It was his "*concern for all the churches*" (2 Cor. 11:28).

Even when he knew imprisonment and death awaited him, Paul remained determined to preach the Gospel and finish his course (see Acts 20:24). Paul was not concerned with physical comforts or the desire to be recognized for his anointing or revelation; he was consumed with the desire to know Christ (see Phil. 3:8). Under the utmost pressure, the apostle "*did not shrink from declaring...the whole purpose of God*" (Acts 20:27).

### ***Lordship and Liberty***

God is leading the Church to be balanced in all things—neither caught in legalism nor careless with grace. The mature Church moves in grace's unforced rhythms (see Matt. 11:29 MSG), wading deeply into the liberty Jesus purchased for her at Calvary. Yet, freedom must be balanced with the very thing that made it possible: His Lordship. Second Corinthians 3:17 states plainly that "*the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*" There can be no liberty without the Lordship of Jesus Christ!

We have been freed not to build our kingdoms but to partake in the building of His. To rise to the challenge, we must proclaim our only message—the testimony of Jesus Christ. Our focus—if it is consecrated to His Lordship—is not on buildings, seating, social agendas, competition, sound systems, titles, or recognition, but on Him. Like Paul, we are called to the "*whole purpose of God*" (Acts 20:27).

The testimony of the Chief Cornerstone and a reverence for His Lordship will release the Church into new realms of freedom—not a rollercoaster ride of highs and lows, but a state of perpetual revival. The day is coming when the Church will be without "*spot or wrinkle*" (Eph. 5:27) and rightly consumed with talking about Him.

That is where the ministry of the prophet begins and ends.

## Chapter 1

# Covenant Harmony

*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to Him (DEUTERONOMY 18:15).*

IT IS SUCH A SIMPLE SENTENCE, SUCH A FIRM AND FATHERLY COMMAND. Moses told the still-wandering Israelites: “Keep your eyes open because a prophet is coming. He will be like me, and you will listen to Him” (see Deut. 18:15, above).

The most significant prophet until the advent of Christ taught the Israelites to expect their Messiah, though His appearing was centuries away. Moses described the promised One; he planted in Israel’s heart a picture they could understand: “He will be *like me*.” Although they would not live in the flesh to witness the day of His coming, Moses imprinted the Messiah’s identity on the collective consciousness of a nation.

Centuries later, Peter and John ministered healing to a lame man at the Gate Beautiful. Afterward, Peter explained the miracle to stunned witnesses (see Acts 3:1-18). To whet their spiritual appetites, Peter invoked the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and explained that faith in His glorified Son was what healed the lame man. Peter then served the entrée: he reminded the

Jews that the Son (the Messiah) had been prophesied to Israel. Peter continued his testimony of the Christ:

*Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. Moses said, “**The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you.**” And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, “And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways (Acts 3:19-26).*

Standing on the opposite shore of Calvary from where Moses had stood, Peter confirmed that Jesus was *the* Prophet—the Messiah—to whom Moses had referred. All along, Israel had expected the Prophet to set people free. After all, He would be like Moses, and Moses was a deliverer. They had watched, fasted, and prayed for generations, with no sign of Messiah’s appearance. Now, suddenly, Peter answered the question wrapped deep in their souls, saying, “This is the One you have been expecting.”

Imagine the immensity of the moment!

## **Scripture or Prophecy?**

Scripture had sustained the Jews’ hopes for the Deliverer. The prophetic books promised His coming. But in reality, all of Scripture had foreshadowed Him. Because we tend, by nature, to categorize things, we also

compartmentalize Scripture. We label certain books *prophetic* because they foretell things to come. Isaiah's description of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 is a prime example of prophecy. Isaiah pointed God's people toward the Messiah who would come *someday*.

We label all the books of the Bible in various ways: we call them Wisdom books or Epistles or Gospels or Torah, and so on. While these categories are useful, they obscure the fact that *all Scripture is prophecy*. Did you catch that? *All Scripture is prophecy*.

