

INTRODUCTION

The Central Message of the 12 Prophets – *God's in charge.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Tenach Divisions:

Christians call this the Old Testament because it's concerned with God's relationship to Israel under the terms of several contractual arrangements while Christians relate to God under the terms of a new covenant (Luke 22:20).¹

The Hebrews arranged these 39 books into three collections:²

The Law

Torah = "the law" from the verb *yarah* meaning to throw or to aim at or to shoot.

Genesis - Deuteronomy (a.k.a. The books of Moses or the Pentateuch)³

The Sacred Writings (a.k.a. Books of Wisdom)

- I. The Book of Truth (Psalms, Proverbs & Job)
- II. The Megilloth (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes & Esther)
- III. Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah & Chronicles

The Prophets

The former prophets - Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings

The latter prophets

Major prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah & Ezekiel

Minor prophets (a.k.a. the *dodecapropheton*, the twelve-prophet book)

And may the bones of the Twelve Prophets revive out their place, for they comforted Jacob and delivered them with their confident hope.
Ecclesiasticus 49:10 (c.180 BC)

About 3/5^{ths} of the Twelve Books have been found in fragments dating 200-300 BC.⁴

¹ This leaves the false impression that God changed his way of interacting with people a couple thousand years ago. This is false because God has always insisted that the only way you can begin & maintain a relationship with him is through dependence upon his love and mercy. Then what makes it a new covenant? For one thing a new covenant was anticipated during the times of the prophets (c.f. Jer.31:31). For another, the covenant was new in its scope (i.e. all humankind, not just Israel) and in its purpose (i.e. to fulfill the promises of the earlier covenants). It was at this point in history that Christ provided the way for God to express his mercy without ignoring human evil. The death of Christ was not a tragedy of history; it was God's secret plan to deal with human sin by permitting Christ to act as a substitute - to be punished in our place. We'll have to come back to this many times in the course of our study (c.f. Gal. 3:19-25; 1Tim.2:5f; Heb. 8:6; 9:7-9, 15, 23; 10:5-16; 12:24 for details on the New Covenant)

² These divisions are not absolute (e.g. Early copies of the Torah have Genesis through Chronicles as the Law. The writings do not always include Daniel or Chronicles.). See Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* for a description of the Torah canon.

³ Sometimes Genesis is not included because it is not actually part of the law

⁴ Discovered in a repository for worn scrolls (a.k.a. such repositories are known as *genizah*) in an ancient synagogue at Cairo, Egypt around 1896-1900.

They were written over the course of 400 years at key periods in the history of Israel & Judah.⁵

- Early 800's to late 700's BC - Obadiah, Joel & Jonah
- 700's BC - Amos, Hosea, Micah & Nahum
- 600's BC - Zephaniah & Habakkuk
- 500's to 400's BC - The postexilic prophets Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi

HEBREW PROPHECY

What is Prophecy?

- Disclosing the will of God - forth-telling.
- Authentication that the disclosure is from God – foretelling.

Are there parallels between OT prophecy and other Near Eastern cultures?

- Babylonian omen texts (2000 BC) –
- Mari prophecy -

What is a Prophet?

massa (lit. burden) or *n^e'um* (lit the declaration of) are translated 'oracle'

nibba – translated, 'to prophesy;' to summon, announce or call.

is Elohim – translated, 'the one of God'

hozeh or *ro'eh* – translated, 'seer;' a recipient of special visions/revelations from God; not necessarily visions, however.

"*The hazon (vision) concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah, son of Amoz hazut (saw)...*" Isa.1:1

"*The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa - what he hazah (saw) concerning Israel...*" Am.1:1

Prophets in biblical history.

Deuteronomy 18:15ff

What is the Purpose of Prophecy?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

⁵ See Table 1

4.

5.

How is Prophecy Interpreted?

