

Doctrine of the Prophet

1. A prophet is a representative of God who announces or teaches divine revelation even before it has been reduced to writing.

1.1 He is a representative of God who foretells future events. Some of which events may involve eschatology but not necessarily.

2. Prophets functioned in the Jewish Age, Kingdom Age and the early part of the Church Age. The early part of the Church Age more specifically might be defined as until the writing and the dissemination of the New Testament.

3. With completion and dissemination both the office and role of the prophet vanished.

3.1 There was an observable diminution of prophecy and the use of prophet as Scripture unfolded. Scripture replaced the prophet.

Jude 14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones

Jude 15 to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

3.2 In the Jewish Age there are more than 400 citing's of the word prophet or one of its cognates.

3.3 There are more than 100 references to the word prophet and/or prophet in the Gospels.

3.4 There are more than 30 references in the Book of Acts to the word.

3.5 In the epistles there are more than 45 references.

3.5.1 There are 30 references in the early epistles i.e. those written before AD 56.

3.5.2 All other references are to past prophets who function in other ages and there is the noticeable absence of the gift after AD 56 as extant.

3.5.3 We can conclude that the gift of prophecy is a pre-canon gift which like the other temporary gifts vanished with the completion of the Canon.

3.6 In the Book of the Revelation there are more than 21 references to prophecy and or prophet/s.

4. There was an office of prophet and a function of prophet and both would seem to be the result of a spiritual gift.

5. Many of our Scripture today came from men with the gift of prophecy who were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Heb 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,

Heb 1:2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

2Pe 1:20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.

2Pe 1:21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

6. Many who functioned with the gift of prophecy held the office of prophet but certainly not all.

7. Some of the prophets were obscure and some were evil having misused their office/function.

7.1 Certainly Balaam who tried to trick God into cursing Israel so that he could remain in favor with Balak. He was a prophet of God out of control.

Num 22:4 The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, "This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time,

Num 22:5 sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River, in his native land. Balak said: "A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me.

Num 22:6 Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed."

Num 22:7 The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said.

Num 22:8 "Spend the night here," Balaam said to them, "and I will bring you back the answer the LORD gives me." So the Moabite princes stayed with him.

Num 22:9 God came to Balaam and asked, "Who are these men with you?"

Num 22:10 Balaam said to God, "Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message:

Num 22:11 A people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away."

Num 22:12 But God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed."

Num 22:13 The next morning Balaam got up and said to Balak's princes, "Go back to your own country, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you."

Num 22:14 So the Moabite princes returned to Balak and said, "Balaam refused to come with us."

Num 22:15 Then Balak sent other princes, more numerous and more distinguished than the first.

Num 22:16 They came to Balaam and said: "This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Do not let anything keep you from coming to me,

Num 22:17 because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me."

Num 22:18 But Balaam answered them, "Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God.

Num 22:19 Now stay here tonight as the others did, and I will find out what else the LORD will tell me."

Num 22:20 That night God came to Balaam and said, "Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but do only what I tell you."

Num 22:21 Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab.

Num 22:22 But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

Num 22:23 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get her back on the road.

Num 22:24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between two vineyards, with walls on both sides.

Num 22:25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat her again.

Num 22:26 Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left.

Num 22:27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat her with his staff.

Num 22:28 Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"

Num 22:29 Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now."

Num 22:30 The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" "No," he said

Num 22:31 Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

Num 22:32 The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me.

Num 22:33 The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared her."

Num 22:34 Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back."

Num 22:35 The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you." So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

Jos 13:20 Beth Peor, the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth Jeshimoth

Jos 13:21 -- all the towns on the plateau and the entire realm of Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled at Heshbon. Moses had defeated him and the Midianite chiefs, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba -- princes allied with Sihon -- who lived in that country.

Jos 13:22 In addition to those slain in battle, the Israelites had put to the sword Balaam son of Beor, who practiced divination.

Jos 24:8 "I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land.

Jos 24:9 When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you.