It may be easier to believe this statement when you are reading Jeremiah and more difficult when you are in Leviticus. It takes a macro view of Scripture and redemptive history to fully grasp this idea. For example, consider the dietary laws described at length in the Books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus. At first glance, explanations about which animals are clean and which are unclean appear to have nothing at all to do with prophecy. They look more like a tedious menu of regulations designed to set God's people apart and test their devotion to Him.

But when you view the dietary rules in the larger context of redemptive history, you realize they have less to do with nutrition and more to do with God's eternal purpose. This is where the prophetic aspect of all Scripture—even the dietary laws—comes into view.

.....  
*All Scripture is prophecy.*  
 .....

Do you remember the Acts 10 account of Peter's vision at Simon the tanner's house in Joppa? Peter was on the rooftop praying and became hungry. While lunch was being prepared, he fell into a trance. The backstory, of which Peter was not yet aware, was that God had sent an angel to speak to an Italian man of prayer named Cornelius. The angel told Cornelius to send for Peter and bring him back to Cornelius' home in Caesarea.

The timing of Peter's vision is significant; it occurred as Cornelius' messengers were about to invite Peter to accompany them. The vision was entirely prophetic:

[Peter] saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." And again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy" (Acts 10:11-15).

God used the vision to demonstrate that Peter's continuing ties to the Law had become a hindrance to his ministry. To Peter, the idea of eating "unclean" creatures was revolting. He still ascribed to the dietary laws of Torah and would not have dreamed of eating such animals. Yet the voice said, "Get up...kill and eat!" When Peter resisted the voice explained that his dietary preferences were anachronistic and contrary to God's eternal purpose, saying, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."

Peter grappled with the heavenly admonition as Cornelius' team arrived. God knew that Peter would have second thoughts about obliging the Italian from Caesarea, so "the Spirit said to him, '...Get up, go downstairs, and accompany them without misgivings; for I have sent them Myself'" (Acts 10:19-20). Peter's misgivings had been divinely set aside. The next day, he and the three men left Joppa.

There was nothing coincidental about the vision Peter received the day before his journey to Caesarea. It was sent by God to adjust Peter's doctrine and bring him into alignment with God's intent regarding the Gentiles (of whom Cornelius was one). Peter addressed the issue as soon as he arrived in Caesarea and revealed the connection between the vision and his visit:

*You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean (Acts 10:28).*

Peter then shared the testimony of Jesus Christ. As he spoke, God moved on the people, and His eternal purpose was revealed:

*While Peter was still speaking...the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. And all the circumcised [Jewish] believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ... (Acts 10:44-48).*

Up till this point, the Church consisted almost entirely of Jews, even though God's plan was to redeem all peoples! (See Mark 16:15.) The Church had become exclusionary. God drew a parallel between the Church's condition and the exclusionary practices of the Law. By commanding Peter to see all the creatures in his vision as being clean, God communicated His *inclusive* redemptive intent and inspired needed changes to the apostle's ministry approach.

Can you see that the vision on Simon's rooftop had nothing to do with food? The dietary laws themselves were prophetic. They were intended for a larger purpose; now their role as prophetic metaphor was evident. Remember that the Jews naturally divided the world into "clean" and "unclean." Foods, practices, nations, tribes—all were judged by the Law. The Jews distinguished clean from unclean peoples in part by what they ate. Unclean foods and practices demonstrated the reality that some nations were far from Him. Now, in the post-ascension paradigm, the Way had been made to purify the unclean and bring them back to God. As Paul would later write in Ephesians 2:19, the Gentiles were "*no longer strangers and aliens.*"

*All* Scripture is prophecy. Peter not only received a course correction from Heaven; he also saw the prophetic fulfillment of dietary regulations in the salvation of the Gentiles of Cornelius' household.

The Church's Jews-only mold had begun to break.

### RELUCTANT OUTREACH

There is irony in Peter's reticence to reach the Gentiles: it stands in stark contrast to the prophecy in Joel 2:28 about God pouring out His "*Spirit on all mankind*"—a text Peter quoted on the Day of Pentecost! Later on, God used Saul, one of Christianity's foremost persecutors, to reach the Gentiles. Even Saul's persecuting ways helped spread the Gospel. As Christians fled his wrath, they carried the testimony from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria!

