

The Prophets

Lesson #1

Introduction To The Prophets

Introduction. The prophets of Israel hold a unique place in the history of Israel. In fact, it was a unique place in respect to all the Middle East of Old Testament days, and, because of their writing, their influence has been of prime importance in world history. They were great men, courageous men; they were guides for proper religious belief and correct conduct to a people that continually strayed from the Law of their God. Israel Mat-tuck speaks of "the towering place which these prophets held in the religious history of the Jews," and R. B. Y. Scott says that "Hebrew prophecy remains incomparable in its spiritual quality and permanent significance for religion."

I. **A Special Call**

- A. One reason for the greatness of the prophets was that they were a specially called people.
 - 1. They did not come to office by inheritance, having been born into a prophetic tribe or family; nor was a son of a former prophet automatically made a prophet because he was the son of such a person. Each prophet was selected by God and called to a work God had for him to do.
 - 2. In this, prophets differed markedly from priests in Israel.
 - a) Priests did receive their office by inheritance.
 - b) If a person was a descendant of Jacob's son Levi, he was constituted a Levite; and if in addition he descended from Aaron he was a priest.
 - c) He did not have to choose to be a Levite or a priest, nor did he have to be called to either office; he became one or both by birth.
- B. Prophets, however, were chosen men, picked from among others. This made it a distinct honor to be a prophet.
 - 1. One had to be specially called by God. The call properly designated a prophet as such and gave him an authority for his work. False prophets were false because they were not called (Jeremiah 14:14; 28:15).
 - 2. Several prophet's calls are mentioned in the Bible.
 - a) Exodus 3:3-4.
 - b) Isaiah 6:1-13.
 - c) Jeremiah 1:5.
 - d) Ezekiel 1:1; 2:2-3.
 - e) Amos 7:14-15.

- C. It is noteworthy that the prophetic call was often given in connection with an outstanding experience that helped the prophet realize its authenticity.
1. Moses was called as he saw a bush miraculously burning. He would long remember the vivid picture; it reinforced the reality of the call.
 2. Isaiah had a vision of God high and lifted up in the temple when he received his call. Again he would long remember the dramatic scene and be reminded of the call.
 3. Ezekiel was commanded to eat a scroll at the time he was summoned; we are told that he did eat it and that it was in his mouth "as honey for sweetness" (Ezekiel 3:3).
 4. Such occasions gave body and substance to the reality of the call and increased its effectiveness as a foundation for the prophet's work.
- D. The prophetic call frequently involved some aspect of preparation for the work in view.
1. Moses was equipped with miraculous credentials (Exodus 4:1-9), and was assigned his brother Aaron to be a spokesman for him.
 2. Isaiah's lips were purified by a burning coal placed upon them, fresh from the temple altar.
 3. Ezekiel, having eaten the scroll, was symbolically filled with God's word for effective proclamation.

II. ***Recognition In The Law***

- A. God gave His law to Israel at Mount Sinai. It constituted the foundation for all religious activity and social relationships of the people. It was in fact a sort of constitution for the nation of Israel.
1. In the law were lengthy prescriptions concerning Israel's priests. Their identity was set forth, as well as their customs, duties, clothing, and considerable information regarding the ceremonial activity they were to supervise.
 2. The same was not true, however, regarding the prophets. Neither their role nor their duties were described and even their existence was not really established, though it was recognized.
- B. This recognition of the prophets is found in Deuteronomy 18:9-22, which should be noticed.
1. The first eight verses of the chapter give further indication as to the Levitical office, but with vs. 9 comes a change which tells of the prophetic recognition.
 2. Moses says that the people upon entering Canaan should not try to communicate with God by any form of divination after the pattern of other nations because this method of communication was an

abomination to the Lord. Instead, God would give a divine communication through a prophet.

- C. The word "prophet" is used in the singular and carries a first reference to Christ, but it is commonly agreed that it has a secondary reference to prophets generally.
 - 1. In this passage, then, God was saying that His people should look to prophets for their divine revelations and not to forms of divination as did the peoples of the world around them.
 - 2. This gave a definite place for prophets, though the passage does not set forth a legal prescription as to who they should be or the nature of their functions.

