

**BANNED**

**QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE**



**The Rev. Dr. Carl Gregg**

*Mondays, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm,*

*September 29 – November 3*

# Housekeeping

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- Slides: [frederickuu.org/fcc](http://frederickuu.org/fcc)
- **Attendance** for FCC
- Add to **email** list?
- Insights from your studies — *or other questions/suggestions?*

# Covenant

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- Use **“I” statements**: *speak from your own experience.*
- **Ask permission before sharing** other participants’ stories outside the group.
- **Step-up, step-back**: be conscious of the level of participation that you bring to the conversation. Allow everyone a chance to speak before you speak again.
- You always have **permission to “pass.”**



# Upcoming Classes

- *Session 7: Introduction (to Prophetic Literature)*
- *Session 8: Isaiah*
- **Session 9: Jeremiah, Ezekiel**
- **Session 10: The Twelve; Psalms & Proverbs; Job**
- **Session 11: Five Scrolls**
- **Session 12: Daniel and “After the Hebrew Bible”**
- Spring 2015: 6-weeks on Jesus, the Gospels, and Acts
- Fall 2015: 6-weeks on Paul & the rest of the NT

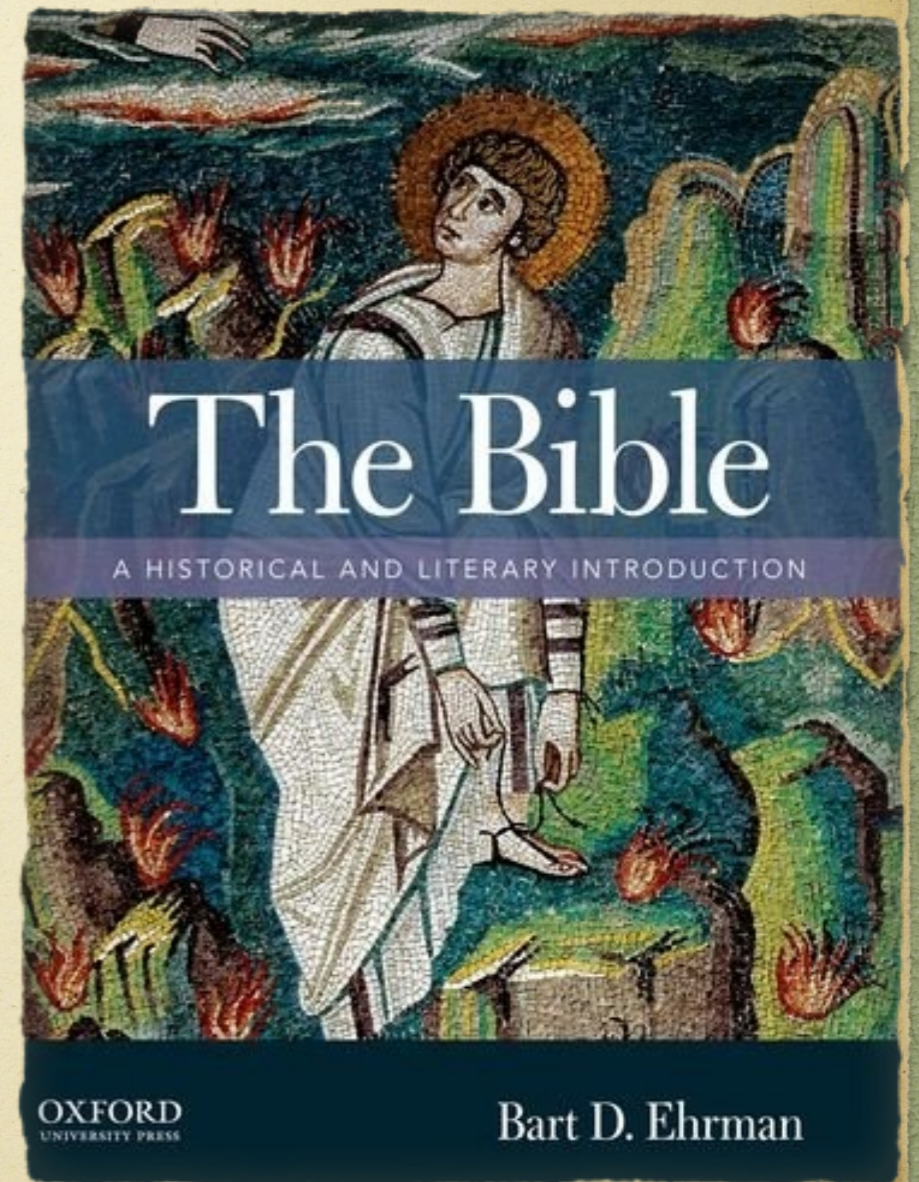
Alternately: Read primary text...*and* annotations  
...*or just come to class*

➤ Chapter 5: The Early Israelite Prophets: Amos, Isaiah of Jerusalem, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk

➤ Chapter 6: The Historians and Prophets of Exile and Return: Ezra and Nehemiah, Second Isaiah, Joel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Third Isaiah, Malachi

➤ Chapter 7: Poets and Story Tellers of Ancient Israel: Psalms, Lamentations, Song of Songs, Ruth, Esther, Jonah, Daniel, 1 and 2 Chronicles

➤ Chapter 8: Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature: Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Selections of AL



Fall 2014

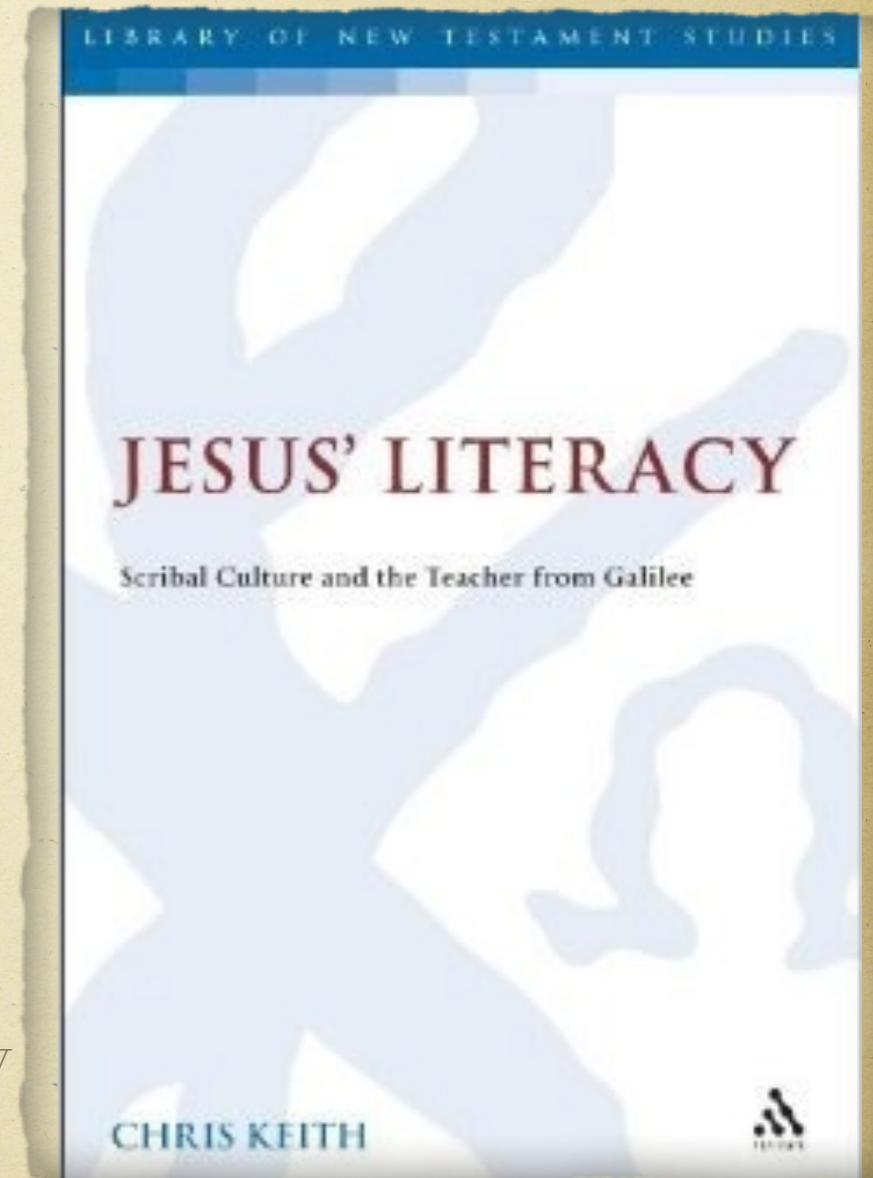
# Follow-up from Last Week: Literacy Rates (via Ehrman)

