

The Major Prophets

The Prophets of Israel Viewed as a Whole

Their Designation

The first division of the Old Testament was known as the Law with the second being called the Former Prophets, but these included four books which have already been outlined—Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Though these books deal with the history of Israel, they were composed from a prophetic viewpoint and possibly even the authors themselves may have been prophets by profession.

The seventeen books considered in this section were classified in the Hebrew Bible as the Latter Prophets. The term 'latter' speaks primarily of their place in the canon rather than of their chronological position. These prophets are sometimes called *the writing prophets* because their authors wrote or recorded their utterances. There were other *oral prophets* like Nathan, Ahijah, Iddo, Jehu, Elijah, Elisha, Oded, Shemaiah, Azariah, Hanani, Jahaziel, and Huldah who left no records of their utterances. Mostly because of their size, the Latter Prophets are subdivided into the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel), and the twelve Minor Prophets, whose writings could all be included in one large scroll which came to be known in Greek as the *Do„decaprophe„ton*, "the Twelve-Prophet Book").⁵⁰ Daniel, usually viewed as one of the Major Prophets in the English Bible, actually appears in the third division of the Hebrew Canon called "the Writings."

Lamentations will also be dealt with here because of its place in the English Bible, though in the Hebrew Bible it is among the five rolls or *megilloth*, the shorter books, which were brief enough to be read publicly on anniversaries.

Their Description

The authors of these books were described or referred to by a number of terms due to the nature of their ministry and calling. They were called prophets, seers, watchmen, men of God, messengers, and servants of the Lord. Unger writes:

According to I Samuel 9:9 the prophet was in earlier Israel commonly called a *ro'eh*, that is one who perceives that which does not lie in the realm of natural sight or hearing. Another early designation of similar etymology was a *hozeh* "one who sees supernaturally" (II Samuel 24:11). Later the Hebrew seer was more commonly called a *nabhi'* (I Samuel 9:9). This popular name is to be related the Accadian *nabu*, "to call or announce," either passively, as Albright (*From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 1940, pp. 231 ff.), "one who is called" (by God), or actively with Koenig (*Hebraeisches und Aramaeisches Woerterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 1936, p. 260), "an announcer" (for), or preferably with Guillaume (*Prophecy and Divination*, 1938, pp. 112f), who construes the term to mean that the prophet is the passive recipient of a message manifest in his condition as well as in his speech, and is "one who is in the state of announcing a message which has been given to him" (by God).⁵¹

As can be seen from Unger's comments, a certain amount of uncertainty exists regarding the exact meaning of the word "prophet." The word *prophet* is from the Hebrew *ayb]n** (*nabi*). The

⁵⁰ Archer, Electronic Media.

⁵¹ Unger, pp. 306-307.

deviation of this word is a matter of controversy, but the essential idea in the word is that of an *authorized spokesman*. This is clear, not from the etymology of this word which has been lost in antiquity, but from its use in three Old Testament passages: (1) **Exodus 6:28-7:2**. When Moses objected to being the spokesman for God to Pharaoh, God appointed Aaron to be Moses prophet, i.e., his authorized spokesman. The issue here is one person speaking for another. (2) **Numbers 12:1-8**. Aaron and Miriam, perhaps out of jealousy, sought to supplant Moses as mediator of God's revelation with themselves (cf. Vs. 2), but God dramatically intervened to show He would speak directly with Moses alone and that He would also speak through those called *prophets* by dreams and visions. But the implication as to the meaning of "prophet" is clear. A true prophet is one who speaks for God to man. (3) **Deuteronomy 18:9-22**. Just before the death of Moses, we have the formal announcement of the office of the *nabi*, the prophet, on a continuing basis.⁵² These verses make it clear that the prophet is one who speaks forth the message which God has revealed to him.

Their Directive or Message

As a mouthpiece or spokesman for God, the prophet's primary duty was to speak forth God's message to God's people in the historical context of what was happening among God's people. The broadest meaning is that of *forthtelling*; the narrower meaning is that of *foretelling*. In the process of proclaiming God's message, the prophet would sometimes reveal that which pertained to the future, but, contrary to popular opinion, this was only a small part of the prophets message. *Forthtelling* involved *insight* into the will of God; it was *exhortative*, challenging men to obey. On the other hand, *foretelling* entailed *foresight* into the plan of God; it was *predictive*, either encouraging the righteous in view of God's promises or warning in view of coming judgment. So the prophet was the divinely chosen spokesman who, having received God's message, proclaimed it in oral, visual, or written form to the people. For this reason, a common formula used by the prophets was, "Thus says the Lord."

As God's spokesman, their message can be seen in a three-fold function they had among the people of God in the Old Testament:

First, they functioned as preachers who expounded and interpreted the Mosaic law to the nation. It was their duty to admonish, reprove, denounce sin, threaten with the terrors of judgment, call to repentance, and bring consolation and pardon. Their activity of rebuking sin and calling for repentance consumed far more of the prophets' time than any other feature of their work. The rebuke was driven home with predictions about the punishment that God intended to send on those failing to heed the prophet's warning (cf. Jonah 3:4).

Second, they functioned as predictors who announced coming judgment, deliverance, and events relating to the Messiah and His kingdom. Predicting the future was never intended merely to satisfy man's curiosity, but was designed to demonstrate that God knows and controls the future, and to give purposeful revelation. The prediction given by a true prophet would be visibly fulfilled. The failure of the prediction to be fulfilled would indicate that the prophet had not spoken the word of *Yahweh* (cf. Deut. 18:20-22). In 1 Samuel 3:19 it is said of Samuel that the Lord was with him and let none of his prophetic words fail (lit., "fall to the ground").

