

Hymns: 33 When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder 34 When We All Get to Heaven
Scripture: Psalm 16:8-11

Big Idea: Only God knows the future

Grays Sports Almanac – Complete Sports Statistics: 1950-2000.

That was the central object in the plot that allowed Biff Tanner to build fabulous wealth in an alternate reality and **fund** his corrupt paradise called Biff's World. An elderly version of himself from the future gave Biff the almanac and told him:

*You see this book?
This book tells the future.
Tells the results of every major sports event till the end of this century--*

Does anyone remember where this story is found? *Back from the Future* [the movie] *Part II*.

Wouldn't it be great to know the future? I often wonder how people could be duped by fortune tellers. It would be so easy to demonstrate that they are fakes. Just ask them to give you the price for the Dow Jones Industrial Average for the next close. Of course, they cannot do that. If they could, they would have no need to waste their time with you and take **your** money.

[Hold a Bible and raise it in your hand.]

Do you see this book?

This book tells the future.

How is that possible?

The one who wrote it

perfectly

knows

the future.

The eternal God is not bound (as we are) by the constraints of time or even space for that matter.

Review

Last time, we looked at the kings of Israel. The Israelites
rejected the Lord as their leader,
did what was right in their own eyes, and
demanded **a man** for a king.

The Jewish nation was united under its first three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon. We learned that the nation was **then** divided into the northern (bad guys) and southern (good guys) kingdoms.

The southern kingdom, called Judah, consisted of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and eventually all of the Levites. The northern kingdom, called Israel, consisted of the rest. All of the northern kings were bad. Most of the southern kings were also bad but many were good. Of course, there is only **one** King of Kings and that is the Messiah – hallelujah.

Prophets

Today, we're going to take one final slice at the Old Testament in this study of the Dispensation of Law. Then, we'll move on to the New Testament time. This key study sets the stage for the transition to our present dispensation – the Age of Grace. As you might have guessed, today we will look at the prophets.

{Who?}

So who is a prophet of God exactly? He is a man, called by God to speak his words. Since **only God knows the future**, these prophets are the **only** source in the world who can tell us the future. They are not only seers but also speakers of God's truth and often of God's warning to the people.

The first mention in the Bible of the word *prophet* appears in a familiar story in Genesis: Genesis 20

God speaks to King Abimelech in a dream saying:

[7] Now therefore restore the man [Abraham] his wife [Sarah]; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know [] that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

Clearly prophets of God wielded great power.

We can classify these prophets as “published” and “non-published” that is, some prophets have books of the Bible named after them and others do not.

1. Non-published prophets include:
 1. Abraham (Genesis 20:7) as we just saw
 2. Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:25-36)
 3. Moses spoke face-to-face with the Lord (Deuteronomy 34:10)
 4. Elijah
 1. stopped rain (I Kings 17:1),
 2. predicted deaths of Ahab and Jezebel (I Kings 21:17-24),
 3. mocked the prophets of Baal (I Kings 18:20-40) as he called down **fire** from heaven
 4. went up to heaven in a fiery chariot (II Kings 2:11)
[remember him?]
 5. Elisha
 1. Multiplied a woman's oil to lift her out of poverty (II Kings 4:1-7)
 2. Raised a boy from the dead (II Kings 4:32-37)
 3. Predicted abundance of flour the next day, during a famine (II Kings 7:1, 16)
 6. David was called a prophet by Apostle Peter (Acts 2:29-30). He wrote many messianic psalms.
2. Published prophets (books identified by their names)
 1. Major prophets (four)
 1. Isaiah
 - Vision of hot coal and unclean lips
 - Spoke of the Messiah

