

### Old Testament Prophetic Ministry

When we think of Biblical Prophetic Ministry most of us view the ministry from an Old Testament perspective. To summarize the Old Testament perspective is see prophecy as ministry through an individual called by God to announce to people that God is angered by their sin and He is frustrated that they are not fulfilling the conditions of the covenant between them and God, therefore He will act/react this way toward you.

Motivation/Personality	Gifts of the Spirit	Ministry Gifts	Office Gifts
Romans 12:6-7	1 Corinthians 12:4-11	1 Corinthians 12:27-31	Ephesians 4:11
Prophecy Serving Teaching Exhortation Giving Mercy  Choleric Sanguine Phlegmatic Melancholy	Word of Wisdom Word of Knowledge Faith Gifts of Healing Working of Miracles Prophecy Discerning of Spirits Tongues Interpretation of Tongues	Apostles Prophets Teachers Miracles Healings Helps Administration Tongues	Apostle Prophet Evangelist Pastor Teacher

#### I. ***4 Misconceptions About Prophetic Ministry.***

1. ***God's only method of communication today is scripture*** (the canonized word) - so they discount a revelatory word from an individual to an individual.
  - Example David Evans
  
2. ***Prophets are God's "watchman on the wall"*** - so the prophet Serves as God's policeman to the body of Christ to monitor and maintain scriptural morality, integrity, and ethics and are responsible to give God's final direction and approval on matters.
  - This attitude leads to a whole host of abuses using the prophetic.
  - Prophetic Ministry Edifies, Comforts, and exhorts – it confirms and calls forth.

**Ezekiel 3:17–18** (ESV) “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>18</sup> If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.

3. **Prophetic ministry is God’s method of communicating His frustration.**

- So the people are terrified of the prophetic.
- They expect to be exposed and dressed down for their “Sins.”

- Example: My first experience with the prophetic

**1 Samuel 28:15** (ESV) Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do.”

4. **Prophetic Ministry is the same in the New Testament as the Old Testament.**

**1 Samuel 9:9** Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he used to say, “Come, and let us go to the seer”; for *he who is called* a prophet now was formerly called a seer.

## II. **The Old Testament Role of the Prophet**

**Prophets were individuals appointed as:**

1. **God’s Representative to give His perspective to mankind.**

**Exodus 3:9–11** (ESV) And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup> Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” <sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

**Amos 3:7–8** (ESV) “For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.<sup>8</sup> The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?”

**1 Samuel 3:1** (ESV) Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.

## **2. God’s voice to announce His plans for action or His punishment for sin & disobedience.**

**1 Samuel 3:11–14** (ESV) *Then the LORD said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.”*<sup>12</sup> On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.<sup>13</sup> And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them.<sup>14</sup> Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.”

**Jonah 1:1–2** (ESV) Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,<sup>2</sup> *“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”*

**1 Kings 17:1–4** (ESV) Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, *“As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.”*<sup>2</sup> And the word of the LORD came to him:<sup>3</sup> *“Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.<sup>4</sup> You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.”*

**1 Kings 21:20–24** (ESV) Ahab said to Elijah, “Have you found me, O my enemy?” He answered, *“I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD.”*<sup>21</sup> *Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel.*<sup>22</sup> *And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the anger to which you have provoked me, and because you have made Israel to sin.*<sup>23</sup> And of Jezebel the LORD also said, “The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.”<sup>24</sup> Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat.”

**2 Kings 1:2–4** (ESV) Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he sent messengers, telling them, “Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness.”<sup>3</sup> *But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, “Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?’*<sup>4</sup> Now therefore thus says the LORD, You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’ ” So Elijah went.

