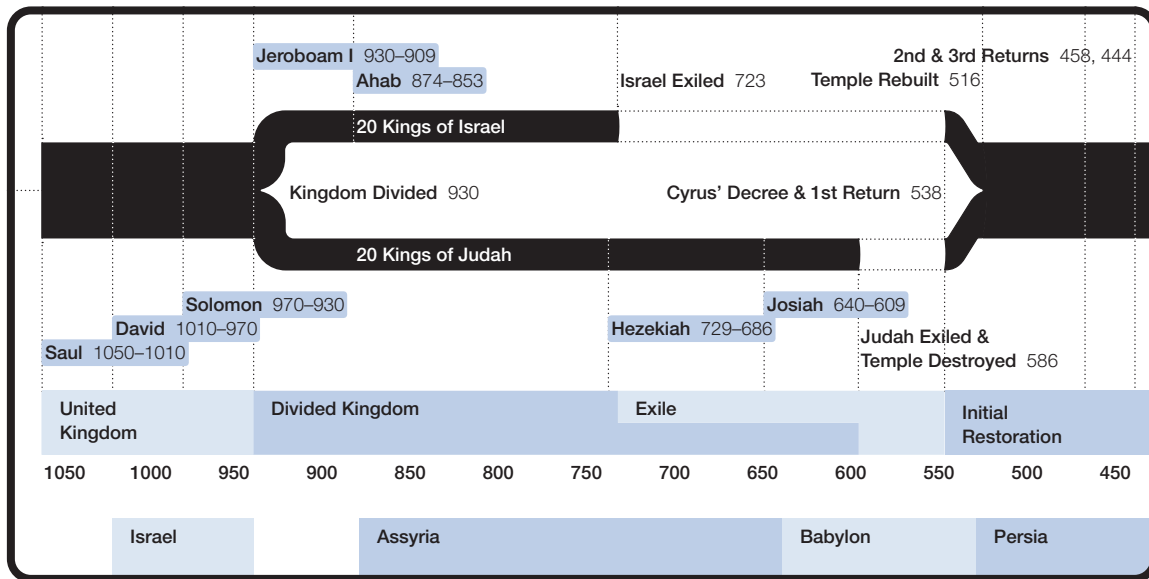


LECTURE 13: INTRODUCTION TO THE LATTER PROPHETS

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I. The Latter Prophets in History A. The Timeline of Major Players and Events

Fig. 13.1. Key Powers, People, & Periods in the History of Israel & Judah



Prepared by Jason S. DeRouchie. For an expanded version of this material that includes all kings and prophets of Israel and Judah, see Appendix 1, Fig. A.2.

Fig. 13.2. Chronology of the Classical Prophets

World Power	Prophetic Period	Primary Audience		Foreign Nation Focus
		Israel	Judah	
Assyria (870–626 B.C.)	8 th –early 7 th century	Jonah (ca. 770)		Assyria (Nineveh)
		Amos (ca. 760)		
		Hosea (ca. 760–730)	Isaiah (ca. 740–700) Micah (ca. 737–690) Nahum (ca. 650)	
Babylon (626–539 B.C.)	Late 7 th –early 6 th century		Habakkuk (ca. 630)	Edom
			Zephaniah (ca. 627)	
			Jeremiah (ca. 627–580)	
			Joel (ca. 600?)	
			Obadiah (ca. 586?)	
			Ezekiel (ca. 593–570) [in Babylon]	
Persia (539–323 B.C.)	Late 6 th –5 th century		Haggai (ca. 520)	
			Zechariah (ca. 520–518)	
			Malachi (ca. 433)	

Prepared by Jason S. DeRouchie; adapted from John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 52.

Fig. 13.3. Kings of the Divided Kingdom

<i>Kings of Judah (Southern Kingdom)</i>			<i>Kings of Israel (Northern Kingdom)</i>			
1	Rehoboam	930–913 B.C.	1	Jeroboam I	930–909 B.C.	I
2	Abijah	913–910	2	Nadab	909–908	
3	Asa	910–869	3	Baasha	908–886	II
			4	Elah	886–885	
			5	Zimri	885	III
			6	(Tibni)	885–880	IV
4	Jehoshaphat	872–848*	7	Omri	885–874	V
5	Jehoram I	853–841*	8	Ahab	874–853	
6	Ahaziah I	841	9	Ahaziah	853–852	
7	Athaliah [†]	841–835	10	J(eh)oram II	852–841	VI
8	J(eh)oash I	835–796	11	Jehu	841–814	
9	Amaziah	796–767	12	Jehoahaz	814–798	
10	Azariah II (Uzziah)	792–740*	13	J(eh)oash II	798–782	VII
			14	Jeroboam II	793–753*	
			15	Zechariah	753	VIII
11	Jotham	750–732*	16	Shallum	752	
12	Ahaz	735–715*	17	Menahem	752–742	IX
13	Hezekiah	729–686*	18	Pekahiah	742–740	
14	Manasseh	696–642*	19	Pekah	752–732*	X
15	Amon	642–640	20	Hoshea	732–723	
16	Josiah	640–609	<i>Exile of Israel by Assyria, 723 B.C.</i>			
17	Jehoahaz	609	*Date includes a coregency or overlapping reign.			
18	Jehoiakim	609–598	†Originally wife of Jehoram I, Athaliah became sole ruler of Judah after the death of her son Ahaziah I.			
19	Jehoiachin	598–597	Prepared by Jason S. DeRouchie. Nearly all dates are taken from Edwin R. Thiele, <i>The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings</i> (new rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994), 10; the only change from Thiele's proposal is the start date of Hezekiah's reign (729 instead of 715), based on the clear reading of the Hebrew Masoretic text and the arguments of Leslie McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" <i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i> 146 (1989): 393–404.			
20	Zedekiah	597–586				
<i>Exile of Judah by Babylon, 586 B.C.</i>						

THINK!

As will be seen, prophets played a major part in the ancient world, a fact witnessed to by the mass number of "false prophets" in the OT. What could have caused these 15 prophets and not others in these three distinct periods to have their writings preserved and viewed as words from God? Be as specific as possible in your response. In considering an answer, read Deuteronomy 13:1–3; 18:22; Jeremiah 28:9; and Ezekiel 33:32–33.

B. Makeup of the Audiences

Fig. 13.4. The Makeup of the Southern & Northern Kingdoms

	<i>Southern Kingdom – Judah</i>	<i>Northern Kingdom – Israel</i>
Size	1(2) tribes	10 tribes
Dynasties & Kings	1 dynasty (of David) / 20 kings (only two fully loyal: Hezekiah & Josiah)	10 dynasties / 20 kings* (all wicked, esp. Jeroboam I & Ahab)
Capitals	Jerusalem	Samaria
Worship Centers	Jerusalem	Bethel & Dan
Economic Status	Struggling	Wealthy
Destruction	586 B.C. by Babylon	723 B.C. by Assyria
* The total number of northern kings lowers to nineteen and the dynasties to nine if Tibni from 1 Kings 16:21–22 is not included.		

C. Dating the Prophets

1. Introductory comments:
 - a. About half of the Latter Prophets involve dating problems, one-fourth of them major.
 - b. You don't have to date books from scratch, but you do have to be aware of the presuppositions that guide some scholars' dating of the books. For example:
 - i. There is no prophetic prophecy.
 - ii. Prophetic oracles were altered and adapted within a circle of prophetic disciples.
 - iii. Much OT prophecy is actually pseudonymous.

THE RESULT of these liberal presuppositions: A prophetic book is the product of redactors, and the "original" message can only be reconstructed theoretically.
2. Proper methods for dating the Prophets:
 - a. Is there a superpower in view? Is it identified?
 - b. Is Israel united or divided? Are the north and south in view, or just one of them?
 - c. Does curse or restoration blessing predominate the prophetic message?
 - d. What is the general internal situation of the message and audience? Can events or situations be dated?
 - e. Are there comparisons with statements in Samuel-Kings or Chronicles?
 - f. Are there names, dates, and events by which to establish a time frame for the message—at least a *terminus ad quo* (earliest possible date) and/or *terminus ad quem* (latest possible date)?
 - g. Are there other OT books that are quoted or echoed?
3. Why worry about dating the Prophets?
 - a. The prophets' messages are occasional in that they were proclaimed to a particular people in a particular time.
 - b. The prophets provide God's perspective on the history of the covenant.

