

INTRODUCTION TO OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

PROPHET

Over 300 times in the OT

Over 100 times in the NT

Numerous terms describing the function

DEFINITION

OT prophet acted as a mouthpiece for God.

Received a message from Him and proclaimed it.

Name they were called – prophet, seer, man of God: 1 Sam9:9; 1 Kgs 13; 1 Chron 29:29

FIRST OCCURANCE –Gen 20:7-8 Abraham; Abimelech & Company

Knew what the term means

SECOND OCCURANCE – Ex7:1; Ex 4:10-16

The prophet passes on a message from God

Amos 3:8; Jer 1:7-17; Ezk 3:4

KINGS, PRIESTS, PASTORS receive their portion through

Heredity or human appointment; not so a prophet.

God chooses to give him a message with orders to pass it on.

In short the work of a prophet is not the fulfilling of an office, but the performance of a function.

In the time of Elijah and Elisha individuals who desired to assist a prophet were described as “sons of the prophets.”

In New Testament times, more so than Old, a prophet would get his message from God by means of the Written Word: Dan 9:1-27; 1 Cor 14:3; Eph 4:11

HOW THE PROPHET RECEIVED HIS MESSAGE – HEBREWS 1:1

The prophet was not a wise man who gave good advice.

Operating in his capacity:

1. He made mistakes 2Sam7:1-4
2. Samuel had it wrong again and again 1Sam 16
3. Human knowledge and speaking in partial 1Cor 13:9
4. He alone was not left; he was an individual within the body of God’s people
1Kgs 19:9ff
5. Ezekiel objected and God modified his delivery Ezk 4:7-15
6. Habakkuk needed clarification before giving out God’s message Hab 1&2
7. Samuel didn’t recognize who was speaking 1Sam 3:3-9

INTRO...CONTINUED

8. A prophet could deliver the message perfectly and then die for disregarding it
1Kgs 13
9. Messages from God could come early or instantaneously Isa 7:1-16
10. They were often conscious that they were speaking under the influence of God – “Thus saith the Lord” – and “The word of the Lord came to me” Jer 1:9; Ezk2:7
11. The prophets did not always understand the messages they were speaking themselves.
Dan 7:28; 8:15-27; 10:7-15; Rev 7:13,14; 17:6
They had difficulty when they made prophecies concerning the coming Messiah
1Pet1:10-13

THE TOPICS OF THE PROPHETS

The topics taken up by the OT Prophets may be summarized as follows:

1. The holiness of God
2. The sin and failure of God’s chosen people
3. A call to repentance
4. God’s judgment on them if they would not repent
5. God’s judgment on the surrounding nations
6. The return of part of the nation from captivity
7. The coming of the Messiah and His rejection
8. The Messiah’s coming in power and great glory
9. The restoration of God’s chosen people
10. Christ’s universal reign.

PROPER NAMES AND WHAT THEY REFER TO

1. The name ISRAEL ordinarily refers to the Northern Kingdom, the ten tribes. But it sometimes refers to the entire nation – all who are descendants of Abraham.
2. JUDAH, on the other hand, usually refers to the Southern Kingdom, the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin.
3. EPHRAIM is used, especially in Hosea, to describe the ten tribes, or the Northern Kingdom. The house of Joseph also refers to the Northern Kingdom.
4. SAMARIA was the capital of the Northern Kingdom and is mentioned frequently.
5. JERUSALEM, on the other hand, was the capital of the Southern Kingdom.
6. NINEVEH was the capital of Assyria.
7. The city of BABYLON was the capital of the nation of Babylon (also called Babylonia).
8. DAMASCUS was the chief city-state of Syria.

THE PROPHET RECEIVED REVELATIONS IN DIFFERENT WAYS: Heb 1:1-2

1. by the invisible being seen: Num 22; 2Kgs 6:15-17
2. By visions: Ezk 37; ch 40-48; Micah 4:1-4; Isa 2:1
Thus they were called “seers” Ezk 8 and 9
Book of Revelation

INTRO...CONTINUED

THE PROPHETS DELIVERED THEIR MESSAGES IN DIFFERENT WAYS:

SHORT ANSWERS	LONGER ANSWERS	LONG MESSAGE
Judges 4:6	Num 23:5-10	Ex 20:22 – 23:33
1Sam 2:27-36	Num 23:16-24	
1Kgs 16:1-7	Num 24:3-9	
1Kgs 17:1	Num 24:15-24	
Etc		

SOMETIMES GOD DELIVERED HIS MESSAGE HIMSELF 1Kgs 11

PROPHETIC MINISTRIES WERE RECORDED AND CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO: 1.their lengths:

- minor prophets
- major prophets
- 2. the times in which they lived
- 3. the people to whom their message was directed
- 4. Speaking Prophets and Writing Prophets

MESSAGES WERE RECEIVED BY MEANS OF VISIONS

Dan ch 7-12
Ezk ch 8-11
Ezk ch 40-48
Entire book of Zechariah
Book of Revelation

MESSAGES WERE RECEIVED BY MEANS OF SYMBOLIC ACTS

1Sam 15:27-28
1Kgs 11:2-30
2Kgs 13:15-19
Jer 13:1-11; 18:1-10 19:1-13 24:1-3
Ezk 4:1-3; 5:1-4,12; 12:1-16
Etc

The OT ministry of the prophets ceased by 400 BC There is no record of this “ministry” continuing. NOTE: The Old Testament Scriptures were complete.
The Gospels and Acts see a new beginning of this activity. It stops again with the completion of the New Testament. 1Cor 13:9-12