III. ***Courageous Individuals***

- A. One reason why an inheritance relationship was not suitable for the prophets was that each had to be a special kind of person. Not just anyone would do.
 - 1. The priestly office did not find this nearly so true. A weak son could still carry on rather well, for the work was quite routine. One might also expect that there were some mediocre priests, who functioned simply because they had become priests by inheritance.
 - 2. The prophet, however, did not act by pattern. He had often to chart a new course that might be different from any before. Even when God gave him instructions as to his work and the course he was to take, that course often carried with it a great challenge.
 - 3. The prophet might anoint a king to office; later he might bring this very king a severe reprimand. He might bring cheer, or he might impart cause for sorrow. His assignment might lead to great danger or to high honor. He had to be prepared for suffering and injustice as well as ease and plaudits. He had always to be an individualist in courage and ingenuity. There was no room for mediocrity.
 - a) The first act of Samuel as God's newly called prophet was to tell the high priest, Eli, that his house had been rejected by the Lord (1 Samuel 3:4-18). This was certainly a challenging task for Samuel, because he probably was not more than ten years old.
 - b) Later Samuel was to anoint Israel's first king, Saul (1 Samuel 9:15-21; 10:1-8) and after this to inform him that he, too, had been rejected (1 Samuel 13:11-14).
 - c) And later still he was to anoint Israel's second king, the great David (1 Samuel 16:1-13).
 - d) Nathan was instructed in due time to rebuke David for his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:1-12). It was certainly a challenge to give this form of a message to the greatest king of the day, but Nathan did so.

- e) Then a few years later the prophet Gad was sent to give David a choice of three punishments for his sin in taking a census (2 Samuel 24:10-17).
 - f) The prophet Ahijah had first to promise the new nation of Israel to Jeroboam (2 Kings 11:29-39) and then to tell him that it would be taken away (2 Kings 14:6-16).
 - g) A "man of God" was sent to reprimand Jeroboam for his false altar at Bethel (1 Kings 13:1-10).
 - h) Elijah warned of a famine and effected a remarkable contest on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 17:1; 18:25-38).
 - i) Elisha announced to Hazael that he would be king over Syria and wept while doing so because of the havoc he knew this man would bring on Israel (2 Kings 8:7-13).
 - j) Jonah was sent even to the foreign and feared city of Nineveh to preach repentance (Jonah 1:2; 3:1-2).
- B. This all means that a person had to be an outstanding individual to qualify as a prophet.
1. Prophets had to be people of outstanding character, great minds and courageous souls. They had to be this by nature and then, being dedicated to God, they became greater because of the tasks and special provisions assigned them.
 2. Thus they became the towering giants of Israel, the formers of public opinion, the leaders through days of darkness and a people distinguished from all those about them either in Israel or other nations of the day.

IV. ***The Meaning And Task Of The Prophet***

- A. Under the law there were at least five classes of speakers: Moses, the lawgiver; the wise men, who gave counsel; priests, who taught the law; prophets, through whom God spoke His word; and psalmists, who were the singers or poets in Israel. Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of three of these classes as being important to the instruction of the people (Jeremiah 18:18; Ezekiel 7:26).
1. Moses (lawgiver).
 - a) Since the law was given but once, there would be of necessity only one lawgiver.
 - b) Moses, the servant of Jehovah, was faithful to his task (Nehemiah 8:1, 14; 9:13-14; John 1:17; 7:19; Hebrews 3:5).
 2. Wise men (counsel).
 - a) The function of these was to give sound advice on matters of life.
 - (1) The first mention of such persons is that of a wise woman (2 Samuel 14:1-24).

- (2) The second person to be characterized as wise was a woman (2 Samuel 20:16-22).
- b) The most outstanding wise man of Israel's history was Solomon. The canonical books of wisdom are Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Some include the Song of Solomon.
 - c) As Eiselen has pointed out, "The wise men did not appeal directly to the conscience as did the prophets, but rather to the mind through counsel and argument, though their ultimate aim was to reach the conscience and through it influence conduct and life."
3. Priests (law).
- a) The special function of the priests was related to the law. Since the law was civil and ecclesiastical, their function was twofold: first, to declare, interpret and teach the law; second, to tend the sacrificial duties.
 - b) Therefore, when apostasy came, the priests were in a large measure responsible for it (Leviticus 10:8-11; Hosea 4:6; Ezekiel 22:26; Malachi 2:7).
4. Prophets (word).
- a) The mission of the prophet was to communicate to Israel the divine word.
 - b) Though they did predict, it may be said of them that so far as their work as a whole was concerned they were proclaimers rather than predictors.
5. Psalmists (poets).
- a) The poets or "sweet singers" complete the group after Moses. Posterity is indebted to these poets for the Psalms.
 - b) In them are to be found expressions of the deepest emotions and feelings of the human spirit. Some reflect, others express, many foretell; but all seek to glorify God.
- B. Designations of the prophets.
1. *Ro'eh* and *hozeh*.
 - a) The first term is used only 12 times in the Old Testament and the second 18 times. Both terms are participles and come from verbs which are practically synonymous.
 - b) The first comes from *ra'ah* and the second from *hazah*, both of which means "to see."
 - (1) The participles mean "one who sees" or, as translated commonly in the Old Testament, "seer."
 - (2) For instance, Saul and his servant used this term for Samuel (1 Samuel 9:11).
 - c) Both of these terms had their respective periods of popularity: *ro'eh* in the time of Samuel and *hozeh* in the time of David (cf. 1 Samuel 9:9).

