

Gospel Truth

Biblical Instruction and Encouragement
for the Mission Field Worldwide.

THE CALL OF THE PROPHETS

"I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings..." —Jeremiah 35:15

From the earliest days of Israel's history, God raised up men to speak His word to the people. The prophetic call did not begin with human ambition or natural ability; it began with God Himself. He selected the vessel, gave the message, and sent the prophet forth to stand in His place and declare His word. Their calling carried a weight they did not choose, yet could not escape.

The prophets were not all alike. Some came from royal courts, while others were farmers, shepherds, or laborers. A few were trained and educated; others had no earthly credentials at all. Their personalities varied—some tender and weeping, others bold and fiery, still others calm and steadfast. Yet with all their differences, one truth was the same: **God called them.** He placed His word in their mouths and His burden upon their hearts.

Their message often met resistance. They spoke in times of crisis, idolatry, decline, and national unrest. They warned of judgment when the people preferred soothing words. They were God's voice to a wandering, backslidden nation, urging the people to repent. They called

Israel back to righteousness when the nation drifted toward sin. They offered hope when hope seemed lost, reminding the faithful that God had not forgotten His covenant. Many of the prophets were scorned and despised; they suffered reproach, loneliness, persecution, and even death for the sake of obedience. Still, they remained faithful to the One who sent them.



These prophets—unique, misunderstood, and frequently rejected—were human. They experienced fear, weariness, discouragement, and moments of deep struggle. Some hesitated, some felt inadequate, and some

wrestled with the heavy responsibility placed upon them. But God used them—not because they were flawless, but because they were willing. His strength was made perfect in their weakness, and His message went forth through imperfect vessels who trusted Him.

The prophetic call did not end with the Old Testament. Today, God still seeks men and women who will hear His voice, surrender to His will, and speak His truth with humility and courage. The question remains as vital as ever: *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* May our answer echo Isaiah's response: **"Here am I; send me."** ■

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The Prophets and Their Times

The prophetic books of the Bible are not arranged in chronological order, and it can be difficult to see where each prophet fits in Israel's history. This chart provides a simple overview of when the writing prophets ministered—before the Babylonian captivity (pre-exile), during the captivity (exile), and after the return to Judah (post-exile). Elijah and Elisha are also included because of their important place in the prophetic story. Scripture mentions other prophets whose ministries were significant, though their writings were not preserved in prophetic books.

NAME	DATES (BC)	LOCATION	ERA
Elijah	875-848	Israel (Northern Kingdom)	Pre-Exile
Elisha	848-800	Israel (Northern Kingdom)	Pre-Exile
Joel	9th to 5th century (uncertain)	Judah	Pre-Exile
Amos	760	Israel (from Judah)	Pre-Exile
Hosea	755-715	Israel (Northern Kingdom)	Pre-Exile
Isaiah	740-686	Judah (Jerusalem)	Pre-Exile
Micah	740-687	Judah (Moresheth)	Pre-Exile
Nahum	663-612	Judah	Pre-Exile
Zephaniah	640-621	Judah	Pre-Exile
Habakkuk	612-600	Judah	Pre-Exile
Obadiah	c. 586	Judah	Exile (early)
Jeremiah	626-586	Judah (Anathoth/Jerusalem)	Pre-Exile to Exile
Lamentations (Jeremiah)	586	Judah	Exile
Ezekiel	593-571	Babylon (River Chebar)	Exile
Daniel	605-536	Babylon to Persia	Exile
Haggai	520	Judah	Post-Exile
Zechariah	520-518	Judah	Post-Exile
Malachi	450-430	Judah	Post-Exile

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Gospel Truth, P.O. Box 2042, Nixa, MO 65714 USA
editor@thegospeltruth.org

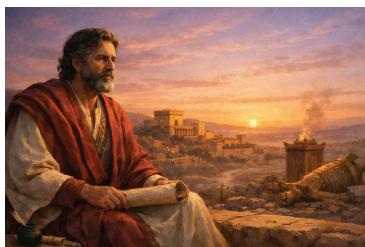
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Old Testament Prophets

The Old Testament prophets were chosen by God to speak His word in times of crisis and decline. They warned of judgment, called the people to righteousness, and offered hope of restoration. They also guided and encouraged, seeking to draw the people back to God. The lives and messages of the prophets continue to remind us of God's holiness, mercy, judgment, and faithfulness.