- c. Dating the prophets helps us understand what God is doing redemptively in space and time, so that we can ultimately know how to live in our own history.
- 4. Two more final notes:
 - a. When dating the prophets we are talking about the dating of their original message, whether verbal or written. For some prophetic books, it is possible that the date of the written document is not the same as the date of the verbal proclamation.
 - b. Within the “commentary books” of the Latter Prophets and Former Writings, the editors of the Bible appear to have been more concerned about a book’s message and placement in the canon than its relative dating. This is most evident in the Book of the Twelve minor prophets, where nearly every listing of the books appears to bear a theological rather than chronological agenda. It is also evident in *Baba Bathra*’s structuring of the commentary books according to size (Jeremiah > Ezekiel > Isaiah > The Twelve) over date (Isaiah > Jeremiah > Ezekiel).

II. The Function of Yahweh Prophets

A. Titles of the Prophets

1. “Seer” (*rōʿeh*): An early designation for a prophet (1 Sam. 9:9), this word reflects the perceptibility of this class of individuals. The prophets could “see” into the future things unknown to others, but, even more importantly, they could “see” rightly in the present. That is, they knew the mind of God and were able to identify the innate rebellion of God’s covenant partners in a way they themselves could not detect.
2. “Visionary” (*hōzeh*): This term relates to a specific type of revelation known as a vision, whether of the future or present (Num. 24:4; 1 Sam. 3:1; Isa. 1:1). An Aramaic cognate (*hzyn*) is found in the Zakkur inscription above.
3. “Prophet” (*nābîʾ*) (Jer. 1:5). While most scholars connect the Hebrew term for prophet to the Akkadian verb *nābû*, “to call, proclaim, name,” there is question as to whether noun is best understood in an active or passive sense (i.e., one who calls on God or one who is called by God).
 - a. The active interpretation focuses on the role of the prophet invoking God’s name (see D. E. Fleming, “The Etymological Origins of the Hebrew *nābîʾ*: The One Who Invokes God,” *CBQ* 55 [1993]: 217–24). Scripture is clear that prophets were to be men of both the Word and prayer. As the prophet Samuel asserted, “As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Yahweh by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way” (1 Sam. 12:23, see more below). In 1 Kings 18 both Elijah and Baal’s prophets “call upon the name” of their respective God’s (18:24, 26, 36–37), and in 2 Kings 5:11, Naaman the Aramean complains that Elisha has not interceded to Yahweh on his behalf. We may also see evidence of this in the fact that worship leaders were considered prophets, as they “prophesied with the lyre in thanksgiving and praise to Yahweh” (1 Chr. 25:3).

- b. Most scholars apply the passive interpretation to the noun prophet, defining the term as “one summoned by God” (John Huehnergard, “On the Etymology and Meaning of *nābîʿ*,” *EI* 26 [1999]: 88–93; P. A. Verhoef, “Prophecy,” *NIDOTTE* 4:1067–1078). Here the term is analogous to many other official titles: “anointed one, messiah” (*māšīaḥ*), “promoted one, ruler” (*nāgîd*), “raised one, prince” (*nāśîʿ*), “consecrated one, Nazarite” (*nāzîr*), “appointed one, overseer” (*pāqîd*), “hired one, hireling” (*śākîr*).
4. “The man of the Spirit” (*ʾiš hārûaḥ*): A title pointing to the divinely-directed nature of a prophet’s ministry and/or the divine-inspired nature of his message (Hos. 9:7).
5. “(The) man of God” (*ʾiš [hā]ʾlōhîm*): At the very least, this title reflects the close relationship between the prophet and God, but it may also reflect the man’s character (= “godly man”; Deut. 33:1; 1 Sam. 2:27; 2 Kgs. 4:7; cf. 2 Tim. 3:17).
6. “The servant of Yahweh” (*ʿebed yhwḥ*): As agents of the heavenly court (2 Kgs. 17:13; Jer. 7:25; 23:22), the prophets operated as God’s ambassadors, bearing a distinct role as divine servants. This title is not restricted to those normally considered prophets (e.g., Moses, Isaiah) but is applied to the patriarch Abraham and King David as well.
7. “The messenger of Yahweh” (*malʾaḳ yhwḥ*): An officially commissioned mouthpiece of the highest authority (Isa. 42:19; 44:26; Hag. 1:13; Mal. 3:1; 2 Chr. 36:15–16). In this context, prophetic speeches are often introduced by statements like: “Thus says Yahweh”; “Yahweh says”; “The declaration of Yahweh”; “The oracle/burden of Yahweh against PN.”

B. The Prophets as Covenant Enforcers

1. The prophets were covenant ambassadors from the heavenly council, commissioned (1) to call God’s people back into relationship with their covenant King and (2) to stand in the gap, interceding to God on behalf of his people. In short, **they preached for God to the people, and they prayed for the people to God.**
 - a. The prophet as God’s mouthpiece:
 - i. Two roles:
 - (1) *Foretelling*: words of God that depict future realities
 - (2) *Forthtelling*: words of God that direct human action in the present (*primary role)
 - ii. Summary texts:
 - 2 Kgs. 17:13. Yet Yahweh warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.”
 - Jer. 23:21–22. I did not send the prophets; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.²² But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds. Cf. Jer. 14:14.
 - Hos. 12:9–10. I am Yahweh your God from the land of Egypt....¹⁰ I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets gave parables.
 - Mal. 3:1. Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the

messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says Yahweh of hosts.

- 2 Chr. 36:15. Yahweh, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place.

Fig. 13.5. The Function of Yahweh Prophets in History

Period	Function	Audience	Message	Examples
Pre-monarchy	Mouthpiece, Leader	People	National guidance; Maintenance of justice; Spiritual Overseer	Moses, Deborah <i>Transition: Samuel</i>
Pre-classical	Mouthpiece, Leader	King, Court	Military advice; Pronouncement of rebuke or blessing	Nathan, Elijah, Elisha <i>Transition:</i>
Classical	Mouthpiece, Social/spiritual commentator	People	Rebuke concerning current conditions of society; Leads to warnings of captivity, destruction, exile, and promise of restoration; Call for justice and repentance	North: Jonah; South: Isaiah "Writing Prophets": Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve

Adapted from John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 52.

- b. The prophet as intercessor:
- Abraham's* role as prophet was closely tied to his praying for sinners to enjoy divine pardon (Gen. 20:7; cf. 18:22–33).
 - Samuel* said he would sin if he failed to pray for the people, along with teaching them the ways of God (1 Sam. 12:23)
 - God charged *Jeremiah* to act opposite of his prophetic role: “Do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you” (Jer. 7:16; cf. 11:14; 14:11–12). However, Jeremiah did pray, and he later implored God to protect him in return for his standing before God “to speak good for [the people], to turn away your wrath from them” (18:20).
 - God told *Ezekiel* that sin caused a breach in Israel’s defensive wall and that he sought a man to “build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it” (Ezek. 22:30). To Israel’s destruction, none could be found.
 - Twice *Amos* pled with Yahweh to forgive Israel and to stop his judgment against the northern kingdom, and Yahweh relented (Amos 7:1–3, 4–6).
 - The psalmist declares that *Moses* “stood in the breach before [God], to turn away his wrath from destroying them” (Ps. 106:23). Intriguingly, God’s charge to Moses to “leave me alone that I may destroy them” (Deut. 9:14) was actually the very means God used to call the prophet to intercession. God gave a command that would have been sin for the prophet to obey, for prophets were supposed to stand in the breach on behalf of God’s people. Israel’s sin was a serious offense against God (9:14, 16, 18), but Moses is asked to do what God himself would promise never to do to Israel (4:30–31; 31:6). Furthermore, the use of the verb “leave alone” in Deuteronomy 9:14 appears to have been intentionally switched from the verb used in Exodus 32:10 in order to

echo the divine promise of Deuteronomy 4:31, thus clarifying what God actually wanted from Moses—namely, intercession.