2. *'Ish elohim*.

- a) "Man of God" is used of the man who came to denounce the false altar of Bethel, and was later detained by the old prophet of Bethel (1 Kings 13:1-34).
- b) Its significance is merely to point the man out as one who knew God and was sent by God on a particular mission.
- c) This term is also used of prophets who are otherwise well known by name (Deuteronomy 33:1; 1 Samuel 9:6; 2 Kings 4:9).

3. *Nabhi'*.

- a) This is the principal word for prophet in the Old Testament. It is used in its noun form alone nearly three hundred times and it is related closely to the verb *nabha'*, which is used approximately 300 more times.
- b) A determination of the meaning of the earlier terms was not difficult, but the same is not true regarding this one.
 - (1) Some say that *nabha'* means "to bubble up." They believe that the concept is in keeping with ecstatic behavior on the part of the prophets in which their emotional fervor bubbled up within them.
 - (2) Others believe that it should be linked to the Akkadian *nabu*, meaning in its active voice "to speak," thus giving the idea, "speaker." If one takes the passive voice, it changes the meaning to "one spoken to" or "called," thus stressing the person's call to service.
 - (3) Still others have seen a relationship to the Arabic *naba'a*, meaning "to announce," or to the Assyrian god Nebo, who is then thought of as a "speaker."
 - (4) It thus becomes apparent that etymology alone is not conclusive. What is more important, therefore, is the meaning ascribed to the term in the Old Testament.
 - (a) Exodus 7:1-2.
 - i) There would be a relation between Moses and Aaron like that between God and a spokesman for Him, with this spokesman being characterized as a "mouth."
 - ii) Thus a *nabhi'* was one who spoke in the place of another. Gottwald observed, "The pith of Hebrew prophecy is not prediction or social reform but the declaration of divine will."
 - (b) Deuteronomy 18:15-22.
 - i) It would be to this person that people should look for information rather than to the various forms of divination listed in earlier verses.

- ii) The task of the prophets is indicated as speaking the words of God ("put my words in his mouth").
 - (c) Amos 7:12-16.
 - i) Amaziah urges Amos not to "prophesy" any more at Bethel, and Amos in turn says that God had sent him to Israel in order to "prophesy."
 - ii) Thus what he had been doing at Bethel, and motivated Amaziah's rebuke, was "prophesying," and what this had been of course was speaking God's message.
 - (d) Given the nature of the assignment given to prophets at the time of their call, and the fact that they always spoke God's message, leads us to the conclusion that *nabhi'* means "speaker from God." It may well be that this meaning came etymologically from the Akkadian word *nabu* ("to speak") when taken in its active sense.
4. *Ro'eh*, *hozeh*, and *nabhi'* occur together in 1 Chronicles 29:29. So under the influence of the Holy Spirit a prophet was the spokesman of God.
 - a) God spoke to the fathers by the prophets (Hebrews 1:1).
 - b) They spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).
 - (1) The speech of the prophet is "prophesying."
 - (2) The message of the prophet is the "prophecy."
 - c) A prophet was a man who had something to say and had to say it (Jeremiah 20:7-9).
 5. The prophets were not merely predictive sharpshooters who sought only to satisfy human curiosity concerning the future. Nor did they give haphazard predictions like modern psychics.
 - a) When they spoke by God's direction, the words came to pass (Isaiah 46:9-11).
 - b) They did often foretell events, and this is one of the strongest proofs of inspiration (Isaiah 42:9; 44:6-7).
 - c) However, people err when they think that the main task of prophets was the prediction of future events.
 - (1) Though the prophets did predict at times, as God gave them this kind of information, the greater part of their ministry was in preaching to the people of their own time.
 - (2) They were really much like preachers of today, urging people to live in a manner pleasing to God.
 6. The methodology of the prophets.
 - a) Preaching.
 - (1) The manner of speaking by the prophet may be best characterized as preaching.