Finally, they functioned as watchmen over the people of Israel (Ezek. 3:17). Ezekiel stood as a watchman on the walls of Zion ready to trumpet a warning against religious apostasy. He warned the people against political and military alliances with foreign powers, the temptation to become

⁵² R. Laird Harris, L. Archer, Jr. Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 544.

involved in idolatry and Canaanite cultic worship, and the danger of placing excessive confidence in religious formalism and sacrificial ritual.

While the prophets functioned in various ways as they communicated God's message, *they occupied one major role* in Israel's religious system. The prophets in Israel occupied the role of *a royal diplomat or prosecuting attorney*, indicting the nation for violations of the Mosaic covenant.⁵³

A Comparison of the Four Major Prophets⁵⁴

Comparison of the Four Major Prophets				
	Isaiah	Jeremiah	Ezekiel	Daniel
Prophesied To:	Jews in Judea	Jews in Judea and captivity	Jews captive in Babylon	Jews captive in Babylon and Gentile kings
Concerning:	Judah and Jerusalem (Isa. 1:1; 2:1)	Judah and Nations (Jer. 1:5, 9-10; 2:1-2)	The whole house of Israel (Ezek. 2:3-6; 3:4-10, 17)	Israel and Gentile Nations (Dan. 2:36ff; 9)
During the reigns of:	Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah (kings of Judah)	Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah (kings of Judah)	Zedekiah (king of Judah); Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon)	Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah (kings of Judah). Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon)
Dates:	740-680 B.C.	627-585 B.C.	592-570 B.C.	605-536 B.C.
Historical Setting:	2 Kings 15-21; 2 Chronicles 26-30	2 Kings 22-25	Daniel 1-6	Daniel 1-6

A Review of the Old Testament's Anticipation of Christ⁵⁵

By way of review, it would be well to remember that the **Law** laid the *foundation* for Christ by the election (Genesis), redemption (Exodus), sanctification (Leviticus), direction (Numbers), and instruction (Deuteronomy) of the nation of Israel as the custodians of the oracles of God (Rom. 3:1) and the channel for Messiah (Gen. 12:1f; Rom. 9:4-5).

Then further preparation for Christ was given in the **Historical Books** by giving the nation the Land of Israel for their possession (Joshua). The nation was then oppressed by foreign nations and was unfaithful, still God raised up judges and found faithfulness in the nation (Ruth). Stabilization was given to the nation under king Saul (1 Samuel), then expansion under king David (2 Samuel), and glorification of the nation under Solomon's reign (1 Kings 1-10). This was followed with division in the nation (1 Kings 11-22) into the northern 10 tribes and the southern tribes of Judah and

⁵³ Carl Laney, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Oct.-Dec. 1981, p. 315-316.

⁵⁴ The following chart comparing the four major prophets is taken from *The Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody Press, 1995, p. 1151.

⁵⁵ Though not quoted verbatim, the focus here was taken from Norman L. Geisler's, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1977, pp. 227-228.

Benjamin. These both suffered deterioration (2 Chronicles) resulting eventually in *deportation* by Assyria and Babylon (2 Kings). Consequently, the Temple suffered *deprivation* (1 Chronicles) and destruction (2 Chronicles). However, God's faithfulness to His promises remained and so there was *reconstruction* of the Temple (Ezra) and *restoration* of a remnant of the nation to the land (Nehemiah) followed by *protection* of God's people (Esther).

All the while, in the **Poetical Books** there was always *spiritual aspiration* for Christ with the moral foundation being laid in the Law and the national framework being developed in the books of History.

Through the **Prophetical Books** we have the nation of Israel, through the prophets, looking forward with great *expectation* to Christ. This is done in the following ways:

The earlier prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos) expect a *national restoration* by the Messiah. Isaiah and Micah predict *international salvation* through the coming of Christ. But Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah warn of God's *retribution on the nations*. Lamentations grieves over God's *retribution on His people* but Jeremiah looks for a *covenantal reaffirmation* in Christ. Ezekiel expects the nation's *religious restoration* and Daniel predicts its *political restoration*. After the Babylonian captivity Haggai and Zechariah exhort the people in their *religious reconstruction* and Malachi in their *social and moral reconstruction*, as they await the coming of the "sun of righteousness [that] shall rise, with healing in its wings" (Mal. 4:2).⁵⁶

ISAIAH (The Salvation of *Yahweh*)

Author:

As the book clearly declares, the author is Isaiah, the son of Amoz, an apparently influential and distinguished Jewish family. Isaiah but he appears to have been on familiar terms with the royal court even in the reign of Ahaz. He was evidently a well-educated student of international affairs, who spent most of his time in the city of Jerusalem, where he rubbed shoulders with royalty and gave advice on foreign affairs because he was so in touch with the crosscurrents of world affairs. Though often scoffed at, being directed by God, he vigorously opposed any entangling alliances with foreign powers (whether with Assyria as against Samaria and Damascus, or with Egypt as against Assyria). As warned by the Lord in chapter six, his cause was doomed to failure, for both government and people chose to put their trust in the political alliances of man rather than in the sure person and promises of God.

