

## Doctrine of the Prophet

### The Call, Commission, Classification, Clarity, and Commitment of a Prophet

1. A prophet was a person who spoke for God and who was responsible to communicate God's message courageously.
2. A prophet received his call or appointment directly from God.
3. Some prophets, like Jeremiah or John the Baptist, were called before birth.
  - *Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*
  - *Luke 1:13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. 14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. 15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. 16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.*
4. Their authority came from God alone whose message they bore (Ex 7:1).
  - *Exodus 7:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.*
5. Who can match the eloquence and brilliance of Isaiah, the depth of emotion and melancholy of Jeremiah, or the dramatic and determined spirit of Ezekiel?
6. A prophetic call was a call to spiritual liberty and freedom to be oneself.
  - *John 8:31-32 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*
7. The prophet of God never considered himself to be for hire for the hireling cannot be a caring person or a good shepherd to the people. Jesus Himself taught this concept in John 10.
  - *John 10:12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

8. The only prophet in *Scripture* that was in the ministry for the expressed purpose of getting money was Balaam (Num. 22). The apostle Peter warns against a mindset of ministry for hire.
  - *2 Peter 2:15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;*
9. Not being in the ministry solely for money enabled the prophet to be unaffected by human bias and criticism.
10. The call of the prophet required that he not be intimidated or threatened by his audience.
  - *Jeremiah 1:7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. 8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.*
  - *Ezekiel 2:6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.*
11. A prophet sometimes became quite dramatic and acted out his message.
  - *Isaiah went naked and barefoot for three years. Isaiah 20:2-3 At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. 3 And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia;*
  - *Ezekiel lay on his left side for 390 days and on his right side for 40 more. Ezekiel 4:1 Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, even Jerusalem: 2 And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about. 3 Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel. 4 Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. 5 For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. 6 And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year. 7 Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it. 8 And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege.*

- Zechariah broke two staves. *Zechariah 11:7 And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. 8 Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. 9 Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. 10 And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it assunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. 11 And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD. 12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. 13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD. 14 Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.*

10 Making themselves a spectacle, prophets not only aroused curiosity but also invited the scorn of their peers.

- *Jeremiah 11:21 Therefore thus saith the LORD of the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, Prophesy not in the name of the LORD, that thou die not by our hand:*

11 Except for God's call, prophets had no special qualifications.

12 The prophets appeared from all walks of life and classes of society. They included

- Sheep-breeders like Amos. *Amos 7:14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit:*
- Farmers Elisha. *1 Kings 19:19 So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.*
- But also princes like Abraham. *Genesis 23:6 Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.*
- And priests like Ezekiel. *Ezekiel 1:3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.*
- Even women and children became prophets. *1 Samuel 3:19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. 20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD. 2 Kings 22:14 So Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and*

*Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.*

13 In rare circumstances, God used the hesitant or unruly to bear his message.

- Balaam prophesied (Num 22:6-24:24) the Lord's message but was actually an enemy of God (2 Peter 2:15-16; Rev 2:14).
- Saul certainly was not in fellowship with God when he prophesied. *1 Samuel 10:23 And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. 24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.*

14 While some prophets were called for a lifetime other prophets spoke briefly and no more.

- *Numbers 11:25 And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. 26 But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.*

15 In either case, a prophet spoke with the authority of the Holy Spirit.

- *Numbers 11:29 And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them! Numbers 24:4 He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:*

16 One trait characterized them all: a faithful proclamation of God's word and not their own.

- *Jeremiah 23:16 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. Ezekiel 13:2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD;*

Note. How did one know the difference?

- ❖ The prophetic message was consistent with other divine revelation.
- ❖ The prophetic message did not lead to acts of immorality.
- ❖ The prophetic word came to pass accurately.
- ❖ The prophet had a “*Thus saith the Lord*” ring of truth and authority.

