

Major Prophets' Difficulties in the Old Testament

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to go through the purpose of God's call to the selected Prophets' lives and challenges when speaking to the world on His behalf. A prophet's role in the Old Testament was to speak God's word. Some would predict events, heal people, and/or perform miracles. Moses is an Old Testament prophet who predicted the arrival of another prophet. That Prophet is Jesus. God understood the dangers of men ruling over men and the root of the problem. This study clearly recounts the lives and challenges that the Major Prophets faced, as well as how they were able to come up with their missions with the help of God. So, the five books of The Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel) cover a significant time span and present a diverse range of messages. Isaiah, for example, spoke to the nation of Judah about 150 years before their exile into Babylonia and urged them to be faithful to God. By sampling, this study mainly discussed the two Prophets, Jeremiah and Daniel, based on their long call and the hardships they faced when delivering God's message to the respective place to which God sent them. This study primarily discussed the two Prophets, Jeremiah and Daniel, based on their long call and the hardships they faced when delivering God's message to the respective place to which God sent them. Jeremiah preached a message of God's judgment against the rulers and people of Judah for violating the nation's religious and legal traditions, but Hananiah opposed him, preaching a message of peace and salvation and foretelling the deliverance of the Israelite nation from the hands of their enemies. Jeremiah cried out to those same people on the verge of exile, pleading with them to repent. Jeremiah's Lamentations is a dirge written during Judah's exile. Ezekiel and Daniel, the last two Major Prophets, spoke and wrote to the exiles, encouraging them to remember that God was still in control and would eventually restore the spiritual fortunes of His disciplined nation. Daniel was first and foremost a God's servant, a prophet who demonstrated to God's people how to live a holy life. The significance of this study is to help readers understand the life and long history of the Prophets, as well as their patience and faithfulness to the Almighty Heavenly God.

Keywords: Major Prophets, difficulties, challenges, calling, Old Testament, Bible

1. Introduction

The Bible is simply a love letter written in sixty-six books over a sixteen hundred year period by more than forty authors from three continents. Despite the fact that the authors came from diverse backgrounds, there is one message, one theme, one thread that runs throughout the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. That message is God's redeeming love for mankind, which is as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago. The Old Testament has two types of prophets: Major Prophets and Minor Prophets, and each of them had a different message for the people and workplaces concerned, depending on God's choices. The books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are referred to as the Bible's major prophets in the Old Testament (in chronological order). They are significant due to the scope and size of these books. The Bible, like a movie or a novel, has an overall plot structure; the Major Prophets must be found within this larger story (Peter J. Gentry, 2017). The Bible clearly does not explain how the Lord's word came to a prophet; however, there are a number of examples where the Lord revealed his will through visions rather than an audible or internal voice (1 Samuel 3:1,15; 2 Samuel 7:17; Isaiah 1:1; Ezekiel 11:24) or dreams (Numbers 12:6). As a priest, King as well as Prophet, Jesus fulfilled his father's advocacy.

The Major Prophets are comprised of five books. These books have a total of 167 chapters, with the longest having 66. The Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeramiah, Lamentations, Daniel, and Ezekiel, in order of length. There are 12 books labeled Minor Prophets, with a total of 67 chapters. There is only one chapter in the shortest. These are frequently read in a single short sitting. Hosea, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are the Minor Prophets; these books transcribe the prophets' teachings, warnings, calls to repentance, and words of encouragement. Prophets served alongside priests as God's earthly representatives, conveying messages directly from God to the people of Israel. The prophets' calling to be Israel's conscience frequently pitted them against the Israelite establishment, invariably because Israel's people and rulers had disobeyed God's commands. A prophet, according to most dictionaries, is a person who receives a divine message and speaks to other humans on behalf of a deity. The Bible's definition, based on how prophets are described throughout Scripture and what they are tasked with doing, isn't all that different from what dictionaries say. It's like being God's representative for a specific time and place.

God's Prophet, the Suffering Prophet, fulfilling the Scriptures and pointing to that fulfillment even through Judas' choice! Christ, Jehovah's anointed Servant, is appointed and qualified to serve in the three offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. He is portrayed here as God's appointed Prophet, to reveal all that the Father had given to Him in order

to speak about the salvation God had ordained for His people through the suffering Servant of Jehovah. The end of all that long line of prophets who suffered while bringing God's revelation to God's people; and at the same time, the One of Whom all that long line of prophets spoke.

