

The Books of the Prophets

Sunday 10/3/2010

It is my sword to fight the devil and his temptations. It is my comfort in times of trouble. It is my compass for my life journey. It is God's true letter to me personally and my companion every day of my life.

Let's pray. Father, we thank You and praise You today for the Lord Jesus. Thank You for those that have come today. We pray that the opening of Thy Word, the Bible says, that the entrance of Thy Word giveth light. And Lord, give us the light from Heaven today. Help us to see and understand all the things that You have for us. And Lord, we'll thank You and praise You in Jesus' name for His sake, we ask it. Amen. You may be seated.

I. Introduction to the Prophetic Books

Today we're going to start, as you know, we've been coming through the books of the Bible, basically not trying to give you the whole book, but trying to help you understand how Christ is revealed in the different books. The Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed in every book of the Bible. I have showed you how they have been broken down into individual books. Sometimes they're broken down into books in a section.

Today we enter probably the largest section in your Bible, and that is the section of the prophets. In Bible circles, you're going to find that they are split into two categories: the major prophets and the minor prophets. You're going to get a lot of information today that you'll want to get down and get into your Bible. I'd put it either in the front of my Bible, probably right there at the first one, Isaiah, and get a little rundown of all the background of the books of the prophets. Then you can get into each one individually as we go through it.

They're called the major and the minor prophets. Many people think that they're called the major and the minor prophets based on some of the books having more into them, more important than the others. That's not true. The major prophets are the longer books, like Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Those are the major prophets. They're major not because what they had to say was more important, but what they had to say was more lengthy. Therefore, they are the major prophets.

The minor prophets go all the way down from, I think, Hosea, which has 12 chapters, to the little book of Obadiah, which only has one chapter. They're called the minor prophets because they're smaller books. They have fewer chapters. They usually run from 1 to 12, maybe 14 (Zechariah has 16), but they're smaller in their content.

II. Three Categories of Prophets

Now, in Bible history, when you start to look at the books of the Bible, the prophets, this is something you really want to remember. In time, I'm going to give you all these three categories. These prophets fall into three distinct categories. You're going to find where they fall into a category.

The first group will fall into the category before they go into captivity. These will be the prophets that were around up to about 606 BC when Babylon is taken, and around 580 something when Syria comes down and takes the northern tribes. All of the prophets that write up to that point write before the exile or before the captivity.

Then you have a couple of prophets that actually write during the captivity. So that forms our second category. Then you have some prophets who write after they come back from that captivity. If you know your Bible at all, you know that that captivity lasts 70 years. At the end of that captivity, the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther kick in, and we find where Cyrus, king of Persia, decrees and they go back to the land. When they get back to the land, you find that God gives them some prophets that are writing at that period of time after they go back to the land.

So you have the prophets are major and minor. That deals with their content. And then you have them falling into three categories: those before the exile, those during the exile, and then those after they return. That's very important to know because it gives you a basic context of how they work. It's very important before you try to understand the individual books of the prophets that you get the mindset behind these books. It's really the key to understanding the prophets.

III. The Role of the Prophet and the King

When God established His kingdom with David, David was the first king. You know your Bible history. You know that we've come up through Genesis, the book of the beginnings, up through Exodus where they come out of Egypt, the 40 years wandering, and then they go into the Promised Land in Joshua. They set themselves up after the judges, but it's not until 1 Samuel that they get their first king. Saul was the wrong king; it wasn't God's choice, it was the people's choice. We know how that turned out. But finally God gives them David, and David establishes the throne for the nation of Israel for the next 500 years or so. David is the first king that God gives them, and He establishes His kingdom with David.

From that point on, every king that comes on the scene, you're going to find that God gives them a prophet, and in many cases, prophets. There's more than one who basically are there during that period of time when that king reigns. Most people don't understand how this fits in, and it's absolutely vital in getting your whole Bible together as far as getting a context.

When God set up David, He gave him Nathan the prophet. Every king down the line, as you go down through, and the Bible is a list of about 36 or 38 kings, every one of them over the course of three or 400 years, every one of them has a prophet that is around during that time. Some of them have more than one prophet during that time, and the prophets are there for a reason.

The king, when God established the king, you've got to understand that God is establishing a political kingdom. God's form of government is not socialism, communism, capitalism, or humanism, or anything else. God's form of government is a theocracy. God's form of government is a king that has God's heart on the throne that rules His people by the Word of God. That's God's key. That's why the first king that God chose was David, because David is a picture of Christ, and the last king that He's going to choose is going to be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself when He comes back and He sets on the throne in Jerusalem.

The king represents the political side of things. The king represents God a step before establishing a literal, visible kingdom on this earth in Jerusalem and putting a literal, visible king on it to rule His people, the nation of Israel, and to lead them the right way. But now, how do the prophets fit in? The prophets fit in; they represent the spiritual side of things. Where the king represents the political things that go on for God, the prophets represent the message that God wants to get to the king.

In other words, the prophets were men of God. God in the Old Testament spoke to men three different ways. I don't know if you even know this.

1. One of the ways He spoke to them was by dreams.
2. Another way He spoke to them was something called the Urim and the Thummim, which you find in the Bible.
3. The third way that He spoke to them was through the prophets.

During the time of Israel, the majority of the time He speaks to the people through the prophets. It's a lot like you've got a king on the throne. He's running everything. He's doing the best he can. But God, who sees the future, sees what's happening and going on around him, keeps interjecting things into the king to make sure he keeps doing the right thing. It's a lot like churches today with pastors and people. God used the prophets to keep the nation of Israel straight. God uses preachers today and the church to keep God's people straight. That's how it really plays out all the way across the board.

IV. The Unpopular and Dangerous Prophetic Ministry

If you came in this morning, I don't know if you know what I saw. I found a little thing laying around here that was from when they had the restaurant upstairs, and it said "Today's Menu." It's a little chef back there with a blackboard on it. I thought, that is a good thing to have for where we're going. So I basically, I'm going to try to do it every week on one of the books and change the menu up to go along with the story. When we went through Kings and Chronicles, the menu today would be oxen heads and doves' dung. That's what they had to eat back in Kings when they went through the great famine in Samaria. I thought that was so pertinent to find out at the time we were at, so I put it on there, "Today's special is the fillet of your soul. Hot off the order." I say that because that's really what these prophets are all about.

When you get into the book of the prophets, you're going to find that you're into some of the most negative material that you're ever going to find anywhere in the Bible. God told the prophet what to tell the king. He told him about the circumstances of the kingdom, when to go to war, when not to go to war. He told them what was wrong, what they were doing was wrong.

An example of that is David. Remember back in the Bible when David got messed up with Bathsheba and killed Uriah the Hittite? David tried to cover it up and tried to make the thing look like it was okay when it wasn't. He put an elaborate plan together. It was Nathan the prophet that walked in, and God used Nathan to take David in his own snare. Nathan goes in there and he says, "Nathan, what's the problem?" And he says, "Well," he says, "there was a guy who only had one little lamb, and this great guy who had many lambs took this guy's lamb, the only lamb that

he had, and took that lamb." David was furious. He was absolutely infuriated. He said to him, "Find me that guy, bring that guy to me, that guy's going to restore that lamb fourfold." You know what Nathan did? Nathan took that bony finger and put it in David's face and he says, "Thou art the man." Nobody knew what David did, but God knew, and God told the prophet Nathan, and Nathan went to confront David.

Now, in that case, it worked pretty well, didn't it? Because David did have a relationship with God. He loved the Word of God, and it broke David's heart. So you go through the rest of the Bible, and when you see where David got right, he didn't argue with God. God had smote him in his heart through Nathan, and God used all the prophets to keep everybody accountable from the king on down. That's the way God did it. That was his job.

