

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 7, Session 8, Ways and Means of God's Revelation to the Prophets Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 7, Session 8, Ways and Means of God's Revelation to the Prophets, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Robert Vannoy explores the nature of prophecy in ancient Israel. It challenges the idea that Israelite prophets were primarily ecstatic figures, suggesting visionary experiences were more common. **Vannoy analyzes biblical texts to argue against labeling prophets as "madmen" based on their messages.** He emphasizes that prophets were primarily proclaimers of God's word, using understandable language. **The lecture examines formal characteristics of prophetic proclamation, including directness, wordplay, poetic expression, and figurative language.** Finally, Vannoy outlines the content of prophetic messages, focusing on religious/theological matters, morality/social relationships, political issues, and eschatology/Messianic expectations, showing how these messages called people back to their covenant with God.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 7, Session 8 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Foundations).



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3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 7, Session 8, Ways and Means of God's Revelation to the Prophets

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Robert Vannoy's "Foundations of Prophecy, Lecture 7":

Briefing Document: Robert Vannoy, "Foundations of Prophecy, Lecture 7"

Main Theme: This lecture focuses on understanding the nature of prophetic experience in ancient Israel, particularly addressing the concept of "ecstasy" and exploring the characteristics of prophetic preaching. Vannoy argues against common exaggerations of ecstatic behavior and emphasizes the importance of visionary experience and the faithful proclamation of God's Word as central to prophetic ministry. He also considers how the personal characteristics of individual prophets are used by God in their proclamation.

I. Ecstasy Among Israel's Prophets: A Critical Examination

- **Against Exaggeration:** Vannoy challenges the notion that ecstatic phenomena were the *source* of prophetism in Israel. He cautions against overstating the presence and significance of ecstasy among canonical prophets, noting that much of the cited evidence is unconvincing.
- "You have to be careful of exaggeration in speaking of ecstasy among Israel's prophets, and often the evidence that is utilized is not really convincing—such things as symbolic acts, strong emotional expressions...or first-person style of speech."
- **Symbolic Acts & Emotional Expressions:** He dismisses symbolic acts and strong emotional expressions as reliable indicators of ecstasy.
- **First-Person Speech:** He argues that the use of "I" by prophets when delivering God's word is a stylistic device, not evidence of an ecstatic state. He offers the example of Sennacherib's messenger in 2 Kings 18:29, who speaks in the first person for Sennacherib without being in an ecstatic state.
- **Labeling Prophets as "Mad":** Vannoy refutes the idea that references to prophets as "madmen" (e.g., 2 Kings 9:11, Jeremiah 29:26) prove ecstatic behavior. He contends these are often insults or attempts to discredit the prophet's *message*, not necessarily descriptions of their state of mind.

- "Why was Jesus called a madman? Not because he was an ecstatic, it's because of his message...It has nothing to do with ecstasy, but it has everything to do with the message." (John 10:20, Acts 26:24 used as parallel examples from the New Testament)

II. Visionary Experience as a Form of "Ecstasy"

- **Visionary Experience:** Vannoy posits that if any form of ecstatic behavior is present among Israel's prophets, it is primarily that of visionary experiences, not wild or erratic behavior. He sees visions as a common means of divine revelation.
- "The form of ecstatic behavior most frequently displayed among Israel's prophets is that of the visionary experience, not wild abnormal behavior."
- **Description of a Vision:** Vannoy describes a vision as a state in which someone in an awakened condition is transposed into another reality, seeing and hearing things as if they were physically present. He uses Isaiah 6 as an example.
- **Visionary Ecstasy:** Vannoy suggests this visionary means of receiving divine revelation can be termed "visionary ecstasy", drawing parallels to Peter's and Paul's experiences in Acts 10:10 and Acts 22:17. He notes the Greek word translated as "trance" in these passages is "ecstasis."

III. The Preaching of the Prophets: Proclamation, Personality, and Divine Revelation

- **Proclaimers of God's Word:** Prophets were primarily preachers, proclaiming God's revealed word publicly. Their messages were delivered in understandable language in a sober, normal manner.
- "The prophets were first and foremost proclaimers of God's Word...The prophetic books to a large extent are a written record of their oral proclamation."
- **Revelation and Proclamation:** The preaching of the prophets was a faithful representation of divine revelation, but it also incorporated the personal element of the individual prophet.
- "The message of the prophets was a faithful proclamation of God's revelation...However...the personal element of the individual prophet is employed in the representation of the message."
- **Personal Element:** Each prophet's personality, background, and style shaped their proclamation (e.g., the sensitivity of Jeremiah vs. the lack of personal details in Isaiah).

