

**2-D****Introduction to the Pentateuch**

The five books of Moses are variously known as the Law, the Torah (Hebrew for Law), the Law of Moses, the “five-fifths of the Law,” and the Pentateuch. The word “Pentateuch” is derived from the Greek words *pente* (five) and *teuxos* (scroll or book). Although there is much external and internal evidence that supports the Mosaic authorship of these five books, many critics in the last two centuries have challenged this. The usual scenario is that Israel’s religion evolved through several stages and various literary strands appeared along the way. These were edited during the divided kingdom and after the Babylonian exile. These theories, however, are built upon assumptions that have since been proven false or remain unproven. Is the Pentateuch Mosaic or is it a mosaic? These books show a clear continuity of content, theme, purpose, and style that point to a single author. They make up a unity, not a late and unreliable patchwork. Each book smoothly picks up where the previous book left off. There is completeness about the Pentateuch not only in its consecutive history but also in its progressive spiritual development.

BOOK	KEY IDEA	THE NATION	THE PEOPLE	GOD’S CHARACTER	GOD’S ROLE	GOD’S COMMAND
Genesis	Beginnings	Chosen	Prepared	Powerful Sovereign	Creator	“Let there be!”
Exodus	Redemption	Delivered	Redeemed	Merciful	Deliverer	“Let My people go!”
Leviticus	Worship	Set Apart	Taught	Holy	Sanctifier	“Be holy!”
Numbers	Wandering	Directed	Tested	Just	Sustainer	“Go in!”
Deuteronomy	Renewed	Covenant	Made Ready Retaught	Loving Lord	Rewarder	“Obey!”

**Genesis** This book provides the foundation for the entire Bible in its history and theology. Its first eleven chapters give a sweeping survey of primeval events: God’s work of creation, the fall of man, the judgment of the Flood, and the spread of the nations. There is a sudden shift in chapter 12 as God singles out one man through whom He would bring salvation and bless all nations. The remainder of Genesis traces the story of Abraham and his descendants Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

**Exodus** Jacob’s descendants have moved from Canaan to Egypt and are suffering under the bondage of a new pharaoh. After a period of four hundred years they cry to God for deliverance. God responds by empowering Moses to stand before Pharaoh and create the ten devastating plagues. After their redemption in the Passover, the Israelites leave Egypt, cross the sea, and journey to Mount Sinai. There God reveals His covenant law and gives them the pattern for the building of the tabernacle.

**Leviticus** Now that the people have been redeemed and delivered, they must be set apart to God to live holy lives. God gives them instructions for the sacrificial system and the priesthood. The remainder of Leviticus teaches the people how to become ceremonially and morally pure. The emphasis is on sanctification, service, and obedience.

**Numbers** Still at Mount Sinai, the people receive additional directions before proceeding to the promised land of Canaan. When they are on the verge of entering the land, their faith crumbles and God disciplines them by making them wander in the wilderness until the unbelieving generation dies out. The new generation then reaches Moab, the doorway to the land of Canaan. It is here that God begins to instruct the people who are about to inherit the land.

**Deuteronomy** Moses is at the end of his life and Joshua has been appointed as his successor. In his farewell messages to the generation that grew up in the wilderness, Moses reminds them of God’s dealings in the past, reviews the need for righteousness and integrity in the present, and reveals what will happen in the near and distant future. Moses then blesses the people and views the Promised Land from Mount Nebo before his death.

**Chronology of the Pentateuch**

Date	Event	Reference
Fifteenth day, first month, first year	Exodus	Exodus 12
Fifteenth day, second month, first year	Arrival in Wilderness of Sin	Exodus 16:1
Third month, first year	Arrival in Wilderness of Sinai	Exodus 19:1
First day, first month, second year	Erection of Tabernacle	Exodus 40:1, 17
	Dedication of Altar	Numbers 7:1
	Consecration of Levites	Numbers 8:1–26
Fourteenth day, first month, second year	Passover	Numbers 9:5
First day, second month, second year	Census	Numbers 1:1, 18
Fourteenth day, second month, second year	Supplemental Passover	Numbers 9:11
Twentieth day, second month, second year	Departure from Sinai	Numbers 10:11
First month, fortieth year	In Wilderness of Zin	Numbers 20:1, 22–29; 33:38
First day, fifth month, fortieth year	Death of Aaron	Numbers 20:22–29; 33:38
First day, eleventh month, fortieth year	Moses’ Address	Deuteronomy 1:3

