

The Prophets: *Holy Men of God*

Men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit

The great men of the Old Testament were not the kings or the priests, but the prophets because they were always calling the people to repentance and revealing God's will to man.

When you compare all ancient history and its writings there is nothing which matches Israelite prophecy.

DEFINITION: A prophet is a man who speaks to men on behalf of God the message he has received from God. Prophecy is the declaration and illustration of the principles of the divine government, whether in the past, present, or the future. Prophets were God's specially called and inspired messengers. They were "holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

Ro'eh was a person who was possessed of supernatural vision, insight, and foresight. He was called a "seer."

Chozeh was an authoritative messenger from God, a beholder or seer, who received supernatural vision.

Nabhi was one who spoke for God. He speaks from an inner compulsion of the Spirit of God the message he has received.

NAMES: The prophets are called by various names including: "Man of God," "Servant of Jehovah (LORD)," "Messenger of Jehovah," "Interpreter," "Sentinel," "The Man of the Spirit."

HOLY SPIRIT'S INFLUENCE ON PROPHETS: The Holy Spirit breathing into the mind of the prophet so illumined his spirit and pervaded his thoughts, that while nothing as a person was taken away, yet everything that was necessary to enable him to declare divine truth in all its fullness was bestowed on him. Their inspiration consisted in the fullness of the influence of the Holy Spirit enabling them to accomplish their work.

The control and guidance by the Holy Spirit in the expression of the message guarantees the expression of truth without error.

TASK OF THE PROPHET: His job was to call the people back to God and to the truth of God. It involved warning them of the consequences of their actions and a call to repentance. At times it was a message of God's plan for the future of His Kingdom. They were men through whom God spoke His message of love for sinners, and warned them of the consequences of their sins. The heart of their message was God's promise of eternal redemption through the coming of Jesus Christ the Messiah.

PREPARATION: God prepared each of these men for their special task. There were also "schools" of the prophets in Ramah (1 Samuel 19:18), Bethel (2 Kings 2:3), Jericho (2 Kings 2:5), and Gilgal (2 Kings 4:38).

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FALSE PROPHETS: The test of the prophet was practical and simple. "When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord has truly sent him" (Jeremiah 28:9). The term does not occur in the Old Testament. It is found on the lips of Jesus (Matt. 7:15-23; Mk.13:21-23; Jer. 14:13-18; 28; 1 Kings 22:5-28). Things that are most highly valued are most subject to counterfeiting. True prophecy has in it no contradictions. It must always agree in genuine way with what is already known about Yahweh. Satan is the counterfeiter.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPHETS:

1. They were sent from God. These men claimed to be speaking from God and for God. "Thus says the Lord" was a clear emphasis of their preaching. The content of their message is proof that they were inspired of the Lord.
2. Their message was related to history. It grew out of some historic situation in which they lived. The prophets were messengers of their times. The message can only be understood by seeing it in its original setting. You have to become a student of history to understand Old Testament prophecy.
3. God's revelation is progressive. Each message builds upon other revealed truth from God.
4. Prophecy is not always predictive. It is a mistake to think that Old Testament prophecy was always predictive or foretelling of the future. There were times when the prophet spoke only to his own generation without any special reference to the future. He called his generation to repentance or to a social change within the nation or political changes. They warned the nation and its leaders of wrongs that needed to be corrected. They were primarily messengers of God, whether they spoke of the past, the present, or the future.
5. There were absolute predictions of the future. These predictions reveal God's purposes of grace to men. They are dependent upon the sovereign purpose of God, and they are certain of fulfillment. A good example is Genesis 3:15, which is not dependent upon, man, but solely upon God. Galatians 4:4-5 shows its fulfillment.
6. There were conditional predictions, which directly bear upon men's responsibility for a proper human response to secure fulfillment. A good example is Jonah's prediction that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days.
7. Correct interpretation of prophecy includes the recognition of both literal and figurative language freely intermingled. Genesis 3:15 is a figurative way of picturing the conflict between Christ and Satan.
8. All prophecy is centered in Christ. It is a testimony of Jesus Christ. He is at the center of prophecy because He is the central theme of all the Scriptures. No one, or anything can share that center stage with Him. Bring every prophecy to Christ in order to see it in its true light.
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9. Interpret Old Testament prophecy in the light of the New Testament. We find the key to the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy by examining how New Testament writers interpreted the prophets. The explanation of the Old Testament in the New Testament is the very point from which alone all explanation that listens to the voice of the divine wisdom must set out. This way we understand the sense of the Holy Scriptures as understood by inspired men themselves, and are furnished with the true key to knowledge. We discover from the New Testament writers the correct principles of interpreting the Old Testament prophecies. Probably we should see much more in the prophetic messages than we at first observed.