As time moves on, where Nathan kind of lucked out and had a king that had a relationship with God, it doesn't work so well a little bit later on. After Solomon, and we see the splitting of the kingdom with Jeroboam and Rehoboam, we see then some 38 kings come on the scene over the northern and southern tribes. Each one of them in the next 400, 500 years has a prophet or prophets that is associated with them.

Not all of the prophets, you need to know this, not all the prophets wrote books. You're going to find that Shemaiah, in 1 Kings 12, he's a prophet, he didn't write anything. Elijah and Elisha, they were great prophets back in 1 and 2 Kings, they didn't write anything. So the thing you want to remember is a couple of basic things.

First of all, the prophets were men that God used as His mouthpiece to tell the people what they're doing right and what they're doing wrong, and what God expects, and to hold them accountable with the awesome responsibility God has given them to be the greatest nation on the planet. Of course, many times those prophets didn't write anything. They went to the people and they're listed in the Bible. Some of them are unknown in the Bible; they're not even listed. You have some unnamed.

As the nation of Israel goes through its demise, and we know the history of Israel so I don't have to go over that again, they begin to fall apart. Once the kingdom gets divided, it just begins to go downhill from there. As it goes into its demise, the job of a prophet became a very unpopular job. Under David, he was recognized because the king loved God and they wanted to do what God said. He was revered as the man that God told them they got their message from God. But as the nation of Israel went into apostasy, as the nation of Israel went into the decline, the job of a prophet became a very dangerous job and a very hard job and a very unpopular job.

As the leaders of Israel, the kings, took the nation into deep sin and deep apostasy, the first thing that comes to mind is Ahab. Ahab is the most wicked king Israel ever had. The prophet that goes against Ahab is Elijah. Elijah was God's man who took a stand for God in the midst of Israel's apostasy. Oh, he was absolutely hated. Every leader, Ahab had married a woman, Jezebel, who was the new religious preacher, woman preacher in the kingdom. She brought in Baal worship. She had 400 prophets of Baal, and she destroyed Israel's relationship with God.

You want to remember now, you've got to get this picture in your mind. Even though Baal worship is going on, they're offering up their children to sacrifices. They're doing everything, they're worshipping the sun, they're going into everything that Baal worship. You want to go back to about 1 Kings chapter 23, I think it's going to be a very interesting chapter. You can really see the absolute ungodliness that's going on around the temple of God. And yet, much like today, if you walked into the temples back there, in the height of their Baal worship service, you would have thought they would be worshipping God. They used all of the things that God had given them to worship Him: the temple, the holy things. Everything that God had given them to worship Him that would give the semblance of worshipping God, they had now the devil and the sun god and all of the other things.

Now we have a woman Jezebel who comes on the scene. She has 400 prophets of Baal. They're worshipping the sun. They're doing everything that is absolutely contrary to the Word of God. Yet, if you would have walked back in time and you would have walked in Israel during that period of time, you would have thought, just like you do when you go into most churches today, that everything between them and God is okay. In reality, they were as far from God as they could get.

Nobody likes to be told you're wrong when you don't want to be told you're wrong. Law number one of human nature. Israel, the more you, when you're religiously wrong, you really resent it. There's something about religion that just drives people up the wall that when they're wrong and you try to tell them they're wrong, boy, you get yourself into some terrible situation. That is where Israel was with the prophets. The prophets had a mandate by God to go and take everything that God told them and take it to Ahab and all the other kings and lay it on the line. And they hated him. They hated him. Jezebel tried to kill him. They threatened to kill him. They did all kinds of things to the prophets of God.

In fact, you know, this is where you find in Hebrews chapter 11, a great verse I think that puts it all into context in God's Hall of Fame there down toward the end of the chapter.

Hebrews 11:32-38

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourging, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Now, you see what he did? He just gave you a kind of a layout, a history going from the book of Judges right up into Samuel and then right up into David and then on beyond that into the prophets. He says in verse 33, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." "Women received their dead, raised to life again," that'd be Elijah, "and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourging, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder," that's cut in half with a saw if you can't figure it out. "They were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins being destitute, afflicted, and tormented."

Why? Why did that happen to the men that God sent to His people? Because they had gotten a long way from God and wanted not to hear the truth of God. They wanted to hear the lie that they had sold themselves and the illusion that came along with it.

V. Parallels to Modern Ministry

Now you cannot, and I don't want this to be just a history lesson this morning by any stretch of the imagination. There are some great, and you've heard me say this many times, there are great parallels today for those who are thinking of stepping into ministry at some point in your life. I talked to a young guy yesterday who got into the ministry and took a church, and he called me yesterday on the phone and he'd been there almost six or seven months now and absolutely getting clobbered up one side and down the other. He just went on, I talked to him for about an hour. In fact, it was at your boy's birthday party. He went on for about 40 minutes, maybe an hour, and we talked back and forth. He asked me, he said, "I am getting lied about, I am getting kicked around, I'm getting beat up, I'm getting scammed, people are trying to set me up." And yet God is blessing and people are getting saved, but the old school, the old guard that hates the book and don't want to change, he says, he went on and on and on and on and on. And then when he was done, I just simply said, "Welcome to the ministry." And he said, "But does it ever, does it ever," he said, "everything I ever heard and saw you go through, now I'm experiencing," he says, "let me ask you a question, does it ever end?" And I said, "No, it never ends. Never ends. But you do learn to make friends with it after a while and it doesn't bother you anymore."

You've got to come to the point where the first six months is rough, the first year is rough, the first five years are rough. But after a while, it either makes you or breaks you. I think the tough time in ministry today proves people. I think you take a young man and his wife and you put him in the ministry and they get dumped on and they get that illusion very quickly. It's not like your

honeymoon, you know, when it's over, five years later, you figure it out, wake up some morning and say, "Boy, I don't know, what happened to all this, you know?"

Like a guy told me one time, he was driving with his wife and they were pulled out to a stop light and there was a couple in front of them that were out of light in front of them, and she was, it looked like one person there, and she obviously was snuggling up to him with her head on her shoulder while they were driving the car. I can't do that today because you've got buckets. See, this has been an old story. They were sitting there, his wife's sitting over here and they've been married now 10, 20, 30 years, and they're sitting over there and his wife's talking, suddenly she gets quiet. The light changes and the guy starts to drive and it becomes obvious that the woman steps up now and there was two people there. She nudged him on the shoulder and said, "Don't you remember when we used to do that?" Now, what are you going to do with that? He was smarter than most people. He looked at her and said, "Yeah, I remember that." She said, "What do you think?" She says, "I haven't moved." I don't know how that worked for him through the whole process, but that was pretty quick thinking on his feet.

You're going to find that the prophets, they represent a man taking God's side against a religion, a religious organization that God had set up to run one way but now is running wild. I'm telling you what, the parallels here are incredible. You're going to find that in your life in ministry, if you're going to take a stand for the things of God, you're simply going to pay the price. The real test is, what is your mettle made of? Are you able to take the onslaught or are you not? Are you able to take it and deal with it and understand it and realize it and put it in perspective or are you not? That's really the great parallels today.

I kind of, when I hung up from that young guy yesterday, I thought to myself, you know what, that is the best thing that can happen to him because he needs to find out within the first year if he really is cut out for this. You can know all your Bible, guys. Let me tell you something. I've been in this business for 40 years. You can know your Bible up one side and down the other and you can disciple people and be good at what you do and organize good ministries and all that. But I want to tell you something, when you're out there on your own, boy, and the fire starts coming in and the mortar rounds start dropping in and people start stabbing you in the back and lying about you and lying to you and pretending things that's not true and going on in their life and then kicking you in the back with this whole thing, that's where you're really made of. That's where you find out if you have it or not. That's where you find out if you really have the calling that God wants you to have.

