

of the first meaning of the word. It would be equally reasonable to translate this fifth purpose as "to set a seal of approval on vision and prophecy."

While the NIV is not incorrect in freely rendering *nabi* as "prophecy," an argument could be made for keeping the literal translation, "prophet," since the fulfillment of the prophet's message verified his claim to be a spokesman for God.

Paul makes a similar use of the word "seal" in 1 Corinthians 9:2, "For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord." If one questions whether Paul is really an apostle of the Lord, the Corinthians who came to believe in Christ through his message are his seal. This is an exact parallel to Gabriel's fifth statement of purpose. It is most naturally interpreted as meaning that the claims of the prophets to be messengers from God will be authenticated by the fulfillment of their visions and predictions.

In spite of these facts a number of writers insist that here "seal" should be taken in the second sense -- that of closing something up. Some base this on the claim that the word must have this sense in the second purpose and therefore could hardly be used in a different sense later in the same verse. This argument would be questionable in any case, but is doubly so because of the unlikelihood that the word is actually used in the second statement.

Those who say that in this purpose "seal" should be taken in the second sense disagree as to what it really signifies. Thus Keil says:

Prophecies and prophets are sealed, when by the full realization of all prophecies prophecy ceases, no prophets any more appear. The extinction of prophecy in consequence of its fulfillment is not, however (with Hengstenberg), to be sought in the time of the manifestation of Christ in the flesh; for then only the prophecy of the Old Covenant reached its end ... and its place is occupied by the prophecy of the N.T., the fulfilling of which is still in the future, and which will not come to an end and terminate ... till the