



A Summary of the Old Testament

within the word

Lesson Fifteen | The Prophets, the Captivity-Assyrian and Babylonian, and the Return from Babylon

There were many prophets who spoke to the people of Israel. God, in His great love for this nation, continued to call them to repent and turn back to Him. God loved them and wanted to provide for them but so often they wanted nothing to do with His plan. The people endured years of unnecessary hardships and trials because of their stubborn rebellion.

We looked at their national leaders last week. This week, we will look at their spiritual leaders, the prophets. These men were used to speak on God's behalf. We will not be able to look at the prophets in detail, but we will get a general idea of when they spoke and to which people they spoke with, along with some of the amazing events, occurring at that time. At the end of this lesson, there is a list of the prophets and a map.

Day One

1. I would like to draw our attention to the first three prophets, Gideon, Samson and Samuel. These men were all prophets during the time of the Judges.

Read Judges 21:25.

What effect did these godly men have on the people of their day?

2. The people refused to listen when the prophet Samuel encouraged them to look to God for provision and protection. (1 Samuel 8) They insisted they would be better off with a king like all the other nations. God granted their request. Samuel was instructed by God to anoint the first king of Israel.

Who was this first king?

Read 1 Samuel 9:27-10:1.

3. Saul did not obey the Lord, as God had instructed him. So, God rejected Saul and instructed Samuel to anoint a young shepherd boy, who would one day reign in Saul's place.

Who was this young shepherd boy?

Read 1 Samuel 16:11-13.

4. In God's perfect time, David became king of all Israel. David reigned for 30 years, with Nathan, the prophet, by his side. Nathan was a good friend to the king.

True friends speak the truth in love even when it is not a pleasant task.

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-7.

How did Nathan help his king see truth and a restored relationship with God?

5. When David died, his son, Solomon, became king. Nathan remained a prophet, and friend, to Solomon, as well.

Solomon began his reign very well, but unfortunately; he did not end as well as he began. He married many foreign women, who brought with them their heathen gods. This became the downfall of his family and the nation. (1 Kings 11:4)

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king. Rehoboam was given an opportunity to lead well. Instead, he chose to be ruthless and the kingdom divided. Rehoboam attempted to reunite the kingdom by force. He was warned by Shemaiah, the prophet of God.

What did Shemaiah tell him to do?

Read 1 Kings 12:22-24

6. Now let's look at the prophet Elijah. Elijah was a prophet at the time of King Ahab. Elijah told of the drought and the famine coming, then he quickly fled for his life.

He knew King Ahab and his queen, Jezebel, did not like bad news. Queen Jezebel could not locate Elijah, so she settled for killing as many of God's prophets as she could find. Obadiah another godly man hid 100 prophets of God in a cave and supplied them with food and water.

While Jezebel was gone, Elijah appeared before King Ahab and instructs him to gather all the people and the 450 prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel.

Read 1 Kings 18:21.

This is an amazing story of faith and trust in the power of God. What was Elijah's challenge to the people?

7. What causes us to waver?
Following God faithfully or following something else, that is the choice we make each day. When we allow ourselves to drift along in life following nothing but our own lead, who is truly our god?

If you were not alive in the 1990's, there was a resurgence of the popular bracelet with these initials: WWJD. They were a reminder to ask the question, *"What would Jesus do?"*

What would happen if we began every decision with WWJD?

Perhaps the better question might be, what does love require of me?

8. Elijah suffers from a bit of misinformation. (1 Kings 18:22) When he gives the instructions for the events that would take place that day, he says he is the only prophet of God left.

Sometimes it does feel this way. When we are tired and discouraged or facing a situation of grave consequences, it can feel like we are the only one left serving God.

Read 1 Kings 18:4.

Was that true for Elijah?

Is it true for us?

9. Read 1 Kings 18:23-46.
This is an amazing story of the splendor and power of God. Briefly write out the events of this day.

10. When King Ahab returned, he told Queen Jezebel everything that happened.

Read 1 Kings 19:1-18.

What was Jezebel's response?

Once again Elijah flees for his life. He is starving and exhausted after his long journey he made a camp under a broom tree.

What does Elijah tell God?

Have you ever been so scared and tired that you said things that you really did not mean?

