

Profiles of Prophets

Chapter 1

Audio Lesson: Old Testament #61



Objective: To introduce the role of Old Testament prophets and understand how they fit with the rest of Scripture.



Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.

—Amos 3:7

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

—2 Peter 1:20, 21

Israel and Judah had many prophets, but only 16 of them wrote books. From a New Testament perspective, these books of the prophets are considered the essence of the Old Testament. They express the heart of God toward His people.

Who were these prophets? They were men from many different backgrounds who were called to speak for God—usually to give words of correction to a nation of priests and people who had gone astray. All the prophets who wrote books lived in a period of approximately 400 years, from 800 to 400 BC. They were often ridiculed, mocked, and persecuted because they preached a message few people wanted to hear. When their message was rejected, they warned of the judgment God would bring on the nation. In the message of most of the prophets, that judgment came in the form of captivity for God's people; Assyria would capture the northern kingdom of Israel, and Babylon would capture the southern kingdom of Judah. In all of their warnings, however, there is a message of hope. God let His people know ahead of time that they would be restored after they had repented. The prophets preached during the darkest days in the history of God's people, yet their greatest message of hope came from their prophecies of the coming Messiah.

1. **True** or false? There are two essential sections of the Old Testament: the Law and the Prophets.
2. True or **false**? All great prophets in the Old Testament wrote books.
3. True or **false**? Most prophets were also priests.



Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. Who could become a prophet?
 - a. Anyone born into a family of prophets
 - b. Those who trained for years in the prophetic arts
 - c. Only priests
 - d. Whoever God selected**

5. Why were prophets needed?
 - a. God wanted everyone to know their future, so he chose prophets to be fortune-tellers.
 - b. The people—including the priests—had become corrupt and disobeyed God.**
 - c. God did not want His people to relate to Him directly, so He assigned these holy men to represent Him.
 - d. The people had learned the Law and practiced it perfectly, but God still had more things to tell them.

6. How long did the era of prophets last?
 - a. About 400 years**
 - b. Less than 50 years
 - c. At least 1,000 years
 - d. Four weeks in 787 B.C.

7. What were God's prophets primarily called to do? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. Predict the future
 - b. Be a spokesman for God**
 - c. Exhort the people of God to obey and apply God's Word to their lives**
 - d. Get people's priorities in line with God's priorities**
 - e. Preach against a problem that was blocking God's work**
 - f. Give everyone hope and make them feel good

8. The ministry of the prophets was primarily related to what historical events?
- The end times
 - God's judgments through conquest and captivity**
 - The Exodus and Promised Land
 - Earthquakes and famines
9. What usually happened when the prophets preached messages of repentance and revival?
- Everyone who heard them repented and was restored.
 - The nation changed its course for the better.
 - The prophets were honored for their faithfulness.
 - Their message was ignored and rejected, and they were often persecuted.**
10. What problem did the prophets most often address?
- Social injustice
 - Anger
 - Idolatry**
 - Jealousy
11. What solutions did the prophets promise? (*choose all that apply*)
- God would bring them back to the land.**
 - God would ultimately deliver them through a Savior.**
 - Their punishment would be so effective that they would never sin again.
 - God would eventually punish their enemies.**
12. What were the roles of the prophets? (*choose all that apply*)
- To tell the will of God for the present**
 - To explain the details of the Law
 - To foretell God's plan for the future**
 - To protect Israel from its enemies
 - To cry out against the obstacles to the will of God**
 - To help people cope with adversity**
13. What type of writing is given the most space in the Bible?
- Law
 - Letters
 - Prophets**
 - History
14. How do the prophetic books fit historically with the rest of the Old Testament?
- They explain the foundations and beginnings of Israel.
 - They were written during Israel's "golden age."
 - They tell of the fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.**
 - Their primary purpose has little to do with Old Testament history but instead points toward New Testament times.



Are there any obstacles to what God wants to do in your life? If so, what are they? If you do not know, pray and ask God to reveal them to you and help you deal with them.



Thank God that He speaks to His people—and that He corrects us when we need it. Pray that you would be sensitive to His voice. Ask Him to remove any obstacles or problems that are blocking God’s work in your life. Ask God to give you opportunities and courage to speak of His will for His people.



Going Deeper

1. Since God the Holy Spirit, Who wrote the Bible, shows the importance of a subject or topic in the Bible by the amount of space given to that subject, what is God telling us by the fact that the largest sections of Scripture are the writings of the prophets? _____

2. Why are the prophets the least read and least understood books by the people of God today?

3. What is the definition of a prophet? _____

4. What was the role and function of a prophet? _____

5. What was the essential message of the prophets? _____

6. What kinds of people were called to be prophets? _____

7. How were the prophets treated when they preached the messages that God gave them to preach? _____