# Introduction to the Historical Books

The twelve historical books pick up the story of Israel where it left off at the end of Deuteronomy. These books describe the occupation and settlement of Israel in the Promised Land, the transition from judges to the monarchy, the division and decline of the kingdom, the captivities of the northern and southern kingdom, and the return of the Remnant. The historical books break into three divisions: (1) the theocratic books (Joshua, Judges, Ruth), (2) the monarchical books (Samuel, Kings, Chronicles), and (3) the restoration books (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther).

## The Theocratic Books

**These books cover the conquest and settlement of Canaan and life during the time of the judges. During these years (1405–1043 BC), Israel was a nation ruled by God (a theocracy).**

**Joshua** The first half of Joshua describes the seven-year conquest of the Land of Promise through faith and obedience on the part of Joshua and the people. After their spiritual and physical preparation, the Israelites took the land in three campaigns: central, southern, and northern. The last half of the book details the partitioning of the land among the twelve tribes and closes with Joshua's challenge to the people.

**Judges** The disobedience in Judges stands in contrast to the faithful obedience found in Joshua. The Israelites did not drive out all the Canaanites and began to take part in their idolatry. Judges records seven cycles of foreign oppression, repentance, and deliverance. The people failed to learn from these cycles, and the book ends with two illustrations of idolatry and immorality.

**Ruth** This little book sheds a ray of light in an otherwise dark period. The story of Ruth occurred in the days of the judges, but it is a powerful illustration of righteousness, love, and faithfulness to the Lord.

## The Monarchical Books

**These 6 books trace the history of Israel's monarchy from its inception in 1043 BC to its destruction in 586 BC**

**First Samuel** The prophet Samuel carried Israel across the transition from the judges to the monarchy. The people clamored for a king and God told Samuel to anoint Saul. Saul began well but soon degenerated into an ungodly tyrant. David became God's king-elect but he was pursued by the jealous Saul whose murderous intentions were checked only by death.

**Second Samuel** Upon the demise of Saul, David reigned for seven years over Judah and another thirty-three years over the twelve reunited tribes. His reign was characterized by great blessing until he committed adultery and murder. From that point until his death he was plagued by personal, family, and national struggles.

**First Kings** Solomon brought the kingdom to its political and economic zenith, but this wisest of men played the fool in his multiple marriages with foreign women. After his death in 931 B.C., the kingdom was tragically divided when the ten northern tribes of Israel set up their own king. Only the southern kingdom of Judah (two tribes) remained subject to the Davidic dynasty.

**Second Kings** The story of the divided kingdom continues in Second Kings as it carries Israel and Judah to their bitter ends. None of the nineteen kings of Israel did what was right in the sight of God, and their corruption led to captivity at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Judah lasted longer because eight of its twenty rulers followed the Lord. But Judah also fell in judgment and was carried away by the Babylonians between 605 B.C. and 586 B.C.

**First Chronicles** The Books of Chronicles give a divine perspective on the history of Israel from the time of David to the two captivities. The first book begins with a nine-chapter genealogy from Adam to the family of Saul, followed by a spiritually oriented account of the life of David.

**Second Chronicles** This book continues the narrative with the life of Solomon, and focuses on the construction and dedication of the temple. It then traces the history of the kings of Judah only, giving the spiritual and moral reasons for its ultimate downfall.

## The Restoration Books

**The last three historical books describe the return of a remnant of the Jews to their homeland after 70 years (605–536 BC) of captivity. They were led in the period from 536–420 BC by Zerubbabel, Ezra & Nehemiah.**

**Ezra** Babylon was conquered by Persia in 539 B.C. and Cyrus issued a decree in 536 B.C. that allowed the Jews to return to Palestine. Zerubbabel led about fifty thousand to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, and years later (458 B.C.), Ezra the priest returned with almost two thousand Jews.