ISAIAH

THE MESSIANIC PROPHET



DATES: Ministry approx. 740–686 BC

ROLE: Prophet

LOCATION: Jerusalem; Judah

BOOK: Isaiah

THEMES: Holiness, judgment, repentance, restoration, the coming Messiah

Isaiah's name (meaning "*The Lord is salvation*") reflects the core message of his ministry. Isaiah's call to the prophetic ministry came "in the year that King Uzziah died," when he saw a vision of the Lord in the temple (Isaiah 6:1–8). He lived in Jerusalem and prophesied to the southern kingdom of Judah, which consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The northern kingdom of Israel was deeply idolatrous and would eventually fall to Assyria in 722 BC.

Isaiah ministered during the reigns of kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Isaiah 1:1). Because he lived in Jerusalem and interacted closely with these kings, he seems to have had some connection to the royal court, though Scripture does not explain the details.

Isaiah was married and had at least two sons whose names carried prophetic meaning. Shear-jashub ("a remnant shall return") and Maher-shalal-hash-baz ("speed the spoil, hasten the prey") were signs to the nation and reflected the message God had given him (Isaiah 7:3; 8:1–4).

Isaiah rebuked Judah for their sin and warned of the judgment that would come. The nation was tempted to rely on political alliances—especially with Egypt—as Assyria rose in power. Isaiah reminded them that no foreign nation could save them; their only security was in trusting the Lord (Isaiah 31:1). He foretold that Judah would one day be carried away into Babylon (Isaiah 39:6–7), a prophecy that was fulfilled more than a century after Isaiah's death.

Although Isaiah spoke strongly about sin and judgment, God also used him to deliver some of the clearest prophecies in Scripture concerning the Messiah. He wrote of the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), the divine King who would reign forever (Isaiah 9:6–7), the righteous Branch from the house of David (Isaiah 11:1–10), the forerunner who would prepare the way of the Lord (Isaiah 40:3–5), and the man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions

(Isaiah, continued)

and would bear the sins of many (Isaiah 53). These prophecies plainly point to the coming of Jesus Christ.

The Bible does not record how Isaiah died. According to early Jewish and Christian tradition, he was martyred at the age of ninety during the reign of Manasseh and was sawn in two—some believe this is reflected in Hebrews 11:37. While this cannot be confirmed from Scripture, it illustrates the danger faced by prophets who refused to compromise God's message.

Isaiah exposed the real spiritual condition of Judah, yet he also carried a message of hope. He reminded the people of God's holiness and pointed them toward the Redeemer who would come. His writings, noted for their grandeur of language and powerful poetic style, provide one of the clearest Old Testament pictures of the Messiah. He is the most quoted of the prophets in the New Testament. ■

ZEPHANIAH

THE PROPHET OF THE DAY OF THE LORD



DATES: Ministry approx. 640–621 BC

ROLE: Prophet

LOCATION: Judah, primarily Jerusalem

BOOK: Zephaniah

THEMES: The Day of the Lord, judgment on sin, God's holiness, repentance, restoration, a purified remnant

Zephaniah (meaning “*hidden by the Lord*”) ministered in Judah during the reign of King Josiah (Zephaniah 1:1), likely just before the king’s reforms. His genealogy reaches back four generations to “Hezekiah,” and many scholars believe this refers to King Hezekiah. If that connection is correct, Zephaniah was of royal descent—a rare background for a prophet—and his message carried unusual authority as he called Judah back to God.

When Zephaniah began to speak, Judah was spiritually adrift and deeply corrupt. Idolatry was widespread, violence and injustice were common, and many people were comfortable in their sin. Zephaniah opened his prophecy with a clear warning: God’s judgment was drawing near. Throughout the book, he speaks of “the day of the Lord”—a time when God would deal decisively with sin in Judah and in the surrounding nations (Zephaniah 1:14–18). His words include some of the strongest descriptions of judgment in the Old Testament, intended to wake the people from spiritual complacency.

