

# Intro to Prophetic books—more than just a bunch of angry old men

Teacher: Yvon Prehn

## Review and where we are

- We are at the end of Solomon's reign and this is where many people's knowledge of Old Testament history stops
- As to reading their Bibles, many people stop after Psalms & Proverbs
- Few can tell you what's in the books near the end of the Old Testament
- BUT!!!!!!

## That's like walking out in the middle of a movie!

- And not coming back until the last 10 minutes
- Which, to carry out the analogy is what happens when you stop reading the history with Solomon, totally ignore the rest of the Bible and then jump to the New Testament
- You've missed some of the most important parts of the story!
- We will go into the history later, but in overview
- Solomon's reign ends in sin and judgment
- Kingdom splits
- The rest of the Old Testament is a combination of the history of Israel until 400 years before Christ AND, what's important for our lesson today, what the Prophets who spoke at that time said

## Our reading plan combines the two

- The prophetic books are put into their correct places in the times in which they spoke, in the historical books
- After reading and studying them in this way your appreciation of the Bible, your understanding of the OT and preparation for understanding the NT will grow
- Our plan:
- 1<sup>st</sup> How to study the Prophets
- Reference: *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* by Stuart and Fee

- Application comments when applicable for this lesson
- Then coming podcasts will go back to history and prophets mixed in

## Basics about the prophets

- 5 Major (but 2 written by Jeremiah)
  - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Lamentations
- 12 Minor Prophets
  - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi,
- Placed behind the historical and poetic books
- Not in order, historical or otherwise
- A "***Do you really love me?***" part of the Bible
- Because they require careful study (like any worthwhile textbook) to understand and apply

## Lots of words, little understood

- Tends to be a lot of misunderstanding, especially when not read in whole or in context
- People often see them as either:
- Angry old guys ranting and raving primarily about judgement or judgement in the future
- Or on the more positive side messages about the coming Messiah
- **Reality is that:**
- Less than 1 percent concerns events yet to come in our time.
- Less than 2 percent of Old Testament prophecy is messianic.
- Far less angry and judgmental than often assumed—much about the love and patience of God

## About the future they do talk about....

- Is almost always was the NEAR future
- Most prophecies took place in the lifetime or near future of the hearers
- VERY near future—story of Ahab and the prophet Micaiah in 1 Kings 22
- Overall the books are primarily prophecy about what will happen to Israel and the nations surrounding it from the time of the division into two kingdoms through the deportation of both and the restoration of the

Southern kingdom

- It's not all about us!!!!
- Though we can learn from it that actions have consequences
- Much that is timeless in them, for example....

#### **Great place for a key verse in all**

- Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what it fears, or be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. He will become a sanctuary, Isaiah 8: 12-14, NRSV
- God the one we are to fear...then and now
- Much content in Proverbs is like this—a past application, but great lessons for us today, though we can't be too specific in many applications

#### **Audience & authority**

##### **Audience:**

- Israel & Judah primary
- BUT often spoke to the nations surrounding as well
- Application—all accountable, all know
- **Authority:**
- Emphasized that the message was not their own
- Spoke the words of God
- Often the repeated phrase “the Word of the Lord”
- Always a message of hope if repentance and ultimately unconditional
- In these books we see the heart of God—his love, patience, how having to disciple breaks His heart

#### **Importance of understanding correct dating for the Prophets**

- Dating of the Prophets—when they were written is important—
- Because if written after events, not prophecy, but commentary, if before shows:
- God as the author and outside time (we'll have examples as we go along)
- In OT shows accuracy of prophecies, e.g. Cyrus, captivity and return
- Contemporary commentators cast doubt without cause on dating
- But archeology and internal Biblical evidence shows validity of traditional dating, tangible artifacts that support by name and time many

