

# Responding to God's Faithful Intervention

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## *Minor Prophets Part 1*

This inductive Bible study is designed for individual, small group, or classroom use. A leader's guide with full lesson plans and the answers to the Bible study questions is available from Regular Baptist Press. Order RBP 0036 online at [www.regularbaptistpress.org](http://www.regularbaptistpress.org), e-mail [orders@rbpstore.org](mailto:orders@rbpstore.org), call toll-free 1-800-727-4440, or contact your distributor.

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## The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

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# Preface

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God does not sit in Heaven wringing His hands wishing people would obey Him. He does not fret and hope they will change; rather He faithfully intervenes in their lives. God's intervention in the Old Testament came primarily through His prophets. They warned God's people about their need for repentance and declared God's wonderful plans for His still future Kingdom. Both the warnings and the prophecies about the Kingdom showed that God loved His People and wanted them to follow Him as sheep follow a shepherd.

Israel overwhelmingly ignored the prophets' warnings and chose to serve other gods. As a result, God brought the destruction on them that the prophets so vividly described.

Though the prophets mainly dealt with *Israel's* past and future, they reveal God's character to us in ways few other books of the Bible do. Studying the books will expand your understanding of God and will help you respond to Him in a distinctly personal way. Let God use the Minor Prophets to intervene in your life and draw you closer to Himself.

## Lesson 1

# God's Servants, the Prophets

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*God sent the prophets to proclaim His Word courageously.*

### Various Passages

**“Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 1:8).**

**T**he survey results are in: public speaking is in the top ten when it comes to things people fear. One survey shows that of three thousand respondents, 41 percent feared public speaking more than anything else. In another survey, public speaking came in second after snakes as people's greatest fear. And in a third survey, it came in sixth.

So, if you're like most people, public speaking ranks high among the things you want to avoid.

### Getting Started

1. What would go through your mind if someone handed you a microphone and asked you to give a speech?

2. How would you respond if your speech had to be one of condemnation to a group of ungodly people?

### Searching the Scriptures

Nearly 50 percent of people would list giving a speech as their most terrifying experience. But God's prophets gave numerous speeches—and on subjects that sometimes cost them their lives. They spoke confidently and courageously because they were speaking for the Lord. Their courageous obedience should encourage you to obey courageously too.

### Prophets in the Family Line

Prophecy and “prophets” existed from the very beginning. For example, Abel was the first prophet (Luke 11:49–51; cf. Genesis 4:1–10). Enoch, described as the seventh from Adam, prophesied (Jude 14; cf. Genesis 5:22–24). Jacob assembled his sons for a final blessing and foretold what would take place in the distant future (Genesis 49:1–28). Hundreds of years later, God designated Aaron as Moses' prophet, or mouthpiece (Exodus 7:1).

3. Read Exodus 3:10. What courageous act did God ask Moses to do for Him?

4. How much would you have protested God's plan if you had been in Moses' place?

5. Read Exodus 3:13–15. God's name “I AM” refers to His eternal and independent existence. How should those qualities have affected Moses as he decided whether to obey God?

Moses functioned as the ideal model for all later prophets (Deuteronomy 18:15–18). He interceded between God and the people by approaching God, receiving His word, and reporting back to the people all that God had said.

### **A Prophetic Band**

Following Moses, God kept His promise to send a succession of prophets who regularly reminded the people of His will. Unfortunately, the Israelites stubbornly rejected the word of the Lord (Jeremiah 7:25, 26).

6. Read Jeremiah 7:25 and 26. How did God describe the people's response to His prophets?

When Samuel was a boy, the voice of prophecy was rarely heard (1 Samuel 3:1); but during his adult ministry, a whole "company of prophets" arose (10:5). Members of this prophetic band were probably Samuel's disciples. It is possible that several such groups arose, with each one located at one of the various stops on Samuel's judicial circuit (7:15–17).