- c. New Testament Application:
 - i. Intercession was central to the ministry of the apostles. Direct care for the needs of the Jerusalem congregation was to be done by the deacons, because the apostles were to devote themselves “to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Because the NT church only has two offices—deacon and overseer/elder/shepherd (e.g., Phil. 1:1), it seems that congregational elders now serve as an outgrowth of the initial apostolic office, making an elder’s primary role prayer and ministry of the Word.
 - ii. The role of prayer appears to be central to the role not only of the heads of God’s household (the elders) but also of the heads of human households. Husbands are to love their wives with care, “so that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7). Similarly, after urging the church in Ephesus at large “that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people” (1 Tim. 2:1), Paul expresses his desire “that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling” and “that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control” (2:8–9).

2. The Nature of Prophetic Oracles and the Covenant Blessings and Curses

Fig. 13.7. Categories of Prophetic Oracles

	<i>Description</i>	<i>Pre-Exilic Emphasis</i>	<i>Post-Exilic Emphasis</i>
Indictment	Statement of the offense (specification of covenant <i>stipulations</i> violated)	Primarily idolatry, ritualism, & social justice	Not giving proper honor to Yahweh
Warning / Judgment	Declaration of the punishment to be carried out (warning or promise of covenant <i>curses</i>)	Primarily national destruction projected for near future	Interprets recent or current crises as punishment
Instruction	Clarification of the expected response (call to heed covenant <i>stipulations</i>)	Little offered; general calls to turn from sin & to return to Yahweh	More offered; calls for renewal addressed to particular situations
Restoration / Salvation	Affirmation of future hope or deliverance (promise of covenant <i>restoration blessings</i>)	Presented & understood as coming after intervening period of judgment	Presented and understood as spanning a protracted time period

Adapted from John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 54.

- a. Oracles of Warning/Judgment
 - i. Outworking of covenant curses: Oracles of warning or immanent punishment against those who failed to live loyally in covenant or to treat God and his people with respect—whether individuals (e.g., 1 Sam. 13:13–14; 1 Kgs. 11:11–13) or nations (e.g., Jer. 8:4–12; Ezek. 15; Isa. 17; Amos 4:1–3; Mic. 3:7–12).
 - Dan. 9:11. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.

**Fig. 13.6. Israelite Covenant Blessings, Curses, & Restoration Blessings
Referred to by the Prophets**

Blessings			
1.	Yahweh's presence / favor / loyalty (Lev. 26:11–12)	6.	General & unspecified (Deut. 28:2, 6, 8, 12–13)
2.	Confirmation of the covenant (Lev. 26:9)	7.	Peace & security in the land with no fear: a. <i>general</i> (Lev. 26:5–6); b. <i>from harmful animals</i> (Lev. 26:6); c. <i>from enemies</i> (Lev. 26:6)
3.	Be a holy people to Yahweh (Deut. 28:9)		
4.	Rains in season (Lev. 26:4; Deut. 28:12)		
5.	Abounding prosperity and productivity: a. <i>general</i> (Deut. 28:12); b. <i>fruit of the womb</i> (Lev. 26:9; Deut. 28:4, 11); c. <i>fruit of the livestock</i> (Deut. 28:4, 11); d. <i>fruit of the ground</i> (Lev. 26:4–5, 10; Deut. 28:4, 8, 11)	8.	Victory over enemies (Lev. 26:7–8; Deut. 28:7)
		9.	Freedom from slavery (Lev. 26:13)
		10.	Global influence & witness (Deut. 28:1, 10, 12)
Curses			
1.	Anger & rejection from Yahweh (Lev. 26:17, 24, 28, 41; Deut. 4:24–25; 29:20, 24, 27–28; 31:17–18, 29; 32:16, 19–22, 30)	13.	Exile & captivity: a. <i>of the people</i> (Lev. 26:33–34, 36, 38–39, 41, 44; Deut. 4:27; 28:36–37, 41, 63–64, 68; 29:28; 30:4; 32:26); b. <i>of the king</i> (Deut. 28:36)
2.	Rejection & destruction of the cult (Lev. 26:31)		
3.	War and its ravages: a. <i>general</i> (Lev. 26:17, 25, 33, 37; 28:25, 49, 52; 32:23–24, 30, 41–42); b. <i>siege</i> (Lev. 26:25–26, 29; Deut. 28:52–53, 55, 57)	14.	Forced idolatry in exile (Deut. 4:28; 28:36, 64)
4.	Fear, terror, & horror (Lev. 26:16–17, 36–37; Deut. 28:66–67; 32:25)	15.	Futility (Lev. 26:16, 20; Deut. 28:20, 29–31, 33, 38–41)
		16.	Dishonor & degradation (Lev. 26:19; Deut. 28:20, 25, 37, 43–44, 68)
5.	Occupation & oppression by enemies & aliens (Lev. 26:16–17, 32; Deut. 28:31, 33, 43–44, 48, 68; 32:21)	17.	Loss of possessions & impoverishment (Deut. 28:31)
6.	Agricultural disaster & non-productivity: a. <i>general</i> (Lev. 26:20; Deut. 28:17–18, 22, 40; 29:23); b. <i>drought</i> (Lev. 26:19; Deut. 28:22–24); c. <i>crop pests</i> (Deut. 28:38–42)	18.	Loss of family (Deut. 28:30, 32, 41; 32:25)
		19.	Helplessness & stumbling (Lev. 26:36–37; Deut. 28:29, 32; 32:35–36; 38–39)
		20.	Psychological afflictions (Deut. 28:20, 28, 34, 65–67)
7.	Starvation / famine (Lev. 26:26, 29, 45; Deut. 28:53–56; 32:24)	21.	Lack of peace & rest (Deut. 28:65)
8.	Illness, pestilence, & contamination (Lev. 26:16; Deut. 28:21–22, 27–28, 35, 59–61; 29:22; 32:24, 39)	22.	Denial of burial (Deut. 28:26)
9.	Desolation: a. <i>of holy places</i> (Lev. 26:31); b. <i>of cities & towns</i> (Lev. 26:31, 33); c. <i>of the land</i> (Lev. 26:32–35, 43; Deut. 28:51; 29:23)	23.	Becoming like the cities of the plain (Deut. 29:23)
		24.	Death & destruction (Lev. 26:36, 39; Deut. 4:26; 28:20–22, 44, 48, 51, 61; 29:20; 30:15, 18–19; 31:17; 32:25–26, 35, 39, 42)
10.	Destruction by fire (Deut. 28:24; 32:22)	25.	General & unspecified (Deut. 4:30; 28:20, 24, 45, 59, 61, 63; 29:19, 21–22; 31:17, 21, 29; 32:23, 35)
11.	Harm from wild animals (Lev. 26:22; Deut. 32:24)		
12.	Decimation & infertility: a. <i>of family</i> (Lev. 26:22; Deut. 28:18, 59); b. <i>of cattle</i> (Lev. 26:22; Deut. 28:18, 51); c. <i>of population generally</i> (Lev. 26:22, 36; Deut. 4:27; 28:62; 32:36)	26.	General punishment, curse, & vengeance (Lev. 26:41, 43; Deut. 28:16, 20–21, 27; 30:19; 32:35, 41, 43)
27.	Multiple punishments (Lev. 26:18, 21, 24, 28)		
Restoration Blessings			
1.	Renewal of Yahweh's presence, favor, & loyalty (Lev. 26:42, 45; Deut. 4:29, 31; 30:3, 9)	6.	Restoration of general prosperity, well-being, & wealth (Deut. 30:3, 5, 9; 32:39)
2.	Renewal of the covenant (Lev. 26:42, 44–45; Deut. 4:31)	7.	Return from exile & repossession of the land (Deut. 30:3–5)
3.	Restoration of true worship & ability to be faithful (Deut. 4:30; 30:6, 8)		
4.	Population increase (Deut. 30:5, 9)	8.	Reunification (Deut. 30:3–4)
5.	Agricultural bounty (Lev. 26:42; Deut. 30:9)	9.	Power over enemies & aliens (Deut. 30:7)
		10.	Freedom & restoration from death & destruction (Lev. 26:44; Deut. 30:6; 32:39)
Prepared by Jason S. DeRouchie; most of the categorization is taken from Douglas Stuart, "Malachi," in <i>The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical & Expository Commentary</i> , ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1259–1260; cf. idem, <i>Hosea–Jonah</i> , WBC 31 (Dallas: Word, 1987), xxxi–xlii. All references were pulled from Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 4, and 28–32. No single prophetic book, except perhaps Isaiah, mentions all categories.			

