

Church of God

Sunday School

THE BIBLE — THE MAJOR PROPHETS

DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** Isaiah proclaimed good tidings (Isaiah 61:1-11).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** Jeremiah is called (Jeremiah 1:4-10).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** Mercy shown in time of trouble (Lamentations 3:22-26).
- ❑ **Thursday:** Ezekiel receives a call and commission from God (Ezekiel 2:1-10).
- ❑ **Friday:** Daniel's wisdom comes from God (Daniel 2:16-23).
- ❑ **Saturday:** Prophecy comes from God (2 Peter 1:21).



MEMORY VERSE: ". . . Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream."
—Numbers 12:6

Division of Prophecy Books

The last 17 books of the Old Testament are books of prophecy (divinely inspired words of a prophet). Hebrew writings refer to these as "the Latter Prophets." Prophecies of "the Former Prophets" are found in the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Most of the prophecies of the Former Prophets were oral and not written down. These 17 books are often divided into two groups: major prophets (first 5 books) and minor prophets (last 12 books). This does not mean that some books were more important than others. The major prophetic books tend to be longer, and the minor prophetic books are shorter. (Note: the Book of Lamentations is not named after a prophet but is placed with the major prophetic books because of who wrote it.) It is important to remember these books are not always in chronological order and that events in these books occurred at the same time as the events of the books of history.

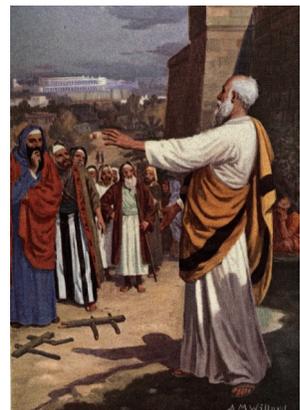
Purpose of the Prophets

The word *prophet* in the Greek language means "one who speaks on behalf of another." Prophets were the mouthpiece of God (2 Kings 24:2). They were usually unpopular because of their messages. Those messages exposed sin, warned of coming judgment, called for the people to return to the law (moral, civil, and ceremonial), and also told of the coming Messiah (Jesus). Prophets were watchmen over the people of Israel (Ezekiel 3:17), warning of physical and spiritual dangers.

God gave His messages to His prophets through dreams, visions, angels, nature, and miracles. Other times God spoke plainly to His prophets. Most of the messages were to the northern and/or southern kingdoms (Israel and Judah). At least two prophets were given a message for Gentiles (non-Jews).

Books of the Major Prophets

ISAIAH: the name of this book means "salvation is of the Lord." This is appropriate because the word *salvation* is used 26 times. (Compare this to how many times *salvation* appears in all the other prophetic books combined: seven.) The Book of Isaiah has been described as a miniature Bible. It has 66 chapters, and the Bible has 66 books. The first 39 chapters of Isaiah are often called the "Book of Judgment." This theme parallels with the



Old Testament, which has 39 books. The second half of Isaiah (27 chapters) is called the "Book of Consolation," for it speaks of the hope and comfort of the coming Messiah. This parallels the New Testament, which has 27 books.

Isaiah was an educated man and a member of the royal family. His beautiful writing style reflects his education. Isaiah has been called the "prince of prophets." He is the most quoted prophet in the New Testament (66 times). Isaiah prophesied of Cyrus the Great more than 100 years before Cyrus was born (44:28; 45:1), and he prophesied of Christ more than 700 years before His birth (Chapter 53). These prophecies came true! Isaiah was primarily called to Judah (the southern kingdom). Other prophets who lived at the same time as Isaiah were Amos, Hosea, and Micah. Tradition tells us Isaiah died a horrible death at the order of King Manasseh (Hebrews 11:37).

JEREMIAH: God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to Judah when he was a very young man. Jeremiah was weak and timid, but through God's help Jeremiah's weaknesses became his strengths. He was hated and persecuted by his own family (12:5-6). His unpopular message brought threats and imprisonment. Many false prophets told lies that contradicted Jeremiah's messages (14:13-16; 28:10-17).

Jeremiah's message called for repentance and warned of coming destruction if the people did not repent. This message can be seen through the repeated use of such words as "backsliding" (13 times), "return" (47 times), "scattered" (14 times), and "captive" or "captivity" (51 times). The people would not listen. They did not believe God would allow His temple to be destroyed or His people taken into captivity.