## Covenant Community From Testament to Testament

All Scripture is prophecy and all Scripture harmonizes, from Old Testament to New. This harmony confirms the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible and highlights the threads that connect Old and New Covenant faith communities. Although the Church views the Old Covenant through the lens of the New, we neither discard nor disregard the Old, because God never deviates from His fixed principles. Jesus Himself said that He came not to abolish but to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (see Matt. 5:17).

The harmony of covenants is reflected in the parallel arrangements of their respective books. We are about to see a small blueprint of this harmony in the Book of Jeremiah. But first, let's discuss a little history. Remember that, in his day, the weeping prophet, Jeremiah, was harshly persecuted. His warnings of judgment fell on deaf ears and caused many to declare him a false seer. In their zeal to discredit Jeremiah, his detractors said, "*The law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet*" (Jer. 18:18 NKJV).

In this sentence, Jeremiah's persecutors spoke the truth, although they had done so from wrong motives and a flawed assessment of the prophet, his ministry, and the times. They defended *a* truth at the expense of a man whose life was dedicated to *the* truth. Their cutting words touted God's

view but rejected His servant and therefore, the God who sent him! (See Matthew 10:40.)

In his book *The Creative Word*,<sup>1</sup> Walter Brueggemann sees in Jeremiah 18:18 a map of the Old Testament that charts three sections: “the Torah, of the priest, the counsel of the wise, the word of the prophet.”<sup>2</sup> We often refer to them as the Law, the Prophets, and the Wisdom Literature (or the Writings). These sections represent distinct modes of life and education<sup>3</sup> that have undergirded the covenant community since the Exodus. We will soon see how the New Testament parallels this progression, but first, let’s take a brief tour of the Old.

### ***Torah***

The Torah is the first and preeminent portion of Old Covenant canon. From its five books (also called the Pentateuch or Law) flow the rest of Scripture. Torah tells us where we came from; it reveals both our human and community origins. Genesis describes the Creation, the life of Abraham, and the beginnings of the Hebrew nation. In Exodus, God delivers His people and establishes His Law. Leviticus teaches God’s people how to approach Him in holiness. In Numbers they learn how to organize themselves spiritually, socially, and militarily. The fifth book, Deuteronomy, stresses the merits of covenant-keeping.

#### **e·thos**

“The distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature, or guiding beliefs of a person, group, or institution...”<sup>4</sup>

The five books cover every aspect of life. Therefore, Brueggemann describes Torah as a “statement of community *ethos*.”<sup>5</sup> Torah reveals the community’s character and consensus in terms of beliefs and behaviors the community values as being nonnegotiable. From generation to generation (and to the extent that they uphold the *ethos*) these parameters ensure the integrity of the community against the whims of personal opinion and the world’s shifting ways. Under the tutelage of Torah, the community takes

precedence over the individual; the Law does not conform to people; instead, those who enter the community learn to see reality in the context of Torah.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Prophets*

The second section of Old Testament canon includes the minor and major prophets, as well as the Book of Joshua and other historical books such as First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, etc.<sup>7</sup> Brueggeman includes the historical books because “they do not chronicle the affairs of persons and nations, but they trace the impingement of God’s Word and purpose...”<sup>8</sup> within the context of history. In other words, these books document the community’s determination to follow the proceeding and eternal Word of God.

#### **pa·thos**

- 1: an element in experience or in artistic representation evoking pity or compassion
- 2: an emotion of sympathetic pity<sup>9</sup>

The Prophets deal with “the *pathos* of God and of Israel...”<sup>10</sup> and reveal the tension between His promises and the state of the community at any given moment. Considering the gaps that are common between God’s ideal and current reality, anguish and indignation are familiar expressions in prophetic books, according to Brueggemann.<sup>11</sup>

The ethos expressed by Torah and the pathos of the Prophets are intertwined. Theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel explains that *pathos* is a “concern for the world” and “the very ethos of God.”<sup>12</sup> He describes this pathos as the “anxiety of God”<sup>13</sup> voiced by His prophets when the ethos is dishonored and the covenant is broken. The Prophets proclaim where the covenant community should be *and* where it is going.