Jos 24:10 But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

Neh 13:1 On that day the Book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing of the people and there it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be admitted into the assembly of God,

Neh 13:2 because they had not met the Israelites with food and water but had hired Balaam to call a curse down on them. (Our God, however, turned the curse into a blessing.)

Jud 1:10 Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals -- these are the very things that destroy them.

Jud 1:11 Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.

Rev 2:14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.

7.2 Volition is of course a divine institution applicable for all people, certainly to include prophets.

7.3 Prophets acted in different ways at different times vary often in quiet with little fanfare.

7.3.1 Ahijah is used to anoint Jeroboam to replace Rhobom

1Ki 11:29 About that time Jeroboam was going out of Jerusalem, and Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh met him on the way, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone out in the country,

1Ki 11:30 and Ahijah took hold of the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces.

1Ki 11:31 Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes.

1Ki 11:32 But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe.

1Ki 11:33 I will do this because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molech the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in my ways, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my statutes and laws as David, Solomon's father, did.

1Ki 11:34 "But I will not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon's hand; I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of David my servant, whom I chose and who observed my commands and statutes.

1Ki 11:35 I will take the kingdom from his son's hands and give you ten tribes.

1Ki 11:36 I will give one tribe to his son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my Name.

1Ki 11:37 However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel.

7.3.2 Jehu is used to prophesy against the King of Israel Baasha in about 886 BC condemning him for fighting against Judah.

1KI 16:7 Moreover, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Jehu son of Hanani to Baasha and his house, because of all the evil he had done in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger by the things he did, and becoming like the house of Jeroboam -- and also because he destroyed it.

7.3.3 Shemaiah prophesied to Rehoboam son of Solomon that Shishak King of Egypt would defeat Judah because of idolatry.

2Ch 12:5 Then the prophet Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and to the leaders of Judah who had assembled in Jerusalem for fear of Shishak, and he said to them, "This is what the LORD says, 'You have abandoned me; therefore, I now abandon you to Shishak.'"

7.3.4 Hananiah prophesied against Jeremiah saying Nebuchadnezzar would return Judah's wealth. Jeremiah I turn correctly prophesied of Hananiah's death.

Jer 28:1 In the fifth month of that same year, the fourth year, early in the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, the prophet Hananiah son of Azzur, who was from Gibeon, said to me in the house of the LORD in the presence of the priests and all the people:

Jer 28:2 "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Jer 28:3 Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the LORD'S house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon.

Jer 28:4 I will also bring back to this place Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and all the other exiles from Judah who went to Babylon,' declares the LORD, 'for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.'"

Jer 28:5 Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah before the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD.

Jer 28:6 He said, "Amen! May the LORD do so! May the LORD fulfill the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the LORD'S house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon.

Jer 28:7 Nevertheless, listen to what I have to say in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people:

Jer 28:8 From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms.

Jer 28:9 But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true."

Jer 28:10 Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah and broke it,

Jer 28:11 and he said before all the people, "This is what the LORD says: 'In the same way will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon off the neck of all the nations within two years.'" At this, the prophet Jeremiah went on his way.

Jer 28:12 Shortly after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

Jer 28:13 "Go and tell Hananiah, 'This is what the LORD says: You have broken a wooden yoke, but in its place you will get a yoke of iron.

Jer 28:14 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will put an iron yoke on the necks of all these nations to make them serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they will serve him. I will even give him control over the wild animals."

Jer 28:15 Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, "Listen, Hananiah! The LORD has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies.

Jer 28:16 Therefore, this is what the LORD says: 'I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you are going to die, because you have preached rebellion against the LORD.'"

Jer 28:17 In the seventh month of that same year, Hananiah the prophet died.

8. In the early church age both apostles and prophets were used to carry the universal church until the anon was completed.

8.1 They were then replaced by the Canon to be presented by the Pastor-Teacher and taught by the Holy Spirit.

Eph 4:11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

9. There were four categories of Old Testament revelation.

9.1 The spoken Word "thus saith the Lord. "For example, there were the words to Abraham, Samuel, Noah, Job, Elijah. etc.

9.2 Dreams:

Gen 15:12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

Gen 31:10 "In breeding season I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled or spotted.