11. God reassures Elijah that he does not have all the facts.

Read 1 Kings 19:18.

What bit of very good news does the Lord share with Elijah?

12. Let's look at one more event from Elijah's time as a prophet in Israel.

Read 2 Kings 1.

King Ahab has died and Ahaziah is king in Israel. He suffered a terrible accident and was not sure he would survive. The king sent messengers to consult Baal-

Zebub, the god of Ekron. As they made their way, they encountered Elijah. Elijah sent them back with a question for the king. What was his question?

The king sent a company of soldiers three times to find Elijah. What happened to the soldiers sent to find Elijah?

Day Two

1. In 2 Kings 2 we read that Elijah was about to be called home to heaven. Elijah asked Elisha how he could bless him before he was gone.

What did Elisha ask for?

Read 2 Kings 2: 9-18

Did God grant Elisha what he had asked?

2. Read 2 Kings 2:19-22.
What was the next miracle of Elisha's ministry?
3. Read 2 Kings 4:1-7.
What miracle did Elisha do for a widow lady?
4. Have you ever been down to the end of your resources, when an opportunity to meet a need for someone else came to your attention?
How did you respond?
How differently might you respond if something like this happens again?
5. Read 2 Kings 4:8-17.
Elisha met a couple, and they show him great hospitality.
What did they do for this prophet of God?
6. What did Elisha do for this Shunammite couple?
7. Read 2 Kings 4:18-37.
Life is filled with difficulties; it was no different during the days of Elisha.

When young boy got sick, what did Elisha do for these friends whose son is about to die?
8. James 5:16 "*...The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*"
What is the key to powerful and effective prayers?
9. Elisha was an incredibly good friend to this couple.

When your friends are suffering or going through a difficult season, are you moved with compassion?
 Are you the kind of friend who prays fervently for others?

10. One of my favorite stories is the story of Naaman and his healing.

Read 2 Kings 5.
 Briefly state the details of this miracle.

11. I often think of the story of Naaman, when sharing the gospel. It is so easy to be saved.

We believe and accept Jesus’s finished work on the cross. Like Naaman, many people think this is just too simple. They believe they must do something to receive forgiveness and restoration from God. Like Naaman, we must simply take God at his word.

Have you taken this step of faith?
 Have you simply asked Jesus to come into your heart and be your Savior?
 Jesus died for all sin past, present and future. It is a finished work. We simply must believe and receive.

12. There are many other amazing stories, but we must move on. Read Hosea 1:1 and Amos 1:1. Which kings were in power when these men spoke to the people of the northern kingdom and called them to turn back to God?

Prophet	Reference	King	Key Verse	Write out the key verse or paraphrase it
Hosea	Hosea 1:1		Hosea 14:1	
Amos	Amos 1:1		Amos 5:24	

13. Read Hosea 14:9.
 Paraphrase Hosea’s words from this verse.
 Do these words still ring true?

Day Three

1. The prophet, Joel, preached to the people of the southern kingdom. He refers several times to the “...*day of the LORD.*”

Fill in the chart.

Joel is calling the people to see their sin as God sees it and turn back to Him. The “...*day of the LORD*” can be a reference to things about to happen or future events, but they will be noticeably an act of Almighty God.

	What is the prophet saying about the day of the LORD?
Joel 1:15	
Joel 2:1	
Joel 2:11	
Joel 2:31	
Joel 3:14	

- Obadiah was also a prophet to the southern kingdom. His name means ‘servant or worshiper’ of the LORD. Like Joel, his message was to remind the people, “*The day of the LORD is near.*”

Obadiah is only a single chapter in the Bible. Read verse 15.
What is the prophet’s warning for those who do not repent?

- Micah is a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah.

Read Micah 1:1.
Which king ruled during Micah’s day?

- Micah 6:8 is one of the most clear and concise verses on living a life pleasing to the LORD. According to this verse what truly displays our love for God?

- Isaiah is the longest of all the prophetic books, with 66 chapters.

Read Isaiah 1:1.
Which kings did he serve God under?

- Read Isaiah 1:11.
What word did Isaiah have for the religious leaders and people of his day?

- Read Isaiah 1:18-20.
What is God’s desire for each of us?

- Read Isaiah 6:1-4.
What do these verses teach concerning the events going on in heaven?