- ii. Example of analyzing prophetic judgment oracles against the 27 curse types:
 - (1) Amos 4:1–3. Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, “Bring, that we may drink!”²The Lord Yahweh has sworn by his holiness that, behold, the days are coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks.³And you shall go out through the breaches, each one straight ahead; and you shall be cast out into Harmon, declares Yahweh.
 - (2) Curses evident: 13. Exile and captivity (Lev. 26:33: “And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.”)
- b. Oracles of Restoration/Salvation
 - i. Outworking of restoration blessings: predicted a day when God would renew his relationship with his people (e.g., Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:16–32; Isa. 10:5–12:6; Amos 9:13–15; Zech. 8:2–8).
 - ii. Example of analyzing prophetic salvation oracles against the 10 restoration blessing types:
 - (1) Zech. 8:2–3, 7–8. Thus says Yahweh of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath.³Thus says Yahweh: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of Yahweh of hosts, the holy mountain....⁷Thus says Yahweh of hosts: Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country,⁸and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.
 - (2) Restoration blessings evident: 1. Renewal of Yahweh’s presence, favor, and loyalty; 2. Renewal of the covenant; 7. Return from exile and repossession of the land.

III. Yahweh Prophecy in Its Ancient Context

A. Oracles of the Ancient World (Adapted from DeRouchie’s brief essay by this title in the *Archaeology Study Bible*, 1507.)

An “oracle” is any divine pronouncement through a prophet that directs human action in the present or foretells future events. Usually translating the Hebrew *maśśā’* (e.g., 2 Kgs. 9:25; Isa. 13:1; Hab. 1:1; Mal. 1:1), the English word “oracle” occurs thirty-five times in the NASB OT and always refers to a prophetic exposition of divine communication. The three NT instances of “oracle” (Greek *logion*) all have Israel’s God as their source and refer in part or in whole to the body of revelation begun in the OT and finalized in Christ (cf. Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12 with 1:1–2). Significantly, Scripture (e.g., Num. 22–24; 1 Kgs. 18:20–40) and numerous extra-biblical texts uncovered in ancient Syria-Palestine, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and (to a lesser

extent) Egypt witness that the reception and proclamation of words from god(s) were common throughout the ancient world and not restricted to biblical prophecy.

The Bible presents the classical prophets as ambassadors of the heavenly court (2 Kgs. 17:13; Jer. 23:21–22), who authoritatively presented the revelation of God to his people (Isa. 44:26; 2 Chr. 36:15, 16; Hag. 1:13; Mal. 3:1). At times the divine word came to the prophet through a dream or vision (e.g., Num. 12:6–7; Isa. 6:1–13; Jer. 31:26; Zech. 2:1; Amos 8:1–3), but normally the mode of inspiration is unspecified. Mention is occasionally made of the divine Spirit’s involvement in inspiration (e.g., 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 1 Kgs. 22:24; Mic. 3:8; Joel 2:28–29; Ezek. 11:5; Zech. 7:12; Neh. 9:30), and frequently oracles are preceded with the formulaic expression: “The word of the LORD came to me saying . . .” (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:4; 1 Kgs. 21:28; Jer. 1:2; Ezek. 36:16; Hag. 1:3; Zech. 4:8). The divine revelations were usually spoken and at times were framed as parables or allegories (e.g., 2 Sam. 12:1–7; Isa. 5:1–7; Ezek. 16, 23). Other oracles were dramatically performed, as the prophet embodied through symbolism what God was revealing in history (e.g., 1 Sam. 15:27–28; 1 Kgs. 11:29–37; 2 Kgs. 13:14–20; Jer. 13:1–11; Ezek. 4).

With reference to content, some oracles provided a divine answer to human questions (e.g., Gen. 15:2–5; 2 Sam. 2:1; Hab. 1–2), but most were divinely initiated responses to Israel’s (lack of) covenant fidelity at a particular time in history. That is, as covenant enforcers, the prophets called Israel back to their commitment to Yahweh and reminded them of the covenant curses and blessings, the promises of death and life, that Yahweh had sworn to honor (Lev. 26; Deut. 4:25–31; 28; 30:1–10). The prophets pronounced oracles of warning and/or imminent punishment against individuals (e.g., 1 Sam. 13:13–14; 1 Kgs. 11:11–13) and nations (e.g., Amos 4:1–3; Mic. 3:7–12; Isa. 17; Jer. 8:4–12; Ezek. 15) who failed to live loyally in the covenant or to treat God and his people with respect. They also declared salvation and restoration oracles that predicted a day when God would renew his relationship with his people (e.g., Amos 9:13–15; Isa. 10:5–12:6; Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:16–32; Zech. 8:1–8).

Israel’s prophetic voice often sounded similar to the messages of the pagan deities. Like Yahweh, these gods demanded homage and declared judgments. They warned of danger and offered assurance in the face of peril. They foretold national destruction and promised kingdom renewal. But Yahwistic prophecy was nevertheless distinct in at least three ways. First, only Yahweh among the gods of the ancient world spoke in order to establish, maintain, and enforce a covenant relationship with a people (Deut. 4:5–9). Second, whereas many pagan oracles were ambiguous as to their intent and fulfillment, Yahwistic oracles were intentionally clear and accurate (Isa. 18:14–22). Third, only from Israel’s prophets did a staunch monotheism confront polytheistic idolatry (Isa. 5:7–10; 6:4–5; Isa. 40:18–31; Ps. 115). Yahweh was a jealous God who demanded total allegiance. His voice would be heard, and his word must be heeded.

B. Introduction:

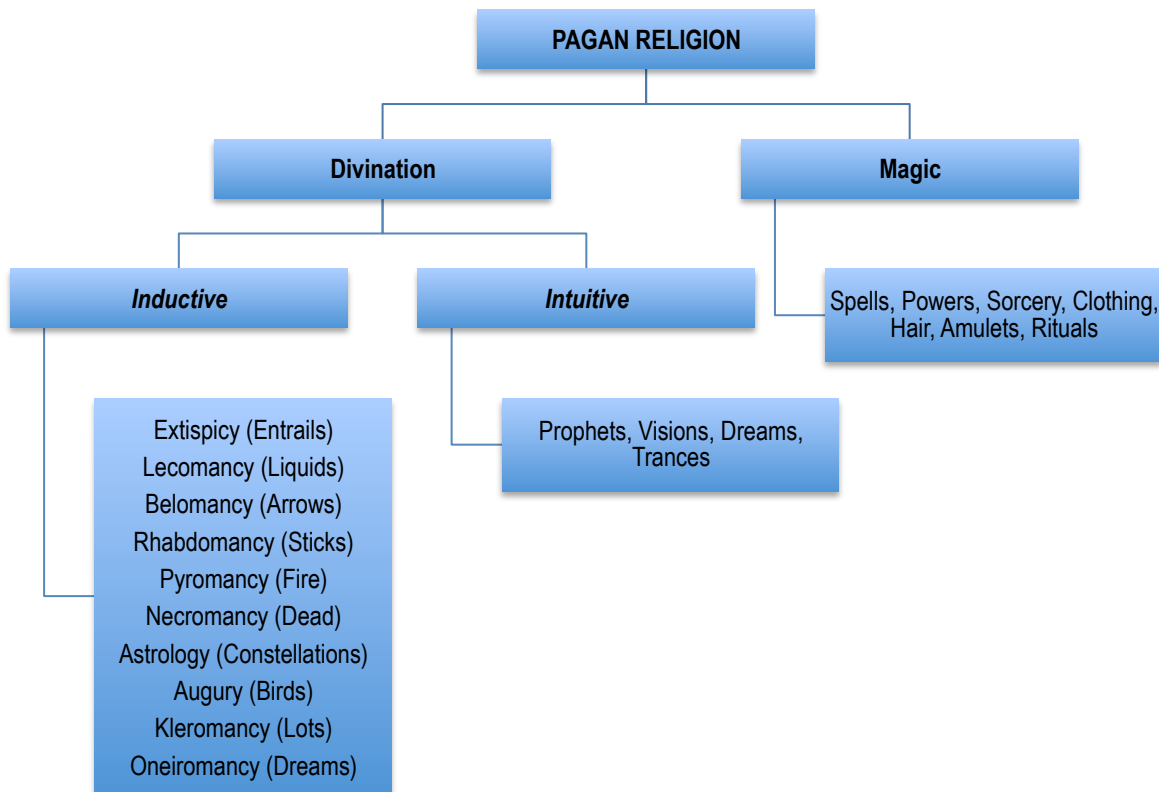
1. *Prophecy*: A divine pronouncement (verbal or otherwise) through a prophet that directs human action in the present (forthtelling) or foretells future events.
2. *Revelation*: God’s disclosure of himself and his will in a way we can understand.
3. 2 Types of religion, based on how one views revelation: Pagan and Yahwistic