Gen 31:11 The angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob.' I answered, 'Here I am.'

Gen 31:12 And he said, 'Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.

Gen 31:13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land."

Num 12:6 he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams.

Num 12:7 But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house.

Num 12:8 With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

9.3 Visions:

Isa 1:1 The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Isa 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

1Ki 22:19 Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left.

1Ki 22:20 And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' "One suggested this, and another that.

1Ki 22:21 Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'

1Ki 22:22 "'By what means?' the LORD asked. "'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said. "'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.'

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9.4 Angelic Appearance:

Gen 16:6 "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

Gen 16:7 The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.

Gen 16:8 And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

Gen 16:9 Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her."

Gen 16:10 The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."

Gen 16:11 The angel of the LORD also said to her: "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery.

Gen 16:12 He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."

Mat 1:20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Luk 1:20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."

10. New Testament prophecy during the early church age was a valid temporary gift and in the New Testament it is used of either the communication gift of teaching Scripture to come or the teaching of eschatology. With the completion of these temporary gifts they will give way to a "more excellent way." That way is of course the written New Testament.

1Co 12:28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

1Co 12:29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

1Co 12:30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

1Co 12:31 But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

1Co 14:22 Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers.

11. There were female prophets:

Exo 15:20 Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing.

Exo 15:21 Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea."

Jdg 4:4 Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time.

Jdg 4:5 She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided.

2Ki 22:14 Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophetess Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District.

2Ki 22:15 She said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me,

2Ki 22:16 'This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read.

2Ki 22:17 Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.'

2Ki 22:18 Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard:

2Ki 22:19 Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD.

2Ki 22:20 Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.'" So, they took her answer back to the king.

Luk 2:36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,

Luk 2:37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

Luk 2:38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

12. Summary

12.1 The prophets were first of all forthtellers and spokesmen for God. Abraham, as he received and announced the covenant which God had made with him concerning his seed, was such a forthteller.

13. Abraham was a witness to many, certainly to include the day he witnessed to his servants on Mount Moriah.

Gen 22:5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

Gen 22:6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together,

Gen 22:7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Gen 22:8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

Gen 22:9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

Gen 22:10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

Gen 22:11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

Gen 22:12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Gen 22:13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

Gen 22:14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

Gen 22:15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time

Gen 22:16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,

Gen 22:17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,

Gen 22:18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Gen 22:19 Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

14. Moses, as the greatest of all the prophets, was to receive the word directly from God's mouth and pass it on to Aaron who was to be his spokesman. Exo 7:1-6

15. All who act in the capacity of proclaiming the Word of God are His spokesmen.

15.1 Today it is the pastor teacher who exegetes and analyzes the written Word and presents it to his right congregation.

16. In the designation of the Old Testament as Law and the Prophets (Mat 11:13, 22:40; Luk 16:16), the writers of all the books subsequent to Pentateuch are classified as "prophets."

16.1 They were prophets in the sense that they recounted history, manifested God's glory in praise and song, revealed His wisdom, and delivered His warnings of judgment and promises of restoration, all as God's inspired spokesmen.

17. Though not all foretold the future, many prophets did so. Abraham, as the first man named a prophet, was both a forthteller and a foreteller.

17.1 He delivered to Isaac and his descendants a prophecy concerning Israel which revealed the promise of the first coming of Christ as the seed (cf. Gal 3:8, 16) and also the setting up of a kingdom.

