

## BIBLE OVERVIEW

### SESSION V: THE KINGDOM PROPHESED

#### What do you think?

1. Prophets are regarded as God's 'covenant police', bringing people back to the law of God.
2. What do you think qualified one to be a prophet or God's spokesman?
3. Some prophets were important courtiers while others were simple peasant farmers. Why do you think God recruited like this?
4. Which prophet do you think speaks most about Jesus? Why do you think so?

#### What is prophecy?

Prophecy is very often misunderstood, and people find it very difficult to understand. These problems often arise from a misunderstanding of what prophecy is.

1. Prophecy does have predictive elements in it, but it is not history in advance. This view of prophecy is unhelpful because it tends to lead to the wrong focus of interest - it tends to lead to a desire for guidance based on knowledge of the future, rather than trusting God. It can also lead to a dogmatism where only certain 'prophet interpreters' have the proper understanding (and this can lead to cults arising); this also makes prophecy very complex and devalues its literal meaning to the original hearers. (Late Great Planet Earth; 2012)
2. The predictive elements are there to remind us that God is in control, so when the events happen we are assured of God's sovereignty. It also shows us that God has a goal in history, and sets our minds on where history is heading. The predictive elements explain the current events and what will come out of them. We see in the prophecies three time horizons all interwoven together. As you see a range of mountains in the distance it is impossible to tell which mountains of the range are closer, and which are further away. When the prophets wrote it was as though they saw things that were happening in their times, in the times of Christ, and in the end times. They didn't clearly distinguish between these times as they wrote and so it means that we have to study them carefully to see which prophecy applied then, which at the coming of Christ, and which refers to the end times.
3. Biblical prophecy is essentially the exposition of, and appeal to the character of God. It is aimed at strengthening faith, and producing action in obedience to God now.
4. The prophets have been described as covenant law enforcement officers. The Torah (first five books of the Bible) talk of the blessings and curses that God will mete out, and the prophets remind the people of the covenant God has made with them and call them to obey commit their lives to him.
5. The prophets also stress that their message is not their own, but God's message for the people; hence you will often read the words 'this is the word of the Lord' or similar phrases. The very word prophet comes from the word to call (nabi) - a prophet has to be called by God. A prophet is given particular words to people standing in a particular situation before God at a particular hour in history.



The greatest prophet was Moses, as he communicated God's revelation to humanity (Deut 18:15-22; 34:10-20). The Kingdom fulfilment is regulated by the ideal at Mt. Sinai. All subsequent prophets act as watchdogs, holding up the mirror of the Law, and showing the people the conditions laid down for the enjoyment of the covenant blessings. The non-writing, former prophets - from Samuel to Elijah & Elisha - are always seeking to bring the covenant people back to covenant obedience.

The latter prophets additionally look forward to future fulfilment of God's covenant promises and hence their prophecy was written down. These prophets spanned the time between 760-460BC, and are divided into the major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel) and the minor prophets - the others who wrote smaller books.

**Prophets to Northern Kingdom:** 8th century BC - Amos & Hosea , after this Israel ceases to exist

**Prophets to the Southern Kingdom:** 8th century BC - Isaiah, Micah  
7th century BC - Jeremiah, Ezekiel (Before Exile)  
6th century BC - Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah... (After Exile)

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After **Malachi**, there are no prophets until **John the Baptist** (Mark 1:4).

The prophecies have patterns to them – see themes below.

## Prophecy in Israel

<sup>NB</sup> Deuteronomy 18:15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.<sup>16</sup> For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire any more, or we will die."<sup>17</sup> The LORD said to me: "What they say is good."<sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.<sup>19</sup> If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.<sup>20</sup> But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.<sup>21</sup> You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?"<sup>22</sup> If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

1. How do prophets come to be in Israel? (v15,18)

2. What will the prophets be like? (v15,v18)

3. What do the prophets speak? (v18)



## 4. What authority do the prophets have? (v19)

### **Two kinds of falsehood are defined:**

- V20b
  
- V20a

## Christ's self-understanding as prophet

### **Luke 4:16-38; Matthew 12:38-41**

*Luke 4:16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.<sup>17</sup> The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."<sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him,<sup>21</sup> and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."<sup>22</sup> All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your home town what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"<sup>24</sup> **"I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his home town.**<sup>25</sup> I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land.<sup>26</sup> Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.<sup>27</sup> And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed--only Naaman the Syrian."<sup>28</sup> All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this.<sup>29</sup> They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.<sup>30</sup> But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.*



**Matthew 12:38** Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you."<sup>39</sup> He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.<sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.<sup>41</sup> The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, **and now one greater than Jonah is here.**

### Fulfilled in Christ

**Mark 9:1-7; Acts 3:17-26 (Jn 6:14-15)**

Mark 9:1 And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."<sup>2</sup> After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them.<sup>3</sup> His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.<sup>4</sup> And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."<sup>6</sup> (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)<sup>7</sup> Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

<sup>19</sup> Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,<sup>20</sup> and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus.<sup>21</sup> He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.<sup>22</sup> For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you.<sup>23</sup> Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.'<sup>24</sup> "Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days.<sup>25</sup> And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'<sup>26</sup> When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

### Surpassed by Christ

**Hebrews 1:1-3; 3:1-6**

Hebrews 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,<sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.<sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.



*Hebrews 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.<sup>2</sup> He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.<sup>3</sup> Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself.<sup>4</sup> For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.<sup>5</sup> Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future.<sup>6</sup> But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.*

## A New Captivity:

### **Read Ezekiel 12:1-13**

God has done great things for Israel, and yet how are they described? (v2)

What is the prophet asked to act out before the people of Israel?

What is going to happen to people of Israel?

## A New Exodus:

### **Read Isaiah 43:1-7, 14-21**

How is God described in these passages?

What is the people's relationship to God?

What does God promise to do? v5

Is this just a repeat of the past?

## A New Covenant:

### **Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Ezekiel 36:24-32)**

What is promised here? (v31)



What was wrong with the old covenant? (v32)

How will the new covenant be different? What does God promise to do? (v33-34)

## A New King:

**Read Isaiah 11:1-11 (9:6-7)**

Who was Jesse?

Why is the shoot described as coming up from the stump of Jesse?

How will this ruler be different from previous rulers? v2-5

## A New Nation:

**Ezekiel 11:13-21**

How are the people described in v13-15?

What does God promise to do for them?

## A New Creation

**Read Isaiah 65:17-21**

What evidence is there that this is all in fulfilment of God's plan of salvation? v18, v23

## Think through it

A preacher described a man's bedroom in accurate detail giving detail about the curtains and the position of furniture although he had never seen it. Would such accuracy mean that he is a true prophet? Why or why not? In John 4 the Samaritan acknowledges Jesus as a Prophet because he told her things about herself. Jesus however does not stop at that, he presses her to recognise him as the Messiah the anointed King that was to come. How do we recognise true prophecy today?

