

Lesson 38: Crazy for God: The Prophets. More than mere fortune-tellers, pt. 1

A. Introduction

Have you ever tried to tell someone something they didn't want to hear? It's not easy, is it! Harder still, have you ever warned someone you love of something you saw that was going to cause them ruin if they didn't heed your warning? Well today we are going to look at men who were more than mere fortune-tellers. I'm talking about God's prophets.

The word prophet means "to speak on behalf of another." On the most basic level, these biblical prophets were messengers who spoke on behalf of God. In Hebrew, though, the most common word for prophet is nabi (pronounced na-VEE) which means "one who is called." Thus, the emphasis in the Bible is not so much on the prophet's role as a his or her status as one called by God.

As in our last lesson, I want to let you know that some of the material for today's lesson comes from **The Bible for Dummies** by Jeffrey Geoghegan, professor of Biblical Theology at Boston College, and Dr. Michael Homan, Professor of Biblical studies at Xavier University of Louisiana, and published by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Their book, "**The Bible for Dummies**" is an excellent resource to give you a better understanding of the Bible. They explain everything in plain English along with some great illustrations and of course, their dose of humor and wit. So if you want to get a better overall understanding of the Bible as you are going through this Firm Foundation series, go to Amazon or Barnes and Noble and order this outstanding resource: **The Bible for Dummies**.

Before we go any further, let's review last week's lesson:

Questions for Review:

1. What Persian king issued a decree allowing the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem?
King Cyrus
2. What was the date that Cyrus issued this decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland?
A. 496 BC; B. 538 BC; c. 562 BC. Answer: **B, 538 BC.**
3. How many deportations or returns were there to Judah? **3**
4. What prompted King Cyrus to allow the Jews to return to their homeland? **God stirred his heart.**
5. According to Jeremiah's prophesy, how long had the Jews been captive in Babylon? **70 yrs.**
6. Did all the Jews leave Babylon to move back to their homeland in Judah? **No, only 5400.**
Most stayed behind in Babylon.
7. Why did the Jews stay behind in Babylon and not jump at the opportunity to return to their homeland? **They had settled in, built homes, businesses, established connections with friends and family and were living comfortable lives.**
8. Shortly after Ezra arrives in Judea, a large group of people approach him. What do they confess?
"We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women who came from the people around us."
9. What does Ezra tell the men to do? **Divorce their wives and children.**

10. Why does God want them to divorce their families? **Because intermarriage and assimilation will cause the Hebrew people (Israelites) to lose their identity and purity as Jews, God's holy people—set apart for His special purpose.**
11. When Nehemiah, the cupbearer for the king, gets word that the Jews in Jerusalem are being insulted, threatened and that the walls have been broken down by fire, what does he do? **He cries, mourns for days, fasts, and prays to God.**
12. How often did Nehemiah pray to God about this matter? **Day and night.**
13. What did he ask God to give him regarding King Artaxerxes? **Success as he approached the king asking for permission to return to Jerusalem to help rebuild the walls.**
14. Does God answer Nehemiah's prayer? **Yes, most definitely. The King gives him permission as well as an armed escort and permission to use the empire's resources to rebuild the walls.**
15. When Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem, how does he wisely organize the people to rebuild the walls? **According to their families and he puts them to work on portions of the wall that are near their homes so that they would have a vested interest in completing this work.**
16. When Nehemiah gets word that their enemies are plotting to attack them while they are rebuilding the wall, what practical steps does Nehemiah take? **We prayed to our God and set guards to protect us day and night.**
17. The walls were rebuilt in how many days? **52**
18. How do the Israelites celebrate the completion of this work? **By entering into the Feast of Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles, where they build huts and meals are eaten for eight days.**
19. How do they learn about the Feast of Sukkot or Feast of Tabernacles? **From Ezra who brings out the Torah and reads it to the people, many who are hearing the Word of God for the first time in their lives.**

B. Describing a prophet's job

Theme: God is loving, merciful, and gracious.

Theme: God communicates with man.

Being a prophet was not an easy job. Most often God's messages were about as popular as a Pharaoh costume at a Passover party. In fact, only one prophet, Isaiah, actively seeks the job, while several others, including Moses, Jonah and Jeremiah, complain that their vocation is a fate worse than death.