➤ Vast majority of people in first century Roman Palestine could *not* read or write.

➤ Modern myth: all boys in Palestine went to Hebrew school and became literate there.

➤ Broader picture: in antiquity most people in every time and place were illiterate.

➤ Most influential study: Columbia University professor of ancient history William Harris's book *Ancient Literacy*

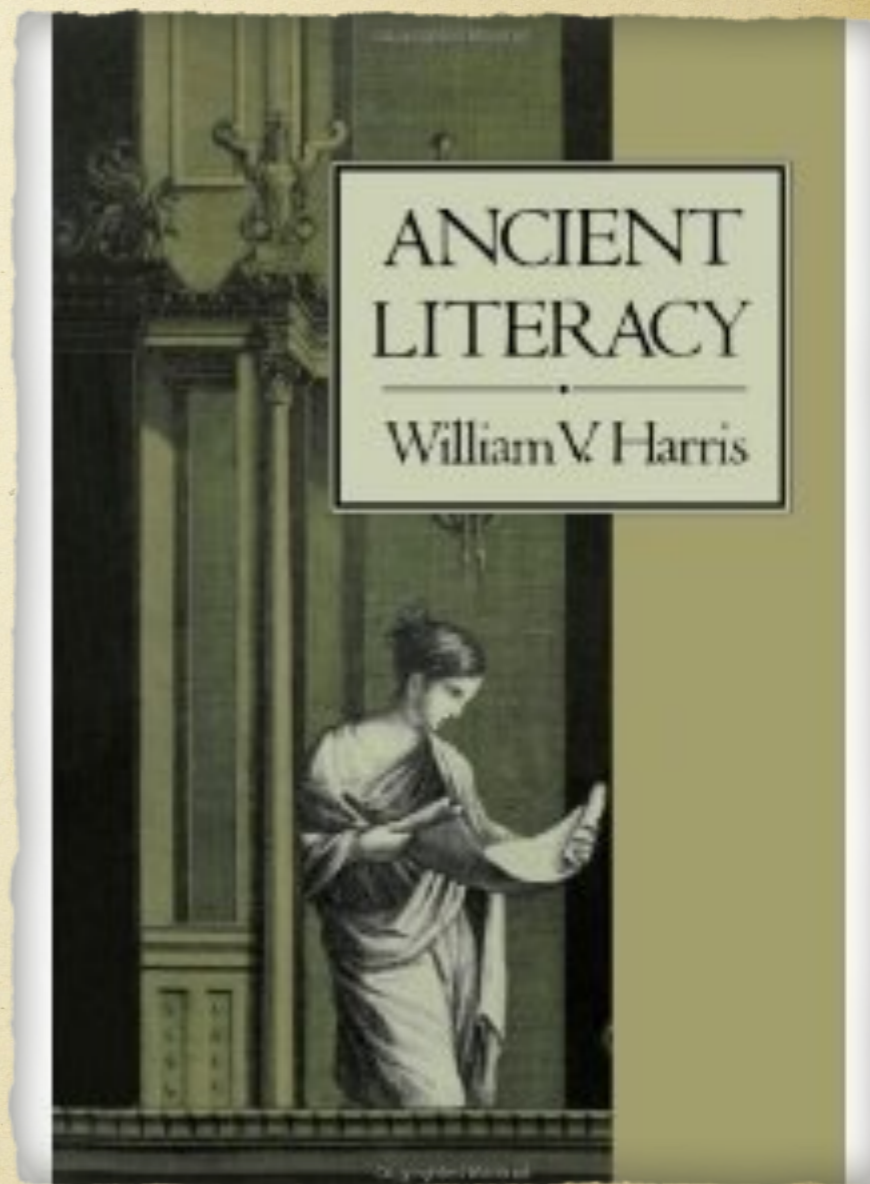


2011

# Follow-up from Last Week: Literacy Rates (via Ehrman)

➤ Harris: at the *best times and places* in the ancient world (say, Athens in the days of Plato), maybe 15% of the population was roughly literate. In *most times and places* it was more like 10%. Of that number far more could *read* than could write.

➤ Raffaella Cribiore: in the ancient world, reading and writing were two different skills, and writing composition still another. Almost all those who could read and write, or even just read, were upper-crust urban elites. Jesus, of course, was none of the above.



1989 (Harvard UP)

# Literacy

- More narrow picture: literacy in first-century Palestine was almost certainly lower than the in the empire at large. This has been shown in an influential article by Meir Bar-Ilan and in the full and authoritative study *Literacy in Roman Palestine* by Catherine Hezser.
- Roman period, probably only 3% of the population of Palestine was literate. And again, those who were were primarily the rich and well-off folk living in the cities. So what are the chances that someone like Jesus could read and write?
- NT: not a shred of evidence to indicate that Jesus could write. The only account of him writing is the story of the woman taken in adultery in John 7-8, which was not originally in the NT but was added by a later scribe. Chris Keith has another book making the case that that this story was added to the Gospel of John by a scribe who wanted to show that Jesus could write.



# Literacy

❧ Ehrman: my strong sense is that Jesus could not write. I think he certainly could not compose, and he was probably never trained to copy (for example, the Scriptures). That kind of training took years, and I doubt if the kind of **hand-to-mouth existence** he and his family had in the little hamlet of Nazareth would have afforded him the time or leisure to get it.

❧ But could he read? In Mark 6, we learn that Jesus' own townspeople – the ones he grew up with, cheek by jowl (Nazareth was a very small place) – are flabbergasted that he has learning of any kind and can't understand how he came by it (Mark 6:2-4). This is based on his teaching in the synagogue, and the passage does not indicate that Jesus actually read the Scriptures before he started teaching about it. But the clear implication from this, our earliest account of the matter, is that Jesus was not known by the people who would have known to have had an education.