### **Published and Unpublished Prophets**

A host of prophets ministered during the days of the kings of Israel and Judah. They may be classified into two groups: non-canonical prophets, who did not write books of the Bible, and canonical prophets, who did.

One of the more famous non-canonical prophets was Nathan. On one occasion he confronted King David regarding his sins of adultery and murder (2 Samuel 12:1–15). This shows how the true prophets of God demonstrated great courage while making their pronouncements.

7. What phrases in 2 Samuel 12:7–12, from Nathan's speech, show that Nathan approached his role as a prophet seriously and courageously?

Years later, Micaiah was not afraid to warn King Ahab of his impending death in battle—even though the king's messenger cautioned Micaiah that all four hundred of the king's personal prophets had unanimously foretold success (1 Kings 22:5–28). Just like Nathan, Micaiah was not afraid to confront a king. Unlike Nathan, Micaiah was imprisoned because of it (22:26–28).

8. Read 1 Kings 22:26–28. Whom did Micaiah fear more—Ahab or God?

9. How do you know?

## **Elijah and Elisha**

Probably the two best known non-canonical prophets are Elijah (1 Kings 17—2 Kings 2) and Elisha (2 Kings 2—13). These two prophets announced divine judgment against Israel and performed many miracles. Elijah and Elisha called the people to return to the God of their fathers and to forsake the false gods, especially Baal.

Elijah was fed by ravens at the brook Cherith, and later from a widow's self-replenishing flour bin. He prayed and God sent back a widow's son from the dead, sent fire from heaven upon Mount Carmel, and sent an abundant rain to end the long drought. After the "mountaintop experience" at Carmel, Elijah momentarily lost his courage and fled from Queen Jezebel.

10. First Kings 19:10 reveals that Elijah lost his courage because he felt all alone. What happens to your courage to obey God when you focus on your limited abilities?

God reassured Elijah of His presence with him and then revealed to

Elijah that seven thousand others in Israel were also followers of God.

Elisha became Elijah's heir to ministry, since he had received a double portion of his master's spirit (2 Kings 2:9–11). As Elijah's successor, Elisha performed many miracles. Most notably, Elisha instructed Naaman the Syrian to wash in the Jordan River so he would be healed of his leprosy, led the blinded Syrian army to Samaria, performed a miracle with a widow's oil, and raised a Shunammite woman's son from the dead.

Originally, Elisha was one of Elijah's pupils, which explains why Elisha called Elijah, "My father, My father" (2 Kings 2:12). Similarly, the "sons of the prophets" were all followers of a senior prophet (either Elijah or Elisha). This master-student relationship resembles that of the "company of the prophets" who studied under Samuel.

The sons of the prophets were not wealthy (2 Kings 4:1; 6:5), so they survived on the alms of the people (5:15; 8:8; 1 Samuel 9:8) and on their own foraging (2 Kings 4:39). Some lived together and shared meals (2 Kings 4:38–41); others were married and lived in their own houses (2 Kings 4:1, 2).

11. Why did living on donations and foraging demand that the sons of the prophets show courage?

Some of the sons of the prophets acted as messengers for their senior prophet. For example, Elisha called on one of them to anoint Jehu as king over Israel (2 Kings 9:1–10).

### **They Kept It Short**

In addition to the non-canonical prophets, sixteen canonical prophets wrote seventeen books of the Old Testament. Their writings include the books of Isaiah through Malachi. Jeremiah wrote both the book that bears his name and the book of Lamentations.

The last twelve of these books, Hosea through Malachi, are known as the Minor Prophets. We do not call them "Minor" in the sense that

they are of little significance. Certainly they form an integral part of God's Word. Instead we call them "Minor" because of their relative brevity, especially when compared with the much longer prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. In the Hebrew Bible, the Minor Prophets were all copied onto one scroll and were titled "The Twelve."