This is a lot like basic training here. It could get rough at times, but you know what, nobody's going to hurt you here. Now, I may slap you around a little bit on Sunday morning, but nobody's going to hurt you. Nobody's going to come up and cut your throat from behind your neck, behind your back. Nobody's going to do any real damage to you. You're kind of protected here, see. Somebody has a problem with you, it falls back on me. I work through it and try to, that's my job. But let me tell you something, when you get out there on your own, all you've got is God. All you've got is God.

This illusion of the ministry, I'm sure that these prophets, when they got called of God, they were as excited as some of God's people are when the young men are called into the ministry. But boy, in that thing with Ahab and Jezebel and Ahaziah and all those guys that went after them and tried to wipe them out and all the things that went on, it was a different story. It was a different story. Welcome to the ministry. There you are. There's the great parallels there, you see.

I have in the front of my Bible 19 or 20 great issues that Israel had. I have them in kind of a ready reference form that I can get to at any moment's notice. It shows the issues and the great parallels of the prophets, what they faced and what you're going to face or what I faced. I put them in there for me. In fact, I wanted them where I could use them. If you were down in Joplin last week, you actually saw me do that. I was sitting back there getting ready to go through and get up and preach. I was thinking about some things and God said, "You know what, remember those 19 ready references you put up there in the front of your Bible? Now's the time to put those in and use them for where you're going with this message." So I looked up the front, had them right there and I used them. I've used them many, many times. Some of you have heard some of them. Most people have not heard all of them. But they're incredible. It shows what the real issue was back then versus what the real issue is today.

The people had an issue with God. Israel had an issue with God. What happens is when you represent God and you take the message of God to people, they're not going to take it out on God. They're going to take it out on you. That's what they did with the prophets. Oh, these are great things here. Each one of these is a sermon in itself.

In Isaiah 29:12, the prophet Isaiah told the people, "You know what he said? He said, 'You guys just give a bunch of lip service to God.' He says, 'You've got a head knowledge. You've got the Old Testament. You've got the writings of the prophet and the law. You've got a head knowledge but you've got no heart.' He says, 'All every one of you do is tell God what he wants to hear.'" That's what he preached to them. That's rough. I mean, that wasn't popular.

Jeremiah 23:20, you know what Jeremiah's preaching? He's preaching down there in verse 20 and he's telling him that God gave him a perfect book. You know what he's saying in verse 30? "And some of your spiritual leaders have come and stole it from you." That's what he's preaching. He's preaching exactly what you face today. He's preaching like that either.

You know what Hosea said in Hosea 8:12? He says, "You folks, the great things that once God did for you, the great things that he gave you, you now don't even understand what they were." Well, that was rough. I'm sure that was not popular.

You see, back then you didn't have to worry about getting invited back to preach because they didn't do that back then. You went wherever the people were. If all the saved people were down at the Chiefs game, you know where the prophet of God went? He went down to the Chiefs game. If they were down there on Sunday morning, I'm just using that as an example, but if all the Christians were gone for God when he should have been in God's house and down at the Chiefs game, you know where God sent the prophet of God? He sent them down to the Chiefs game. God gives him the ability to speak louder than the guy on the podium or with a sound

jitter. You know what he does? He walked right out in the middle of the field while the Chiefs are winning or losing, everybody's all fired up and he blasts them. That's what he did.

You know what Isaiah said in Isaiah 5:20? This is one of my favorites. He says, "You guys have taken all the good things that God gave you and you've made them evil and then you've taken all the wicked things of Baal that are evil and now you make those good." Wow. That went over really well.

Isaiah also said in Isaiah 59:4, he says, "You know what? The truth that God has given you that he saved you by that you've allowed it to fall in the streets." None of it was popular. There ain't a whole lot that's popular in these books. That's why I said out there on the menu, "Fillet your soul today," because that's where these prophets go.

Amos 8:11, he nailed it on the thing. He said, "You know what? We've got a famine in our country." And he said, "Yeah, we've got a famine in our country." Everybody went, "Amen, we need more bread, we need more chicken, we need more lamb, we need more of this." He says, "I'm not talking about food. There's a famine of you folks listening to what God says." Ooh, ooh. He didn't like that either. Didn't like it at all.

You get an example of it if you want to go into the New Testament. You get an example in the early part of Acts. Remember Stephen's message in Acts chapter 7 when he got stoned? I don't mean he was smoking anything. I mean he took rocks and killed him. He got stoned. You know why he got stoned? You ought to read that message sometime. He got stoned because he's telling the nation of Israel and the leaders all the wrong things they've done down through the Old Testament that took them away from God, how they've killed the prophets, how they've done everything. The Bible says when he was done with that, they just was in a rage and they grabbed him, they took him out and they stoned him. Oh yeah. Yeah, those good, godly people that if you would have walked into their home, they'd have had crucifixes and Bibles all over the place. Yeah, those same godly people that were you wherever you went. Do you think that they were the greatest? All on the outside. All on the outside. That's the nation of Israel.

He said in chapter 2 verse 4, he talked about pastors, teachers who had a spirit of falsehood. Jeremiah in Jeremiah 23:25, he actually uses the word. He talks about the dream world of the nation of Israel. He says, "Folks, you're living in a world that's an illusion. You think you have a relationship with God. You think you're doing what's right, but deep down inside you know you're not and you are under an illusion and you're in a dream world and you're as far from God as you could ever get." They didn't like that either. I guarantee you they didn't like it.

Malachi 1:7-8, old Malachi was another one. You know what he said? He said, "You've polluted the bread and now you've polluted the sacrifice." Oh, they didn't like that. They didn't like that at all. They were going through the sacrifice and they were making their offerings where in the Old Testament they were offering up lambs under the law, lambs, bullocks, rams. By the time Malachi's day was there, they were offering up their children. Now they were offering up their children. They knew what the Bible said to make the right sacrifice. They didn't do it and now they've degenerated to the place that when they go into the temple to worship God, which is the

sun god, but in their mind they've lost the real God a long time ago, they're offering up their same children to the world on an altar, a Baal, a Moloch.

Somebody says, "Well, I'm glad we're in the New Testament. We don't do that." You kidding me? I see parents do that every day of my life. Just because you don't literally put them in the fire. I've seen some of you, God's people who know what's right, know what you need to do, know what you need to do with your children and all you do is just keep offering them up to the world and give them nothing spiritually. And then you scratch your head and wonder why they went to the world. Oh yeah. Yeah, these guys were not popular. Aren't you glad I'm not preaching this to you today? I'm just putting an analogy.

Haggai 1:6. Oh, this is our favorite. We know this one. Life without God, bagged with holes. Jeremiah again in Jeremiah 48:10. He got on them for keeping their sword back from drawing blood. That's witnessing. Proverbs 28:5. Solomon coined it when he said man does not understand God's judgment.

Now what you do with all of that when you see that, every one of these verses that I just gave you was written by a prophet of God. I could give you 5,000 more. Every one of these verses was written by a prophet of God at some point in Israel's decline to bring them back to God and to show them their unrighteousness. Now these are the great negative things in the prophets. There's not a lot of positive stuff in the prophets. If you want a nice warm fuzzy feeling, don't go to the prophets. If you want to get feeling good about yourself, don't go to the prophets. If you want to delude yourself into thinking that your world is fine when you're going to wind up with a judgment seat of Christ as naked as a jaybird, don't go to the prophets. Don't go to the prophets. The books of the prophets are the hard line books of the Bible.

