

**THE CESSATION OF PROPHECY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

by

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## SUMMARY ABSTRACT

This thesis “investigates” prophecy according to the Old Testament. While the main focus is on matters leading to cessation, an analysis of the rise and nature of prophecy introduces the theme. Expressions of prophecy evident among ancient Near Eastern cultures are compared to determine prophetic origins. Prophecy is a dynamic force in Israel, and together with the priesthood, develops the theological and religious views of the nation. Prophets are active during major transition periods of Israel’s history. Prophecy is an integral means of communication between Yahweh and his people. Through the prophets Yahweh elects, leads, directs, and helps the people of God. Furthermore, prophets were involved in the formulation of the Scriptures that were received by Israel. The reception of the Scriptures registers the acceptance of inspired writings and exposes other documents as apocryphal and pseudepigraphal. When the ‘Spirit of prophecy’ was believed to add nothing new to Scripture, the canon was considered closed.

Surprisingly, some texts indicate that prophecy ends in Israel. A few passages indicate potential problems in the mediation process that may include aberrations in the delivery, content, and motivation for presenting prophecy. Prophecy deteriorates from the kind of prophetic leadership that Moses exemplified. Some claim that prophecy arose with the monarchy and ended after the Babylonian exile. Other theories regarding its demise include matters related to false prophecy, theological and religious differences, the compilation of the Hebrew canon, inspiration and the quenching of the Spirit of God. At times, people long for a message from God, but find silence.

Problems associated with prophecy that lead to its demise as well as the future anticipation of transformations to prophecy or its continuation are presented and analyzed. Prophetic utterances diminish and ultimately cease, but texts also imply that prophecy is a permanent feature for God’s people. Prophecy will be transformed, renewed, or changed. Many texts foresee a period of restoration, salvation, and prophecy for all God’s people. A period of dormancy and prophetic silence will be followed by the recurrence of prophecy when the Spirit of God will inspire prophetic utterance. God will pour out his Spirit and prophecy will continue indefinitely.