Yet Zephaniah’s message is not only one of judgment. He called Judah to seek the Lord, to

seek righteousness and humility, promising that God would preserve a remnant who would trust Him (Zephaniah 2:3). He also pronounced judgment on surrounding nations—Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush, and Assyria—reminding them that God rules over all nations.

The book ends with a shift from judgment to restoration. Zephaniah foretold a day when God would purify His people, remove their fear and shame, and gather them again. One of the wonderful promises of the Old Testament appears here: **“The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save... he will joy over thee with singing”** (Zephaniah 3:17).

Scripture does not record anything about Zephaniah’s death, and little is known about his personal life beyond his lineage. But his message stands as one of the final calls to Judah before Babylon arrived. Zephaniah reminds us that God’s holiness must be taken seriously, yet His mercy is extended to all who will humble themselves and return to Him. ■

HABAKKUK

THE QUESTIONING PROPHET



DATES: Ministry approx. 612–600 BC

ROLE: Prophet

LOCATION: Judah

BOOK: Habakkuk

THEMES: God's justice, questioning and faith, judgment on wickedness, living by faith, the sovereignty of God

Habakkuk (meaning “one who embraces”) lived in Judah in the years leading up to the Babylonian invasion, likely during Jehoiakim’s reign. His

book, written in the same era as Jeremiah’s ministry, is unusual among the prophets: instead of sermons to the people, it records a dialogue with God. That’s why he is often remembered as “*the questioning prophet*.” He looked at the violence, the injustice, and the spiritual decline of his nation, and he brought his concerns directly to the Lord (Habakkuk 1:2–4).

God’s reply was unexpected. He revealed that Babylon would rise up to judge Judah (Habakkuk 1:6). This raised another question for Habakkuk—how could God use a nation even more corrupt than Judah? Yet the Lord reminded him that He rules over all nations and that sin, whether in Judah or in Babylon, will not escape His judgment. In this context comes the foundational truth: “the just shall live by his

faith” (Habakkuk 2:4), later echoed throughout the New Testament.

The book concludes with a prayer that becomes a declaration of trust. Habakkuk begins with questions but ends with confidence: “Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Habakkuk 3:18). His final words show that faith does not depend on circumstances but on the God who does not change. The meaning of Habakkuk’s name mirrors his prophetic ministry. He embraced God in prayer and faith even while questioning His ways.

Scripture does not record Habakkuk’s death, and little else is known about his life. Habakkuk wrestled with questions that still confront believers today—why God allows evil, how His justice works, and how faith endures in uncertain times. Habakkuk shows that asking hard questions is not unbelief but is a path to trusting in God more deeply. ■

JEREMIAH

THE WEEPING PROPHET



DATES: Ministry approx. 626–586 BC

ROLE: Prophet and priest

LOCATION: Anathoth and Jerusalem; Judah

BOOK: Jeremiah; Lamentations (traditional)

THEMES: Judgment, repentance, covenant faithfulness, fall of Judah, restoration and hope

Jeremiah (meaning “*The Lord appoints/exalts/hurls*”) was the son of Hilkiah, a priest from the village of Anathoth in the land of Benjamin (Jeremiah 1:1). His call came in the thirteenth year of King Josiah, around 627 BC, when God said to him, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee... I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). Jeremiah was called at a very young age, shown by his own words:

“I am a child” (Jeremiah 1:6). His ministry began less than a century after Isaiah’s ministry ended. Judah had not heeded the earlier warnings, and the nation was nearing its final collapse. Jeremiah carried God’s message through the last years of Judah’s history. He ministered through the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, all the way to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. His ministry lasted approximately forty years.

Jeremiah is often called “*the weeping prophet*” because of the deep sorrow he carried for Judah’s sin and the judgment that was coming. Many historical writers describe him as sensitive and deeply emotional. Though he often struggled under the weight of the message—at times appearing despondent—he remained obedient and faithful to God’s call. God sent him to warn the nation that Babylon would conquer Jerusalem because the people had hardened their hearts and turned to idolatry. Jeremiah pleaded with them to repent, but his message was rejected repeatedly. False prophets opposed him and promised peace when there would be no peace (Jeremiah 6:14). When Jeremiah told the people not to resist Babylon, for God had given Judah into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand, they accused him of being a traitor.