17.2 The certainty of this restoration and the promise of the coming of Christ was attested by God's personal oath. (Jer 31:27-37; 32:27, 36-44; 33:2-26; cf. Heb 6:17-18; 8:8-13)

17.3 It was also revealed through David, the prophet-king, in the Davidic covenant that his "house" or dynasty would endure forever (2Sa 7:16). Therefore, a greater David, even Christ, would reign in this restored kingdom. (Jer 33:15-17; Exe 34:23-24; 37:24-28)

17.4 At the same time another and even more vital thread of prophecy had already been revealed right after the Fall. Adam and Eve were told that the seed of Eve would destroy Satan. "It shall bruise the head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

17.4.1 The seed therefore referred to in the Abrahamic covenant had already been revealed to Adam. Thus Gen 3:15 and 22:18 both point to the cross.

17.5 Throughout the Old Testament three lines or Strands of prophecy were developed:

17.5.1 One line concerning the suffering, sacrificial Messiah and Christ's first coming. (Gen 3:15;22:18; cf. Gal 3:8,16; Gen 49:10-11; Isa 7:14; 9:6; 53; Psa 16; 22; 69)

17.5.2 The certainty of this restoration and the promise of the coming of Christ was attested by God's personal oath. (Jer 31:27-37; 32:27, 36-44; 33:2-26; cf. Heb 6:17-18; 8:8-13)

17.5.3 It was also revealed through David, the prophet-king, in the Davidic covenant That his "house" or Dynasty would endure forever (2Sa 7:16). Therefore, a greater David, even Christ, would reign in this restored kingdom. (Jer 33:15-17; Eze 34:23-24; 37:24-26)

17.5.4 At the same time another and even more vital thread of prophecy had already been revealed right after the Fall. In Gen 3:15 Adam and Eve were told that the seed of Eve would destroy Satan. "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The seed therefore referred to in the Abrahamic covenant had already been revealed to Adam. Thus Gen 3:15 and 22:18 both point to the cross.

17.5.5 Throughout the Old Testament three lines or strands of prophecy were developed: One line concerning the suffering, sacrificial Messiah and Christ's first coming. (Gen 3:15, 22:18, cf. Gal 3:8, 16; Gen 49:10-11; Isa 7:14, 9:6; 53; Psa 16:22, 69)

17.5.6 A second strand concerning the reigning Messiah and Christ's second coming as promised in 2Sa 7, and delineated in such great passages as Isa 11:66; Hos 1:10-11; Amos 9:11 Zec 12-14.

The prophets explain in detail both the second coming of the Lord and the conditions of peace and prosperity which shall accompany His reign. (Isa 66:15; Zec 12-14)

17.5.7 A third strand intertwines with the prophesies of the first and second coming of Christ. It has to do with certain historical events which are not connected with either the first or second coming of Christ but are prophecies of particular historical events given to steady God's people in times of great trial and distress. They sketch out beforehand certain happenings in secular history.

17.5.8 Examples are the revelation of the time to be spent by Israel under oppression in Egypt, namely, 400 years (Gen 15:14; cf. Exo 12:40; Gal 3:17), and 70 years of captivity in Babylon (Jer 25:11-12; cf. Dan 9:2), and the delineation of the events between Daniel's day and the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. (Dan 11:1-21)

18. Ethical and social teaching.

18.1 This ministry of the prophet has been all too often ignored in the studies of evangelical scholars.

18.2 Moses' first attempt to help his brethren was in the social sphere. (Exo 2:11). Later, he was guided of God to set up the great theocratic principles of social and economic justice found especially in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

18.3 Amos was the Old Testament prophet who stressed this function of prophecy in particular as he revealed the social injustices in the northern kingdom. Hosea reflects similar teaching, as does also Isaiah.

18.4 Our Lord fulfilled this responsibility particularly in the Sermon on the Mount and in some of His parables.

19. Political influence

19.1 This is also often overlooked. Moses received a commission to demand the release of Israel by Pharaoh. (Exo 6:11; 9:13)

19.2 Nathan was to appear before David (2Sa 12). Isaiah confronted King Ahaz and advised Hezekiah (Isa 7:37). Jeremiah was commanded to appear before the king at different times. (Jer 22:1; 34:2; 37:7)

19.3 Daniel appeared before Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. (Dan 2:19,25; 5:17)

19.4 Amos' message reached the king through one of his ministers. (Amos 5:15-17)

20 A soteriological message

20.1 The most important ministry performed by the prophet was that of giving a message of salvation. In this respect the minister of the gospel follows in his footsteps

20.2 Constantly the prophets warned the people of their sins and urged them to repent. We find such examples as Joshua calling upon Israel to choose whom they would serve. (Jos 24:15)

20.3 Moses gave the blessings and curses, followed by a plea to repent—which would only be fulfilled finally as God led them to repentance at Christ's second coming. (Deu 28:1 ff.)

