

The Importance of Israel in Prophecy –

Teaching Notes

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Part 1—Israel, the Beginning of Prophecy

The First Mentioned Prophet

✚ Gen 20:7 "Now therefore, restore the man's [Abraham's] wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."

The Lord Revealed to Israel

✚ Amo 3:1-2 "Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

A Prophet Among You

✚ Num 12:6 "Then He said, Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream."

The Gift of Prophecy

α 1Co 14:1 "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy."

α Rom 11:29 "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

Groups of Prophets

⌘ 1Sa 19:20 "Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied."

The Span of Time

⌘ Exo 7:1 "So the LORD said to Moses: See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet."

⌘ Act 13:20 "After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet."

- The age of the prophets came to a close with the destruction of the first Temple, Solomon's temple, in 586 B.C.

Age of The Prophets

The United Monarchy				
Dates (BC)	Prophets of United Israel			
1020-1000	Samuel			
975-960	Nathan			
The Divided Kingdoms				
Dates (BC)	Israel (Northern)		Judah (Southern)	Dates (BC)
870-850	Elijah			
850-800	Elisha			
750-745	Amos		[Jonah]	[740-730]
750-745	Hosea			
			Isaiah of Jerusalem	742-700
			Micah	722-701
			Zephaniah	628-622
			Jeremiah	626-586
			Nahum	612
			Habakkuk	605
			Ezekiel	593-573
			Obadiah	c. 586/5
			Isaiah 40-55	540
			Haggai	520-515
			Zechariah	520-515
			Isaiah 56-66	515-500
			Joel	500-350?
			Malachi	500-450
			Jonah	450-400

Notes:

1. Daniel is not included because the book is not normally considered a prophetic book, but rather part of The Writings, the reflective and devotional literature of Israel.
2. There is little historical evidence to date the book of Joel, and it could fall anywhere between 500 B.C. to as late as 300 B.C.
3. The historical setting of Jonah is the Assyrian era of the 8th century B.C., but many scholars place the actual writing of the book in the middle 5th century B.C., shortly after Nehemiah's reforms. This suggests that the book uses much older traditions from the Assyrian era as a means to address a different set of problems in the post-exilic community.

Part 2—Grafted Into Israel

Spirit of Adoption

- α Rom 9:3-4 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises.
- The promise of adoption and well as all of God's promises were for the nation of Israel, according to the flesh are called Israelites.

Grafted into Israel

- α Rom 11:17 "You [gentiles], being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them [Israel], and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness [spiritual blessings] of the olive tree."
- α Col 1:12 "Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers [sharers] of the inheritance of the saints [Israel] in the light."
- α Eph 3:6 "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel."

Part 3—Old and New Testament Prophets

Prophecy is for Believers

- α 1Co 14:22 "Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe."
- α Rev 19:10 "Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."
- The rabbis teach that prophets would keep harps, drums, flutes, and lyres with them when seeking prophecy to create the requisite emotional joy.

New Testament Prophets

- ❖ Old Testament and New Testament prophets fill the same office and operate in the same spirit. Why? Because Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy and He does not change.
- ❖ OT prophets spoke edification to God's people—Israel, while NT prophets speak edification to God's people—the church (which is Israel plus the nations).

- ❖ The only change that took place from the OT to the NT is that the terms of the covenant have changed—we are now in God’s dispensation of complete and permanent atonement through the blood of Christ.
- ❖ The early church often referred to Apostles and Prophets in the same vein, calling them Apostle–Prophets. For example, Paul was called both an Apostle and a Prophet.
- ❖ Prophets continued to serve the New Testament church in accordance with instructions given by the twelve Apostles of Christ through what is called the *Didache*, translated as “The Way.”
 - “And concerning the Apostles and Prophets, act thus according to the ordinance of the Gospel. Let every Apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord, but let him not stay more than one day, or if need be a second as well; but if he stay three days, he is a false prophet. And when an Apostle goes forth let him accept nothing but bread till he reach his night's lodging; but if he ask for money, he is a false prophet. Do not test or examine any prophet who is speaking in a spirit, ‘for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven.’ But not everyone who speaks in a spirit is a prophet, except he have the behavior of the Lord. From his behavior, then, the false prophet and the true prophet shall be known. And no prophet who orders a meal in a spirit shall eat of it: otherwise he is a false prophet. And every prophet who teaches the truth, if he do not what he teaches, is a false prophet. But no prophet who has been tried and is genuine, though he enact a worldly mystery of the Church, if he teach not others to do what he does himself, shall be judged by you: for he has his judgment with God, for so also did the prophets of old. But whosoever shall say in a spirit ‘Give me money, or something else,’ you shall not listen to him; but if he tell you to give on behalf of others in want, let none judge him.” (*Didache* 11:3-12)

Hallmarks of The Prophet

- ❖ Humility is the keynote of prophesy.
- ❖ Prophets are found to be of good character, wise judgement, and merciful hearts.
- ❖ Prophets are diligent in study, teaching, and practice of their faith. Those gifted with prophetic talent are by their very presence performing the role of teacher and guide.
- ❖ Prophesy distinguishes itself from all other arts and intuitive talents.
- ❖ Prophesy occurs in different forms and in different intensities.
- ❖ Prayer and song are both conductors of prophesy and play an equal role in the spiritual life of the prophet.
- ❖ The Rambam (Maimonides) taught that all the miracles wrought by the prophets are the result of their prayers. Even the greatest prophets were not endowed with mysterious supernatural powers; rather their prophetic spirit brought them closer to God so that they could pray with great intimacy and trust in the almighty.