10. The interpretation of prophecy should generally be in the literal and natural meaning of the words. Seek the plain teaching of the passage. The fulfillment of predictions made by the prophets is to be thought of as literal and not allegorical. Many predictions may be given to us in figurative language, and we may or may not understand them, but when the day comes for fulfillment it is to be thought of as literal.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE PROPHETS: Prophets of the Old Testament are usually grouped as writing and oral prophets. Within these two groupings is another classification based on size, and not on content, or on quality of inspiration. Four of the prophetic books were longer in content and therefore called *major* prophets. It does not mean the *major* prophets were more important or significant in subject matter than the *minor* prophets. The *minor* prophets simply signify shorter books and nothing more.

MAJOR WRITING PROPHETS: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

MINOR WRITING PROPHETS: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

THE ORAL PROPHETS:

1. Enoch (Jude 14-15)
2. Noah (II Pet. 2:5)
3. Abraham and the Patriarchs (Gen.20:7; 27:27-29; 49)
4. Moses (Deut. 18:18-22; 34:10-12).
5. Miriam and Aaron (Ex. 15:20; Num. 12:1-8)
6. The Seventy (Num. 11:24-29)
7. Balaam (Num. 22-24)
8. Joshua (Josh. 1, 23, 24)
9. Deborah (Jud. 4-5)
10. Unknown prophet in days of Gideon (Jud. 6:7-10)
11. Unknown prophet in days of Eli (I Sam. 2:27-36)
12. Samuel (I Sam. 3:20)

13. Schools of prophets under Samuel (Saul) (I Sam. 10:10-12; 19:20-24)
14. Gad (I Sam. 22:5; II Sam. 24:11-19; I Chron. 29:29; II Chron. 29:25)
15. Nathan (II Sam. 7, 12; II Chron. 9:29; 29:25)
16. David (Acts 2:30)
17. Ahijah (I Kings 11:26-40; 14:1-18)
18. Man of God from Judah (I Kings 13)
19. Shemaiah (I Kings 12:21-24; II Chron. 12:1-8)
20. Iddo the Seer (II Chron. 12:15; 13:22)
21. Azariah (II Chron. 15)
22. Hanani (II Chron. 16:7-10)
23. Jehu son of Hanani (II Chron. 19:1-3)
24. Elijah (I Kings 17-II Kings 2)
25. Micaiah (I Kings 22)
26. Unknown prophet encouraged Ahab (I Kings 20:13-15)
27. Unknown prophet rebuked Ahab (I Kings 20:35-43).
28. Jahaziel (II Chron. 20:14-17)
29. Eliezer (II Chron. 20:37)
30. Elisha (II Kings 2-8)
31. Prophetic School of Elisha (II Kings 9:1-13)
32. Zechariah son of Jehoiada (II Chron. 24:20-22)
33. Man of God forbade Amaziah's league with Israel (II Chron. 25:7-10)
34. Unknown prophet rebuked Amaziah (II Chron. 25:15f)
35. Zechariah (II Chron. 26:5)
36. Oded (II Chron. 28:8-15)

37. Huldah the prophetess (II Kings 22:12-20)

38. Urijah (Jer. 26:20-23)

[A Look at the Book](#) Introductions to each of the Prophetic books in the Old Testament

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