In both cases with Israel and unfortunately the church, the same result when they rejected the preaching of the man of God sent them, what happened? They went into captivity. Where the nation of Israel took all their phony religion and their phony gods and walked into Babylon and went into captivity, Babylon, a type of the world. God's people today, when they forsake the Word of God and the plan of God in their life, when they do their own thing, it doesn't matter how many churches you go to or how many churches you belong to. It only matters what you do with the Word of God in your own personal life. You know what happens? You go into the same captivity. The world captivates you and you never come back to God. You just go your own way and do your own thing and your life's a joke.

Listen, Israel was going to that temple every day. They were offering sacrifices but they were polluted. They were going through all their rituals. They still had the law but now it's to the sun god. They never missed a day of church. They just missed the God of the Bible and wound up going into captivity. It's incredible, absolutely incredible.

VI. Prophets as Object Lessons

Now that's not all. As Israel got deeper into apostasy, God not only used the prophets to hammer them with the message of God's coming, but He used the men themselves as object lessons. I think this is a great lesson to understand here.

In Isaiah, you know what Isaiah was called to be? It was a rough job. You realize what he told Isaiah to do when he said to go to his people? He told Isaiah that his preaching circuit is going to be for three years. He said, "You're going to preach for three years and all three years of that preaching I want you to go stark naked. Take your clothes off, take your shoes off, take everything off and for three years everywhere you go preach naked." That's tough calling. That's rough.

You know what he told Ezekiel? You see, not only did he give them a hard message, he used them as object lessons. He told Ezekiel that when your wife is going to die, Ezekiel, your wife is going to die. And when she dies, you're not to weep and shed one tear over her death. Weird, weird, weird.

You know what he told Jeremiah? Jeremiah is the only man in the Bible ever told. God told him, "Don't get married. Don't marry anybody."

You know what he told Hosea? He told Hosea, he said, "When you take a wife, you go down there to Gomorrah and you take a wife of hordoms. You take a whore for a wife." That was a violation of the law. But he told him directly, "As my prophet and my man with my message, you're going to be an object lesson. Go marry a wife of hordoms." On, on, on it goes. It's a wild time, man. It's a wild time.

Because these men, the prophets, are dealing with Israel and their backsliding from God, and all the material is negative, dealing with God's coming judgment. You've got to get this down too. Doctrinally, that will be prophetically, all this material deals with the three major events in the Old Testament concerning the nation of Israel in prophecy. They're going to deal with the Tribulation period, the second coming of Christ, and the Millennium. You want to get that down.

The prophets historically will be the time in one of three categories: right before God's judgment of 606, during that judgment, or right after that judgment. Doctrinally, all this will picture the three major events that Israel is going to go through in the future. Inspirationally, it's a picture of God's judgment on us. You don't get saved and live your life and do what you want to do without a judgment coming to you. And it's all through there.

VII. The Book of Isaiah: Nakedness and Transparency

All right, with that little introduction there, let's look at Isaiah first. We want to get some of this stuff down here. Isaiah. That's your first major prophet. I'm going to give you a lot of material that you want to get in your Bible.

First of all, the name Isaiah. It means, "Save thou Jehovah." Christ is typified in the book of Isaiah as Israel's Messiah. You'll find that in John 1:41. You'll find that in the book of Isaiah because Christ is portrayed as the Messiah. This is where you find a great verse in Isaiah 7:14 on the virgin birth. The Bible says that God will give you a sign that a virgin shall conceive and be with child. Of course, we know that child, the Lord Jesus Christ, which is Israel's Messiah. You'll find great prophecies in Isaiah 53 and 52 about the death of the Messiah.

Now Isaiah is a pre-exile book. It's before the captivity. It's totally negative. Isaiah writes during the time when Israel is in deep apostasy. Israel is in a mess. Absolutely broken down and in a mess. I want to show you here in chapter 1 basically how the book goes. We don't have time to go through the whole book and no desire to tell but here's an example.

Look at Isaiah 1:5-8. Let me read it for you. Pick it up in verse 4.

Isaiah 1:4-8

4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

7 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence; and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

Now there ain't a whole lot positive in that. You called me up on the phone and said, "Bob, I'm going through a tough day. Could you read me a comforting passage of Scripture?" and I read that to you? Probably wouldn't do you much good. That's the prophets.

You find in one section where He tells them how rotten they are, then look at the other side of it. Look at Isaiah 1:16, same chapter. Now He just told them how rotten they are and really gave it to them. Now look what He says in verse 16.

Isaiah 1:16-20

16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

See how the thing goes? Now there's the two aspects. These are God's people. He loves them. But God is a holy God and He's not going to tolerate His people saying one thing and doing something else. You ever read and list the things that He mentions in here that they're supposed to get back to and do? All of the things that they are so willing and obedient, all of the things that He wants them to do and He pleads with them. God is a God who is a God of love but He's also a God of righteous judgment. He wants the best for His people but He ain't above dropping the hammer on them when He needs to. That is a lesson that 20th century, 21st century Christian, Christian don't have a clue on. I realize there's a lot of grace today and I realize that God puts up with a lot of things. But I'm telling you what, friend? You better look at these things and understand that not, He lays out their evil but then He gives them an exhortation of to repentance but He ends that thing saying if you don't get it right, I'm going to come down and judge you.

Now Isaiah is our first prophet. At his first object lesson, and I even shudder to think of this and I think it's very important to see this. He's told in Isaiah 20:2 that as I already said for three years he got to walk around naked preaching to the people of God. Now I mean if it wasn't already bad enough you got a negative message. I mean walking around naked. Somebody said now why would God do a thing like that? Don't you get it yet? Don't you realize that God always used object lessons? He has God's prophet walk around naked which is a shame. He has him preach three years naked to show Israel as an object lesson what a shame they are and how naked they are before God even though they're trying to hide their sins. And there's some great lessons in that.

Now I would do not do justice not to tell you this. Now all the scholars today and all the big time preachers they really can't deal with that. I don't know how many books I've read over the years. I don't know how many preachers I've heard when it comes to that passage. They just can't grasp the reality that God would ask somebody to do that. So they all come up and I've heard many preachers say this, "Well it doesn't really mean he was naked. He went around in his underwear." You're laughing, that's what they teach on it. I mean I've heard it a thousand times in 40 years. I've heard it all my life and of course that's the most. I mean you read it for yourself Isaiah 20:2-3. Here's what he said.

Isaiah 20:2-3

2 At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

3 And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia;

Now does this sound like he had underwear on to you? If we're going to be honest with it, if it says naked means he had underwear on then barefoot means he wore socks. I mean what do you do with it? I know the drill. I know the drill. The star of Bethlehem really couldn't have been a star so it had to be a conjunction between Saturn and Jupiter. I know the drill. Isaiah 7:14, you know a virgin conceiving is too hard for the liberal so they change it in all the new Bibles to a young woman. Yeah I understand the drill. You know Jonah really didn't die in the belly of the

whale. You know he lived for three days down there, you know, and all the gastric juices, you know, and then God just threw him up. Yeah I know the Red Sea really didn't split. It was just the wind that blew it. Yeah the bush that Moses talked to in Exodus 4 it really didn't burn. It was just an illusion and Moses was high on a mountain so he thought that the bush was talking to him. Well I knew guys that I was in my church years ago that used to get smashed in drugs and booze. You ought to see the things that used to talk to them.