- ❖ This shows us that we may not rely on miracle. Instead we are to rely on prayer, for "prayer is not a miracle."
- ❖ Prophecy is the overflow of the presence of the Holy One.
- ❖ Prophecy delegates to prophets an unequaled status among their peers as the Creator's representative.
- ❖ Prophecy is how the divine will and presence are made known.
- ❖ Prophetic vision transforms the wilderness into ranks of order and fruitfulness.
- ❖ Prophecy—as the supreme language of the soul—is the vehicle by which the creator instructs and guides His people to come closer to Him.
- ❖ Prophecy helps the created discern the relationships between the seen and unseen, the physical and the immaterial.
- ❖ The prophets told the future, pointed to the dangers of the past and present (watchmen), and gave others hope and faith in the meaning of life.
- ❖ Prophets helped interpret both world affairs and personal predicaments.
- ❖ The souls of the prophets propel the community into a state of awareness that is above the ordinary daily focus or insight.
- ❖ Prophets do not simply tell others what God has said. Their very presence in the community changes it and contributes to its refinement.

Part 4—Israel at the Center of Prophecy

Israel the Land of Prophecy

- ❖ Israel is known as the primary place for receiving prophecy.
- ❖ Of all the Jewish prophets since the generation of the Exodus, almost all obtained prophecy only while in the Holy Land.
- ❖ Many advanced Jewish mystics had their entire perspective in the *Torah* greatly altered after arriving in Israel.
- ❖ Many people today, even on a temporary visit to Israel experience a heightened sense of inspiration and insights into life and its meaning.
- ❖ This can be attributed to Israel's inimitable place in the fabric of creation.

Prophets in Israel

- ❖ Most of the prophets in Israel came from the Aaronic priesthood.
- ❖ With the exception of Isaiah, every Jewish prophet in the bible received his gift through his predecessors, and is part of a long, unbroken chain of prophecy.
- ❖ Practices leading to prophetic awareness were closely held and discussed in small, secret groups, then passed orally from a teacher to a student who had been deemed morally and spiritually worthy of receiving the teachings.

Israel at the Center of Prophecy

- ❖ Mat 24:32-33 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree [Israel]: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!"
- ❖ Rom 11:28-29 "Concerning the gospel they [Israel] are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."
- ❖ Luk 13:35 "See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you [Israel] shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!"

Israel and the Tribulation

- ❖ Dan 9:24 Seventy weeks are determined For your people [Israel] and for your holy city [Jerusalem], To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.
 - The seventieth of Daniel refers to the last seven years at the end of the age, and is called "the tribulation."

God's Plan of Perfection

- ❖ We can see creation and prophecy (the spoken word) are bound up in each other, one being the beginning of the *Torah* (the written word) and the other its end (the written word made flesh). Thus, the ends are concealed in the beginnings.
- ❖ *Echad*, the Hebrew word for "oneness," is the process and outcome of prophecy.
- ❖ Creation therefore seems to be for the ultimate purpose of producing a humanity composed of holy prophets.
- ❖ This holy speaking will unite the church and Israel, and ultimately all humanity and God as one, *Echad*.
- ❖ God's prophets will therefore bring about His plan of perfection.

Israel and the Kingdom of God

- ❖ Act 1:6 "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"
 - The fact that Jesus' disciples asked this question reveals they understood that the Kingdom of God belonged to Israel.

- We the church should understand the same—that God is restoring His Kingdom to the Jewish people, and we are part of His plan of restoration.
- Jesus will establish His earthly Kingdom in Israel from Jerusalem for all eternity just as the Lord promised to David.

Many Kings and Many Kingdoms

✠ Gen 17:6 "I will make you [Abraham] exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you."

✠ Gen 35:11 "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you [Abraham], and kings shall come from your body."

- The kingdom belongs to the King, and its people are His domain. Therefore, the Kingdom is as much about the people of God as it is about God Himself.
- But this is no ordinary Kingdom. It is a Kingdom of kingdoms as it says: ^{Rev 17:14} "He is Lord of lords and King of kings."

Restoration of The Kingdom

✠ Isa 2:2-3 "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills [nations]; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord, To the house [kingdom] of the God of Jacob [Israel]; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

- It says "these things" shall come to pass in the "latter days," meaning the days leading up to the return of the Lord. What things?
- As the earth falls into greater darkness, Israel will begin to rise and shine as a beacon of light in the earth.
- The Kingdom of the Lord's house, which is His holy temple, shall be established over all the kingdoms of the earth, and shall be exalted over all the nations.
- And all the nations shall flow up to Jerusalem to the Kingdom of God, and Israel will teach the nations how to walk in God's paths according to His laws.

- Israel is at the very center of all biblical prophesy, and for that part, all prophesy. If our prophetic words do not teach, correct, edify, and encourage the believer to understand God's kingdom purpose for their life (which is intricately tied to Israel), then we have missed God's heart of prophesy for His people.

References

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