Jeremiah suffered greatly for the message God gave him to speak. He was beaten, arrested, and thrown into a cistern where he sank into the mud (Jeremiah 38:6). King Jehoiakim

cut up Jeremiah’s written prophecy and burned it piece by piece (Jeremiah 36). After Jerusalem fell, Jeremiah stayed with the few who were left in the land. The remnant later forced him to go with them to Egypt, even though he warned them not to flee there (Jeremiah 42–43). The Bible records nothing more about his death, though later tradition says he was stoned in Egypt.

In the middle of all the trouble, God gave Jeremiah a message of hope. He foretold that God would make a new covenant with His people, writing His law in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31–34). Though Jeremiah lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem, he also declared that God would restore His people again.

Jeremiah’s ministry stands out for its honesty, compassion, and endurance. He exposed Judah’s sin, warned of coming judgment, and still pointed to God’s mercy and the promise of a new covenant that would one day be fulfilled in Christ. ■

EZEKIEL

THE WATCHMAN PROPHET



Ezekiel (meaning “*the strength of God*”) was a priest and the son of Buzi. He was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon during the second deportation in 597 BC (Ezekiel 1:1–3). Ezekiel was carried away before the final destruction of Jerusalem, and his ministry took place among the exiles who lived by the River Chebar. Although far from Jerusalem, God used him to speak to the Jewish exiles from Judah who, even after the warnings of Isaiah and Jeremiah, had not yet understood the seriousness of their sin or the purpose of their captivity.

Ezekiel’s prophetic call came in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity, around 593 BC (Ezekiel 1:2). He saw remarkable visions of the glory of the Lord—visions that shaped the rest of his ministry. Because God set him as a “watchman unto the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 3:17), Ezekiel is often known as the “watchman prophet.” Scholars also describe him as the “prophet of visions” because of the vivid and symbolic nature of his prophecies, and as the “prophet of the exile” because his entire ministry took place in Babylon. Historical writers describe Ezekiel as strong-willed and disciplined, marked by deep devotion to God and by the striking, sometimes mysterious character of his visions.

Ezekiel ministered during the same general period as Daniel, who had been taken captive earlier in 605 BC. Although they served in different settings—Daniel in the royal court and Ezekiel among the common exiles—Ezekiel refers to Daniel by name as a righteous and wise man (Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3).

In his early ministry, Ezekiel warned that Jerusalem would be destroyed because the people refused to repent. His message was firm and direct, and God often commanded him to act out symbolic signs to illustrate the coming judgment. Ezekiel lay on his side for many days to represent the years of Israel’s and Judah’s sin (Ezekiel 4:4–6). He ate rationed food cooked over human dung to picture the defilement and famine the people would endure during the siege (Ezekiel 4:12–13). He shaved his

(Ezekiel, continued)

hair and beard and divided it into portions to show the fate of Jerusalem—some burned, some struck with a sword, and some scattered to the wind (Ezekiel 5:1–4). All these signs were meant to shock the exiles awake to the seriousness of their condition. When Jerusalem finally fell in 586 BC, a refugee arrived with the news, confirming everything Ezekiel had prophesied (Ezekiel 33:21). From that point forward, his message shifted from judgment to hope. He spoke of restoration, a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26), and the promise that God would one day gather His people again.

Ezekiel was married, and the death of his wife became a solemn sign to the people (Ezekiel 24:15–18), though Scripture gives no further details about his family.

Ezekiel also spoke God's judgment against the nations around Israel and received visions that showed what God would do with His people. His vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37) is one of the clearest pictures of God bringing life and hope where there was only death. A major theme in Ezekiel's ministry was the glory of the Lord. He saw the glory depart from the temple because of Israel's sin, but he also saw the promise that God's glory would return again in the future.

