

Prophecy - 1 - Nations

One of the most intriguing passages regarding how God works with the nations is found in Paul's sermon in Athens.

*And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has **determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; Acts 17:26-27***

God determined when they would begin and end (*pre-appointed times*). He also chose how large and powerful they would become (*boundaries of their dwellings*) He worked in all the nations so "*they should seek the Lord.*" God's purpose in working with the nations is the same as that for each individual. We are to pray all men and for kings and all in authority, because God wants all men to be saved.

*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 **for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth 1Tim. 2:1-4***

God also wants us to understand that the reasons nations come and go is because God wants no one to perish, but all to come to repentance. When it seems (as it did to Habbakuk) that God is somehow slack in His actions, we have to stop and reflect that this is the longsuffering of God not willing for any to perish.

*But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 **The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 2Pet. 3:8-9***

God uses both individuals and nations in His desire that all men to be saved, no one perish, all come to a knowledge of the truth, and come to repentance. All of this is inferred in Paul's statement that it is all "*in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him.*"

The Parable of the Potter

Just as God judges each individual based on the things done in the body whether good or evil (2Cor 5:10), He also does with nations. God revealed to Jeremiah that just as the free will of man leads to how God will deal with each individual, so also the freewill of the collective individuals that make up a nation also determine how God will deal with them. When a nation is good, God determines to bless them and when they are evil His righteous judgment will bring a curse on them.

*The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying: 2 "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words." 3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. 4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. 5 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 6 "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the Lord. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel! 7 **The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, 8 if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. 9 And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, 10 if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it. Jer. 18:1-10***

This is what made the preaching of the prophets so important. Repentance changed everything. God would bless any nation that repented and would destroy any nation that would not. Most of the prophecies found in the Old Testament are not Messianic. They are prophecies of God's assessment of a nation and what the future held for them. Most of the time these prophecies were

made against the divided nations of Israel and Judah. But entire books as well as chapters in other books are dedicated to the warnings to other nations that they too were in peril.

Noah to the Ancient World

Even before there were any nations, God was using the principles that are set forth in Jeremiah's "parable of the potter." God was aware of the universal nature of the evil at that time. Every description is a superlative "great," "every," "only," "corrupt" and "filled."

WICKEDNESS was **GREAT in the earth**

EVERY INTENT OF THE THOUGHTS of his heart

ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY.

The earth **CORRUPT** before God

earth was **FILLED** with VIOLENCE

*Then the Lord saw that **the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.** 6 And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Gen. 6:5-8*

***The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.** 12 So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, "**The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.** Gen 6:11-13*

God chose to deal with this on a **universal level**. This was no longer simply an individual problem, but a global one. Even though there were multitudes of individuals they were all acting collectively and therefore were deal with collectively.

God sent a prophet to give them an opportunity to repent globally, but also gave each individual the opportunity to repent. Peter called Noah "a preacher of righteousness." Both his preaching and the building of the ark (a sign similar to that of Jonah) were a warning of impending doom, which both collectively and individually they chose to ignore.

did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; 2Pet. 2:5-6

The entire time the ark was being built was a time of longsuffering in which God tolerated their wickedness and each day gave them the opportunity to repentant be forgiven. But that longsuffering ended when the ark was completed and after all the animals and Noah's family entered, God closed the door.

who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. 21 There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1Pet. 3:18-21

Their preappointed time came to an end when the ark was prepared and God closed the door to grace, mercy and forgiveness.

*7 So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood. ... 13 On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and **Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark** — ... 16 and the Lord shut him in. Gen. 7:7, 13, 16*

The Beginning of Nations

The beginning of nations developed because man once again did something that God saw as rebellion. We don't know exactly what it was. God had told Noah to fill the earth and they did not want to be scattered over the earth. But from the context it seems like there was something more. A pride of life, or a seed that God saw leading to the same outcome of evil. For that reason God changed their languages and scattered them over all the earth.