# Literacy

- ❧ This view is at odds, however, with the way the same story is told in **Luke 4:16-21**. This is the one passage in the entire NT that indicates that Jesus could read. He does read. And the people are not amazed that he suddenly seems educated when they knew he wasn't; they are instead taken aback at the "gracious words" that he spoke.
- ❧ Luke 4, then, is our only solid evidence that Jesus could read. It is based on a story in Mark where Jesus is not said to read. So could Jesus read? Many people have thought that since he was acclaimed as a Jewish teacher, he surely could read the Scriptures that he taught about. That may well be right, and I slightly lean to that view – that Jesus could read the Hebrew Bible (well? fairly well? not so well?). But I don't think that it's necessarily the case: a teacher does not have to read, and it is possible for very smart people to acquire their knowledge of texts – even accurate knowledge of texts – from hearing them read aloud (which is how most people "read" in the ancient world: by hearing a text read aloud in a public context).

## Literacy

I should stress that we cannot say that “rabbis” were always highly educated, that Jesus was a “rabbi,” and that Jesus was therefore highly educated. That’s precisely what we don’t know. The technical term/office of “rabbi” came about long after Jesus had passed from the scene. To call Jesus a rabbi in his day was not to say that he belonged to the rabbinic office or participated in a rabbinical school. It simply was to say that he was a **teacher**, back in the days when that did not require special training.

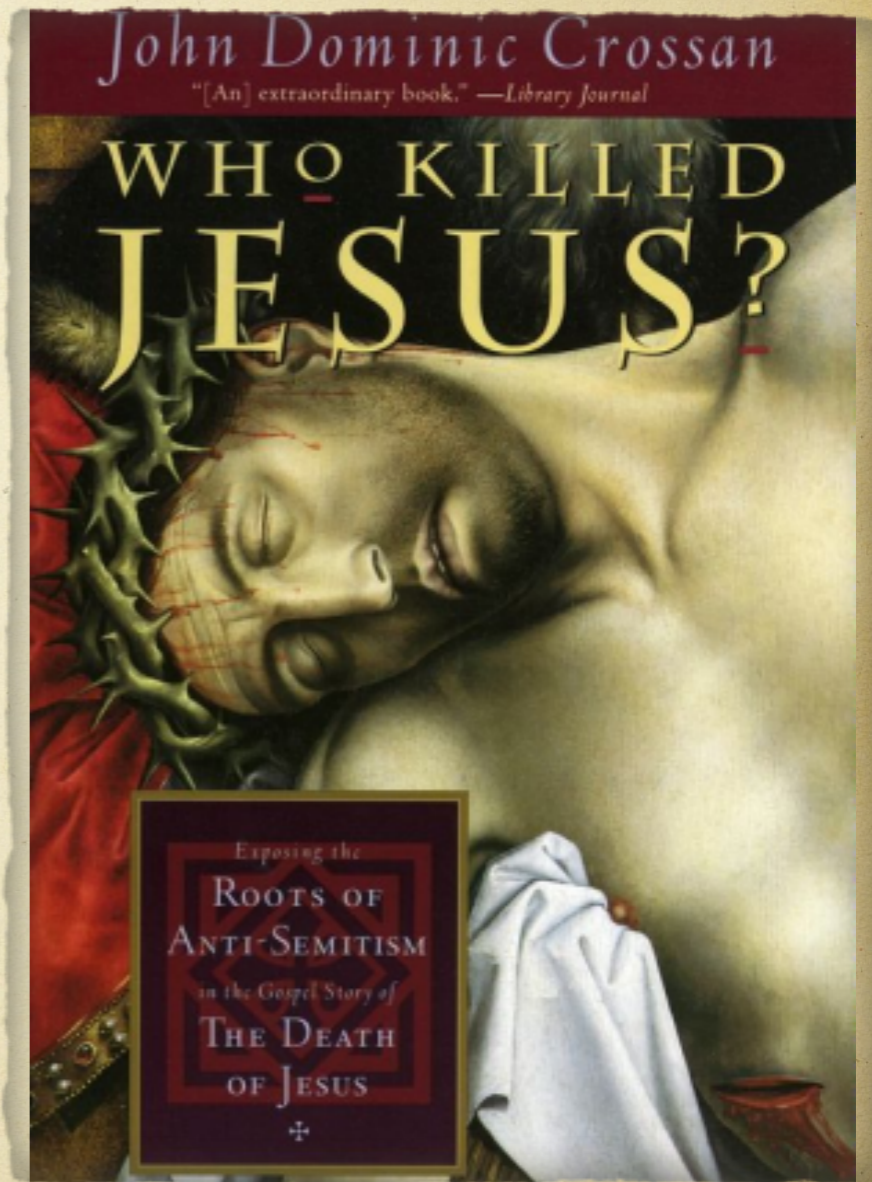
Ehrman: Still, I slightly incline to the view that Jesus could read. How did he learn? I’m afraid we can only guess. The best guess is that if it’s true that he could, he must have been taught by someone who had access to books (of Scripture) and who took the time to teach him. And that would suggest that it was the local leader of the local synagogue. If that’s the case, then that unknown person turns out to have been one of the most important figures in the history of western civilization.

# Prophecy Historicized OR History Remembered (*Jewish & Christian Readings of the Same Text*)

“The issue is whether the passion accounts are prophecy historicized or history remembered. Raymond Brown [*Death of the Messiah*] is 80% in the direction of history remembered. I’m 80% in the opposite direction.”

Prophecy historicized: Christians searching their Scriptures to understand events in their present, found these ancient descriptions and weaved them theologically into their writings. Take prophecy and weave it theologically into history.

History remembered: memory of events



## Parallel with Luke 4 (Isaiah 61:1-2)

“1 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;”

Portion of Isaiah scroll that Jesus reads in the synagogue

## Parallel with Matthew 25 (Isaiah 58:6-7)

“6 Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?”

# Jeremiah: Not such a big crybaby after all, or, it's not Jeremiah's fault he got placed next to Lamentations

❧ The prophetic word came to Jeremiah during a 40-year period, from the 13th year of King Josiah (627 BCE) until the 7th year of Zedekiah (587 BCE).

❧ Terrifying time: the Babylonian exile, destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple built by Solomon.



# Outline

➤ Jeremiah 1-25

Why the nation fell to Babylon

➤ Jeremiah 26-36

How the Nation can survive





# Jeremiah 1:1-3

“1 The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, 2 to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3 It came also in the days of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah son of Josiah of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.”