- 17 Jesus' reference to Himself as a prophet in John 12:49-50 rests upon this standard of faithfully repeating God's word to man.
- *John 12:49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.*
- 18 The prediction of future events and the certain fulfillment was the test of a prophet's genuineness.
- *Deuteronomy 18:20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. 21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? 22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.*
- 19 Whether a prophet's words were fulfilled within his lifetime or centuries later, they were fulfilled to the letter.
- *1 Kings 13:3 And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. 2 Kings 23:15 Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. 16 And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.*
- 20 Regardless of the time of fulfillment, the prophet's message applied to his generation as well as to others by way of application.
- 21 The main role of the prophet was to bear God's word for the purpose of teaching, reproof, correcting, and training in righteousness.
- *2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*
- 22 Whether warning of impending danger or disclosing God's will to the people, they were similar in function to the modern preacher in the church.

23 Prophets were referred to as

- Messengers of the Lord.
  - ❖ *Isaiah 44:26 That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:*
  - ❖ *Haggai 1:13 Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.*
- Servants of God.
  - ❖ *Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.*
- Shepherds.
  - ❖ *Ezekiel 34:5 And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.*
- Watchmen.
  - ❖ *Isaiah 62:6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence,*

### **Important Prophets of the Bible**

24. God has used people in every age to fill the prophetic role of proclaiming His word.

- **Noah** was a "preacher of righteousness" to his generation (2 Peter 2:5).
- **Abraham** was considered a prophet (Gen 20:7).
- **Isaac**, the son of Abraham, was considered a prophet (Ps 105:9,14-15)
- **Jacob**, the grandson of Abraham, was viewed as a prophet (Gen 49).
- **Moses** was eulogized as the greatest prophet of all, due to his major accomplishments as well as his many writings (Deut 34:10-12).
- His successor, **Joshua**, received the commission to continue Moses' work and so assumed the prophetic role also (Deut 34:9; Josh 1:1, 5).

25. Following the entrance of the Hebrew people into the land of Canaan, many prophets appeared throughout Israel's history to aid and protect the nation.

26. The prophets mentioned in the Bible probably represent only a small portion of the total number of prophets.

27. Most of the prophets remain obscure because they never wrote down their message.

28. This indicates their task required face-to-face confrontations and a spoken rather than a written message.
29. Many times the prophet stood alone and spoke to an unsympathetic or even antagonistic audience.
30. Great courage and independence of spirit was required.
31. The prophet was not a man of routine like the priest; he charted new paths for the people.
32. It is appropriate that the first prophet mentioned after Joshua is unnamed (Judg 6:7-10).
33. Prophets were to exalt God's word and not seek their own glory.
34. This unnamed prophet appeared in the time of Gideon when Israel was falling back into idolatry.
35. Rather than speak of the future, he called Israel to remember the Lord who delivered them from Egypt.
36. The next prophet was **Samuel**, whose vocation was apparent to all from his youth (1 Sam 3:19-20).
37. Samuel's life was spent
  - serving diligently as a judge (1 Samuel 7:15),
  - leading the army to victory (1 Samuel 7:9-10),
  - and establishing the religious and civil life of the nation (1 Samuel 10:25).
38. Samuel both appointed (1 Samuel 12:1) and recalled the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 15:26-28).
39. Samuel provided a model for other prophets to follow (1 Samuel 19:20).
40. Four prophets appeared in the time of David, who himself demonstrated the traits of a prophet (2 Samuel 23:2-3).
41. The four prophets during the days of David were
  - Gad (1 Samuel 22:5),
  - Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-15),
  - Zadok (2 Samuel 15:27),
  - and Heman (1 Chronicles 25:5).

42. Four prophets also appeared during the time of Jeroboam:

- Ahijah.
- A man of God. A man of God confronted Jeroboam for his intrusion into the priestly office at the altar and prophesied the coming of Josiah by name (1 Kings 13:1-9).
- An old prophet. However, his rival, the old prophet in Bethel, deceived him and brought about his death (1 Kings 13:11-32). Even though the old prophet lied, God revealed the death sentence of the man of God to him (1 Kings 13:21-23).
- Iddo the seer. Iddo apparently had visions, but he confined his revelations to writing (2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 13:22). The prophet Iddo also recorded the acts of Abijah, the successor of Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 13:22), who himself raised a prophetic voice, although he was a wicked king (1 Kings 15:1-5).

