Quarter Four: *The Gift of Prophecy*

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Lesson 6—The Prophetic Writings

Monday: Literary Genres and Styles

November 2, 2026

- **Last Week:** "Revelation and Inspiration"
  - General & special revelation; inspiration from the Holy Spirit to communicate it orally, in writing or through dramatization

- **This Week:** "The Prophetic Writings"
  - One aspect of how prophets communicated God's messages was thru Scripture
    - Special focus on the writing style / genres, use of literary assistants & more in the writing of the Bible

Memory Text: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4, NKJV).

The week in brief:

- **1. Sunday:** The Call to Write (Pastor Ryan J)
  - God's instruction for His prophets to write His inspired messages down in Scripture & the various circumstances surrounding that writing
- **2. Monday:** Literary Genres and Styles (Jill)
  - Various styles of Holy Spirit inspired writing throughout the Bible & why
- **3. Tuesday:** Literary Assistants (Pastor John L)
  - Use of literary assistants to assist the authors of the Bible; thought inspiration by the Holy Spirit, not verbal inspiration
- **4. Wednesday:** Literary Sources (Pastor John D)
  - Use of non-biblical sources / references in the canon of Scripture
- **5. Thursday:** Divine Message and Human Imperfections (SQ)
  - A perfect message delivered imperfectly through His messengers, the prophets.
- **6. Friday:** Ellen G White's Writings (SQ)
  - EGW's use of literary assistants, other (non-biblical) material, & thought inspiration vs verbal inspiration, & imperfection & growth as a person

Monday: Literary Genres and Styles

Num 33:1 – 49; Isa 13:1; 17:7; Jer 2:4 – 9; 36:2; 1 Cor 7:10, 12, 40

- What & Why
  - What literary genres & styles were used in the Bible
  - And why were they utilized?

Various Literary Genres & Styles in the Bible (not exhaustive list)

- These categories overlap:
    - Some are broad genres; others are subgenres or literary forms within those genres

- **Historical Narrative:** 36%
    - Percentages won't all add up perfectly: different ways of classifying Biblical material
    - Story with a purpose: Jesus & redemption interwoven throughout
    - Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy
        - 12 historical books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth
            - 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles
            - Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
    - Acts (gospels for the underlying framework)

- **Biographical** (gospels) 10%
    - Underlying literary framework = historical prose narrative (subset of #1)
    - Mark emphasizes action & movement
    - Matthew makes extensive use of Jesus' teaching & parables
    - Luke repeatedly highlights Jesus' ministry to the marginalized & overlooked
    - John emphasizes Jesus' identity through teaching & theological discourses
        - Synoptics = theological biographies (biographies driven by theology)
        - John = biographical theology (theology structured around a biography)
            - His gospel is a masterpiece of early Christian theology

    - OT books that contain some biographical narrative:
        - Patriarchal narratives: Abraham, Jacob, Joseph
        - Moses' narrative: Exodus
        - David narrative: 1 & 2 Samuel
        - Ruth & Esther narrative: Ruth & Esther

- **Parables** 1% (subset of biographical narrative from the gospels)
    - Parable = short story to illustrate a spiritual truth
        - Widely remembered; used sparingly
    - More in the synoptic gospels
        - Prodigal son
        - Lost coin, sheep
        - Good Samaritan

- **Diary** (subset of historical narrative)
    - Num 33:1 – 49 -
- **Law** 3%
    - Authoritative, discourse prose (non-story) containing commandments, legal codes, ritual statues that legally defined God's people
    - Covenant code = Exodus 20 - 23
    - Priestly & holiness code = Leviticus & certain parts of Numbers
    - Deuteronomic code = Deuteronomy 12 – 26

- **Poetry** 15% (poetry & wisdom)
    - Psalms – songs of prayer, praise, worship
    - Song of Solomon – love poetry

- **Wisdom Literature =** subset of poetry
    - Proverbs
    - Ecclesiastes
    - Job (starts & ends with prose)
        - Major section is wisdom literature, written in poetry
        - Main Q: Why do bad things happen to good people?

