

Introduction to the Prophets

1 Issues

Someone has observed that in order to love intimately one must know accurately, else one is loving an image of their own making. Knowing accurately is the function of sound biblical studies.

1.1 Attitudes towards these texts

1.2 Nature of Prophet and Prophecy

2 Setting

2.1 Geopolitical setting c. 850-430

The 9th through the 5th centuries were anything but tidy and simple. And to that complex chaos, the God of grace sends His servants the prophets. The “People of God” declined from the “golden age” of David and Solomon to ruin. By c.930 B.C. Israel had already been torn in two by civil war. The northern Kingdom of Israel was characterized by unrelenting spiritual rebellion and, at times, significant political instability. The southern Kingdom of Judah, led by David’s dynasty (except for a six-year break), found itself on a spiritual “rollercoaster.” Yet both kingdoms experienced periods of affluence and ease which seemed to anaesthetize any latent spiritual sensitivity toward the LORD.

Onto this tragic stage God sends His spokespersons to confront their own culture, to raise an awareness of God's righteous expectations, to persuade those who claim a relationship with God to live like it, to tell a watching world about God's glory and grace, and to remind all humanity that God, always faithful to His promise, would send His Anointed Servant to be our Saviour.

On the international scene, the power center in Egypt was in decline. The Neo-Assyrian Empire emerged in the last half of the 8th century as a “world power.” By 627 the empire encompassed lower Egypt, eastern Turkey, southern Armenia and Azerbaijan, western Iran and everything in between in the Fertile Crescent. Toward the end of the 7th century the Babylonian-Median alliance sacked Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, and by 605 the Neo-Babylonian Empire had become the new “superpower.” Sixty-six years later she was replaced by the Medo-Persian Empire which extended its world power West to Libya, Northwest into Bulgaria and Greece, East to Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

2.1.1 Egypt, 3rd Intermediate Kingdom - 1085-656

2.1.2 Mesopotamia

2.1.2.1 Neo-Assyrian Period - 841-612: Tiglath-pileser III, Shalmaneser V, Sargon II, Sennacherib

2.1.2.2 Babylonian Period - 612-539: Nebuchadnezzar II

2.1.2.3 Persian Period - 539-333: Cyrus, Darius

2.2 Physical Setting

2.2.1 Near East

2.2.2 Southern Kingdom

2.2.3 Northern Kingdom

2.3 Domestic Setting

2.3.1 Divided Nation

2.3.2 Local politics & economics

2.3.3 Popular Culture

2.4 Spiritual Setting

2.4.1 Syncretism

2.4.2 Apostasy

2.4.3 Revivals

2.5 Prophets & Their Times

2.5.1 ANE Backdrop

2.5.2 Definitions

2.5.2.1 Revelation

2.5.2.2 Prophet

2.5.2.3 Prophecy

2.5.2.4 Context

2.5.2.4.1 Birth of nation - settlement

2.5.2.4.2 Early monarchy

2.5.2.4.3 Classical period

2.5.3 Consciousness

2.5.3.1 Call

2.5.3.2 Claim

2.5.3.3 Mode

2.5.4 Function

3 Canon: English Bible / Hebrew Bible

4 Reliability: Limitations of “proof”

5 Hermeneutics

5.1 Popular Approaches

5.2 Historical & Cultural Issues

5.2.1 Antecedents as Prophetic Paradigms: Creation, Eden, Flood, Sodom & Gomorrah, Bondage, Exodus, Wilderness

5.3 Literary Issues

5.4 Theological Issues

5.5 Hermeneutical Principles

5.5.1 Jewish Interpretation & Progress of Revelation

5.5.2 Dual Authorship

5.5.3 Incarnational Model

5.5.4 Meaning / Significance

5.5.5 Distinctive types

6 Theology of the Prophets

6.1 Messianic Prediction

6.2 Messianic Prophecy

6.2.1 One Promise in both Testaments

6.2.2 Theme of Hebrew Bible from NT Perspective

6.2.3 Messianic Focus

6.2.4 Basis of Christian Theology

6.3 Key Terms:

- 6.3.1 Seed,
- 6.3.2 House,
- 6.3.3 Son,
- 6.3.4 Rest,
- 6.3.5 My Elect,
- 6.3.6 Special People,
- 6.3.7 Torah of Humanity,
- 6.3.8 Hasid,
- 6.3.9 Servant,
- 6.3.10 Kingdom,
- 6.3.11 Last Days,
- 6.3.12 Day of the LORD,
- 6.3.13 etc.