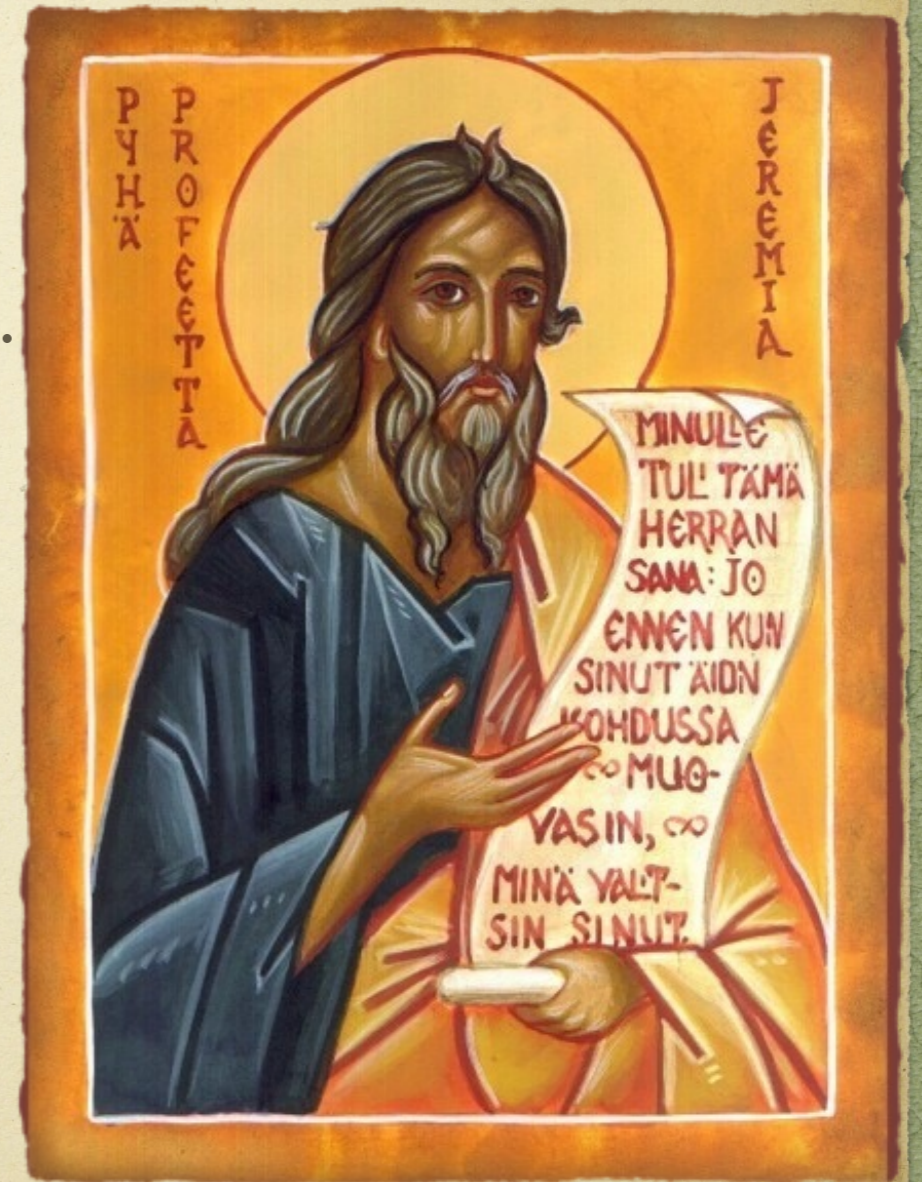


# Jeremiah 1:1-3: “Superscription”

Credits the entire book to Jeremiah, prophet and son of a priest from Anathoth.

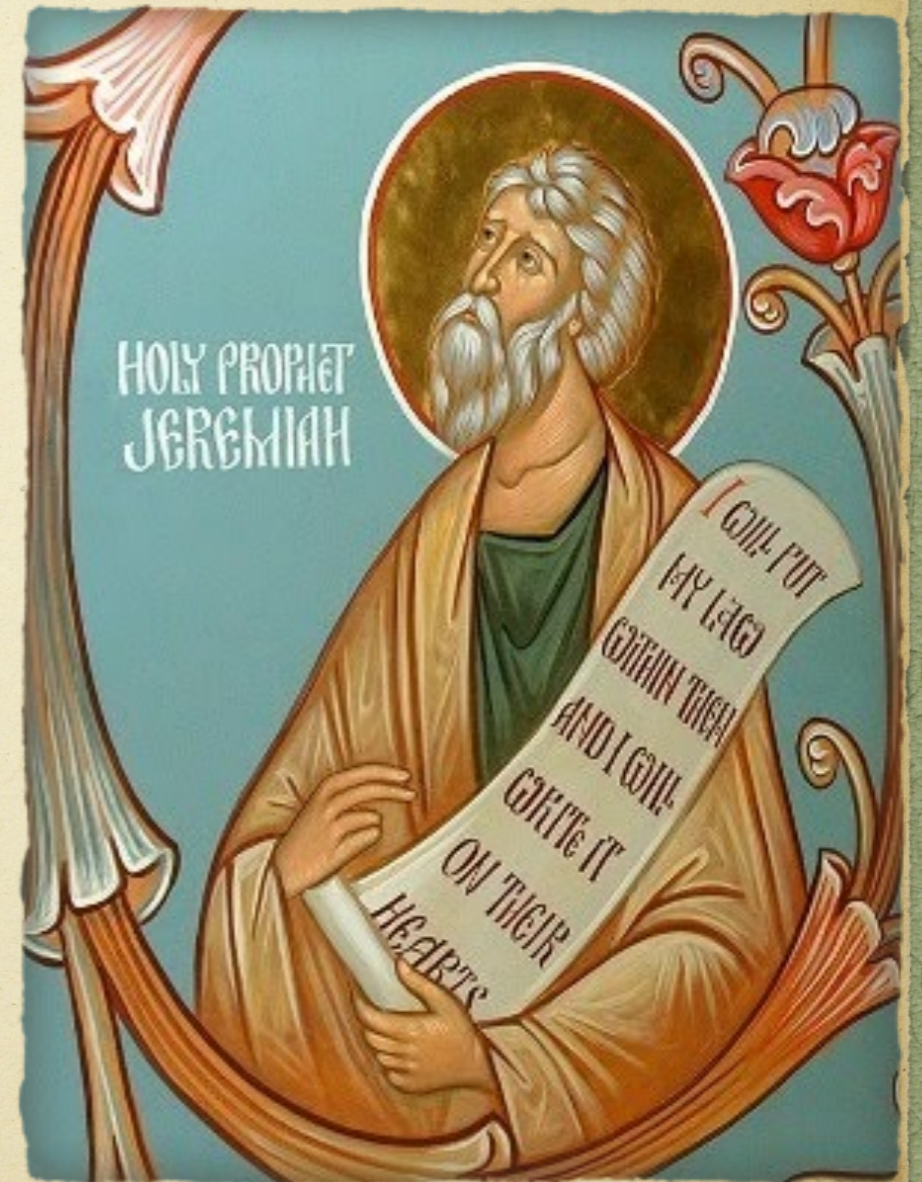
Locates Jeremiah outside the governmental and religious power structures [*central vs. peripheral prophets*]

Jeremiah most active during the reign of Jehoiakim & Zedekiah, but his ministry continued after Jerusalem fell in 587.



## Jeremiah 1:4-10

“4 Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,  
5 ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
and before you were born I consecrated you; I  
appointed you a prophet to the nations.’ 6 Then  
I said, ‘Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how  
to speak, for I am only a boy.’ 7 But the Lord  
said to me, ‘Do not say, “I am only a boy”; for you  
shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall  
speak whatever I command you. 8 Do not be  
afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you,  
says the Lord.” 9 Then the Lord put out his  
hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said  
to me, “Now I have put my words in your mouth.  
10 See, today I appoint you over nations and  
over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to  
destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.””



# Jeremiah 1:4-10

God calls Jeremiah *before birth* to be a prophet...*not* a self-appointed messenger

Like Moses, Jeremiah also resists his call.  
(Ex 3:11; 4:1, 10)

Compare with Isaiah 6 (touching mouth)

v. 10 as microcosm of major themes:  
destruction and rebuilding.



