

A History of the Prophets by Lisa Foose

Moses and Aaron

This confrontation with Pharaoh became the model for every Prophet that followed, a reminder that the Lord is King over the whole earth. Israel is his special people, and any nation who disobeys God will be judged (Dt. 4:32-40; 9:4-5).

Mt. Sinai

The covenant at Mt. Sinai anticipated how prophecy would work, reminding the people of their covenant relationship with God.

Judges

During the time of the conquest, the prophets and judges carried the Message of the covenant faithfulness and punishment for disobedience. God held the Caananites accountable, acted as Israel's warrior and secured his people by waging war against the nations (Judges 4-5). Hard-heartedness and rebellion, which began in the desert, led the Jews into a cycle of sin — oppression — repentance — salvation during the period of the judges.

Samuel and Nathan

Called on by God to usher in Israel's first kings: chose, anointed, counseled Saul, David, and Solomon as directed by God. For the rest of history, kings would lead in war and politics, and prophets in the shaping of the spiritual direction of the nation ultimately.

**922 B.C. and the split into Northern and Southern Kingdoms: Israel & Judah
For the first 100 years after the split, the prophets delivered a face-to-face message to the king, their family and court staff (Elijah & Elisha), concerning justice, idolatry, and whether to go to war.**

These pre-exilic prophets looked to a time of restoration during which God would fight to rescue and renew his people as he had done in the past...even as they warned repeatedly that destruction would come. To Israel and Judah, these prophets shared a faith which transcended both their own times and the hardness of their countrymen's hearts.

Joel and Obadiah

These prophets realized that God would remain faithful to his promises. They believed that his love for his people was stronger than their sin, so they developed a tradition of preaching judgment and salvation, doom and promise back-to-back.

The whole nation would experience judgment, yet the Lord would preserve a remnant. He would restructure ancient traditions. Thus, the prophets began to speak of new patterns of kingship and even a new covenant and creation and a new people.

Isaiah and Micah (Judah); Amos and Hosea (Israel)

As the kings resisted the prophets and excluded them from court, prophets spoke to the people as a whole and began writing their prophecies (Isaiah 6:9-12). It wasn't about the Jews reading and responding, but about God's faithfulness to His covenant warnings. Judgments and the promise of future restoration to Israel specifically, before her collapse in 721 B.C.

Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah

The southerners in Judah failed to learn from the fate of their northern cousins. So the prophets warned them until 588 B.C., when the Babylonians destroyed Judah and took many to exile.

Ezekiel and Daniel

With no land, no Jerusalem, no temple, and no king, it seemed to the people that God had deserted them. God raised these prophets to explain the calamity, restore a right perspective to the people's understanding of their circumstances and point beyond the present suffering with his people, which came through Jesus.

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

Encouragement, warning, five reminders of God's promises through the period of restoration in Palestine. Malachi predicted that the Messiah would be preceded by a reappearance of Elijah.

The Kingdom of God fell into silence between Malachi's prediction of Elijah and the prophecies of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist

Elijah was not reincarnated but his authority was here again in John the Baptist, whose message "forms a kind of summary description of his prophetic predecessors." He was separated from society but spoke in a compelling way. He appeared before kings and suffered persecution from them. His message called people to change their ways and repent. He predicted the coming and the greatness of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ

The ministry of the prophets ended with the coming of Jesus, the last and the greatest prophet, as He himself suggests. All the prophets before Him pointed to

Him; when He was present, the future orientation of prophecy had to undergo a permanent change. At the Day of Pentecost, all the Lord's people received the Spirit, and the gift of prophecy continued with the "prophets" of the early church. Their new authority and inspiration should be distinguished from that of the Old Testament prophets: the ministry of the Word was committed to the apostles and then to the church founded on their testimony.