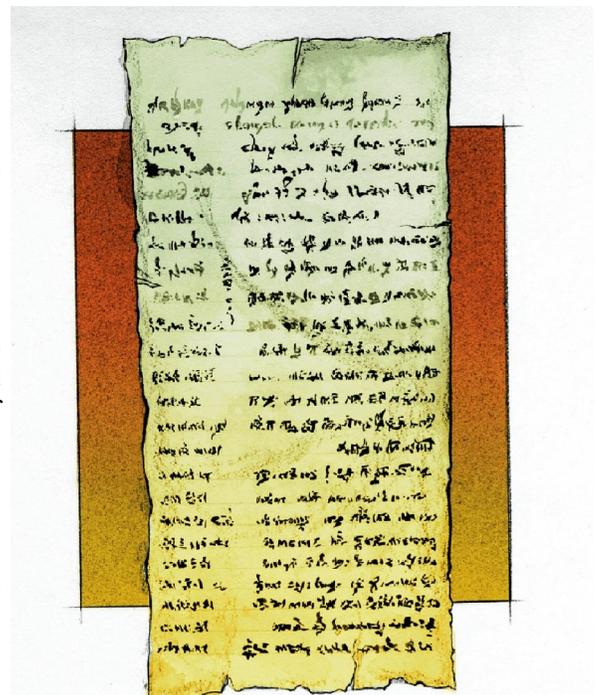
For more than 40 years Jeremiah spoke God's words to the unbelieving Jews. He is called the "weeping prophet," no doubt because the people would not take heed to his warnings. Jeremiah lived to see his prophecies come true when the Babylonians destroyed the city and the temple and took the Jews as captives. Jeremiah's ministry continued during and after the time of captivity (also called "the Exile"). Other prophets who lived at the same time as Jeremiah were Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel, and Ezekiel.

LAMENTATIONS: a *lamentation* is also known as a "dirge" (funeral song). This book has been called "the funeral of a city." Tradition says Jeremiah wrote five dirges while viewing the destroyed city of Jerusalem, including Solomon's Temple. These five dirges became the five chapters of Lamentations. The first four chapters are acrostic poems. In the original Hebrew language, each chapter had 22 verses, and each verse began with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order. The last chapter is a prayer for mercy and restoration.

EZEKIEL: the name of this prophet means "God will strengthen." This book is thought to have been written while Ezekiel and many of the Jews were in Babylonian captivity. Other prophets who lived during Ezekiel's time were Daniel (also a captive) and Jeremiah (who stayed in Jerusalem with other Jews). Daniel and Ezekiel were believed to have been the same age.

Ezekiel used prophecies, parables, signs, and symbols to convey his message. His message was this: captivity is a result of sin and the Jews needed to repent; judgment is not finished; and there is hope of restoration. Ezekiel also told of the promise of a coming King, but the Jews did not fully understand that the Messiah would be for all people (not just the Jews) and that it would be a spiritual deliverance from sin (not a physical deliverance from their enemies).

DANIEL: the name *Daniel* means "God is my judge." This book contains some of the most well-known stories in the Bible. It also contains dreams and visions of future historical events. Some have described this book as "history before it happened." Because future events are foretold with such accurate detail, many people do not believe Daniel wrote all of it. However, God knows the future, and it was He who revealed the details to Daniel. This book is also a great help when studying the Book of Revelation.



"... all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished."
(Luke 18:31)

Bible Quiz



1. What is the definition of a "prophet"? _____

2. What is the difference between the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets? _____
3. Books of prophecy were often written in a poetic style. Poetry speaks to the emotions and (like parables) conveys a message in less direct language. Read Isaiah 40:31. What do you think God is promising those who wait on Him? _____

4. God's prophets used object lessons to convey a message. When Jeremiah wore a yoke around his neck, what did the false prophet Hananiah do (Jeremiah 28:10)? _____

5. What message did Jeremiah have for Hananiah (Jeremiah 28:12-17)? _____

6. Ezekiel's message in Ezekiel, Chapter 24, came in the form of a _____ (verse 3).

7. What is a "dirge"? _____

8. How many dirges are in the Book of Lamentations? _____

9. What does the name "Daniel" mean? _____

10. In the Book of Daniel we read of several dreams and visions. Fill in the blanks:

In Chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about a great _____ (verse 31).

In Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a very large _____ (verse 10).

In Chapter 7, Daniel had a vision of four _____ that came up out of the sea (verse 3).

In Chapter 8, Daniel had a vision of a _____ (verse 3) and the "he _____" (verse 8).

In Chapter 10, Daniel had a vision of a certain _____ clothed in linen (verse 5).

Isaiah's Prophecies Are Fulfilled in Jesus

Write the FULFILLMENT Scripture reference on the correct line with each PROPHECY.

PROPHECY

Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) _____

Will be spat on & struck (Isaiah 50:6) _____

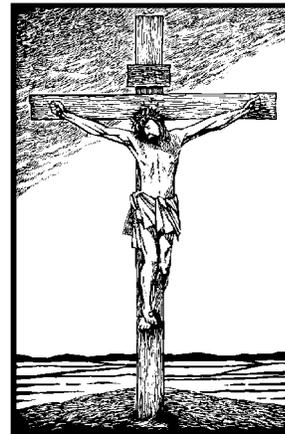
Will be widely rejected (Isaiah 53:1, 3) _____

Will bear our sins and sorrows (Isaiah 53:4-5) _____

Will be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9) _____

Will heal the brokenhearted (Isaiah 61:1-2) _____

Crucified with criminals (Isaiah 53:12) _____



FULFILLMENT

Matthew 27:57-60

John 12:37-38

1 Peter 2:24

Matthew 27:38

Luke 4:18-19

Matthew 26:67

Luke 1:26-31