### **3. God’s monitor of Israel’s compliance to their covenant with Him.**

**Joshua 24:14–15** (ESV) “*Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.*<sup>15</sup> And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

**1 Kings 18:17–19** (ESV) When Ahab saw Elijah, *Ahab said to him, “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?”*<sup>18</sup> *And he answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father’s house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals.*<sup>19</sup> Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

### **4. God’s representative to people and the peoples representative to God.**

**1 Samuel 3:19–21** (ESV) And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.<sup>20</sup> *And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD.*<sup>21</sup> And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

**1 Samuel 7:6–10** (ESV) ... And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah.<sup>7</sup> Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines.<sup>8</sup> *And the people of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.”*<sup>9</sup> So

Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. And Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. <sup>10</sup> *As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the LORD thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel.*

**5. God's representative through whom miracles were performed.**

**1 Kings 17:8-11** (ESV) Then the word of the LORD came to him, <sup>9</sup> "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you." <sup>10</sup> So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. *And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."* <sup>11</sup> *And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."*

**2 Kings 1:7-10** (ESV) He said to them, "What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?" <sup>8</sup> They answered him, "He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite." <sup>9</sup> Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.'" <sup>10</sup> *But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.*

**2 Kings 2:7-8** (ESV) Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. <sup>8</sup> *Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.*

**2 Kings 2:11-14** (ESV) And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. <sup>12</sup> And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. <sup>13</sup> *And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.* <sup>14</sup> *Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.*

**2 Kings 3:13-20** (ESV) And Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What have I to do

with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother.” But the king of Israel said to him, “No; it is the LORD who has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab.” <sup>14</sup> And Elisha said, “As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would neither look at you nor see you. <sup>15</sup> But now bring me a musician.” And when the musician played, the hand of the LORD came upon him. <sup>16</sup> And he said, “Thus says the LORD, ‘I will make this dry streambed full of pools.’ <sup>17</sup> *For thus says the LORD, ‘You shall not see wind or rain, but that streambed shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, you, your livestock, and your animals.’ <sup>18</sup> This is a light thing in the sight of the LORD. He will also give the Moabites into your hand, <sup>19</sup> and you shall attack every fortified city and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree and stop up all springs of water and ruin every good piece of land with stones.” <sup>20</sup> The next morning, about the time of offering the sacrifice, behold, water came from the direction of Edom, till the country was filled with water.*

## Minor Prophets

**Hosea** – Hosea explained God’s complaint against Israel and warned of the punishment that would come unless the people returned to the Lord and remained faithful to him. The book shows the depth of God’s love for his people, a love that tolerates no rivals.

**Amos** - Amos denounced the people of Israel for their apostasy and social injustice and warned them that disaster would fall upon them for breaking the covenant. He urged them to leave the hypocrisy of their “solemn assemblies” (5:21) and instead to “let justice roll down like waters” (v. 24). Nevertheless, said Amos, God would remember his covenant with Israel and would restore a faithful remnant.

Amos, prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah (792–740 B.C.) in the southern kingdom and Jeroboam II (793–753) in the north. During this time both kingdoms enjoyed political stability, which in turn brought prosperity. It was also a time of idolatry, extravagance, and corruption. The rich and powerful were oppressing the poor.

**Micah** - Micah denounced the wealthy, who were oppressing the poor, and warned of impending judgment.

Micah prophesied in Judah during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (about 750–700 B.C.), at about the same time as Isaiah. It was a time of prosperity, and The northern kingdom actually fell during Micah’s ministry, in 722, and Judah almost fell in 701 (2 Kings 18–20). The book contains three sections, which alternate between words of warning and messages of hope. Micah told of a day when there would be peace among all nations, who would then be able to “beat their swords into plowshares” (4:3), and of a

royal deliverer who would save God's people from all her enemies. This deliverer would be born in Bethlehem (5:2).

**Joel** - Joel, proclaimed that God would punish not only the nations but unfaithful Israel as well. *Joel urged everyone to repent, and told of a day when God would "pour out [his] Spirit on all flesh" (2:28).*

Joel told of a locust plague that had struck Israel and which, he said, foreshadowed the "day of the Lord." The day of the Lord was a time greatly anticipated by the Israelites because they believed that God would then judge the nations and restore Israel to her former glory. Yet, said

**Obadiah** - Obadiah prophesied that Edom would be repaid for mistreating God's people. Obadiah also asserted that God is sovereign over the nations and that the house of Jacob would be restored because of God's covenant love for his people.

