

## **SERIES: PROPHETS, PRIESTS AND KINGS**

Godly leadership in the house of God and the heart of the believer

**TITLE: The Written Prophets: Speaking to People of God and the Nations**

**Key Passage: Deuteronomy 4:25-31**

## **WHAT WE KNOW OF THE WRITTEN PROPHETS**

### **WRITTEN VERSUS ORAL**

- They wrote!

### **LISTENED AND COMMUNICATED**

- As we saw two weeks ago when we spoke of the oral prophets.
- All prophets listen to God and communicate what is shown or shared.

### **MAJOR AND MINOR = longer and shorter**

- Major – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel ( **The Four**)
- Minor – Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi – ( **the twelve**)
- The Minor Prophets of the Bible are shorter books with more specific content, compared to the broader subjects of the Major Prophets.

### **FOUR GROUPS:**

- **Prophets of Israel** – Jonah, Amos, and Hosea
- **Prophets of Judah** – Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk
- **Exilic Prophets** – Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel
- **Post-exilic Prophets** – Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

### **TIME FRAME:**

- Obadiah in 845 BCE – Malachi in 432 BCE
- They are not listed in chronological order.
- They speak to different people at different times under different circumstances.

## **WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE WRITTEN PROPHETS**

### **YOU WILL SEE THAT IT IS ALWAYS ABOUT THE COVENANT**

- Jim Ellis: writer for Bible.org coined the phrase:
- **“Covenant Enforcement Mediators”** –
  - The covenant with Abraham is brought up multiple times.
  - The covenant Law with Moses is brought up over and over.
  - The imagery of marriage and faithfulness is presented throughout the prophets.

## YOU WILL SEE THAT IT IS FORTH-TELLING MORE THAN FORETELLING

The primary difficulty for most modern readers of the prophets stems from an inaccurate understanding of the words “prophet” and “prophecy.”

- The word prophet refers to one who tells forth (or proclaims), as well as one who foretells.
  - The prophets are speaking to the people of that time about things that concerned them. – We can learn lessons from what is transpiring in their time. The messages are mostly for them.
  - But we often limit the meaning of prophecy to foretelling the future, so many Christians refer to the prophets only for predictions about Christ’s first coming, or his second coming, and the end times as though prediction of events far distant to their own day was their main concern.
- It should be pointed out that less than 2% of Old Testament prophecy is messianic.
  - Still... it is important as it points to the Messiah and is proof of fulfillment mentioned over and over in the Gospels.
- Less than 5% specifically concerns the New Covenant age.
  - This is the church age post 70 AD when the Old Covenant ended.
- And less than 1% concern events still future to us.
  - The prophets did indeed announce the future. But it was usually the immediate future of Israel, Judah, and the surrounding nations they announced.
    - Upcoming disasters from Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia
    - Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the empires
    - Daniel’s words concerning the seventy weeks leading up to the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD
  - Not our future.
    - Though there are things that must be pointed out concerning the restoration of the nation of Israel
    - The dry bones
    - The Great Day of the Lord

One of the keys to understanding the Prophets, therefore, is to recognize that for us to see their prophecies fulfilled, we must often look back on times that were still future to them, but for us are past.

To see the prophets as primarily predictors of future events is to miss their primary function, which was, in fact, to speak for God to their contemporaries.

## YOU WILL SEE THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THE PROPHET

- Their calling
  - How they heard from God
    - Jeremiah (a priest) – *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.* (Jer.1:5)
    - Isaiah – *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”* (Isa. 6:8)
- Their situation:
  - Going into and coming out of exile
    - Daniel – See Dan. 1:1-6.
    - Haggai – *In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai...* (Hag. 1:1)

- During which reign
  - Amos- *The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa—the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king. (Amos 1:1)*
  - Hosea - *during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel:*
  - Ezekiel - *In my thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.*
- To Nineveh - Jonah / Nahum
- Called to marry a harlot - Hosea
- Their behavior:
  - Personal measures as how they relay the message:
    - **EZEKIEL**
      - **The brick** - A striking example is found in Ezekiel 4:1-13. He was instructed to take a brick, lay it on the ground, and inscribe the word Jerusalem on it. Making believe the brick was “Jerusalem,” he was to build a siege wall, pitch toy camps around it, and place battering rams against it on all sides. The reason for this is given in verse 3. It was to be a sign to the house of Judah. This was prior to the final invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 588, which lasted until 586 when the city was breached. Ezekiel’s prophecy took place between 592 and 589 BC.
      - **Food cooked over dung** - Ezekiel was commanded to lie on his left side for 390 days (apparently beside his little model of the city under siege) to bear the iniquity of the house of Israel, and when that was completed, he was to lie on his right side and bear the iniquity of the house of Judah for 40 days. For nourishment, he was to eat only peasant’s food cooked over cow dung. All this was to symbolize the pollution with which Israel and Judah had defiled themselves.
      - **The hole in the wall** - Ezekiel to dig a hole in a wall, to gather the baggage of an exile by day, throw it over his shoulder, and to go out through the wall in the evenings like an exile leaving his city. He was apparently to do this over and over so the people would ask him what he was doing. He was to say,
    - **Daniel**
      - Interpretation of dreams, prayer, lion’s den

### YOU WILL SEE THAT THERE ARE THREE FORMS OF ORACLES

- Oracles - just as we must learn to think paragraphs in the epistles or narrative sections of the Bible. Not always in order of appearance even within the writings. Hard to know when things are happening, though some give us a note as to when and where.
  - Lawsuit Oracle
  - Woe Oracle
  - Salvation Oracle

# WHAT TO APPLY WHILE READING THE WRITTEN PROPHETS

## THERE ARE FOUR MESSAGES

### Warning will be given:

#### Deuteronomy 4:25-26

*“When you become the father of children and children’s children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord your God so as to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you shall surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it.”*

### Refusal brings Cursed Judgement:

#### Deuteronomy 4:26-28

*“You shall not live long on it, but shall be utterly destroyed. And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where the Lord shall drive you. And there you will serve gods, the work of man’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.”*

- a warning of curses (punishments) if Israel is not obedient and faithful to the covenant. The curses are found in Leviticus 26:14-39, Deuteronomy 4:15-28, and Deuteronomy 28:15-32:42.
- Generally, these may be categorized under ten “D’s”: death, disease, drought, dearth, danger, destruction, defeat, deportation, destitution, and disgrace.

### Repentance brings Restoration:

#### Deuteronomy 4:29-30

*“But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days, you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice.”*

### Standing with the Lord brings blessings:

#### Deuteronomy 4:31

*“For the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.”*

## CHALLENGE: THE COVENANT LANGUAGE IS STILL THE SAME:

REJECT THE COVENANT AND FIND DESTRUCTION  
REPENT AND FIND LIFE

THE FIRST WAS LAW COVENANT  
NOW IT IS THE GRACE COVENANT

- Still there are warnings:
  - In the Scriptures
  - By the spirit convicting
- Still there is destruction for disobedience:
  - Choices to sin will bring destruction on you.
  - Rejection of Christ will seal a fate of sorrow.
- Repentance will bring life and restoration.
  - *If you confess your sin, He is faithful and just to forgive your sin and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.* 1 Jn. 1:9
- Obedience and love for Him will bring blessings.
- Blessing and Cursing –
  - The kinds of blessings that come for faithfulness are found in Leviticus 26:1-13, Deuteronomy 4:32-40, and Deuteronomy 28:1-14. Generally, these may be categorized as life, health, prosperity, agricultural abundance, respect, and safety.
  - The curses for disobedience are just the opposite: see Leviticus 26:14-45, Deuteronomy 26:15-68.