

The Prophets
Series: The Bible
May 22, 2022

Welcome again to worship.

Today, we continue our series “The Bible” as we look at the entirety of the Canon, recognizing the overarching themes and message of Scripture. I hope you have enjoyed this highly unusual series as much as I have.

On page 4 of your bulletin is a graphic representation of the Bible. Like a bookshelf, the Bible has many sections: Law, History, Poetry, the Prophets (both Major and Minor) are in the Old Testament. In the New Testament are the Gospels, a single book on Church History, then the Letters written by Paul, followed by General Letters, and concluding with the Book of Revelation.

Today, we are going to take a 30,000 foot look at the fourth section, the Prophets. We will ask three questions: What are the mega themes of the section? What is the key verse of that section? And how does it point to Jesus, the Son of God? I am so glad you have joined us on this spectacular journey!

There are 17 prophetic books divided into two sections: the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. What’s the difference between the two? How did the major prophets receive such designation? Was it their prominence in the Jewish hierarchy of prophets? Did they prophecy more doom and gloom? Did they sell more of their books? Not really. The difference between the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets is the length of their books. They were more long-winded.

Some of the prophets are well known.

Isaiah is probably the most well-known and read of the prophets. Some of our most favorite Scriptures are in this book, including many about the Messiah, especially this one we read every year at Christmas:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined... For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.¹

Jeremiah is often called the Weeping Prophet, for he urged God’s people to turn from their sins and back to God. He has 2 books in the Bible: his main one plus Lamentations, which he wrote after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Lamentations’ message is to teach people that to disobey God is to invite disaster, and to show that God suffers when His people suffer.² I will never forget the first time I read Lamentations. I was in the 8th grade. My basketball team was in the tournament. The night before, we had played one of our rivals, whom we had beaten twice already, and lost in the tournament game. In the pain and grief of that loss, I began to read Lamentations, including this verse:

¹ Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 (NRSV)

² Life Application Study Bible, Lamentations Introduction

*My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns; my bile is poured out on the ground because of the destruction of my people, because infants and babes faint in the streets of the city.*³

We are familiar with Ezekiel and his famous chapter 37 and the vision of the valley of dry bones.

As far as Daniel, we spent several weeks studying his book last year.

After that, our overall knowledge of the rest of the Minor Prophets is kind of like some of our US Presidents: we've heard their names but don't know much about them.

We have:

- Hosea, whom God commanded to marry an unfaithful prostitute to symbolize Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord.
- Joel, whom the Apostle Peter quoted on the Day of Pentecost, "Then, after doing all those things, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions."⁴ He also wrote, "That is why the LORD says, 'Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead.' Return to the LORD your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He is eager to relent and not punish."⁵
- Amos, who called the women of Israel "fat cows." Not very PC in any time or culture.
- Obadiah, which is only a single chapter, and the first thing I think of when I hear Obadiah is that we named our 1974 Chevy van after the prophet.
- Jonah, of whale fame, which we studied in 2020.
- Micah, who wrote these wonderful words, "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"⁶
- Nahum, who wrote, "The LORD is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes. He is close to those who trust in him."⁷
- Habakkuk, whose name must be pronounced with a healthy amount of postnasal drip. He also wrote, "I have heard all about you, LORD. I am filled with awe by your amazing works. In this time of our deep need, help us again as you did in years gone by. And in your anger, remember your mercy."⁸
- Zephaniah, who wrote, "Seek the LORD, all who are humble, and follow his commands. Seek to do what is right and to live humbly. Perhaps even yet the LORD will protect you— protect you from his anger on that day of destruction."⁹
- Haggai, who called the people to complete the rebuilding of the Temple.
- Zechariah, who gave hope to God's people by revealing God's future deliverance through the Messiah.

³ Lamentations 2:11 (NRSV)

⁴ Joel 2:28 (NLT2)

⁵ Joel 2:12-13 (NLT2)

⁶ Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

⁷ Nahum 1:7 (NLT2)

⁸ Habakkuk 3:2 (NLT2)

⁹ Zephaniah 2:3 (NLT2)

- Malachi was the last prophet of Israel before the coming of John the Baptist. I pull him out at stewardship time.