Eisegesis

Modernistic

Postmodernistic

Exegesis

Kinds of foretelling prophecies **Unambiguous prediction**

Developmental or Gap Prophecies

Double-reference Prophecies

Type Prophecies⁶

Motif Prophecies⁷

THE DAY OF YAHWEH

"the day of Yahweh,"⁸ and "the day of the wrath of Yahweh,"⁹ or various related expressions¹⁰ appear frequently in prophetic writing.

⁶ τυπος - *tupos*, type, a word used of a mold; αντιτυπος - *antitupos*, antitype, a word used of a die which presses metal into the mold. The *tupos* and *antitupos* are images of the same thing, one convex (the die or *antitupos*) and the other concave (the mold or *tupos*).

⁷ This is not a standard prophetic category.

⁸ Joel 1:15; 2:1,11 (against Israel); 3:4; 4:14 (against nations); Amos 5:18,20; Zech.1:7, 14; Mal.3:23; 4:5; Ezek.13:5 (past tense); Isa.13:6,9 (against the nations); Ob.15 (against Edom).

⁹ Zeph.1:15,18; 2:2,3; Lam.1:12; 2:1,21,22; Ezek.7:19;

¹⁰ *that day* Ob.8, Am.9:11; *day for Yahweh* Ez.30:3; *day for Yahweh of hosts* Is.2:12; *day of tumult for the Lord Yahweh of hosts* Is.22:5; *day of Yahweh's vengeance* Is.34:8; Jer.46:10; Isa.61:2; *day of Yahweh's sacrifice* Zeph.1:8; *day of clouds and thick darkness* Zeph.1:15; Ez.34:12; Joel 2:2; *day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom* Zeph.1:15; *a day of trumpet blast and battle cry* Zeph.1:16; *day of which I have spoken* Ezek.39:8; *a day for Yahweh is coming* Zech.14:1; *a day when he fights on a day of battle* Zech.14:3.

New Testament authors pick up the expression but here it is correlated with the return of Christ.¹¹

This does not refer to a definite time but to a definite activity of God. Contemporary to the prophet.¹²

The end of human history.¹³

Features of the final Day of YHWH

- (Mal.3:1; 4:5; c.f. Mt. 11:10; 17:10-13; Mk.1:2; 9:11-13; Lk.1:17, 76; 7:27)
- (Dan.11:41; Zech.12-14;14:1-2; Joel 3:9-12; Amos 5:18; 6:14; Ezek.38:16; Zeph.1:14-15; Isa.22; Jer.30:1-17; Joel 2:28; Amos 5; Zeph.1)
(Obad.15; Ezek.38-39; Zech.14; see also Rev.5-18).
- (Isa.10:27; 11:10, 11; 61:2; Dan.12:1f; Lk.4:18f; Jer.30:19-31:40; Joel 2:28, 32; Micah 4; Zech.13; Mal.3:2; 4:1f; Rev.19-22).
- (Isa.2:17).
- (Amos 9:11f, Acts 15:16f, Isa.2:2-4).

GOD IN HUMAN HISTORY

The History Of The Divided Monarchy

931-930 BC Division of the Nation

Rehoboam's blunder

10 tribes of the north (Israel or Ephraim) - Jeroboam

2 tribes of the south (Judah) - Rehoboam

The deeper spiritual cause of the division.¹⁴

Pressures from surrounding nations and.¹⁵

For all of these reasons, both before and around the times of Israel & Judah's destruction the intensity of prophetic activity was very high and it was during these times that most of the Minor Prophets wrote and spoke out.