specific Bible prophecies

#### **More about time and the prophetic books**

- God's view of time—outside time, he sees it all
- **This does not mean that correctly understanding the timing of all events is easy.**
- *“It should be noted, of course, that some of the prophecies of the near future were set against the background of the great eschatological [end-times] future, and sometimes they seem to blend. . . . For now let it be noted that the reason for this is that the Bible regularly sees God's acts in temporal history in light of his overall plan for all of human history. Thus the temporal is to be seen in light of the eternal plan.*
- *It is like looking at two discs, with a smaller one in front of a larger, straight on; then from the perspective of subsequent history to see them from a side view and thus see how much distance there is between them.”*
- Fee, Gordon D.; Fee, Gordon D.; Stuart, Douglas; Stuart, Douglas (2014-06-24). *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: Fourth Edition* (p. 207). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.
- Better example—mountain ranges—you cannot see from a distance the huge valley in-between them
- Of course, God being outside of time sees it all
- Example: the story of the “dry bones” coming to life in Ezekiel
- The near term prophecy is that Israel would return to the land
- The Eternal prophecy is the everlasting resurrection of the dead
- Especially in a book like Isaiah, you get a sense of God's viewpoint—all at once and yet a progression—truly astounding and awe-inspiring

#### **Task of the Prophets**

- As Stuart and Fee say, their #1 Task was not to foretell the future to the curious, but:
- The prophets were “covenant enforcement mediators”
- Israel's law constituted a covenant between God and his people: Lev 26: 14 – 39; Deut 4: 15 – 40
- The Law contained not only regulations and

statutes for them to keep it but the sorts of punishments (“curses”) that God will necessarily mete out if they do not.

- God does not merely give Israel his law, but he enforces it. This is the message of the Prophets.
- They were Forth-tellers (live as God commands now) as well as Fore-tellers (this is what will happen if you don’t)

### **What this means to be “covenant enforcement mediators”**

- They were enforcing the covenant of a God who:
- He does not act capriciously in bringing judgement—people are warned again and again
- Always tells the truth—no idle threats
- His words/promises ALWAYS come to pass
- Actions have consequences
- No matter how long it takes or how difficult times might be
- He is involved in the lives of both individuals and nations

### **Also, contrary to popular opinion**

- Rather than primarily messages and books about judgement
- They are worthy illustrations of the character of God
- We see God’s patience—warnings repeated—through centuries
- Message delivered in many ways to many people (Israel, Judah, courts of kings, people, other nations)
- His LOVE
- His desire for restoration

### **Underlying Lesson of the Prophets, then and today:**

#### **Importance of both Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy**

- “Orthodoxy is correct belief. Orthopraxy is correct living.
- Through the prophets, God called the people of ancient Israel and Judah to a balance of right belief and right living.
- This, of course, remains the very balance that the new covenant requires as well (cf. Eph 2: 8 – 10; James 1: 27; 2: 18).
- Love God, love your neighbor
- What God wanted from Israel and Judah is in a general sense the same as what he wants

from us. The Prophetic Books can serve constantly as reminders to us of God’s determination to enforce his covenant.

- For those who obey the stipulations of the new covenant (loving God and loving one’s neighbor), the final, eternal result will be blessing (no matter what the troubles of this world)
- For those who disobey, the only result is an eternal curse, removal not just from the land, but the presence of God.”

Fee, Gordon D.; Fee, Gordon D.; Stuart, Douglas; Stuart, Douglas (2014-06-24). How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: Fourth Edition (p. 211). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

### **From them we learn trust in God and his Word**

- Through prophets and history see thousands of years of how God worked
- Lots for us today in the New Testament
- Same God can be trusted
- What he promises for us in the future in the New Testament will as surely come to pass for us as did for the prophets
- But also what he says will be the fate of the wicked will happen

### **Final Applications**

- When you read a book of the prophets, look up background, setting what is happening in that historical time\*\*\*WE will be doing that in coming podcasts
- Overall challenge—how you live matters
- God’s judgement does not always mean hard times, quite often just the opposite
- He allows prosperity to see how we react
- Judgement is coming, we are warned
- Anyone can repent of anything
- For the believer in Jesus--all will be well . . . . .
- As the last verse of the book of Obadiah says, “and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s”