On page 5 of your bulletin is a chronology of the Prophets, listing when they prophesied and to which nation.

What are the Mega Themes of the Prophets?

First, Holiness.

God is highly exalted above all His creatures. His moral perfection stands in contrast to evil people and nations. God is perfect and sinless in all His motives and actions, so He is in perfect control of His power, judgment, love, and mercy. His holy nature is our standard for morality. Because God is without sin, He alone can help us with our sin. It is only right that we regard Him as supreme in power and moral perfection. We must never treat God as common or ordinary. He alone deserves our devotion and praise. He is always truthful, fair, and just.¹⁰

Second, Sin.

The reformation during King Josiah's reign failed because the people's repentance was shallow. They continued in their selfishness and worship of idols. All the leaders rejected God's law and will for the people. Jeremiah lists all their sins, predicts God's judgment, and begs for repentance. Judah's deterioration and disaster came from a callous disregard and disobedience of God. When we ignore sin and refuse to listen to God's warning, we invite disaster. Don't settle for half measures in removing sin.¹¹

Third, Punishment.

Because of sin, Jerusalem was destroyed, the Temple was ruined, and the people were captured and carried off to Babylon. The people were responsible for their destruction and captivity because they refused to listen to God's message. Unconfessed sin brings God's full punishment. It is useless to blame anyone else for our sin; we are accountable to God before anyone else. We must answer to Him for how we live.¹²

Fourth, God's Mercy.

God's compassion was at work even when the Israelites were experiencing the affliction of their Babylonian conquerors. Although the people had been unfaithful, God's faithfulness was great. He used this affliction to bring His people back to Him. God will always be faithful to His people. His merciful, refining work is evident even in affliction. At those times, we must pray for forgiveness and then turn to Him for deliverance.¹³

Fifth, Hope.

God's mercy in sparing some of the people offers hope for better days. One day, the people will be restored to a true and fervent relationship with God. Only God can deliver us from sin. Without Him, there is no comfort or hope for the future. Because of Christ's death for us and His promise to return, we have a bright hope for tomorrow.¹⁴

Sixth, Restoration.

¹⁰ Life Application Study Bible, Isaiah Introduction

¹¹ Life Application Study Bible, Jeremiah Introduction

¹² Life Application Study Bible, Jeremiah Introduction

¹³ Life Application Study Bible, Lamentations Introduction

¹⁴ Life Application Study Bible, Lamentations Introduction

Ezekiel consoles the people by telling them that the day will come when God will restore those who turn from sin. God will be their King and shepherd. He will give His people a new heart to worship Him, and He will establish a new government and a new Temple. The certainty of future restoration encourages believers in times of trial. But we must be faithful to God because we love Him, not merely for what He can do for us.¹⁵

Finally, Messiah.

The prophets predicted God would send the Messiah to save His people. He would set up His own Kingdom as the faithful Prince of Peace, who rules with righteousness. He would come as sovereign Lord, but He will do so as a servant who will die to take away sins. Our trust must be in the Messiah, not in ourselves or in any nation or power. There is no hope unless we believe in Him. Trust Christ fully and let Him rule in your life as your sovereign Lord.¹⁶

As far as the Key Verse of the prophets, while I could have chosen many, I selected Isaiah 53:5:

*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*¹⁷

Pilate delivered Jesus to his soldiers to be whipped. The Roman scourge was a dreadful instrument of torture. It was made of the sinews of oxen, and sharp bones were inter-twisted every here and there among the sinews; so that every time the lash came down, these pieces of bone inflicted a fearful laceration, and tore off the flesh from the bone. Jesus was, no doubt, bound to the column, and thus beaten.

In his "Morning and Evening" devotional, Charles H. Spurgeon wrote:

"Believer in Jesus, can you gaze upon Him without tears, as He stands before you the mirror of agonizing love? He is at once fair as the lily for innocence, and red as the rose with the crimson of His own blood. As we feel the sure and blessed healing which His stripes have wrought in us, does not our heart melt at once with love and grief? If ever we have loved our Lord Jesus, surely we must feel that affection glowing now within our bosoms.