1 Now the **whole earth had one language and one speech.** ... 4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." 5 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, **and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.** 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. 9 Therefore its name is called Babel, because there **the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.** Gen. 11:1; 4-9

This is one of the ways that God could fulfill His promise to never destroy the entire earth in a flood again. From that point on, God would use one nation against another and never need to destroy the all at one time again.

Abraham — A Great Nation

Soon after the nations went their own ways, They again turned to corrupt ways. It appears that though Romans is not speaking exclusively of this event, it was the first of the many times it has happened since.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For **since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.** Amen. Rom. 1:18-25*

By the time Abraham was born, every indication is that the nations around him were exactly as described in Romans. They were worshipping and serving the creature and bowing to idols. Sodom and Gomorrah were already far given into uncleanness as also the seven nations of Canaan. God called Abram and gave him to promise to become a great nation.

*Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. 2 **I will make you a great nation;** I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Gen. 12:1-3*

When God called Abram He also promised to bring the seed promised to Eve. Even though this new nation was only in its infancy with the promised seed (Isaac) yet unborn, God was already speaking of what he had made Abraham: The father of man nations.

*Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17 (as it is written, "**I have made you a father of many nations**") in the presence of Him whom he believed — **God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;** Rom. 4:16-18*

Abraham – Seven Nations of Canaan, Egypt, Sodom and Gomorrah

God then revealed to Abram, how He would use other nations to facilitate these plans. He revealed that Abraham's descendants would be in the nation of Egypt for 400 years. God had so clear a picture of what was going to occur that He could speak things there were not as though they were. He knew that Egypt would oppress and afflict the descendants of Abraham. He knew as He judged Egypt with the 10 plagues that they would not repent when of these judgments. He also revealed

that it would take 400 years for these things to come to pass and the iniquity of the seven nations of Canaan be complete to that Israel could dispossess them.

*Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that **your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.**" Gen. 15:13-16*

God then revealed to Abraham that He could and would still use natural catastrophes to bring some nations to an end. The wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah were crying out to God to be dealt with. God made it clear nothing would be done until a careful assessment is made, and Abraham sought to move God to mercy by his prayers.

*And the Lord said, "**Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, 18 since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.**" 20 And the Lord said, "**Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.**" Gen. 18:17-21*

The remainder of the Old Testament is the development of these plans. Plans we would know nothing about except that He revealed them through the prophets.

Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.
Amos 3:7

Everything we know about God's plans and works is revealed by these men in the prophets. The Old Testament is therefore not only an unfolding of the scheme of redemption, but also the unveiling of God's working with nations and individuals.

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Rom. 15:4

Prophecy - Nations- 2

*And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has **determined** their **preappointed times** and **the boundaries of their dwellings**, 27 **so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him**, though He is not far from each one of us; Acts 17:26-27*

God Rules in the Kingdoms of Men

As we draw some conclusions based on the above, we learn that God determined when a nation would begin and when it would end(**preappointed times**). Not only that but also how large or small that nation would become(**boundaries of their dwellings**).

Not only does the Holy Spirit through Paul sum this up with there is “*no authority*” in existence “*except from God*” and the “*authorities that do exist are appointed by God,*” but also adds another dimension. These nations are designed by God to be an ever present reminder of His wrath on those who do evil. They are God’s ministers (*diakonos* -deacon) to execute wrath on all who practice evil.

*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For **there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.** 2 **Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves....** 4 **For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.** Rom. 13:1-4*

Although we know there is time and chance in the world today (Ecc. 9:11), we are also told “*He rules over the nations*” and “*rules in the kingdom of men.*” He gives the rule and power to whomever He wishes. Again, as Paul revealed in Athens, All of this is done to save as many as possible and help as many as possible to find Him.

God used Nebuchadnezzar to teach all the living to understand these things. God truly rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses.

