

Understanding the Old Testament Prophets

I. Encountering the prophets

- A. What is a “prophet”?—Num.12:6
- B. The purpose of prophets—1 Cor. 14:3
- C. Proof of a prophet—Deut.18:21-22/ 13:1-3/ 1 John 4:1-4
- D. The purpose of prediction—John 13:19/14:29

II. Why so difficult?

- A. Reference to obscure historical events
- B. Poetic imagery—Joel 3:18/ Ezek. 28:12-14; 31:3, 6, 9/ Isa.30:26; 22:23-25
- C. Apocalyptic language & visions—Isa.13:10; 34:4, 8-10/ Ezek.38:22/Zech.14:12
- D. Use of hyperbole—Isa.64:6-7/ Jer.25:33; 33:22/ Obad.4
- E. Spiritualized usage—Isa.28:16/ Micah 4:1-4/Zech.2:4-5
- F. Acted-out parables—Isa.20:1-6/ Jer.27:2ff/ Ezek. 4 & 5/ Zech.11:4-16
- G. Typological usage—Hos.11:1/ Mic.7:19/ Isa.11:15
- H. Messianic merging

III. Understanding the prophetic books

A. The New Testament as code-breaker—1 Peter 1:10-12/ 2 Cor.3:14/ Luke 24:45

B. Recognizing recurring imagery

1. Anthropomorphisms and animal images—Isa.55:12/ Jer.6:2
2. Agricultural images: vineyard, trees, desert transformation—Mic.7:1/ Jer.11:16/ Isa.32:15; 35:1
3. Images of divine wrath: unquenchable fire, darkness, seismic & cosmic disruption
4. Rivers and water—Joel 3:18/ Ezek.47:1/ Zech.14:8
5. The Exodus, the highway and gathering from the nations—Isa.11:11, 15-16/ Mic.7:15, 19

C. Recognizing recurring themes

1. God’s righteousness and sovereignty
2. God’s expectations
3. God’s complaint—covenant violation: primarily idolatry and injustice
4. God’s threat of judgment: usually invasion and conquest
5. God’s call to repent
6. Rescue of the remnant from impending peril
7. Ultimate salvation in the messianic kingdom

D. What the New Testament tells us about the Messianic Age (see chart on reverse side)