Fig. 13.8. Pagan vs. Yahwistic Religion

<i>Pagan</i>	<i>Yahwistic</i>
Closed to revelation; use of divination and magic	Grounded in revelation—divine guidance, protection, and wisdom
Usually man-initiated	Always God-initiated
Manipulative and man-centered	Submissive and God-centered
Polytheistic; no personal relationship	Monotheistic; all about personal relationship
Open to whatever will bring harmony in and perpetuation of human society; majority rules	Countercultural

C. Magic and Divination

Fig. 13.9. Divination and Magic in Pagan Religion

Adapted from Willem A. VanGemeren, *The Prophetic Word*, 22

1. *Magic*: The practice of discerning the future or will of the gods through *supernatural powers*; the practice of the occult (spells, sorcery, amulets, rituals, etc.)
2. *Divination*: The practice of discerning the future or will of the gods through *supernatural phenomena*:
 - a. *Inductive*: When divination is performed through an object or “omen,” whether a natural event, an unusual phenomena, or a ritual involving water, oil, fire arrows, or lots (see the Assyrian omen texts).

- b. *Intuitive*: When divination is performed through the medium of a person, whether through visions, dreams, a direct voice, etc. (see the Shulgi prophecy).

D. Some ancient extra-biblical oracles

1. Stele of Zakkur (from Syria-Palestine: Aram)
 - a. Background: This 8th century B.C. Aramaic inscription commemorates the victories of King Zakkur over Ben-Hadad, son of Hazael, King of Syria. The text sheds light on the historical situation in Syria-Palestine during the late ninth and early eighth centuries and illustrates how first-person royal inscriptions could have been transposed into third-person narratives like those in the Bible. In it, we also find seers and diviners giving King Zakkur affirming information as he ponders what to do in light of the onslaught of a vast enemy.

KAI202 A:1–C:2 INSNWS-E. ^{A:1}The stele that Zakkur, king of Hamath and Lu‘ash, set up for Ilwer, [his lord]. ^{A:2}I am Zakkur, king of Hamath and Lu‘ash. I was a pious/humble/poor man, and Baalshamayn [delivered] ^{A:3}me, and stood with me; and Baalshamayn made me king in ^{A:4}Hadrach. The Barhadad son of Hazael, king of Aram, organized against me an alliance of ^{A:5} [---]teen kings: Barhadad and his army, Bargush and his army, the ^{A:6} [king] of Kue and his army, the king of Umq and his army, the king of Gurgum ^{A:7} and his army, the king of Sam‘al and his army, the king of Melitene and his army, [the king ^{A:8} of [and his army, the king of --- and his army], and seven [others] ^{A:9} together with their armies. All these kings laid siege to Hadrach; ^{A:10} they put up a rampart higher than the wall of Hadrach, and dug a trench deeper than its moat. ^{A:11} But I lifted up my hands to Baalshamayn, and Baalshamayn answered me, and Baalshamayn [spoke] ^{A:12} to me through seers and messengers; and Baalshamayn [said ^{A:13} to me], **Fear not, because it was I who made you king, [and I ^{A:14} shall stand] with you, and I shall deliver you from all [these kings who] ^{A:15} have forced a siege upon you.** Then [Baalshamayn] said to me, [Destroyed shall be] ^{A:16} all these kings who forced [a siege upon you---] ^{A:17} [---] and this rampart th[at they erect ...]. ^{B:1} [---] Hadrach [---] ^{B:2} [---] for rider and horse ^{B:3} [---] its king in its midst. I ^{B:4} [then rebuilt] Hadrach, and I added ^{B:5} [to it] a whole circle of ^{B:6} [strongholds]; and I established it [once more] as my kingdom, ^{B:7} and established it as [my land. I built ^{B:8} all] these strongholds throughout my whole territory, ^{B:9} and I built temples for gods throughout my whole ^{B:10} [land]. Then I rebuilt [--- and ^{B:11} I rebuilt] Afis; and [...] ^{B:12} [...] in the temple of [Ilwer ^{B:13} [...]; and I have set up ^{B:14} this stele before [Ilwer], and [written] ^{B:15} thereon the story of my achievements. ^{B:16} Now, whoever effaces that of [...] ^{B:17} [the hands?] of Zakkur, king of Hamath and ^{B:18} Lu‘ash, from this stele, and whoever ^{B:19} removes this stele from ^{B:20} Ilwer’s [presence], and drags it away [from] ^{B:21} [its place], or whoever sends [...] ^{B:22} [...] ^{B:23} let Baalshamayn and Ilwer ^{B:24} and [...] and Shemesh and Sahar ^{B:25} and [...] and the gods of heaven ^{B:26} [and the gods] of earth and the Baal of ^{B:27} [...] the man (?) and ^{B:28} [...]. ^{C:1} [...] ^{C:2} the name of Zakkur and the name [of his house ...].

- b. Overview:
 - i. The deity involved in giving the oracle: the god Baalshamayn
 - ii. The form the oracle took: Prophecy through seers and messengers
 - iii. The recipient of the oracle: Zakkur, king of Hamath and Lu‘ash
 - iv. The nature of the oracle: Zakkur is not to fear the 17 kings besieging him because Baalshamayn, who made him king, would deliver him from the enemy.
- c. Comparison with Scripture:
 - i. For historical parallels, see 2 Kgs. 8:7–15, 28–29, 10:32–33, 13:22–24; 2 Chr. 22:5–6; Amos 1:3–4.
 - ii. Yahweh prophecy was the opposite of “yes-man” prophecy.
 - 1 Kings 22:5–8. And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “Inquire first for the word of Yahweh.” ⁶Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about

four hundred men, and said to them, “Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?” And they said, “Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.”⁷ But Jehoshaphat said, “Is there not here another prophet of Yahweh of whom we may inquire?”⁸ And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of Yahweh, Micaiah the son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil.” And Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say so.”

- Jer. 26:11–12. Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, “This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.”¹² Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, “Yahweh sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard.”

2. Journey of Wen-Amon (from Syria-Palestine: Phoenicia)

- a. **Background:** In the third decade of the reign of Ramses XI (1090–1080 B.C.), King of Egypt, the empire had been decimated, making even a quest to get Lebanese timber a perilous adventure. A certain Wen-Amon is sent as an ambassador of the Egyptian god Amun-Re from southern Egypt to Phoenicia to purchase logs. He travels by sea from northern Egypt to Tyre and then on to Byblos. The prince of Byblos did not welcome Wen-Amon but rather commanded that he leave. Into this context, the “prophecy” occurs. The excerpt only includes the immediate context of the oracle.