I told you the story how I was in the hospital when I was in the Army and he put me down in a ward down there where I mean I really was sick. I had really almost I think I had pneumonia. But after three or four days I get feeling pretty good, you know, and I'm walking around I didn't know where I was going, you know, and a big hospital is a big complex so I straight into the mental ward. I didn't even know it. It was this big guy, big guy, and he's walking around, you know, he's walking around with arm in a sling and he had a cast on his leg. I don't know what happened to him but the other arm seemed fine but he's like that. So I'm talking and I'm saying, "Hey, how you doing, Mac?" Didn't answer me and I said, "I'm glad to get up and walk around a little bit." I said, "I think I had pneumonia. I was pretty sick there for a while." He said, "I said, 'How you doing?' I said, 'I've never seen you around him before.'" He said, "What happened to your leg?" He said, "What happened to your arm?" He said, "Are you going to be okay?" He didn't answer me. And I said to him, I said, "What's wrong with your other arm?" This one holding up could look fine, you know. I said, "What's wrong with your other arm?" He looked down at me with this look in his eyes and he says, "Like there's something wrong with me." And he says, "What's the matter? Can't you see my pet giraffe?" I said, "Yeah, that's a nice one." I had to go now. That's where he was.

I knew a guy one time that was on I used to scur down to Jackson County Jail and visit him years ago. This guy had burned his brain out on drugs and burned his brain out on alcohol and I don't even know how I got hooked up with him. Somebody's mother called the church or somebody wanted somebody to go see him so I went down to Jackson County Jail. I don't think he had him. He was in more trouble than he could know what to do with. And I don't know what ever happened to him. But I'm sitting in a visiting area there like a little cell room talking with him. And we're talking back and forth and he says, "He's looking at you." And I said I thought he meant the surveillance camera, you know. And I said, "That's okay." He says, "No, he's looking at you. He's laughing." And I said, "Who's looking at me and laughing?" He says, "The guy sitting in that chair next to you." Wouldn't anybody in the chair next to me? And this guy was heart dropped serious. I mean he wasn't just pulling my leg. He's serious. He said he went and I talk all the time. I said, "Okay. I said, 'Well then you don't need me here if you got somebody to talk to.'" You know back that time it was the old cartoon exit stage left. Man I was out of there, you know.

So I mean, you know, the world likes to paint it in the Bible it's those kind of illusions. No, no, it was a real burning bush. God spoke to him from it. It's just the way it went. But I know the drill. People can't handle the Bible and they don't understand why the Bible is the way it is. So when they see Isaiah walking around naked then they have a tough time with that because they just can't conceive that God would do that, see, for three years. Well first of all if you look at verse 3

it tells you, of course people don't read the Bible anymore. It tells you it's a sign. A guy walking around three and a half, three years naked would be a sign. A guy walking around with some kind of linen cloth on him would not be a sign.

Bible says, "Well, you know in the new Bibles they take out Isaiah 7:14 where it says the virgin can't conceive and put in a young woman." The Bible says, "This sign shall be given unto you." What sign is it? Just a young woman gives them a child. Man, our church that happens every week. Now a virgin conceiving, well that's something to be signed about. See that's a sign. And him walking around three years naked was for an object lesson to show Israel their spiritual condition. Israel's naked before God. Hebrews 4:13 says, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." I mean it's just that simple.

Now there's a great practical lesson here. I don't have time to give you all these but they're probably four or five in each chapter and they're incredible. But I don't have time to get all of these and run them through the whole book. But I want to show you some of this stuff how it works. This is a great practical lesson. Every preacher should be naked when he preaches. And every Christian ought to be naked in their Christian life. The moral is when you're naked you can't hide anything. And what you see is basically what you get. In other words, transparency in your life.

You find this concept in 2 Corinthians 4:1-2 where it says:

2 Corinthians 4:1-2

1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

See that thing? In other words in your Christian life you ought to be transparent. No hidden agendas. I have people all the time that play the game. All my life it's been in the ministry. They tell you one thing but they're really going to do something else. I think in the Bible one of my favorite words and it's a great word study is the word "cloak."

1 Thessalonians 2:4-5 says:

1 Thessalonians 2:4-5

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

See? "Nor a cloak." Of covetousness, God is witness. You know what a cloak is? It covers up your use of no but a cloak is like a Dracula wore. A cape, you know? And you put it around you

and nobody can see what's on the inside. You cloak who you really are. It's a great word in the Bible.

He has another one over there in 1 Peter 2:16. He says:

1 Peter 2:16

16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Many churches and many pastors every Sunday they get up. They preach under a cloak. They say one thing but in reality they want something else. They want power. They want money. They want glory. They want this. They want that. And they use the message of God to cloak what they really want and what they really do. And it's all a cloak.

I'll show you a great verse over here. Have you ever seen this verse in John 15:22? This is a great verse. And this really says it all. John 15, pick it up in verse 20.

John 15:20, 22

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

He's talking to the nation of Israel. He's basically saying they don't know God. Yet they claim to know God. They claim to love God. But they rejected the Messiah. They rejected Christ. They rejected the disciples. Now watch this. Oh this is great. This is great. Jesus speaking. "If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin. But now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my father." You know what he just said? He said, "Till I showed up they can hide their sin. Till I got here and spoke to them and gave them the word of God they could pretend they were spiritual. They could pretend they loved God. And yet they were so far away from God that they could not even know him but they cloaked themselves." You know what Jesus did when he showed up? He took away the cloak. You know what the word of God does in your life? Why you don't come to Thursday night Bible study. This is why you don't get involved in the word of God. This is why you want to study the things you really want to study because that by he said it. When I say it to them he removed the cloak. That book removes the cloak that we all like to hide under.

Now Israel could play the game all through the Old Testament. They went into the captivity and they were playing the victim. Oh they played the victim. Oh poor us. Oh poor them. If you would take a Jew today, an Orthodox Jew and take him back to Isaiah 52. Isaiah 53. If you'd run him back there to the great passages in the Bible that you and I know as a picture of the suffering Savior on the cross. Do you know what an Orthodox Jew does with those passages? He plays the victim and he says, "Oh those passages is a suffering for God." No you didn't suffer for God. You suffered because you cloaked yourself in a feigned righteousness and God stripped it away and sent you into captivity. That's why. That's exactly why. And when Christ showed up in verse 22

by his word, he spoke unto them, he stripped that cloak away and their hidden sin was revealed and they really did not like it.

Now brethren that's what every church ought to be. I'm sorry. This is not a positive message. This is what every prophet in the Old Testament did. This is what Jesus did and this is what every pastor and preacher and every church ought to do. It ought to keep, you leave, you check your cloak at the door when you come in and be transparent of who you really are instead of putting out one thing and then having a little crowd where you have it the other way.

The biggest mistake people ever made, boy, and I ain't kidding you. The biggest mistake that people ever made and some of you young people make this mistake but everybody makes it. You thought if the smoke was thick and the room was dark and the beer was hidden in the garage where nobody could see it and the music was loud that God could not see what went on. Well I got news for you Buster. You never push your hand anywhere that God didn't know where you put it. You never hid anything in your garage, in your basement or whatever you do so your friends and your kids and your family won't see it that God didn't see it. Now you're in an illusion here. I'm telling you, you never hid anything in your life that God didn't see it. You never had a hidden anger, a hidden bitterness, a hidden passion, a hidden lust that God didn't know exactly what it was. You know why? Because Hebrews 4:13 says, "all things are naked and open unto Him." Oh yeah man that's a great concept. That's a great principle.

VIII. The Book of Jeremiah: Root Out, Pull Down, Destroy, Throw Down

Now let's look at the book of Jeremiah quickly. I wish I could say this is going to get better but it didn't. These prophets are going to be killed here. We're going to move through these as fast as we can. And I guarantee you I'm only preaching on the ones that are going to get you, not me. I got to pick those things you see. Probably as it all gets me.