20.4 Jonah called on Nineveh to repent with 40 days (Jon 3:4).

20.5 Ezra prayed for those who had returned from Exile, to confess their sins and put away their foreign wives. (Ezr 9:5-10:11)

20.6 And John the Baptist exhorted Israel to prepare a highway in their hearts for the coming of their King. (Luk 3:4-6)

21 Modes of Communication

21.1 Direct proclamation. The prophet proclaimed in simple, bold language (Jon 3:4) the message which God had given to him. It was communicated either, as in Moses' case, "mouth to mouth" (Num 12:8, though he alone was permitted to talk with God face to face. Deu 34:10), or through a dream or vision (Jer 1:11 ff.). But always it was by direct inspiration of God so that the prophets could again and again write "Thus saith the Lord."

21.2 Figurative language. As a rule the prophecies of the Old Testament are clear and direct, though some are certainly purposely figurative. The reasons for the figurative are two: (a) To convey more effectively and expressively some fact or truth (cf. Isa 6:12-13; Amos 9:13). (b) To express a knowledge of future events in such a form that it could not be fathomed by the unbeliever, on the other hand, only after most careful study. God does not cast all His pearls before swine.

21.3 In general, however, the figures of speech are readily understandable when examined in the context of Old Testament culture. For example, when Isaiah said, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isa 40:3-5), the metaphoric imagery is that of preparing a highway for the coming of a king.

21.3.1 The voice speaking this is in the wilderness turned out to be that of John the Baptist as he preached repentance preparatory to the coming of the Messiah. (Luk 3:1-18)

21.3.2 When Isaiah speaks of a birth without travail and asks can a nation be brought forth all at one (Isa 66:8, NASB), the picture is easily recognizable as the same as that given in Zec 12-14, where the whole nation repents at Christ's second coming.

21.4 Dramatic Presentation

21.4.1 Sometimes the Lord directed the prophet to dramatize the message. Jeremiah was to make yokes and put them on his neck (Jer 27:2), Ezekiel to set up a drawing of the city on a tile and lay siege to it. (Eze 4:1 ff.)

21.4.2 Ezekiel was also to shave his head and his beard, and to burn a third a third of the hair in the city, strike a second third with a sword, and scatter last third to the wind, etc., illustrating Jerusalem's approaching fate (Eze 5:1-12).

21.4.3 God called upon Hosea to marry a harlot and redeem her from slavery as a picture of His undying love for Israel. (Hos 1:2; 3:1)

22. Development of Prophecy

22.1 Prophecy in the Bible opens with the declaration in Gen 3:15. This belongs to the first prophetic strand which announces the first coming of Christ as the suffering, sacrificial Messiah.

22.2 The second thread, that of the ruling, reigning Messiah, appears so closely intertwined with this first thread in the Abrahamic covenant that they are at first almost indistinguishable.

22.3 The third, namely, that line of prophecies which foretell historical events needed to strengthen the faith of the believer in dark, difficult days, appears first of all in Gen 15:13 with the announcement that Israel will remain in Egypt for 400 years.

22.4 Though Abraham was a prophet, it was Moses who most fully exemplified all the ministries of the Old Testament prophet. He was so far above the other prophets, both in character and in administration, that God compares Christ to him. (Deu 18:18)

22.4.1 In contrast, the New Testament writer compares him to Christ as the lesser to the greater. (Heb 3:1-6)

22.4.2 In the times of the judges there was sporadic political and military but little real spiritual leadership. Word from the Lord was rare in those days and visions were infrequent (1Sa 3:1, NASB). This continued until the days of Samuel.