## Jeremiah 3:1-2 (Strong language)

“1 If a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's wife, will he return to her? Would not such a land be greatly polluted? You have played the whore with many lovers; and would you return to me? says the Lord. 2 Look up to the bare heights, and see! Where have you not been lain with? By the waysides you have sat waiting for lovers, like a nomad in the wilderness. You have polluted the land with your whoring and wickedness.”



# Why so angry?

4:22 "For my people are foolish, they do not know me; they are stupid children, they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil, but do not know how to do good."

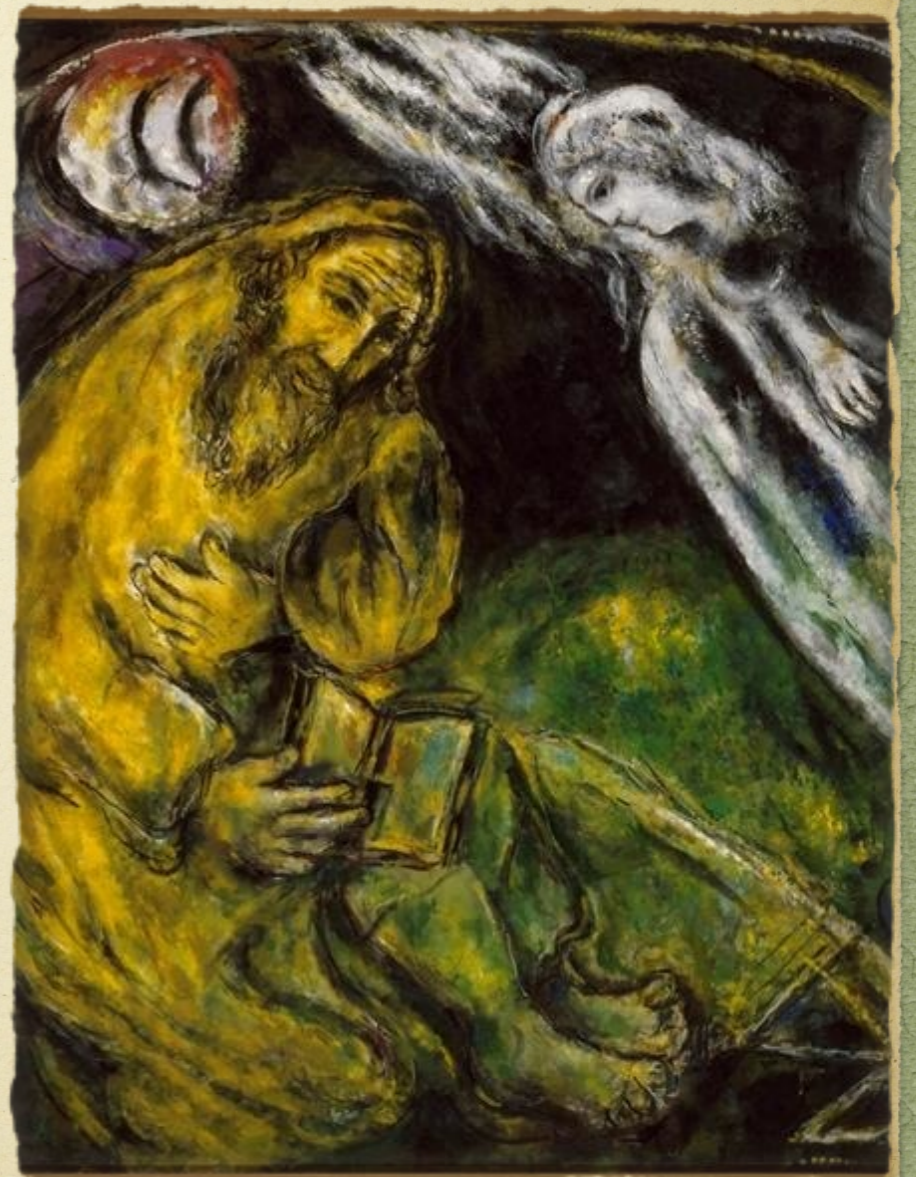
5:28 "they have grown fat and sleek. They know no limits in deeds of wickedness; they do not judge with justice the cause of the orphan, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy."





# Jeremiah 7:1-11 (Recapitulated in NT)

“1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2 Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the Lord. 3 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. 4 Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord." 5 For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, 6 if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, 7 then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever. 8 Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. 9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are safe!" — only to go on doing all these abominations? 11 Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You know, I too am watching, says the Lord.





## Jeremiah 20:7-18 (Inner turmoil of prophet)

7 O Lord, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me [*HEB: "seduced and raped"*], and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me. 8 For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. 9 If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. 10 For I hear many whispering: "Terror is all around! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" All my close friends are watching for me to stumble. "Perhaps he can be enticed, and we can prevail against him, and take our revenge on him." 11 But the Lord is with me like a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten. 12 O Lord of hosts, you test the righteous, you see the heart and the mind; let me see your retribution upon them, for to you I have committed my cause. 13 Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers. 14 Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! 15 Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, saying, "A child is born to you, a son," making him very glad. 16 Let that man be like the cities that the Lord overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon, 17 because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great. 18 Why did I come forth from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?

# Jeremiah 7:1-11 (Recapitulated in NT)

“1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2 Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the Lord. 3 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. 4 Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord." 5 For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, 6 if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, 7 then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever. 8 Here you are, **trusting in deceptive words to no avail.** 9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are safe!" — only to go on doing all these abominations? 11 **Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight?** You know, I too am watching, says the Lord.



# Jeremiah 23:18 (Theophany)

“18 For who has stood in the council of the Lord so as to see and to hear his word? Who has given heed to his word so as to proclaim it?”



# Jeremiah 29:11 (Hermeneutics)

“11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”



Hermes

## Jeremiah 31:31-34 (New Covenant)

“31 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.”