*'This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, **In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.'** Dan 4:15*

God had expected his son Belshazzar to understand these truths as he had so clearly learned them. But since Belshazzar ignored them God gave a much sterner lesson, one we would all do well to consider. God brought the Babylon kingdom to an end that very night (God foreknowledge and providence in action — It was already set up before it occurred).

*They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, **till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.** 22 **"But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this.** 23 **And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. ... Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.** 25 **"And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.** 26 **This is the interpretation of each word. Mene: **God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it;** 27 **Tekel: **You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting;** 28 **Peres: **Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.**" Dan. 5:21-23*******

Not only did God know that it was going to the Medes and Persians, but He had already named its first king, Cyrus as His shepherd who would be the one who would free God’s people from Babylon and allow them to rebuild the Temple. God names Cyrus through His prophet Isaiah more than 150 years before the events occurred. In His naming God says a lot about the things we have been discussing in this class. It is God who will open the gates and give him Babylon. This was done so that Cyrus would know and all of us who have faith would know that God does rule in the kingdoms of men. Yet so much more:

"That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; 7 I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and

create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things.”

28 Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid.'" 45 "Thus says the Lord to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held — To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut: 2 'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron. 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the Lord, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel. 4 For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. 5 I am the Lord, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, 6 That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; 7 I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things.' Isa. 44:28; 45:1-7

This is the basic framework for all the nations. It will continue until the end of the age, since nothing has changed. God still wants all to grope after and find him. He wants all men to be saved and none to perish. For all these reasons, God is still working in the nations today.

The Prophets Reveal God's Work among the Nations

Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.
Amos 3:7

Everything we know about God's plans and works is revealed by these prophets. The Old Testament is therefore not only an unfolding of the scheme of redemption, but also the unveiling of how God works with the nations.

God revealed to Moses the meaning of His words to Abram about the Amorites.

According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. 4 You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the Lord your God. 5 You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord. Lev. 18:3-5

God then revealed the “doings of the land of Egypt” and the “doings of the land of Canaan.” Every form of incest in the family, along with adultery, the sacrifice of children and either a man or a woman have sex with a beast.

'Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. 25 For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. 26 You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you 27 (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), 28 lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. 29 For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people. Lev. 18:3-5; 24-29

The second critical thing God is aware of is the taking of human life. Two things seem to be important in the initial passage. First, God demands a reckoning for every murder. Whether man or beast, it must be dealt with. The only way for it to be dealt with is “by man his blood shall be shed;” This is a direct command for capital punishment. When murder occurs the only reckoning God will accept is the death of the murderer by the hands of man.

“Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. 6 “Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God he made man.
Gen. 9:5-6

Moses' takes this command and explains how this applies to the nations. Blood defiles the land. As with

Abel, that blood cries out from the ground, and God can hear that cry. The only way to deal with that cry of defilement is by capital punishment.

'So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. 34 'Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.'" Num. 35:33-34

These are the basic principles God has given us through the prophets. When we add to this the reasons for the destruction of the ancient world (violence, every thought evil) and Sodom and Gomorrah we have a clear picture of what God looks at when He makes His decisions.

Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had **pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.** 50 And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit. Ezek. 16:49-50

as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having **given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh,** are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Jude 7

As God's Chosen Nation the Standards were Higher

Since Israel was the vehicle for God's eternal purpose they are a special case. They are God's holy nation set apart for His service. They were given the same rules as all other nations, with the addition of the Law of Moses that was designed to keep them separate until the seed should come. God sternly warned them that of whom much is given much is expected.

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. Deut. 28:1-2

15 "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: ... 25 "The Lord will cause you to be **defeated before your enemies;** you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. ... 33 **A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit of your land and the produce of your labor, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually.** 34 So you shall be driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see. ... The Lord will **bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, 50 a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young.** Deut. 28:15, 25, 33-34 49-50

Although they just wanted to be given up and become like the other nations, God told them that that would never be.

