

I. Introduction

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A. The OT uses three Hebrew terms for “prophet” which designate two distinct functions:

1. The terms *hozeh* or *ro’eh*, meaning “visionary” or “seer” imply that prophets could see into future events (e.g. Samuel and the lost donkeys, 1 Sam. 9.1-10).
2. The term *nabi*’ meaning “one who announces” designates the most common function of a prophet: one “who announced or declared vital information,” who functioned “as a spokesman”¹ on behalf of God (e.g. Moses, Ex. 7.1).

II. The Prophets in Israel’s History

A. Prophets existed well before the writing prophets. The Bible described Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, and Huldah as prophets.

B. Through Moses, God established several standards for prophets:

1. God’s people must not follow any prophet who tells them to serve any god but Yahweh (Deut. 13.1-11).
2. Prophets must speak God’s word and God’s word alone (Deut. 18.18).
3. Speaking accurately of future events can serve as confirmation of a prophet’s authority (Deut. 18.21-22).

C. Prophets were not the regular teachers of God’s word (Deut. 33.10), but were called “for particular times” (e.g. Is. 6).

1. They have come to charge Israel for breaking covenant with God (Is. 1).
2. They have come to call Israel to repentance and warn of judgment (Ezek. 18.30-32).
3. They have come to promise redemption for a remnant (Ezek. 20.33, 37).

D. 8th-century Prophets

1. Hosea and Amos ministered to Israel, warning of the coming judgment for their sins, which came at 722 B.C. when the northern kingdom was conquered by Assyria.
2. Jonah preached to Nineveh, capital of Assyria before Assyria conquered Israel.
3. Micah and Isaiah preached of God’s victory over Assyria (which came at 612 B.C.), ultimately pointing the people to a promised Savior and his kingdom.

E. 7th-century prophets

1. These prophets ministered to God’s people under the Assyrians, assuring them of God’s covenant to them (Zephaniah, Jeremiah).
2. They also announced the end of Assyria’s tyranny (Nahum, Habakkuk), while also warning that continuing in sin would result in exile (which came with Babylon in 587 B.C.) (Zephaniah, Jeremiah).

F. 6th-century prophets

1. These prophets ministered to God’s people while under exile in the Babylonian and Persian empires (Daniel, Ezekiel, Obadiah).
2. Others prepared God’s people for their return to Jerusalem and “looked forward to future glory for God’s people under the Messiah’s leadership”² (Haggai, Zechariah).

G. 5th-century prophet(s)

¹ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1229.

² *ESV Study Bible*, 1230.

1. Malachi was the last of these prophets, writing during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, observing “flaws in the returned exiles’ commitment to God”³ and looking forward to the coming of the Messiah.
2. As Joel made no mention of a king in Judah, it is possible he wrote in this time as well. He calls the people to repentance during a locust plague.

III. Style

- A. The prophets used many different literary styles in their writings, including narratives, sermons, extended poems, dialogues, and visions.

IV. Unifying Themes in the Prophetic Books

- A. The prophets assert that God has spoken through them. (Jer. 7.1-8.3, 36.1-32; Is. 20.1-6; Hos. 1-3; cf. 2 Pet. 1.21).
- B. The prophets affirm that God chose Israel for covenant relationship (Jer. 2-6; Hos. 1-3; Amos 2.6-3.8).
- C. The prophets most often report that the majority of Israel has sinned against their God and his standards for their relationship (Is. 7.1-14; Jer. 7.1-15; Hos. 4.2; Ezek. 8.1-18; Is. 1.21-31; Amos 4.6-11).
- D. The prophets warn that judgment will eradicate sin (Is. 2.12-22; Joel 2.1-11; Zeph. 1.7-18; Amos 5.18-20; Jer. 42.18; Is. 24.1-23).
- E. The prophets promise that renewal lies beyond the day of punishment that has occurred already in history and beyond the coming day that will bring history as we know it to a close (Is. 9.2-7, 11.1-16, 52.13-53.12; Dan. 7.9-14; Jer. 31.31-40, 32.14-26; Ezek. 34.25-31, 36.22-32; Is. 65.17-25, 66.18-24; Zeph. 3.8-20).⁴

V. Scholarly Issues and the Prophetic Books

- A. Beginning in the 1700s, critical scholars began to argue (1) that differences within individual books proved a book might have more than one author, and (2) that the OT prophets did not predict future events in the manner the NT claims.⁵
- B. In response, evangelical scholars (1) reaffirmed the authorship of these books, as there is no claim within each book to say otherwise, and (2) that the OT and NT are in harmony, interpreting events in the same way.

VI. Pronouns in the Prophets

- A. There may be confusing pronoun use in the prophets in the following cases:
 1. unmarked interjections
 2. unsigned transitions
 3. differences in ancient and modern conventions
 4. obscurity in a passage beyond simply its pronouns.⁶
- B. Examples of these include:
 1. “He” in Zech. 10.11.
 2. “Us” in Is. 41.22.
 3. “Her” in Mic. 7.10.
 4. “They” in Ezek. 30.17.
 5. “You,” “Jacob,” or “servant” in several cases.

³ *ESV Study Bible*, 1230.

⁴ *ESV Study Bible*, 1230-1.

⁵ *ESV Study Bible*, 1231.

⁶ *ESV Study Bible*, 1231-2.

THE MAJOR PROPHETS

1. Isaiah
2. Jeremiah
3. Ezekiel
4. Daniel

THE MINOR PROPHETS

1. Hosea
2. Joel
3. Amos
4. Obadiah
5. Jonah
6. Micah
7. Nahum
8. Habakkuk
9. Zephaniah
10. Haggai
11. Zechariah
12. Malachi

COURSE SCHEDULE

Pre-Assyrian	Jonah	Dec. 13
	Amos	
	Hosea	Dec. 20
	Isaiah	Dec. 27
	Micah	Jan. 3
Pre-Exilic (Assyrian)	Nahum	
	Zephaniah	Jan. 10
	Habakkuk	
Exilic (Babylonian)	Jeremiah	Jan. 17
	Daniel	Jan. 24
	Ezekiel	Jan. 31
	Obadiah	Feb. 7
Post-Exilic (Persian)	Joel	
	Haggai	Feb. 14
	Zechariah	
	Malachi	Feb. 21