

# The Questor

## God's Messengers.... .... The Prophets

We have travelled a long road together as we have thought about the prophets of the Old Testament of the bible. We started in the time of Amos and went right through to Malachi, a time span of 350 years. And we have covered them in the order in which they lived, rather than the order they appear in the Bible.

Date BC

790	Amos
760	Hosea & Jonah
740	Isaiah & Micah
645	Nahum
635	Zephaniah
625	Jeremiah & Habakkuk
605	Daniel
595	Ezekiel
580	Obadiah
520	Zechariah & Haggai
500	Joel
450	Malachi

The prophets form a huge part of the history of the Hebrew people. They were tough, initially speaking truth to power during the reigns of kings from Jeroboam II of the northern kingdom of Israel through to Zedekiah in the southern kingdom of Judah. Then, after the people of Judah were taken into exile, they continued to convey God's message to the exiles in order that they should keep the faith. Finally, they accompanied the returning exiles when they were freed to return to Judah, encouraging them to rebuild the temple and to restore their faith in God.

Israel first became strong in the time of King David. He unified the Hebrew people, bringing all the tribes together into one nation. Solomon took it further; extending and fortifying the borders, building up great military power and great wealth. But all this went to his head and he became decadent and dabbled in other faiths.

After him it all started to decline. There were factions within his family and the unified kingdom was split into two: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. There followed a succession of kings in the north and south – some good, some bad – mostly bad. Under the bad kings, the people deviated from God's law which had been given to them by Moses.

God used the prophets to try to persuade the kings and the people to return to him. He told them how much he loved them but also threatened them with invasion and exile if they didn't turn back to him. They wouldn't listen so he allowed the great powers of the day to take them into exile.

Even after their return from exile, the people still ignored God's will for them. So they endured a succession of occupying powers. After the Babylonians and Persians came the Greeks and the Romans. And it was during the period of Roman occupation that God came himself as Jesus – the ultimate prophet.

Jesus brought his message of the love and grace of God who sees every person as his child and wants the very best for each of them. But there was a hard edge to his message too: that if we refuse to enter into the relationship that God offers us, he will ultimately reject us when he calls time on life as we know it.

That message has now been conveyed to the whole world during the Christian era by missionaries and modern day prophets. But we still struggle to receive it. And the more affluent we become, the more we struggle to recognise its significance. We rely instead on the power of wealth, science and technological developments.

The message of the prophets has been consistently presented to us for almost three thousand years. Yet we still need prophets today to remind us in unequivocal terms of what God has been saying throughout all that time. *And we need to listen!*