The Bible for Dummies lists some of the most common tasks biblical prophets performed include:

- **Predicting the future.** Predicting future events was a prophet's calling card. These predictions could range from picking the sex of an unborn child to predicting the outcome of a battle. Typically, the ability to predict the future gave prophets credibility, and when they had an audience, they could tell their listeners what was really on their mind (or God's mind).
- **Advising leaders.** Kings realized the importance of getting God's approval before embarking on a particular course of action, such as building a temple or going to war. Yet, most kings didn't want "no" for an answer, so they would usually "hire prophets," who were really nothing more than ancient yes-men. At times, however, and much to the chagrin of the king, a true prophet would show up on the scene and tell the king what God really thought about his plans or administration. As a result, kings and prophets rarely got along. We've already seen this as we

looked at the ministry of Elijah the prophet who was hated by King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, so much so, that at times, Elijah was running for his life.

- **Enacting change.** Prophets worked hard to get people to rectify their behaviors and beliefs. At times, their messages were met with repentance and change, but most often, their admonitions were shunned, and prophets found their very lives in danger.
- **Performing symbolic acts.** Because “a picture is worth a thousand words,” sometimes prophets conveyed messages by dramatic action. For example, the prophet Ezekiel is asked to cook food over manure “briquettes” to symbolize Israel’s moral uncleanness (Ezekiel 4); the prophet Hosea is asked to marry a prostitute to convey Israel’s unfaithfulness (Hosea 1); and the prophet Isaiah is asked to go around naked for three years to depict Israel’s impending judgment and shame (Isaiah 20). As you may imagine, there was not a long line in front of the Prophet Employment Agency.
- **Declaring oracles.** Perhaps the most common function of a prophet was to deliver God’s messages. These messages, called oracles, usually begin with the words “Thus says the Lord....” Oracles most often warned people of the impending judgment they would face if they didn’t reverse direction and amend their ways.

God spoke through His messengers, the Prophets, to Israel and Judah to teach the Israelites His ways and to warn them of His judgment on sin. God also sent some of His messengers to other nations near the land of Israel.

C. Examining a prophet’s qualifications.

Theme: Man can come to God only according to God’s will and plan.

Unlike other vocations in ancient Israel—such as the priesthood, where one needed to fulfill specific requirements before getting “hired” (such as being a Levite, a male, and falling into a particular age bracket)—biblical prophets could be young or old, rich or poor, brainiacs or simpletons, male or female. In fact, some of Israel’s most influential prophets were women, including Miriam, who led Israel in its worship of God after the exodus from Egypt (Ex. 15:20); Deborah, who led Israel to victory against the Canaanites (Judges 4:4); and Huldah, who advised one of Israel’s great kings, Josiah (2 Kings 22:14). The secret to God’s choice is diversity, because God needs a wide range of people to deliver His diverse messages to the ever-changing circumstances of Israel’s national existence.

The prophet of God speaks the words God gives him, unlike false prophets. In **Jeremiah 27:9-10 (GW)**, **Jeremiah tells the people:**

⁹ Don't listen to prophets, mediums, interpreters of dreams, fortunetellers, or sorcerers who tell you that you'll never serve the king of Babylon.

¹⁰ They are prophesying lies to you. They will cause you to be taken far from your lands. I'll scatter you, and you will die.

Here are the signs of a false prophet in either the Old Testament or the New Testament:

- A false prophet presumes to speak for God. He speaks words that God has not commanded him to speak. God says in the Torah, in **Deut. 18:20**, “But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.” In other words, the punishment for being a false prophet is death.

- The false prophets led the people astray. They support those who do evil. Here is what God says about false prophets, speaking thru the prophet Jeremiah. It's really the blind leading the blind, and I have a slide here depicting this. Anytime we follow a man and believe what he says rather than checking it with the Bible, we're like the blind following the blind. There are so many here in America today who go to church but as Josh McDowell says, "They check their brains in at the door." They go to church and whatever the pastor or teacher says, they believe it without looking to see if it lines up with God's Word, the Bible. If a pastor told them to jump off a bridge today, many of them would do it. If their pastor told them to sell their homes and give it all to him and the church, many of them would do it. It's the blind leading the blind. Instead of following the Messiah, the Deliverer, all too many today are following men and women who in a great many ways are leading them astray, which is what false prophets do.

Jeremiah 23:13-15 (GW)

¹³ "{Say this} about the prophets of Samaria: I saw something disgusting. The prophets of Samaria prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray.

¹⁴ "{Say this} about the prophets of Jerusalem: I see something horrible. The prophets of Jerusalem commit adultery and live a lie. They support those who do evil so that no one turns back from his wickedness. They are all like Sodom to me, and those who live in Jerusalem are like Gomorrah."