**Nehemiah** The temple was built, but the wall of Jerusalem still lay in ruins. Nehemiah obtained permission, supplies, and money from the king of Persia to rebuild the walls (444 B.C.). After the walls were built, Ezra and Nehemiah led the people in revival and reforms.

**Esther** The story of Esther took place between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra. Most of the Jews chose to remain in Persia, but their lives were in danger because of a plot to exterminate them. God sovereignly intervened and used Esther and Mordecai to deliver the people.

# Introduction to the Major Prophets

**Characteristics** These men were called prophets, seers, watchmen, men of God, messengers, and servants of the Lord. The most frequently used title is **נָבִיא** ‘*navi*’, “prophet” (over three hundred times), referring to one who has been called or appointed to proclaim the message of God Himself. The word **רֹאֵה** ‘*roeh*’, “seer” speaks of one who perceives things that are not in the realm of natural sight or hearing. The English word “prophet” is derived from two Greek words that literally mean “speak for.” This emphasizes the role of these people as divinely chosen spokesmen who received and related God’s messages, whether in oral, visual, or written form. God communicated to them through a variety of means including dreams, visions, angels, nature, miracles, and an audible voice.

Samuel was, in a sense, the first of the real prophets (see Acts 3:24; 13:20; Heb. 11:32). He was the first to create a colony of prophets, and he presided over them at Ramah (1 Sam. 19:20). True prophets were divinely called and endowed with special abilities. Because of their moral and spiritual message which was grounded in the Law, their lives had to be consistent with their words. Deuteronomy 18:18–20 prescribed that a true prophet would speak in Yahweh’s name and that his prophecies must be completely accurate.

**Message** Although the prophets had a ministry of *foretelling* future events, their primary role was that of *forthtelling*. This demanded spiritual insight as well as foresight, because they proclaimed the consequences of specific attitudes and practices of their day. They dipped into the past for lessons and exhortations concerning the present. And they spoke of the need of present reforms to avert future judgment. The prophetic message had four major themes: (1) The prophets exposed the sinful practices of the people. It required considerable courage to tell the people what they needed to hear instead of succumbing to the temptation of telling them what they wanted to hear. God’s messengers could not compromise their harsh treatment of sin as sin, knowing that the only hope for the people was a humble turning to the Lord and acknowledgment of their guilt. Like watchmen who alerted the people of coming danger, their messages were very practical. (2) The prophets called the people back to the moral, civil, and ceremonial law of God. They reminded the people about the character of God and urged them to trust Him with all their hearts. God has a rich purpose for them, but they must believe and obey Him. (3) They warned the people of coming judgment. God must condemn the nation if its princes, priests, and people continue to arrogantly reject God’s moral and spiritual principles. They are responsible for their disobedience to their covenant commitment with God. Yahweh is the sovereign Lord of history, and the gentile nations will also be judged if they rebel against His dominion. (4) The prophets anticipated the coming Messiah. History is linear, not cyclical. It has a definite goal, and God will sovereignly move all things to a consummation in the messianic age. His name will be honored and His voice obeyed by all people of the earth. Biblical prophecy is unique because of its clarity and specific fulfillment. Over three hundred Old Testament prophecies were precisely fulfilled by Messiah in His first advent, and over four hundred more remain to be fulfilled when He comes again. “To Him all the prophets bear witness” (Acts 10:43). In short, the prophetic message is twofold: condemnation because of the sin of man, but consolation because of the grace of God.

**Interpretation** The prophets spoke in the context and background of their times, and it is important to understand their historical and cultural circumstances. They emphasized four chronological points—their own day, the Captivity and return, the first coming of Christ, and the messianic kingdom. The chronology was not as important in their minds as the events themselves, and they sometimes blurred the distinctions between these four periods. Some events were literally fulfilled, some were partially fulfilled, and some are yet unfulfilled. Their messages use symbols and figures of speech, but they point to real events. There is a great diversity and individuality among the prophets ranging from the sophistication of Isaiah to the simplicity of Amos. Their personalities, backgrounds, interests, and writing styles vary widely, but they shared a common conviction, courage, and commitment. They wrote from the ninth to the fifth centuries B.C. and spanned God’s program from their day to the new heaven and new earth. Of the seventeen prophetic books, twelve were preexilic, two were exilic, and three were postexilic.

