The Isaiah:

Prophecies. Prophets. Confusing words in the modern world, but well accepted in the world of the ancient Jews.

Prophets gave prophecies. There were true prophets whose prophecies came true, and false prophets whose prophecies did not come true. There were prophets of God, and prophets of the many false gods. There were solo prophets, and groups of prophets.[1] At times, there were hundreds of prophets.[2] Most of the prophets named in the Bible were men, but there were women prophets as well. True prophets of God led dangerous lives. Many of them were killed, and many more were persecuted by people who did not like what they had to say. So, really, nothing to be confused about, prophets simply gave prophecies.

There are major prophets and minor prophets who wrote books in the Old Testament. The major prophets wrote longer books or gave more complex prophecies. The major prophets are Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and me…Isaiah. There are prophets in the Old Testament, and prophets in the New Testament.

What does it mean for a prophet to prophesy or to give a prophecy?

One type of a prophecy is simply telling the truth of a matter. These might include general statements such as, "If you continue to worship idols, God will punish you." Jeremiah was thrown into a well and left for dead because people did not want to hear him tell the truth.[3]

Other prophecies are more specific in nature, and may have a time frame involved. These prophecies are sometimes easier to determine whether they are true or false. One scripture in Deuteronomy says that if what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place, that message is not from the Lord. That false prophet is to be put to death.[4] The Apostle Peter said that false prophets bring destruction upon themselves.[5]

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[1] i.e. 1 Samuel 19:20

[2] i.e. 1 Kings 22:6

[3] Jeremiah 38

[4] Deuteronomy 18:20-22

[5] 2 Peter 2:1

Another type of prophecy involves something that will happen in the far distant future. Some prophecies are very literal, while some are symbolic. And, some prophecies may qualify under several of these categories.

As you can guess, it can be very challenging for a reader of the Bible to recognize a prophecy, and then to determine what it means. So, I suppose there is room for confusion in the modern world. You have many books and writings just on how to interpret the book of *Revelation* alone.

We prophets didn't even understand the many facets of the prophecies we made, nor could we make them come true ourselves. Again, the Apostle Peter, "The prophecies of old times came not by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Jeremiah:
As prophets, we understood that we did not see the whole picture. But I don't think any of us really understood how little we knew. Most of the time, we could see the obvious application to the Jews, but what we did not…and could not…know was how many of our prophecies were pointing directly toward Jesus and the new life he was to bring.

Jesus pointed out many of the prophetic Scriptures while he was on earth, but really delved into the matter after his resurrection. Many of his teachings and observations were repeated by Matthew and Paul in their writings.

Some of the Old Testament prophecies predicted how God would make a new deal with his people to replace the deal he made with the Jews. Part of the new deal was that people would be given new hearts. God says, "I will give them one heart and put a new spirit in them; I will take their stony hearts and give them a heart of flesh. They will walk in my statutes and keep my commands, and they will be my people and I will be their God."[6]

An interesting question that Paul answers in his book of *Romans* is "What did the Old Testament prophets promise?" It's a great question. The Answer? The Gospel regarding Jesus.[7]

Samuel and Micah said that a shepherd-king would come from Bethlehem. That is where Jesus was born.[8]

Malachi spoke of the one who would prepare the way for Jesus. That one was John the Baptist.[9]

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[6] Ezekiel 11:19-20

[7] Romans 1:2

[8] 2 Sam. 5:2, Micah 5:2

[9] Malachi 3:1

Isaiah spoke of the place where the primary ministry of Jesus would take place, Galilee.[10]

In fact, Isaiah has so much about Jesus that we don't have enough time to talk about all of them. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given."[11] A virgin will conceive and give birth to a son," and then the time Jesus actually unrolled the scroll and read Isaiah's prophecies about himself! The book of Isaiah is packed with them.

In Isaiah Chapter Nine, it describes Jesus and his spiritual kingdom: "the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David…for ever and ever."[12]

Isaiah Chapter 53 reads like a biography of Jesus written hundreds of years before he was born: despised and rejected, a man of sorrow, bore our griefs, wounded by our sins, we are healed by his stripes, he is our shepherd, the Lord laid all of our sins on him, and was with the rich in his death.

I don't mean to sound jealous of Isaiah, but the Holy Spirit seems to have really used him to prophesy about God's Son.

Isaiah:
I am a little jealous of Ezekiel, such a great prophet. God named him Son of Man, a favorite term that Jesus used for himself. And I'm a little jealous of Daniel, Zechariah, and Malachi. They gave such amazing prophecies about Jesus and his coming kingdom.

But as jealous as I am of the other Old Testament Prophets, who I am really jealous of is … you! Why? Let me quote the Lord Jesus himself: "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears because they hear. I tell you most sincerely, many prophets and righteous people desired to see what you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them."[13]

You have a New Testament to read. You have a story of Jesus to hear and understand. You have Paul, and Peter, and James, and John, and so many others to tell you the things that we gave our lives to hear…but didn't get to.

You can't even imagine how jealous of you I am. I can envision myself reading the New Testament over and over and over. Being with Jesus in prayer and meditation. Learning the

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[10] Isaiah 9:1-2

[11] Isaiah 9:6

[12] Isaiah 9:6-7

[13] Matthew 13:16-17

things that even angels didn’t know. Spending hours every day with the Lord Jesus. Just like you do.