What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, 'We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone.' Ezek. 20:32

Prophecy - Nations- 3

*And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has **determined** their **preappointed times** and **the boundaries of their dwellings**, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; Acts 17:26-27*

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Judges in Israel - The Cycle that Plagued Israel until Babylon

Within one generation after the death of Joshua, the cycle which would characterize Israel’s service to God until the Babylonian Captivity. The faithfulness of their fathers gave way to their own apostasy. God’s anger led to raising up a nation as an adversary who would oppress Israel until they repented. Then Lord then raised up a judge who would deliver them, but when the judge died they would revert and worship idols again.

*10 When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, **another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.** 11 Then **the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals;** ... 14 **And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and ... when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; ... it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them.** They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way. Judg 2:10-19*

During the days of the judges, God used those who were not driven out by Israel and other nations surrounding them to conquer and oppress them. The purpose of these nations: **(this was only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it)**, God needed His people to know about war.

***Now these are the nations which the Lord left, that He might test Israel by them, that is, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan** 2 **(this was only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it),** 3 namely, **five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites** who dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath. 4 And they were left, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. Judg. 3:1-4*

The Rise of the Kings

The shift from judges to prophets happened with their rebellion of asking for a king. This was why Samuel is considered the last judge and the first prophet. When they asked for the king, they

wanted the king to be the one to judge them.

Now it came to pass **when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel.** 2 The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. 3 **But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.** 4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5 and said to him, "**Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.**" 6 **But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us."** 1 Sam 8:1-6

Samuel saw this as the direct application of their request. They did not come to complain about the wickedness and ask for them to be removed and wait for God to select the next judge. Instead they wanted a king of their own choosing to be the judge over them. His cry to God is not revealed but God's answer reveals it. "*They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me.*" God rightly saw this as a rejection of His order and plan. Prior to this God chose the judge. When they were needed and who they were was in His hands. Now these people want to change that order. They are rejecting God just as surely as men do today when they replace "*elders in every church*" and Jesus the chief shepherd, with a central headquarters and a man on earth doing what only Jesus was chosen to do. God concludes by adding that this request was in the same mode as they had done ever since they left Egypt. Korah sought to replace Moses and God showed His displeasure. They have now done the same to Samuel.

So Samuel prayed to the Lord. 7 And the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; **for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.** 8 **According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day — with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods — so they are doing to you also.** 1 Sam 8:6-9

Before God revealed Saul to Israel, and just before Saul's coronation, Samuel again spoke of the terrible consequence of asking for a king. Yet the people refused to repent.

"Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you.' 19 **But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, 'No, set a king over us!'** 1Sam 10:18-19

*Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the Lord, and He will send thunder and rain, **that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking a king for yourselves.*** 1Sam 12:17

Many years later the full damage of this decision was spoken by God. After they chose this king, there were three kings (Saul, David, and Solomon), who reigned over a united Israel. Solomon's treachery revealed the folly of replacing God with a king. Then God chose Jeroboam who "drove Israel from serving God.

At the end of the 10 tribes, God spoke of this moment. He reminds them that God truly is the only King. When they spoke to their judges (Samuel) about wanting a king, God gave it to them in their anger and now after all the terrible things their king had done he took them away in His wrath.

*"O Israel, you are destroyed, But your help is from Me. 10 **I will be your King; Where is any other, That he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'?** 11 **I gave you a king in My anger, And took him away in My wrath.*** Hos 13:9-11

As God summed up the entire history of the 10 tribes it is directly attributed to their kings. Because of the wickedness of Solomon, God sought to help them by giving them another king. But that king "*drove Israel from following the Lord.*" They never recovered from the influence of this evil king who set up calves and changed the worship of God. This is the danger of all central power structures to God's people. Only Jesus and God can be trusted to lead in this manner. Every time another form of government is sought the next step by those in power is to "drive them from following God" through their creeds that direct all the followers to do what is contrary to God's teaching.