**Isaiah** This pinnacle of the prophets has a twofold message of condemnation (1–39) and consolation (40–66). Isaiah analyzes the sins of Judah and pronounces God’s judgment on the nation. He broadens his scope to include judgment on the surrounding nations and moves to universal judgment followed by blessing. After a historical parenthesis concerning King Hezekiah, Isaiah consoles the people with a message of future salvation and restoration. Yahweh is the sovereign Savior who will rescue His people.

**Jeremiah** Judah had reached the depths of moral and spiritual decay, and Jeremiah was called to the heartbreaking and unpopular ministry of declaring the certain judgment of God against the nation. Jeremiah faithfully ministered in spite of rejection and persecution, and the dreaded day finally came. Judah’s defiance of God’s holiness led to her downfall, but God graciously promised to establish a new covenant with His people.

**Lamentations** This beautifully structured series of five lament poems is Judah’s funeral for the fallen city of Jerusalem. After his forty years of warning, Jeremiah’s awful words came true. His sorrow is obvious in his vivid descriptions of the defeat, destruction, and desolation of Jerusalem.

**Ezekiel** The prophet Ezekiel ministered to the Jewish captives in Babylon before and after the fall of Jerusalem. Like Jeremiah, he had to convince the people that the city was doomed and that the Captivity would not be brief. Ezekiel also described the fate of Judah’s foes and ended with a great apocalyptic vision of Judah’s future.

**Daniel** This crucial book abounds with detailed prophecies and visions of the future. It outlines God’s sovereign plan for the gentile nations (2–7) and moves on to a portrait of Israel during the time of gentile domination (8–12). At a time when the Jews had little hope, Daniel provided encouragement by revealing God’s power & plans for their future.

## Introduction to the Minor Prophets

These twelve books became known as the Minor Prophets late in the 4th century A.D. not because they were considered less important or less inspired, but because they are generally shorter than the five Major Prophets, especially books like Isaiah and Jeremiah. Their messages are more succinct than those of the Major Prophets, but they are just as powerful. Before the time of Christ these twelve books were joined together to make one scroll known collectively as “The Twelve.” Their combined length (sixty-seven chapters) is about equal to that of Isaiah. The only chronological significance of the order of the Minor Prophets in the English Bible is that the first six were written before the last six. The Minor Prophets from Obadiah to Malachi cover a four-hundred-year span of history moving through the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires. Three were prophets to the northern kingdom (Jonah, Amos, Hosea), six were prophets to the southern kingdom (Obadiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk), and three were postexilic prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi). Although all the minor prophets are named, very little is known about most of them. Their backgrounds and personalities are quite diverse, but the four basic prophetic themes are found in all of them (see “Introduction to the Major Prophets”).

**Hosea** The unhappy story of Hosea and his faithless wife Gomer illustrates the loyal love of God and the spiritual adultery of Israel. Hosea exposes the sins of Israel and contrasts them to God’s holiness. The nation must be judged for its sins but it will be restored in the future because of the love and faithfulness of God.

**Joel** This book looks back to a recent locust plague that decimated the land of Judah to illustrate the far more terrifying day of the Lord. The land will be invaded by a fearsome army that will make the locusts seem mild in comparison. Nevertheless, God appeals to the people to repent in order to divert the coming disaster. Because the people will not change, judgment will come, but it will be followed by great blessing.

**Amos** The northern kingdom was in its heyday when Amos warned the people of their coming doom. In eight pronouncements of judgment, Amos spirals around the surrounding countries before landing on Israel. He then delivers three sermons to list the sins of the house of Israel and call for repentance. The people reject Amos’ warnings and their coming judgment is portrayed in a series of five visions. But Amos closes his book with a brief word of future hope.

**Obadiah** This obscure prophet of the southern kingdom directs his brief oracle to the nation of Edom that bordered Judah on the southeast. Edom (descended from Esau) refused to act as his brother’s keeper toward Judah (descended from Jacob). Because they gloated when Jerusalem was invaded, their judgment would be nothing less than total destruction.