43. The king correctly anticipated victory over Jeroboam's troops (2 Chronicles 13:12).

44. The prophet Shemaiah appeared to Solomon's successor, Rehoboam, to stop him from attempting to reunite the country by force (2 Chronicles 11:2-4).

45. The next king, Asa, was promised God's blessing by the prophet Azariah when the king was returning from his victory over Zerah, the Ethiopian (2 Chronicles 15:1-7). But Asa did not remain faithful, seeking help instead from the Syrians when Baasha threatened him.

46. The prophet Hanani was imprisoned for rebuking Asa for not relying upon the Lord alone as in the earlier victory (2 Chronicles 16:7-10).

47. The son of Hanani, Jehu, played a more prominent role than his father. He condemned the wickedness of Baasha and declared his dynasty would end (1 Kings 16:1-4).

48. Jehoshaphat was promised victory over the alliance of Moab, Ammon, and Edom by the prophet Jahaziel (2 Chronicles 20:14-17). God alone would supply the victory. After these two lessons about alliances, Jehoshaphat allied with Ahab's son, Ahaziah, in order to build a southern fleet.

49. The prophet Eliezer proclaimed the alliance caused God to destroy the fleet (2 Chronicles 20:37).

### **Elijah and Elisha**

50. Five prophets appeared during the reign of Ahab. These included the famous prophets Elijah and Elisha.

51. Elijah was the most unforgettable and dynamic of the Hebrew prophets.

52. He dominated the scene under Ahab in 1 Kings 17-19 and 21, but his ministry continued until the reigns of Ahaziah (2 Kings 1) and Jehoram (2 Kings 2).
53. His impact and eminence was compared with Moses, as their joint appearance with Christ in His transfiguration suggests (Matthew 17:1-13).
54. Elijah's spectacular success over the prophets of Baal in the bringing of rain defies comparison.
55. His volatile and dynamic temperament stands in stark contrast to Elisha, who realized that his quieter personality needed some help if he was to follow a prophet like Elijah. So he asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9).

### **Elisha**

56. Although he was called by Elijah in the reign of Ahab, Elisha really only succeeded him in the reign of Jehoram (2 Kings 2-9).
57. Doubly blessed, Elisha performed 14 miracles to Elijah's seven (2 Kings 13:21).

### **Major and Minor Prophets**

58. Three prophets confronted kings in person.
  - A man of God told Amaziah of Judah to dismiss his Israelite mercenaries (2 Chronicles 25:7-10), while another prophet rebuked Amaziah for saving the idols after defeating Edom (2 Chronicles 25:15).
  - Finally, Oded secured the release of Judaeans captured by Israelites during the time of Ahaz (2 Chronicles 28:9-15).
59. These prophets in Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings provided those books with the name of former prophets in the Hebrew canon.
60. They actually overlapped in time with the "latter" or "writing" prophets, known commonly as the major and Minor Prophets.
61. The former prophets dealt more with daily problems and the current state of affairs, while the latter prophets wrote down for later generations what would happen in the future.
62. A few passages in the writing prophets give biographical material about the prophets themselves.
63. While most of the writing prophets simply present God's message, there are biographical chapters in

- Isaiah (6-7; 20; 37:1-39:8),
- Jeremiah (1; 13; 19:1-21:14; 24:1-29:32; 32; 34:1-35:19),
- Daniel (1-6),
- Hosea (1; 3),
- Amos (7:10-17),
- Jonah (Jonah), Haggai
- (Hag), and Zechariah (7-8).

Other parts of Zechariah and Ezekiel tell about the prophets' receiving visions, but these passages have lesser value in portraying the prophets' personalities.

