



The Prophets

Saturday 6th June 2026

Teaching by Tom O'Toole

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Introducing The Prophets

Non-Writing Prophets

Figures who appear within narrative books like Samuel and Kings:

Examples include Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, Huldah and many others.

Writing Prophets

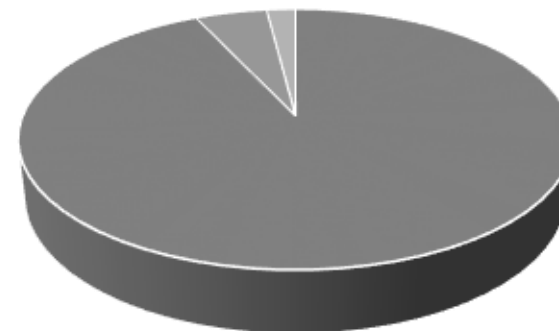
Three Major Prophets:

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
(Some also add Daniel)

Twelve Minor Prophets:

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah,
Jonah, Micah, Nahum,
Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai,
Zechariah, Malachi

Content of The Prophets



- Immediate Context (~93%)
- Near Future (~5%)
- Far Future/Messianic (~2%)

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Some Prophets In Action

Nathan "You are the man" (2 Sam 12:7)		<i>The prophet as a moral truth-teller, exposing hidden personal sin in the context of royal privilege.</i>
Elijah "This is what the Lord says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?" (1 Kings 21:19)		<i>The prophet as a moral witness against systemic injustice that sees what the powerful do to the powerless and stands with truth and justice.</i>
Amos "They sell the innocent for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals." (Amos 2:6)		<i>The prophet as a social critic from the margins, confronting complacency.</i>
Jeremiah "His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed I cannot." (Jeremiah 20:9)		<i>The prophet as a suffering messenger who embodies God's own heart, and whose life becomes a sign of hope when everything looks hopeless.</i>

The economics of affluence and the politics of oppression are the most characteristic marks of the Solomonic achievement. But these by themselves could not have prospered and endured as they did had they not received theological sanction.... Obviously, oppressive politics and affluent economics depend on each other. Nevertheless, it is my contention that fundamental to both is the religion of the captive God in which all over-againstness is dissipated and the king and ideology are completely at ease in the presence of God.

Walter Brueggemann

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The Message of the Prophets

(i) A Diagnosis of What Is Wrong

God's people had turned away from him, and the prophets laid out the charges against them. All of this comes in the context of the covenant that God had made with his people (see for example Deuteronomy 28).

Idolatry

Isaiah 44:12-15 - The blacksmith... cuts down cedars... It is used as fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it.

Immorality

Hosea 4:1-2 - ...There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

Injustice

Isaiah 10:1-2 - Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees. To deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.

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The Message of the Prophets

(ii) A Call to Repent

Having laid out the charge the prophets urge the people to turn back to God.

Joel 2:12-13 - 'Even now,' declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Who might find the call to repentance uncomfortable? And who might have found it liberating?

(iii) A Warning if they Don't

The warning was combined with consequences if the people didn't turn back. They were living as God's people in God's land, but God can't give his stamp of approval to what is happening.



So the story goes into reverse:

Land → Exile: (*Isaiah 39:6-7*)

God's Presence → Withdrawn: (*Ezekiel 10:18*)

But

God's Promises remain so there is still hope

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The Hope of the Prophets

As dire as the warning of the prophets get, they do not leave people without hope. God has not given up on his people or his promises!

Short Term

The immediate crisis is that people are away from the land and the temple. Can God still be with them even in exile? The answer is a resounding **yes!** (e.g. Esther, Daniel, Jeremiah 29:5-7)

Medium Term

Even though God could be with them in exile, the next question is 'will we be here forever?' And the answer is **no**. Through the prophets, God promised that the people would return to the land (e.g. Jeremiah 29:10) and we see the story of this being fulfilled in Ezra, Nehemiah and Haggai.

Long Term

How will the cycle be broken and things ultimately change? The promises of the prophets converge on a figure who Isaiah calls the servant of the Lord (Isaiah 61). He will bear the sins of the people (Isaiah 53), institute a new covenant (Jeremiah 31) and give his people new hearts and the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 31). In Luke 4, **Jesus** announces that he is the fulfilment of these promises.

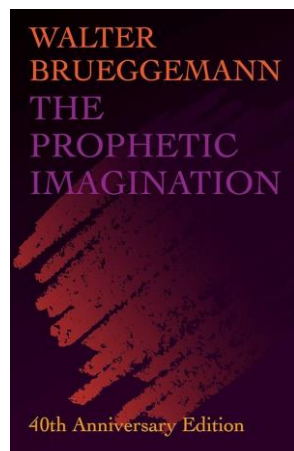
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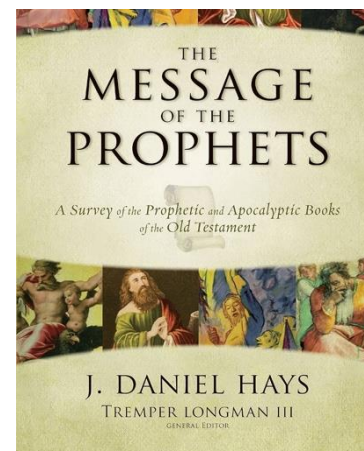


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Recommended Resources



The Prophetic
Imagination



The Message of the
Prophets

