

# Argument 8: No Need for Modern Prophets or Apostles

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## | Introduction

One of the most fundamental differences between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and mainstream Protestantism is the claim that God has restored living prophets and apostles to the earth. Critics contend that the apostolic office was unique to the founding generation of the church, that it ceased with the death of the original Twelve, and that the completed Bible renders prophetic revelation unnecessary. This is not a peripheral disagreement — it strikes at the heart of how God communicates with His children and whether the heavens are open or closed.

## | The Criticism (Steelmanned)

The strongest version of this argument:

Ephesians 2:20 says the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." A foundation is laid once — you do not keep re-laying it. The apostles served a unique, unrepeatable role in establishing the church. Hebrews 1:1-2 declares, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." This implies a progression: prophets were the preliminary mode of communication; Christ is the final, definitive word. Jude 3 urges believers to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" — the faith was delivered *once for all* (*hapax*), not progressively through ongoing prophets. Since we have the completed New Testament, which contains the apostolic teaching, we have everything we need. Modern prophets are not only unnecessary but dangerous, as they open the door to false teaching.

## | Biblical Response

### Ephesians 2:20 — "Foundation" Does Not Mean "Temporary"

1. **The metaphor works against cessationism.** In the same passage (Ephesians 2:19-22), Paul says the church is "fitly framed together" and "groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." A living, growing structure requires ongoing stewardship — not merely a foundation laid and abandoned.
2. **Ephesians 4:11-14 explicitly states the purpose of apostles and prophets — and it has not yet been fulfilled:**

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: **till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:** that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."

Has Christendom achieved "the unity of the faith"? With over 45,000 Christian denominations, the answer is manifestly no. The very condition for the cessation of these offices — unity of faith and fullness of knowledge — has not been met. By Paul's own standard, apostles and prophets are still needed.

1. **The "foundation" includes prophets — Old Testament prophets.** If "apostles and prophets" in Ephesians 2:20 means the office is temporary and unrepeatable, this applies equally to prophets. Yet no evangelical argues that the Old Testament prophets should not have existed because Moses already laid the "foundation."

## Hebrews 1:1-2 — God Spoke Through His Son, Not Instead of Prophets

1. **The passage contrasts modes, not cessation.** It says God spoke through prophets in "diverse manners" and now speaks through His Son. But Christ Himself appointed apostles and prophets (Ephesians 4:11) as the means through which He would continue speaking. The Son speaking does not eliminate the prophetic office — it authorizes it.
2. **Christ Himself prophesied future prophets.** In Matthew 23:34, Jesus said: "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes." In Revelation 11:3: "I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy." If Hebrews 1:1-2 means no more prophets, Christ contradicted it before it was written.
3. **The early church after Christ had prophets.** Acts 11:27-28 — "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus." Acts 13:1 — "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers." Acts 21:9 — Philip's four daughters "did prophesy." Acts 21:10 — Agabus again prophesied. The church Christ established *included* prophets as an ongoing office.

## Jude 3 — "Once Delivered" Does Not Mean "Once For All Time"

1. **The Greek *hapax* means "once" in the sense of definitiveness, not temporal finality.** The faith was *definitively* delivered — it is trustworthy and authoritative. This does not preclude additional revelation any more than God's definitive covenant with Abraham precluded His covenant with Moses or David.

2. **Jude is warning against false teachers, not future prophets.** The context of Jude 3-4 is about people who "crept in unawares" and turned "the grace of our God into lasciviousness." Jude is urging defense of true doctrine against corruption — the very thing prophets are needed for.
3. **If "once delivered" means no new revelation, the rest of the New Testament is illegitimate.** Jude is thought to be one of the earlier NT writings. If his statement closes revelation, then later books (John's Gospel, Revelation, some of Paul's letters) violate Jude's injunction.

## | Early Christian and Historical Evidence

### The Early Church Expected Ongoing Prophecy

- **The Didache (c. 50-120 AD)**, one of the earliest non-canonical Christian writings, contains detailed instructions for receiving traveling prophets and testing their authenticity (chapters 11-13). This presupposes prophets were an expected, ongoing feature of church life.
- **Clement of Rome (c. 96 AD)** wrote to the Corinthians about the apostolic office and the principle of succession — that apostles appointed successors and expected the ministry to continue. (*1 Clement* 42-44)
- **Irenaeus (c. 130-202 AD)** wrote: "Those who are in truth [Christ's] disciples, receiving grace from Him, do in His name perform [miracles]... Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years." (*Against Heresies* 2.32.4). He also affirmed apostolic succession as necessary for sound doctrine.
- **Justin Martyr (c. 100-165 AD)** wrote: "The prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time." (*Dialogue with Trypho* 82)
- **Tertullian (c. 155-220 AD)** acknowledged the Montanist prophets and argued for ongoing prophetic gifts, though the mainstream church eventually rejected Montanism's specific claims.

### Cessationism Is a Later Development

The idea that prophetic and apostolic gifts ceased with the apostolic age became prominent only as the institutional church consolidated authority. It was largely formalized during the Reformation, when Protestants needed a theological basis for rejecting papal authority while simultaneously denying the need for any ongoing prophetic office.

- **John Chrysostom (c. 349-407)** is one of the earliest Church Fathers to suggest that miraculous gifts had ceased — but he attributed this to the unfaithfulness of the church, not to God's design. This is, ironically, precisely the Latter-day Saint explanation for why a restoration was necessary.

- **B.B. Warfield** (1851-1921) formalized cessationism as Protestant theology in *Counterfeit Miracles* (1918). This is a modern theological development, not an ancient Christian consensus.