COS 90–91. ^{1,33}They departed and I celebrated [in] a tent on the shore of the sea in the harbor of Byblos. And [I made a hiding place for] Amun-of-the-Road and placed his possessions in it. Then the prince of Byblos sent to me saying: “[Leave my] ³⁵harbor!” I sent to him, saying: “Where shall [I go]? ----. If [you have a ship to carry me], let me be taken back to Egypt.” I spent twenty-nine days in his harbor, and he spent time sending to me daily to say: “Leave my harbor!”

Now while he was offering to his gods, the god took hold of a young man [of] his young men and put him in a trance. He said to him: “**Bring [the] god up! Bring the envoy who is carrying him!** ⁴⁰**It is Amun who sent him. It is he who made him come!**” Now it was while the entranced one was entranced that night that I had found a ship headed for Egypt. I had loaded all my belongings into it and was watching for the darkness, saying: “When it descends I will load the god so that no other eye shall see him.”

Then the harbor master came to me, saying: “Wait until morning, says the prince!” I said to him: “Was it not you who daily took time to come to me, saying: ‘Leave my harbor’? Do you now say: ‘Wait this night,’ ⁴⁵in order to let the ship that I found depart, and then you will come to say: ‘Go away’?” He went and told it to the prince. Then the prince sent to the captain of the ship, saying: “Wait until morning, says the prince.”

When morning came, he sent and brought me up, while the god rested in the tent where he was on the shore of the sea. I found him seated in his upper chamber with his back against a window, and the waves of the great sea of Syria broke behind ⁵⁰his head. I said to him: “Blessings of Amun!”

- b. **Overview:**
 - i. **The nature of youth’s activity:** The prince was offering to his gods when one of his servants was placed into a trance by the god and used as a mouth-piece.
 - ii. **The nature of the oracle:** The servant announced that Wen-Amon had indeed been sent by Amun-Re and that his presence in the town is justified.
- c. **Comparison with Scripture:** How does this text shed light on 1 Samuel 19:23–24?

	Wen-Amon Oracle	Saul's experience
Divine Initiative	"The god" seizes the prince's servant in order to speak a word through him.	The Spirit of God comes on Saul and causes him to prophecy
Physical Response	The young man is placed in a "trance," apparently distanced in some way from the "real world."	Saul's physical being is caught up in the experience (though not in a "trance" per se): he lays down naked, prophesying before Samuel all day and night. R. P. Gordon notes that, while Israelite prophets are often physically oppressed by the visions they see (e.g., Isa. 21:3; Jer. 23:9; Hab. 3:16), nowhere is the experience described as "ecstasy" or a "trance" ("Where Have All the Prophets Gone?" <i>BBR</i> 5 [1995]: 67–86, esp. 82 for this discussion). The apostle Peter, however, is caught up in a "trance" during the vision of the sheet and animals (Acts 10:10–15).
Audience Response	The prince clearly understands a verbal message given through the young man; the audience is called upon to receive and interpret the divine communication.	There is no hint that Saul and his servants' "prophecies" were verbally understandable; the audience is called upon to receive and interpret the divine communication; the audience raises the question, "Is Saul among the prophets?"

3. Marduk Prophecy (from Mesopotamia)

a. Background:

- i. Probably designed to glorify Nebuchadnezzar I of Babylon, this text begins with the god Marduk relaying his history of travels to and from Babylon. He tells of his twenty-four year stay in Hatti, where he went "to test" them. A Babylonian king then returned him to his homeland in a victory procession of war. Marduk then speaks of a time in Assyria where he blessed the peoples, allowing them to flourish. But curse rather than blessing was called upon Elam, where Marduk went next. The prophecy you are about to read is proclaimed as if from Elam. And having "fulfilled" his days in this place, declares that the time has come to return to Babylon.
- ii. Additional note: Marduk's "travels" parallel what we know about the "travels" of the image of Marduk from ancient times. In 1594 B.C. a Hittite king captured the image and took it back to Anatolia. After the image's return to Babylon, it was again captured, this time by the Assyrian Tukulti-Ninurta I. Elam attacked Babylon in the time Kudurnahhunte, which resulted in the transport of the statue of Marduk to Elam. Nebuchadnezzar I fulfills the role of the "prince," and under his rule Babylon became the greatest world power.

COS 1.480–81. ^{1.10}O Harharnum, Hayyasum, Anum, Enlil, Nudim[mud], Ea, Muati, Nabium! Let the great gods learn my secrets. After I gird my loins, I will give my speech.

^{1.7}I am Marduk the Great Lord. I am always watching, walking watchfully over the mountains, I watch, a watchman roaming the lands. I am he, who in all the lands—from sunrise to sunset—am constantly roaming.

^{1.13}I gave the command that I go to Hatti. I inquired into Hatti. I set up the throne of my Anu-power in its midst. I dwelt in its midst for 24 years. I established [the tr]ade of the citizens of Babylon [in] its midst. I oversaw its [...], its goods, and its valuables [in] Sippur, Nippur, [and Baby]lon.

^{1.23}[A king of Babylon] arose and led me [to] Babylon. [...] the crown of my Anu-power [...] and the statue [...] water, winds [...]. Three days [...] the crown of my Anu-power [...] and statue [...] to my body [did I ...] I went home. [With reference to Babylon, I said:] “Bring [your tribute, O you] la[nds, to Babylon ...].”

[gap]

^{1.1}[...] Assur was good [...] Ekur, Assur [...] [Make its temples shine] like a *zalāqu*-stone. Abounding [...] I gave [it. Monthly, daily, and ye]arly [I blessed it]. I gave [it] wings like a bird. I filled all [the lands]. I filled [...]. I blessed Assur. I gave it fates [...]. I gave it strong approval [...]. I went home. With reference to Babylon I said: “Bring your tribute, O you lands, to Babylon [...].”

^{1.18}I am Marduk, the great prince. I am Lord of fate and oracle. Who has undertaken this campaign? As I have gone away, I will come back—I have commanded it. I went to Elam—all the gods went—I commanded it. I myself cut off the *nindabû*-offering of the temples. Shakkan and Nisaba I caused to go away to heaven. ^{2.1}Sirish made the midst of the land sick. The corpses of the people block the gates. Brother consumes brother. Friend strikes his friend with a weapon. Aristocrats stretch out their hands (to beg) from the commoner. The scepter grows short. Evil lies across the land. [...] kings diminish the land. Lions block off the way. Dogs go mad and bite people. As many as they bite do not live; they die. I fulfilled my days; I fulfilled my years. Then I carried myself back to my city Babylon and of the Ekursagil. I called all the goddesses together. I commanded: “Bring your tribute, O you lands, to Babylon [...].”

^{2.19}**A king of Babylon will arise, and he will renew the house of announcement, the Ekur-sagil. He will draw the plans of heaven and earth in the Ekur-sagil. He will change its height. He will establish tax exemptions for my city Babylon. He will lead me and bring me into my city Babylon and the Ekur-sagil forever. He will renew the ship Matush. He will inlay its rudder with *šāriru*-metal. He will [cover] its walls with *pašallu*-metal. He will let sailors who serve on it embark on it. They will face each other on the right and left. A king who like (?) the star (?) of the Ekur-sagil [...].**

[gap, then some fragmentary lines]

^{3.1}[gap, some fragmentary signs] **Ningirsu will rule. The rivers will carry fish. The fields and plains will be full of yield. The grass of winter (will last) to summer. The grass of summer will last to winter. The harvest of the land will thrive. The marketplace will prosper. He will set evil aright. He will clear up the disturbed. He will illumine evil. The clouds will be continually present. Brother will love his brother. A son will fear his father as if he were a god. Mother [...] daughter. The bride will marry. She will fear her husband. He will be compassionate toward the people. The man will regularly pay his taxes. That prince will [rule all] the lands.**

^{3.21}And I, the god of all, will befriend him. He will destroy Elam. He will destroy its cities. The city and its swamps he will turn away. He causes the great king of Der to arise in his doorway. He will change its deathly silence. He evil [...]. His hand he will seize. He will ever cause him to enter Der and the Ugal-kalama.