Now in the book of Jeremiah, what's Jeremiah mean? The word Jeremiah, the name Jeremiah means "cast out." It's a picture of Israel being cast out. And Jeremiah's mission is no better than in Isaiah's. He's tough, it's tough man. It's absolutely tough.

Now Christ is typified as the righteous branch. You'll find out in Jeremiah 23:5 where it says:

Jeremiah 23:5

5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

So that's a reference to Christ, the righteous branch, you see. It's off the olive tree of Romans chapter 11 if you got your notes all together. Now the book of Jeremiah is pre-exile. And boy old Jeremiah puts it to him. Oh boy he does. But boy he also pays the price. Boy you go through that thing and look at old Jeremiah. I think the picture of Jeremiah is one of the greatest pictures of what a pastor has to go through and how God calls a man and finds out what that man's made of than any other book in the Bible.

Boy old Jeremiah puts it to him. In chapter 36 he comes down there and God gives him the book of Jeremiah and he writes that book. He takes it into the king. You know what the king does? The king gives it to his religious leader, a guy by the name of Jehudi. Jeremiah takes that book of Jeremiah in there and he says, "King this is the Word of God right here." The king looks at it and he says, "Check it out Jehudi." You know what the Bible says in chapter 36 Jehudi did? He took a pen knife, switch blade. He went through the book of Jeremiah and every piece he didn't like he cut out, threw in the fire. You know what the problem with that was? By the time he was done cutting out what he didn't like the whole book was in the fire. Yeah, that's Jeremiah. There you are. That's what it is. You know what a lot of God's people do today? You just take out of the Bible what you really like. You'll take out of the Bible what won't make you change or force about you what needs to change. We're all that way. Just the way it is. We come to the point where we want to take what we want to take and we want to do what we want to do that keeps us but we don't want to put ourselves into the situation where we do what we have to do. That was what happened.

In chapter 37 it didn't get any better. He keeps preaching. He goes and gets another book of Jeremiah. Now you know what they do with him? They put him in prison. Now this is the man that God sent to his people to give them the message of God. You thought they had a banquet. They thought they had turned the whole nation out and got everybody shut out and say, "Hey here's the man that God speaks through. He's got a message from God. Let's shut up, shut out and listen to what God says to us because we're his people." Oh yeah right. How'd that work for you? Put him in prison.

You know what they did in chapter 38? It wasn't satisfied with putting him in prison. They got him out of prison. Now they put him in a dung pit. You know what a dung pit is? Well just go get a johnny on the spot and go inside and close the door and lift the seat up and stick your head down in it and that's what it is. A full one by the way. You know what they did? They put cords under his arms and they lowered him down into a pit of dung and they lowered him down into that pit and he's down there and he's down in that pit. I mean why? What did he do to deserve that? He preached the Word of God. He told people the truth. He told God's people what they did not want to hear and they wanted to get rid of the man of God so desperately that tearing up the Bible wasn't enough. Putting him in jail wasn't enough. Now they got to put him in a dung pit. They had a rough job. He's down there in that old dung pit. Boy I'll tell you what. I can't even imagine that. And finally they'd come over there and somebody said, "What in the world are you doing? Get him out of there." And they lowered down a rope. They put it under his, it tells you, put it under his armpits and they pulled him back up. Wow what a mess he must have been.

Boy I'll tell you what. You find, I'm going to tell you something. You all may be going to heaven and I'm going to heaven. We all may be God's children. But I want to be very honest with you after 40 years in the ministry and dealing with all kinds of people that are tuned to how many thousand and putting 300, 400 young men in the ministry over my lifetime. Let me tell you something. You may be all be going to heaven. I may be all the heaven. We're all made brothers and sisters in Christ. But God's people can be the most wicked, godless, depraved people on this planet when they want to be. Amen. It's incredible stuff.

His object lesson is to take no wife. He's the only man in the Bible told not to marry. You know why that is? Because doctrinally, I told you already, all this stuff doctrinally is a picture of the tribulation, second coming in the millennium. You know why he's told not to marry? Because Jeremiah is a type of 144,000 Jews in Revelation chapter 7 and again in Revelation chapter 14 that preached a message to the nation of Israel in their apostasy during the tribulation period and the Bible says they have to be virgins not married. That's why. That all makes sense. It all comes together when you put it together. It's great stuff. Every chapter is loaded.

I think one of the things that you got here is probably the greatest chapter for me personally as a pastor and for you, any of you young men out there that aspired, or young ladies aspired to be in the ministry. I think it's one of the greatest places in the Bible that shows the calling of a prophet to Israel and yet at the same time calls you and tells you what you're up against and what you got to do in any ministry any time whether it's the Old Testament or the New Testament. Great stuff. I mean it's just loaded.

Look at Jeremiah 1. I remember years and years and years ago. This is what male priests did in my ordination. When they ordained me he had already went to New York City and he made a trip back to fly and they asked him to preach since he was my father in the Lord and this is what he preached. I still got the notes in my Bible. I preached it probably a hundred times since that time some 40 years ago, 35 years ago. And it was something that it was a great message for me and that would be a great message for every young man or young lady that wants to do the work of God.

Jeremiah 1:4-10

4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Now watch this thing. "Then the Word of the Lord came unto me saying, 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee and ordained thee a prophet unto the nation.'" Now I want to stop right there for a moment. We talked about this yesterday, didn't we, in the men's prayer group, the concept of foreknowledge. We saw how that God not only had a plan for you, I know free will is all part of it, but God puts

everything in your life to give you everything you need to make every right choice you need to make. Now you may not make it, maybe you will, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll make the right choice to get saved and maybe you'll make the right choice to get the right Bible and get into the right church and in some place along the line some issue will come up in your life and you refuse to make that right choice and then you go left and go right on down the road someplace. Life is choices. And if you want to have good success with God and the Word of God make the right choices. Do what the Bible says. That's what the Bible tells you to do.

But when I look at this thing it says foreknowledge. God looked at every one of you this morning. If you're saved here this morning God looked at you before you were, at the time you were born. And this has nothing to do with predestination or anything associated with it. It's called foreknowledge in the Bible. And God looked at you and God knew what He wanted you to do. Now you may never do it. You may never fulfill it. But He looks at you a lot like every parent looks at that baby in the crib and that mother says, "I want him to be president someday." Dad says, "I want him to have a better life than I've got." Dad says, "I've got a corporation. He's going to get it when he grows." You want better for that child than you have. I don't ever know a parent that looked at that little baby in the crib and said, "I hope you're a bum down the city union mission when you grow up." Now maybe they wind up as a bum in the city union mission. But that's because they made bad choices. Or maybe as a parent you made bad choices. But the bottom line is that's not your desire. Your desire is that that kid, male or female, gets everything that they want and have the best life they can. And in most cases better than your life. But you see that's what God did. God put every person in your life. We saw it yesterday, didn't we, in Timothy's life. God put everything in Timothy's life to get him exactly what he needed to bring him down the line to give him every right choice that he made and Timothy made the right choices. And I'm telling you, for knowledge God looks at you here this morning. He's got a plan for you. The problem is you don't have a plan for God. He has one for you. You just don't have one for Him. Or you've got a plan for your husband or your boyfriend or your friends or this or that and all that stuff. You've got plans. They just don't include God's plan in your life. That's the problem. But God's got a plan for you.