## The Great Apostasy Is Historical Fact

The disappearance of apostles and prophets from Christianity is not an LDS invention — it is documented history:

- By the end of the 2nd century, the original apostles were all dead and no one claimed their office.
- Church governance shifted from apostolic leadership to bishop-led governance, then to the Roman papal system.
- Essential doctrines were debated and altered at councils (Nicaea 325, Constantinople 381, Chalcedon 451) — precisely the kind of doctrinal drift that prophets and apostles were given to prevent (Ephesians 4:14).
- Even Protestant historians acknowledge that early Christianity underwent significant changes in doctrine, practice, and organization between the 1st and 4th centuries.

## LDS Doctrinal Position

1. **The church Christ established required apostles and prophets.** This was not optional or temporary — it was the Lord's organizational pattern (Ephesians 4:11-14; 1 Corinthians 12:28).
2. **When apostles and prophets were lost, the church lost its authorized leadership.** This is what Latter-day Saints call the Great Apostasy — not the disappearance of all Christian truth, but the loss of priesthood authority and prophetic direction.
3. **The Restoration through Joseph Smith returned what was lost.** The restoration of apostles and prophets is not an innovation — it is a return to the New Testament pattern.
4. **Article of Faith 6:** "We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth."
5. **Article of Faith 9:** "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."

## Key Scriptures

Reference	Point
<b>Eph 4:11-14</b>	Apostles and prophets given "till we all come in the unity of the faith" — not yet achieved

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<b>Eph 2:19-22</b>	Church is a living, growing temple — needs ongoing leadership
<b>1 Cor 12:28</b>	"God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets" — God's design for His church
<b>Amos 3:7</b>	God does nothing without revealing it to His prophets
<b>Acts 11:27-28</b>	Prophets in the post-ascension church (Agabus)
<b>Acts 13:1</b>	Prophets and teachers at Antioch
<b>Acts 21:9-10</b>	Philip's daughters prophesied; Agabus prophesied
<b>Matt 23:34</b>	Jesus: "I send unto you prophets" — future tense
<b>Rev 11:3</b>	Two witnesses/prophets prophesied for the last days
<b>Rev 18:20</b>	"Rejoice... holy apostles and prophets" — present in the last days
<b>Joel 2:28-29</b>	"Your sons and daughters shall prophesy" — in the last days
<b>Acts 3:19-21</b>	Peter prophesied a "restitution of all things" before Christ's return

## | Responses to Common Objections

### "The foundation is laid once — Ephesians 2:20."

A foundation supports a building — it doesn't make the building self-maintaining. Paul's own letters describe the *ongoing* need for the offices he lists. If apostles were temporary, why did Paul spend Ephesians 4:11-14 explaining their purpose as continuing "till we all come in the unity of the faith"?

### "Hebrews 1:1-2 — God now speaks through His Son, not prophets."

Christ Himself appointed prophets and apostles as His authorized representatives (Luke 6:13; Ephesians 4:11). He speaks *through them*, not instead of them. Prophets are not competitors to Christ; they are His servants.

### "Jude 3 — the faith was once for all delivered."

If this closes all future revelation, it also closes all New Testament books written after Jude. The passage is about defending true doctrine against false teachers — the very reason prophets are needed.

## **"We don't need prophets — we have the Bible."**

The Bible itself was produced by prophets and apostles. Without them, you have no Bible. And 45,000+ denominations interpreting the same Bible differently is exactly the "tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine" that Ephesians 4:14 warns about.

## **"Modern prophets could lead people astray."**

So could ancient ones — that's why God provided tests for prophets (Deuteronomy 18:20-22; Matthew 7:15-20; 1 John 4:1). The solution to false prophets is not no prophets; it is true prophets. You don't ban doctors because some commit malpractice.

## **"Paul warned about false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13)."**

Yes — which proves real apostles were still expected. You only warn about counterfeits when the genuine article exists. If the office had ceased, there would be no need to warn about fakes.

## **| Conclusion**

The cessationist position — that prophets and apostles were temporary offices limited to the first century — is not taught in scripture, was not held by the earliest Christians, and contradicts the explicit statements of Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul. The New Testament describes a church led by living prophets and apostles, equipped with spiritual gifts, and guided by ongoing revelation. The disappearance of these offices is not evidence that God withdrew them by design; it is evidence that something was lost — and something needed to be restored. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that this restoration has occurred, returning the church to the organizational pattern Christ Himself established.

## **| Resources**

- [FAIR: Prophets After the New Testament](#)
- [FAIR: The Great Apostasy](#)
- [Church: Apostasy and Restoration](#)
- [Church: Prophets](#)
- [Church: Restoration of the Priesthood](#)

## **| Addresses**

- [\[\[\\_obsidian\\_research/arguments/No-Need-for-Modern-Prophets-or-Apostles|Argument: No Need for Modern Prophets or Apostles\]\]](#)

## | Related Defenses

- [\[\[\\_obsidian\\_research/defense-drafts/great-apostasy-never-happened-full|Great Apostasy Defense \(Full\)\]\]](#)
- [\[\[\\_obsidian\\_research/defense-drafts/great-apostasy-never-happened-cheatsheet|Great Apostasy Defense \(Cheat Sheet\)\]\]](#)
- [\[\[\\_obsidian\\_research/defense-drafts/canon-closed-no-new-scripture-full|Canon Closed Defense \(Full\)\]\]](#)
- [\[\[\\_obsidian\\_research/defense-drafts/canon-closed-no-new-scripture-cheatsheet|Canon Closed Defense \(Cheat Sheet\)\]\]](#)
- [\[\[\\_obsidian\\_research/defense-drafts/sola-scriptura-bible-sole-authority-full|Sola Scriptura Defense \(Full\)\]\]](#)
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