- (a) In teaching one addresses primarily the mind of the hearer. The interest of teaching is to impart information.
- (b) In preaching one addresses the emotion and will. The interest of preaching is to stir reaction and response.
- (2) The prophetic books are full of examples of preaching (Hosea 4:1; 5:1; Amos 7:15; Jeremiah 2:2; 7:2; 17:19; 19:2).
- b) Key individuals.
 - (1) The moral and religious condition of any country depends in large part on the leadership of those in authority. If leaders conduct themselves properly, people will more than likely do the same.
 - (2) Thus, another aspect in the prophetic method was to contact key individuals of Israel and urge them to conform to God's will.
 - (a) Samuel went to Saul.
 - (b) Nathan and Gad went to David.
 - (c) Shemaiah went to Rehoboam.
 - (d) Ahijah and a "man of God" went to Jeroboam.
 - (e) Elijah and Micaiah went to Ahab.
 - (f) Elisha went to Jehoram and Jehu.
 - (g) Azariah and Hanani went to Asa.
 - (h) Jehu went to Jehoshaphat.
 - (i) Zechariah went to Joash.
 - (j) "The prophet" went to Amaziah.
 - (k) Zechariah went to Uzziah.
 - (l) Isaiah went to Ahaz and Hezekiah.
 - (m) Jeremiah went to Jehoiakim and Zedekiah.
- (3) Symbolic actions.
 - (a) In the work of declaring God's word, prophets employed various measures for stressing points they wished to make.
 - (b) They would perform certain actions, or instruct others to do them, actions which they would explain to be symbolic of truths they wished to convey.
 - i) Elisha told Joash to shoot an arrow through an open window and strike arrows on the ground (2 Kings 13:17-19).
 - ii) Isaiah was to remove the sackcloth from his body and the sandals from his feet (Isaiah 20:4).
 - iii) Jeremiah was to take an earthen bottle to the Hinnom Valley and break it in the sight of all the people (Jeremiah 19:11).

- iv) Jeremiah brought a group of the Rechabites into the temple and set jars of wine before them and exhorted them to drink (Jeremiah 35:1-17).
- v) Ezekiel drew a picture of the siege of Jerusalem on the face of a building brick (Ezekiel 4:1-3).
- vi) Ezekiel shaved the hair from his head and burnt some of it, cut some of it and scattered some of it in the wind (Ezekiel 5:1-2).
- vii) Hosea married Gomer, a harlot, and then watched as she became unfaithful to him (Hosea 1:2; 3:1-3).

(4) Object lessons.

- (a) Some item or action which the prophet saw illustrated a truth to his mind.
- (b) He would use the item or action symbolically to express that truth in a forceful way.
 - i) The almond twig (Jeremiah 1:11-12).
 - ii) The pot of food boiling on the fire (Jeremiah 1:13-14).
 - iii) The linen girdle (Jeremiah 13:1-11).
 - iv) The potter and the clay (Jeremiah 18:1-10).
 - v) The two baskets of figs before the temple (Jeremiah 24:1-10).

C. Numerous figures are called prophets.

1. Enoch (Jude 14).
2. Abraham (Genesis 20:7).
3. Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; 34:10).
4. Deborah (Judges 4:4).
5. Miriam (Exodus 15:20).
6. Companies or "sons of the prophets" (1 Samuel 10:5-13; 19:18-24; 1 Kings 18:13; 20:35; 22:6; 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1).
7. Samuel usually marks the beginning of the prophetic era (Acts 3:24).

V. **The Message Of The Prophets**

A. Three facts to keep in mind as one studies.

1. Seek to understand the political, moral, social, and religious conditions at the time the prophet lived.
 - a) A proper interpretation must be made by first keeping in view how the message was relevant for the people to whom the prophet spoke.
 - b) Secondary fulfillment of prophecy is often found in the New Testament, but this can be understood only when applied by inspired writers of the New Testament.