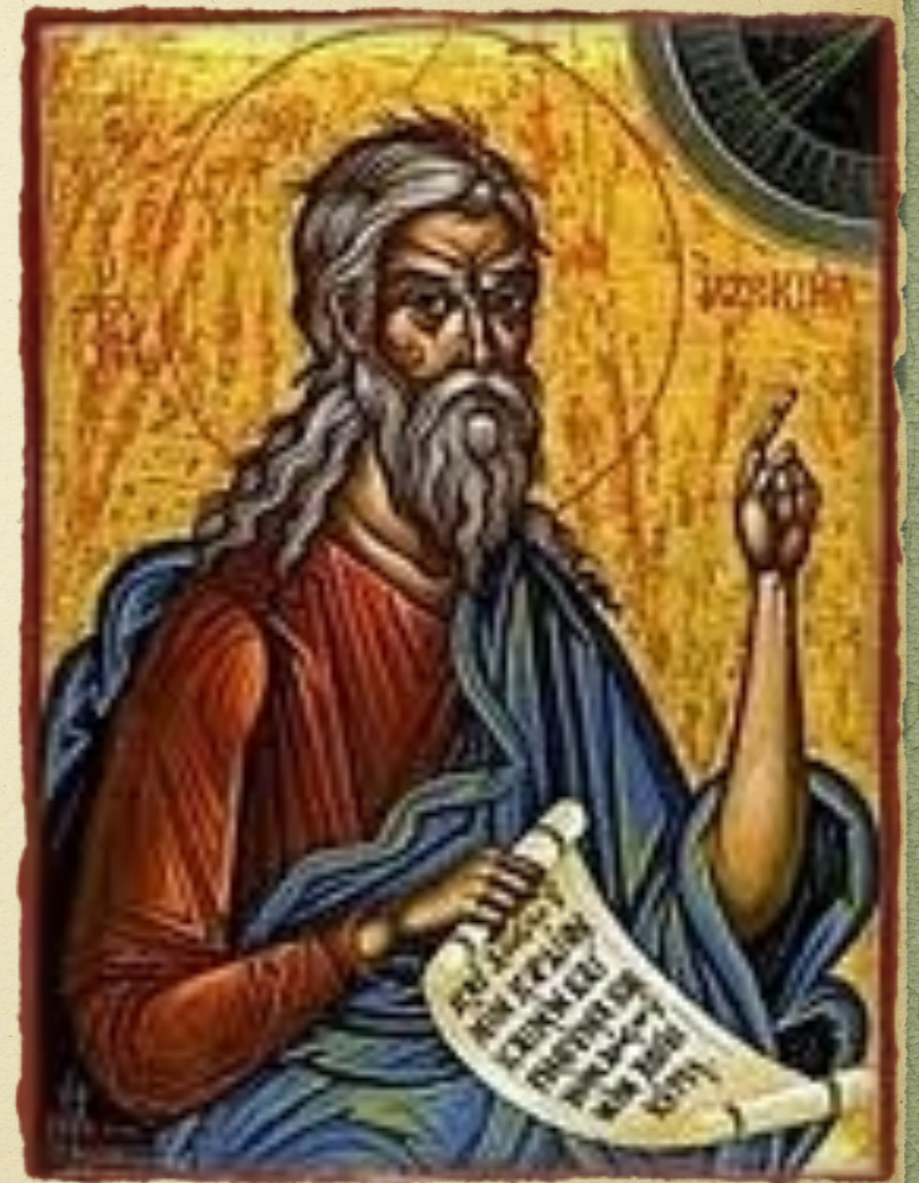
Hermes

# Ezekiel: Prophet & Priest

“They Shall Know that I am the Lord”:

God is not a Republican or a Democrat, or,

Ezekiel’s proclamation of  
a radically free God



# Dates

597 BCE Ezekiel deported to Babylon

593 BCE Ezekiel commissioned as prophet

571 BCE Continued ministry until at least this point because that's what we have recorded



## Ezekiel 1:1-3 (Introduction)

*...visions continue throughout chapter*

“1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2 On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), 3 the word of the Lord came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was on him there.”





## Ezekiel 1:10 (Introduction)

“10 As for the appearance of their faces: the four had the face of a **human** being, the face of a **lion** on the right side, the face of an **ox** on the left side, and the face of an **eagle**;

Revelation 4:7, “Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: 7 the first living creature like a **lion**, the second living creature like an **ox**, the third living creature with a face like a **human** face, and the fourth living creature like a **flying eagle**.”



# Middle Ages: Symbols for Gospels

Matthew = Human/Angel

Mark = Lion

Luke = Ox

John = Eagle



# Ezekiel 3:1-11 Call, Commissioning, Eating of scroll (*prophetic sign-act*)

1 He said to me, O mortal, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. 3 He said to me, Mortal, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it. Then I ate it; and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey. 4 He said to me: Mortal, go to the house of Israel and speak my very words to them.... go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them. Say to them, "Thus says the Lord God"; whether they hear or refuse to hear.



# Ezekiel 16:1-50 (Strong language)

❧ Israel: orphan —> prostitute (“whore”)

❧ God: loving father —> vengeful husband.

❧ Ends: Sodom passage [*peace with justice*]

❧ [biblestudytools.com/nrs/ezekiel/16.html](http://biblestudytools.com/nrs/ezekiel/16.html)



# Brueggemann: “A God Not Useful”

*(application of strong language)*

➤ Ezekiel bears witness to a God who is free, transcendent, and other.... Key to Ezekiel’s proclamation of God is that God will not be trivialized, taken for granted, or drawn too close.... God will not be pressed into the service of any other cause, not matter how noble or compelling.

➤ Not the utilitarianism of the Western Enlightenment: God is often “used” either in *conservative* fashion to buttress morality and the American way of life or in *liberal* fashion to provide motivation for social change of various ideological kinds.

➤ Ezekiel is against such exploitations: one must talk *not* even about God’s will but about God’s *person*, who is first of all not even to be obeyed but to be honored, glorified, adored, and feared.