**Jonah** With a prophetic message of only one line, Jonah is the most biographical of all the prophets. The repentant response of the people of Nineveh to Jonah’s terse oracle causes the God of mercy to spare the city. But the central teaching of the book is the lesson on compassion God has to teach His reluctant prophet. Jonah learns to look beyond his nation and trust the Creator of all people.

**Micah** The prophecy of Micah begins with a word of divine retribution against Israel and Judah because of the radical corruption on every level of society: rulers, prophets, priests, judges, businessmen, and landlords. But God’s covenant promises will be fulfilled in the future kingdom of Messiah. Judgment will ultimately be followed by forgiveness and restoration, and the book ends on a strong note of promise.

**Nahum** About 125 years after Nineveh repented under the preaching of Jonah, Micah predicted the imminent destruction of Nineveh. The people in the Assyrian capital have reverted to idolatry and brutality, and Assyria has overthrown the northern kingdom of Israel. Because of God’s holiness & power, Nineveh will surely be destroyed in spite of its apparent invincibility.

**Habakkuk** Very close to the end of the kingdom of Judah, Habakkuk asks God why He is not dealing with the wickedness of his nation. When God tells him He is about to use the Babylonians as His rod of judgment, Habakkuk asks a second question: How can He judge Judah with a nation that is even more wicked? After the Lord’s second response, the prophet magnifies the name of God for His power and purposes.

**Zephaniah** In no uncertain terms, Zephaniah develops the theme of the coming day of the Lord as a day of awesome judgment followed by great blessing. Zephaniah begins with the coming judgment of Judah and broadens his scope to include the Gentiles as well. Because Judah refuses to seek the Lord, it stands condemned. But a Remnant will exult when God restores the fortunes of His people.

**Haggai** After the Babylonian exile, the Jews began to rebuild the temple but allowed the work to stop while they rebuilt their own houses instead. Because of their failure to put God first, they were not enjoying His blessing in the land. Haggai urges the people to finish the temple because of God’s promise that it would be filled with glory. After chastening the people for their contamination, Haggai closes with a promise of future blessing.

**Zechariah** A contemporary of Haggai, Zechariah also exhorts the Jews to complete the construction of the temple. Zechariah’s method of motivating them is one of encouragement—the temple is central to Israel’s spiritual heritage, and it is related to the coming of Messiah. Zechariah’s series of visions, messages, and burdens offer some of the clearest messianic prophecies in Scripture. God reveals that His program for his people is far from completed.

**Malachi** By the time of the last Old Testament prophet, the spiritual and moral climate of the people has grown cold. Their worship is meaningless and indifferent, and as they grow more distant from God, they become characterized by religious and social compromise. A terrible day of judgment is coming when “all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff” to be burned, “But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.”

## Introduction to the Poetical Books

Until recently, not many people knew that fully one-third of the Hebrew Bible was written in poetry. This became more obvious when poetic sections were set off from prose sections in some English translations. In fact, there are only five Old Testament books that appear to have no poetry: Leviticus, Ruth, Ezra, Haggai, and Malachi. The five books now known as the poetical books serve as a hinge which links the past of the historical books to the future of the prophetic books. These books explore the experiential present and emphasize a life-style of godliness. Unlike the Pentateuch and twelve historical books, the poetical books do not advance the story of the nation Israel. Instead, they delve deeply into crucial questions about pain, God, wisdom, life, and love—all in the present tense.

**Job** Job was a righteous man who was suddenly embroiled in an intense ordeal of every kind of suffering. He went through three cycles of debate with his friends who insisted that his misfortune must have been caused by sin. When God finally revealed Himself in His majesty and power to Job, it became obvious that the real issue was not Job's suffering but God's sovereignty. Job's questions were never answered but he willingly submitted to the wisdom and righteousness of God.

**Psalms** The five books of psalms span the centuries from Moses to the postexilic period and cover the full range of human emotions and experiences. The wide variety of Psalms (lament, thanksgiving, praise, enthronement, pilgrimage, etc.) suited them for service as the temple hymnal for the people of Israel. The psalms were set to music and focused on worship.