Look what he said. "Then the Word of the Lord came into me saying, 'Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee. And before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.'" "Then said I," this is Jeremiah speaking now, "'Ah Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child.'" That's a true statement. Now watch the Lord intervene here. "Verse 7, 'But the Lord said unto me, Say not I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.'" Now there's your commission, guys. That's my commission. Go where God tells you to go and then say what he tells you to say. Now that can be rough today. It was rough back then when you were up against Ahab. But I've learned in a lot of years and minutes that the Ahabs are still alive today. And they're male and female version by the way.

"But the Lord said unto me, 'Say not I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak, be not afraid of their faces. For I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.'" Then he gets the big thing here, boy. This is great. "Then the Lord

put forth his hand and touched my mouth, and said unto me, 'Behold I have put my words in my mouth. See this day I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.'"

Now somebody says, "Well I like a positive church then." Don't go to Jeremiah's church. Don't go there. I mean this thing is he's got the word of God and God lays out some very clear directives here. This was what I got preached to. And I got this set to be down as a challenge and a charge. Yet when you come down here and you look at these things they're all laid out in the Bible.

The first thing that he's told to do is to root out.

Root out. Now you can go all through the New Testament and find great things about this and we're not going to spend a lot of time with each one of them. But Hebrews 12:15 talks about the root of bitterness. See, I guess without a doubt bitterness is the number one thing that gets into people's lives and just destroys them. You know where bitterness comes from? Bitterness comes from first of all because you don't appreciate the relationship you got with God. That's where it starts. Somebody will do something in your life. Somebody will hurt you in some way. And because you don't see how many times you've hurt God and done things with God and he forgives you and brings you back, you know, it develops into an unforgiving spirit. It comes at a point where, you know, then your pride gets involved and self-righteous to get involved and then you get your birds of a feather flock together. You get the other people who are bitter flocking around you who are bitter too and you'll all just become a little bitter society and that's one of the hardest things to deal with in your life. You know why? Because it isn't like just treating a normal thing. It's got roots to it.

When I was a kid growing up, when my dad died, my mom remarried, I lived in my house that I grew up in by myself. I took it over for my mom. And it was an old dilapidated house. It still stands. But it was a mess back then. I can't even imagine it 60 years later. I mean 50 years later, it's just a mess. But, you know, every twice a year we had the, every time it rained, you go down, the basement was a swimming pool. I mean it just leaked like a sieve. Everything was wrong with it. And one of the problems was that by the time I was there and took it over, the sewage system was so bad that it ran out to the street that it would clog up two or three times a year. And I'd have to get the sewer guy to come out, you know. And I remember sitting down there, you know, and he'd get this big long snake. I don't know how they do it now. But he'd get this big, he'd bring this big machine down with this big coiled up snake in it. And he'd pop the thing off the drain down there and he'd start feeding that snake down and it would make all kinds of growling grunting noises, you know. And I don't know how he'd tell but he said, "Okay, I'm out to the street now." And I said, "Okay." And he said, "I'm going to pull it back because he can't do it again, the main line." So he pulled it back out, you know. And he brought that thing out and I'm telling you what, wrapped around that, wrapped around that snake, which was about that big, was about that much of tree roots and everything that had clogged my sewer system. And I asked him, I said, "Is there anything I can do?" He said, "Well, you can put some stuff down there to slow it up." He said, "The bottom line is roots have a way of finding their way into anything no matter how solid it is." And I'll tell you what, you know why some of your lives are like a backed up

sewer? You know why there's no happiness and no joy? There's no power of God in your life. You need a rooted man to come over and ream you out. You got the root of bitterness in down inside you and you ain't going to get rid of it for anything on this planet. We want to keep it. And I'll tell you what, the first thing he said that that preacher had to do was root out because if you got a root of bitterness in you and you're bitter towards something in your life and you can't move on and deal with it, you ain't going anywhere. And that's the number one thing he said. Root out.

You know the next thing he said? Pull down. Where do you find out at? 2 Corinthians 10:4. All these are in the Bible and the New Testament and a practical application. He said:

2 Corinthians 10:4

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

You know what a stronghold is in your life? Something that has a stronger hold on you than God. Now I'm obviously, I mean I understand, I mean you know, drugs can be a stronghold, pornography can be a stronghold, alcohol can be a stronghold, cigarettes can be a stronghold. I mean sports can be a stronghold. I mean covetous, lust, bitterness, all can be a stronghold. But whatever is in your life that keeps pulling you down, whatever is in your life that keeps getting you, won't let you get past where you need to be, that's a stronghold. It could be your boat. It could be your cabin at the lake. It could be your own self-righteousness or your pride. It could be your covetousness. It doesn't matter, whatever it is, whatever it keeps you from getting to the place where you control your life instead of life controlling you. Now the great model for that, and that's a tough one too, but the great model for that is found over there in 2 Samuel chapter 5. In 2 Samuel chapter 5 you're going to find a story. Don't have time to get into it today. But that Old Testament story shows you exactly how if you have a stronghold in your life how to break it. It's all in there.

All right, the third one, destroy. That would be the book of Joshua. Now in the book of Joshua, we talked about this a couple of nights ago in Bible study, but in the book of Joshua you have the story in Joshua chapter 7 of Achan. Achan was a foot soldier in his real army. And Achan got into the thing where he did something he wasn't supposed to do. God said that the first battle in the battle of Jericho, Joshua chapter 7, was the first battle that they fought. And God said, "The battle's down the line. You guys can take whatever you want to take. It's all yours. The first battle, everything that is the spoils of that war comes to me, everything." And what happened was Achan took something, some thing that he should not have taken. And then he tried to hide those things, but what happened was because he was doing what was wrong and violated what God said, God's judgment came down on the nation of Israel and they started to lose every battle.

Moses gets wind of something going on, so he pulls out of his troops together and finds out that Achan has taken some things, has hid them in the tent floor of his tent, and now because he will disobey God and he's hiding something in his tent, God will not put the blessings on his life or his family or in the nation of Israel. Now, you know what that's a picture of? That's a picture of you and me having something in our lives that isn't right with God that we don't get confessed up and take care of and deal with and then we pretend everything is all right. That's what that's a

picture of. I've often preached this message as an entire message. I used to do a lot of camps and I've actually seen how that one or two people in a camp, holdouts can affect the whole camp. And about, you know, Monday night I just preached the hell out of them. Tuesday night I just whack them again. And then Wednesday night I'd let them go and if the camp usually broke where all the kids just got busted, the Holy Spirit of God, it was a unique thing to see the God's Spirit work in it. And about Wednesday night the camp usually broke. And Wednesday night I had learned after years of preaching camps that the message you preach on Wednesday night, Achan in the camp and point the finger at every kid in that camp and says which one of you is keeping the power of God from getting the person next to you? There's sin in the camp, there's Achan in the camp. And I lay that whole thing out. And boy, God just come down and bust their heads, man. It's an incredible concept because Achan, like so many of God's people, he coveted, he tells you, he says, "I saw," lust of the eyes. And he coveted a Babylonian garment, 200 shekels of silver I think it was in a wedge of gold.