God desires that we overcome our difficulties, grow as people, and return to live with Him after this life. But He does not expect us to do it on our own. He leads us through the Holy Spirit, the scriptures, and the prophets. A prophet is someone who has been chosen by God to guide the entire world. God has a pattern of guiding His children through prophets, beginning with Abraham and Moses and continuing with living prophets today. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealed his secret to his prophets."(Amos: 3:7)

God chose the ancient prophets to represent Him in various ways to the nation Israel. Their primary responsibility was to speak for Him. The prophets wrote a large portion of the Old Testament. Phrases like "God said," "God says," and "thus says the Lord" appear frequently in their writings. The first prophetic books are for the Major Prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah's Lamentations, and Ezekiel. All of the books of the Major Prophets took place during the "Period of Prophecy," which spanned the time between the Israelites' entry into the Land of Israel and Judah's Babylonian captivity. All versions of the books agree that during this time, God chose the four Major Prophets to be spoken to and to speak the divine word to the people. Themes of the Major Prophets include 1) the impending destruction of Jerusalem, 2) future judgment for the people of Judah due to their continued rebellion against God, and 3) the future restoration of Jerusalem after the Jews' captivity ended.

These types of questions were addressed by the latter prophets, who sought answers both for the present moment and, increasingly toward the end of their era, for some distant future. They also considered issues of obedience, punishment, and repentance as they attempted to resolve what they perceived to be national sins. Such prophecies were directed at the offending nation, whether Israeli or foreign. When we read about the prophets' lives, we are both interpreting what is written and the prophets themselves are interpreting God's message. The prophets did not create their own stories. Their stories were first passed down orally, and then stories about the prophets were written down by others. According to Martti Nissinen (1988), prophecy, which was once a distinctly biblical concept, is now recognized as yet another form of divination and a phenomenon that can be found all over the ancient Eastern Mediterranean. Even Greek oracle, which has traditionally been discussed independently of biblical and Mesopotamian prophecy, is essentially part of the same picture.

The future prediction indicates that the plan of deliverance will take time. According to Isaiah, the people will be restored to a right relationship with Yahweh in two stages. First and foremost, the people would be freed from physical exile in Babylon. Second, the people would be freed from spiritual exile and sin slavery. According to Jason S. DeRouchie, ed. (2013), a prophet normally predicts events that will occur in the near future. When these prophecies come true, the prophet is validated in his community as speaking for Yahweh and being a true prophet. As a result, when this same prophet speaks about events that will take place in the distant future, or at some unknown or unspecified point in the future, his audience will believe that he is speaking for Yahweh, and Yahweh will be attested as the one and only true god against all rivals.

The purpose of this paper is to depict the lives of the Major Prophets such as Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Lamentations of Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, as well as to identify the common challenges they faced when delivering their prophecies to sinful nations. Some relevant concepts have also been included in this work to help its readers understand God's long-term plan for human beings. At the end, the author will specify how Christians and Godly people should bear any suffering or pains associated with God's word that they may experience unknowingly or knowingly during these days.

2. Materials and Methods

The first four prophetic books of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel were studied using library reading and thematic analysis. The relevant works of various scholars were consulted so that the real gap being studied could make sense and bring the overview related to the Prophets' messages To Whom It May Concern.

3. An overview of introductory to the books of prophecy

Prophets are called by God and filled with God's Spirit, and they speak God's word to those who have drifted away from God in some way. A prophet is a preacher in one sense. A prophet, on the other hand, is frequently a whistle-blower in the marketplace, especially when an entire tribe or nation has strayed away from God.

In times of historical and moral crisis, the Old Testament prophets spoke to Israel. They saw themselves as part of a larger narrative that God was weaving throughout history—a narrative of repentance, encouragement, and the coming Messiah. Each major and minor prophet, as well as their writings, are clustered with the key historical events of their time in this updated introductory book. Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah are among the Neo-Assyrian prophets associated with the fall of the Northern Kingdom (Israel). Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Nahum, Ezekiel, Obadiah, and Lamentations are Neo-Babylonian prophets who describe the fall of the Southern Kingdom (Judah), while Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, and Malachi are Persian prophets who describe

the Jewish return to Israel. The Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, are the focus of the main track.

However, throughout Israel's history, the priests have frequently become corrupt and moved away from God, causing the people to worship idols. When priests failed to teach God's law to the people and kings and judges failed to govern the kingdom fairly, prophets appeared. When the entire Israelite enterprise was on the verge of self-destruction, God called and spoke via prophets as whistle-blowers.

One of the most heartbreaking tragedies of God's people was their insistence on worshiping the numerous gods of their pagan neighbors. Offering their children in the fires of Moloch and ritual prostitution with every imaginable filthy conduct "on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree" were widespread practices of this idolatrous worship (2 Chr. 28:4). But there was an even greater evil in rejecting Yahweh in favor of living in community as a distinct and holy people of God. Oppression took the role of concern for the poor, widows, orphans, and strangers in the land. Extortion, taking bribes, and dishonest gain became normal as business practices overturned God's ideal. Religious leaders rejected God's holy goods, and leaders used authority to harm lives. Rather of benefitting the nation, these wicked activities contributed to its demise. Prophets were frequently the final voices heard in the land, bringing people back to God and to a just and healthy society.

