

Key Prophetic Messages

God said something very interesting in Amos 3:7

“Surely the Lord GOD does nothing,
Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”

There are things God wants us to know. Through prophecy He tells us those things. A prophet is someone who conveys God’s messages to people, telling us what God knows we need to hear, to think about, and act on.

A prophet is someone who speaks on behalf of God. Names from the Bible like Noah, Samuel, Elijah or Isaiah might come to mind. Those are a few examples of those who have operated as prophets, bringing a message from God to people. Sometimes God uses a prophet to foretell, to talk about something that will happen in the future. That’s how He used Noah – to tell people that there was going to be a flood, and also point out the way to survive it.

Foretelling is something that captures our attention, because we are so hemmed in by time. We mainly deal with what is happening around us right now today. The past is gone. You and I were not around a hundred or two hundred years ago, We can’t change the past. And we can’t see tomorrow because it’s not here yet. So if someone is able to foretell what will happen tomorrow or next year, or in ten years, that is really extraordinary for us. But for God it’s just normal.

God can see all of time, at the same time. Past, present and future are all plain before Him, as if they’re all laid out on the same table. God can choose to give a person a look at any part of that grand tableau. To Moses God showed the distant past, which enabled him to write the story of creation, as recorded in the book of Genesis. When the apostle John was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos, God gave him a look into the future, from which he wrote the book of Revelation. In John’s time those things were still in the distant future. For us it might be tomorrow.

Jesus prophesied about the future, and told us what to expect as we're approaching the time of His return. Let's look at Matthew chapter 24:

³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for [Ⓜ]all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, [Ⓜ]pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand.

³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that [Ⓜ]it is near—at the doors! ³⁴ Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Each of us can reflect on the signs that we have seen or that our world is experiencing right now. This can help us recognize what time it really is in the history of the world, and prepare our hearts to meet God.

Prophecies that foretell something help us to develop faith in the word and power of God. Because when we see these prophecies being fulfilled, we realize who is the ruler of the universe. This builds our determination to stick with the word of God, and to live in obedience to it. Seeing prophecy fulfilled helps us realize that "yes, this stuff is real".

Let's look at another aspect of a prophet's role. This time it's not *fore*-telling, but "*forth*-telling", or telling forth something from God's point of view. In this case God gives the prophet special insight into how He, God, views a situation. The prophet then declares what God wants His people to understand.

Expressing things from God's point of view is a really important function of a prophet. Without that our minds could easily be drowning in a sea of just human opinions. But a prophet, through times of prayer and seeking, needs to really seek out how God feels about things. And then convey this to others in such a way that they also can get an understanding of the mind of God.

In the book of Malachi we see an example of a prophet doing some forth-telling. Malachi was helping the people to understand how God felt about the way they were treating Him. God just wasn't so important to them any more. Their apathetic attitude was showing up in the way they lived, in the way they worshipped, or actually the way they didn't really bother to worship. And in their giving, or actually the way they didn't really bother to give to the house of God.

God used His prophet to point out the connection between the spiritual condition of the people, and the mess they were experiencing in their lives. The purpose of the prophecy was to bring about a change in their attitudes, and their actions - which would transform everything else in their lives. Forth-telling is telling it like it is, from God's point of view, so that we know what we need to change, and how we need to live.

We have another example of a forth-telling prophet in the book of Zechariah. In chapter 3 the prophet describes something that he experienced spiritually, beyond the reach of our usual five senses. It was a conversation, in fact a confrontation, that was taking place in the spiritual realm.

In the situation that Zechariah described, someone identified as "Joshua the high priest" was standing before the Lord. This person Joshua was someone in a role of spiritual leadership, trying to do his job on behalf of the people he served. But at the same time, Satan the adversary was standing up before God, spouting out one accusation after another about this person's unworthiness.