And the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight. 21 For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them commit a great sin. 22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, 23 until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day. 2 Kings 17:20-23

The Prophets

There have always been prophets. The term was first used of Abraham and then Moses, but Jesus took the prophets all the way back to Abel and Jude to Enoch.

that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Luke 11:50-51

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." Jude 14-15

Vine gives us a comprehensive description of prophets as the "mouths" of God who spoke for Him.

"*nabi*^o represents "prophet," whether a true or false prophet (cf. Deut 13:1-5). True prophets were mouthpieces of the true God. In 1 Chron 29:29 three words are used for "prophet": "Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the Book of Samuel the Seer [*ro^oeh*] and in the Book of Nathan the Prophet [*nabi*^o], and in the Book of Gad the Seer [*chozeh*]." The words translated "seer" emphasize the means by which the "prophet" communicated with God but do not identify the men as anything different from prophets (cf. 1 Sam 9:9).

The second occurrence of *nabi*^o establishes its meaning: "And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet" Ex 7:1. The background of this statement is Ex 4:10-16, where Moses argued his inability to speak clearly. Hence, he could not go before Pharaoh as God's spokesman. God promised to appoint Aaron (Moses' brother) to be the speaker: "And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God" Ex 4:16. Ex 7:1 expresses the same idea in different words. It is clear that the word "prophet" is equal to one who speaks for another, or his mouth. (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words OT: 5030

With the advent of the kings, those who were sent to God to speak to the kings or the people about their behavior were all identified as prophets. Nathan was the prophet who worked with David and Ahijah was sent at the end of Solomon's reign to work with Jeroboam. These spokesmen were sent to bring God's message of good or evil to those to whom God sent them.

Nathan - 2 Sam 7:2

Elijah - 1 Kings 18:26

Gad - 1 Sam 22:5

Micaiah - 1 Kings 22:7-8

Ahijah - 1 Kings 11:29

Elisha - 2 Kings 5:8

During the reign of Ahab with Jezebel as his queen, God chose Elijah to come and reveal to him the consequences of his wicked actions. He appears to tell him that God has chosen to withhold the rain from Israel. God has sent him to reveal to Ahab that rain can only come at the word of this prophet so he must heed him if he wants rain. This culminated in the conflict with Jezebel's prophets that ended in their death. When the discouraged Elijah went to Sinai and pleaded with God, He gave him three individuals who would help him. The first was a king in Syria who would be used to help bring down and chasten Ahab's house. The second was the king who would replace this dynasty that began with Omri by killing all the offspring of Ahab and also would kill wicked Jezebel.

Then the Lord said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you

arrive, **anoint Hazael as king over Syria.** 16 Also you shall **anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel.** And **Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.** 1 Kings 19:15-17

The “Literary” Prophets

This term has been coined by scholars to describe those prophets who wrote books. They are mostly used to describe the 4 major prophets and the 12 minor prophets. While most of these prophets were sent to Judah or Israel, some of them were sent to other nations as well, to reveal God’s plans to them.

Major Prophets (5)

	Chapters	Pages	
1. Isaiah	66	61	Many different nations. (Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, etc.)
2. Jeremiah	52	57	Many (Egypt, Babylon, Edom, Syria, Ammon, Moab,
3. Lamentations	5	6	
4. Ezekiel	48	45	Many different nations. (Egypt, Edom, etc.)
5. Daniel	12	15	Many different nations (Medo Persia, Greece Rome)

Minor Prophets (12)

1. Hosea	12	9	(Israel)
2. Joel	3	3.5	(Judah)
3. Amos	9	6.5	(Israel, Damascus, Philistines, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab)
4. Obadiah	1	1	Judah, Israel)
5. Jonah	4	2	(Nineveh)
6. Micah	7	5	(Judah, Isarel)
7. Nahum	3	2	(Nineveh)
8. Habakkuk	3	2.75	(Judah, Babylon)
9. Zephaniah	3	3	(Judah, Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, Assyria)
10. Haggai	2	1.5	(Judah)
11. Zechariah	14	8	(Judah)
12. Malachi	4	3	(Judah)

God’s Use of the Nations to Fulfill His purpose

The final instrument against Israel was Assyria, which Isaiah the prophet makes clear is the instrument God used to punish Israel.