3.1 Isaiah

Isaiah is the prophet who has had the most impact on Jewish and Christian theology. Isaiah, like many of the prophets, preached a message that few people wanted to hear: God's people had let their hearts to become corrupted, focusing on useless religious rituals. Isaiah warned God's people that if they did not return to sincere worship, they would be judged. The early half of Isaiah stresses appeals for repentance and warnings of punishment, while the second half emphasizes messages of hope and forgiveness. Isaiah is a thick work with a lot of interesting details. Because Isaiah had direct contact with several of Judah's monarchs, this book details key events during the reigns of Ahaz (Isaiah 7) and Hezekiah (Isaiah 37), among others. However, Isaiah is best known for his descriptions of God's Messiah, one of which is found in this chapter from Isaiah (Isaiah 53:4-6)

3.2 Lamentations and Jeremiah

Jeremiah did not deliver bad news with clinical detachment when the Lord revealed the future devastation of Judah via him. Instead, he empathized with his people and their plight. "Listen to my people's sobbing," Jeremiah screamed out, "it can be heard all over the nation" (8:19). He addressed "my people," not "the people" or "your people,"

to the Lord. Rather, even though he spoke against their immorality, the prophet connected himself with his fellow Jews. "I hurt with the hurt of my countrymen," he admitted. "I'm in mourning and am overtaken with sadness" (8:21). During the time of Josiah, king of Judah, Jeremiah was called to the prophetic ministry. "O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD!" Jeremiah was summoned to announce the Lord's message (Jeremiah 22:29). Jeremiah was called to announce God's harsh wrath, which would culminate in Judah's three deportations. Jeremiah struggled with his ministry because of the harsh message he was preaching to Judah. Jeremiah was a prophet whose heart ached for justice (Claude Mariottini, 2018).

Jeremiah battled in his service to God, yet he is not alone in his suffering. Every person who has been called to preach God's Word has spent time alone with Him. Those in the ministry will understand Jeremiah's shattered heart in his hour of loneliness. The Book of Daniel is the Old Testament's greatest apocalyptic book, with Chapters 7-12 prophesying the end times. Daniel 12:1 predicts a time of enormous "distress" unprecedented in history, when Michael will appear. In Matthew 24:21, Jesus refers to this period as the Great Tribulation, and it is also mentioned in Revelation 7:14. The world's big nations have turned against the Lord, but God will safeguard His people and provide for them. The call to serve God in ministry is a necessary component of service. The ministry is a tremendously gratifying and rewarding profession. However, ministry is a difficult task fraught with acceptance and rejection. Jeremiah's experience of loneliness and rejection, as well as scorn and humiliation, might be applied to God's messengers today. In the life of someone who has been called by God, his conflict with God can become a reality.

3.3 The Major Prophets' Lives and Times

The first is the fact that the people rebelled against their God. Second, God's punishment is coming, and it will manifest itself in the shape of political tragedy. Modern readers typically dismiss the Major and Minor Prophets as being too long or difficult to comprehend, despite Jesus' praise for them. Indeed, they include numerous predictions that were fulfilled during Jesus' earthly existence, providing substantial support for Jesus' claims and reason to trust for His future return. Isaiah served as a prophet in the southern kingdom of Israel, which became known as Judah after the nation of Israel was divided under the rule of Rehoboahm, from 740 to 681 B.C. Judah was trapped between two powerful and aggressive nations during Isaiah's time: Assyria and Egypt. As a result, national leaders spent a lot of time trying to please and court

favor with both of their neighbors. Isaiah spent a large portion of his book denouncing those leaders for relying on human assistance rather than repenting of their wickedness and returning to God.

It's interesting to note that, in the middle of Judah's political and spiritual fall, Isaiah prophesied about the Messiah's arrival, the One who would deliver God's people from their sins. Jeremiah preached a message of God's punishment on the rulers and people of Judah for violating the nation's religious and legal traditions, while Hananiah countered with a message of peace and salvation, predicting the Israelite nation's deliverance from the hands of their enemies. Both claimed to be in possession of God's authority. Jeremiah 27-28 sheds light on the difficulty of distinguishing a legitimate prophet from a fraudulent one.

Jeremiah also wrote the Book of Lamentations, which is a collection of five poems written after Jerusalem was destroyed. As a result of Judah's spiritual deterioration and physical judgment, the book's principal themes revolve around feelings of regret and sorrow. The prophet's faith in God's promises of future goodness and mercy, despite current difficulties, is a prominent thread of hope in the book.

