

# The Prophets -Who Are Those Guys?"

Duane Pederson - January 18, 2018

## Welcome and Introductions

### A limiting way to categorize "prophets":

The prophets are typically divided into three groupings:

<u>Former Prophets</u>	<u>Major Prophets</u>	<u>Minor Prophets (12)</u>	
Elijah	Isaiah	Hosea	Nahum
Elisha	Jeremiah	Joel	Habakkuk
Other minor figures	Ezekiel	Amos	Zephaniah
		Obadiah	Haggai
		Jonah	Zechariah
		Micah	Malachi

## Prominent Themes in Prophetic Writing

### • Covenant

Shepherd and flock (Isa. 56:22; Ez. 34:8-10; Zech. 11:16-17)

Vine and vinedresser (Isa. 5:1-7)

Potter and clay (Jer. 18:1-11)

Father and son (Jer. 31:9)

Husband and wife (Hosea 1-2)

### • Justice

God is a God of justice (Isa. 30:18)

God is a God who loves justice (Isa. 61:8)

God is a God who makes justice part of the new covenant (Hosea 2:19)

### • Apostasy and Idolatry

Any action rebelling against God, God's laws, and abandoning of faith in God and the covenant are soundly denounced.

### • Judgment and Suffering

Many prophetic proclamations involve judgment and suffering

Destruction of Israel (722 BCE) and the destruction of Judah (587 BCE)

## Frederick Buechner

1. Prophet means "spokesman," not "fortune-teller." The one whom in their unfathomable audacity the prophets claimed to speak for was the Lord and Creator of the universe. There is no evidence to suggest that anyone ever asked a prophet home for supper more than once. (2 Kgs 2:23-25; Jer. 19; Ez. 3:1-3; Amos 5:21-24)

2. The prophets were drunk on God, and in the presence of their terrible tipsiness, no one was ever comfortable. With a total lack of tact, they roared out against phoniness and corruption wherever they found them. They were the terror of kings and priests. (2 Sam. 12:1-15; Jer. 7:4)

3. No prophet is on record as having asked for the job.  
(Isa. 6:11; Jer. 1:6; Ex. 4:1-13)

*Buechner Concludes:* Like Robert Frost's, a prophet's quarrel with the world is deep down a lover's quarrel. If they didn't love the world, they probably wouldn't bother to tell it that it's going to hell. They'd just let it go. Their quarrel is God's quarrel.

### Walter Brueggemann

Prophets are people who, because of their roots in the theological tradition and because of some emancipatory experience in their own life, refuse to accept the definitions of reality that are imposed upon us by the socio-economic political power structure. In ancient Israel, the prophets refused to accept the royal-priestly ideology of the Jerusalem establishment, and they kept saying that the radicality of the Torah was more definitive than what was going on in Jerusalem.

Now, it seems to me that the parallel task, in the capitalist superpower empire of the United States which in the rhetoric of civil religion claims God's legitimization, is to say that that operation is not really a carrier of God's future and is more likely to be idolatrous and lethal than not. That's a huge generalization and needs a lot of nuance, but I think that's where we are located.

And . . .

Robert Alter once wrote that Judaism is essentially a culture of interpretation, by which I think he means that we are most Jewish when we are engaged in interpretation. The rabbis are famous for never arriving at the last interpretation; there is always another interpretation. Our Jewish sisters and brothers have much to teach us in my tradition, because it is a great Christian temptation to think that we can arrive at the final interpretation.