An old tradition relates that he was martyred at some time in the reign of Manasseh, possibly by being sawed in two inside a hollow log (d. Heb. 11:37). Since he records the death of Sennacherib in Isa. 37:37-38, it is fair to assume that Isaiah lived until after Sennacherib's death in 681 B.C.⁵⁷

The unity of the book of Isaiah has been challenged by liberal critics who hold that a "Deutero-Isaiah" wrote chapters 40-66 after the Babylonian captivity. Concerning the various viewpoints of the critics, Ryrie writes.

Much dispute has arisen over the authorship of chaps. 40-66. Some assign the entire section to a "Deutero-Isaiah," who lived around 540 B.C. (after the Babylonian captivity). Others see a "Trito-Isaiah," who wrote chaps. 56-66. Still others see inser-

⁵⁶ Geisler, p. 228.

⁵⁷ Archer, Electronic Media.

tions and editing as late as the first century B.C., a position difficult to maintain in view of the discovery of the Qumran Isaiah scroll dated in the second century B.C.

These suggestions attempt to eliminate the supernatural element necessary for predictive prophecy. Hence, the Babylonian captivity and the return under a Persian king (specifically named Cyrus) are not viewed as being predicted 150 years in advance, but as happenings recorded after the events. But even if one were to grant such a conclusion, it would not invalidate predictive prophecy. The name of King Josiah was predicted by a prophet three centuries before his time (1 Kings 13:2), and Bethlehem was named as the birthplace of Messiah seven centuries before the event (Mic. 5:2). In addition, there is predictive prophecy in chaps. 1-39 of Isaiah (see 7:16; 8:4,7; 37:33-35; 38:8 for prophecies soon fulfilled and 9:1-2; 13:17-20 for prophecies of the more distant future).

If "Deutero-Isaiah" lived in Babylon, as is claimed, he shows little knowledge of Babylonian geography but great familiarity with Palestine (41:19; 43:14; 44:14). Further, it is asserted that differences in language and style can only be accounted for by assuming different authors, a theory which, if applied to Milton, Goethe, or Shakespeare, would force us to conclude that many of their writings were spurious. On the contrary, one can point out 40 or 50 sentences and phrases that appear in both sections of the book and that therefore argue for single authorship (cf. 1:20 with 40:5 and 58:14; 11:6-9 with 65:25; 35:6 with 41:18, etc.).

To claim two or more authors for this book is also to contradict the evidence of the New Testament. Quotations from chaps. 40-66 are found in Matthew 3:3; 12:17-21; Luke 3:4-6; Acts 8:28; Romans 10:16, 20, and all are attributed to Isaiah. Moreover, in John 12:38-41, quotations from Isaiah 6:9-10 and 53:1 appear together, and both are ascribed to the Isaiah who saw the Lord in the Temple vision of chap. 6. We must therefore conclude that the same author was responsible for the entire book and that no part of it was written at the time of the Babylonian captivity.⁵⁸

For more on this issue, see Gleason Archer's coverage in his work, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Updated and Revised Edition, 1994, Moody Bible Institute, Paperback Edition.

Date:

740-680 B.C.

Isaiah had a very long ministry that ranged from around 740 to 680. His ministry began near the end of the reign of Uzziah (790-739 B.C.) and continued through the reigns of Jotham (739-731 B.C.), Ahaz (731-715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.). From the standpoint of Gentile rulers of the time, Isaiah ministered from the time of Tiglath-pileser (745-727 B.C.) to the time of Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) of Assyria.

He outlived Hezekiah by a few years because chapter 37, verse 38, records the death of Sennacherib in 681 B.C. Hezekiah was succeeded by his wicked son Manasseh who overthrew the worship of *Yahweh* and no doubt opposed the work of Isaiah.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ryrie, pp.1044-1045.

⁵⁹ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 191.

Title of the Book:

The title, *Isaiah*, is obviously taken from the name of the human author who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, composed it. The Hebrew name of this prophet, Yesha'yahu, means *Yahweh* is salvation, which appropriately, is an excellent summary of the theme and contents of the book.

Theme and Purpose:

As just mentioned, Isaiah's name provides the theme of the book, "salvation is of *Yahweh*." This is most evident by the fact the term "salvation" occurs some twenty-six times in Isaiah but only seven times in all the other prophets combined. Because of this, Isaiah has been called "the evangelical prophet" because he says so much about the salvation and redemptive work of Messiah. In fact, more is said about the person and work of Messiah in His first and second advents than in any other Old Testament book. In some respects, Isaiah is a miniature Bible. It has sixty-six chapters while the Bible has sixty-six books. The first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah correspond to the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament which largely anticipate the coming of Messiah. The last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah neatly parallel the twenty-seven chapters of the New Testament because they speak a great deal about Messiah and His Kingdom as the Servant of the Lord. Chapters 1-39 speak of man's great need of salvation while chapters 40-66 reveal God's provision of Salvation in Messiah and His kingdom.

Summarizing the theme and content, Archer writes:

Appropriately enough, the basic theme of Isaiah's message is that salvation is bestowed only by grace, by the power of God, the Redeemer, rather than by the strength of man or the good works of the flesh. The holy God will not permit unholiness in His covenant people, and will therefore deal with them in such a way as to chasten and purge them and make them fit to participate in His program of redemption. Isaiah sets forth the doctrine of Christ in such full detail that he has rightly been described as "the evangelical prophet." Deeper Christological insights are to be found in his work than anywhere else in the Old Testament.⁶⁰

Key Word:

Again in keeping with the theme and Isaiah's name, the key word is *salvation*.