In 597 B.C., the Babylonians kidnapped Ezekiel, a revered priest in Jerusalem. (This was the first wave of Babylonian conquests; 11 years later, in 586, they destroyed Jerusalem.) As a result, Ezekiel served as a prophet to the Jews who were exiled in Babylon. His writings are divided into three categories: 1) the impending destruction of Jerusalem, 2) future judgment on the people of Judah for their continual defiance of God, and 3) the eventual rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Jews' captivity ended. Ezekiel was commissioned by Yahweh to be "a watchman for the house of Israel," and he undertook a series of symbolic deeds to symbolize the city's impending doom: He threw a brick on the ground to represent Jerusalem's impending siege, lay down on the ground, chained himself to represent capture, ate food cooked on human feces and then animal excrement, and finally shaved his hair and beard. Despite the fact that these deeds took place in Babylon, they were most likely reported to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Ezekiel attempted to quell the exiles' ill-founded aspirations for an immediate return to Jerusalem, just as Jeremiah had attempted to quell the residents of Jerusalem's false hopes concerning the fall of Babylon, which had been predicted by the popular nationalistic prophet Hananiah (Jeremiah, chapter 28, verses 5–17). Daniel's book, like Ezekiel's, was taken captive in Babylon. In addition to his role as a prophet of God, Daniel was a skilled administrator. In fact, he was so good that he served in the courts of four different Babylonian kings. Daniel's works are a mix of history and apocalyptic visions. They reveal a God who is completely in control of history, including people, nations, and even time itself.

God did not send the Israelites into exile primarily to punish them. God has never been, and never will be, interested in punishment for the sake of punishment. Rather, in Ezekiel's day, He intended the punishment or judgment as a means to an end—to bring His people to a state of repentance and humility before the one true God. They had lived in sin and rebellion for so long, confident in their own and neighboring nations' strength, that they needed God to remind them of His holy nature and their humble identity in a dramatic way. God decided that after centuries of warnings, prophetic messages, and invasions, He needed to take more drastic action—He needed to remove the people from their promised land. God is the Lord of heaven and earth, and the people were experiencing judgment as a result of their own sin. In those dark times when we feel lost, the book of Ezekiel reminds us to seek the Lord, to examine our own lives, and to align ourselves with the one true God.

3.4 Problems that the Prophet Jeremiah faced prior to the Babylonian Exile

The Major Prophets' five books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel) span a significant time period and present a diverse set of messages. About 150 years before their exile into Babylonia, Isaiah addressed the nation of Judah and urged them to be faithful to God. Jeremiah cried out to those same people on the verge of exile, pleading with them to repent. Jeremiah's Lamentations is a dirge written during Judah's exile. Ezekiel and Daniel, the last two Major Prophets, spoke and wrote to the people in exile, encouraging them to remember that God was still in control and would eventually restore their disciplined nation's spiritual fortunes. Three of these five books are quite long, and they can all be difficult to understand at times. The time and effort invested in attempting to understand these writings, on the other hand, will be well rewarded. It has been said that no other section of the Bible depicts God in such a majestic and exalted light. His power is mind-boggling. His radiance is breathtaking. And as we read these books, our faith grows to new heights of assurance. Prepare to meet the God of the prophecies and be astounded by God's prophecies as they unfold in these first five prophetic books.

Jeremiah, as a prophet, pronounced God's judgment on the people of his time for their wickedness. He was particularly concerned about false and insincere worship, as well as a failure to trust Yahweh in national affairs. He condemned social injustices, but not as strongly as previous prophets such as Amos and Micah. He discovered the source of sin to be in the weakness and corruption of men's hearts, which he referred to as "the stubbornness of the evil heart." He thought sin was unnatural; he emphasized that some foreign nations were more loyal to their pagan (false) deities than Judah was to Yahweh (the true God); and he frequently contrasted nature's obedience to the law with man's disobedience to God.

Jeremiah spoke the most about repentance of any prophet. He exhorted men to repent of their wicked ways and reliance on idols and false gods, and to return to their early covenantal loyalty to Yahweh. Repentance had a strong ethical undertone because it meant living in accordance with Yahweh's will for the individual and the nation.

Jeremiah's family/relatives rejected him. False accusations were leveled against him. He was threatened with death for speaking up for God. He lived a lonely, solitary life and was forbidden from marrying or attending any social gatherings. Thus, Jeremiah's prophetic suffering stems from two sources: external opposition and persecution, as well as the internal burden of paradigmatically embodying or "pre-living" his people's impending Divine judgment.

Ahaz's reluctance to ask God for a sign piqued my interest, especially in light of Isaiah's unequivocal advice to do so. Ahaz is preparing for war, fearful of invasion by the kings of Israel and Syria, according to previous verses. Isaiah interrupts his contemplation. "If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all," he challenges Ahaz. These words must have felt like a slap in the face to Judah's king. "This people have a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away," Jeremiah lamented (Jer. 5:23). It is God's land, and they are stewards, working in the "fear" of the Lord. In the Old Testament, "fear" (Hebrew *yare*) of God is frequently used as a synonym for "living in response to God." However, Jeremiah pointed out that they were unaware of God as the source of rain and the assurance of harvests. "They do not say in their hearts, 'Let us fear the Lord our God, who gives rain in season, autumn rain and spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for harvest'" (Jer. 5:24). As a result, they are unfaithful, believing that they are the source of their own harvests (cf. Jer. 17:5-6 above). As a result, they no longer had abundant harvests. "Your iniquities have turned these away from you, and your sins have robbed you of good" (Jer. 5:25).