- **Classical Prophecy** 20%
    - Forthtelling = edification, comfort, encouragement
        - Call to repentance, faithfulness, justice, relationship
        - God's message for His people **now**
    - Examples
        - Isaiah – Malachi
    - Style: symbolism & poetry & reeb (more later)
    - Medium: spoken sermons
    - Symbolism:
        - Realistic metaphors (vineyard, shepherd / sheep, clay & potter)

- **Apocalyptic Prophecy** 3.8%
    - Foretelling = predictive of future events
        - God's revealing of what is yet to come
    - Examples:
        - Daniel 7 – 12
        - Portions of Ezekiel & Zechariah (dry bones)
        - Olivet discourse (Matt 24)
        - Revelation (only stand-alone apocalyptic book)
    - Medium: visions & dreams
    - Symbolism:
        - Cosmic metaphors (beasts, horns, heavenly beings, cosmic conflict, etc)

- **Epistles** (letters to the churches) 9.5%
    - 21 epistles total
        - Paul's epistles (14)
            - Early epistles (mission epistles)
                - Galatians
                - 1 & 2 Thessalonians
            - Major epistles (theological epistles)
                - Romans
                - 1 & 2 Corinthians
                - Hebrews (technically not an epistle: more of a sermon, so would be categorized as prose
            - Prison epistles
                - Ephesians, Philippians
                - Colossians, Philemon
            - Pastoral epistles
                - 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus

        - Disciples' epistles (7)
            - James = James
            - Peter = 1 & 2 Peter

- John = 1, 2, & 3 John
- Jude = Jude

- **Oracles** (subset of classical prophecy)
  - Umbrella term for divine utterance = woe, salvation, historical warning, apocalyptic
  - Isa 13:1 – "The **burden** against Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw."
    - Burden = Heb, "burden, oracle, prophecy, saying"
    - Isaiah is replete with oracles of judgment & salvation
      - Woe oracles
      - Blessing oracles

- **Reeb** (covenant lawsuit) (subset of oracles)
  - Reeb = specific type of an oracle
    - Genre = classical prophecy
      - Subset (speech unit) = oracle
        - Subgenre / type = rib
  - Called a "reeb" (rib) = God's covenant lawsuit = God taking legal action against His people because of their failure to keep His covenant
    - Prophet delivering a reeb isn't just a divine messenger for God; they are God's prosecuting attorney

  - Outline of most Biblical reebs:
    - Summons to witnesses (Hear, oh heavens…)
    - Prosecutor's inditement (God lists the breach of contract…)
    - Interrogation (God asks rhetorical Qs to prove Israel has no defense)
    - Verdict / Sentence

  - OT examples
    - Deut 4:26 – " 'I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong *your* days in it, but will be utterly destroyed.'"
      - Literary form & vocabulary is legal – God is bringing a formal indictment against the nation of Israel
    - Isa 1 = a "reeb" – God calls heaven & earth to listen
    - Jer 2 = a "reeb"
    - Deut 4:26 = a "reeb"
    - Micah 6

  - NT example: Acts 7, stoning of Stephen
    - Stephen shifts from helpless defendant to acting as God's prosecuting attorney, placing the Sanhedrin itself on trial for historical breach of the covenant

    - Acts 7:51 – "You stiff-necked & uncircumcised in heart & ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. (52) Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have became the betrayers and murderers,"

- **Why?**
  - Mostly factual, literary lesson.
    - Great to learn what specific literary genres & styles the Bible is written in

- Why does that matter?

- *Parent & child
  - Parent reacts differently to their child
    - Sometimes talk, sometimes listen
    - Sometimes delivers difficult message, sometimes, sits & cries with child
    - Sometimes laughs & plays, sometimes disciplines

  - Why?
    - They love their child & want to reach them – not just transfer information

- *God & us
  - God communicates in different ways because He is trying to reach real people with different needs

  - He uses every means possible to reach us with the gospel
    - Some need stories
    - Some need wisdom
    - Some need warning
    - Some need comfort
    - Some need law
    - Some need hope for the future
    - Some need a letter, speaking directly to their situation

  - Throughout all, Jesus is the overarching theme
    - Different genres
    - One Author
    - One story
    - One Savior