

WHY DID GOD CREATE PROPHETS ANYWAY?

Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?

Jeremiah speaking to God, Jer. 20:18 NIV



Sometimes the prophets themselves didn't even know the answer to this question. Jeremiah several times asks God to use some other means or person than himself. Yet God still consistently chose to use him and other prophets.

We saw in the first study that prophets were often called upon to do strange things. God expected their obedience to be absolute. Yet why He didn't intervene in the affairs of His people directly, rather than using intermediaries is for some a mystery (sometimes even the prophets themselves).

After all, didn't He appear to Adam directly in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), Moses directly through the burning bush (Exodus 3), and Saul of Tarsus directly on the road to Damascus (Acts 9)? So why did God create prophets?

1. How did God speak to His people from the time of the exodus according to Jeremiah 7:22-26?

2. Based on Jeremiah 11:7-8 what was the theme of the prophets' messages to God's people?

3. Do you believe there are people today fulfilling a similar role to that of these Old Testament prophets? If so, how?

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT “SIN” IS

If I was to ask you to define ‘sin’, you might actually identify things that are considered ‘sins’ without really defining ‘sin’. A major ministry of the prophet was to warn God’s people to turn from sin. When God established His covenant with Israel He used a prophet, Moses, to announce the initial warnings.

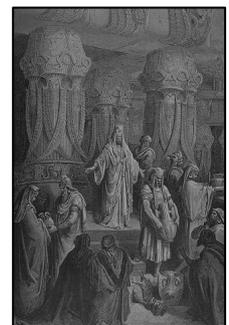
4. Read Deuteronomy 11:16-17; 28:15-29. A covenant of necessity must contain penalties that are agreed to by both parties. Note some of the warnings that God gave Israel if they disobeyed God-

5. Since Israel agreed to the terms of their covenant with God, what did they deserve as a nation the moment they collectively broke their covenant with God?

Yet, the Scriptures declare that despite their rebellion, God was *compassionate, merciful, and slow to anger* (Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). The Scriptures declare both God’s reluctance and yet His just nature to punish sin.

6. What do the ministries of Isaiah and Jeremiah reveal about the idea that some have that God is purely a harsh and judgmental God?

What is the core of all sin? *Rebellion*. Failure to submit to God is *sin*. Some would say *pride* is the essence of sin. But pride is a statement of rebellion against dependency on God. *Those who have greater reason to be proud have the greater need to be humble!* In the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah’s day this is why they addressed much of their warnings directly to the (proud) kings and leaders of Judah.



7. Note Jeremiah’s message in chapter 23. Who is it addressed at? What did God expect from these particular people?

8. Repentance demands humility. In what way was God reinforcing His message to His people when He sent meek prophets to them?

Sin has taken up residency in every human heart, and until the Resurrection Day we are all subject to its lure. Remembering that at its core it is *rebellion against God* we can see that it is not merely lying, cheating, stealing, adultery, murder, swearing, blasphemy, but anything that is *rebellion against God and His authority*.

9. Since all authority is ordained and appointed by God (Romans 13:1; Hebrews 13:7, 17), did these prophets defy God's appointed authority when they stood up to kings and governors, and thus inadvertently sin themselves?

10. Should we respect a leader even if they haven't earned our respect or support? Note the following Scriptures before writing your final answer: Exodus 22:28; Leviticus 19:32; Romans 13:1, 5; Hebrews 13:17; 1Peter 2:13,18; Acts 23:1-5

Sin seeks to justify rebellion. But the prophets warned both kings and commoners against their rebellion toward God. The prophets own lives showed remarkable submission to God, and His authority as represented by priests and kings. Today we worship in "Protestant" churches. It would be fair to say that "Protestant" churches are the most fractured and divided members of the body of Christ.

11. Why are our churches described as being "Protestant"?

12. Is there a link between being a Protestant and the Protestant church being the most fractured and divided members of the Body of Christ?

While the prophets were scathing in their attacks on kings and priests for their wickedness, they were still submitted to their authority. Even Christ Himself placed Himself under submission to the High Priest (Matthew 26:62-64). I wonder where the prophets are today? What would they say to God's people today?

13. Read Jeremiah 18:1-12. What is God trying to say to His people? How does He want us to be before Him?
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FINALLY, A UNITED, SUBMITTED PEOPLE

The prophets reveal that in the last days God would raise up a new people who would serve Him wholeheartedly.

14. How will these people respond to God based on Jeremiah 31:16-22?
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May we be such a people.

Amen.