God intends for us to live and work for the common good. Jeremiah chastised the people of Judah for failing to care for those who could not provide a financial benefit in return, such as orphans and the poor (Jer. 5:28), aliens, widows, and innocents (Jer. 7:6). This is in addition to the accusations he made against specific violations of the Law, such as stealing, murder, adultery, false swearing, and worshiping false gods (Jer. 7:9). Jeremiah laments the lack of integrity he sees among the people of Judah. They appear to believe that if they violate God's ethical norms in their work and daily lives, they can come to the temple, act holy, and be saved from the consequences of their actions. Jeremiah is calling them to live honest lives. Otherwise, their piety is meaningless to God. God declares, "I will cast you out of my sight" (Jer. 7:15). Just because we go to the temple does not make our hearts right with God. Our relationship with him is reflected in our actions, in what we do on a daily basis, including at work.

Daniel, like many young people in America today, was born at a time when his country had turned its back on the Lord, serving false gods and living godless lives. The Lord called the Prophet Jeremiah to warn the nation to repent and return to the Lord or face severe judgment at the hands of the Babylonian Armies, and he faithfully served his heavenly calling for 40 years. His repeated warnings to his people fell on deaf ears and hard hearts, but in the midst of this Apostasy, the Scriptures tell us of at least six different people whom Jeremiah must have influenced (Baruch, Jeremiah's personal secretary, Jeremiah 36:4) of the Prophet Habakkuk; Daniel and his three Hebrew fellow captives) who kept the torch of Faith lit for future generations. Jeremiah may not have realized that his ministry had influenced this small group of people, four of whom were teenagers at the time, who would go on to become great heroes of the Faith.

The first thing we see when we look at Daniel's life are the challenges he faced as a young man, a young man who was a believer who desired to live for the Lord. Every adolescent faces challenges, but none more so than those who, like Daniel, desire to be loyal to their Lord in the midst of a godless generation. Daniel faced four distinct challenges during his day. Nebuchadnezzar understood that the first step was to win the minds of the young people, and that in order to do so, they would be placed in a Secular Education system in which their God, the True and Living God, would be eliminated, and humanism and secularism would be drummed into their minds until they had been transformed from a Christian World View to a Secular View.

Daniel was forced to live in a society that had now declared his Faith to be illegal. It was now against the law to publicly pray to his God and practice his Faith. What a similar world we live in, where prayer and the Bible are almost completely prohibited by law, as are symbols of our Faith, such as the Cross, nativity displays, and the 10 Commandments, but we are not talking about the former Soviet Union or today's godless Russia, but about America, the Nation that once boasted of her exceptionalism and Christian Heritage. Today's youth, like Daniel's, are confronted with the challenges of secular education, sinful enticements, and social edicts that have all but rendered Christianity an outlawed faith in the land of "Religious Freedom."

In God's hands, holy people are powerful tools. They bear witness to the reality of their Lord and Savior as they stand firm in the face of adversity. They both inspire and challenge us to be strong defenders of God's truth and righteousness. Daniel exemplified this kind of genuine holiness. He chose to remain undefiled by pagan Babylon despite the high risk of death.

The Old Testament's depiction of God's patience with His people reminds us that God has always been and continues to be merciful. That His chosen people ignored the covenant they made with Him for millennia without immediate death and destruction

should give us hope in our own struggles to live well for God. Even when we fail Him, He is patient with us and works in us to bring about the best in our lives. Daniel is also an excellent example of sticking to one's convictions in the face of adversity. Daniel and his three companions were thrown into the furnace, but they did not abandon their Almighty God. While we are most familiar with Daniel as the man who was thrown into the lions' den, there was much more to his life. We learn how to be faithful in all circumstances in the first six chapters of Daniel. He faced several difficult situations that could have caused him to lose faith or compromise his beliefs, but Daniel remained steadfast.

The prophet Jonah was dispatched to the city-state of Nineveh to warn it of impending destruction if it continued in its wickedness. Fortunately, the entire city listened and repented of their transgressions. During King David's reign, God sent the prophet Nathan to tell him a parable, effectively convincing King David of his guilt for his recent murder and adultery. The king apologized and accepted his punishment (2 Samuel 12). God sent the prophet Samuel, who was only a boy at the time, to confront the high priest, Eli, about his sons' sacrilegious actions. Unfortunately, in this case, the recipient of the prophetic message did not make the necessary changes for himself and his sons. Each of them died at a young age (1 Samuel 3, 4). Even in the face of a divinely inspired call to action, the human being retains the option of following God's path or their own.

"God said in the last days, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people.' Your children will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream. In those days, I will pour out my Spirit on my servants, both men and women, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2: 17-18).