22.5 This prophet appears to have started a school of the prophets, which died out, only to be revived again by Elijah and Elisha (2Ki 2:3) during the time of apostasy and idolatry in the northern kingdom. (1Ki 18:18)

22.5.1 It was to be expected that great spiritual leaders, such as Samuel and Elijah, would attract to themselves young men keen to follow in their footsteps.

22.6 Two prophetic movements remain to be described: that of Amos and Hosea to warn the northern kingdom of their sin and coming captivity, and that of Isaiah, Jeremiah, et al. to warn the southern kingdom of Judah of her sin, judgment, and coming exile.

22.6.1 There is a close resemblance between the prophetic messages to the north and to the south. Passages of warning against sin and threatened punishments are interspersed with promises of future restoration, peace, and blessing.

22.6.2 As these passages are sorted out and fitted into the pattern given in the Mosaic covenant in Deu 27-30, a marvelous picture emerges of the future promised to Israel and of the millennial kingdom in which all believers will have a part. The kingdom promises add details to the revelations given in the covenants.

22.7 It is Daniel, however, who gives the most extensive prophetic outline of history. He starts by interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great human statue (Dan 2), and later the visions of the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the terrible beast with the horns which "brake in pieces and stamped the residue with its feet." (Dan 7:1-7)

22.7.1 These visions reveal the history of those great nations which were to affect Israel's history until the second coming of Christ.

22.7.2 Daniel ends by foretelling the abomination of desolation, the Great Tribulation, and the resurrection of the saints of the Most High. (Dan 9:27; 12:1-2).

23. In the New Testament Christ is both the fulfillment of prophecy as the sacrificial, suffering Messiah and a Prophet in His own right (Mat 21:19; Luk 24:19; Joh 4:19; 7:40). He announces that the kingdom of God is at hand and speaks of its dynamic existence during the Church Age in the hearts of those who have accepted Him as their Saviour. (Luk 17:21)

23.1 He teaches that the kingdom has become a living reality at His first coming, but that all its full development awaits His return from heaven to take over its rulership. (Mat 22:33-44; cf. Dan 2:35, 43-44; 7:9-14)

23.2 Christ put His hand directly on Daniel's prophecy of the "abomination of desolation" and identified it as the sign which would immediately precede the Great Tribulation (Mat 24:15), thus dispelling all speculation as to the terminal point of Daniel's prophecies in Dan 2; 7; 9; 11-12.

23.3 Once this point has been established, the terrible beast of Dan 7 and its counterpart in Rev 13 and 17 can be seen as identical.

24. Methods of Interpretation

24.1 The interpretation of that strand which concerns Christ's first coming is agreed upon by all orthodox theologians. They also agree that Christ will return. However, there is much disagreement surrounding the details of His second coming, and especially on the matter of the kingdom.

24.2 Very simply stated, the problem is this: can prophecies about the kingdom and the second advent of Christ be accepted and understood in the same literal manner as the prophecies which foretold His first coming?

24.2.1 Certain prophecies in the Old Testament e.g., foretell the presentation of animal sacrifices in the eschatological temple. (Eze 43-46, Zec 14:21).

24.2.2 Because of the theological problems raised by blood sacrifices subsequent to Christ's all-sufficient atoning death, some feel these and other prophecies concerning an earthly kingdom must be spiritualized.

24.3 They are applied either to the presentation of the gospel in the present Church Age, or else to the future eternal state in some spiritualized sense. But is it permissible to depart from the normal grammatical, historical method of interpretation?

24.4 The strand or prophecy which deals with Christ's second coming is interpreted in different ways.

24.4.1 Pre, Post, Mid and Partial although the Partial tend to be of the Mid-Tribulation persuasion. There is also the "Amillennialist" who allegorizes eschatological Scriptures and therefore, do not view the Rapture or the Second Advent as an event.