- One of the most beautiful verses in the Bible is found in Isaiah 6:8.

When Isaiah got a close and personal view of God, what did it compel him to do?

10. Have you had an experience like this?
11. The people of Isaiah's day were like men and women walking in the dark. (Isaiah 9:2) However, God had promised a great light.

Read Isaiah 9:6-7.

Who is that great light?

Look up Luke 2:11; John 3:16 and Matthew 28:18 to help answer this question.

Day Four

1. Isaiah spoke of a branch shooting from the stump of Jesse.

Read Isaiah 11:1-5.

What did Isaiah say about the long-awaited Savior?

2. Read Isaiah 30:19-21.
What did God promise his people through the words of this prophet?

3. Jeremiah is often referred to as the weeping prophet.

Read Jeremiah 1:1-3.

Under which kings did he serve as a prophet?

4. Jeremiah was a man who unashamedly cried out to God on behalf of his people.

Read Jeremiah 2:19.

What is he calling the people to see?

5. God's people had forgotten him. Jeremiah is calling their attention back to their God.

Read Jeremiah 2:32 and 32:36-41.

What has God promised when they return to him?

6. Jonah and Nahum were both prophets sent to foreign nations. God called Jonah and Nahum to go to Nineveh each at different times. If you are not familiar with Jonah, read all four chapters. To Jonah's surprise the people of Nineveh repented. You would think this preacher would be thrilled.

Read Jonah 4.

What lesson did Jonah need to learn?

7. Their repentance was relatively short lived, only about 100 years. By the time Nahum came along they had returned to all their old ways.

What is the message of Nahum in Nahum 1:1-3?

8. Is there a message for us in these verses?
Has God changed how he feels about and deals with His creation?

9. In Nahum 3:5-7, who is ready to come against Nineveh?

10. Read Nahum 3:18-19.

What is their end?

11. The book of Habakkuk is only three chapters, but it is still relevant today. When we look around it often feels like evil is triumphing.

Read Habakkuk 3:1-2.

Now write a prayer of your own for the world and all the evil happening.

What have you placed your hope and confidence in?

12. Zephaniah's purpose was to shake the people of Judah out of their complacency and urge them to return to the LORD.

Read Zephaniah 2:3.

What is the prophet trying to help them see?

13. Ezekiel and Daniel were both taken into captivity and yet they served God faithfully. Ezekiel was taken into captivity first.

Read Ezekiel 12:1-2.

How are the people described here?

14. Read Ezekiel 16:49-52, 59-63.

Even though the people had been unfaithful and broken their promises to love and serve God, what did God say he would do?

Day Five

1. The thought of God's unconditional love and forgiveness available to us should thrill our heart. We do not deserve the love he lavishes on us and yet he does.

Read Romans 6:23.

What do sinful men and women deserve?

Read John 3:16-17.

What is the only thing that can spare us from our terrible fate?

2. Ezra and Nehemiah both spoke God's word to the people who had been allowed to return from captivity. They spoke to the people about God's favor and encouraged them to rebuild God's temple in Jerusalem.

Read Ezra 4:1-5 and 5:17.

What was the greatest hinderance for the people building?

3. Are there those around you trying to discourage your efforts to rebuild your worshipful relationship with God?

Read Ezra 6:1-12.

How did God come to their defense?

What is discouraging you from fulfilling God's purpose today?

4. Haggai and Zechariah both preached to the people who had returned from Babylonian captivity. Read Haggai 1:1-9.
Who specifically did the word of the Lord come to and who was it for?

5. Read Haggai 1:4.

What is the question posed by the prophet Haggai?

Read Haggai 2:1-5.

What is God calling the people to do?

6. Read Zechariah 1:1-6.

Notice this is basically the same period as that mentioned in Haggai.

What is the important call of the LORD to his people?

What was their response?

7. Malachi did not come on the scene for nearly 100 years. But his message was still the same. Read Malachi 4:1-6; and Luke 1:17, 76-79.

Who are these verses referring to?

8. Nehemiah returned with the purpose of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The temple had been completed in 516 BC, but the walls were still in rubble.

Read Nehemiah 6:15-16.

Many said this task was too great, it could not be done.

How did they accomplish this great work?