- c) One must guard against making interpretations which are purely speculative. All applications to modern day occurrences must be carefully harmonized in light of New Testament revelation.
- 2. Consider God's relation to the heathen nations.
 - a) The prophets often revealed how God directs the destiny of these nations and judges them.
 - b) Prophets were not a standing office in Israel. God would raise up prophets to meet specific crises in Israel's history.
 - (1) Most of the prophets, therefore, are clustered around the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions.
 - (2) Not only did the prophets spell doom for disobedient Israel, but also for the wicked heathens as well.
- 3. Observe the teaching of the coming King and kingdom, the true hope of the future (Acts 26:6-7; 28:20).
 - a) The mission and message of the prophets was to try to save God's people from idolatry and wickedness. Failing in this, they announced judgment from God and destruction of the nation.
 - b) But destruction was not total because the prophets foretold how God would spare a remnant out of which would arise the "Branch" from the seed of David. This Messiah would be King of kings.
- B. Some of the great themes developed by the prophets:
 - 1. *Holiness of God* -- He is absolutely pure, righteous, just, merciful, tender, loving, and longsuffering.
 - 2. *Sovereignty of God* -- He rules the universe and is above all, through all, and in all.
 - 3. *Immutability of God's word* -- He carries out His promise. One can depend on Him to act consistently with His word.
 - 4. *Sin* -- God abhors iniquity and will not tolerate, overlook nor excuse it, but He will forgive the penitent.
 - 5. *Repentance and righteousness* -- This is the call of the prophets. Though severe is God's punishment upon the wicked, yet great in mercy is His lovingkindness upon the righteous who are of broken spirit and contrite heart.
 - 6. *Worship* -- The proper reverence, awe, and respect for God will cause one always to have praise and thanksgiving on his lips.

VI. **Classification Of The Prophetical Books**

- A. The Jews had two classes of prophetical books.
 - 1. The earlier prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings).
 - 2. The later prophets:
 - a) "Greater prophets" (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel).
 - b) "Lesser prophets" (also referred to as "The book of the Twelve").

- B. We often classify these as "major" and "minor" prophets.
1. The length of the books makes the difference. The "minor" prophets are not less important nor later than the others. In fact, the dates of the prophets overlap, and indeed all are important.
 2. Each of the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are longer than all 12 of the minor prophets put together.
- C. Oral and literary prophets.
1. Many prophets are called "oral" prophets as we have no writings from them.
 - a) Elijah (1 Kings 17:1).
 - b) Elisha (2 Kings 2:13).
 - c) Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-15).
 - d) Gad (2 Samuel 24:11).
 - e) Ahijah (1 Kings 11:29).
 - f) Shemaiah (1 Kings 12:21-24).
 - g) An unnamed prophet (1 Kings 13:1-34).
 - h) Jehu (1 Kings 16:1-7).
 - i) Eliezer (2 Chronicles 20:37).
 - j) Micaiah (1 Kings 22:8-28).
 2. Sixteen prophets have left us works bearing their names, and we refer to these as "literary" prophets.
- D. False prophets.
1. Along with the true there arose also false prophets (Deuteronomy 18:20-22; Jeremiah 28:1-17).
 - a) These flourished from a very early period in the nation's history to the time of the close of the Old Testament writings.
 - b) The false prophets fall into the two general classes, mercenary and political; some prophesied for money, others for political favor (Micah 3:5, 11).
 2. Oftentimes the false prophets were nationalistic.
 - a) They defended the national practices and rulers through ignorance; but whether false through ignorance or self-will, they and their messages were no less severely denounced by the true prophets.
 - b) Albert C. Knudson has well said, "An ignorant conscientiousness may be quite as dangerous to a community as deliberate wickedness." When opposed by false prophets, the true prophets rise to their greatest heights of zeal and fearlessness.
 3. Distinguishing marks of true prophets.
 - a) Both true and false prophets claimed to represent the true God and both asserted that they had been called. Thus, it was up to the people to discern which one was true in his claims and which was not.