Key Verses:

7:14. "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

9:6-7. For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

53:4-7. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening

⁶⁰ Archer, Electronic Media.

for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

Key Chapters:

Chapter 53: With a book so full of rich truth and Messianic anticipation, deciding of a key chapter is not easy, but surely Isaiah 53 which points to Messiah as a suffering Savior who must die for our sin, is the most remarkable and key chapters of the Old Testament.

Key People:

Isaiah the prophet is the key human personage, but *Yahweh* by the way He is focused on as the *Mighty One of Israel*, as the *Holy One of Israel*, and as the *Lord God of Hosts*, is clearly the chief focus of Isaiah's book.

Christ as seen in Isaiah:

No book of the Old Testament presents a portrait of Christ that is as complete and comprehensive as does Isaiah. Isaiah portrays Messiah in His sovereignty above (6:1f), birth and humanity (7:14; 9:6; 11: 1), in His ministry by the Spirit (11:2f), His divine nature (7:14; 9:6); His Davidic descent (11:1); His work of redemption as our substitute (53), His ministry as the Servant Savior (49ff), and much more.

Outline:

Due to the size of Isaiah, we will restrict the outline to major sections.

- I. Prophecies of Denunciation and Judgment (1:1-39:8)
 - A. Prophecies Against Judah (1:1-12:6)
 1. The Condemnation of Judah (1:1-5:30)
 2. The Commission of the Prophet (6:1-13)
 3. The Coming of Messiah (7:1-12:6)
 - B. Prophecies Against Gentile Nations (13:1-23:18)
 1. Against Babylon (13:1-14:23)
 2. Against Assyria (14:24-27)
 3. Against Philistia (14:28-32)
 4. Against Moab (15:1-16:14)
 5. Against Damascus and Her Ally, Israel (17:1-14)
 6. Against Ethiopia (18:1-7)
 7. Against Egypt (19:1-20:6)
 8. Against Babylon (21:1-10)
 9. Against Edom (21:11-12)
 10. Against Arabia (21:13-17)
 11. Against Jerusalem (22:1-25)
 12. Against Tyre (23:1-18)
 - C. Prophecies of the Day of the Lord (24:1-27:13)
 1. Judgments of the Tribulation (24:1-23)
 2. The Triumphs and Blessings of the Kingdom (25:1-27:13)
 - D. Prophecies Against Israel and Judah (Woes and Blessings) (28:1-35:10)

1. Woe on Samaria (28:1-29)
2. Woe on Judah (29:1-31:9)
3. Behold Messiah and His Kingdom (32:1-20)
4. Woe to Assyria, the Spoiler of Jerusalem (33:1-24)
5. Woe to the Nations (34:1-17)
6. Behold the Coming Kingdom (35:1-10)
- E. Prophecies Against Sennacherib (36:1-39:8)
 1. The Taunt from Assyria (36:1-22)
 2. The Truth from God (37:1-7)
 3. The Threat from Assyria (37:8-35)
 4. The Triumph over Assyria (37:36-38)
 5. The Sickness of Hezekiah (38:1-22)
 6. The Stupidity of Hezekiah (39:1-8)
- II. Prophecies of Comfort or Consolation (40:1-66:24)
 - A. Prophecies of Israel's Deliverance and the Greatness of God (40:1-48:22)
 - B. Prophecy of Israel's Deliverer; the Salvation of the Suffering Servant (49:1-57:21)
 - C. Prophecies of Israel's Glorious Future; God's Program for Peace (58:1-66:24)

JEREMIAH (Warnings Against Sin and Judgment)

Author:

As with Isaiah, this book clearly identifies the human author who is Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah from the priest city of Anathoth in the land of Benjamin (1:1). Jeremiah dictated his prophecies to Baruch, his secretary. Only chapter 52 was not written by the prophet. Jeremiah is often called the "weeping prophet" (9:1; 13:17) or the "prophet of loneliness" perhaps because he was commanded not to marry (16:2). He is also known as the reluctant prophet (1:6), but he faithfully proclaimed God's judgments on an apostate Judah even though he experienced opposition, beatings, and imprisonment (11:18-23; 12:6; 18:18; 20:1-3; 26:1-24; 37:11-38:28).

Date:

627-585 B.C.

Jeremiah was a contemporary of Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel, and Ezekiel. His prophetic ministry began in 626 B.C. and ended sometime after 586. His ministry was immediately preceded by that of Zephaniah. Since Ezekiel began his ministry in Babylon in 593 he too was a late contemporary of this great prophet in Jerusalem. How and when Jeremiah died is unknown though Jewish tradition asserts that Jeremiah was put to death while living in Egypt (cf. Heb 11:37).

Title of the Book:

The book takes its name from its author, Jeremiah. "The name Jeremiah, Yirme-Ya„hu„, apparently means 'Jehovah establishes' (Orelli in ISBE), if the verb ra„ma, ("to throw") is to be understood in the sense of laying a foundation."⁶¹ But compare the following regarding Jeremiah's name:

The meaning of his name is uncertain. Suggestions include "The LORD exalts" and "The LORD establishes," but a more likely proposal is "The LORD throws," either in

⁶¹ Archer, Electronic Media.

the sense of “hurling” the prophet into a hostile world or of “throwing down” the nations in divine judgment for their sins.⁶²

Theme and Purpose:

Two themes are prominent: warnings of God’s judgment against sin are prominent throughout the book, but with that there was also the message of hope and restoration if the nation would genuinely repent.