#### **lo·gos**

A word which, uttered by the living voice, embodies a conception or idea; (Heb. 12:19)...of the moral precepts given

by God in the O.T.: (Mark 7:13)...what is communicated by instruction...<sup>14</sup> The ancient Greek meaning of *logos* implies “meaning.”<sup>15</sup>

### ***Wisdom Literature***

This is the section of Old Testament canon that Brueggemann refers to as “the Writings.”<sup>16</sup> They correspond to Jeremiah 18:18’s “*counsel of the wise*,” the most overt example of a wisdom book being the Book of Proverbs.<sup>17</sup> This mixed grouping includes all remaining Old Testament books. The Writings are not homogenous, yet they provide a sense of meaning and order to life and are therefore described as the *logos* of Old Testament canon.<sup>18</sup>

The Writings link past and future by shedding light on why we are here and how we are to conduct our earthly lives. They focus on experiential learning, the realization of potential, and the application of godly authority. From cultural and historical perspectives, this instruction was most often available in royal circles. Remember that, spiritually speaking, God sees His people as a kingdom of priests called to reign in life as a royal priesthood (see Exod. 19:6; Rom. 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:9).

In their totality, the Torah, the Prophets, and the Wisdom Literature reveal:

- Who we are,
- Where we came from,
- And where we are going.

## **New Covenant Parallel**

The New Testament parallel to the progression in Jeremiah 18:18 (Torah, the Prophets, and Wisdom Literature) is seen in the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation.

### *The Gospels*

The Gospels lay the groundwork for all else in the New Testament. As Torah did for the Old Covenant community, they mark the roots of the Church. First and foremost, the accounts document Jesus' earthly walk and set the stage for the emergence of the Church. Jesus' frequent references to Moses, Abraham, and other fathers in the faith reinforce the roots of the faith community. The genealogies presented in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 point to our origins as a people. The first chapter of John's Gospel takes us back to the Creation itself.

As with the Torah, the Gospels describe the laws of the Kingdom. This time, they are pronounced, not by the prophet Moses, but *the* Prophet, Jesus Christ. The Sermon on the Mount could be called the "Magna Carta" of the Kingdom. As a signature and comprehensive teaching, it defines the spiritual parameters of our community and maps our identity in the Messiah's own words.

### *The Book of Revelation*

Although numerous prophecies are found in the Gospels and elsewhere (consider, among many other examples, John 2:19, in which Jesus said He would raise the Temple in three days) the Book of Revelation encapsulates God's prophetic intention in apocalyptic and concentrated form. In it Jesus addresses both the early and modern Church, both through His letters to the seven churches and through the entirety of the Revelation. In addition, the book explains where the Church is going in redemptive history, naming distinct events such as the Tribulation, Armageddon, and the millennial reign.

Revelation simultaneously stakes out our roots and current condition, and reminds us where we should be, spiritually speaking. Take, for example, Jesus' assessment of the church at Ephesus (and by extension, segments of today's Church). It reads like a report card, as all seven letters do. Jesus commends the church for her deeds, toil, and perseverance, as well as her diligence in testing those who call themselves apostles (see Rev. 2:2). This is Jesus' assessment of the church's condition. His evaluation of where the church should be is revealed in Revelation 2:4, where He warns: "*But I have*

*this against you, that you have left your first love.*” The Church should be focused on her first love, but is not.

In the larger sense, the Book of Revelation reveals the glorious future of the Church, but also articulates finer points as to where the Church will end up if His warnings go heeded: *“Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place...”* (Rev. 2:5). Jesus’ warnings testify that any church that deserts its first love and fails to correct itself will become irrelevant.

### ***The Epistles***

Finally, we have the New Testament “wisdom section”: the Epistles. These books teach us how to behave in accordance with God’s eternal purpose. They connect the dots between where we started and where we are going by providing theological and practical instruction. Paul’s second epistle to Timothy is a good example:

*Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also* (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

Paul mentioned the theological reality of grace; he also established a practical method for Timothy’s handling of the revelation he received. Paul urged him to pass on what he learned to faithful believers who would, in turn, teach others. This is wisdom in New Testament form: it delineates the journey from our unsaved beginnings, to the transformative point of our salvation, and forward to the filling of all things (see Eph. 4:10) and the grooming of a Church without spot or wrinkle (see Eph. 5:27).

