

# He Gave Us Prophets

Lesson 2

A Prophet's Job

Lesson Guide



**thirdmill**

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#### ABOUT THIRDMILL

Founded in 1997, Thirdmill is a non-profit Evangelical Christian ministry dedicated to providing:

#### **Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.**

Our goal is to offer free Christian education to hundreds of thousands of pastors and Christian leaders around the world who lack sufficient training for ministry. We are meeting this goal by producing and globally distributing an unparalleled multimedia seminary curriculum in English, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. Our curriculum is also being translated into more than a dozen other languages through our partner ministries. The curriculum consists of graphic-driven videos, printed instruction, and internet resources. It is designed to be used by schools, groups, and individuals, both online and in learning communities.

Over the years, we have developed a highly cost-effective method of producing award-winning multimedia lessons of the finest content and quality. Our writers and editors are theologically-trained educators, our translators are theologically-astute native speakers of their target languages, and our lessons contain the insights of hundreds of respected seminary professors and pastors from around the world. In addition, our graphic designers, illustrators, and producers adhere to the highest production standards using state-of-the-art equipment and techniques.

In order to accomplish our distribution goals, Thirdmill has forged strategic partnerships with churches, seminaries, Bible schools, missionaries, Christian broadcasters and satellite television providers, and other organizations. These relationships have already resulted in the distribution of countless video lessons to indigenous leaders, pastors, and seminary students. Our websites also serve as avenues of distribution and provide additional materials to supplement our lessons, including materials on how to start your own learning community.

Thirdmill is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) corporation. We depend on the generous, tax-deductible contributions of churches, foundations, businesses, and individuals. For more information about our ministry, and to learn how you can get involved, please visit [www.thirdmill.org](http://www.thirdmill.org).

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## HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

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- **Before you watch the lesson**
  - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
  - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
  - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
  - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
  - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
  - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
  - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

## Notes

### I. Introduction (0:27)

### II. Job Titles (1:09)

#### A. Primary Term (1:57)

The Greek word *prophetes*, from which we derive our English word “prophet” is a flexible term combining two elements:

- *phetes* – speaking or communicating
- *pro* – (1) predict; (2) proclaim

A prophet can be someone who predicts or simply someone who proclaims. Old Testament prophets did both.

The term for prophet in the Hebrew Old Testament had an even broader meaning:

- *nābî'* – called person

**B. Secondary Terms (4:04)**

- *ebed* – servant

Prophets played special roles in God's royal court.

- *ro'eh* – seer

- *hozeh* – seer observer

Prophets were first called seers before the rise of kingship in Israel.

The prophets were called seers because they were given the special privilege of looking into the heavenly places.

- *tsōpneh* (or *shomer*) – watchman, one who keeps guard

Prophets often watched for impending doom and approaching blessings so that people could prepare themselves.

- *mal'ak* – messenger

Prophets received messages from God and took them to the people of God.

- *ish-Elohim* – man of God

### **III. Job Transitions (11:20)**

#### **A. Pre-Monarchy (12:15)**

There were few prophets during this time.

The term *nāvî* is used in the pre-monarchical period to signify a wide variety of people doing many different things.

**B. Monarchy (13:16)**

There are more prophets noted in the Bible during this period of time than any other.

God gave prophets the job of focusing on the actions of kings and making sure they were obedient to the Law of Moses.

God sent prophets to witness against the disobedience of the kings and of the people who followed them.

**C. Exile (16:31)**

In 722 B.C., northern Israel's capital of Samaria fell to the Assyrians. In 586 B.C., Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians.



There was a decrease in the number of prophets.

The prophet's job became much more diverse and informal again.

**D. Post-Exile (17:47)**

The number of prophets remained relatively few.

Prophets began to move slightly back toward a more formal role again.

During the entire post-exilic period the prophets kept watch on the leaders and the general population as well to encourage them to be faithful to God.

#### **IV. Job Expectations (19:20)**

##### **A. Popular Models (19:51)**

Throughout the history of interpretation, Jews and Christians alike have understood the roles of prophets in different ways.

##### **1. Medium/Shaman (20:14)**

Many interpreters have compared Old Testament prophets with mediums of other cultures.

##### **2. Fortune-Teller (20:46)**

Another popular idea is that Old Testament prophets were fundamentally predictors of the future or fortune-tellers.

##### **B. Covenant Model (21:32)**

The most comprehensive model that the Old Testament uses to describe prophecy is a covenant model.

**1. Past Understanding (22:04)**

Past understandings of the covenant have functioned well, but with very little understanding of the historical context.

**2. Contemporary Understandings (22:51)**

The Old Testament often describes God's relationship with Israel as a political treaty.

Parity treaties: treaties between nations of equal status.

Suzerain-vassal treaties: agreements between a great emperor and a lesser king of a city or small nation.

In suzerain-vassal treaties, the emperors gave special roles to their representatives or emissaries.

The function of emissaries in the ancient Near East provides a model for Old Testament prophets.

Prophets were emissaries who bore messages from the Great Suzerain on his heavenly throne. They took those messages to his vassal nation Israel.

## **V. Conclusion (29:22)**



3. What were the characteristics of the prophet's job before the monarchy?

4. What were the characteristics of the prophet's job during the monarchy?

5. What were the characteristics of the prophet's job during the exile?

6. What were the characteristics of the prophet's job after the exile?





9. What is the “covenant model” for understanding a prophet’s job? Why is this model more helpful than others?

## Application Questions

1. By studying the titles of prophets, how has your understanding of a prophet's job broadened?
2. If we assume that Old Testament prophets were like mediums of other cultures, what kinds of mistakes might we make in interpreting their prophecies?
3. How do ancient Near Eastern treaties help us understand God's relationship with Israel?
4. How does Isaiah 6 illustrate the covenant role of a prophet?
5. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?

## Glossary

**'ebed** – Hebrew term (transliteration) for “servant”; also associated with the office of prophet

**exilic period** – Era of Israel's exile from the Promised Land

**ḥōzeh** – Hebrew term (transliteration) meaning “seer” or “observer”; title associated with prophets in ancient Israel

**'ish 'ēlohim** – Hebrew term (transliteration) meaning “man of God” or “man from God”

**mal'āk** – Hebrew word (transliteration) for “messenger”; also associated with the office of prophet

**monarchical period** – Era when kings ruled Israel

**nābî'** – Hebrew word (transliteration) meaning “a called person”; commonly translated “prophet” in the Old Testament

**parity treaty** – A type of treaty that was made between two equals

**post-exilic period** – Era after Israel returned from exile to their ancestral land

**pre-monarchical period** – Era before kings arose in Israel

**prophet** – God's emissary who proclaims and applies God's word, especially to warn of judgment against sin and to encourage loyal service to God that leads to blessings

**prophētēs** – Greek word (transliteration) from which we get the English word “prophet”; meaning one who predicts, speaks forth or proclaims divine truths

**rō'eh** – Hebrew term (transliteration) meaning “seer”; title associated with prophets in ancient Israel

**Septuagint** – Greek translation of the Old Testament

**suzerain** – A powerful emperor or king that ruled over smaller nations; the more powerful party of a covenant, the one to whom it was necessary to submit

**suzerain-vassal treaty** – A covenant arrangement made between a conquering emperor and a lesser ruler

**vassal** – A king or nation that must submit to a more powerful emperor or king (suzerain)