This person identified as “Joshua” could possibly represent Yeshua or Jesus, who stood before God bearing all of our sins. This person Joshua could also represent anyone who is coming to God in prayer. In other words, you or me. There he stood before God, clothed in filthy garments. Those garments represent the reality of our sinfulness, our weaknesses, the lack of any virtue that we can claim before God. It demonstrates what Isaiah wrote, that any righteousness we might think we have, is like filthy rags in the face of God's holiness.

So this vision of Zechariah reveals to us a spiritual fact: that we all stand there in the presence of God, clothed in filth and attacked by the words of the accuser, pointing out our sinfulness. But that stabbing voice was not the only one to be heard. God had something to say, and when He spoke, everything changed.

² And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! /s this not a brand plucked from the fire?”

⁴ Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, “Take away the filthy garments from him.” And to him He said, “See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.”

In the next few minutes, let's take a really quick snapshot of the ministry of four Old Testament prophets and some of their key messages.



Quick “Snapshots” of 4 Prophets

The
Prophet:

Amos

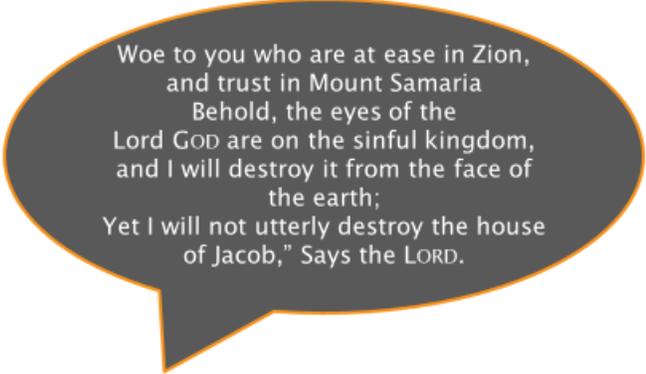
Speaking to:

Israel

Timing:

760 -755 BC

Amos was the earliest prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel. In his ministry he condemned the people's immorality, warned them of coming judgement, and appealed for them to turn back to God. He said that if they would turn, they would obtain mercy, because God is both holy and loving. Amos was not a priest or a professional prophet; he was a farmer by trade. So there's a directness and straightforward tone to his message.



Woe to you who are at ease in Zion,
and trust in Mount Samaria
Behold, the eyes of the
Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom,
and I will destroy it from the face of
the earth;
Yet I will not utterly destroy the house
of Jacob," Says the LORD.

The Prophet:

Joel

Speaking to:

Judah

Timing:

around 835 BC

Judah had recently experienced a massive plague of locusts. Joel used this as an analogy for the coming Day of the Lord, when disaster would descend on the nation for its sins. Yet Joel showed another side of the Day of the Lord – it would bring new, abundant blessings to those who reach out to God. Part of that prophecy was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost and thereafter, up until today.

Return to the LORD your God,
For He is gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger, and of great kindness
And it shall come to pass afterward
That I will pour out My Spirit on all
flesh; And it shall come to pass
That whoever calls on the name of
the LORD shall be saved.

The Prophet:

Hosea

Speaking to:

Israel

Timing:

750 - 722 BC

Hosea's name means Salvation. The power of his message is that it wasn't just words. It was mainly lived out in the pain and heartache of his personal life. God told Hosea to marry a prostitute. She continued her ways within the marriage, bearing three children along the way. Then left him to go back to her pimp. After years, ragged up and unwanted, Hosea bought her back from her master, living out God's almost unbelievable love for us.

Their mother has played the harlot;
She who conceived them has behaved
shamefully.
For she said, 'I will go after my lovers'

In lovingkindness and mercy;
I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness,
And you shall know the LORD.