Walter  
Brueggemann  
HOPEFUL  
IMAGINATION

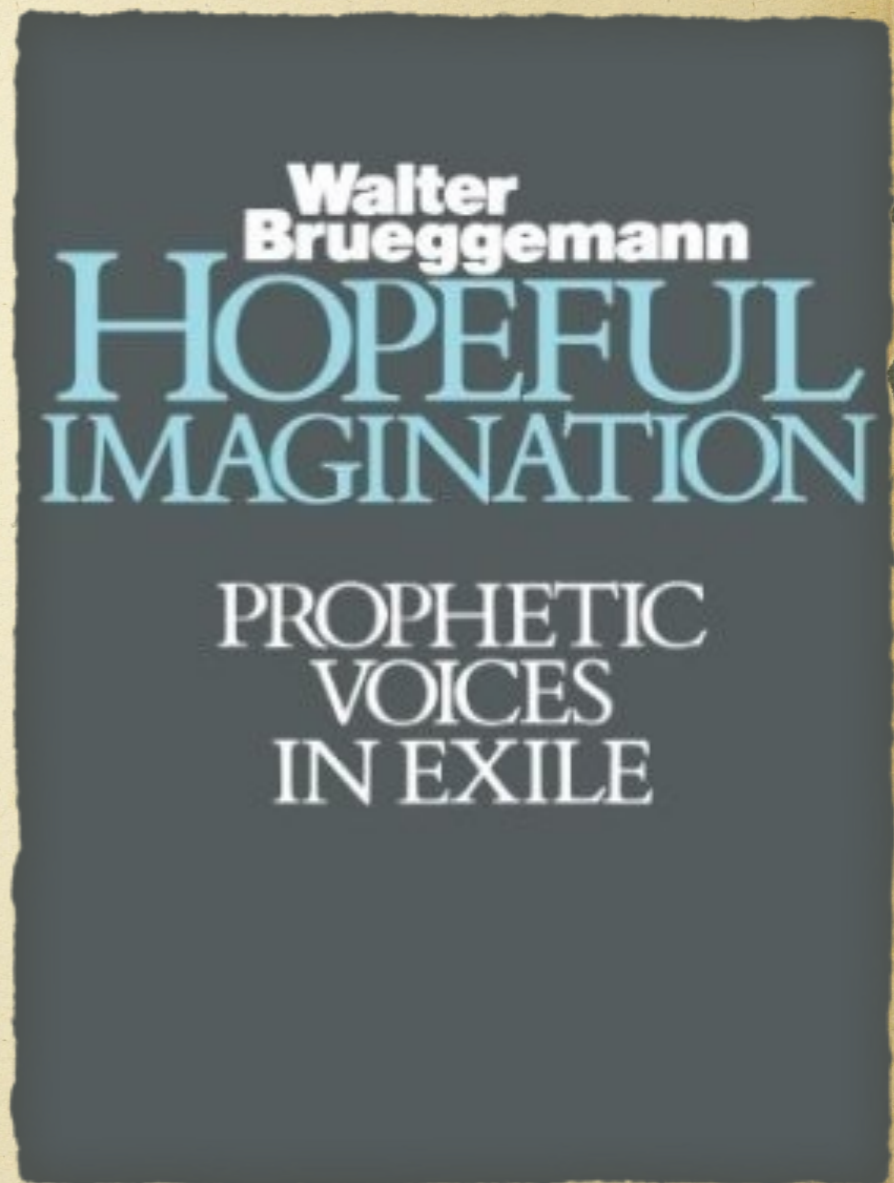
PROPHETIC  
VOICES  
IN EXILE

# Brueggemann: “A God Not Useful”

*(application of strong language)*

➤ If God is unalterable committed to a historical arrangement—the free market system, democratic socialism, classless society—we might manage the future. Conversely, if God be free, God may work a surprise. This latter freedom requires not predictability but profound trust.

➤ It is so easy then for conservatives to identify with God, because they know so fully the mind of God to present God as a partisan in the struggle against [sexual immorality], or in a crusade against communism. Liberals also know the mind of God and know God is pro-busing and pro-choice and all of the other themes of justice to which one is committed.



God Bless the People of Every Nation

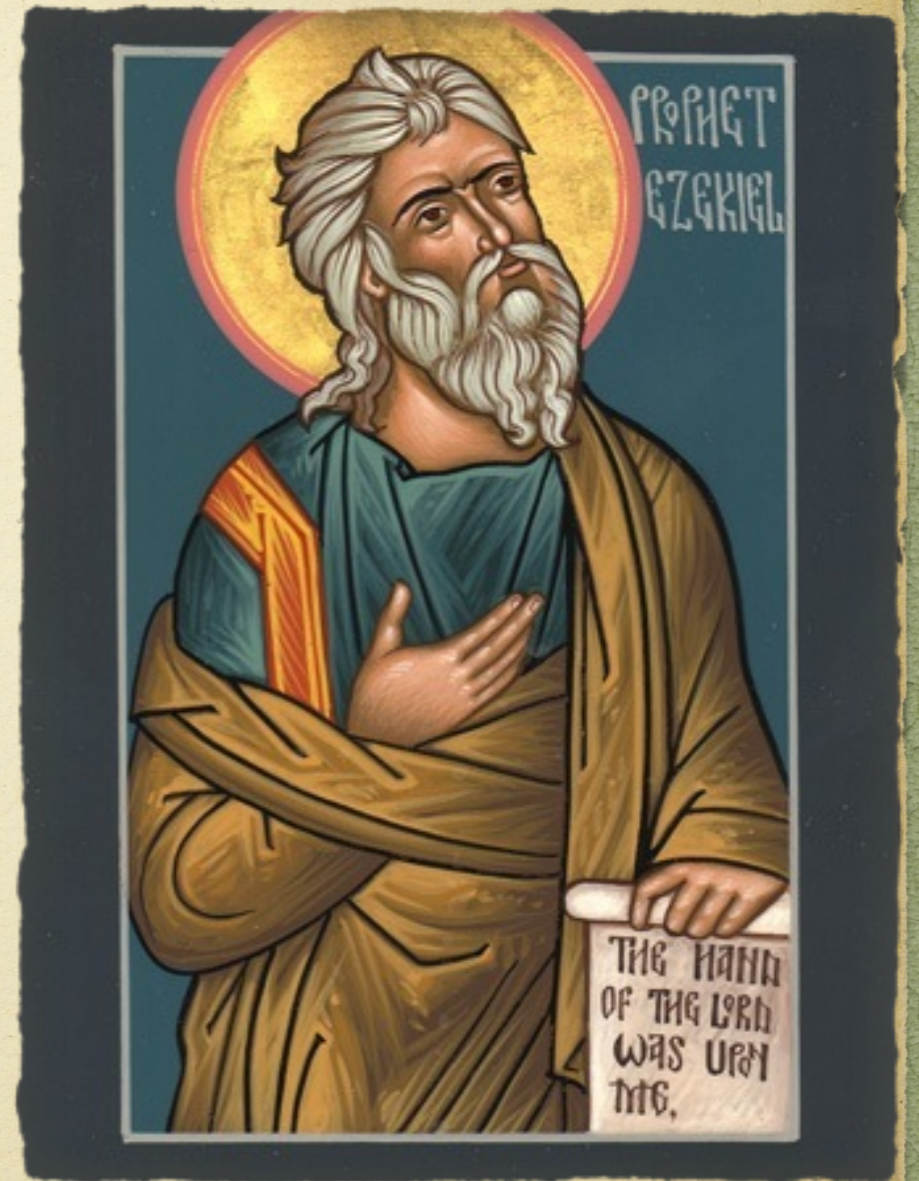
**GOD** is NOT  
a Republican  
...or a Democrat

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# Ezekiel 34:17

“As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats.”

C.f. Matthew 25, Jesus, and prophetic tradition





## Ezekiel 37:1-14 (Dry Bones)

*symbolizes the restoration of the people Israel*

1 The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.

2 He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. 3 He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered,

"O Lord God, you know." 4 Then he said to me,

"Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6 I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord." 7

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone.



## Ezekiel 37:1-14 (Dry Bones)

*symbolizes the restoration of the people Israel*

8 I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." 10 I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. 11 Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' 12 Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 14 I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord."



## Ezekiel 48:30-35 (Final line)

“30 These shall be the exits of the city: On the north side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure, 31 three gates, the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and the gate of Levi, the gates of the city being named after the tribes of Israel. 32 On the east side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates, the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin, and the gate of Dan. 33 On the south side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure, three gates, the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar, and the gate of Zebulun. 34 On the west side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates, the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, and the gate of Naphtali. 35 The circumference of the city shall be eighteen thousand cubits. And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The Lord is There.”