Torah	The Prophets	Wisdom Literature
The Gospels	The Book of Revelation	The Epistles

## The Nexus of Old and New

The Old and New Covenant parallels are more than a curiosity. They are the context from which we can compare and contrast Old and New Covenant prophetic expression. Moses accurately stated that the Prophet, the Messiah, would be like him (see Deut. 18:15). Moses knew by the Spirit of God that he was part of the Old Covenant template; he was a prototype describing aspects of the New-Covenant prophet and apostle.

Just as the three New Testament divisions reflect the Old Testament template seen in Jeremiah 18:18, post-ascension prophets are best understood in comparison to Old Covenant types. Whether we are discussing Scripture in general or the prophetic in particular, this principle holds: the Old Covenant is but a shadow; the New reveals the substance or *fulfillment*. Hebrews 10:1 says, “*The Law...has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year... make perfect those who draw near.*”

Just as the Law found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Old Testament prophets find their fulfillment in members of His Body.

## Shadow and Fulfillment

The fullness of God’s thought revealed in the New Covenant is in perfect harmony with the Old. The connection is indelible, but so is the contrast. Colossians 2:16-17 fine-tunes the post-ascension perspective of the two covenants:

*No one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day [the Law]—things which are a mere **shadow** of what is to come; but the **substance** belongs to Christ.*

The qualities of shadow help us to explain the harmony of the covenants. Shadow reveals shape but only in outline form. The full light is lacking or obscured; therefore detail and color are muted. Spiritually speaking, the full light is not released until the fullness of time; yet the existence of shadow (which can only form in the presence of light) implies light that has already

come. In the case of the covenants, the shadow of the Old spoke from the beginning of the already existing substance of the New. In other words, God declared the end from the beginning:

*Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, “My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure” (Isaiah 46:9-10).*

So the shadow (the Old Covenant) implied that the substance (the New Covenant) existed before it was known by man. This is not a human way of seeing history; yet it is God’s way. Remember His words to Adam and Eve in The Garden: *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel” (Gen. 3:15).* His redemptive plan was in place even before the Law was given!

## **Shadows of the Prophetic and Apostolic**

In the Book of Exodus, the prophetic and apostolic are revealed in shadow form by two of Moses’ contemporaries. When the Tabernacle was to be built, Moses said, *“See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel...of the tribe of Judah...[and] filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship” (Exod. 35:30-31).*

Bezalel would use his God-given gifts and talents in the building of the structure and in teaching. He would work with Oholiab, a man similarly gifted and used of God (see Exod. 35:34-35). Together they would build the Tabernacle and its furnishings, arranging them as God ordained. Their collaborative work created *the* space in which God desired His people to worship Him.

Building and teaching are intrinsic qualities of apostles and prophets: The apostle “builds” the covenant community upon sound doctrine. The prophet inspects the building and its materials, compares them to the divine blueprint, provides understanding, and ensures the forward movement of the community in the direction of the fullness of Christ.

The names of these prophetic and apostolic forerunners illuminate God's intent. *Bezalel* means "in the shadow of God."<sup>19</sup> *Oboliah* means "tent of his father."<sup>20</sup> In combination, they present in shadow form the New Testament model which involves the continual building of the household of God.

## Gift Preview

Any discussion of the prophetic must include an understanding of the prophet. We will distinguish later between the more general prophetic giftings and the office of the prophet. First, let's briefly consider a key verse underpinning the distinction: "*When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men*" (Eph. 4:8).

The passage goes on to describe the gifts as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These are referred to as the *fivefold ministry* or *ascension gifts*. (Please note that some view the pastor-teacher as a single gift. For our purposes, we will name them separately.) Ephesians 4 is not the sole mention of spiritual gifts; Romans 12 and First Corinthians 12 also list gifts. Those mentioned in Ephesians 4, however, are distinguished by the use of the Greek word *doma*, which is not applied to the other groupings. According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, *doma* "lends greater stress to the concrete character of the 'gift'" and is "akin to [the Greek word] *demo*, 'to build, and denotes a housetop.'"<sup>21</sup>

We will explore the *doma* gifts in Chapters 3 and 4 and elsewhere. For now, suffice to say that *doma* gifts are not just gifts *in* people. In the case of the office of prophet, for example, the prophet *is* the gift. The same is true of the offices of the apostle, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. They don't just have gifts; they are gifts. Although the *doma* (or ascension or fivefold ministry) gifts move in the spiritual gifts listed in Romans and First Corinthians, the *doma* gift is distinctive in function and development.