- **Divine and Human Intertwining:** Vannoy emphasizes the "mystery" of how God employs individual characteristics in the proclamation of His word, leading to an intertwining of the divine and human. He references Vos' concept of God shaping and chiseling individualities for His own objective ends (the "organic view of inspiration").
- "God having chosen to reveal the truth through human instruments, it follows that these instruments must be both numerous and of varied adaptations to the common end...God's method of revelation includes the very shaping and chiseling of individualities for his own objective ends." (quoting Vos).
- **Berkouwer's Insights:** Vannoy discusses Berkouwer's views on how a word can be both God's word and man's word and how his views changed over time.

IV. Formal Characteristics of Prophetic Proclamation:

- **Direct and Living:** Prophetic messages were vivid, forceful, and powerful, not abstract or dry lectures. Vannoy uses Jeremiah 7 (the Temple Sermon) as an example.
- **Play on Words:** Prophets often utilized plays on words (puns) to emphasize their points (e.g., Isaiah 5:7, 7:9, Jeremiah 23:33, 1:11).
- **Poetic Expression:** Great portions of the prophetic books are in Hebrew poetry, characterized by parallelisms (synonymous, antithetical, synthetic). Isaiah 2:2 is given as an example.
- **Imagery and Figurative Language:** Prophets frequently used imagery and figurative language (e.g., Isaiah 28, 5, Ezekiel 27).

V. Content of Prophetic Writings:

- **Not a New Religion:** The prophets did not introduce a new religion or morality. Their primary emphasis was to call God's people back to salvation and to the previously revealed covenant established on Mount Sinai. He critiques Wellhausen's view that the prophets innovated ethical monotheism.
- "The prophets did not initiate a new religion or perform it. The prophetic message is not distinguished by new religious concepts. The primary emphasis of the prophets is to call God's people back to salvation, and back to what God has previously revealed."

- **Four Central Areas:** The message of the prophets is centered in four areas:
- **Religious/Theological:** Teaching about God and His relationship to His people, warnings against idolatry and religious formalism. Emphasis on monotheism, God's power and sovereignty (Isaiah 40), holiness, justice, mercy, and love.
- **Morality/Social Relationships:** Addressing questions of morality and social justice (e.g., Jeremiah 22:13, Amos 8:4-12, Micah 3:9-11, Isaiah 3:16-26). Prophets saw a close connection between a person's morality and true religion and viewed social evils as apostasy.
- **Political Issues:** (Not explicitly detailed in this excerpt, but mentioned as an area of focus)
- **Eschatology and Messianic Expectation:** (Not explicitly detailed in this excerpt, but mentioned as an area of focus)

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 7, Session 8, Ways and Means of God's Revelation to the Prophets

Foundations of Prophecy: A Study Guide to Lecture 7

I. Review Questions

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences based on the source material.

1. According to Vannoy, what is a common, but ultimately unconvincing, piece of evidence used to argue for ecstatic behavior among Israel's prophets?
2. How does the labeling of prophets as "madmen" relate to the idea of ecstasy, according to Vannoy, and what examples does he provide from both the Old and New Testaments to support his view?
3. What form of ecstatic behavior is most frequently displayed among Israel's prophets, according to Vannoy?
4. How does Vannoy describe the experience of a vision, and how does he relate it to the concept of ecstasy?
5. What does Vannoy say was the primary role of the prophets?
6. What does Vannoy mean when he says that the message of the prophets is a faithful proclamation of God's revelation, but that there is a personal element to the form of its presentation?
7. Explain the two views of Berkouwer regarding how a word can be both God's word and man's word.
8. What are two formal characteristics of prophetic proclamation, and provide an example of each from the text.
9. What does Vannoy say in response to those who claim that the prophets initiated a new religion or morality?
10. According to Vannoy, what are the four general content areas of the prophets' messages?