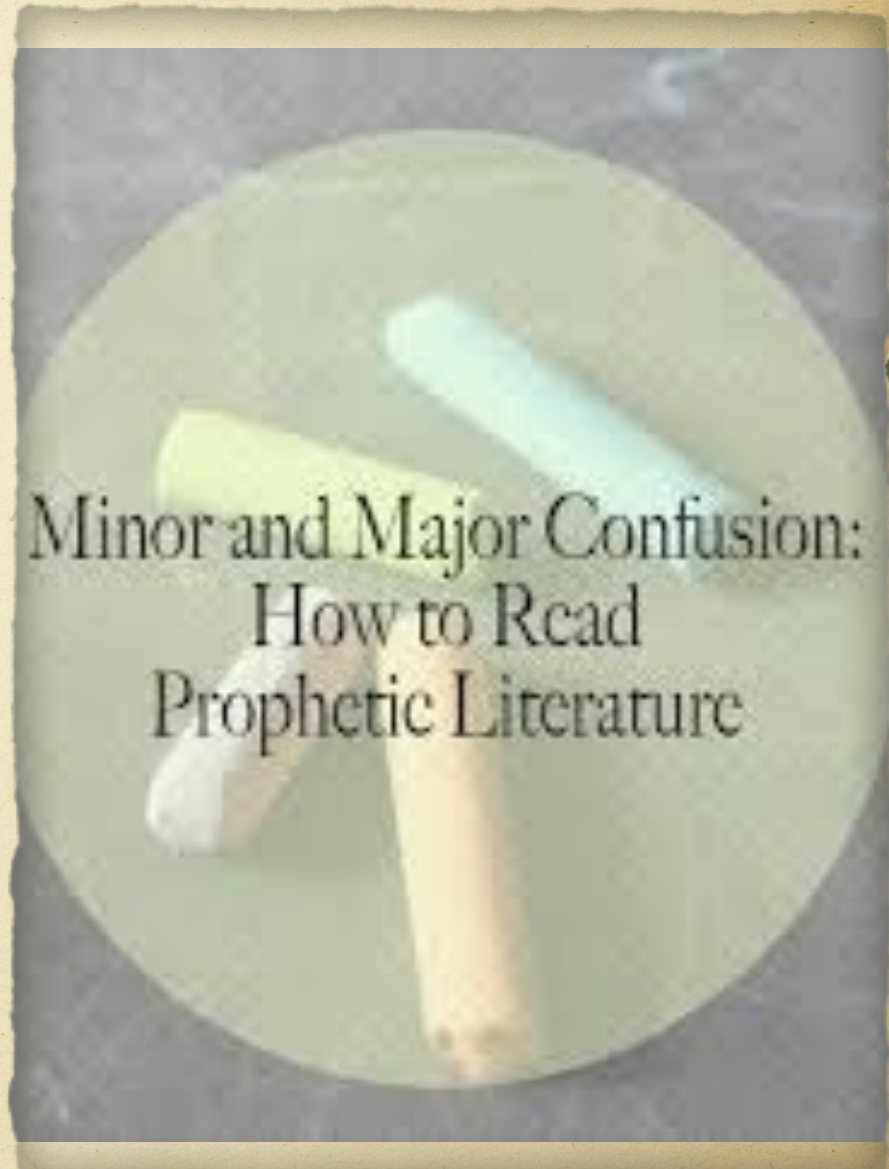
Named after *God*, not any one tribe; represents the return of God's presence, end of abandonment.



# Majoring in the Minors & Sweating the Small Stuff:

Why the Minor Prophets Aren't All That  
Minor

End of the Second major section of canon:  
*Nevi'im* ("The Prophets")



Minor and Major Confusion:  
How to Read  
Prophetic Literature

## Former Prophets

## Latter Prophets

## Sub-categories of Latter prophets

Joshua

Isaiah

Major Prophets

Judges

Jeremiah

“

Samuel

Ezekiel

“

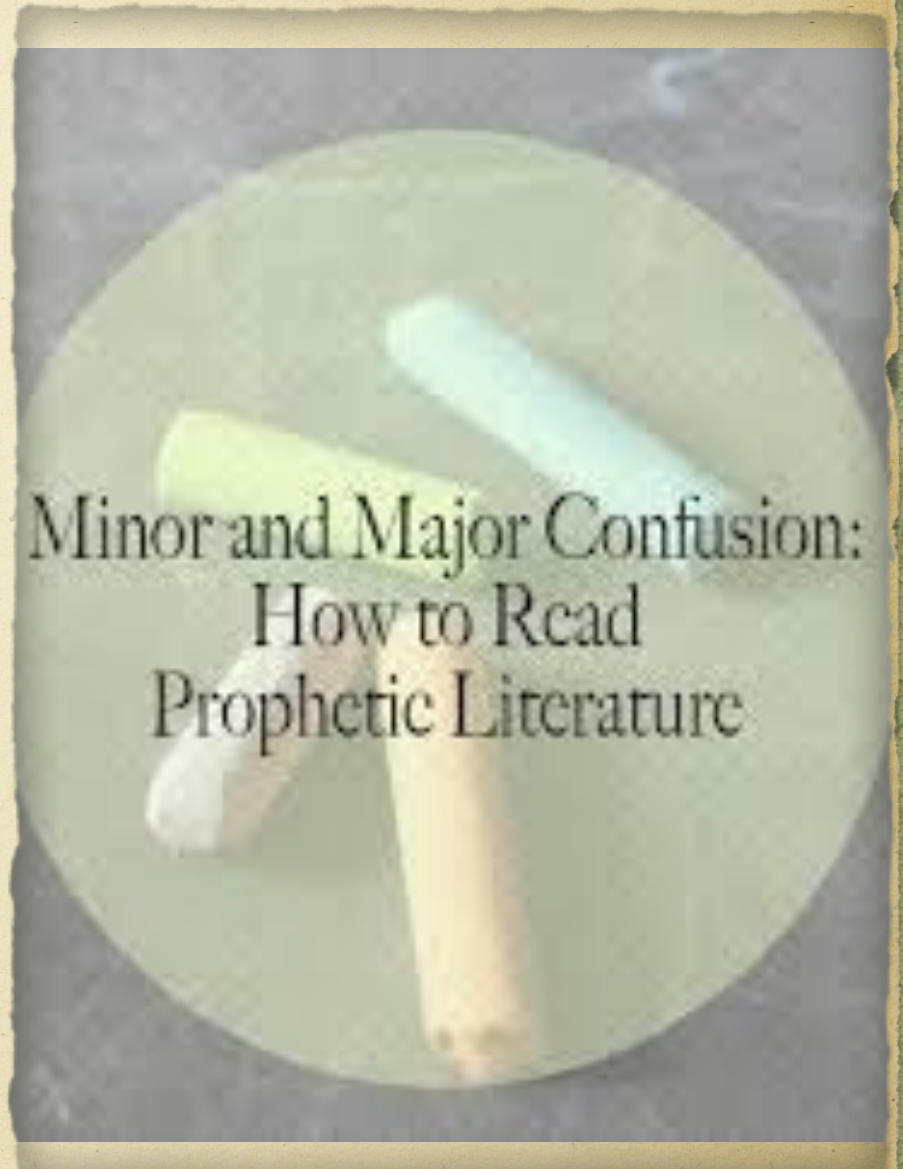
Kings

Book of the 12

Minor Prophets

# Historical-Criticism

- Dominant approach
- Identify the socio-historical context of each individual book
- Trace the editorial process by which each book reached its final form
- (*c.f. Canonical Criticism*)



Minor and Major Confusion:  
How to Read  
Prophetic Literature

<b>Prophet</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Contemporary</b>	<b>Empire</b>
<b>Hosea</b>	8 (700s)	First-Isaiah	Assyria
<b>Amos</b>			
<b>Micah</b>			
<i>Note: 722 B.C.E. Northern Kingdom of Israel destroyed</i>			
<b>Nahum</b>	late-7 (600s)	Jeremiah	<i>Assyria waning, Babylon rising</i>
<b>Habakkuk</b>			
<b>Zephaniah</b>			
<i>Note: 587 B.C.E. Southern Kingdom of Judah taken into exile.</i>			
<b>Haggai</b>	late-6 (500s/400s)		Persia
<b>Zechariah</b>			
<b>Malachi</b>			
<i>Note: 539 B.C.E. marks the return from exile (restoration)</i>			
<b>Joel</b>	little known		"Edomites"
<b>Obadiah</b>	5		
<b>Jonah</b>			



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