



## Cycle 3: Theological Survey

### *A Biblical-Theological Survey of Moses, Prophets and the Writings*

#### **Latter Prophets: Introduction to the Prophets & Prophetic Word**

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### **INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS**

#### **Michael Card, 'They Shall Know'**

*I will speak*

*I will wait*

*I will send prophets among them*

*That they might hear*

*That they might see*

*And understand how much I love them*

*Then they will know that I am Father*

*Then they will know I am Lord*

*They'll walk with Me*

*And be My people*

*I'll walk with them as their God*

*As their God*

*I will strike*

*I will scourge*

*And carry out vengeance upon them*

*But I will heal the wound that I make*

*And tenderly take them back to me*

*Then they will know that I am Father*

*Then they will know I am Lord*

*They'll walk with Me*

*And be My people*

*I'll walk with them as their God*

*This is heaven*

*This is salvation*

*This is their great hope and mine*

*He will come*

*My own Son*

*A Word faithful hearts can't help hearing*

*And by His death*

*With His last breath*

*A Father's forgiveness comes flowing*

*Then they will know*

*That I am Savior*

*I am Redeemer and Friend*

*Immanuel, The God who is with them*

*The God who gives all He can*

*He is salvation*

*He is the kingdom*

*To know Him is paradise*

*Then they will know that I am Father*

*Then they will know I am Lord*

*I am Lord.*

The Michael Card song truly emphasizes the Gospel ministry of the Prophets. We also should be able to hear the Gospel message in the ministry of Moses.

### Link to Deuteronomy (Torah/Teaching of Moses:

**ESV Deuteronomy 10:12-13:** *"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but **to fear the LORD** your God, **to walk** in all his ways, **to love him, to serve the LORD your God** with all your heart and with all your soul,<sup>13</sup> and **to keep the commandments** and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today **for your good?***

**Fear**

**Walk**

**Love**

**Serve**

**Keep**

**= True Piety/True Religion**

Remember, that the Gospel produces a whole person restoration-transformation by God's grace and Spirit, that brings well-being-shalom-peace-contentment-joy-well-ordered affections-loves in Christ: fear, walking, loving, serving, keeping, etc.

God teaches Israel through the Gospel ministry of Moses that He will be faithful in preaching the Gospel throughout the ages:

**ESV Deuteronomy 18:15-22:** *"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers- it is to him you shall listen-<sup>16</sup> just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.'<sup>17</sup> And the LORD said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken.<sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. **And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.**<sup>19</sup> And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.<sup>20</sup> But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.'<sup>21</sup> And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?'-<sup>22</sup> when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.*

**And I will put my words in his mouth,**

**and he shall speak to them all that I command him.**

**ESV Deuteronomy 31:24-29:** *When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end, <sup>25</sup> Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, <sup>26</sup> "Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against you. <sup>27</sup> For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD. How much more after my death! <sup>28</sup> Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and call heaven and earth to witness against them. <sup>29</sup> For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands."*

### **Link to the Book of Joshua:**

**ESV Joshua 1:8-9:** *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. <sup>9</sup> Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

**ESV Joshua 24:25-27:** *So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. <sup>26</sup> And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. <sup>27</sup> And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God."*

**Link to Book of Kings:** Primarily focused on prophets and Northern Kings.

**Link to Book of Chronicles:** Primarily focused on prophets and Southern-Davidic Kings.

### **Link to the Lord Jesus Christ:**

**ESV Acts 3:24-26:** *And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. <sup>25</sup> 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.' <sup>26</sup> God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."*

**MOSES → PROPHETS → JOHN THE BAPTIST → JESUS CHRIST**

## ***What was a prophet?***

Initially, the prophets were Spirit-Anointed Servant-Messengers of YHWH to encourage, promise, warn, and pronounce judgment on the kings. The message of the Prophet Azariah to King Asa that summarizes the Gospel Message and Messenger:

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Chronicles 15:1-5:** The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, <sup>2</sup> and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: ***The LORD is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.*** <sup>3</sup> For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law, <sup>4</sup> but when in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them. <sup>5</sup> In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for great disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands.

1. Spirit Anointed to speak for God (2 Peter 1:20-21)
2. Spirit Anointed to speak to the people (usually through the Kings/Priests)
3. Spirit Anointed to speak the Gospel message (note unconditional/conditional aspects of Covenant of Grace-Gospel)
4. Spirit Anointed to remind the people of God's ongoing, covenantal faithfulness.

The word "prophet" in Hebrew is *navi*: [aybin" **n.m. spokesman, speaker, prophet -- 1.** genuine *prophet* of 'y, aybn, anciently called ha,ro ] *navi* is from another Semitic language, Akkadian, and the root is found in the verb *nabu* (not the place in *Star Wars*) and this means "to decree, to proclaim, to command, to make known". It can also mean to be called or appointed by God. The Greek word for prophet is **profh,thj**, ou m and this means generally that a prophet is one who has insight into the divine will and possesses the power of inspired utterance.

Simply put: ***A prophet is one who is called and who proclaims the Word of God by the empowerment of the Spirit to the priests, the kings and the people.*** A prophet speaks a message from God about God.