**Proverbs** The Book of Proverbs was designed to equip the reader in practical wisdom, discernment, discipline, and discretion. These maxims emphasize the development of skill in all the details of life so that beauty and righteousness will replace foolishness and evil as one walks in dependence upon God.

**Ecclesiastes** The Preacher of Ecclesiastes applied his great mind and considerable resources to the quest for purpose and satisfaction in life under the sun. He found that wisdom, wealth, works, pleasure, and power all led to futility and striving after wind. The problem was compounded by the injustices and uncertainties of life and apparent absurdity of death. The only source of ultimate meaning and fulfillment is God Himself. One should therefore acknowledge his inability to understand all the ways of God, trust and obey Him, and enjoy His gifts.

**Song of Solomon** This beautiful song portrays the intimate love relationship between Solomon and his Shulamite bride. It magnifies the virtues of physical and emotional love in marriage.

### Themes Of The Poetic Books

BOOK	KEY WORD	THEME
JOB	Sovereignty	God revealed himself in his majesty and power to Job. It became clear that the real issue was not Job's suffering (caused by Job's sin) but God's sovereignty.
PSALMS	Worship	The five books of Psalms span the centuries from Moses to the postexilic period, covering the full range of human emotions and experiences. Suited for service as the Temple hymnal, they were set to music and focused on worship.
PROVERBS	Wisdom	Proverbs was designed to equip the reader in practical wisdom, discernment, discipline, and discretion. The development of skills in all the details of life are stressed, so that wisdom and righteousness will replace foolishness and wickedness through dependence upon God.
ECCLESIASTES	Vanity	The preacher applied his great mind and resources to the quest for meaning and purpose in life. He found that wisdom, wealth, works, pleasure, and power all led to futility and striving after wind. The only source of ultimate meaning and fulfillment is God himself.
SONG OF SOLOMON	Love in Marriage	This beautiful song portrays the intimate love relationship between Solomon and his Shulamite bride. It magnifies the virtues of physical and emotional love in marriage.

*Principle:* To have a heart for God is to approach life from His perspective (Job 42:1-6; Psa 1; 19; 63; 73; 119; Pro 2:1-9; Rom 12:1-3).

*Practice:* The poetic books record the struggles of men like Job, David, Solomon, Asaph, and others to gain a divine perspective on their lives and circumstances. As they learned to set their minds on the person, powers, and perfections of God, their wills and emotions came into alignment with His truth. True wisdom is seeing life from God's side, and this is rooted in setting our minds (meditating) on the things above (Col 3:1-3). Try dipping into the Psalms and Proverbs on a daily basis and prayerfully ponder what you read.

## The Psalms

The Book of Psalms (from a Greek word meaning “a song sung to the accompaniment of a plucked instrument”) was written and compiled over a period of perhaps a thousand years: from the time of Moses (Ps. 90) to the time of the return from exile (Ps. 126). The book was used as the temple hymnbook of the Kingdom Period, and stands as the longest, most oft-quoted, most diverse book of the Old Testament.

Book	Book 1 (1–41)	Book 2 (42–72)	Book 3 (73–89)	Book 4 (90–106)	Book 5 (107–150)
Chief Author	David	David/Korah	Asaph	Anonymous	David or Anonymous
Number of Psalms	41	31	17	17	44
Basic Content	Songs of Worship	Hymns of National Interest		Anthems of Praise	
Topical Likeness To Pentateuch	Genesis: Man and Creation	Exodus: Deliverance & Redemption	Leviticus: Worship and Sanctuary	Numbers: Wilderness & Wandering	Deuteronomy: Scripture and Praise
Closing Doxology	41:13	72:18–19	89:52	106:48	150:1–6
Possible Compiler	David	Hezekiah or Josiah		Ezra or Nehemiah	
Possible Dates of Compilation	1020–970 BC	970–610 BC		Until c. 430 BC	
Span of Authorship	About 1000 Years (c. 1410–430 BC)				

## The Minor Prophets (1)

Canonical Order	Chronological Order	Approximate Dates
1. Hosea	1. Obadiah	840 BC
2. Joel	2. Joel	835 BC
3. Amos	3. Jonah	760 BC
4. Obadiah	4. Amos	755 BC
5. Jonah	5. Hosea	740 BC
6. Micah	6. Micah	730 BC
7. Nahum	7. Nahum	660 BC
8. Habakkuk	8. Zephaniah	625 BC
9. Zephaniah	9. Habakkuk	607 BC
10. Haggai	10. Haggai	520 BC
11. Zechariah	11. Zechariah	515 BC
12. Malachi	12. Malachi	430 BC

(1) Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk thru the Bible* [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1983.