- b) This means that people needed objective signs by which to make an identification. It is important, then, to consider the signs that existed.
- (1) Divination not employed.
 - (a) One would think that, in view of the clear warning in Deuteronomy 18:9-14, no prophets would have wanted to employ divination, but they did (Jeremiah 14:14; Micah 3:7, 11; Ezekiel 12:24).
 - (b) There is no way to know how many false prophets employed divination, but at least those who did could be distinguished as false. The true prophets received their information solely by direct revelation from God.
 - (2) Character of the message.
 - (a) False prophets spoke messages that catered to the delights and whims of people.
 - i) This was seen in the four hundred that gave the message to Ahab regarding the battle at Ramoth-gilead. They told him what he wanted to hear.
 - ii) On the other hand, Micaiah told him what he did not want to hear. This in itself was a mark that Micaiah was true (1 Kings 22:8).
 - (b) Jeremiah spoke of the message brought by false prophets as one that declared peace and good times (8:11; cf. Ezekiel 13:10). The true prophets spoke of war, evil and pestilence (Jeremiah 28:8).
 - (3) Character of the prophet.
 - (a) The false prophets were accused of deceiving, lying, drunkenness, pretending to be what they were not and speaking for God when God had not sent them.
 - (b) False prophets would predict peace for people who provided food for them but the opposite for those who would not (Micah 3:5, 11). Hiding their true character would have only been temporary.
 - (4) Willingness for self-effacement.
 - (a) By this willingness, the prophet demonstrated his sincerity and degree of commitment.
 - (b) False prophets were not willing to do this, for they desired an easy life, a life which would come from catering to the desires of a king.
 - i) Jeremiah lived and prophesied in the time when the city of Jerusalem was under siege by the Babylonians.

- ii) While others wanted the people to withstand the enemy, God's word to Jeremiah was that the people should surrender (Jeremiah 38:1-13).
- (5) Harmony of the message.
- (a) The law had been in existence from the time of Moses, and the priests had been teaching it with varying degrees of faithfulness down through the years.
 - (b) As the people would have known the law, this information would have served as a criterion of whether or not the messages were true. If they were consistent with what had been taught before, they could be expected to be true (Jeremiah 26:17-19).
- (6) Fulfillment of predictive prophecy.
- (a) The usefulness of this mark was indicated by God (Deuteronomy 18:21-22).
 - (b) Only a comparatively small portion of all that the prophets spoke concerned prediction, but, when it did, an important mark existed as to the trueness of the prophet (Jeremiah 28:2-4; 25:11-12; 28:15-17).
- (7) Authentication by miracles.
- (a) A study of miracles in the scriptures shows them to have occurred in groups for specific occasions. These occasions were normally times of additional revelation from God or times of unusual importance (1 Samuel 12:16-25).
 - (b) The sign of the miracle, however, was not conclusive evidence of prophetic authenticity; false prophets at times could also produce signs that were beyond human ability (Mark 13:22; 2 Thessalonians 2:9). In keeping with this, Moses warned the people (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).
- (8) Spiritual discernment.
- (a) When Jesus was on earth, He spoke of His followers as those who knew His voice and would not follow strangers (John 10:4-5; 1 Corinthians 2:14). If this were true in the New Testament times, it must have been true also in Old Testament days.
 - (b) It was no doubt mainly the person who was himself far from God who had difficulty in distinguishing between true and false prophets. The person who was truly following the Lord would usually have recognized quickly when a person was a false teacher.

- E. It is interesting to note that in intertestamental times, the Jews, in the apocryphal writings, understood that prophecy had ceased (1 Mac-cabees 4:46; 9:27; 14:41).

VII. **The Prophetic Paradigm**

A. When God revealed His holy word to man, He often did so through the institution of the prophets. These men received God's calling and went out to deliver His message to the people. The message they delivered can be divided into what is known as a prophetic paradigm. This paradigm separates the prophetic book into eight categories.

1. "*The word of the Lord*" (Hosea 1:1) **GOD IS LORD OF HISTORY**
This shows God as the authoritative source of history.
2. "*Out of Egypt I called my son*" (Hosea 11:1) **ELECTION**
This describes God's calling out of His people.
3. "*They went from Me*" (Hosea 11:2) **REBELLION**
This demonstrates the sin and rebellion of the children of God.
4. "*Ephraim will return to Egypt*" (Hosea 9:3) **JUDGMENT**
This shows God's act of punishing His errant children.
5. "*How can I give you up?*" (Hosea 11:8) **COMPASSION**
Sometimes referred to as the "doctrine of mercy."
6. "*Return, O Israel*" (Hosea 14:1) **REPENTANCE**
This shows the children of God turning back to Him from their sins.
7. "*They will blossom like the lily*" (Hosea 14:5) **REDEMPTION**
God's restoration of His wicked children.
8. "*A light to the nations*" (Isaiah 42:6) **EXALTATION**
A picture of the coming Messiah.

B. These eight categories not only give us a simplified way of classifying the prophetic books, but they also describe God's cycle of action regarding the children of Israel as they fell into sin.

Conclusion. Although God spoke through the prophets, He now speaks to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). It is not in man's way to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:13); therefore, we need guidance which is found in God's word (Psalm 119:105). Let us "hear ye him," for it is by His words that we will be judged (Matthew 17:5; John 12:48).