Most of the Minor Prophets ministered before the Babylonian captivity. Three ministered after the exile. Some prophesied to Israel, others to Judah, still others to foreign nations. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah are covered in this study.

### **The Prophets' Mission**

God sent His servants, the prophets, for a reason. Fundamentally, their function was to convey the word of the Lord. Their messages were of divine origin and were given under divine compulsion.

The titles used to designate the Old Testament prophets give insight into their God-given purpose. Two primary English terms appear in the Bible: "seer" and "prophet."

The common title for a prophet during the early years of Israel's history was "seer" (1 Samuel 9:9). The seer perceived (saw) God's will and visualized (envisioned) God's future judgments and blessings. The title "prophet" emphasized the prophet's function of speaking God's message.

The prophets were God's spokesmen, proclaiming the divine message. When God called Jeremiah into prophetic ministry, God made this clear to him. Jeremiah was to speak whatever God commanded him, and he was not to be afraid.

12. Read Jeremiah 1:7 and 8. Why was Jeremiah not to be afraid? What was supposed to give him courage?

Since the word came from the Lord, the desired result would invariably occur. After all, when God speaks, He accomplishes His will. The prophets made many detailed predictions of events that would not tran-

spire for many years. All of their predictions have been or will be completely fulfilled, because the same God Who revealed them has and will accomplish them. The Lord Himself explained this principle of certain realization.

13. Read Ezekiel 12:25a. How do you think the certain realization of God's message affected Ezekiel as he proclaimed God's words?

The terms "seer" and "prophet" each emphasize a different aspect of the prophetic ministry. As a seer, the man of God received the divine message. As a prophet, he proclaimed that message. The prophets' primary function, then, was to speak the messages that God had revealed to them. Isaiah 30:10 succinctly points to this twofold purpose of seeing and then speaking.

### **Warning! Warning! Warning!**

The prophets were divinely appointed moral preachers, and they sounded warnings against the dangers of religious apostasy and formalism. In this capacity they sometimes confronted not only the populous at large but priests and kings in particular.

14. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being extremely difficult, where would you rank the task of confronting priests and kings about their sin?

15. Where would you rank the task of confronting a friend about his or her sin?

Ethical preaching is difficult because no one is perfect but God. Yet God still called His imperfect prophets to this ministry.

16. According to Isaiah 6:5, what did Isaiah realize he needed before he could be God's prophet?

Prophets made numerous predictions concerning the future of Israel and the Gentile nations, and they foretold specific details concerning the Person and ministry of the coming Messiah. Their Messianic prophecies took two forms. Some prophecies spoke of a victorious King, while others mentioned a suffering Servant. We know that at His first coming, Jesus Christ fulfilled the promises of a suffering Servant. The prophecies concerning a victorious King await fulfillment at Jesus Christ's second coming.

### **Prophets Laureate**

The prophets were premier orators and great poets. Their messages provide us with the finest literature in the world. To arrest the attention of their audiences, the prophets also communicated at times by means of symbolic acts. For example, Jeremiah wore a yoke (Jeremiah 27; 28), Isaiah walked about naked and barefoot for three years (Isaiah 20), Ezekiel enacted the siege and destruction of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 4; 5), and Ahijah tore a new garment to represent the division of the kingdom (1 Kings 11:30–39).

17. Read Isaiah 20. What point was Isaiah illustrating by walking around for three years with no clothes on?

18. What two words would you use to describe the courage Isaiah would have needed to complete such a task?

God will never ask us to go three years without wearing clothes, but He does expect us to have the same courageous obedience we see in His prophets in the Scriptures.

### **Making It Personal**

The prophets' great desire was to communicate God's Word. This means that they did so even when it required courage.

19. What are some situations in your life right now in which you need courage to communicate God's Word?

20. What fears threaten to paralyze your obedience to God?

21. How do they compare to the fears that threatened many of God's prophets?

22. What truths about God should help you overcome your paralyzing fears?

23. Memorize Jeremiah 1:8.