3.5 Jeremiah's tribulations during his ministry

- a) He was rejected by his own family/relatives
- b) False accusations were leveled against him Jer 18:8
- c) He was threatened with death for speaking on behalf of God. Jer 11:19, 26:8
- d) He lived a lonely and solitary life and was forbidden from marrying or attending any social gathering. 15:17
- e) His message was rejected by the Israelites/the scroll was burned;
- f) He experienced spiritual struggle as he saw the evil prosper while the righteous suffered; and
- g) He was physically assaulted/beaten. Jer 20:2 37:15

h) His adversaries tried to kill him. He was imprisoned in a muddy cistern. Jer 38:6 I
He was publicly humiliated/mock

j) He was publicly humiliated/mock

k) He was imprisoned/jailed

3.6 Daniel's trials and rewards

Daniel is a wise man who King Nebuchadnezzar captures during the invasion of Jerusalem, according to the biblical book that bears his name. Because he can interpret dreams better than the king's own magicians, Daniel rises to power and prestige in the Babylonian court. Although Daniel interprets the king's dreams and visions throughout chapters 2-6, it is Daniel who receives visions that he cannot interpret in chapters 7-12. Amy C. Merrill Willis (Amy C. Merrill Willis, 2022)

Daniel's humility enabled him to prosper in Nebuchadnezzar's court by God's grace, even as God was preparing to destroy the king's empire. Nonetheless, Daniel and his companions were about to be subjected to another bout of Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance. Unlike in the first and second chapters of Daniel, their faithfulness to God resulted in their suffering in chapter three. Nonetheless, God rewarded their faithfulness even in the midst of their suffering.

For a time, it appeared that Nebuchadnezzar would repent of his arrogance, submit to God, and save his empire from being overthrown by God's power. Unfortunately, the same dream that led Nebuchadnezzar to recognize God's hand on Daniel may also have prompted the king to construct a golden image that he required all of his subjects to worship (Dan. 3:1, 5-6). The edifice represented the Babylonian king's resurrected pride. Its massive structure (ninety feet high) was built on the level "plain of Dura," which would have emphasized the image's commanding presence (Dan. 3:1).

The king's disgraced astrologers saw an opportunity to exact vengeance on Daniel. They exploited the king's resurrected pride and accused Daniel's friends of failing to worship the image (Dan. 3:8-12). Despite the king's threat to cast them into a fiery furnace, the friends readily admitted their guilt and refused to worship the image (Dan. 3:13-18). After years of successfully bridging the gap between the pagan environment of the Babylonian court and their fidelity to God, they found themselves in a situation where no compromise was possible without jeopardizing their integrity. Previously, they served as examples of how to thrive in a hostile environment by following God. They were now expected to serve as role models for how to suffer in the same environment. This they do with zeal.

"O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter," Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king. If our God, whom we serve, is capable of delivering us from the furnace of blazing fire and from your grasp, O king, let him do so. But, if not, please know, O king, that we will not serve your gods and will not worship the golden statue you have erected." (Daniel 3:16-18)

Christians in the workplace today rarely face such extreme hostility, at least in the Western world. However, we may be ordered to do something we cannot do in good conscience. Or, more likely, we will wake up one day and realize that the goals we pursue, the powers we wield, the relationships we abuse, or the compromises we make are already compromising God's desires for our work. In any case, there may come a time when we realize we need to make a drastic change, such as saying "No," being fired, resigning, blowing the whistle, or standing up for someone else. We should expect to suffer as a result of our actions. The fact that we may be carrying out God's will should not lead us to believe that God will shield us from the consequences imposed by the powers that be. Working as a Christian is not a shortcut to success; rather, it entails the constant risk of suffering.

3.7 Suffering and endurance

Take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of patience in the face of adversity (James 5:10). So many of the situations we encounter in life are bearable because we know how they will end. Women, for example, can endure the discomforts and changes associated with nine months of pregnancy because they anticipate the joy that will come when the baby is born. James reminds us in his epistle that we can be obedient to God while suffering because of what will happen on the last day. At the appointed time, Jesus will return as judge and turn His people's fortunes (5:1–9). Only faith in God's ultimate deliverance at Christ's return allows us to rejoice in the trials that produce perseverance (1:2–3). It also helps us understand that, in the end, our wealth will not give us an advantage in God's kingdom (vv. 9–11; 2:1–10; 4:13–17).

Our faith in God will be validated in front of all men on that final day. In today's passage, James exhorts us to be patient for this day, citing the prophets and Job as examples of patient servants (5:10–11). The prophets are good examples of patience because they persevered in their callings in the face of trials brought on by those who despised God. Jeremiah was imprisoned at one point in his life (Jer. 37:11–38:13).

3.8 Lessons for today's Christians from the only two sampled prophets

The book of Daniel is an intriguing prophecy book. But you may be wondering what we can learn from Daniel. As is well known, Daniel was not required to maintain his

Jewish standards. But he did it. This young boy had been instilled with God's precepts – as well as integrity – to the point where it didn't matter whether or not he pleased God. It didn't matter what everyone else was doing around him.