As hinted earlier, an aura of conflict surrounded Jeremiah almost from the beginning. He lashed out against the sins of his countrymen (44:23), scoring them severely for their idolatry (16:10-13, 20; 22:9; 32:29; 44:2-3, 8, 17-19, 25)—which sometimes even involved sacrificing their children to foreign gods (7:30-34). But Jeremiah loved the people of Judah in spite of their sins, and he prayed for them (14:7, 20) even when the Lord told him not to (7:16; 11:14; 14:11).⁶³

Key Words or Ideas:

Judah’s last hour in view of backsliding and unfaithfulness. There are more references to Babylon in Jeremiah (164) than in all the rest of the Bible together.

Key Verses:

1:4-10. Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.” Then I said, “Alas, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, Because I am a youth.” But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ Because everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak. “Do not be afraid of them, For I am with you to deliver you,” declares the LORD. Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. “See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To pluck up and to break down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant.”

7:23-24. “But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.’ “Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward.

8:11-12. “And they heal the brokenness of the daughter of My people superficially, Saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ But there is no peace. “Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done? They certainly were not ashamed, And they did not know how to blush; Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time of their punishment they shall be brought down,” declares the LORD.

⁶² *NIV Study Bible*, General Editor, Kenneth Barker, Zondervan, 1985, p. 1115.

⁶³ *NIV Study Bible*, p. 1116.

Key Chapters:

In keeping with the suffering Jeremiah experienced, **chapter 1** is surely a key chapter in that it records the call of the prophet. Then **chapter 23** is key in that it gives the prophecy of the Messiah, the righteous branch who is seen in contrast to the wicked shepherds and lying prophets described in this same chapter. Twenty-four is another important chapter because it prophesies the Babylonian captivity which will last for seventy years. Finally, **chapters 31-32** are key in that they speak of restoration, the New Covenant when the Lord will "Put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; ..." (31:33)

Key People:

The key person throughout is of course Jeremiah, his preaching, resistance, and persecution.

Christ as seen in Jeremiah:

Many pictures of Christ are seen in Jeremiah: He is portrayed as the fountain of living waters (2:13; cf. John 4:14), the balm of Gilead (8:22), the Good Shepherd (23:4), a Righteous Branch (23:5), and the Lord our Righteousness (23:6). He is seen as the one who will bring in the New Covenant (31:31-34).

Another prophecy in Jeremiah has significant Messianic implications.

The curse on Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, Coniah) meant that no physical descendant would succeed him to the throne (22:28-30). Matthew 1:1-17 traces the genealogy of Christ through Solomon and Jeconiah to His legal (but not His physical) father Joseph, but no son of Joseph could sit upon the throne of David, for he would be under the curse of Jehoiachin. Luke 3:23-38 traces Christ's lineage backward from Mary (His physical parent) through David's other son Nathan (Luke 3:31), thereby avoiding the curse. The Righteous Branch will indeed reign on the throne of David.⁶⁴

Outline:

- I. Jeremiah's Call and Commission (1:1-19)
 - A. The Call (1:1-10)
 - B. The Confirmation of the Call (1:11-19)
- II. Prophecies to Judah (2:1-45:5)
 - A. The Condemnation of Judah (2:1-25:38)
 - 1. Judah's Willful Sin (2:1-3:5)
 - 2. Judah's Chastening (3:6-6:30)
 - 3. Judah's Wrong Religion (7:1-10:25)
 - 4. Judah's Breaking of God's Covenant (11:1-13:27)
 - 5. Judah's Coming Drought (14:1-15:9)
 - 6. Judah's Prophet Recommissioned (15:10-16:9)
 - 7. Judah's Sins (16:10-17:27)
 - 8. Judah and the Sovereign Potter (18:1-23)
 - 9. Judah as a Broken Jar (19:1-20:18)
 - 10. Judah's Kings (21:1-23:8)
 - 11. Judah's False Prophets (23:9-40)
 - 12. Judah's Captivity (24:1-25:38)

⁶⁴ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 200.

- B. The Conflicts of Jeremiah (26:1-29:32)
 - 1. Judah's Reaction to Jeremiah's Ministry (26:1-24)
 - 2. Judah's Advice from Jeremiah: Submit to Nebuchadnezzar (27:1-29:32)
- C. Judah's Hope of Restoration (30:1-33:26)
- D. Events Before the Fall of Jerusalem (34:1-38:28)
- E. The Fall of Jerusalem (39:1-18)
- F. Events After the Fall of Jerusalem (40:1-45:5)
- III. Prophecies to the Gentiles (46:1-51:64)
 - A. Prophecies Against Egypt (46:1-28)
 - B. Prophecies Against the Philistines (47:1-7)
 - C. Prophecies Against Moab (48:1-47)
 - D. Prophecies Against Ammon (49:1-6)
 - E. Prophecies Against Edom (49:7-22)
 - F. Prophecies Against Damascus (49:23-27)
 - G. Prophecies Against Arabia (49:28-33)
 - H. Prophecies Against Elam (49:34-39)
 - I. Prophecies Against Babylon (50:1-51:64)
- IV. Historical Supplement (52:1-34)
 - A. The Fate of Jerusalem (52:1-23)
 - B. The Fate of Certain People (52:24-34)

LAMENTATIONS (A River of Tears)

Author:

The author of Lamentations is unnamed in the book, but two lines of evidence favor Jeremiah as the author.

