

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Storyline of the Bible,

Session 3, Prophets

6-minute Video Overview

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You know, when you open the Bible, it can sometimes feel like you're walking into a library full of totally disconnected books. You've got poetry over here, history over there, a bunch of laws. But what if I told you there's an underlying story that connects every single page, a grand narrative? Well, a huge piece of that puzzle, the actual blueprint for how the whole story comes together, is found in the prophets.

So what if we could actually trace that single plot line from the very beginning all the way to the end? Well, that's exactly what we're going to do in this explainer. We're going to uncover the core conflict of the biblical story and see how the prophets provide the absolute key to understanding its ultimate resolution. All right, so to really get what the prophets' solution is all about, we first have to wrap our heads around the problem they were addressing.

The story of the Bible kicks off with God's original perfect blueprint for creation, and then it shows us how that blueprint got broken, not just once but twice. And when you look at it, you see this incredible, almost tragic, repeating pattern. It starts in Genesis, right? God gives humanity this perfect world, the Garden of Eden, His very presence, and a job to do, to rule.

But they fail, and boom, they're exiled. Fast forward a couple thousand years, and God chooses Israel to be the solution to this problem. He gives them the same gifts: a promised land, His presence in the temple, and a king to lead them.

And tragically, they repeat the exact same failure and are also exiled. This right here is the massive crisis at the heart of the Old Testament. The story just hits a dead end.

God's plan to restore all of creation through His people Israel has seemingly failed. So what now? How can His original purpose for the world ever become a reality? This is the very question that the prophets step in to answer. You know, when we hear the word prophet, a lot of us immediately think doom and gloom, right? But their central message is actually one of radical, unbelievable hope.

They're kind of like divine architects, laying out this incredibly detailed blueprint for how God is going to fix everything that went wrong, and not just for Israel, but for all of creation. And here it is. This is the blueprint they provide, and it's basically our roadmap for the rest of this explainer.

The prophets consistently point to these five interconnected promises: a future where God's people are totally restored, their relationship with Him is remade from the ground up, the land itself becomes a new Eden, His glorious presence returns, and a perfect king finally establishes His rule over everything. So let's dive into that first part of the blueprint. The core problem, remember, was a scattered people and a broken promise.

So it just makes sense that the restoration has to begin right there, at the very heart of the relationship itself. Think about it. In exile, Israel was scattered across the nations, spiritually dead.

The prophet Ezekiel has this vision of them as a valley just full of dry bones, lifeless. But the prophets promised this stunning reversal. God Himself will gather His people from every corner of the earth and breathe new life into them, making them fruitful and multiplying, just like He commanded Adam and Eve way back in the beginning.

And this is so cool because it's not just some political restoration; it's a new creation. When Ezekiel sees God breathing life into those dead bones, the imagery is just unmistakable. It's a direct callback to God breathing life into Adam in Genesis.

God isn't just fixing His people; He's fundamentally remaking them. But okay, a recreated people need a new kind of relationship with God, and this really gets to the heart of the matter. The old covenant failed because the law was external.

It was written on stone tablets that people just couldn't keep. The prophets promise a new covenant, one where God will actually change people from the inside out, writing His desires right on their hearts so that they can finally truly be faithful to Him. But it's one thing to restore the people; they need a restored place to live too.

The blueprint isn't just about our spiritual relationship with God; it's also about renewing the entire physical world that got so broken by human failure. I mean, the prophets described Israel's exile in these absolutely terrifying terms. Jeremiah looks at the land and uses the exact same language from Genesis 1, before creation even began.

He says it's waste and void, dark and chaotic. Exile wasn't just a punishment; it was a decreation, a literal undoing of God's good world. But the vision for restoration is just as radical, if not more so.

The prophets see the return to the land, not just as a simple homecoming, but as a complete transformation of the land itself. As Isaiah says, the desolate wilderness will become like Eden, like the very garden of the Lord. It's a full-on return to paradise.

And what's at the very heart of this new Eden? The temple. You've got to understand, the temple was always meant to be this kind of mini Eden, the special place where heaven and earth overlapped, where God's own presence could dwell with his people. It was absolutely central to the original plan.

And in this stunning vision from Ezekiel, a river of life just pours out from this new temple, and wherever this river flows, it brings life and healing. It turns the Dead Sea fresh and causes fruit trees to grow on its banks. The temple becomes the very source of blessing and life for the entire renewed creation.

Okay, so that brings us to the final crucial piece of this whole blueprint: leadership. Remember, humanity was created to rule on God's behalf, but that rule became corrupt; it became defiant, and it led to chaos instead of order. So the prophets announced that God is going to solve the leadership problem by installing his own chosen King.

This King will be a righteous branch from the line of David, and he will finally rule with the perfect justice and wisdom that humanity so miserably failed to achieve. And get this: this King's rule isn't just for Israel, no way. As Daniel saw in his vision, this King is given an everlasting dominion over all peoples, all nations, and all languages.

This is the ultimate fulfillment of that original mandate from Genesis, God's good and perfect rule finally extending to every corner of the earth through his chosen representative. So when you step back and look at the whole picture, the prophets don't just offer some vague, fuzzy hope; they provide this stunningly detailed and comprehensive blueprint for how God plans to fix the world. I mean, the key takeaway here is just how comprehensive this vision is.

Every single aspect of the original failure is addressed and answered. The broken people, the broken covenant, the broken land, the loss of God's presence, the failed leadership- every single problem has a corresponding restorative promise. It's a complete vision for a new creation.

And yet, the Old Testament ends on a massive cliffhanger. The blueprint is on the table, all the promises have been made, but the story is still missing its hero. How will this incredible vision actually come to pass? Who will bring this new creation into being? The prophets set the stage, leaving all of history waiting in expectation for the one who would finally build according to their blueprint.