II. Answer Key

1. Vannoy argues that symbolic acts, strong emotional expressions, and the use of the first-person style of speech are often cited as evidence of ecstatic behavior. However, he contends that these are not convincing, as they can be explained by other factors such as stylistic choices or messengers delivering another's message.
2. Vannoy argues that labeling prophets as "madmen" is often used to discredit them due to their message, not their ecstatic behavior. He points to Jeremiah 29:26, John 10:20, and Acts 26:24 where prophets are called madmen because of their message, not because they were behaving erratically.
3. Vannoy argues that if there is any ecstatic behavior displayed among Israel's prophets, it is primarily in the form of visionary experiences, rather than wild or abnormal behavior. These visions were a means of divine revelation that came to the prophets.
4. Vannoy describes a vision as a state where someone in an awakened condition is transported into another reality, seeing and hearing things as if they were there. He relates it to ecstasy by citing instances in Acts where the Greek word "ecstasis" is used to describe visionary experiences.
5. Vannoy argues that the prophets were first and foremost proclaimers of God's Word. They received divine revelation not to keep it to themselves but to communicate it to others, primarily through preaching.
6. Vannoy explains that while the prophets faithfully represent God's revelation, their personal characteristics, style, and background influence the way they present the message. He uses examples like Jeremiah and Amos to show how personality shapes the form of proclamation.
7. The early Berkouwer places the mystery in the nature of the working between God's spirit and the human consciousness, in the intersection of the divine and human so that the human personality is taken up into the proclamation of God's word. The later Berkouwer places the mystery in how a human word—which, because it is human is of necessity errant—can be at the same time the word of God?
8. Two formal characteristics are the use of direct and living messages and the utilization of play on words. For example, Jeremiah's Temple Sermon (Jeremiah 7)

vividly conveys the message of judgment, and Isaiah 5:7 uses the play on words of mishpat and mispok to emphasize the lack of justice.

9. Vannoy disputes the idea that prophets initiated a new religion or morality, emphasizing that their primary role was to call people back to the existing covenant and revealed law of God. He stresses reformation over innovation in their messages.
10. Vannoy identifies the four areas as: religious or theological, which includes teachings about God and warnings against idolatry; morality or social relationships, focusing on justice and ethics; political issues, addressing matters of governance; and eschatology and Messianic expectation, dealing with future events and the coming Messiah.

III. Essay Questions

1. Discuss Vannoy's perspective on the role of ecstasy in the prophetic experience in ancient Israel. How does he define ecstasy, and what evidence does he use to support his views?
2. Explain Vannoy's concept of the intertwining of the divine and human in the proclamation of God's word. How does he illustrate this concept, and what are its implications for understanding prophetic messages?
3. Analyze the formal characteristics of prophetic proclamation, according to Vannoy. How do elements like poetic expression, imagery, and wordplay contribute to the effectiveness of the prophetic message?
4. How does Vannoy characterize the content of the prophetic message? What are the key themes and issues that the prophets addressed, and how do these themes relate to the covenant relationship between God and Israel?
5. Compare and contrast the "early Berkouwer" and "later Berkouwer" views on the nature of Scripture as both God's word and human word, and discuss the implications of these views for understanding the authority and inerrancy of the Bible.

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ecstasy:** A state of being beyond normal self-control, often associated with religious experience or altered states of consciousness. In the context of the lecture, it refers to the question of whether Israelite prophets experienced altered states when receiving and delivering messages from God.
- **Visionary Experience:** A form of divine revelation where a prophet perceives a scene, event, or symbol that communicates God's message. Vannoy suggests this is the most likely form of "ecstasy" among Israel's prophets.
- **Ethical Monotheism:** The belief in one God who demands ethical behavior.
- **Inerrancy:** The belief that Scripture is without error in its original manuscripts.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or treaty, often used to describe the relationship between God and Israel. The covenant included blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.
- **Parallelism:** A literary device common in Hebrew poetry, where two or more lines express related ideas. Types of parallelism include synonymous (repeating the idea), antithetical (presenting contrasting ideas), and synthetic (building upon the idea).
- **Imagery:** The use of figurative language to represent objects, actions, and ideas in a way that appeals to the senses.
- **Figurative Language:** Language that uses figures of speech, such as metaphors and similes, to create a vivid or symbolic effect.
- **Massa:** A Hebrew word with a double meaning: "burden" or "oracle."
- **Septuagint:** The Greek translation of the Old Testament.