Only Daniel and his three companions, according to the text, refused the king's food. All of the other captives ate whatever the king provided. This didn't bother Daniel. He was not going to make any concessions. This is a critical lesson for young people (and adults) to learn. Peer pressure can be extremely effective. Many young people have lost faith as a result of it. As Christ's followers, we must make the decision, like Daniel, that we will not compromise our biblical principles under any circumstances. Just as Daniel determined in his heart, we must also resolve that whatever comes our way, we will not give up what we know is acceptable in the eyes of God. Because the pressure will be applied. You will be negatively influenced by your peers, coworkers, etc. in some way. But, if pleasing God and doing His will is truly important to you, as it was for Daniel, it will be easier than you think. Decide right now that if something comes up that you know is contrary to God's word, you will not participate in or condone it.

Daniel's entire life revolved around God. Christians today can learn from this example, as well as from others revolving around Him. Many lessons can be drawn from Daniel's life that go far beyond his being thrown into a lion's den. He was a God-fearing servant who did not waver or compromise when adversity arose. He prioritized God in his life, and he was rewarded for it. Many of Daniel's principles can be applied to our lives today. The author of this work encourages you to think about Daniel's continuous examples of faithful servitude to God rather than just the picture of a guy sitting with lions the next time you hear his name.

Ezekiel study can strengthen readers' and students' faith in the Lord's ability to transform individuals and nations. Students can learn that anyone who repents of their sins will be showered with God's mercy, love, and forgiveness. When Jesus charged us with making disciples, he charged us with teaching everything he had taught. Jesus issued stern warnings as well as tremendous promises of eternal, abundant life. In the context of Ezekiel, we see a strong commission to proclaim the entire counsel of God, particularly warnings to repent or face harsh judgment and punishment. "So I have made you, son of man, and a watchman for the house of Israel." Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you are to warn them." 33:7 Ezekiel (ESV) He also imposed some consequences on Ezekiel. Those who did not repent would be punished as long as he issued the warning. Those who did not repent would still be punished if he did not sound the alarm, and he would be held accountable for their lack of repentance. God told Ezekiel that if he obeyed the Lord's voice, he would know that God was truly

the Lord. According to Ezekiel, obedience clarifies our vision of who God is capable of being in the life of one ordinary person.

Obedience to God's voice also initiates the timing of God's plans for a person's life. God will move heaven and earth to put His plan into action if I choose to obey the personal message He has given to me! Ezekiel was not afraid to speak openly about Israel's and Jerusalem's sins (12:1-24). We cannot act as if everything is fine when it is not. When people sin against God, they must be made aware of their transgression. There is a promise of a new covenant in which individuals are given a new heart and spirit to follow God's commandments. This occurred when Jesus died on the Cross and established the New Covenant in his blood. The promise of a New Jerusalem with a River of Life flowing from its sanctuary is still unfulfilled (47:1-12, Revelation 21-22).

Because we know that our story has an amazing ending, we must remain strong and steadfast in our faith through all of life's trials and tribulations.

3.9 False Prophets

Jeremiah predicted that Shemaiah's seed would be destroyed (Jer. 29:24-32). Jeremiah sent a letter of warning to Judah's false prophets because they had ignored his previous warnings and remained in Jerusalem (29:15-23). Jeremiah singled out Shemaiah, an exile who had sent a letter to Jerusalem's leaders in order to silence Jeremiah (29:24-32). God would punish him and all other false prophets in the end. The problem of false prophets, which existed during the period of classical Hebrew prophecy, also existed in early Christian communities. Throughout the Hellenistic world, prophets and diviners were common. The Greek prophets were not only foretellers but also interpreters of divine messages. Mantics (from the Greek mantis) were visionary seers whose visions were interpreted by prophets, soothsayers, diviners of all kinds, and especially astrologers. Babylonia provided the impetus for much of that activity. The influx of new religions from the East resulted in an overabundance of astrologers and prophets. Throughout the Hellenistic world, many schools of astrology were founded, and old schools of philosophy became preoccupied with astrology.

Jesus warns his followers about false prophets in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:15–20): "Beware of false prophets who come to you dressed as sheep but are ravenous wolves on the inside. You'll recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes picked from thorns, or figs picked from thistles? As a result, every good tree bears good fruit, while every bad tree bears evil fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and burned. As a result, you will recognize them by their fruits."

The canonical gospels address the same issue of a false prophet correctly predicting, and Jesus predicted the future appearance of false Christs and false prophets, affirming that they can perform great signs and miracles, for example, in the Olivet Discourse delivered on the Mount of Olives: "And Jesus began to say to them, "Take heed that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, claiming to be him! And they will mislead many people. And if you hear of wars or rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; these things must happen, but the end is not yet. [...] Then, if anyone says to you, "Look, here comes the Christ!" or Look, he's there! You should not believe it. False Christs and false prophets will appear, performing signs and wonders in order to mislead, if possible, the elect. But don't worry; I've told you everything ahead of time." (Matthew 13:5–7) Rape and fraud scandals involving impostor pastors have prompted calls for church regulation in South Africa. In recent months, there have been a number of high-profile cases involving disgraced pastors. President Cyril Ramaphosa has even weighed in, urging South Africans to band together to combat imposter pastors. Victims of alleged sexual abuse have told the BBC about their ordeals, criticizing the invulnerability of so-called men of God who use their position of authority to cover up abuse. Mbulelo Mtshilibe (Video journalist report in 2019)

False prophets are described in the Bible as adulterous (Jeremiah 23:14), treacherous (Zephaniah 3:4), drunkards (Isaiah 28:7), wicked (Jeremiah 23:11), liars (Jeremiah 14:14; 23:14), and involved in divination and witchcraft (Jeremiah 14:14; Ezekiel 22:28; Acts 13:6). Scripture instructs believers to be diligent in their faith and devotion to Christ's teachings in order to quickly identify false prophets and false teachers (2 Peter 1:10; 1:19—2:1; 1 John 4:1).