1. **External Evidence:** The consensus of Jewish tradition attribute the book to Jeremiah. The superscription to Lamentations in the Septuagint points to Jeremiah as the one weeping over the captivity and the desolation of Jerusalem.
2. **Internal Evidence:** That the author is an eyewitness of Jerusalem's siege and fall is clear from the graphic nature of the scenes portrayed in the book (cf. 1:13-15; 2:6, 9; 4:1-12). Further, there are a number of similarities between the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations (e.g., the phrase "daughter of" occurs about 20 times in each book). In addition, Jeremiah is connected with this type of literature in 2 Chronicles 35:25).

Date:

586 or 585 B.C.

Since the book was written soon after Jerusalem's destruction which was completed in 586, the earliest possible date for the book is 586 B.C. The graphic immediacy of Lamentations argues for a date shortly after this like 586 or 585 B.C.

Title of the Book:

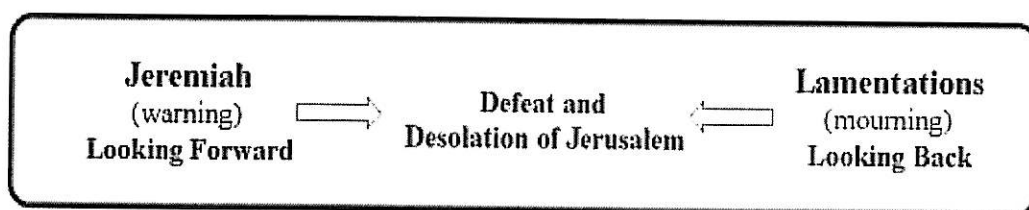
The Hebrew title of the book is *ae,ka*, ("How ... !"), the first word found in 1:1, 2:1; and 4:1. Because of its subject matter, the book is also referred to in Jewish tradition as *qinot*, "Lamentations," which is the title given to it in the Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate.

Theme and Purpose:

The primary theme of the book is a lament or mourning over the woes that had fallen on sinful Judah and the pitiable destruction of the holy city and the temple. God's promised judgment for Judah's sin has come. A second theme flows out of this of judgment for sin. Thus the prophet appeals to the chastened nation that they recognize God was just and righteous in His dealings with them, and that they cast themselves upon His mercy in a spirit of repentance.

Yahweh has poured out His wrath, but in His mercy He will be faithful to His covenant promises. "Though the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (3:22-23).⁶⁵

The special contribution of the prophet Jeremiah as seen in Jeremiah and Lamentations can be observed by a comparison of these two books:⁶⁶



Key Word:

In view of the theme and nature of the book, the key word is mourning or lamentations.

Key Verses:

2:5-6. The Lord has become like an enemy. He has swallowed up Israel; He has swallowed up all its palaces; He has destroyed its strongholds And multiplied in the daughter of Judah Mourning and moaning. And He has violently treated His tabernacle like a garden booth; He has destroyed His appointed meeting place; The LORD has caused to be forgotten The appointed feast and sabbath in Zion, And He has despised king and priest In the indignation of His anger.

3:21-24. This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him."

Key Chapters:

Surely **chapter 3** stands as a pinnacle in the midst of the other chapters of ruin and destruction for here the author expresses his faith and hope in God's mercy who will not reject His people forever.

⁶⁵ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 208.

⁶⁶ Adapted from Wilkinson and Boa, p. 209.

Christ as seen in Lamentations:

Lamentations includes two elements that portray the Savior: (1) It portrays Him as the Man of Sorrows who was acquainted with grief, who was afflicted, despised, and scorned by His enemies (cf. 1:12; 3:19; 2:15-16; 3:14, 30). (2) Jeremiah's weeping over the destruction of Jerusalem is perhaps also a picture of Christ who wept over Jerusalem (see Matt. 23:37-38).

Outline:

- I. The Destruction of Jerusalem (1:1-22)
 - A. The Lament of the Prophet (1:1-11)
 - B. The Lament of the City of Jerusalem (1:12-22)
- II. The Lord's Anger Against His People (2:1-22)
 - A. The Anger of God (2:1-10)
 - B. The Author's Lament (2:11-22)
- III. The Distraught Prophet (3:1-66)
 - A. His Lament (3:1-18)
 - B. His Hope (3:19-42)
 - C. His Suffering (3:43-54)
 - D. His Prayer (3:55-66)
- IV. The Defeated People of Jerusalem (4:1-22)
 - A. The Siege of the City (4:1-12)
 - B. The Reasons for the Siege (4:13-20)
 - C. The Hope for the Future (4:21-22)
- V. The Prayer for Restoration (5:1-22)
 - A. Confession (5:1-18)
 - B. Petition (5:19-22)

EZEKIEL (They Shall Know That I Am *Yahweh*)

Author:

The author is Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, who received his call as a prophet while in exile in Babylon (1:1-3). His ministry as a prophet demonstrates a priestly focus with his concern for the temple, priesthood, sacrifices, and the *shekinah* glory of God. What is known of Ezekiel is derived entirely from the book of Ezekiel itself. He was married (see 24:15-18), lived in a house of his own (cf. 3:24; 8:1) and, along with his fellow exiles, had a relatively free existence.

Date:

593-571 B.C.