Obadiah is the shortest book of the Old Testament and was probably written soon after the armies of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem (586 B.C.). During this conquest, the people of Edom helped capture fleeing Israelites and turn them over to the Babylonians. They even took up residence in some Judean villages. This angered the Lord, for the Edomites, as descendants of Esau, were related to the Israelites (Gen. 25:21–26, 30) and therefore should have helped them.

**Jonah** - Jonah is a prophet sent to Nineveh, God commanded him to "go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me." Because it tells of a fish swallowing a man, many have dismissed the book of Jonah as fiction. But 2 Kings 14:25 mentions Jonah as living during the time of Jeroboam II (about 793–753 B.C.), and Jesus referred to Jonah as a historical person (Matt. 12:39–41). Unlike other prophetic books, Jonah focuses on the prophet himself rather than on his message. When God sent Jonah to Nineveh he rebelled, was swallowed by a fish, repented, and fulfilled his mission after all. When Nineveh repented, the reason for Jonah's rebellion became clear: he had feared that God would forgive the Ninevites; and when God did forgive them, Jonah resented it (4:1–3). The book lists no author, but only Jonah himself could have known all the facts it records.

**Nahum** - Jonah preached repentance on the streets of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, to a soft hearted people who responded with repentance and were spared. Nahum prophesied 100 years later to a people who would not repent. He declares God's sovereignty and power in an effort to shake the sinful indifference off of the Ninevites.

A century later, sometime between 663 and 612 B.C., Nahum preached in a time when Nineveh would not repent. Nineveh, which had destroyed Israel's northern kingdom in 722, itself fell to Babylon in 612—just a few years after Nahum's warning. The Assyrians were notorious for the brutality of their treatment of other nations. Nahum declared, however, that God is sovereign: he punishes whom he will, and they are

powerless to stop him. Much of Nahum's prophecy was directed to the people of Judah, who could rejoice at the good news (1:15) of Nineveh's impending fall.

**Habakkuk** – Poses 2 questions:

1. What do you do when God doesn't respond to a request for help, doesn't respond to violent injustice, when he does nothing to stop violence and destruction?
2. What do you do when God doesn't respond with punishment toward traitors and men who use and abuse others for their own purposes?

Take matters into your own hands? Resent God for what appears to be his inaction?

Question why he uses unrighteous nations to correct His people rather than correcting them? Though God's ways are sometimes mysterious, "the righteous shall live by his faith" (2:4) while awaiting salvation. These words are quoted three times in the New Testament (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). He addresses 2 Issues:

The "theme question" of Habakkuk is, how can God use a wicked nation such as Babylon for his divine purpose? God judges all nations, said Habakkuk, and even Babylon would eventually be judged (Babylon fell to Persia in 539).

Habakkuk was probably written about 640–615 B.C., just before the fall of Assyria and the rise of Babylon (Chaldea). God used Assyria to punish Israel (722); now he would use Babylon to punish Assyria and Judah. This prophecy would be fulfilled several decades after Habakkuk, in 586.

**Zephaniah** - Zephaniah spoke of the coming "day of the Lord," when sin would be punished, justice would prevail, and a "remnant" of the faithful would be saved.

Zephaniah prophesied during the reforms of King Josiah (640–609 B.C.), who brought spiritual revival to Judah after the long and disastrous reign of Manasseh. Zephaniah pronounced God's judgment on corruption and wickedness but also his plan to restore Judah. He The term "day of the Lord" occurs throughout the Bible referring both to impending historical judgments from God and to his final judgment at the end of time. Though Zephaniah does not give details about this day, he speaks of its fearsome consequences (1:18) and calls people to seek the Lord (2:3).

**Haggai** - *Haggai rebuked the people for living in "paneled houses" while the house of God remained in ruins (1:4). He warned that, despite their best efforts, their wealth would never suffice, because the Lord was not pleased with their neglect of his temple (see Lev. 26:2–20). He called them to repent and renew their covenant with the God of their fathers.*

When the first wave of Jewish exiles returned from Babylon to Jerusalem in 538 B.C., they began to rebuild the temple but soon gave up. Inspired by the prophetic ministries of Haggai and Zechariah, they finally completed the task in 516. He assured them that God would achieve his purposes for his people and for all other nations. The rebuilding of the temple symbolized God's restored presence among his people.



