

THE PROPHETS: Deuteronomy Applied Isaiah through Malachi, Revelation

The First Testament prophets primarily focused on the conditions for blessing found in the covenant with Moses. Obedience to the commands of Moses' covenant was the key condition for God's people to be preserved in his land. The prophets can best be arranged around the times during which they prophesied: *before*, *during*, and *after* the exile to Babylon.

Before the Babylonian Exile Amos 5.21-24; Joel 2.12-13

Before the exile, the nation of Israel still had a chance to avoid destruction. These pre-exilic prophets would have warned of impending judgment for unfaithfulness to the covenant with God (for example, see Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Minor Prophets from Hosea through Zephaniah). Their message to Israel was to stop being like the nations that surrounded them. Their message to the nations was to repent and do justice and righteousness to all men, especially Israel.

Another important dimension of their message to Israel was that of the promise of exaltation after a period of chastisement and humiliation. This truth was continually emphasized throughout Scripture, especially the prophets, the Lord Jesus, and Paul: suffering before relief, humility before praise, and perseverance before reward.

During the Exile

The prophets who spoke during the exile told captive Israel to submit and learn from God's chastisement (see Daniel, Ezekiel, and parts of Jeremiah; the books of 1 and 2 Kings were also written from the perspective of right before and during the exile). The exilic prophets told Israel not to hope in the nations for deliverance. They were told to make sure that idols were removed from their hearts (Ezekiel 14; Deuteronomy 28). The captive Israelites in Babylon were not to hope in the temple still standing in Jerusalem. The temple was not a good luck charm against the consequences of rebellion. It was only a symbol of God's presence and would soon fall. The real issue of God's presence would hinge on their present obedience, no matter where in the world they might be. Whenever they were obedient, they would experience the presence of God.

After The Exile

The prophets who spoke to Israel after she had returned from exile to the Promised Land called upon the nation to persevere (See Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were also written from the perspective of positive restoration after the exile). Daniel had told the nation about the years of oppression to come, but Israel had also been told to continue on in obedience to the requirements of the Mosaic covenant. So, lest Israel's courage fail, the post-exilic prophets gave comfort and warning. The DAY of the LORD would eventually come, bringing destruction to the rebellious but salvation and rest to the faithful remnant. The time of final restoration would be according to the Abrahamic covenant as it had been gradually elaborated in later revelation to Moses, David, and the prophets. In that final day: (1) God's *land* will be restored; (2) God's *people* will be saved; (3) God's presence will dwell with his people once again (Revelation 21, 22).

All of God's promises to Abraham would be fulfilled. But a final covenant addressed the major problem blocking the dawning of the kingdom of God: sin. All of these prophets see the ultimate problem being addressed by the ultimate prophet: Jesus.