I obviously pictured that in my mind many, many times. And I put it into a New Testament context where so many are God's people. And even myself at times. You know, they're in the battle. They're fighting. I mean, they're going through Jericho and the walls come tumbling down, boy, and they're just going from house to house because they're fighting in the city. And fighting in the city is the worst kind of combat. It's house to house, door to door. You've got a building with three floors in it. You've got to clear all three floors. You can't just run through the city. It's the most laborious, dangerous, deadly kind of combat there is. And they're going through Jericho. I mean, the walls came down, but they had to clear the city. And I tell the story, you know, I put it into the 20th century, you know, a thing where people can grab it, you know, that they're going from place to place and kicking down the door, you know, and throwing grenades in, you know, and blowing up. And an old Achan, he goes, kicks down the door and walks in there and there's some Babylonian general, you know, with his two aides trying to stuff stuff in the bag. And he takes his Uzi and he cuts him in half and they're laying down there in the thing, you know. And he walks over to make sure they're dead and he starts to walk out and he looks over there. He sees that gold. He sees that silver and he sees that really nice Babylonian garment. And nobody's looking around and the battle's going on out there, you know, and he's putting another magazine in the Uzi, you know, pulling the bolt back. They're open bolt, got to pull the bolt back, fire them. And he's looking around down there and you'll see him, buddy, he pulls his bag around there and puts that stuff down in there and flaps it back out, gets out that door. He's shooting everywhere, killing everybody else. They get back to the camp, you know, the battle's over for the day and he goes back to his tent, you know, and nobody's looking around. He takes his little trench shovel and he starts digging a hole in the door of his tent and he takes that Babylonian garment and puts it down there and hides it. He knows God told him not to do that and not to take that. He knows that belongs to the Lord. But he coveted it. He saw it with his eyes and he coveted it. So he buries it down there and he puts it all over and smooths it all over, puts his trench shovel back in the thing, you know, and walks back out and goes out there and stands out in front of his tent. And some of his buddies walk by and he says, "Great battle today wasn't it, boys? Praise Jehovah. Praise the Lord. The Lord gave us a great day today. Boy, I'll tell you what, I'm so glad I'm in his, I'm so glad that I'm with the Jehovah God and boy, I'll tell you what, you're a great bunch of guys and praise God, he gave us our great delivery day, didn't he?" And the other guy

said, "That's right, Achan, good job today. Praise the Lord." He said, "Yeah, amen all the time." He got something hidden in the floor of his tent. Feigning being a good Christian, feigning being right with God when he can't get the thing out the tent floor because he won't deal with it. Boy, I'll tell you what, when you look at that thing and you understand that thing and you put it in the perspective, it was tough, it was tough. And he comes to that point where he won't destroy the things in his life. Bible calls it in chapter 7, the accursed thing. And what we have hidden in our tent floor today and we won't deal with the effects of unconfessed sin. We saw it when you laid the whole story out, it affected the nation of Israel. They began to lose their battles. I think the most important thing that it infected at the end of the day was his own family. He was taken thought like many moms and dads think. Like I think sometimes that our sin is our own. And of course it's not. That's why the Bible says, give us the process to confess it, get it right with God and get the tent floor cleaned out. It caught up with him. And when it caught up with him, he paid the ultimate price. So it says, destroy.

The next thing is throw down. That'll go over to 2 Corinthians 10:5 where it says:

2 Corinthians 10:5

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

You know what? That's exactly what he says. He says the old Jeremiah over there, he says, "You got to pull down." He says, "You got to root out. You got to pull down. You got to destroy. And then you got to throw down." And then after you get all the stuff out of your life, then, you plant and you build.

You see, most churches today, they don't preach. The menu out there was, "Fillet your soul." Very pointed now, as you can see. The message today in most churches is how good you are, how nice you are, how sweet you are, that there's nothing wrong with you. They replace this word with sin with our shortcomings. They try to make all the problems that we have like they're not really there. And the truth of the matter is the Bible lays it out very clearly that the prophet of God, he rooted out. He tore down. He destroyed. He threw down. And then and only then, once you get those things out of your life, can you build and plant the things that God wants me to have.

The job of a prophet was one of the hardest jobs there ever was. Preaching the truth to a hard-hearted, stiff-necked, self-righteous people of God who had a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof, cloaked in their mask of false spirituality, yet feigning faith in a relationship with God while they hated and killed the prophet of God and the men that God sent him. That's where you were. That's where he was.

IX. The Tragic Consequence of Rejection

Finally, God had enough. The great Gentile nations carried him off. I leave you with this verse. It's in Psalm 137. How tragically true this verse is. I see this verse come to fulfillment almost every day in somebody's life. Psalm 137 to me is one of the most tragic verses in the Bible. It's

said in the context of after Israel was carried away into Babylon. Let the verse speak for itself, but it reminds me of my own life at times and people's lives when he simply says this. Now this is the greatest nation on the face of the planet. These are God's people, the aristocracy of heaven, the ones that God moved heaven and earth to establish in the nation of Israel.

Psalm 137:1-4

1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

4 How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?

Can you imagine that? Can you imagine you and me who once had everything that God had for us. We get out in the world, out of fellowship. Now we're hanging out with the wrong crowd and you try to put that happy smile on when inside God's torched you're just tearing your heart out. And somebody comes along and they know you're a Christian and then they start to say, "Hey why don't you, the guy that wrote Hank Williams who wrote I Saw the Light." Hank Williams died in the back of a taxi cab in Steubenville, Ohio about 1955 some place like that. He wrote one of the most famous songs that I like and people like, "I Saw the Light." Praise the Lord, I Saw the Light. Bubba sings it and some of the guys sing it down at the mission and they love it. It goes back a long way with roots that people can identify with. Hank Williams was a dope addict on heroin and an alcoholic and he died in the back of a taxi cab and as I said in Steubenville, Ohio. He was a taxi cab driver, was taking him back there after his life of fornication and drunk and driving and drinking and drugs that ruined his life and about ready to die and he knew he had the famous Hank Williams in the back of his cab and he said to Hank Williams, he looked over the seat there, "Hey Hank, sing me that song, I Saw the Light." You know what William said? He looked up and he said, "There is no light. There is no light." There wasn't no light for him. There wasn't no light for Israel. Now if you're honest this morning there is no light for you.

Look at Israel's answer. Look at verse 3 again. "For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song and they that wasted us, I love that, wasted us required of us mirth. I got to preach a whole message just on what that wasted means. Sing, sing us one of the songs of Zion." Look at verse 4. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" That's it. The prophet of God in the Old Testament came to God's people to keep them from getting to that strange land. But oh boy, hell bent to election. They were going to get there and they did. And that is the end result. No joy, no power, no happiness, no nothing. And then the world makes fun of them. The world makes fun of them and says, "Sing us one of those songs." And they say, "How can we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?" God's people have an affinity for heading to that strange land.

Every head bowed and every eye closed. Yeah, the books of the prophets, they're not for the tender-footed. But at times the prophets were on the scene. Israel was already on its way out.

And God ratcheted it up and God gave them the men that would stand before the whole nation and take God's side against an apostate nation. What God needs today, looking into some of your young men and you young ladies' hearts, what God needs and what God is looking for is young men that will stand up today in the pulpits of America and take God's side against an apostate Christianity, against the phoniness, the falseness, and all the foolishness that goes on, all the stuff that goes on in the name of God which has absolutely nothing to do with God in any way, shape, or form, just like with the nation of Israel. The prophets are great books. I hope that as we go through these prophets, and boy, that's a whole set unto itself. We've got a long way to go yet. Boy, I'll tell you what, I suspect by the time we're done with that, there'll be about five or six of you here, which is okay with me. The bottom line is, it's the truth and that's what these men were sent to do. You young men just got a great education this morning of what God saw in your life and what He expects of you, and you young ladies too, to take your stand for Him, not to be afraid of their faces. Don't care what they say about you. Let them laugh at you behind your back and snub you whatever it takes. There's a day coming when God's going to make everything crooked straight. That's all you've got to keep focused on.

Father, we thank you today for the Lord Jesus. Thank you for those that have come. We pray, Father, that this is not an easy section to preach, easy for me, but it's not easy to accept. And Lord, help us to first of all understand that these men of God were sent with a purpose. And one of the things that we find down through here that...