[break]

- b. The nature of the oracle: Marduk prophesies that a king of Babylon would arise who would return him to Babylon, restore the cult, sanctuaries, bring back the exiles, bring peace and productivity to the kingdom, and destroy Elam. Reigning long and experiencing “the benevolence of the god,” this king and his realm will know wonderful plenty, the righting of wrongs, unity among the peoples, and a general consideration for all mankind. Furthermore, he will be reconciled with Marduk and the other gods.
- c. Comparison with Scripture: How does this text (esp. 2.19 ff.) relate to Ezek. 34:20–31 and 37:15–28?
 - i. It was the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar I that exiled Judah (and Ezekiel to Babylon—605, 597, 586) and destroyed Jerusalem. In all likelihood, the crafting of the Marduk prophecy aligns closely with Ezekiel’s prophecy about a coming prince and the restoration of Israel to their land.
 - ii. Similarities: Both texts speak of great productivity in an age of restoration, a king who would rule justly and know the favor of god(s).

- iii. Differences: In the Marduk prophecy the king's actions are stressed, whereas the biblical account gives all glory to Yahweh, the prime mover.
4. Mesopotamian Omen Text:
 - a. Omens are the most common type of written Akkadian literature extant today.
 - b. Background and nature of omens:
 - i. Objectives: Mesopotamian diviners were to read the "signs" in order to explain something as it truly is or to foretell how things would be in the near future, whether for king, kingdom, city, or individual. Most omens were oriented toward curse rather than blessing.
 - ii. Methods: Diviners often looked for oddities or anomalies in the everyday world—things that could stand-out as "signs" or "pointers" to a coming reality (e.g., an animal's birthing a different kind of animal or malformed creature [tablets 5 and 12]). They also looked at normal events (at least from our western perspective) and saw them as omens for ill or good [tablet 23].

Earl Lechty, ed., *The Omen Series Summa Izbu* (Locus Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1970).

^{5.1}If a ewe gives birth to a lion—the weapons (which were) abandoned will be raised; the kill will have no opponent.... ^{5.9}If a ewe gives birth to a lion, and it has two necks—the land will have a different ruler, and will follow the strong(er) one.... ^{5.16}If a ewe gives birth to a lion, and it has (two) horns and a third one on the right—the prince will conquer land which does not belong to him. ^{5.17}If a ewe gives birth to a lion, and it has (two) horns and a third one on the left—attack of an enemy against prince. ^{5.18}If a ewe gives birth to a lion, and it has horns, and its right horn is forked—the prince will have no opponent.... ^{5.30}If a ewe gives birth to a lion, and it has no right ear—bad weather will destroy the cattle. ^{5.31}If a ewe gives birth to a lion, and it has no left ear—bad weather will destroy the cattle of the enemy....

^{12.8}If an anomaly's nose is longer than its chin—the prince will enjoy the produce of his land. ^{12.9}If an anomaly has the nose of a wild cow—there will be a serious famine in the land; [...] the people will decrease. ^{12.10}If an anomaly has the nose of a wild cow, and one eye on its forehead—[...]. ^{12.11}If an anomaly has the beak of a raven—pestilence; that ox-fold will decrease; end of the reign; the people will decrease. ^{12.12}If an anomaly has the beak of an eagle—your own flesh (and blood) will attack you....

^{23.15}If a dog runs around in circles in front of him—there will be a great battle; in that month [...]. ^{23.16}If a dog stands in front of him—quarrels will follow one after another. ^{23.17}If a dog jumps up in front of him—there will be destruction of that city. ^{23.18}If a dog joins together with him—the protection of his god will be over him.... ^{23.23}If a white dog urinates on a man—hard times will seize that man. ^{23.24}If a black dog urinates on a man—sickness will seize him. ^{23.25}If a red dog urinates on a man—that man will be happy. ^{23.26}If a dog urinates on a the bed of a man—severe illness will seize that man. ^{23.27}If a dog urinates on the chair of a man—he will have no sons.... ^{23.32}If one dog kisses another dog—worries will follow that city one after the other. ^{23.33}If a dog mounts another dog—the women will be promiscuous....

E. Ways Yahweh made known his will

- Num. 12:6. Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I Yahweh make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream.
- 1 Sam. 28:6. And when Saul inquired of Yahweh, Yahweh did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets.
- Jer. 31:26. At this I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me. [Jeremiah's oracles came in dreams and visions while he was sleeping.]

F. The view of Yahweh prophecy among the nations

- Deut. 4:5–8. See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as Yahweh my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ⁶Keep them and do

them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.”⁷ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as Yahweh our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?⁸ And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

G. Yahweh’s view of and response to divination and magic:

1. Scripture is clear that Israel’s neighbors (and even Israel!) often practiced divination and magic.
 - Gen. 44:5, 15. Is it not from this that my lord drinks, and by this that he practices divination? You have done evil in doing this.” ...¹⁵ Joseph said to them, “What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that a man like me can indeed practice divination?”
 - Exod. 7:10–11. So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as Yahweh commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.¹¹ Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts.
 - Exod. 7:21–22. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.²² But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh’s heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as Yahweh had said.
 - Exod. 8:6–7. So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt.⁷ But the magicians did the same by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.
 - Exod. 8:18–19. The magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast.¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as Yahweh had said.
 - Exod. 9:10–11. So they took soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh. And Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast.¹¹ And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils came upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians.
 - 1 Sam. 6:2. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, “What shall we do with the ark of Yahweh? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place.”
 - 1 Sam. 28:8. So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night. And he said, “Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you.”
 - Jer. 23:25–27. I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’²⁶ How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart,²⁷ who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal?
 - Ezek. 21:21–22[26–27]. For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination. He shakes the arrows; he consults the teraphim; he looks at the liver.²² Into his right hand comes the divination for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to open the mouth with murder, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up mounds, to build siege towers.
 - Isa. 47:13. You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you.
 - Hos. 4:12. My people inquire of a piece of wood, and their walking staff gives them oracles. For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray, and they have left their God to play the whore.
 - Zech. 10:2. For the household gods utter nonsense, and the diviners see lies; they tell false dreams and give empty consolation. Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd.

2. Scripture is also clear that God abhorred such practices and promised to punish all who engage in them.
- Lev. 19:26, 31. You shall not eat any flesh with the blood in it. You shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes....³¹ Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am Yahweh your God.
 - Lev. 20:6. If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.
 - Deut. 18:9–14. When you come into the land that Yahweh your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations.¹⁰ There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer¹¹ or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead,¹² for whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh. And because of these abominations Yahweh your God is driving them out before you.¹³ You shall be blameless before Yahweh your God,¹⁴ for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, Yahweh your God has not allowed you to do this.
 - Jer. 10:2–3. Thus says Yahweh: Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them,³ for the customs of the peoples are vanity.
 - Isa. 44:24–26. Thus says Yahweh, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: “I am Yahweh, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself,²⁵ who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish,²⁶ who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be inhabited,’ and of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins.’”
3. History proves he did just this:
- 1 Sam. 15:23. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh, he has also rejected you from being king.
 - 2 Kings 17:17–18. And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of Yahweh, provoking him to anger.¹⁸ Therefore Yahweh was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only.
 - 2 Kings 21:6, 10–12. And he burned his son as an offering and used fortune-telling and omens and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of Yahweh, provoking him to anger....¹⁰ And Yahweh said by his servants the prophets,¹¹ “Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abominations and has done things more evil than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols,¹² therefore thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such disaster that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle.
 - Lam. 2:13–14. What can I say for you, to what compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is vast as the sea; who can heal you?¹⁴ Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading.
 - 1 Chr. 10:13. So Saul died for his breach of faith. He broke faith with Yahweh in that he did not keep the command of Yahweh, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance.
4. Scripture is clear that even pagan prophecy was under Yahweh’s control and was one of his tools for directing history. He used it (1) to test his people, disclosing whether they would remain faithful (Deut. 13:1–3), or (2) to direct hard-hearted leaders in paths of destruction (2 Chr. 18 // 1 Kgs. 22).
- Deut. 13:1–3. If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder,² and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, “Let us go after other gods,” which you have not known, “and let us serve them,”³ you shall not listen to

the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For Yahweh your God is testing you, to know whether you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

- 2 Chr. 18:18–22. And Micaiah said [to Ahab], “Therefore hear the word of Yahweh: I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left. ¹⁹And Yahweh said, ‘Who will entice Ahab the king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said one thing, and another said another. ²⁰Then a spirit came forward and stood before Yahweh, saying, ‘I will entice him.’ And Yahweh said to him, ‘By what means?’ ²¹And he said, ‘I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And he said, ‘You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.’ ²²Now therefore behold, Yahweh has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these your prophets. Yahweh has declared disaster concerning you.”

