



The Story Of Salvation
NCTM Tuesday Night Studies 2010
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The Message of the Prophets

We begin again with Moses, the normative prophet. Deuteronomy closes with the saying that “Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face (Deut 34:10). The words Moses speaks to God’s people in his great sermons leave us in no doubt about the holiness, loving-kindness and faithfulness of God and His great love and care for His people and promises of blessings for obedience. However, there is another prominent word of God and of enormous importance – the word of warning of judgment for disobedience. This is shown clearly in Deuteronomy 28 where Israel’s obedience will result in abundant blessings. But at considerable greater length it sets forth that disobedience will bring divine judgments. And when there is no repentance all the curses mentioned will come upon them, pursuing and overtaking them, culminating in utter disaster for the nation (Deut 28:45).

And just as the LORD took delight in making you prosperous and numerous, so the LORD will take delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction; you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to possess (Deut 28:63).

They would become such a useless nation that even Egypt would not want to buy them as slaves (Deut 28:68). The choice is clearly theirs. Obedience will bring blessings, life and prosperity. Disobedience will result in curses, death and adversity (Deut 11:26; 30:15-20).

The source of all blessings and curses is Yahweh (“the LORD” is mentioned 34 times in chapter 28). God is the sovereign Lord:

See now that I, even I, am he; there is no god besides me. I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and no one can deliver from my hand (Deut 32:39).

In the Northern Kingdom and a century and a half later in the Southern Kingdom the message of the Prophet quite often was in the form of a lawsuit where God has legal accusations with Israel. God is the prosecutor undertaking a court case against His lawbreaking people. Clear examples can be found in Hosea 4:1–3; Amos 4:1–3; Micah 3:9–12; Isaiah 3:13–17; the love song in Isaiah 5:1–7 and Jeremiah 2:4–13. There many more with endless variations,

Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob
 and chiefs of the house of Israel,
 who abhor justice
 and pervert all equity,
 who build Zion with blood
 and Jerusalem with wrong!
 Its rulers give judgment for a bribe,
 its priests teach for a price,
 its prophets give oracles for money;
 yet they lean upon the LORD and say,
 “Surely the LORD is with us!
 No harm shall come upon us.”

Therefore because of you
 Zion shall be plowed as a field;
 Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
 and the mountain of the house a wooded height (Micah 3:9–12).

This prophecy is against the leadership for its injustices, violence and corruption in the land. Notice the complacent attitude they have towards God. The threat of the last verse is that Jerusalem will be reduced to ruins and abandoned.

What are the sins and its consequences of the people in Jeremiah 2:4–13?

Often the speech of judgment ends in a death sentence that is final and non-negotiable. That seems to be the end of the matter. At other times the message of the prophet, however, was an appeal to repentance. It functioned as a stern warning; the disaster could be averted but only if the nation would repent and turn back to God in obedience. There was then still hope for Israel. Among those appeals for repentance are the following,¹

Seek the LORD and live,
 or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire (Am 4:6)

Seek good and not evil,
 that you may live;
 and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you,
 just as you have said.
 Hate evil and love good,
 and establish justice in the gate;
 it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts,
 will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph (Am 4:14–15).

Sow for yourselves righteousness;
 reap steadfast love;
 break up your fallow ground;
 for it is time to seek the LORD,
 that he may come and rain righteousness upon you (Hos 10:12).

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
 remove the evil of your doings
 from before my eyes;
 cease to do evil,
 learn to do good;
 seek justice,
 rescue the oppressed,
 defend the orphan,
 plead for the widow (Isa 1:16–17).

The last of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptizer, proclaimed, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” What are the three things that John proclaimed in his warnings of Matthew 3:1–12? What are the consequences for those who do not repent?

¹ Brueggemann, Walter, *Theology of the Old Testament. Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), pp. 635–638.

Another category of prophetic speech is the prophecy of promise. Depending on your translation those oracles are usually introduced by the formula “in that day” or “behold the days are coming” or “the days are surely coming” or “afterwards” or “in the last days”

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: “The LORD is our righteousness” (Jer 23:5–6).

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more (Jer 31:31–34).

Moses prophesied,

Moreover, the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live (Deut 30:6).

Ezekiel throws more light on Moses’ words and prophesied that the Holy Spirit would give God’s people a warm throbbing heart instead of a stony one and cause His people to obey God’s commandments.

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances (Ezek 36:25–27).

Joel prophesied the universal outpouring of the Spirit,

Then afterward
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit (Joel 2:28–29).

On the day of *Pentecost* when the Spirit had been poured out, Peter in his speech proclaimed that the *this* of the outpouring of the Spirit is the fulfilment of the *that* of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:17–21; Joel 2:28–32).

Joel had said, “Afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.” Peter said, “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” The afterwards in Joel becomes the last days in Peter’s explanation. The last days have arrived!! We are living in the last days for two thousand years!

Note: *Pentecost* is the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks celebrated 50 days after Passover. It originally was an agricultural feast celebrated after the completion of the grain harvest (Ex 23:16; Lev 23:5-21; Deut 16:9-12). In the inter-testament period Pentecost became the celebration of the anniversary of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai and associated with the renewal of the covenant God made with his people. The loud sound and fire in Acts 2 recall that awesome time at the mountain so long ago.²

After his resurrection Jesus said to his followers on the road to Emmaus,

“Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures (Lk 24:25–27).

Peter writes,

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look! (1 Pet 1:10–12)

Let’s look at just a few:

Moses:

Genesis 3:15; Genesis 12:3; Genesis 49:10

Exodus 12:21–27

Leviticus 17:11

Numbers 21:9

Deuteronomy 18:15–16

The former prophets:

1 Samuel 2:10

2 Samuel 7:12–16

The Psalms:

Psalm 2; Psalm 40:6–8; Psalm 89:35–37; Psalm 110:1, 4; Ps 118:22–23.

The prophets:

Isaiah 4:2–6; Isaiah 5:1–6; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6–7; Isa 11:1–9; Isaiah 42:1–9; Isaiah 49:6–7;

Isaiah 53; Isaiah 61:1–2; Isaiah 65:17–25

Daniel 7:13–14;

Micah 4:1–8; Micah 5:2

Amos 9:11–12;

Zechariah 9:9–10

Malachi 3:1; Malachi 4:5–6

² Marshall, I. Howard, *Acts*, TNTC, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 68.
The New Bible Dictionary, (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962), p. 964