The exile & return of Judah.¹⁶

The Promises of God

When we examine God's actions in human history, they are best appreciated in the context of his plans and his promises. It is for this reason that these books can best

¹¹ Mt.24; 25; Mk.13; Lk.17:22-31; 21; 1Cor.1:8; 5:5; 2Cor.1:14; Phil.1:6, 10; 2:16; 1Thes.5:2; 2Thes.2:2

¹² Isa.7:18-19 Israel's destruction by Assyria; Lam.1:12; 2:1,21,22 & Ez.34:12 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians; Ez.30:3, Joel 3:19 against Egypt; Jer.46:10, Isa.34:8, Ob.8, Joel 3:19 against Edom

¹³ Isa.7:21-25; 59:16 - 65:25

¹⁴ See Appendix A - Religion

¹⁵ See Appendix B - The Nations

¹⁶ Under the terms of the Mosaic covenant, they were obliged to let their arable land lay fallow every seventh year and they had not done so for nearly 500 years. God indicated that he would remove them from the land so that it could rest for the 70 years they had failed to let it lay fallow.

be understood in the context of three agreements between God and Israel, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic and the Davidic covenants.¹⁷

The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen.12:1-3)

A place, a people a blessing.

The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 20:1-17)

A very complex agreement including ceremonial, civil and moral elements. It was bilateral agreement between Israel and God. Consequences were detailed if Israel failed to keep their end of the bargain (c.f. Ex.20:5-6, 12; 23:20-33; Lev. 26 and see Deuteronomy 27-28).

The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam.7:4-16; Psalm 89:3f; 26ff; 132:11-18)

Partly unilateral and partly bilateral and including:

- Unilateral features

- Bilateral features

The Clash of Promises

The Mosaic Covenant required the destruction of Israel but how could God then fulfill the conditions of the Abrahamic and Davidic?¹⁸

The Davidic royal line was at a dead end. How could it produce an eternal king?¹⁹

- **The Destroyed Nation will be Resurrected by God**
Isaiah 46:4; chs. 49, 54, 60, 66; Jer.25, 30, 33; Ez.20, 37, Dan.9; Hosea 2; Amos 9; Micah 7; Zeph.3

- **An Eternal “Anointed One” Will Fulfill the Davidic Covenant.**
Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Micah 5:1-5

- **A Servant of God Will Fulfill the Abrahamic & Mosaic Covenants (c.f. Gen.12:1-3)**
Isaiah 42:1, 6; 49:5-8; 52:13-53:

¹⁷ The Noaic (Gen.6:18; 8:20-9:17) and, according to some interpretations, the Palestinian (Deut.29-30) covenants are additional covenants but they will not be considered here. Additionally, some identify theological covenants between God and all people: of works; of grace and of redemption. Each covenant is related to the one that precedes it.

¹⁸ See Jeremiah 11:1-17

¹⁹ Jeconiah (a.k.a. Jehoiachin); see 2Ki.24:8-17 and 2Chron.36:9-10; A Davidic king would arise whose sins were so repugnant that God declared none of his descendants would sit on the throne (Jeremiah 22:30)

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- Read 2Chronicles 17-25 and 1Kings 16:29 - 2Kings 14:29.²⁰ Make good use of the handouts as well as some good maps of the ancient Middle East while you are reading. Refer to other appendix materials as needed.
- Read and annotate²¹ Obadiah, Joel & Jonah; use the appendix material as needed.
- Memorize the following verses: Joel 2:13; Jonah 2:8²²
- As you read through these three prophets, identify the principles that could apply to you. Which is the hardest to believe? What would it be like if you really believed it?

- **Prepare answers for the following based on your study:**

1. Differentiate between Judah and Israel.
2. Who were the kings of Judah and Israel **during** Obadiah, Joel & Jonah's ministries? Were kings any commended by God? Were any condemned?
3. What nations posed a threat to Israel & Judah **during** Obadiah, Joel & Jonah's ministries?
4. Identify a **main theme** for each of the following books: Obadiah, Joel & Jonah.

²⁰ If you have time, read through the entire books of II Chronicles, I and II Kings.

²¹ Annotation involves underlining passages and making notes in the margins of your Bible. What themes do you notice? What issues are prominent? Jot down appropriate cross-references. If you find a passage confusing and the appendices do not help, jot a question mark (in light pencil) in the margin next to the passage.

²² I won't test you on this. Memorization is for your benefit, not for a grade.