*See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in His lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty's hands,
And spit in their Creator's face.*

*With thorns His temples gor'd and gash'd
Send streams of blood from every part;
His back's with knotted scourges lash'd.
But sharper scourges tear His heart."*¹⁸

The final question is "How Do the Prophets Point to Jesus"? Well, they predict a great deal about the life of Jesus. I've listed 26 of them, along with the prediction and the fulfillment; the 27th one, about the Messiah coming back, has yet to be fulfilled.

1. Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4-6)
2. Messiah would be born of a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23; Luke 1:26-31)

¹⁵ Life Application Study Bible, Ezekiel Introduction

¹⁶ Life Application Study Bible, Isaiah Introduction

¹⁷ Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

¹⁸ Morning and Evening, March 31

3. Messiah would be heir to King David's throne. (2 Samuel 7:12-13; Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:32-33; Romans 1:3)
4. Messiah's throne will be anointed and eternal. (Psalm 45:6-7; Daniel 2:44; Luke 1:33; Hebrews 1:8-12)
5. Messiah would be called Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23)
6. Messiah would spend a season in Egypt. (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:14-15)
7. A massacre of children would happen at Messiah's birthplace. (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16-18)
8. A messenger would prepare the way for Messiah. (Isaiah 40:3-5; Luke 3:3-6)
9. Messiah would be preceded by a forerunner. (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 11:10)
10. Messiah would be rejected by His own people. (Psalm 69:8; Isaiah 53:3; John 1:11, 7:5)
11. Messiah would be preceded by Elijah. (Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 11:13-14)
12. Messiah would be called a Nazarene. (Isaiah 11:1; Matthew 2:23)
13. Messiah would bring light to Galilee. (Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:13-16)
14. Messiah would speak in parables. (Psalm 78:2-4; Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:10-15, 34-35)
15. Messiah would be sent to heal the brokenhearted. (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19)
16. Messiah would be called King. (Psalm 2:6; Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 27:37; Mark 11:7-11)
17. Messiah would enter Jerusalem on a donkey. (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 21:4-5)
18. Messiah would be betrayed. (Psalm 41:9; Zechariah 11:12-13; Luke 22:47-48; Matthew 26:14-16)
19. Messiah's price money would be used to buy a potter's field. (Zechariah 11:12-13; Matthew 27:9-10)
20. Messiah would be silent before His accusers. (Isaiah 53:7; Mark 15:4-5)
21. Messiah would be spat upon and struck. (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 26:67)
22. Messiah would be crucified with criminals. (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27-28)
23. Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced. (Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; John 20:25-27)
24. Soldiers would pierce Messiah's side. (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34)
25. Messiah would be buried with the rich. (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60)
26. Messiah would be a sacrifice for sin. (Isaiah 53:5-12; Romans 5:6-8)
27. Messiah would return a second time. (Daniel 7:13-14)

One day at Disney World's Cinderella's Castle a crowd of children gathered to meet the princess. A gorgeous young girl walked into their midst, each hair in place, flawless skin, and a beaming smile. She stood waist-deep in a garden of kids, each wanting to touch and be touched.

On the other side of the room was a boy maybe seven or eight years old. His age was hard to determine because of the disfigurement of his body. Dwarfed in height, face deformed, he stood watching quietly and wistfully, holding the hand of an older brother.

Don't you know what he wanted? He wanted to be with Cinderella, but he feared yet another rejection, feared being taunted again, mocked again. Don't you wish Cinderella would go to him? Guess what? She did!

She noticed the little boy. She immediately began walking in his direction. Politely but firmly inching through the crowd of children, she finally broke free. She walked quickly across the floor, knelt at eye level with the stunned little boy, and placed a kiss on his face.

However... Cinderella couldn't do anything more than give a kiss. When she stood to leave, she took her beauty with her. The boy was still deformed. The Messiah:

[The Messiah] was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.¹⁹

Christ takes up our infirmities.

Jesus gave more than a kiss – He gave His beauty.

He paid more than a visit – He paid for our mistakes.

He took more than a minute – He took away our sin.²⁰

¹⁹ Isaiah 53:3-5 (NRSV)

²⁰ "Cinderella" by Max Lucado, "Healing in Christ."