Scripture does not record how Ezekiel died. Jewish tradition says he may have been killed by fellow exiles for rebuking idolatry. What we do know is that Ezekiel stayed faithful to God's call in a time of great darkness. He confronted the sin that brought judgment, and he pointed the people to the hope of God's restoration. ■

DANIEL

THE APOCALYPTIC PROPHET



DATES: Active ministry approx. 605–536 BC

ROLE: Prophet and statesman

LOCATION: Jerusalem; Babylon

BOOK: Daniel

THEMES: God's sovereignty, faithfulness in exile, prophetic visions of kingdoms, apocalyptic prophecy, deliverance, the coming Messiah

Daniel (meaning “*God is my judge*”) was taken captive to Babylon in the first deportation of 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar carried away young men from Judah who were “well favored, and skillful in all wisdom” (Daniel 1:3–4). Many scholars believe Daniel came from a noble or royal family, based on the king’s command to bring princes and nobles into the Babylonian court. Daniel was probably a teenager when he arrived in Babylon, yet he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king’s meat (Daniel 1:8). From the beginning, Daniel stood firm in his devotion to God.

Daniel served under several rulers—Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius the Mede, and Cyrus—and God used him in positions of leadership throughout the Babylonian and early Persian empires. Through all the changes and pressures of living in a pagan nation, he maintained his integrity with God. Daniel prayed regularly, sought God’s wisdom, and refused to compromise even when threatened with death. In the reign of Darius, Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den for continuing to pray to God, and the Lord delivered him (Daniel 6).

Daniel is known for his apocalyptic visions. God revealed future kingdoms, the rise and fall of nations, and the establishment of Christ’s everlasting kingdom. His interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams (Daniel 2 and 4), his vision of the four beasts (Daniel 7), and his prophecy of the ram and goat (Daniel 8) reveal God’s sovereignty and point to Christ’s kingdom. These visions, and Daniel’s God-given interpretation of them, help unlock the meaning of later prophecy in Revelation.

(Daniel, continued)

Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 is one of the clearest pictures we have of intercession for a sinful nation. In that same chapter, God gave him the prophecy of the "seventy weeks," which pointed unmistakably to the coming of the Messiah (Daniel 9:24–27).

Daniel lived during the same period as Ezekiel. Ezekiel refers to Daniel by name as a righteous and wise man (Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3), proving that Daniel's faithfulness was known even among the other exiles.

Daniel also witnessed the fall of Babylon. During Belshazzar's feast, the hand of God wrote a message on the wall:

"Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." Daniel interpreted this as God's judgment on the kingdom (Daniel 5). That very night, Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians.

The Bible does not record Daniel's death. He was still ministering in the third year of Cyrus (Daniel 10:1), which suggests he lived into old age. Daniel's life—marked by courage, integrity, wisdom, and steadfast devotion to God—reminds us that regardless of the rule of man, we can live faithfully under God's authority in His kingdom. ■

MICAH

THE PROPHET OF SOCIAL JUSTICE



DATES: Ministry approx. 740–687 BC

ROLE: Prophet

LOCATION: Judah

BOOK: Micah

THEMES: Justice, mercy, true religion, judgment and restoration, the coming Ruler from Bethlehem

Micah (meaning "*Who is like the Lord?*") prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. His ministry took place in the same general era as Isaiah, and his message shares parallels with Hosea and Amos, who also confronted the sins and injustices of the eighth century BC. Micah came from Moresheth, a rural community in Judah, and spoke plainly about the spiritual and moral decline of the nation. His book follows a repeated pattern of judgment, promise, and appeal, reflecting both God's holiness and His enduring compassion.

Micah is remembered as the prophet of social justice because he dealt directly with sins that harmed the poor and vulnerable. He condemned those who seized fields and homes from defenseless families (Micah 2:1–2). He rebuked leaders who abused their authority and failed to uphold equity (3:9). Judges, priests, and prophets often served for payment, and Micah exposed this corruption as dishonoring to God (3:11). He also spoke against the use of false weights and balances, which cheated people in daily trade (6:10–11). Through Micah, the Lord reminded the people that true worship must be joined with righteousness and fair dealings.

Micah's message also pointed toward hope. He foretold that a Ruler would come from Bethlehem who would shepherd God's people in the strength of the Lord (Micah 5:2–4). His preaching had lasting impact; according to Jeremiah 26:18–19, his warning brought conviction to King Hezekiah and helped turn the nation toward repentance. Micah summarized God's requirement in memorable words: "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). The book closes with a strong affirmation of God's mercy and faithfulness. ■

Contact

The Gospel Truth
P.O. Box 2042
Nixa, MO 65714
USA

Email:
editor@thegospeltruth.org

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD

