

# **“All the Prophets Testify”: General Introduction**

Midweek Bible Study – 2025 August 13

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<https://www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/prophets>

Invocation & Opening Prayer

What is “common knowledge” about “the prophets”?

Website introduction to this study

People and Books

Our English Bible canon: Historical, Poetic, Prophetic

Historical: Pentateuch and “Other”

Prophetic: Major and Minor (inescapable quantitative and qualitative diminishing)

New Testament view of Old Testament: Law, Prophets, and Writings

Hebrew Bible canon: Former and Latter

Former: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings

Septuagint (LXX) had Samuel and Kings as “Four Kingdoms”

Latter: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, “Book of the Twelve”

LXX had the Book of the Twelve in a different order

*The Lutheran Study Bible* offers a number of “articles” related to “the prophets” (lxxi-lxxii):

“False Prophets Then and Now” p.307

“The Pattern of the Prophets” p.320

“Prophetesses in the Bible” p.389

“Kings and Prophets of Judah and Israel” p.529 \*

“Prophets whose names appear in italic have written books of Scripture.”

Not listed are Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (perhaps as “post-king” prophets)

Confer and compare on p.1082

Especially Obadiah, Zechariah, Hosea, Jeremiah, Zephaniah

Confer and compare the “Salvation History is Our Story: Bible Overview” handout

“Making a Prophet” p.555

“Passion for the Prophets” p.751 \*

“The Books of the Prophets” (& “The Word of a Prophet”) pp.1077-1078 (not on *TLNB*’s “List”) \*

The extended Luther quotation is from his 1532/1545 “Preface to the Prophets”

“Key Terms and Phrases in the Books of the Prophets” pp.1078-1080 \*

“All the Prophets” pp.1081-1083 \*

“The names of writing prophets are italic” but that does not mean the writing survived

Confer and compare on p.529

Especially Obadiah, Zechariah, Hosea, Jeremiah, Zephaniah

“Prophetic Perspective” p.1258

“Postures and Gestures” p.1276-1277

“Prophecy Foreshadows the Appearing of Christ” p.1493

Identity, location, and dating (and therefore chronological sequence) may be uncertain/debated

Closing Prayer & Benediction

# All the Prophets Testify

We might understandably wrongly think that the prophetic books of the Old Testament are not so relevant for us today, since at least some of what they fore-tell has already happened, including the coming of the long-promised Messiah, our Savior Jesus Christ. Yet, at least in part precisely because they still forth-tell of the Christ, they remain relevant! Furthermore, their unchanging law that shows sin and their Gospel that forgives sin apply not only to the people for whom they originally prophesied but also to all people, including us. And, that is not to mention that at least some of what the Prophets fore-tell has *not* already happened, such as the Last Day with its resurrection of all of the dead and its final at least declaratory judgment of the living and the dead, which judgment sends unrepentant unbelievers to the eternal torment of hell and leaves repentant believers under a new sky on a new earth for eternal life with God. The apostle Peter preached that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead and said that to Him “All the Prophets Testify” that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name ([Acts 10:42-43](#)). Similarly, the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans and to us that the Law and the Prophets testify to the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe ([Romans 3:21-22](#)).

Although not all of the Old Testament prophets necessarily wrote books, when the Divinely-inspired St. Paul and others so refer to “the Prophets”, they essentially are referring to “The Prophets” as a category of Old Testament books (along with the “Law” and “Writings”), but they are not referring to “The Prophets” as we usually might think of them. For example, we tend to think of the Old Testament books in the order that we find them in our English Bibles, and we typically think of two subcategories of the Prophetic Books in that order: the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel) and the Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi). However, the original Hebrew and later Greek collections of those prophetic works had their own sequences and groupings. For example, they might speak both of “Former Prophets”, such as Joshua and Samuel, who wrote what sometimes are called “Historical Books”, and of “Latter Prophets”, such as Isaiah and Amos, who wrote what can seem to more of a sermon, whether in prose or poetry. Pilgrim’s immediately-preceding Midweek Bible Study, “[Salvation History is Our Story](#)”, arguably covered the “Former Prophets” as that Study traced the historical narrative of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and this immediately-following Midweek Bible Study, “All the Prophets Testify”, intends to cover the “Latter Prophets” in the order not of the Hebrew, Greek, or English Bibles but in what is thought to be the order of their writing.

This Midweek Bible Study does not belabor every original Hebrew word, nor does it rapidly skim a whole book in one session, but the Study intends to avoid those extremes and, at a moderate pace, to appreciate God’s Divinely-inspired and therefore inerrant Word spoken through the prophets, especially as that Word applies to us today. Pilgrim’s Midweek Bible Study meets live on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., both in-person in the Conference Room/Library found in the Office Area and on-line via Jitsi (see the link near the top of the page in the grey-widget area on the right). All are welcome! Those participating online only by streaming or downloading are welcome to submit questions using the contact information at right, and we will attempt to address those questions the session after the questions are received. Note that, while generally weekly, Midweek Bible Study is subject both to cancelled dates for pastor’s vacation and holidays and to hiatuses for Advent and Lent, when Pilgrim usually offers a Vespers service on the same day at the same time, in-person in the Sanctuary and on-line via YouTube (again see the link near the top of the page on the right). Finally, as they are available, both PDFs of handouts and recordings of audio and video to stream or download are linked below in reverse order, with the most-recent session first.



Shown is the first column of the Great Isaiah Scroll, the oldest complete copy of the book of Isaiah (apart from some small damaged parts), written in 34 columns on 17 sheets of parchment about 10 inches high, with a total length of about 24 feet. *The work is in the public domain in its country of origin and so this photographic reproduction of it (found [here](#)) is also considered to be in the public domain in the United States.*

## Kings and Prophets of Judah and Israel

The kingdoms of Judah and Israel began as one kingdom under the rule of Saul (1048–1009 BC). They were divided briefly when David reigned in Hebron (1009–1002 BC) and Saul's son Ish-bosheth (1009–1008 BC) reigned in Mahanaim. Some years after Ish-bosheth was murdered by rivals, David became ruler of all Israel from Jerusalem; he subdued Israel's traditional enemies (1002–970 BC). David's son Solomon succeeded him and further expanded the kingdom (970–931 BC). But

Solomon's son Rehoboam did not manage the kingdom well, and it split into Judah and Israel (also called Ephraim in the Old Testament). The chart below presents an overview of the kings of Judah and Israel along with the prophets who served in these kingdoms. (Overlapping dates within a kingdom indicate co-regencies; see shaded areas. Prophets whose names appear in *italics* have written books of Scripture. Pious kings who introduced reforms are marked with an asterisk.)

| Prophets of Judah   | Kings of Judah    | Reigns in Judah (BC) | 10th century BC | Reigns in Israel (BC)   | Kings of Israel | Prophets of Israel              |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Shemaiah  | Rehoboam          | 931–914              |                 | 931–910   | Jeroboam        | <i>Ahijah</i>                   |
|   | Abijam            | 914–911              |                 | 910–909   | Nadab           |                                 |
| Azariah<br>Hanani<br>Jehu   | Asa*              | 911–870              |                 | 909–887   | Baasha          |                                 |
|   |                   |                      | 9th century BC  | 886–885   | Elah            |                                 |
|   |                   |                      |                 | 885   | Zimri           |                                 |
|   |                   |                      |                 | 885–880   | Tibni           |                                 |
|   |                   |                      |                 | 885–874   | Omri            |                                 |
| Jahaziel<br>Eliezer   | Jehoshaphat*      | 873–848              |                 | 874–853   | Ahab            | <i>Elijah</i><br><i>Micaiah</i> |
|   |                   |                      |                 | 853–852   | Ahaziah         | <i>Elisha</i>                   |
| <i>Obadiah</i>  | Jehoram           | 853–841              |                 | 852–841   | J(eh)oram       |                                 |
|   | Ahaziah           | 841                  |                 |   |                 |                                 |
| Priest: Jehoiada  | Athaliah          | 841–835              | 841–814         | Jehu  |                 |                                 |
| <i>Zechariah</i><br><i>Joel</i>   | Joash*            | 835–796              | 814–796         | Jehoahaz  |                 |                                 |
|   | Amaziah           | 796–767              | 8th century BC  | 798–782   | Jehoash         | <i>Jonah</i>                    |
|   | Azariah (Uzziah)  | 792–740              |                 | 793–753   | Jeroboam II     | <i>Amos</i>                     |
| <i>Isaiah</i><br><i>Micah</i>   | Jotham            | 750–735              |                 | 753   | Zechariah       |                                 |
|   |                   |                      |                 | 752   | Shallum         |                                 |
|   |                   |                      |                 | 752–742   | Menahem         |                                 |
|   |                   |                      |                 | 742–732   | Pekah           |                                 |
|   | Ahaz              | 735–715              |                 | 742–740   | Pekahiah        | <i>Oded</i>                     |
|   |                   |                      |                 | 732–722   | Hoshea          | <i>Hosea</i>                    |
| <i>Nahum</i>  | Hezekiah*         | 715–686              |                 | 722   | Fall of Samaria |                                 |
|   | Manasseh          | 696–642              |                 |   |                 |                                 |
| <i>Habakkuk</i><br><i>Zephaniah</i><br><i>Huldah</i><br><i>Jeremiah</i> | Amon              | 642–640              | 7th century BC  | The Assyrians deported people from Galilee and Transjordan as early as 733 BC. They crushed Syria in 732 BC. God permitted Assyria finally to destroy idolatrous Israel in 722 BC. Much of the Israelite population was deported and assimilated into upper Mesopotamia (2Ki 15:8–17:23). Assyria resettled other peoples in Israel (2Ki 17:24–41).   |                 |                                 |
|   | Josiah*           | 640–609              |                 |   |                 |                                 |
|   | Jehoahaz          | 609                  |                 |   |                 |                                 |
| <i>Daniel</i><br><i>Ezekiel</i>   | Jehoiakim         | 609–598              | 6th century BC  | Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon in 605 BC. He deported Jehoiachin of Judah and others in 597 BC (2Ki 24:8–17; 2Ch 36:9–10). More deportations occurred in 587 BC after Jerusalem was destroyed (2Ki 25:1–25; 2Ch 36:11–21). Other Judeans escaped to Egypt after further unrest (2Ki 25:22–26), which resulted in a further deportation c.582 BC. The Judeans lived in refugee colonies in the vicinity of Babylon and were not assimilated. In 539 BC, Cyrus of Persia triumphed over the Babylonians. In 538 BC, he approved the return of the Judeans to their homeland. |                 |                                 |
|   | Jehoiachin        | 598–597              |                 |   |                 |                                 |
|   | Zedekiah          | 597–587              |                 |   |                 |                                 |
|   | Fall of Jerusalem | 587                  |                 |   |                 |                                 |
|   | Restoration       | 537 BC               |                 |   |                 |                                 |

## Passion for the Prophets

confronted them and cursed them," wrote Nehemiah, "and beat some of them and pulled out their hair" (Ne 13:25). After decades in exile, Nehemiah and the other people of Judah returned to their homeland with a new passion against breaches of the Law. This new passion represented a dramatic change in their religion.

Before the exile in Babylon, the prophets seemed to preach to deaf ears. For the most part, the people did not heed their impassioned message of repentance. But through suffering and disappointments, through the persistent word of the prophets, the people of Judah (from which we get the word *Judaism*) returned to their homeland zealous for purity amidst the lawlessness of the nations. In the hope that they would never again suffer exile, the Judean people passionately followed the teachings of the Law and the Prophets.