The book of Ezekiel contains many dates so that its prophecies can be dated with considerable precision. Twelve of the 13 dates in the book specify the times when Ezekiel received his message from the Lord. The other date is of the arrival of the messenger who reported the fall of Jerusalem (33:21). Receiving his call as a prophet in July, 593 B.C., Ezekiel was active for 22 years. His last dated oracle was received in about 571.

Title of the Book:

As with Isaiah and Jeremiah, the book of Ezekiel gets its name from its author, Ezekiel, which is the Hebrew *yehezkeal* and means "God strengthens" or "strengthened by God."

Theme and Purpose:

Ezekiel's focus is on condemnation (1-32) for Israel's sin and consolation (33-48) in view of what God will do in the future. Archer summarize the theme:

The theme of Ezekiel's prophecy is that the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity are necessary measures for the God of grace to employ if He is to correct His disobedient people and draw them back from complete and permanent apostasy. But the day is coming when Jehovah will restore a repentant remnant of His chastened people and establish them in a glorious latter-day theocracy with a new temple.⁶⁷

Ryrie adds the following word that brings out another important element of his ministry:

Ezekiel's ministry was to keep before the exiles the sins that had brought God's judgment on them and to assure them of God's future blessing in keeping with His covenant. Chapters 1-24 were written before the fall of Jerusalem to remind his fellow captives that God's judgment on the city and Temple was surely coming. Chapters 33-48 contain prophecies of the still future restoration of Israel in the millennial kingdom.⁶⁸

Key Word:

While the key concept may be found in the word "restoration," the words "shall know that I am the Lord" occurs some 63 times. Other distinctive phrases that are repeated are "the word of the Lord came" (50 times), and "glory of the Lord" (10 times).

Key Verses:

36:24-30. "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. "And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. "Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. "And I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, that you may not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.

36:33-35. "Thus says the Lord GOD, "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. 34 "And the desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passed by. 35 "And they will say, "This desolate land has be-

⁶⁷ Archer, Electronic Media.

⁶⁸ Ryrie, pp. 1261.

come like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate, and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.'

Key Chapters:

Chapters **36-37** speak of the blessings that will come to the mountains of Israel followed by the hope of restoration of Israel in the vision of the valley of dry bones, which outlines the clear process of restoration of Israel's future.

Chapters **38-39** anticipate the great global conflict that will occur on the mountains of Israel but with Israel's enemies defeated by God.

Key People:

Ezekiel, son of Busi, a priest called to be prophet to Israel before and after the Babylonian captivity.

Christ as seen in Ezekiel:

Christ, the Messiah, is pictured as a tender sprig that will be planted on a high and lofty mountain (17:23-24), a picture similar to that of the Branch in Isaiah (11:1), in Jeremiah (23:5; 33:15), and in Zechariah (3:8; 6:12). Ezekiel also speaks of Messiah as the King who has the right to rule (21:26-27) and who will minister as the true Shepherd (34:11-31).

Outline:

Again, because the great length of this book, only the major sections will be outlined.

- I. The commission and Call of Ezekiel (11:3-27)
 - A. Ezekiel Beholds the Glory of God (1:1-28)
 - B. Ezekiel is Commissioned to the Word of God (2:1-3:27)
- II. Present Judgments on Jerusalem and Judah (4:1-24:27)
 - A. Four Signs of Coming Judgment (4:1-5:17)
 - B. Two messages of Coming Judgment (6:1-7:27)
 - C. Four Prophecies Through Visions (8:1-11:25)
 - D. The Certainty of Judgment With Their Causes Through Signs, Messages, and Parables (12:1-24:27)
- III. Prophecies Against Gentile Nations (25:1-32:32)
 - A. Against Ammon (25:1-7)
 - B. Against Moab (25:8-11)
 - C. Against Edom (25:12-14)
 - D. Against Philistia (25:15-17)
 - E. Against Tyre (26:1-28:19)
 - F. Against Sidon (28:20-26)
 - G. Against Egypt (29:1-32:32)
- IV. Prophecies of the Restoration of Israel (33:1-48:35)
 - A. The Return of Israel to the Land (33:1-39:29)
 - B. The Restoration of Israel in the Kingdom (40:1-48:35)

DANIEL (Israel's Ultimate Destiny)

Author:

As evident by Daniel's own claim (12:4) and by his use of the autobiographical first person from chapter 7:2 onward, Daniel is the author of this prophetic book. Archer points out:

Despite the numerous objections which have been advanced by scholars who regard this as a prophecy written after the event, there is no good reason for denying the sixth-century Daniel the composition of the entire work. This represents a collection of his memoirs made at the end of a long and eventful career which included government service from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar in the 590s to the reign of Cyrus the Great in the 530s. The appearance of Persian technical terms indicates a final recension of these memoirs at a time when Persian terminology had already infiltrated into the vocabulary of Aramaic. The most likely date for the final edition of the book, therefore, would be about 530 B.C., nine years after the Persian conquest of Babylon.⁶⁹

While a youth, Daniel was taken as a captive to Babylon in 605 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar. There he became a statesman in the court of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius. Though he did not occupy the office of a prophet, Christ identified him as a prophet (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14). As one who did not occupy the prophetic office, the book of Daniel is found in "the Writings," the third division of the Hebrew Bible rather than in "the Prophets."