64. The writing prophets do not appear to be in chronological order, but they provide clues that can be matched with historical facts which suggest their proper sequence.
65. Obadiah spoke against Edom; his ministry may have occurred in the time of Jehoram (853-41 BC) when Edom revolted against Judah (2 Kings 8:20-22).
66. Joel can be dated to the time when Judah's enemies were Tyre and Sidon along with Philistia (Joel 3:4), Egypt, and Edom (Joel 3:19).
67. Since no king is mentioned, the book has been dated to the time of Joash's childhood when Jehoida the high priest was his guardian. The dates of Joash's reign are 835-796 BC
68. In the following century five prophets can be dated to the reigns of various kings.
69. Hosea probably prophesied from about 760 BC to past 715 BC or from the time of Uzziah and Jeroboam II to Hezekiah.
70. Amos prophesied when Uzziah and Jeroboam II ruled. Their reigns overlapped for at least 15 years (767-753 BC) and even longer if Uzziah's co-regency with his father Amaziah is counted.
71. Jonah was a contemporary of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC), but his trip to Nineveh may have been before or after Jeroboam's reign. Since Assyrian power and spirit fell during the weak reign of Ashurdan III (773-755 BC), especially after the plague of 765 BC and the total eclipse of the sun in 763 BC, Jonah may have undertaken his successful mission shortly afterwards around 760 BC
72. Isa 1:1 says that Isaiah's ministry spanned four kings from the death of Uzziah (Isa 6:1) through Hezekiah, about whom Isaiah wrote a history (2 Chronicles 32:32).
73. That Isaiah ministered after Hezekiah's death in 686 BC is evident from his recording of Sennacherib's death which occurred in 681 BC

74. Micah began his ministry under Uzziah's successor, Jotham, and finished it some time in the reign of Hezekiah (Micah 1:1).
75. This would suggest his ministry began some time after Uzziah's death in 739 BC. Since Micah does not mention Sennacherib's invasion of 701 BC, he must have concluded his ministry before that date.
76. Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah appeared in the next century.
77. Nahum probably wrote his prophecy in the latter half of the seventh century, since Nah 3:8-10 refers to the destruction of Thebes in 663 BC.
78. Nahum probably prophesied the 612 BC destruction of Nineveh before the ministry of Zephaniah, who also predicted the fall of Nineveh and dates himself to the time of Josiah (640-609 BC), according to Zephaniah 1:1.
79. Zephaniah's attack on idolatry suggests he wrote his work before the reforms of Josiah in 621 BC.
80. Habakkuk's prophecy should be dated after 612 BC, since he made no reference to Assyria.
81. The prophet was concerned about the coming invasion of Babylon, probably the first one of 605 BC in the reign of Jehoiakim (609-598 BC). Thus his work can be dated about 609-606 BC.
82. Jeremiah began his work in 627 BC (Jeremiah 1:2-3) and continued ministering in Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC.
83. Daniel and Ezekiel ministered during the Captivity in Babylon. Daniel was taken to Babylon in 605 BC at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Judah.
84. Ezekiel was taken there in 597 BC at the time of the second invasion. Daniel ministered until the third year of Cyrus of 536 BC (Dan 10:1).
85. Ezekiel was called to begin his ministry in 592 BC (Ezekiel 1:2) and continued until at least 571 BC (Ezekiel 29:17).
86. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi ministered after the Captivity when the people returned to Judah. Haggai dates his prophecy to 520 BC (Haggai 1:1, 15; 2:1, 20).
87. Zechariah began his prophecy two months after Haggai (Zechariah 1:1) with his first message.
88. His other revelations came later in the year, two years later (Zechariah 1:7; 7:1), and at a later period of time (Zech 9:1).

89. Malachi was probably written after 432 BC when Nehemiah wrote his book because Nehemiah faces the same problems mentioned by Malachi: priestly carelessness (Mal 1:6-2:9), intermarriage with foreigners (Mal 2:10-3:6), and lack of tithing (3:7-4:3).