

### 3 “What time is it?” The prophetic view of present, past and future: TEXTS

#### The Role of the Future in Prophecy

*The most ‘successful prophetic predictions of disaster do not come true! When people repent, God repents!*

#### Jonah 3

The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup> So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. <sup>4</sup> Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup> And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. <sup>6</sup> When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup> Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: “By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. <sup>8</sup> Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish.” <sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

#### Jeremiah 26:1-19 (The ‘text’ of Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon is found in Jeremiah 7)

At the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, this word came from the LORD: <sup>2</sup> Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD; speak to them all the words that I command you; do not hold back a word. <sup>3</sup> It may be that they will listen, all of them, and will turn from their evil way, that I may change my mind about the disaster that I intend to bring on them because of their evil doings. <sup>4</sup> You shall say to them: Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, <sup>5</sup> and to heed the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently—though you have not heeded— <sup>6</sup> then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.

<sup>7</sup> The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. <sup>8</sup> And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, “You shall die! <sup>9</sup> Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant’?” And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

<sup>10</sup> When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the LORD and took their seat in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the LORD.

<sup>11</sup> Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, “This man deserves the sentence of death because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.”

<sup>12</sup> Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, “It is the LORD who sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. <sup>13</sup> Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD

will change his mind about the disaster that he has pronounced against you. <sup>14</sup> But as for me, here I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. <sup>15</sup> Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.”

<sup>16</sup> Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, “This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.”

<sup>17</sup> And some of the elders of the land arose and said to all the assembled people, <sup>18</sup> “Micah of Moresheth, who prophesied during the days of King Hezekiah of Judah, said to all the people of Judah: ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, Zion shall be plowed as a field;

Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,  
and the mountain of the house a wooded height.’

<sup>19</sup> Did King Hezekiah of Judah and all Judah actually put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and did not the LORD change his mind about the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster on ourselves!”

## **The God of the Prophets**

### **Exodus 3:13-15**

<sup>13</sup> But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” <sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.”<sup>[a]</sup> He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” <sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD,<sup>[b]</sup> the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’:

This is my name forever,  
and this my title for all generations.

## **God’s People have broken the covenant ...**

### **“Therefore” – Jer 5:20-29**

Declare this in the house of Jacob,  
proclaim it in Judah:

<sup>21</sup> Hear this, O foolish and senseless people,  
who have eyes, but do not see,  
who have ears, but do not hear.

<sup>22</sup> Do you not fear me? says the LORD;  
Do you not tremble before me?

I placed the sand as a boundary for the sea,  
a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass;  
though the waves toss, they cannot prevail,  
though they roar, they cannot pass over it.

<sup>23</sup> But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart;  
they have turned aside and gone away.

<sup>24</sup> They do not say in their hearts,  
“Let us fear the LORD our God,  
who gives the rain in its season,  
the autumn rain and the spring rain,  
and keeps for us

the weeks appointed for the harvest.”  
<sup>25</sup> Your iniquities have turned these away,  
and your sins have deprived you of good.  
<sup>26</sup> For scoundrels are found among my people;  
they take over the goods of others.  
Like fowlers they set a trap;  
they catch human beings.  
<sup>27</sup> Like a cage full of birds,  
their houses are full of treachery;  
therefore they have become great and rich,  
<sup>28</sup> 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.  
<sup>29</sup> Shall I not punish them for these things?  
says the LORD,  
and shall I not bring retribution  
on a nation such as this?

**“Nevertheless” Jer 30:12-22**

For thus says the LORD:  
Your hurt is incurable,  
your wound is grievous.  
<sup>13</sup> There is no one to uphold your cause,  
no medicine for your wound,  
no healing for you.  
<sup>14</sup> All your lovers have forgotten you;  
they care nothing for you;  
for I have dealt you the blow of an enemy,  
the punishment of a merciless foe,  
because your guilt is great,  
because your sins are so numerous.  
<sup>15</sup> Why do you cry out over your hurt?  
Your pain is incurable.  
Because your guilt is great,  
because your sins are so numerous,  
I have done these things to you.  
<sup>16</sup> Therefore all who devour you shall be devoured,  
and all your foes, every one of them, shall go into captivity;  
those who plunder you shall be plundered,  
and all who prey on you I will make a prey.  
<sup>17</sup> For I will restore health to you,  
and your wounds I will heal,  
says the LORD,  
because they have called you an outcast:  
“It is Zion; no one cares for her!”  
<sup>18</sup> Thus says the LORD:  
I am going to restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob,  
and have compassion on his dwellings;

the city shall be rebuilt upon its mound,  
 and the citadel set on its rightful site.  
<sup>19</sup> Out of them shall come thanksgiving,  
 and the sound of merry-makers.  
 I will make them many, and they shall not be few;  
 I will make them honored, and they shall not be disdained.  
<sup>20</sup> Their children shall be as of old,  
 their congregation shall be established before me;  
 and I will punish all who oppress them.  
<sup>21</sup> Their prince shall be one of their own,  
 their ruler shall come from their midst;  
 I will bring him near, and he shall approach me,  
 for who would otherwise dare to approach me?  
 says the LORD.  
<sup>22</sup> And you shall be my people,  
 and I will be your God.

## Coming out of Exile

### Isaiah 43:14-25

Thus says the LORD,  
 your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:  
 For your sake I will send to Babylon  
 and break down all the bars,  
 and the shouting of the Chaldeans will be turned to lamentation.  
<sup>15</sup> I am the LORD, your Holy One,  
 the Creator of Israel, your King.  
<sup>16</sup> Thus says the LORD,  
 who makes a way in the sea,  
 a path in the mighty waters,  
<sup>17</sup> who brings out chariot and horse,  
 army and warrior;  
 they lie down, they cannot rise,  
 they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:  
<sup>18</sup> Do not remember the former things,  
 or consider the things of old.  
<sup>19</sup> I am about to do a new thing;  
 now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
 I will make a way in the wilderness  
 and rivers in the desert.  
<sup>20</sup> The wild animals will honor me,  
 the jackals and the ostriches;  
 for I give water in the wilderness,  
 rivers in the desert,  
 to give drink to my chosen people,  
<sup>21</sup> the people whom I formed for myself  
 so that they might declare my praise.  
<sup>22</sup> Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob;  
 but you have been weary of me, O Israel!  
<sup>23</sup> You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings,

or honored me with your sacrifices.  
I have not burdened you with offerings,  
or wearied you with frankincense.  
<sup>24</sup> You have not bought me sweet cane with money,  
or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices.  
But you have burdened me with your sins;  
you have wearied me with your iniquities.  
<sup>25</sup> I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,  
and I will not remember your sins.

*Note the 'nevertheless' that comes into play at the end of this text.*

**Questions to think about?**

- How does the past (memory) and the future (expectation) impact on our present experience?
- What new thing might God be doing?