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5. FAQs on Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 7, Session 8, Ways and Means of God's Revelation to the Prophets, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

How did mainstream biblical studies initially view the source of prophetism in Israel, and how does the lecture challenge this view?

- Mainstream biblical studies often attributed the source of prophetism in Israel to ecstatic phenomena observed in surrounding nations, suggesting that Israelite prophets were influenced by and exhibited similar ecstatic behaviors. However, the lecture challenges this view by arguing that the evidence for such ecstatic behavior among canonical prophets is often exaggerated and unconvincing. Symbolic acts, emotional expressions, and the use of the first-person style of speech are not necessarily indicators of an ecstatic state.
- **What examples does the lecture provide to counter the argument that prophets were considered "madmen" due to ecstatic behavior?**
- The lecture cites several examples to refute the idea that prophets were labeled as "madmen" due to ecstatic behavior. For instance, in 2 Kings 9:11, a prophet is called a "madman" by one of Jehu's officers, but this is portrayed as a derogatory remark rather than an indication of ecstatic behavior. Similarly, in Jeremiah 29:26, Jeremiah is called a "madman" by a false prophet seeking to discredit him, not because of any perceived ecstatic state. The New Testament also provides instances where Jesus and Paul are labeled as "madmen" due to their messages, not their behavior.
- **If ecstatic behavior is present among Israel's prophets, what form does the lecture claim it most frequently takes?**
- The lecture argues that if any form of ecstatic behavior is present among Israel's prophets, it most frequently takes the form of visionary experiences, rather than wild, abnormal, or erratic behavior. The vision was a means of divine revelation that came to the prophets rather frequently. While some scholars dismiss visionary experiences as mere literary devices or psychological hallucinations, the lecture suggests that the biblical text presents them as genuine means by which God communicated his message to the prophets.

- **How does the lecture define a "vision" in the context of prophetic experience?**
- The lecture defines a vision as a state where someone in an awakened condition is "transposed into another reality," seeing and hearing things as if they were physically present in that reality. Drawing on Augustine's description, the lecture suggests that a vision involves a loosening of consciousness from bodily senses, allowing God to reveal what He wills. The prophet remains conscious but perceives a spiritual world, hearing voices and seeing images that others would not perceive.
- **What does the lecture mean when it states, "The prophets were first and foremost proclaimers of God's Word"?**
- This statement emphasizes that while prophets received divine revelation, their primary role was to communicate that revelation to others, primarily through preaching. The lecture suggests that the prophetic books are largely written records of their oral proclamations. This perspective contrasts with the idea that prophets delivered messages in an ecstatic state, instead emphasizing their use of understandable language and a sober, normal manner of speaking.
- **How does the lecture describe the relationship between divine revelation and the prophet's personal element in proclaiming God's Word?**
- The lecture emphasizes that the preaching of the prophets was a faithful representation of what God revealed to them. However, it also acknowledges that the personal element of the individual prophet is employed in the representation of the message. The lecture suggests that God uses the personal characteristics, traits, background, and ways of affecting an individual in the proclamation of his word. This intersection of the divine and the human results in a message that is both God's word and man's word.
- **What are some of the formal characteristics of prophetic proclamation, according to the lecture?**
- According to the lecture, the formal characteristics of prophetic proclamation include messages that are direct and living, not abstract and dry. Prophets often utilized a play on words to emphasize their point, wrote in poetic form, used imagery or figurative language, and focused on specific areas within their content. Examples include Jeremiah's Temple Sermon, Isaiah's use of wordplay, Hebrew poetry being characterized by parallelisms, the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah, and the merchants of Tyre being pictured as a merchant ship at sea.

- **What are the four main areas in which the message of the prophets can be categorized, and how do they relate to each other?**
- The message of the prophets can be categorized into four main areas: religious or theological, morality or social relationships, political issues, and eschatology and Messianic expectation. These areas are interconnected. Religious teachings stress monotheism, God's power and sovereignty, and warnings against idolatry, and the covenant between God and his people is of primary focus. Morality and social relationships address social justice, concern for the poor, and condemnation of corruption. Political issues involve God's judgment on nations and rulers. Eschatology and Messianic expectation point to future judgment and the coming of the Messiah.