¹⁵ This is what the LORD of Armies says about the prophets: I will give them wormwood to eat and poison to drink. The prophets of Jerusalem have spread godlessness throughout the land.

Remember in our last lesson, when the men of Jerusalem came to Ezra came to Jerusalem and began to enact religious reform and bring the people back to living their lives in obedience to God's Word, and he is approached by a group of men who confess to Ezra that they have married outside the faith. These men confess that they have married women of other nationalities. And remember what Ezra told them to do? They had to divorce their wives and families. They had to leave their wives and children. That sounds so cruel and so heartless. Would God really tell these men that they had to turn their backs on their wives and children? Yes He would. Why? Because one of the greatest temptations that Israel faced again and again was a thing called "syncretism."

Theme: Man must have faith in order to please God and be saved.

Theme: Man can come to God only according to God's will and plan.

Syncretism is a merging of different religions, cultures, beliefs and thought. Syncretism as far as God was concerned was DEADLY, because it would destroy Israel. It would destroy their holiness as being set apart for God for His purposes. It would destroy their culture and ultimately, it would destroy their faith.

You see, false prophets always encourage syncretism. In **Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (GW)** , **here's what God says about how to deal with false prophets:**

¹ One of your people, claiming to be a prophet or to have prophetic dreams, may predict a miraculous sign or an amazing thing.

² What he predicts may even take place. But don't listen to that prophet or dreamer if he says, "Let's worship and serve other gods." (Those gods may be gods you've never heard of.)

³ The LORD your God is testing you to find out if you really love him with all your heart and with all your soul.

⁴ Worship the LORD your God, fear him, obey his commands, listen to what he says, serve him, and be

loyal to him.

⁵ That prophet or dreamer must be put to death because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and freed you from slavery. He was trying to lead you away from following the directions the LORD your God gave you. You must get rid of this evil.

The false prophet could predict things that would come to pass, but he would always have the intent of leading God's people astray, to serve other gods. God's judgment on false prophets was death, because they preached rebellion against Almighty God.

In Deuteronomy 18:9-14 (GW), God has another warning concerning the practices of false prophets and the lengths that they would go to ensnare Israel into following other false gods.

⁹ When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, never learn the disgusting practices of those nations.

¹⁰ You must never sacrifice your sons or daughters by burning them alive, practice black magic, be a fortuneteller, witch, or sorcerer,

¹¹ cast spells, ask ghosts or spirits for help, or consult the dead.

¹² Whoever does these things is disgusting to the LORD. The LORD your God is forcing these nations out of your way because of their disgusting practices.

¹³ You must have integrity {in dealing} with the LORD your God.

¹⁴ These nations you are forcing out listen to fortunetellers and to those who practice black magic. But the LORD your God won't let you do anything like that.

Do you see why it's dangerous today to seek out a fortune tellers or to have your palm read, or to read the horoscope in the daily newspaper, or to call the 900 numbers to have some fortune teller give you insight into your future. It's all a trap and the goal is to lead you astray, to get you to follow the false gods of this age. God says that these practices are disgusting, and they lack integrity. Even though they may have some element of truth and give you some measure of insight into your future, the goal of these practices is to get you to turn your back on the one true God, El Shaddai, the Lord God Almighty, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The One True God, who is full of truth and light. In Him there is no darkness at all. He is the giver of life. He is the Almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth.

D. Introducing the Major Prophets

Among the prophets, three are called "Major" (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel), and the other twelve are called "Minor" (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi). These designations do not refer to their relative importance, but rather to the relative length of their writings.

The writings of the Major Prophets are quite long, each filling their own scrolls, while the Minor Prophets are considerably shorter, and are written all on one scroll.

E. Introducing Isaiah

Isaiah, son of Amoz, lived in a troubled time when everything that was supposedly nailed down seemed to be coming loose. Three hundred years before the prophet ministered, David had drawn the struggling

tribes together, subdued the neighboring groups, and carved out a secure Israelite state. David's was the golden age.

You may remember that after King David's time, destructive forces began to chip away at this rather idealistic situation causing the golden age to lose its luster. Solomon followed his father on the throne but created great discontent with his luxurious living and oppressive ways. The division of this kingdom followed close on the death of Solomon. Military struggle, false worship, weak leadership, internal confusion, and external threat characterized the life of these two kingdoms down to the eighth century. In the first half of the eighth century both of these kingdoms reached a strength, prosperity, and security they had not known before. They were free from the danger of being destroyed by other powers and were being ruled over by capable kings, Jeroboam II (793-753 b.c.) in the north and Uzziah (792-740) in the south.