Augustine said: "The prophet of God is nothing else but the enunciator of the words of God to men."

Geerhardus Vos wrote: "Jehovah's approach to Israel is eminently the approach of speech; God gives Himself in the word of His mouth" (*Biblical Theology*, pg. 205).

***"Thus says YHWH..."***

Dr. Vangemeren defines a prophet as: "An Israelite, called by God, and empowered by the Spirit who serves as God's spokesperson who has received authority and revelation from God, who is a

good shepherd over God's flock, and who demonstrates God's Word and mission with signs" (pg. 32).

**A prophet is also a seer:** ha'r' ra'ah {raw-aw'} **Meaning:** 1) to see, look at, inspect, perceive, consider 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to see 1a2) to see, perceive 1a3) to see, have vision 1a4) to look at, see, regard, look after, see after, learn about, observe, watch, look upon, look out, find out/ hz<Ax chozeh {kho-zeh'} **Meaning:** 1) seer 1a) seer 1b) vision

Vos wrote: "The word 'seer' refers to an extraordinary influence brought to bear on the seeing faculty of the prophet, by which he was made to see things, instead of hearing them, with the same result that through this seeing a message of divine provenience [origin] was introduced into his consciousness" (pg. 215).

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Samuel 9:9** (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, "Come, let us go to the seer," for today's "prophet" was formerly called a seer [ha'r' ra'ah].)

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Samuel 24:11** And when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer [hz<Ax chozeh], saying...

Simply put: ***A prophet is the mouthpiece of God who is called and who proclaims the Word of God by the empowerment of the Spirit to the priests, the kings and the people who also "sees" things not usually perceived by other people.***

#### **Four Primary Stages /Phases of Development of the Prophetic Ministry:**

- 1) Court Prophets: Prophets to the kings
- 2) Classical Prophetism: Prophets to the kings, priest-leaders, the people in general
- 3) Preachers at large
- 4) Prophetic Writings (Large portion of OT Canon: "Latter Prophets" or "Major/Minor Prophets")

***Retrospectively ← → Circumspectively ← → Prospectively***

#### ***The Prophet's Message: Retrospective and Prospective***

The prophets' message was back-looking to the past of the periods of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph) and Moses or ***retrospective***, as well as forward-looking to the future or ***prospective*** as it foretold of the fulfillment of the Kingdom and Kingdom events. This message

that was ***retrospective and prospective*** was addressed to the People of Israel in present-tense circumstances.

### ***Retrospective Revelation***

Vangemeren writes: “The prophetic ministry is a direct continuation of the revelation of God through Moses, the fountainhead of Old Testament revelation. Moses desired for God’s people to be a counterculture, a new community transformed by divine revelation and by the Spirit. The prophetic message was consistent with the Mosaic revelation, for it applied more explicitly the blessings and the curses of which Moses had spoken and supplemented the existing canonical writings with a new word from God. All prophetic utterances were to be tested by God’s revelation to Moses” (pg. 38).

*ESV Malachi 4:4-6: "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. <sup>5</sup> "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."*

### ***Prospective Revelation***

As Dr. Vangemeren writes: “The prophets spoke *in* time as they were human beings empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak God’s word in space and time. Yet the prophets spoke *out* of time as their writings reflect more than the historically and culturally conditioned collection of Israel’s prophets.

***The Lord empowered the prophets by the Spirit to proclaim and write down the revelation he gave them as a witness for future generations” (Interpreting the Prophetic Word, pg. 19).***

Vos wrote: “The prophets speak out of the consciousness of being reorganizers, reconstructionists. That something better will come and must come they know, but they are not aware as yet of the extent to which when it comes, it will swallow up the past...The prophet now knows that not repair but regeneration of the present lies in the womb of the future” (pg. 207).

A. B. Mickelsen wrote: “Whether [the prophet] is discussing the past, present, or future, the prophet is seeking to make God the most genuine reality that men can know and experience” (Quoted in Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, pg. 229).

**What is a “covenant lawsuit”?** The prophets acted as YHWH’s prosecuting attorneys to convict them of covenantal unfaithfulness. It is important to understand the background of this in the ancient Near East

In the ancient Near East when a Great King would conquer a people, he would make known a historical prologue stating his right to rule over his vassal people or subjects. He would establish a covenant with them giving them instructions on how they are to live their lives. In this

ceremony of “cutting” or making a covenant, the Great King would state his stipulations that would govern their behavior and conduct, including rewards for obedience (or “blessings”) and consequences for disobedience (or “curses”).

The Book of Deuteronomy, the final words and last sermons of Moses to God’s people are in this kind of Treat-Covenant form. How is the *Book of Deuteronomy* a covenant document?

In Deuteronomy chapters 1-4, the historical prologue is stated as YHWH tells the people of the grace that he has shown to them, and how he is their Redeemer, King-Lord. In chapters 5-26, the covenant law or stipulations of God’s requirements of his people are made known. In chapters 27-28 Moses declared the blessings of God to the people for obedience if the people kept the covenant faithfully, and the curses on the people that would result if they failed to keep the covenant.