The
Prophet:

Isaiah

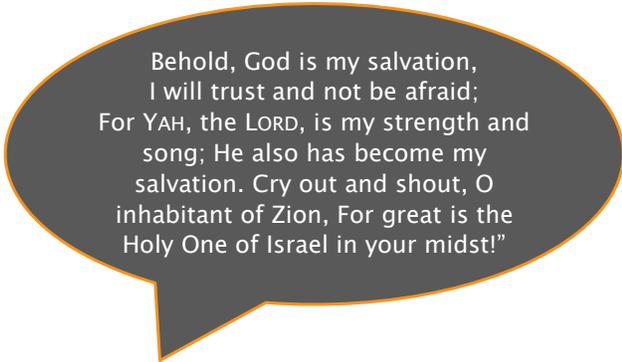
Speaking to:

Judah

Timing:

740 - 680 BC

Isaiah's name means Yahweh is salvation. He was a major voice of the message of salvation. More than any other prophet he proclaimed the coming of Messiah. He told us that unto us a child would be born, who would embody the Everlasting Father as the Son of God. Isaiah brought us visions of God's glory and holiness and majesty as the One, only, true, living, almighty, God, Creator of all things.



Behold, God is my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid;
For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and
song; He also has become my
salvation. Cry out and shout, O
inhabitant of Zion, For great is the
Holy One of Israel in your midst!"

There are three big overarching themes in the messages the prophets brought to God's people. The first big theme was showing the people how they were living in terms of their covenant with God. The prophets described with detail and emotion how the covenant was being transgressed. That transgression was usually taking place in three ways:

1. People were straight out disobeying the commandments of God.
2. They were running after and worshipping false gods. This was depicted as spiritual adultery, being unfaithful to God, who had been so faithful to them.
3. They were neglecting the social justice that God requires. They were exploiting those without power, like the poor, the foreigner, the sick, the widow, the orphan, the slave. They were turning their eyes away and not meeting the needs of those who needed their help.

And yet in spite of the way they were living, God's people thought that if they just went through the motions of religious rituals at the Temple, they would be

ok. God should accept that as if they were sincere. Through His prophets, God said “No Way”.

Which brings us to the second big theme of the prophets: Repent! Turn from your evil ways, because judgement is coming. From Jonah to Jeremiah to John the Baptist this message rang out, Repent! Turn around! Or you are going to experience the judgement of God. But if you repent, you can experience His mercy. That message is still coming to us today. Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling. And we don't always give Him our attention. Sometimes He has to shout.

The third big theme of the prophets is that of Restoration and Salvation. This message is that the Kingdom of Heaven truly is at hand, if we would reach out and receive it. Beyond our sin, beyond all the destruction caused by our sin, God makes a promise through His prophets: If we would finally turn to Him, and humble ourselves, and pray, and seek His face, and turn from our wicked ways... Then God will hear from heaven, He will forgive our sins, He will heal our land. He will restore His blessings, He show to us the path of life. Our ears will hear a voice behind us saying “This is the way, walk ye in it”. God will open the doors into His Presence, He will welcome us into everlasting life.

In addition to those three big themes of the prophets, there are two other things that stand out and must be mentioned. The first is the experience of the glory of God. The voice, the presence, the sight, the light, the glory of God. That experience was awesome and life-changing. The prophets wrote about it, although they could scarcely find words to express the inexpressible.

Then also, there is a signature phrase that echoes through the prophetic writings from Exodus to Ezekiel and beyond. It is “I am the Lord”. It was the reason for so many things that God said and did through the prophets – “that they might know that I am the Lord”. We can't understand much about life without accepting this truth, this first foundational fact, “I am the Lord”.

Let's end with the prophetic message of Restoration and Salvation from the apostle John in Revelation 22:

⁶ Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

⁷ "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

¹⁰ And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

¹² "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* "Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last."

¹⁴ Blessed *are* those who ^{do} His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ ^{But} outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

¹⁸ For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, ^{God} will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, ^{God} shall take away his part from the ^{Book} of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."

Brothers and sisters, God has sent us prophecy to alert us and to light our way. Throughout scripture and in our present day, the prophets have spoken. Now it's up to us to listen. We can't be passive about prophecy, because it is God speaking to us. Instead, we need to seek out the messages that God has given to us in His word. And we can't be hearers only, we have to commit to be doers of the word. So let us both hear and take heed. Every day let us make sure that we are living according to the words of prophecy that we have received. Let's lock in to our covenant with God. And we will experience His restoration and salvation.