### Scribes and Scrolls

Before the exile in Babylon, the Israelite Bible consisted of "the book," the Law of God ("Torah")—the five books recorded by the prophet Moses (8:8). After the exile, scribes such as Ezra collected the writings of the prophets, preserving them for public reading and study (8:13; this work would include the books of the "Former Prophets" and the "Latter Prophets"; see pp 1077–83). They laid the foundation for the Judaic synagogue gatherings in Jesus' day.

The scribes preserved the passionate preaching of the prophets. The harsh conditions amid the rubble of Jerusalem demanded harsh discipline. For example, as Nehemiah and the people labored to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, false prophets opposed them and prophesied against them (6:10–14). When the people of the land continued to marry foreigners—worshippers of other gods—Nehemiah and Ezra responded forcefully (Ezr 10; Ne 13:23–29). They feared that the people would fall into idolatry again.

### Foreign Tongues

An important feature of Nehemiah's zeal had to do with languages. He noted that when Judean people married foreigners, many of their children grew up speaking a foreign language (13:23–24). The children would not grow up hearing and reading the message of the prophets in the Hebrew language. He saw in these marriages the destruction of

God's people. Even a son of the high priest had married the daughter of Sanballat, a Babylonian governor in Samaria (13:28).

In an effort to remain faithful to the message of the prophets, Nehemiah drove the high priest's son out of Jerusalem. He cursed the people who married foreigners and demanded that they take an oath not to let their sons and daughters marry outsiders. His zeal for the Law and concern for cultural boundaries became a characteristic of later Judaism. His concern about foreign languages was the beginning of a long debate in Judaism about which language was appropriate for prayer. Many rabbis came to regard Hebrew as the language of the temple and the only language appropriate for prayer. Like Nehemiah, they wanted to preserve the original language of the prophets.

### A Message for All Nations

Harsh times demand harsh measures. Who can fault Nehemiah's zeal or concern for purity in the wake of a national tragedy such as the destruction of Jerusalem? However, the message of the prophets was about more than purity. The prophets foresaw the repentance of all nations (Is 2:1–5). Instead of fearing the inclusion of outsiders, the prophets anticipated a day when God would gather people of all nations and all languages to Himself (Ps 102:12–22). They preached a message of repentance and forgiveness for all people.

Thanks be to God, this message has circled the globe to reach your ears and call you to faith in Jesus Christ. Today, the Gospel of Jesus has reached almost every nation. The message of the prophets has been translated into thousands of languages.

Don't settle for simply reading and studying the Prophets. Look for opportunities to share that message of freedom and forgiveness with those who have not yet heard or believed. Support the preaching of the Gospel in your area and among the nations.

Whereas Nehemiah rebuked his countrymen and called down curses on them for marrying foreigners, we praise God and bless Him for delivering His forgiveness to foreigners. Each time you gather with God's people, call down His blessing upon them and your community. Rejoice in the forgiveness and new life available to you and all people through Christ, the Savior.

## ISAIAH THROUGH MALACHI

# The Books of the Prophets

**THE 17 BOOKS OF THE MAJOR AND MINOR** Prophets form an important division of the Old Testament, as confirmed by early Jewish literature (Ecclus 49:10; 2Macc 15:9; 4 Maccabees 18:10) and the New Testament (cf Mt 5:17; 7:12; Lk 16:29; 24:27, 44; Ac 13:15; 24:14; 28:23). The ministry of these "Latter Prophets," as they came to be known among the Jews, spanned from the eighth century BC to the fifth century BC, after which the prophets ceased to speak (see pp 155-58, 1081-83).

Whereas the Former Prophets wrote historically and chronologically (see "Books of History," pp 335-37), the Latter Prophets wrote what feel to us like sermons. However, even though the Latter Prophets wrote portions of their books in prose, they frequently gave their messages in poetry (see p 775-78).

At the time of the New Testament, the Sadducees held the Books of Moses as authoritative Scripture in distinction from other writings or traditions (Jos, *Ant* 13:297; 18:16). The Samaritans likewise had their edition of the Books of Moses but did not accept other Old Testament books. The Egyptian Jewish scholar Philo (c 20 BC-c AD 50) referred to the Psalms and the Prophets as sacred and inspired (*De ebrietate* 143; *On the Cherubim* 49). But he almost never cited them, focusing constantly on the Books of Moses. Later rabbinic Judaism regarded the Psalms and Prophets as authoritative. Yet they distinguished the Books of Moses as most important.<sup>1</sup> But this is not how the early Christians received the Prophets. Christians received the prophetic writings as God's very Word, of equal authority to any other part of Holy Scripture, a matter that the prophets themselves greatly emphasized (see "Thus says the LORD," p 1080).

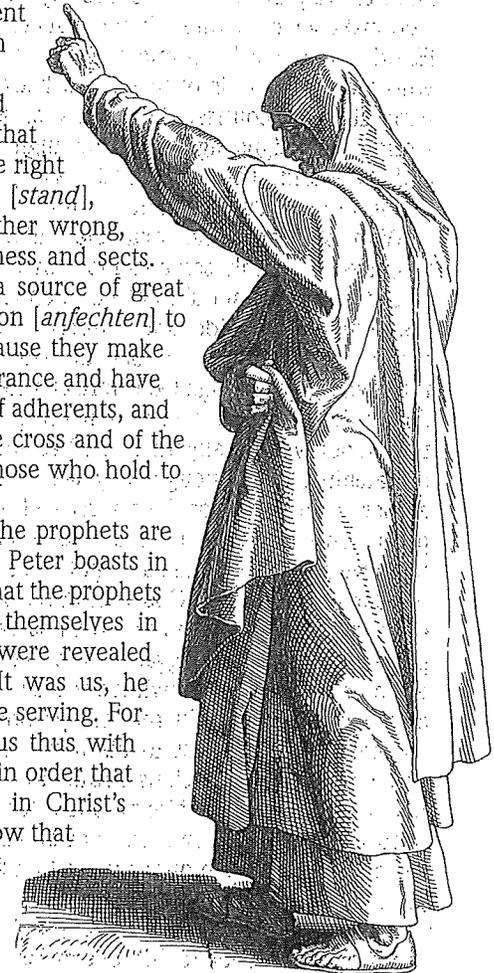
Luther described two great contributions of

<sup>1</sup>See Mishnah Megillah 4:4; Rosh HaShanah 4:6; Bava Batra 12a; Nedarim 22b; Niddah 23a. See also Hummel, p 155.

the Prophetic Books: (1) their prophecies of salvation in Christ and (2) their preaching of the Commandments. He wrote:

We Christians ought not to be such shameful, satiated, ungrateful know-it-alls, but rather read and use the prophets with earnestness and profit. For, in the first place, the prophets proclaim and bear witness to the kingdom of Christ in which we now live, and in which all believers in Christ have heretofore lived, and will live until the end of the world. For us there is strong comfort and comforting strength in having for our Christian life such mighty and ancient witnesses. By them our Christian faith is greatly comforted in the confidence that before God it is the right station or stance [*stand*], over against all other wrong, false, human holiness and sects. For these all are a source of great offense and affliction [*anfechten*] to a weak heart, because they make such a good appearance and have such a multitude of adherents, and also because of the cross and of the small number of those who hold to Christian faith. . . .

For this, then, the prophets are useful to us, as St. Peter boasts in I Peter 1[:11-12] that the prophets were not serving themselves in the things which were revealed to them, but us. It was us, he says, that they were serving. For they have served us thus with their prophesying, in order that he who would be in Christ's kingdom might know that he himself must first suffer many things before he comes to glory,



and govern himself accordingly. By this we become sure of two things: first, that the great glory of Christ's kingdom is surely ours, and will come hereafter; and, second, that it is nevertheless preceded by crosses, shame, misery, contempt, and all kinds of suffering for the sake of Christ. The purpose is that we shall not grow discouraged through impatience or unbelief, or despair of that future glory, which is to be so great that even the angels desire to see it [1 Pet. 1:12].

In the second place the prophets show us many great examples and experiences which illustrate the first commandment. They explicate it in masterly fashion, in both words and examples, so as to drive us powerfully to the fear of God and to faith, and to keep us in them. For after they have prophesied of Christ's kingdom, all the rest is nothing but examples of how God has so strictly and severely confirmed his first commandment. So to read or hear the prophets is surely nothing else than to read and hear how God threatens and comforts. God threatens the godless, who feel proud and secure. And if threatening does not help, he backs it up with penalties, pestilence, famine, war, until they are destroyed. Thus does God make good his threat in the first commandment [Exod. 20:5]. But he comforts those who fear him, who are in all kinds of need, and backs it up also with aid and counsel, by means of all kinds of wonders and signs, against all the might of the devil and the world. Thus does God make good also his comfort in the first commandment [Exod. 20:6].

With sermons and examples like these the prophets repeatedly serve us more than abundantly, in order that we should not be offended when we see with what pride and assurance the godless despise God's word and pay no attention to his threatenings, as though God were an utter nonentity. For in the prophets we see that things have never turned out well for any man who has despised God's threatening, even though they were the mightiest emperors and kings or the holiest and most learned people on whom the sun ever shone. On the other hand we see that no one has ever been deserted who has dared to rely upon God's comforts and promises, even though they were the most miserable and the poorest sinners and beggars that were ever on the earth, indeed, even though it were a slain Abel and a swallowed Jonah. By this the prophets prove to us that God holds fast to his first commandment and wills to be a gracious Father to the poor and believing, and that for him no one is too small or too despised. He wills, however, to be an angry Judge to the godless and the proud; and for him no one is too great, too mighty, too wise, too holy. . . .

To be sure, there is in the prophets more of threatening and rebuke than of comfort and promise.

And it is good to observe the reason for this. The godless always outnumber the righteous. Therefore one must always inculcate the law much more than the promises. Even without the promises, the godless feel secure; they are most agile in applying the divine comforts and promises to themselves, and the threats and rebukes to others. Nor do they let themselves be turned away, by any means, from this perverted notion and false hope. For their motto is "Peace and security; all is well." They stick to that, and by it go merrily to destruction, as St. Paul says, "Destruction comes upon them suddenly [1 Thess. 5:3]." (AE 35:265-68)

### The Work of a Prophet

The Books of the Prophets and other portions of the Old Testament show that a prophet was not simply a preacher who explained and applied an existing text of the Bible. God delivered messages directly to the prophets.

The background of the most common Hebrew term for "prophet" (*nabi*) is disputed. Some believe the root word means "to pour forth," as though speaking in an ecstatic trance. These interpreters point to passages such as 1Sm 10:9-13; 1Ki 22:8; and Jer 29:26 as examples of this idea (they also point to examples of ecstatic behavior from other ancient religions). Notably, when the Hebrew verb "prophesy" is used of false prophets, it occurs in a special form and may be translated "rave" (1Sm 18:10; 1Ki 18:29). This shows that the Israelites may have distinguished the extreme behaviors of false prophets. Most commonly, "prophet" describes a spokesman for God and does not assume an ecstatic experience (see "Thus says the LORD," "declares the LORD," and "word of the LORD [that] came," pp. 1079-80).

Another important term is "seer" (Hebrew *chozeh*, from a verb for "seeing" or "perceiving"; 1Sm 9:9). The Lord often showed or revealed things to the prophets in a dream or dreamlike state (see p. 74).

Ultimately, the prophets were men sent to speak the Lord's Word. Their chief task was to confront the people's sin, to bring them to repentance, and so restore them to a right relationship with God (cf 2Ki 17:13, 23; 21:10-12).

On the service of prophetesses, see p. 389.

### Key Terms and Phrases in the Books of the Prophets

Though the prophets clearly build upon earlier writers such as Moses, their writings include many unique expressions. For more about the word lists in *TLSB*, see the introductory comments, p. 5.

*ah*. See *woe*.

*backsliding*. From Hbr *shub* (see *turn*). Describes a person turning away from the Lord to follow his own way. ESV also translates with Eng "apostasy."

**burden.** Hbr *massa'* (cf Zec 9:1; 12:1). Also translated "oracle" (Is 13:1; Mal 1:1), emphasizing that what the prophets spoke were words of the Lord and not their own words. The translation "burden" emphasizes that the prophet must deliver a word of judgment on the Lord's enemies (Jer 23:33).

**captivity.** Hbr *galuth*. Singular noun that may describe a group of people taken into exile. Through Moses (Dt 28:41), the Lord warned that Israel would be taken from the Promised Land if they disobeyed the covenant (see "portion," p 7). The prophets later announced the captivity, and Jeremiah gave it special emphasis. The term was used almost exclusively for the Judean exiles who suffered the Babylonian captivity.

**comfort.** Hbr *nacham*, "to be sorry," "to regret," or "to pity," leading to acts of care for those who were hurt. Isaiah esp emphasizes that the Lord comforts His people (cf Is 40:1; 49:13; 51:3, 12, 19). See *relent*.

**daughter(s) of Jerusalem/Judah/Zion.** First appears chronologically in a psalm of David (Ps 9:14). Plural "daughters" occurs in Sg. Otherwise, these expressions are associated with the prophets and are very common in Lam. They may refer to the cities or towns surrounding Jerusalem (see note, Ps 97:8) but often refer to the young women in and around Jerusalem who celebrated the victories of the city or mourned its siege and destruction. The important role of women as singers may stand behind these expressions (cf Ex 15:20-21; Jgs 11:34; 1Sm 18:6; Ps 68:25; Jer 31:4; Zep 3:14; Zec 2:10; 9:9). See p 389.

**day of the LORD.** Refers to a time (not strictly 24 hours) in which God dramatically reveals and/or executes His judgment by condemning the wicked and delivering the righteous. The prophets often use this phrase with reference to the end of history (cf 2Pt 3:10); yet it does not always have this ultimate sense. See notes, Jl 1:15; Am 5:18-20.

**declares the LORD.** The second most common indicator of a prophetic statement, occurring over 340 times. See *Thus says the LORD*.

**Ephraim.** The dominant and centrally located tribe in northern Israel; it became synonymous with the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel after they divided from the Southern Kingdom of Judah. See map, p 558. See also *Israel* and *Judah*. Cf Gn 48:20; Dt 33:17; 2Sm 2:8-9; 1Ki 12.

**exiles.** See *captivity*.

**idols.** Hbr *gilulim*, "dung pellets" (always plural; related terms used in Jb 20:7; 1Ki 14:10; Ezk 4:12, 15; Zep 1:17). Expresses the utter derision the prophets felt

toward pagan idols: One of 10 OT terms for idols; Ezk uses it repeatedly (38 of 47 appearances in the OT).

*in that day.* See *on that day*.

**Israel.** The name God gave to the patriarch Jacob (Gn 32:28); it became (1) the name for the 12 tribes of the nation that descended from Jacob and (2) the name of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (see *Ephraim*). In the NT, Israel becomes a name for the Church, which constitutes believers from all nations (Rm 9:6; Gal 6:16). God had chosen ancient Israel for His special purposes (cf Dt 7) and gave them covenant promises. The same promises do not apply to the modern political state of Israel.

*Jacob.* See *Israel*.

**Judah.** The royal tribe of ancient Israel (prophesied in Gn 49:8-12) that supported David in strengthening and extending the kingdom of Israel (2Sm 2-5). When Israel split under Rehoboam (1Ki 12), descendants of David continued to rule the southern tribes as the separate "kingdom of Judah." See map, p 558. After exile in Babylon, people of Judah resettled their former territory and rebuilt the temple. See note, Ezr 4:12. See also *Ephraim* and *Israel*.

**know that I am the LORD.** Phrase first spoken to Moses to describe a result of the exodus (Ex 6:7). However, over 80 percent of its uses are as a "recognition formula" in Ezk. When used in pronouncing judgment, it describes how the people must learn the truth through punishment (e.g., Eng expression "learn the hard way"). However, this phrase often follows announcements of God's mercy, affirming the sincerity of believers' repentance and faith.

*latter days.* See *on that day*.

**on that day.** Can simply mean "then," but appears often in the Prophets with reference to the "day of the LORD" (see above). Cf Is 24:18-20; 29:5-8; 66:15; HoS 3:5; Jl 2:30-3:16; Am 5:18-20; Zep 1:14-18; Zec 14:1-5.

*oracle.* See *burden*.

*prophet.* See pp 1077-78, 1080-83.

**relent.** Hbr *nacham*. See *comfort*, which translates the same term. "The LORD relented/repented" is a metaphor of the Lord changing a previous pronouncement of judgment. The metaphor appears at some key junctures in Scripture: the flood (Gn 6:6), the Sinai revelation (Ex 32:12-14), and the institution of the monarchy (1Sm 15:11, 35). It also appears in psalmody and creedal statements (cf Ps 106:45; Jer 18:7-10; Jl 2:13; Jnh 4:2). In 35 examples, the Lord is the subject of this verb. At first, these passages may appear to contradict

other statements that He does not change previous decisions (Nu 23:19; 1Sm 15:29; Ps 110:4; Jer 4:28; 20:16; Ezk 24:14; Hos 13:14; Zec 8:14). However, the passages listed here divide into two types: (1) There are certain promises the Lord has made that He will never change. Five describe the Lord's refusal to change His decision concerning the judgment of 587 BC, and one (Ps 110:4) speaks of His unwillingness to change the eternal priesthood and order of Melchizedek. (2) Two passages speak of His refusal to change His will (Nu 23:19; 1Sm 15:29). These are statements of principle (i.e., God is not a man that He should go against a prior decision). He is constant with respect to His Gospel promises made to Abraham and David (cf Ezk 18:23, 32). He is unchangeable in His nature (Ps 102:27; Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17).

**remnant.** Hbr *she'ar*, "rest, remainder." A common term that gains special use in the Prophetic Books. The term may express God's condemnation (Is 10:22) or His mercy (Is 37:31). Though destruction would come upon God's chosen people, He would not annihilate them. God would keep His promises and preserve a remnant of people who would reconstitute the holy people, which becomes the Church in the NT.

**repent.** See *turn*.

**restore the fortunes.** Yet another use of Hbr *shub*. Lit, "return the things turned over [to someone]." So, this is not a request for mere luck. The idea is closely related to the blessings of the new creation depicted as the new land of Israel (Ezk 47:3-12). In the NT, restoration describes what God effects through the coming of the messianic kingdom (cf Mt 17:11; Ac 1:6; 15:16; 1Pt 5:10).

**return.** See *turn*.

**shepherd.** Common title for Israel's leaders (cf Jer 23; 25; Ezk 34; Mi 5; Zec 11). This title provides the NT basis for the office of pastor (cf Jn 21:15-17; 1Pt 2:25; 5:2-4). On leadership in Israel, see p 228.

**son of man.** Appears early in statements of non-Israelites (cf Nu 23:19; Jb 16:21; 25:6; 35:8), which may characterize their non-Hebrew language(s). However, c 85 percent of OT examples appear later in Ezk, who was exiled among Aram speakers in Babylon (cf Dn 7:13; 8:17). The expression is likely borrowed from Aram, where it simply means a human being, a person. For its transformation in the NT, see note, Dn 7:13; see also p 2098.

**Thus says the LORD.** The most common indicator of a prophetic statement, used over 400 times in the OT, mostly in the Books of the Prophets. Indicates a personal, supernatural communication from God to the prophet (see note, Zec 4:9). The prophets typically do not identify their statements as their own messages,

nor as something resulting from a collaborative effort with the Lord. Such expressions affirm that the prophets truly spoke the Word of God, which must be fulfilled (see notes, Dt 18:15-22). See *declares the LORD* and *word of the LORD (that) came*.

**turn.** Hbr *shub*, "to turn, turn around." A very common verb, used over 1,000 times in the OT. Appropriately translated "repent" in more than 100 cases, most often in Jer (Is rarely uses the term this way). Repentance is God's work (see note, Jer 31:18) that leads a person to renounce sin—requesting God's mercy and returning to His way (see "way," p 842). For a classic OT example, see David's confession and prayer in Ps 51.

**woe.** Hbr *'oy* and *hoy*, also translated "oh!" or "alas." Interjection expressing sadness or warning. The prophets frequently begin pronouncements of judgment with this term, which may introduce a series of condemnations.

**woman in labor.** Common metaphor in the Prophetic Books; describes the greatest distress a person can experience.

**word of the LORD (that) came.** Used over 100 times in the OT, mostly in the Books of the Prophets. Prophetic revelations are described as a "word" that God delivered to the prophets and through them. (Cf Jer 1:1-2; Ezk 1:3; Jl 1:1; Jnh 1:1; Mi 1:1; Zep 1:1; Hg 1:1; Zec 1:1; Mal 1:1). Sometimes the "word" is accompanied by a vision (Is 1:1; Ezk 1:1) or is somehow "seen" (Am 1:1; Mi 1:1; Hab 1:1). See *Thus says the LORD* and *declares the LORD*.

**word that came . . . from the LORD.** Introductory statement used by Jeremiah. See *word of the LORD (that) came*.

#### Observations about Israelite Literature

Some nineteenth-century critical scholars insisted that most Israelite literature developed later than the Bible describes, or, most radically, that all the Old Testament Scriptures were written after the Babylonian exile (587 BC). However, a careful assessment of the prophets' writings shows important contradictions to such theories.

The prophets often use expressions that well fit the kingdom period of Israel's history (1048 BC-587 BC), during which the prophets were most active. These same expressions rarely or never occur in earlier Israelite literature (the Books of Moses, Jsh, Jgs, and Jb). Here are some examples:

**Phrases.** The prophets use "declares the LORD" more than 300 times, an expression that almost never appears in writings before the kingdom period (exceptions being Gn 22:16; Nu 14:28). "Day of the LORD" is a distinct expression of the prophets. "Daughters of Israel" appears in some earlier texts (Dt 23:17; Jgs 11:40; 2Sm 1:24), but it is eclipsed by the prophets' frequent use of "daughter(s) of Jerusalem/Judah/Zion."

**Titles.** "LORD of hosts" and "Holy One of Israel" do not occur in the earlier literature but are common during the time of the prophets.

**Metaphors.** The idea of the Lord as King appears in a few verses of the earlier literature. (Nu 23:21; Dt 33:5; Jb 18:14; two of these examples are from non-Israelites). But the idea of the Lord's kingship expands greatly during the kingdom period. The prophets even develop royal titles to express this thought. Also, the prophets often use the metaphor of "a woman in labor" to describe the distress coming with God's judgment. This metaphor does not occur in the earlier texts.

**Idols/Idolatry.** Prophetic Books before the exile of

ten rail against problems of idolatry or mention names of specific deities. The postexilic prophets (Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) hardly mention idolatry as an issue or complain about abuse of the "high places" where pagan sacrifices often occurred (see pp 526–27). This corresponds well to what is known from archaeological remains, in which idols are frequently found prior to the exile but disappear afterward. See note, Ex 34:13.

Examples such as these show that nineteenth-century critical assumptions about the writing of the Bible did not comprehend the long history of Israelite literature or its reliability. See pp 3–7, 335–37.

## All the Prophets

Breaks and intermissions punctuated the ministry of the prophets. The charts below list the names of men in the Bible called prophets, seers, and visionaries or men participating in these activities. Use these charts to get a complete picture of the ministry of the prophets. To learn more about prophetesses and their service, see p 389. (The names of writing prophets are italic. Dates are approximate.)

### Ancient History and Patriarchs

| Prophet and Date              | References          | Notes  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Enoch, ancient history        | Gn 5:21–24; Jude 14 | Early on, the prophets focused on leadership of their clan or nation. The Bible describes them more as leaders for God's people than as spokesmen for God. Although other ancient cultures had people who predicted the future or served as divinely inspired guides for kings (e.g., the "diviners" or "nabu" of the Mari texts found along the Euphrates River dated to the 18th century BC), the Israelites emphasized leaders who heard from and spoke to God. |
| Job, 3rd or 2nd millennium BC | Jb 7:14             |  |
| Abraham, c 2100 BC            | Gn 20:7             |  |
| Jacob, 1876 BC                | Gn 46:2             |  |

There is silence for about 400 years; prophets seem to come and go throughout Israel's history. During Israel's time in Egypt, no prophets are described. At times, it seems that the ministry of the prophets goes away.

### Exodus and Conquest

| Prophet and Date                | References  | Notes   |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---|
| Moses, 1446 BC                  | Dt 18:18    | Moses is perhaps the consummate example of a prophet. He is called by God to lead His people. He speaks for God and works His miracles. These features define the role of later prophets, whose ministries often conflict with the people God calls them to lead. |
| Aaron, 1446 BC                  | Ex 7:1      |   |
| Seventy elders, 1445 BC         | Nu 11:25    |   |
| Elders Eldad and Medad, 1445 BC | Nu 11:26–29 |   |
| Unnamed prophet, c 1175 BC      | Jgs 6:8     |   |

There is silence for about 300 years; after the death of Moses, a virtual silence about prophets occurs in Scripture.

### Kingdom of Israel

| Prophet and Date                             | References          | Notes   |
|--|---------------------|---|
| Priest Samuel, 1160 BC                       | 1Sm 3:1–4:1         | As Israel becomes a kingdom, the prophets often serve as advisers to the king (court prophets). The great prophet of this era is Samuel, who shares many characteristics with Moses. Samuel seems to lead the "sons of the prophets." Perhaps a formal training for prophets exists at this time. See p 555.  |
| Procession of prophets, 1048 BC              | 1Sm 10:10; 19:18–24 |   |
| Saul, 1048 BC                                | 1Sm 10:9–13         | This period of Israel's history also highlights the prophets' role in worship and song. Musical instruments accompany the prophesying. David, himself a prophet and composer, lavishly supports the musical offerings of the Levites at the tabernacle. This connection between prophecy and music may help explain why so many of the prophets write poetry (song lyrics). See also p 389. |
| Court prophet Gad, 1010 BC                   | 1Sm 22:5            |   |
| Court prophet Nathan, 1000 BC                | 2Sm 7:1–17          |   |
| King David, 1000 BC                          | 1Sm 16–1Ki 1        |   |
| High priest and seer Zadok, 1000 BC          | 2Sm 15:27           |   |
| Court prophets and Levite musicians, 1000 BC | 1Ch 25:1–5          |   |
| Asaph the seer, 1000 BC                      | 2Ch 29:30           |   |
| Agur   | Pr 30:1             |   |
| King Lemuel                                  | Pr 31:1             |   |

(cont.)

The Kingdom Divided

| Prophet and Date                          | References                           | Notes   |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| Ahijah the Shilonite, c 931 BC            | 1Ki 11:29                            | When Israel divides into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, the prophets have the special task of calling the people to repentance. The kings continue to seek prophetic approval by introducing and supporting false prophets. The great prophetic figure of this era is Elijah, whose showdown with the prophets of Baal demonstrates the important role both true and false prophets play in ancient Israel.<br><br>Few writing prophets stem from this period. Early on, few people would have had the skill for such work. Government officials may have practiced writing almost exclusively for administrative reasons. For example, Moses probably learned to read and write in Egypt and may have passed that skill to Joshua (Jsh 1:8). Samuel is the next prophet described as writing, more than 300 years later (1Sm 10:25). However, by the time of Hezekiah, the king could issue an edict and expect that it would be read throughout the land (2Ch 30:6). |
| Shemaiah, 931 BC                          | 1Ki 12:22-24; 2Ch 11:2-4; 12:5-7, 15 |   |
| Iddo the seer, c 931 BC                   | 2Ch 9:29; 12:15; 13:22               |   |
| Old prophet in Bethel                     | 1Ki 13:11-32                         |   |
| Unnamed prophet in Judah                  | 1Ki 13:1-32                          |   |
| Unnamed prophet in Israel                 | 1Ki 20:13-30                         |   |
| Azariah, son of Oded, 911 BC              | 2Ch 15:1-8                           |   |
| Hanani the seer, 870 BC                   | 2Ch 16:7                             |   |
| Micaiah, 863 BC                           | 1Ki 22:1-28; 2Ch 18:6-27             |   |
| Elijah, c 875 BC                          | 1Ki 17-19                            |   |
| Elisha, c 870 BC                          | 1Ki 19:16-21                         |   |
| A son of the prophets                     | 1Ki 20:35-43                         |   |
| Jehu, son of Hanani, 853 BC               | 2Ch 19:2                             |   |
| Levite Jahaziel, c 850 BC                 | 2Ch 20:14-20                         |   |
| Eliezer, son of Dodavahu, c 850 BC        | 2Ch 20:37                            |   |
| Sons of the prophets at Bethel, c 855 BC  | 2Ki 2:3                              |   |
| Sons of the prophets at Jericho, c 855 BC | 2Ki 2:5                              |   |

Collapse of Israel and Judah

| Prophet and Date                           | References                       | Notes   |
|--|----------------------------------|---|
| Young prophet                              | 2Ki 9:1-13                       | As the spiritual and political threat of Assyria and Babylon grows, so do the activities of the prophets. The abundance of prophetic writing seems to correspond with the growth of literacy during the rise and decline of Israel as a nation. In other words, God leads the prophets to use this new means of communicating His Word.   |
| Joel, 9th century BC                       | Book of Joel                     |   |
| Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, c 800 BC       | 2Ch 24:20-22; Mt 23:35; Lk 11:51 |   |
| Jonah, c 790 BC                            | 2Ki 14:23-25; Book of Jonah      |   |
| Unnamed prophet                            | 2Ch 25:15                        |   |
| Amos, 8th century BC                       | Book of Amos                     |   |
| Hosea, 8th century BC                      | Book of Hosea                    |   |
| Isaiah, 8th century BC                     | Book of Isaiah                   |   |
| Micah, 8th century BC                      | Book of Micah                    |   |
| Priest Jeremiah, 7th century BC            | Book of Jeremiah                 |   |
| Nahum, 7th century BC                      | Book of Nahum                    | After the Judeans returned from exile in Babylon, they gathered the Prophetic Books together with the Law of Moses. In these centuries after the exile, the Jewish synagogue formed, where the Judeans read the Law and the Prophets and sang the Psalms wherever they settled. Synagogues started first among the Judeans who lived farther from the temple (the Diaspora). According to the Palestinian Talmud, 480 synagogues existed in Jerusalem alone by the first century AD, the time of Jesus' earthly ministry. |
| Zephaniah, 7th century BC                  | Book of Zephaniah                |   |
| Hananiah (false prophet)                   | Jer 28                           |   |
| Habakkuk, 7th century BC                   | Book of Habakkuk                 |   |
| Uriah                                      | Jer 26:20                        |   |
| Ahab, son of Kolaiah (false prophet)       | Jer 29:21                        |   |
| Zedekiah, son of Maaseiah (false prophet)  | Jer 29:21                        |   |
| Shemaiah the Nehelamite (false prophet)    | Jer 29:31                        |   |
| Daniel, 605 BC                             | Book of Daniel                   |   |
| Priest Ezekiel, 593 BC                     | Book of Ezekiel                  |   |
| Obadiah, 6th century                       | Book of Obadiah                  |   |
| Haggai, 520 BC                             | Book of Haggai                   |   |
| Priest Zechariah, grandson of Iddo, 520 BC | Book of Zechariah                |   |
| Malachi, c 430 BC                          | Book of Malachi                  |   |

There is silence for about 400 years, as described by 1 Maccabees, a Jewish book written after the time of the Old Testament. See pp 1553-58.

## New Testament

| Prophet and Date                 | References                                    | Notes   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Priest Zechariah, 4 BC           | Lk 1  | John the Baptist represents the last prophet of the OT. His work of preparing the way for Christ is itself a matter of prophecy (Mal 3:1; 4:5; Mt 11:11–14). A significant difference between OT and NT prophets is that the NT prophets do not serve or seek to serve as advisers to kings. Their preaching and teaching about the kingdom of God transcends national boundaries and organizes people around Scripture rather than a political figure. |
| John the Baptist, AD 29          | Mt 3:1–12                                     |   |
| Jesus, AD 29                     | Mt 3:13–17; Mk 1:9–11; Lk 3:21–22; Jn 1:29–34 |   |
| Caiaphas, AD 32                  | Jn 11:49–53                                   |   |
| Ananias, AD 36                   | Ac 9:10–19                                    |   |
| Paul, AD 36                      | Ac 9:1–19; 16:9–10; 18:9; 26:19               |   |
| Peter, AD 36                     | Ac 10:9–11:18                                 |   |
| Prophets of Antioch, AD 47       | Ac 13:1                                       |   |
| Bar-Jesus, AD 47 (false prophet) | Ac 13:6–11                                    |   |
| Judas and Silas, AD 49           | Ac 15:22–41                                   |   |
| Disciples at Ephesus, c AD 54    | Ac 19:6                                       |   |
| Agabus, AD 55                    | Ac 21:10                                      |   |
| The Body of Elders, AD 66        | 1Tm 1:18; 4:14                                |   |
| Apostle John, c AD 90            | Rv 1:3  |   |
| Two Witnesses of Revelation      | Rv 11:3                                       |   |

Throughout Scripture, you can find examples of God working through His prophets. However, you will also discover significant times when God did not speak through prophets. Sometimes the silence of the prophets was a punishment from God for the people's disobedience (Am 8:11; Mi 3:4, 7). At other times, it seems that God simply chose to deliver His Word in another way, such as preaching through the elders and pastors of the New Testament.

Today, various religious leaders claim the gifts and calling of a prophet. But many of these leaders have failed to show the accuracy and faithfulness that God expects of His prophets in Scripture (cf Dt 18:15–22; see p 307). Before you put your confidence in any self-proclaimed prophet, judge his or her teachings in view of the teachings of God's prophets as recorded

in the Bible. (Note how Paul applies this in 1Co 14:32–33, 37–38.) Most important, consider whether any teacher faithfully proclaims and serves the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For, as the apostle John recorded, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rv 19:10; see p 1245).

Ultimately, true prophets proclaim Jesus Christ and the promise of salvation God offers through Him. While prophecies about the end times (and the rise and fall of nations and leaders) may attract attention, salvation through Christ is the heart of prophecy. Jesus guides the future and has given you His written Word as a guide for your life in these changing times. In the Word of Christ, receive the peace and satisfaction that He alone can give. Praise Him for the ministry of the prophets, recorded in Scripture for your benefit.