Date:

537 B.C.

If Daniel is the author as the book claims, then it was written after the Babylonian captivity when Daniel and other young men were taken captive to Babylon in 605 when Nebuchadnezzar subdued Jerusalem. But for various reasons, this date has been disputed with many critics arguing that Daniel is a fraudulent book which was written in the time of the Maccabees in the second century B.C. rather than the sixth century B.C. Concerning the arguments against the authorship of Daniel in the sixth century Ryrie writes:

The first attack on the traditional sixth century B.C. date for the composition of the book came from Porphyry (A.D. 232-303), a vigorous opponent of Christianity, who maintained that the book was written by an unknown Jew who lived at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.). This view was widely promoted by scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the following reasons: it is alleged that Daniel could not have made these predictions, since they were accurately fulfilled and could therefore have been written only after the events occurred; Persian and Greek words used in the book would have been unknown to a sixth-century Jewish author; the Aramaic used in 2:4-7:28 belongs to a time after that of Daniel; and there are certain alleged historical inaccuracies. In answer, we observe that predictive prophecy is not only possible but expected from a true prophet of God. Since Daniel lived into the Persian period, he would have known Persian words. The presence of Greek words is easily accounted for, since one hundred years before Daniel, Greek mercenaries served in the Assyrian army under Esarhaddon (683) and in the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar. Recent discoveries of fifth cen-

⁶⁹ Archer, Electronic Media.

tury B.C. Aramaic documents have shown that Daniel was written in a form of Imperial Aramaic, an official dialect known in all parts of the Near East at that time. Alleged historical inaccuracies are fast disappearing, especially with the information provided by the Nabonidus Chronicle as to the identity of Belshazzar (5:1) and with evidence that identifies Darius the Mede with a governor named Gubaru (5:31).

In addition, how can the use of relatively few Greek words be explained if the book was written around 170 B.C., when a Greek-speaking government had controlled Palestine for 160 years? One would expect the presence of many Greek terms. Also, the Qumran documents (Dead Sea Scrolls), dated only a few decades before the alleged second-century writing of Daniel, show grammatical differences that indicate they were written centuries, not decades, after Daniel. Further, the scrolls of Daniel found at Qumran are copies, indicating that the original was written before the Maccabean era.⁷⁰

Title of the Book:

The book is named after its author. The Hebrew word for Daniel is Daniyyeál or Daniáel, which means either "God is Judge" or "God is my Judge." The Greek form *Daniel* in the Septuagint is the basis for the Latin and English titles.

Theme and Purpose:

The theme of Daniel is God's sovereign power as the one true God, who judges and destroys the rebellious world powers and will faithfully deliver His covenant people according to their steadfast faith in Him. Daniel was written to encourage the exiled Jews through revealing God's sovereign plan for Israel during and after the period of domination by the Gentile world powers. This is the time of the Gentiles which began with the Babylonian captivity but will end with the establishment of Messiah's kingdom as the stone, one cut out without hands, became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (2:34-35; see also 7:13-14).

Key Word:

Though the words "king" and "kingdom" occur over and over again, the key idea is the plan of God for Israel which will end in the establishment of God's Messiah King as ruler on the earth.

Key Verses:

2:20-22. Daniel answered and said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. "And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, And knowledge to men of understanding. "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.

2:44. And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

7:14. "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting

⁷⁰ Ryrie, p. 1342.

dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Key Chapters:

One of the greatest prophetic chapters in the Bible is Daniel 9, the prophecy of the 'seventy weeks' determined for Israel (9:24-27). These verses give us the chronological frame for the nation of Israel and her Messiah from the time Daniel to the establishment of Messiah's kingdom on earth.

Key People:

The key people are Daniel who was taken to Babylon as a youth, served in government and became God's special mouthpiece to Gentile and Jewish nations; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, three more youths who were chosen for special training along with Daniel (their former and Jewish names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah). Other important persons are Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon in 605 B.C., Darius who succeeded Belshazzar as king, Cyrus, the Persian monarch, and Michael, the archangel who ministered to Daniel in chapter 10.

Christ as seen in Daniel:

One of the key portraits of Christ in Daniel is that of the coming Messiah who will be cut off (a reference to the cross) (9:25-26). However, Christ is also portrayed as the great stone who will crush the kingdoms of this world (2:34, 45), the son of man (7:13), and the Ancient of days (7:22). The vision in 10:5-9) is most likely a Christophany, an appearance of Christ (cf. Rev. 1:12-16).

Outline:

- I. The Personal History of Daniel (1:1-21)
 - A. His Deportation to Babylon (1:1-7)
 - B. His Faithfulness in Babylon (1:8-16)
 - C. His Reputation in Babylon (1:17-21)
- II. The Prophetic Plan for the Gentile Nations (2:1-7:28)
 - A. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of the Great Image (2:1-49)
 - B. The Fiery Furnace: A Lesson in Faith (3:1-30)
 - C. Nebuchadnezzar's Vision of the Great Tree (4:1-37)
 - D. Belshazzar's Feast and the Handwriting on the Wall (5:1-31)
 - E. Darius' Foolish Decree or Daniel in the Lion's Den (6:1-28)
 - F. Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts (7:1-28)
- III. The Prophetic Plan for Israel (8:1-12:13)
 - A. Daniel's Vision of the Ram, the Goat, and the Small Horn (8:1-27)
 - B. Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks of Year (9:1-27)
 - C. Daniel's Prophetic Panorama of Israel's Future (10:1-12:13)