- Spoke of the coming kingdom (far into the future)
 - Book structured as a miniature Bible with 66 chapters and a major division after chapter 39 (39 and 27 – just like the counts of the books in the Old and New Testaments)
 - Chapter 53 (the most famous chapter) details the crucifixion of the Messiah
2. Jeremiah
- Born a priest
 - Appointed prophet at an early age
 - Reluctant
 - Called the “weeping prophet”
 - Unpopular – beaten and put in prison
 - predicted God’s judgment of Judah and the nations
 - exposed the false prophets
 - denounced the king (not good for popularity)
 - specifically predicted the Babylonian captivity (bearer of bad news)
3. Ezekiel
- Testified repeatedly that he gave the word of the Lord
 - Spoke of the glory of God
 - Predicted the fall of Judah
 - Declared judgment on the enemies of Judah
 - Predicted the restoration of Judah
 - Had many visions – most famous of which was the Valley of Dry Bones – referring to the restoration of the nation Israel.
4. Daniel
- Well educated and well favored
 - Taken captive in Babylon
 - Interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream describing Gentile world nations and two other dreams
 - Interpreted the hand writing on the wall
 - Survived the lion’s den
 - Had a vision of the throne of God
 - Most famous prophesy – Seventy weeks of Daniel unlocks the timing of future events
2. Minor prophets – (twelve) we’ll just quickly hit them
1. Hosea – God directed him to marry a harlot to illustrate the Israelites’ spiritual adultery
 2. Joel – Tells Judah to repent to be saved from God’s present and future judgment
 3. Amos – A farmer, proclaimed judgment of the nations and Israel and future redemption
 4. Obadiah – Predicted judgment of Edom [Esau] and final restoration of Israel
 5. Jonah – After surviving a perilous whale ride, he preached repentance to Nineveh
 6. Micah – Preached in the countryside predicting judgment of Israel, restoration, and the coming King.
 7. Nahum – the name means *comfort*. He brought a message of comfort to Judah as well as a prediction of Nineveh’s destruction.
 8. Habakkuk – J. Vernon McGee called him the prophet with a question mark for a brain.

Sort of like the Doubting Thomas of the Old Testament
He asked God the question Why?

9. Zephaniah – preached against idolatry and brought revival for a time
10. Haggai – encouraged the returning remnant to complete building the temple
11. Zechariah – whose book is called the Apocalypse of the Old Testament predicted the Messiah’s two comings
12. Malachi (finally) – means “messenger of the Lord” rebuked Judah for their sins and encouraged them with prophesy of the coming “Sun of Righteousness” (4:1)

{What?}

With those details under our belt, let’s pull together the common ministry of these prophets.
II Kings 17 summarizes their ministry in this way:

*[13] Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the **prophets**, and by all the **seers**, saying,*

Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you

[how?]

*by my servants the **prophets**.*

Prophets also predicted:

Short-term future events

The first coming of Messiah

End-time events **far** into the future -- including the second coming of the Messiah

Were they accurate? The Bible says that they had better be:

Deuteronomy 18

[18] I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee [referring to Moses] , and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

*[19] And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever** will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.*

*[20] But the **prophet**, which shall **presume** to speak a word in my name, which I have **not** commanded him to speak, **or** that shall speak in the name of **other** gods, **even that prophet shall die.***

That’s a pretty high standard.

*[21] And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath **not** spoken?*

*[22] When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow **not**, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath **not** spoken, but the prophet hath*

*spoken it presumptuously: **thou shalt not be afraid of him.***

In other words, ignore this guy after you stone him to death.

What did they do?

II Peter 1

*[21] For [] **prophecy** came not in old time by the will of man:
but [by] **holy men of God**
[] **as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.***

These men were God's voice.

In Deuteronomy 13 we have further instruction regarding how to distinguish God's men:

[1] If there arise among you a prophet, ...

and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,

[2] And the sign or the wonder come to pass, ...,

[and he says],

*Let us **go after other gods**, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;*

*[3] Thou shalt **not** hearken []to the words of that prophet, ...:*

for the LORD your God proveth you,

to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

*[5] And that prophet, ..., **shall be put to death;***

[why?]

because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God,

No prophet of God –even a miracle worker – will tell you to worship another god.

