

PROPHETS

WHO IS A PROPHET?

- ✓ A prophet is called by God, to speak for God, to His people in the way God wished to speak and to speak only what God wished to. (Exodus 6:28ff)
- ✓ Called by God and filled with God's Spirit, a prophet spoke God's word to people who had in one way or another distanced themselves from God.
- ✓ God chose them for special duty while most of them were doing some other jobs.

THE MINISTRY OF A PROPHET

- The prophet worked in connection with monarchy.
- There were prophetic groups, though many lived alone.
- Kings depended on them specially during wars.
- They spoke the truth impartially.
- They used symbolic language.
- Their main work was to intercede for people to God.
- They got divine messages through dreams and revelations.
- The format of their prophecy was like "thus says the Lord..."
- There were true and false prophets in Israel.
- They were not always well accepted.
- They were against idol worship.

PROPHETS AND THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

The records of the **earliest prophets** are seen in the books of Joshua through 2 Kings.

Afterwards, the words and deeds of the prophets were preserved in separate collections of 16 books called the **latter prophets**. These collection of 16 are divided into **minor prophets** and **major prophets** based on the length of writing.

When the unified kingdom split in two, the ten northern tribes (Israel) fell into idol worship. *Elijah* and *Elisha*, the last among the former prophets, were called by God to challenge these idolatrous Israelites to worship Yahweh alone.

The first of the literary prophets, *Amos* and *Hosea*, were called to challenge the apostate northern kings of Israel.

As Israel neared its destruction, the small nation of Judah in the south were seen worshipping Yahweh as well as other foreign gods. Good kings pulled the people back from idol worship and bad business practices, but bad kings reversed that. In the southern kingdom (Judah), the first literary prophets were *Obadiah* and *Joel*.

Isaiah spoke for God in Judah under four kings—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Micah also prophesying during that period. Hezekiah was followed on the throne by Manasseh.

Manasseh was followed by good king Josiah who instituted a thorough cleansing of the temple, ridding it of much pagan worship. The people cleaning the temple found an ancient scroll that spelled judgment on the land, which led to the last revival of Yahweh worship in Judah. The prophets in Jerusalem at this time included *Nahum*, *Jeremiah*, and *Zephaniah*.

Josiah was followed by kings whose disastrous political decisions eventually brought the Babylonian conqueror Nebuchadnezzar II against Jerusalem and took the people as captives. *Ezekiel* was among those captives, while *Habakkuk* joined *Jeremiah* and *Zephaniah*, continuing their prophetic work in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah remained in Jerusalem, continuing his prophetic work until he was carted off to Egypt. Meanwhile, Ezekiel continued to prophesy in Babylon to the exiled Jews living there.

Among the Jewish captives in the first deportation was the young man *Daniel*, whom God used in Babylon in the court of all the Babylonian emperors. When Babylon was overthrown by the Persians, the new Medo-Persian king Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild their city and its temple, first under Zerubbabel and then under Nehemiah. Daniel's prophecies span the Babylonian exile through Cyrus's decree ending the exile. The post-exilic prophets *Zechariah* and *Haggai* challenged the Jews to rebuild the Temple. It was in this period that the final post-exilic prophet *Malachi* wrote. The book of *Jonah* does not take place in Israel, rather in Nineveh.

PROPHET AND THE PEOPLE

Prophet was a Mediator. He is so because God called him to be so. He prayed for the people. He made people to repent of their sins. He reminded them of God’s covenant. He gave them warnings. He interceded with God and made God to change His own decisions. He spoke with the people and conveyed the divine message either through symbols. Direct calls or through their own special way of living.

MAIN THEMES OF PROPHETIC PREACHING

- Social Justice*..... Amos, Habakkuk, Zechariah
- Monotheism*.....Hosea
- Salvation*.....Isaiah
- Centrality of Zion*..... Isaiah, Zechariah, Micah, Jeremiah
- Holiness of God*..... Isaiah, Jeremiah
- Day of the Lord*..... Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Malachi
- Holy Remnant*..... Isaiah, Zechariah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah
- New Covenant*..... Jeremiah

PROPHETS IN PENTATEUCH	Abraham, Miriam, Balaam, Moses
PROPHETS BEFORE MONARCHY	Joshua, Eli, Samuel
PROPHETS BEFORE DIVIDED KINGDOM	Nathan, Gad, Ahiah
PROPHETS IN ISRAEL IN THE DIVIDED KINGDOM	Elijah, Elisha, Obadiah, Amos, Hosea
PROPHETS IN JUDAH IN THE DIVIDED KINGDOM	Shemaiah, Isaiah I, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Nahum, Jeremiah
PROPHETS IN EXILE	Ezekiel, Isaiah II, Daniel
PROPHETS AFTER EXILE	Haggai, Isaiah III, Malachi, Zechariah, Joel