The Old Testament's punishment for false prophets was severe: "If any prophet dares to speak a message in My name that I have not commanded him to speak, or to speak in the name of other gods, that prophet must be put to death" (Deuteronomy 18:20). The false prophets are Balaam, the old prophet from Bethel, Zedekiah, Hananiah, Shemaiah, Ahab, Zedekiah, Noadiah, Elymas, and Jesebel. In the New Testament, Jesus taught about false prophets in His Sermon on the Mount, saying, "Beware of false prophets." They come to you dressed as sheep, but they are ferocious wolves on the inside. You can identify them by their fruit. Do people pick grapes or figs from thorn bushes? Similarly, every good tree bears good fruit, while every bad tree bears bad fruit. "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit" (Matthew 7:15–18). Though the New Testament describes Jesus as a prophet, he is also believed to be more than a prophet: he is the expected Messiah (Greek *christos*, "anointed one"), who will reign as the Son of David and the Son of God, as prophesied by prophets of

old. The royal ideology of the Hebrew Scriptures was crucial to early Christianity because it contained the seeds of its Christological doctrines.

3.10 Today's Prophets

Prophets in the Bible urged people to repent and foretold the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Today, prophets continue to bear witness to Jesus. They also warn and advise everyone on important issues. Recent prophetic teachings address social issues like marriage and family relationships, practical issues like education and financial responsibility, and spiritual topics that help us overcome personal trials and find great confidence and faith.

Despite Jeremiah's dramatic prophecy that Jerusalem would fall under the yoke of the Babylonians—even parading with a yoke around his neck—his message was unpopular. It didn't appear to offer the much-needed promise and hope of immediate restoration. Rather, messages from false prophets, particularly Hananiah, had won the day. He soothed the Israelites' ears by promising that the exile would end in two years. Jeremiah sees this as a deceptive hope that will only add to the misery and pain.

Today, the world is dealing with a deadly coronavirus pandemic, for which there is no cure or vaccine, and religious and secular prophecies abound. As many Christian believers seek answers to why God has allowed such suffering to occur, others make it their business to provide the much-needed answers, claiming to speak for God. Various sources are sending conflicting messages. Some advocate solely for repentance, prayer, and fasting. Others advocate for public health measures to be implemented. Others advocate for both as a means of containing the pandemic and its effects on the human race. These contradictory messages are reminiscent of the prophecies that competed during the prophet Jeremiah's time. According to Daniel and his companions, they did not allow their captors to demolish and thus discredit their faith. Despite the threat of death, they remained faithful to God. They did not try to gloss over or compromise the Truth in order to save their skins, but instead remained steadfast in their faith. As we read in Daniel 3, God rewarded them for their faithfulness by shielding Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the furnace's flames.

According to Daniel Ritchie (2022), we knew we had to stay in this season of ministry. Suffering has the ability to both destroy and strengthen faith. We hear the groaning of creation in suffering, but we also see God's power revealed in our weakness. The suffering of humanity and God's sovereignty are inextricably linked. In fact...suffering can be how God's plans are carried out.

4. CONCLUSION

The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, foretelling Christ's sufferings and the glory that would follow those sufferings. The prophets attempted to learn what the Spirit was showing them, when those events would occur, and what the world would be like at that time. It is important to note, however, that no record exists of any of the apostles or other believers acting as prophets on the day of Pentecost, with the exception of Peter's Gospel preaching (2:14–36). In other words, the public preaching was the first evidence of the fulfillment of Joel's message about prophecy. Hananiah believed his message was realistic, but he was mistaken. Jeremiah, the true prophet, delivered a realistic, albeit unpopular, message. The false prophet tells people what they want to hear, whereas the true prophet tells them what they need to hear. The true prophets' promises were conditional on Israel fulfilling its vocation, whereas the false prophets made absolute and unconditional promises based on illusions. Jesus warned His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount to beware of false prophets. Following true or false prophets has opposite results; therefore, we must be able to distinguish between them. According to Matthew (5:10-12), "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely accuse you of everything because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for they persecuted the prophets before you in the same way. To cut a long story short, we can learn that when problems, heavy duties, persecutions, and other forms of suffering arise, we can draw strength from these faithful and strong prophets, particularly Jesus Christ, our persecuted and merciful Savior.

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