So we see that prophets:

1. **Forth**tell – that is, “Thus saith the Lord”
2. Foretell – predict the future

What did they predict?

1. Pending events (often battle outcomes)
 - Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream predicting seven fat years followed by seven lean years.
 - Isaiah warned Ahaz king of Judah not to make an alliance with Assyria (Isaiah 7:3-4; 10:5-12)
 - Isaiah predicted judgment of surrounding nations (Isaiah 13-33)
 - Jeremiah warned of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (Jeremiah 24:10-12)
2. Coming Messiah *all things concerning Him...* (Luke 24:25-27)

Here's a very abbreviated list of the many fulfilled prophecies from these prophets regarding the first coming of the Messiah:

{<http://www1.cbn.com/biblestudy/biblical-prophecies-fulfilled-by-jesus>}

1. Virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14)
 2. Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
 3. Triumphal entry on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9)
 4. Betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, temple, potter (Zechariah 11:12-13)
 5. Cut off (Daniel 9:26)
 6. Sin offering, lamb, silent, despised, rejected, innocent, mocked, beaten, beard plucked, died with the wicked, grave with rich (Isaiah 52:15-53:12)
 7. Wounds in hands (Zechariah 13:6)
 8. Crucifixion (Psalm 22:1-20)
 9. Resurrection (Psalm 16:8-11)
3. End-Time events.
- Coming time of tribulation (Daniel 12:1)
 - Israel recognizes their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10)
 - Millennium (Isaiah 65)
 - The final state: New heaven and earth (Isaiah 65:17)

When did these published prophets speak?

Roughly 850 B.C. to 415 B.C.

During Babylonian exile 605 B.C. to 535 B.C. – Daniel and Ezekiel

After – Haggai, Zechariah

Before Babylonian exile 850 to 605 B.C. -- all of the others

Who did they preach to? {Where?}

- Two to Israel the northern kingdom – Hosea and Amos
- One to Edom – Obadiah
- Two to Nineveh – Jonah and Nahum
- All of the rest to the southern kingdom of Judah

Application

Now we've seen what the prophets had to say. They speak of the near and far future. They also warn people to follow the Lord. What about **your** future? What will be **your fate** when you leave this body behind? **This book** has the answer.

Mark 8

[34] And when he [that is, Jesus] had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me,

*let him deny himself,
and take up his cross,
and follow me.*

*[35] For whosoever will **save** his life shall **lose** it;
but whosoever shall **lose** his life for **my sake** and the **gospel's**,
the same shall **save it**.*

*[36] For what shall it **profit** a man, if he shall **gain** the whole world, and **lose** his own soul?*

[37] Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Have you noticed how the richest people in the world usually have no use for God? They do however seek eternal life. According to *Forbes Magazine* in 2016, the co-founder and CEO of Oracle Corporation was the seventh richest man in the world with a net worth of \$43 billion. You may have heard that he's the guy who bought his own Hawaiian Island of Lanai for \$300 million.

He's also the guy who has reportedly donated more than \$400 million on cryonics research. That's the effort to freeze your brain and DNA at death until technology advances enough to rejuvenate it. The result will be human immortality. These guys think they can beat death and do it **their** way. Unfortunately for them, without Jesus Christ, they will die in their sins and pay the ultimate price for rejecting Him.

Indeed, there is great **profit** to turning to Jesus Christ and accepting His **free gift** of grace. Those who do, will be comforted in knowing their future is both secure and glorious.

Benediction

*[25] Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel,
and the preaching of Jesus Christ,
according to the **revelation** of the **mystery**,
which was kept secret since the world began,*

*[26] But now is made manifest,
and by the **scriptures of the prophets**,
according to the commandment of the everlasting God,
made known **to all nations** for the obedience of faith:*

*[27] To God only wise,
be **glory** through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. (Romans 16:25-27)*