

The Prophets of the Old Testament

Part 2

THE PROPHETS SO FAR

When we review the prophets, we will only call someone a prophet if Scripture does. Last week we looked at the four prophets of the Pentateuch: Abel, Abraham, Moses, and Miriam. Moses is the only one that provides details of the Messiah and written work for us to review and learn.

Next, we studied the prophets of early Israel from the time of the judges through the monarchy. The first one, Deborah, is important and writes her song in Judges 5. There are no messianic references, but it is a song of praise for the deliverance of Israel.

Samuel was instrumental in the transition from the judges to the monarchy and the choosing of David. His work as a prophet is vital to Israel and provides guidance and instruction to David as the patriarch of the kingly line of the Messiah and inheritance of the Seed promise.

Nathan, however, is the prophet that communicates to David the promise of the Lord that David would have one of his descendants be a king forever. Nathan is not normally thought of as one of the great prophets, but the most important prophecy, the Davidic Covenant, is brought through Nathan.

Ahijah is the prophet that oversees the transition from the monarchy to the Divided Kingdom. He established Jeroboam and then announced the curse that Jeroboam brought upon himself and his line. Ahijah is the first prophet of the Divided Kingdom.

DAVID

While David is not generally numbered among “the Prophets,” he was inspired by the Holy Spirit when he wrote the Psalms, many of which were prophetic and foretold the characteristics or activity of the coming of the Messiah. As such, David can rightly be called a prophet, as he is in the New Testament. In fact, after seeing some of the others that are called prophets, David did more (quantity) foretelling than most of the prophets.

The problem with David being called a prophet is that we do not see the Lord speaking directly to David. Instead, He spoke to David through the prophets Samuel, Gad, and Nathan. If we read the narrative of the Old Testament, we would not call David a prophet; however, when we read the Psalms, we would consider him a prophet as he wrote of things that only God could have told him.

With the narrative and the Psalms in view, is David a prophet? The tiebreaker belongs to Scripture (Matthew 22:42-44; Acts 1:16; 2:29-31; Hebrews 11:32).

In conclusion, yes David is a prophet. However, because we have studied him as king, we will not spend much time on him as a prophet. David’s ministry as a prophet was in the Psalms and many of his prophecies are more covert and poetic. A study of the Messianic Psalms is always advised since the New Testament authors use the Psalms in referring to events in the life of Jesus and dealing with the future Kingdom of Heaven.

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ELIJAH

Elijah is the second prophet of the Lord to the kings of Israel (Northern Tribes).

Elijah is introduced in 1 Kings 17:1 and his ministry continues through 2 Kings 2:1-14 and lasts for about 30 years. He interacts with Ahab, Ahaziah, and a letter sent to Jehoram who is a son of both Judah and Israel. But most of his prophetic life concerns six major events.

Event 1:

The prophecy of the drought and subsequent famine told to Ahab (1 Kings 17:1-7). It was during this time that we see Elijah take refuge and ravens (not bats) provided him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening.

Event 2:

The raising of the widow's son (1 Kings 17:8-24)

Event 3:

The confrontation of Baal worshipers at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:17-40)

Event 4:

The ending of the drought (1 Kings 18:41-46)

After the drought ended, the confrontation with Jezebel occurred. Jezebel was an evil woman of the Sidonians who had married Ahab and seemed to be the true power in Israel. Elijah hid from her in the caves at Horeb because of what she had done to the unnamed prophets of the Lord (1 Kings 18:1-13). After he is confronted by the Lord, Elijah said that he was the only one left in Israel to seek after YHWH. The conversation is iconic (1 Kings 19:9-18). This is also where we meet Elisha.

Event 5:

In 2 Kings 1:1-18, we see a confrontation between Ahaziah and Elijah that occurred when Elijah prevented messengers from Ahaziah to meet with prophets of Baal-zebub. Consequently, in 2 Chronicles 21:12-15, we see that Elijah sent a letter to Jehoram telling him of his fate.

Event 6:

A whirlwind that took Elijah to heaven without him dying (2 Kings 2:1-14) and the transition from Elijah to Elisha (2 Kings 2:15-22). Also tossed in this account is Elijah parting the Jordan River.

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QUESTION AND OBSERVATIONS

Why did Elijah and Elisha not write a book?

One possible answer is that their ministry was not of words but of action. Most of the prophets spoke for the lord and foretold events but did not do many miracles. After Elisha, there are only a handful of miracles that occur in the Hebrew Text, three through Isaiah, the fiery furnace, Daniel in the lion's den, and Jonah.

What is the significance of Elijah and Elisha concerning the Messiah?

Elijah is referenced as a forerunner to the Messiah.

Jesus' miracles are compared to those of Elijah and Elisha. Only Jesus is recorded as doing more miracles than Elisha.

Their message is not verbal but is in their activity.