For example, many in the Body of Christ have prophetic tendencies and have ministered in that realm; yet not all are prophets. The prophetic office encompasses more than prophetic leanings. We will soon see how God creates and prepares His Ephesians 4:8 gifts—His *doma*—for service. But first, we will talk about God's eternal purpose.

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## Pinpoint the Prophetic

1. How does our discussion of the fuller meaning of the dietary laws impact your personal understanding of the statement that “all Scripture is prophecy”? What other examples illustrate this point?
2. How does the harmony of Old and New Covenants deepen your appreciation of the Old? How does it better equip you to discuss the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible with skeptics?
3. Consider our discussion of shadow and substance. What questions did our discussion resolve for you? What points would you add?
4. Select a Bible character not named in this chapter, and study the meaning of his or her name (using any combination of concordances, lexicons, commentaries, etc.). How does the prophetic aspect of the character and story become clearer as a result of your research?
5. Consider our preliminary discussion of the gifts discussed in Ephesians 4. What new questions does it raise? Write them down and consider them as you read Chapters 3 and 4.



# Endnotes

## Introduction

1. Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 21.
2. Dictionary.com, *Dictionary.com Unabridged*, Random House, Inc., s.v. “reductionism,” <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/reductionism>; accessed March 9, 2011.

## Chapter 1

1. Although Walter Brueggemann and I do not share all views expressed in *The Creative Word*, his work is both thoughtful and informative. His discussion of Jeremiah 18:18 is of particular interest here.
2. Walter Brueggemann, *The Creative Word* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982), 8.
3. Ibid.
4. Merriam-Webster Online, *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* 2011, s.v. “ethos,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethos>; accessed March 16, 2011.
5. Brueggemann, 12.
6. Ibid., 12.
7. Ibid., 9.
8. Ibid.

9. Merriam-Webster Online, *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* 2011, s.v. “pathos,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pathos>; accessed March 16, 2011.
10. Brueggemann, 12.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets: Two Volumes in One*, Vol. I (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 219.
13. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 2.
14. *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, Complete and Abridged formats*, BibleSoft, Inc. Electronic Database (© 2000, 2003), s.v. “logos.”
15. *The World of Cyprus Greek-English Dictionary*, s.v. “logos,” <http://www.kypros.org/cgi-bin/lexicon>; accessed March 17, 2011.
16. Brueggemann, 9.
17. *Ibid.*, 10.
18. *Ibid.*, 12-13.
19. BibleSoft’s New Exhaustive Strong’s Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. CD-ROM. BibleSoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc. (© 1994, 2003, 2006) s.v. “Bezalel,” (OT 1212).
20. *Ibid.*, s.v. “Aholiab,” (OT 171).
21. *Blue Letter Bible*, “Dictionary and Word Search for *doma* (Strong’s 1390),” 1996-2011, < [http:// www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G1390&t=KJV](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G1390&t=KJV) >; accessed March 18, 2011.

## **Chapter 2**

1. *Blue Letter Bible*, “Dictionary and Word Search for *chephets* (Strong’s 2656),” 1996-2011, <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=H2656&t=KJV>; accessed April 26, 2011.
2. Dictionary.com, *Dictionary.com Unabridged*, Random House, Inc., s.v. “intent,” <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/intent>; accessed: March 21, 2011.



# About Mark Chironna

CERTIFIED LIFE COACH, PUBLIC SPEAKER, AUTHOR, AND PASTOR, Dr. Mark Chironna bridges the intellectual and spiritual realms to dismantle emotional barriers, empower lives, and release the creativity and personal power of the individual. His authentic and compassionate approach has transformed lives through one-on-one mentoring, speaking engagements, print, and electronic media.

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