# Themes of the Prophetic Books

## The Major Prophets

BOOK	Key Phrase	THEME
Isaiah	Salvation Is Of The Lord	Twofold message of condemnation (1–39) and consolation (40–66). God’s judgment on the sins of Judah, the surrounding nations, and the world, followed by future salvation and restoration.
Jeremiah	Judah’s Last Hour	Declaration of certain judgment of God against Judah. God promises to establish a new covenant with his people.
Lamentations	Lamentations	This beautifully structured series of five lament poems is a funeral dirge for the fallen city of Jerusalem.
Ezekiel	Future Restoration	Ministry to the Jewish captives in Babylon before and after the fall of Jerusalem. The fate of Judah’s foes and an apocalyptic vision of Judah’s future.
Daniel	God’s Program For Israel	Outlines God’s plan for the gentile nations (2–7) and portrays Israel during the time of gentile domination (8–12).

## The Minor Prophets

BOOK	Key Phrase	THEME
Hosea	God’s Love For Israel	The story of Hosea and his faithless wife illustrates the loyal love of God and the spiritual adultery of Israel.
Joel	Day Of The Lord	A recent locust plague illustrates the far more terrifying day of the lord. God appeals to the people to repent in order to avert the coming disaster.
Amos	Judgment Of Israel	In 8 pronouncements of judgment, Amos spirals around the surrounding countries before landing on Israel. He lists the sins of Israel and calls for repentance.
Obadiah	Judgment Of Edom	Condemns the nation of Edom (descended from Esau) for refusing to act as a brother toward Judah (descended from Jacob).
Jonah	Revival In Nineveh	The repentant response of the people of Nineveh to Jonah’s one-line prophetic message caused the God of mercy to spare the city.
Micah	Judgment And Restoration Of Judah	In spite of divine retribution against the corruption of Israel and Judah, God’s covenant with them will be fulfilled in Messiah’s future kingdom.
Nahum	Judgment Of Nineveh	About 140 years after Nineveh repented under the preaching of Jonah, Micah predicted the destruction of the city because of its idolatry and brutality.
Habakkuk	Live By Faith	Troubled with God’s plan to use the Babylonians as his rod of judgment on Judah, Habakkuk praises the lord after gaining a better perspective on his power and purposes.
Zephaniah	Day Of The Lord	The coming day of the lord is a time of awesome judgment followed by great blessing. Judah stands condemned, but God will restore the fortunes of the remnant.
Haggai	Reconstruction Of The Temple	After the Babylonian exile, Haggai urges the Jews to put God first and finish the temple they had begun so that they can enjoy God’s blessing.
Zechariah	Prepare For The Messiah	Like Haggai, Zechariah exhorts the Jews to complete the construction of the temple. He relates it to the coming of Messiah in a series of visions and messianic prophecies.
Malachi	Appeal To Backsliders	The spiritual climate of the people had grown cold, and Malachi rebukes them for their religious and social compromise. If they return to God with sincere hearts, they will be blessed.