5 Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! 6 I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to

take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few. 8 For he saith, Are not my princes all of them kings? 9 Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? 10 As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; 11 shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? Isa 10:5-11

Yet they would not go unpunished, for though they were doing exactly what God wanted them to do it was not in their heart to do it for God but for their own gods and their own pleasure.

Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. 13 For he hath said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I have understanding: and I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and like a valiant man I have brought down them that sit (on thrones): 14 and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples; and as one gathereth eggs that are forsaken, have I gathered all the earth: and there was none that moved the wing, or that opened the mouth, or chirped. 15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? shall the saw magnify itself against him that wieldeth it? as if a rod should wield them that lift it up, (or) as if a staff should lift up (him that is) not wood. 16 Therefore will the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory there shall be kindled a burning like the burning of fire. Isa 10:12-17

Jonah to Nineveh

We must not overlook God's work with nations that were actually extended or helped by these prophets. Nineveh repented at the words of Jonah.

When God sent Jonah to preach to Nineveh, it was a warning to them to repent or be destroyed.

*Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and **preach to it the message that I tell you.**" 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. 4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "**Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!**" Jonah 3:1-4*

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.... 10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it. Jon. 3:5, 10

Jesus' Death

What is important to understand is that though God knows these things, they are not fixed because of His knowledge. They are fixed because God knows that no matter how hard He tries to help, it will be to no avail.

Jesus worked as hard as possible to convert and to sway Israel and its leaders to come back to God. It was not a lack of effort that led to this outcome but the hardened hearts of those in that day. All God had to do is allow things to take their natural course and this would be the outcome. Not even the power of John the baptism and Jesus could change it.

him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: Acts 2:23

For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. Acts 4:27-29

The Prophets Revealed the Love and Righteousness of God

Even though God already knows the outcome, out of love, mercy and righteousness He reveals it to them anyway.

And the Lord God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. 2Chr. 36:15-16

Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. 26 Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. 27 "Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you. Jer. 7:25-27

Every prophecy in the Old Testament, both to Israel, Judah and the surrounding nations were a sincere invitation by God to forsake their ways and return to Him for blessings. While many failed, some succeeded, but the outcome was always in the hands of those who received the message.

We see God's feelings when He spoke to Jonah. Although the souls of men and the eternal purpose of God are of the highest consideration, God also cares about the affects his judgments have on those who are innocent.

But the Lord said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left — and much livestock?" Jonah 4:10-11

Thus one of the primary purposes of the prophets was to bring Israel back to repentance and to warn the nations around them of their peril.

Yet **Jehovah testified** unto Israel, and unto Judah, **by every prophet, and every seer**, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, 2 Kings 17:13-16

Yet **he sent prophets to them**, to **bring them again** unto Jehovah; and **they testified against them**: but they would not give ear. 2 Chr 24:17-19

they were disobedient, ... and slew thy prophets that **testified against them to turn them again unto thee**, and they wrought great provocations. Neh 9:26

Yet many years didst thou bear with them, and **testified against them by thy Spirit through thy prophets**: yet would they not give ear: Neh 9:30-31

Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, **I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them**: 26 yet they hearkened not unto me, Jer 7:25-27; 25:3-7; 26:4-6

The **prophets that have been before me** and before thee of old **prophesied against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence**. Jer 28:8; 44:4-7

O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away. 5 **Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets**; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are (as) the light that goeth forth. 6 for I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings. Hosea 6:4-6