5. Scriptural distinctions between Yahweh prophecy and false prophecy:

a. Key Texts:

- Deut. 13:1–3. If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, ²and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, “Let us go after other gods,” which you have not known, “and let us serve them,” ³you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For Yahweh your God is testing you, to know whether you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (On the performance of authentic signs and wonders by the unregenerate, see Exod. 7:10–11, 21–22; 8:6–7; Matt. 7:22–23; 24:24–25; Rev. 13:14; 16:14; 19:20.)
- Deut. 18:21–22. And if you say in your heart, “How may we know the word that Yahweh has not spoken?”—²²when a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that Yahweh has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.
- 1 Kgs. 22:28. And Micaiah said, “If you return in peace, Yahweh has not spoken by me.”
- Jer. 28:9. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that Yahweh has truly sent the prophet.
- Ezek. 33:32–33. And behold, you are to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it. ³³When this comes—and come it will!—then they will know that a prophet has been among them.” Cf. Ezek. 2:5.
- Isa. 8:19–20. And when they say to you, “Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,” should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.
- Isa. 44:6–8. Thus says Yahweh, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, Yahweh of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. ⁷Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. ⁸Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.”
- Lam. 2:14. Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading.

b. Synthesis—In contrast to pagan prophecy, Yahweh prophecy ...

- i. Is characterized by truthful charges and predictions (Deut. 18:22; 28:9; 1 Kgs. 22:28; Jer. 28:9; Ezek. 33:33; Isa. 44:7–8; Lam. 2:14).
- ii. Promotes sustained loyalty to Yahweh alone, exposing iniquity and calling for repentance that leads to blessing (Deut. 13:2–3; Lam. 2:14).
- iii. Includes no sign of pagan practices and finds its confirmation in God’s word alone (Isa. 8:19–20).

Fig. 13.10. Comparison between Yahweh Prophecy and Pagan Prophecy

<i>Similarities</i>	<i>Differences</i>
<p>Both Yahweh and pagan deities... Spoke out of the divine council to commission messengers. Demanded homage and declared judgments. Warned of danger and offered assurance in the face of peril. Foretold national destruction and promised kingdom renewal.</p>	<p>Yahweh prophecy... Was initiated by the Creator rather than deriving as a fabrication of the creation. Was an overflow of submission to God rather than an attempt at manipulation of the divine. Alone confronted polytheistic idolatry with a staunch monotheism and passion for Yahweh's renown. Was always accurate rather than ambiguous or misguided. Always aligned with God's Word in the Law. Alone was given to establish, maintain, and enforce covenant relationship with a people.</p>

IV. Interpreting the Prophetic Word (Adapted from a similar handout by Douglas Stuart, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1999.)

A. Guard against Interpretive Fallacies

1. Ancient-Modern Nation Confusion: the attempt to link OT prophecy with particular current political regimes. Not only is the modern, secular state of Israel different from the Israel of the Bible, the linking of unspecified OT prophecies with particular contemporary events and/or peoples is extremely difficult if not impossible.
2. Genre Confusion: assuming that the interpretational rules for one genre apply to another. Because literature varies so much, the interpreter must be guided by a literal and not a literalistic hermeneutic, letting intentional figures of speech, symbolism, and metaphor remain such.
3. Prophecy should not be "spiritualized" (i.e., removed from the historical truth to which it speaks), "personalized" (i.e., treated subjectively as if its meaning might be different for you than for someone else), "allegorized" (i.e., assuming that components of a passage have meaning only as symbols of Christian truths), "universalized" (i.e., treating something unique or uncommon as if it applies to everyone equally), "moralized" (i.e., assuming that principles for living can be derived from every biblical passage), or "exemplarized" (i.e., assuming that because the Bible records an action, it is always an example for us to follow).

B. Pay Attention to History

1. All fifteen Old Testament classical prophets preached during a monumental 340-year period (770–433 B.C.) during which Israel and Judah were reduced from independent nations to a single, pitiful, remnant state (Judah), one tiny district in the huge Persian empire. Why? It was because a long history of disobedience to God's Mosaic covenant required the unleashing of its curses.
2. This was an era of dramatic change, and God's prophets clarified for Israel and the world why history was playing out the way it was and how this history fit within God's overall kingdom-building plan culminating in Christ.
3. Were God's ancient promises of Israel's greatness void? Was there any kingdom hope for the future? Would the era of curse be supplanted by restoration blessing? Prophetic preaching is mainly about historical developments, and no interpretation of its message that ignores historical context can hope to be accurate.

C. Remember the Covenants

1. Prophets were covenant messengers of the long-established terms of God's relationship to his people. They were reminders, not innovators. The Mosaic covenant (Exod. 20–Deut. 33) contained a perspective of blessing-curse-restoration blessing (cf. Lev. 26 and Deut. 4, 28–32), and prophetic revelation will only be understood properly within this scope.
2. The first era of blessing was prosperous life in the Promised Land. Then, as a result of covenant-breaking, the curse-era of conquest and exile came, starting for northern Israel with the Assyrian conquest of Samaria in 723 B.C. and then for Judah with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
3. The second blessing era is the new creational age of the new covenant, underserved but granted by God's grace. In speaking of the restoration blessing, the prophets in part predict the Church Age, our own "last days," initiated by Christ's death and resurrection. They also anticipate a consummated fulfillment in the age to come wherein the blessings are not only greater than those of the first era but eternal for those who know God's redemption.

D. Think in Terms of Analyzing Oracles

1. Nearly all prophetic teaching is in the form of oracles, self-contained verbal revelations from God, spoken or sung publicly in order to explain what God was doing in history and why.
2. We must carefully identify the beginning and end of an oracle and be sure that we understand its characteristic terminology and structure. We must patiently analyze the oracle's historical, literary, and biblical context, grasping its place in history, the book, and the canon. We must also diligently scrutinize its form, structure and flow, and important words.
3. Most prophetic oracles are somewhere in the middle of a continuum between prose and poetry, and all employ multiple figures of speech. Some are visionary, and their symbolism—understood by the prophet and his audience—must be identified accurately and not subjectively for a modern audience unused to such symbolism.
4. All oracles must be faithfully interpreted within the biblical-theological context of the whole of revelation, since understanding redemptive history and canonical placement is essential to conveying accurately what the prophets were inspired to say. People need to know the "big picture" if they are to orient their lives properly. They need to hear us teach the prophets accurately.

E. See and Savor Christ and the Gospel

1. The NT is clear that the OT prophets looked with anticipation for the days of Jesus and that they prophesied the good news of God's kingdom in Christ, including his death and resurrection, and the mission they would spark.
 - Matt 13:11, 16–17. And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. . . .¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷ For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.
 - Luke 24:25–27, 32. And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. . . .³² They said to

each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

- Luke 24:44–46. Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
 - John 5:39. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.
 - Acts 13:26–27, 32, 38–39. . . . To us has been sent the message of this salvation.²⁷ For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers . . . did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets. . . .³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers,³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus. . . .³⁸ Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,³⁹ and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.
 - Acts 26:22–23. To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass:²³ that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.
 - Acts 28:23, 30–31. When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. . . .³⁰ He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.
 - Rom 1:1–6. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.
 - Rom 3:21–22. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction.
 - 1 Pet 1:10–12. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.
2. The NT also stresses that *every* prophet from Samuel onward anticipated Christ.
- Acts 3:18, 24–26. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. . . .²⁴ And *all the prophets* who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, “And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”
 - Acts 10:39–43. They put [Jesus] to death by hanging him on a tree,⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear,⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.⁴² And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to

be judge of the living and the dead.⁴³ To him *all the prophets* bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.