***Zechariah*** - Zechariah encouraged the people to repent and renew their covenant with God.

Such spiritual renewal would be necessary for the people to be ready to worship God once the temple was rebuilt (about 516 B.C.). He accused them of doing the very things their ancestors had done before the exile. He was concerned about social justice for widows, orphans, and foreigners. But as the people endured opposition from the non-Jewish inhabitants of Judea, Zechariah reassured them of God's abiding comfort and care. God would continue his covenant with Israel. Messianic hope was rekindled during Zechariah's ministry, and the book ends with the promise that the Lord would establish his rule over all the earth (14:9).

***Malachi*** - Malachi, writing a short time after Zechariah, called the people to repentance with respect to: the priesthood, which had become corrupt; worship, which had become routine; divorce, which was widespread; social justice, which was being ignored; and tithing, which was neglected.

Although the urging of Haggai and Zechariah had brought the completion of the temple (516 B.C.), this had not produced the messianic age many expected. The warm response to Zechariah's call to repentance had grown cold, because God apparently had not restored the covenant blessings. "Will man rob God?" the Lord asked through Malachi (3:8), and he promised to "open the windows of heaven" (v. 10) for those who pay their full tithe. Malachi predicted the coming of both John the Baptist and Jesus, referring to each as a "messenger" of God (3:1).

## **Major Prophets**

***Isaiah*** - Isaiah lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of Assyria. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (see 6:10), who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster. He warned that the sin of the people of Judah would bring God's judgment.

He also declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return them from exile. The book speaks of a "servant," a "man of sorrows," who would be "pierced for our transgressions," accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (52:13–53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which God will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing eternal peace. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. (possibly till the 680s).

***Jeremiah*** - ***Jeremiah's task as a prophet was to declare the coming judgment of God.*** Jeremiah, often called the "weeping prophet" because of his sorrow over the persistent message of God's judgment, prophesied to the nation of Judah.

From the reign of King Josiah in 627 B.C. until sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586. He dictated his prophecies to a scribe named Baruch (36:4, 32).

However, throughout the book we also see God’s concern for repentance and righteousness in individuals as well as nations. This dual focus is seen in God’s instructions to Jeremiah: he was “to pluck up and to break down” but also “to build and to plant” (1:10). Jeremiah sees a future day when God will write his law on human hearts, and “they shall all know me,” and “I will remember their sin no more” (31:33–34).

***Lamentations*** – The book of Lamentations is made up of five poems, each an expression of grief over the fall of Jerusalem. Like a eulogy at a funeral, these laments are intended to mourn a loss—in this case, the loss of a nation. The latter half of chapter 3 implies that the purpose behind the book’s graphic depictions of sorrow and suffering was to produce hope in the God whose compassion is “new every morning” (v. 23) and whose faithfulness is great even to a people who have been condemned for their own unfaithfulness. *The author, while not identified in the book itself, may have been the prophet Jeremiah, who was said to have “uttered a lament for Josiah”* (2 Chron. 35:25). Lamentations was probably written shortly after Jerusalem’s fall in 586 B.C.

***Ezekiel*** - Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years.

The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the “likeness” of the Lord himself. Ezekiel was keenly aware of God’s presence and power in human affairs. After Jerusalem’s fall (in 586), Ezekiel prophesied hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God’s covenant, the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (ch. 37) is a classic picture of God’s ability to renew his people.

***Daniel*** - Exiled to Babylon in 605 B.C., Daniel was one of several young men chosen to serve in Nebuchadnezzar’s court. From the interpretation of dreams, to the familiar stories of the fiery furnace, the lions’ den, and the handwriting on the wall, to the prophetic visions, the recurrent theme is God’s sovereignty over human affairs.

When Persia conquered Babylon in 539, Daniel was again given a position of power. He remained faithful to God in both of these hostile environments. In the historical sections (chs. 1–6) God supernaturally rescued Daniel and his friends. The rest of the book consists of visions of future judgment and deliverance by the Messiah. Some of Daniel’s prophetic themes are echoed in the New Testament, especially in Revelation.

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