## Paul's Letters to Churches

Book	Key phrase	Theme
<b>Romans</b>	<b>Righteousness of God</b>	Portrays the gospel from condemnation to justification to sanctification to glorification (1–8). Presents God's program for Jews and Gentiles (9–11) and practical exhortations for believers (12–16).
<b>1 Corinthians</b>	<b>Correction of Carnal Living</b>	Corrects problems of factions, immorality, lawsuits, and abuse of the Lord's Supper (1–6). Replies to questions concerning marriage, meat offered to idols, public worship, and the Resurrection (7–16).
<b>2 Corinthians</b>	<b>Paul Defends His Ministry</b>	Defends Paul's apostolic character, call, and credentials. The majority had repented of their rebellion against Paul, but there was still an unrepentant minority.
<b>Galatians</b>	<b>Freedom from the Law</b>	Refutes the error of legalism that had ensnared the churches of Galatia. Demonstrates the superiority of grace over law, and magnifies the life of liberty over legalism and license.
<b>Ephesians</b>	<b>Building the Body of Christ</b>	Extols the believer's position in Christ (1–3), and exhorts the readers to maintain a spiritual walk that is based upon their spiritual wealth (4–6).
<b>Philippians</b>	<b>To Live Is Christ</b>	Paul speaks of the latest developments in his imprisonment and urges his readers to a life-style of unity, humility, and godliness.
<b>Colossians</b>	<b>The Preeminence of Christ</b>	Demonstrates the preeminence of Christ in creation, redemption, and the relationships of life. The Christian is complete in Christ and needs nothing else.
<b>1 Thessalonians</b>	<b>Holiness in Light of Christ's Return</b>	Paul commends the Thessalonians for their faith and reminds them of his motives and concerns on their behalf. He exhorts them to purity of life and teaches them about the coming of the Lord.
<b>2 Thessalonians</b>	<b>Understanding the Day of the Lord</b>	Paul corrects false conclusions about the day of the Lord, explains what must precede this awesome event, and exhorts his readers to remain diligent.

## Paul's Letters to People

Book	Key phrase	Theme
<b>1 Timothy</b>	<b>Leadership manual for churches</b>	Paul counsels Timothy on the problems of false teachers, public prayer, the role of women, and the requirements for elders and deacons.
<b>2 Timothy</b>	<b>Endurance in ministry</b>	A combat manual designed to build up and encourage timothy to boldness and steadfastness in view of the hardships of spiritual warfare.
<b>Titus</b>	<b>Conduct manual for churches</b>	Lists the requirements for elders and instructs Titus in his duties relative to the various groups in the churches.
<b>Philemon</b>	<b>Forgiveness from slavery</b>	Paul appeals to Philemon to forgive Onesimus and to regard him no longer as a slave but as a brother in Christ.

## Letters from Others

Book	Key Phrase	Theme
<b>Hebrews</b>	<b>Superiority of Christ</b>	Demonstrates the superiority of Christ's person, priesthood, and power over all that preceded him to encourage the readers to mature and to become stable in their faith.
<b>James</b>	<b>Faith that works</b>	A practical catalog of the characteristics of true faith written to exhort James' Hebrew-Christian readers to examine the reality of their own faith.
<b>1 Peter</b>	<b>Suffering for Christ</b>	Comfort and counsel to those who were being maligned for their faith in Christ. They are encouraged to develop an attitude of submission in view of their suffering.
<b>2 Peter</b>	<b>Guard against false prophets</b>	Copes with internal opposition in the form of false teachers who were enticing believers into their errors of belief and conduct. Appeals for growth in the true knowledge of Christ.
<b>1 John</b>	<b>Fellowship with God</b>	Explores the dimensions of fellowship between redeemed people and god. Believers must walk in his light, manifest his love, and abide in his life.
<b>2 John</b>	<b>Avoid Fellowship with False Teachers</b>	John commends his readers for remaining steadfast in apostolic truth and reminds them to walk in love and avoid false teachers.
<b>3 John</b>	<b>Enjoy Fellowship with the Brethren</b>	John thanks Gaius for his support of traveling teachers of the truth, in contrast to Diotrefes, who rejected them and told others to do the same.
<b>Jude</b>	<b>Contend for the Faith</b>	This exposé of false teachers reveals their conduct and character and predicts their judgment. Jude encourages his readers to build themselves up in the truth and contend earnestly for the faith.
<b>Revelation</b>	<b>Revelation of the Coming Christ</b>	The glorified Christ gives seven messages to the church (1–3). Visions of unparalleled judgment upon rebellious mankind are followed by the Second Advent (4–19). The Apocalypse concludes with a description of the new heaven and new earth and the marvels of the new Jerusalem (20–22).