The last half of the eighth century was quite a different story. Assyria began a policy of expansion and conquest which would bring the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, and leave the Southern Kingdom, Judah, in the position of paying tribute to this great power. The prophet Isaiah was a citizen of the Southern Kingdom, Judah, and ministered during a forty year period which witnessed the subjection of Judah to Assyria in the days of King Ahaz (735-715 b.c.; 2 Ki 16) and the attempt of King Hezekiah (715-686 b.c.) to free his people from Assyrian control (2 Ki 18-20).

Surely God's elect people must have pondered the meaning of such tumultuous events. They may have been asking these questions:

- Is our nation in this crisis because our God is weaker than the gods of Assyria?
- Is military strength the determining force in the history of nations?
- Could it be that bad times had to come for us to see some things that we could never see in the good times?
- Did our love and confidence in good King Uzziah cause us to forget God, our true King?
- Is the external plight of our nation in any way related to the moral and ethical living of those within the nation?
- What does the future hold?
- Wherein is hope and security? Who speaks for God in such a time?

In the very year that good King Uzziah died, God called Isaiah to help the people answer such questions as these (Isa 6:1-8).

F: Calling Isaiah (Isaiah 6)

Theme: God communicates with man.

Isaiah's call to be a prophet is quite unique among the prophets, such as Moses and Jonah, because rather than running from God's call, Isaiah enthusiastically volunteers his services to God.

God appears to Isaiah in a vision where God is sitting on an elevated throne wearing a mantle (or robe) that fills the inner sanctuary of the Temple. Because not just anyone can look upon God, Isaiah is made ritually pure by a six-winged angelic being called a seraph, who takes a burning coal from God's altar and

places it on Isaiah's lips. God then asks, "Whom shall I send (to my people)?" Isaiah responds, "Here am I, send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)

Isaiah quickly discovers that his fellow countrymen will not listen to his preaching. When he asks God how long they will be unresponsive, Isaiah is told that generation will follow generation "until the cities lie ruined." God's Word always has an impact, whether it is accepted or rejected. Yet Isaiah's mission to Judah would only seem to fail. After the judgment, new life would spring up, as young twigs struggle up out of seemingly dead stumps.

The opening chapters of Isaiah show that although the people offer God sacrifices and prayers, they reveal their insincerity by neglecting the rights of the poor and disadvantaged. As God puts it:

Isaiah 1:16-17 (GW)

¹⁶ "Wash yourselves! Become clean! Get your evil deeds out of my sight. Stop doing evil.

¹⁷ Learn to do good. Seek justice. Arrest oppressors. Defend orphans. Plead the case of widows."

G. Isaiah's Most Famous Prophecies

Theme: God communicates with man.

Theme: God is holy and righteous. He demands death as the payment for sin.

Several of Isaiah's prophecies have had an enduring influence. Here are some of Isaiah's most influential prophecies which are summarized in **The Bible for Dummies**:

Swords to plowshares: the great day of peace (Isaiah 2): In Isaiah 2:4, Isaiah predicts that in the "latter days" God will usher in a great age of judgment, followed by unprecedented peace. Here's what Isaiah says:

Isaiah 2:1-5 (GW)

¹ This is the message which Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw about Judah and Jerusalem.

² In the last days the mountain of the LORD'S house will be established as the highest of the mountains and raised above the hills. All the nations will stream to it.

³ Then many people will come and say, "Let's go to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways so that we may live by them." The teachings will go out from Zion. The word of the LORD will go out from Jerusalem.

⁴ Then he will judge disputes between nations and settle arguments between many people. They will hammer their swords into plowblades and their spears into pruning shears. Nations will never fight against each other, and they will never train for war again.

⁵ Come, descendants of Jacob, let's live in the light of the LORD.

And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, and they shall no longer learn war." It hasn't happened yet, but it's nice to imagine such a day, and it will come to pass. This passage, in fact, adorns the United Nations' building in New York.

The birth of Immanuel (Isaiah 7): In Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah prophesies that a "young woman will conceive and bear a son, and his name will be called Immanuel." In its immediate context, Isaiah is advising King Ahaz not to get involved in a war because those pressuring him to do so won't be around much longer.

In fact, they'll be gone "before the child knows how to refuse evil and choose good" (Isaiah 7:16)—in other words, the danger will pass in a few years. The child's name, Immanuel, which means "God is with us," intends to remind Ahaz that God will protect him during these trying times. Many scholars think that the young woman involved here is Isaiah's wife, who is elsewhere called a "prophetess" and who later gives birth to sons with important names.

Isaiah's prediction took on a new meaning in the New Testament, where it is applied to Jesus' mother, Mary, who, though a virgin, conceives Jesus (the Deliverer) by the power of God. Isaiah's prophesy here in 7:14 is considered a messianic prophesy, foretelling the details of the birth and life of the Messiah.

Isaiah and Handel's Messiah (Isaiah 9): Nothing says Christmas like the smell of pine, the taste of eggnog, the sight of bills stacking up on the hearth, and the melodic sound of choirs singing Handel's Messiah. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called: "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." In truth, Handel didn't write these words, Isaiah did.

With these words, Isaiah predicts the birth of a child who will usher in a Golden Age of justice and peace. Let's read a bit more of Isaiah's prophesy concerning the coming Messiah:

Isaiah 9:2-7 (ESV)

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

³ You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

⁴ For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

So Isaiah tells us that this coming Deliverer, coming Messiah, will be called Wonderful Counselor, which means He will be the One to whom we should seek counsel because He knows everything. He will be called Mighty God, so this coming Deliverer is the Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth. He will be called Everlasting Father. In other words, He comes as Father God who cares for us as His adopted children. And He bears the name, Prince of Peace. It is only with the coming Messiah, the coming of the Mighty God, that we will have true and lasting peace, because He alone is the author of peace. Every other attempt at peace is futile and temporary, but the Prince of Peace, the Messiah, will bring lasting peace.

My two sons and their naked father (Isaiah 7-20): Isaiah fathers two sons, who receive symbolic names: Shearjashub and Mahershalalhashbaz – maher-shalal-hash-baz:

- Shearjashub is not as bad as it sounds—it means "a remnant shall return," and could be understood to mean that, no matter how bad things get, there will always be a remnant of

God's people. However, it could also mean that although a whole army will go into battle, only a remnant will return. That's bad.

- Mahershalhashbaz (maher-shalal-hash-baz) means "the spoil speeds, the prey hastens." Positively, this indicates that Assyria will soon defeat the Syrian-Israelite coalition threatening Ahaz. Negatively, however, it means that the people of Judah will also be victims of Assyria's aggressions. That's really bad.

Later, Isaiah strips and walks around naked for three years. Although this must have been difficult for Isaiah's two sons to explain to their friends, the historical background for Isaiah's unusual behavior is the Assyrian's capture of the Philistine city of Ashdod in 711 B.C. The people of Ashdod had hoped that their powerful allies, Egypt and Cush (now known as Sudan and Ethiopia), would defend them against this attack. They didn't. Thus, Isaiah removes his clothes to symbolize the "dress" of war the captives will wear as they too will fall to Assyria.

I often wonder what Isaiah's family and friends thought of him walking around naked for three years. Did they believe that God had told him to do this, or did they think he was out of his mind. Most would probably have said, "God would never tell you to do something as crazy as walking around naked for three years. That's not God. Now put some clothes on. You're an embarrassment to yourself, your family, and everyone in town." You see, so often, we think we know what God would have us do and say, and we even presume to the extent that we say, "That's not God. He would never do that. He would never make you walk around naked for 3 yrs." Be careful. As God says through Isaiah in **Isaiah 55:8-9 (GW)**

⁸ **"My thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways,"** declares the LORD.

⁹ "Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts."

The Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53)

Several passages in the Book of Isaiah describe the activity of an unnamed "Servant" of God. The best known of these is the "Suffering Servant Song" of Isaiah 53, which tells the story of an unattractive man filled with grief, and who is hated and rejected by others. He carries others' pain, but still they inflict pain upon him. God even inflicts pain upon this servant, placing the sins of everyone else upon his shoulders.

Let's read this portion of Isaiah 53 to get the full import of what Isaiah is telling us.

Isaiah 53:1-12 (GW)

¹ Who has believed our message? To whom has the LORD'S power been revealed?

² He grew up in his presence like a young tree, like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that would make us look at him. He had nothing in his appearance that would make us desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by people. He was a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering. He was despised like one from whom people turn their faces, and we didn't consider him to be worth anything.

⁴ He certainly has taken upon himself our suffering and carried our sorrows, but we thought that God had wounded him, beat him, and punished him.

⁵ He was wounded for our rebellious acts. He was crushed for our sins. He was punished so that we could have peace, and we received healing from his wounds.

⁶ We have all strayed like sheep. Each one of us has turned to go his own way, and the LORD has laid all our sins on him.

⁷ He was abused and punished, but he didn't open his mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. He was like a sheep that is silent when its wool is cut off. He didn't open his mouth.

⁸ He was arrested, taken away, and judged. Who would have thought that he would be removed from the world? He was killed because of my people's rebellion.

⁹ He was placed in a tomb with the wicked. He was put there with the rich when he died, although he had done nothing violent and had never spoken a lie.

¹⁰ Yet, it was the LORD'S will to crush him with suffering. When the LORD has made his life a sacrifice for our wrongdoings, he will see his descendants for many days. The will of the LORD will succeed through him.

¹¹ He will see and be satisfied because of his suffering. My righteous servant will acquit many people because of what he has learned {through suffering}. He will carry their sins as a burden.

¹² So I will give him a share among the mighty, and he will divide the prize with the strong, because he poured out his life in death and he was counted with sinners. He carried the sins of many. He intercedes for those who are rebellious.

Because the Suffering Servant is unnamed, he has been linked to a number of figures from Israel's past, including the prophet Isaiah himself, Jeremiah, and even the nation of Israel. The New Testament writers understood him to be Jesus, the Messiah, who also suffers great physical and emotional pain, remains silent before his accusers and is "pierced through (crucified) for our sins." This is considered to be a Messianic prophecy because it foretells the suffering of the Messiah, down to the detail of how he would be put to death, by means of crucifixion, and this prophesy was given more than 500 yrs before crucifixion was even used as a form of execution.

Although, Isaiah's death is not recorded in the Bible, tradition maintains that King Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, the most evil of Judah's kings, executes him by sawing Isaiah in half, a tradition that seems reflected in the New Testament's notice of one of God's prophets being "sawn in two" (Heb. 11:37)

In our next lesson, we'll look at Jeremiah, as well as God's judgment on Israel and Judah in Lesson 39: Crazy for God, the Prophets pt. 2

Let's see what you remember as we review today's lesson:

1. There were certain tasks that biblical prophets performed. Name 4 of the 5 tasks that were mentioned in this lesson? **A. Predicting the future; B. Advising leaders like kings on a course of action that they should take; C. Enacting Change, calling for repentance and a change of behavior; D. Performing symbolic acts such as Isaiah walking around naked for 3 yrs to signify Israel's impending judgment or Ezekiel asked to cook food over manure briquettes to signify Israel's moral filth and degradation; E. Delivering oracles. They were God's spokesmen and would deliver his messages, "Thus saith the Lord...."**
2. The prophet of God speaks for whom? **God**
3. The word prophet means what? **One who speaks on behalf of another.**
4. Who gives the prophet of God his message? **God**
5. What was the penalty for being a false prophet? **Death**
6. What is syncretism? **A merging of different religions, cultures, beliefs and thought.**
7. **Why did Ezra tell the Israelite men that they had to divorce their wives and children? Because he knew what syncretism would bring. Syncretism was one of the greatest temptations that Israel**

facd. Intermarriage with other religions and cultures would mean that the Israelites were no longer holy or set apart by God as His unique, peculiar people.

8. What was the purpose of the false prophet? To lead God's people astray to serve other gods.
9. Why is it dangerous to seek out fortune tellers, or read your daily horoscope or have your palm read? Because it can lead you astray into serving false gods of this age.
10. Why was Isaiah's call to serve God unique? Because he enthusiastically volunteered: "He am I Lord, Send me!"
11. Where did the words of Handel's Messiah come from? Isaiah 9. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called: "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
12. A number of Isaiah's prophecies specifically prophesy the coming of the Messiah (the Deliverer), such as Isaiah 7:14 where Isaiah prophesies that a "young woman will conceive and bear a son, and his name will be called Immanuel." What are these prophecies called? Messianic prophecies, because they describe details about the birth and life of the coming Messiah, over 500 yrs before he was born.
13. Sometimes prophets had to symbolically live out their message as well as speak it. What did God tell Isaiah to do for 3 yrs? To strip and walk naked to symbolize how the Israelites would be stripped bare as they fell captive to the Assyrians.
14. According to tradition, how was Isaiah put to death? He was sawn in two.