In chapters 29-30, Moses tells the people that they will break the covenant that they made with God and yet God in his Grace would restore them, teaching the people that it is only by grace that one is redeemed:

*<sup>ESV</sup> Deuteronomy 30:1-6: "And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, <sup>2</sup> and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>3</sup> then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. <sup>4</sup> If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. <sup>5</sup> And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*

In Deuteronomy 30:19-20, Moses called heaven and earth to witness the covenant made between God and His people:

*<sup>ESV</sup> Deuteronomy 30:19-20: I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, <sup>20</sup> loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."*

In Deuteronomy chapters 31-34, Moses gives instruction concerning the covenant made with God for Israel’s future and appoints a successor in Joshua who will serve as a mediator in the Promised Land.

It is very important to understand *The Twelve* (as well as all of the prophets of the Old Covenant up to John the Baptist) in light of the writings of Moses and particularly the covenant made between YHWH and His people revealed in the covenant document *Deuteronomy*.

A “Rib” (Hebrew, pronounced “reeve”) is a “charge” pattern of prophetic-covenant prosecutors. The prophets charge the people of covenant infidelity/unfaithfulness in three parts:

1. Reminder of God’s acts of covenantal loyalty toward Israel.
2. Statement of specific charges against Israel.
3. A solemn warning of judgment if God’s word goes unheeded. Call to repentance!

***ESV Romans 15:4** For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

We will interpret in a threefold reading of the prophets (which is how we should interpret the Old Testament as God’s people):

1) **First Reading:** *“How did the people of Israel first hear the words of the prophets within their cultural milieu?”* - Considering the message of the prophet in his historical context and time period in redemptive-history.

2) **Second Reading:** *“How do the prophets point to Jesus Christ?”* (cf. Luke 24:24ff): Considering the message of the prophet as it becomes clearer throughout redemptive-history, and particularly with the coming of Jesus Christ.

3) **Third Reading:** *“How do we read the prophets “in Christ as the Church today”?:* Considering the message of the prophet as it applies and has implications for Christ’s Church today.

Let us remember what our father in the faith, John Calvin wrote concerning the prophets as the very “key” to rightly interpreting and understanding the prophets:

*“...I urge readers to remember to use the key which I gave them, so that they may understand aright. That is, whenever the prophets describe the bliss awaiting believers and which appears as but a tiny shadow in this world, let them recall this distinction: to provide a clearer picture of God’s goodness, the prophets portrayed it figuratively in terms of earthly advantages. While portraying them this way they nevertheless meant to lift men’s hearts above the earth, above the elements of this world and above this perishable sphere, and to lead them to meditate on the blessedness of the spiritual life” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1541, 446-47).*

***ESV Hebrews 11:13-16:** These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having*



*acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. <sup>14</sup> For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*

### **Interpretation Helps: Types and Antitypes in Book of the Twelve**

**TYPE → ANTITYPE**

**PROPHET → JESUS**

**ISRAEL → CHURCH**

**NATIONS → UNBELIEVERS**

A helpful picture from Willem Vangemeren helps us to learn the redemptive-historical way that YHWH revealed himself through prophets:

#### **MOSES THE SERVANT (The Fountainhead of Prophetic Revelation)**

→

**SAMUEL (The Model of Prophetic Revelation: Last of the judges, first of the prophets).**

→

**ELIJAH (Covenant Prosecutor)**

→

**THE CLASSICAL PROPHETS (Including the Twelve)**

→

**JOHN THE BAPTIST**



## JESUS THE MESSIAH

### → [Ministers of the Word]

Ministers today still have the prophetic task of preaching and proclaiming not merely religion, but the very revelation of God's Word in written form:

*<sup>ESV</sup> 2 Timothy 4:1-2: I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

Professor O. Palmer Robertson in his excellent book *The Christ of the Prophets* writes that there are similarities between or patterns in God's call and commissioning of the prophets:

- 1) The prophet is called by God to speak in a historical context a specific message because of God's sovereign election and call of the prophet.
- 2) The prophet was given a vision of God.
- 3) The prophet is commissioned by God.
- 4) The prophet responds to God of his inadequacy.
- 5) The people respond in repentance or rejection.

Michael J. Williams in his book *The Prophet and His Message* (pg. 55) gives a helpful pattern for the call and commissioning of the prophet (4):

- 1) Divine confrontation
- 2) Introductory Word
- 3) Commission
- 4) Objection from the prophet
- 5) Reassurance from God

6) Some sign from God confirming his intent

Using Moses as the prototype or archetype of all other prophets, let us consider Exodus 3 and the call and commission of Moses:

- 1) **Divine confrontation:** <sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 3:1-3:** Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."
- 2) **Introductory Word:** <sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 3:4-9:** When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup> And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. <sup>7</sup> Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them."
- 3) **Commission:** <sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 3:10** Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."
- 4) **Objection from the prophet:** <sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 3:11** But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"
- 5) **Reassurance from God:** <sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 3:12** He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."
- 6) **Some sign confirming God's intent:** <sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 3:12** He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

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