9. We should not allow the size of our task or the length of time it will take to see it through to deter us from doing the work God has called us to accomplish.

What task is God calling you to do today?

10. As we have done each week, add God's character qualities you have seen to your list on **The Character of God** page. Some of His qualities may be repeated from chapter to chapter but you may also see new ones as well.

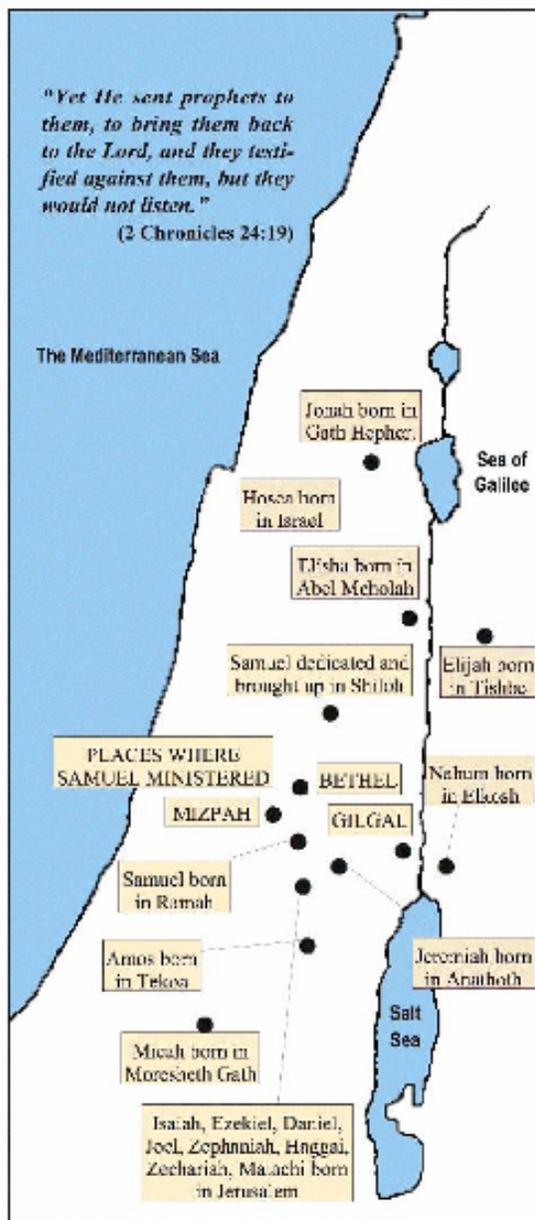
Please, do not leave this undone. The purpose of our study is to get to know our God.

List of the Prophets

The prophets were men called by God and given the task of speaking truth, calling others to repentance, and leading them to a relationship with the One true God, Jehovah. Their message was seldom welcomed by those receiving it, but that did not deter them.

God will continue to use us to speak the truth in love. As a believer, we are called to share truth in such a way that points people to a genuine relationship with God. Do not be deterred.

THE PROPHETS BY THEIR PLACE OF BIRTH:



THE PROPHETS BY THEIR PLACE IN TIME:

I. The Pre-Exile Prophets

Joel	c. 850-700 B.C.
Jonah	c. 800 B.C.
Amos	c. 780-755 B.C.
Hosea	c. 760-710 B.C.
Micah	c. 740 B.C.
Isaiah	c. 740-680 B.C.
Nahum	c. 666-615 B.C.
Zephaniah	c. 630-620 B.C.
Habakkuk	c. 627-586 B.C.
Jeremiah	c. 626-580 B.C.

II. The Exile Prophets

Daniel	c. 604-535 B.C.
Ezekiel	c. 593-570 B.C.
Obadiah	c. 585 B.C.

III. The Post-Exile Prophets

Haggai	c. 520 B.C.
Zechariah	c. 520-518 B.C.
Malachi	c. 450-400 B.C.

THE PROPHETS BY THEIR PLACE OF MINISTRY:

I. To Israel

Hosea
Amos
Jonah (also to The Nations)

II. To Judah

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Joel
Micah (also to Israel)
Habakkuk (also to The Nations)
Zephaniah
Ezekiel
Daniel
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

III. To The Nations

Nahum (also to Judah)
Obadiah