

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE FOR ALL ITS WORTH

CHAPTER 10 – THE PROPHETS:
ENFORCING THE COVENANT IN ISRAEL

THE MEANING OF PROPHECY

- Prophecy is assumed to be a “foretelling or prediction of what is to come.”
- We overemphasize our future, rather than the prophet’s future.

THE MEANING OF PROPHECY

- Statistically, the prophecies break out as follows:
 - Over 92% of the prophecies are focused on Israel's immediate future
 - Less than 2% are messianic
 - Less than 5% are about the New Covenant age
 - Less than 1% concerns still future events

THE PROPHETS AS SPOKESPERSONS

- The prophets were not future tellers, they were messengers of God to their own people
- We hear much more *about* prophets than we do *from* the prophets
- Even Elijah and Elisha are known about not from

THE PROPHETS AS SPOKESPERSONS

- The writing and collecting of oracles are difficult to understand
- They were likely not intended to be a full reading, but rather a collection, specifically within the major prophets

THE PROBLEM OF HISTORY

- We sit at a great historical distance
- We are far removed from the religious, historical, and cultural life of ancient Israel
- This makes it difficult for us to know what the prophets were referring to and why

THE FUNCTION OF PROPHECY

- The prophets were covenant enforcement mediators
- The prophets' message was not their own but God's
- The prophets were God's direct representatives

THE FUNCTION OF PROPHECY

- The prophets' message was not original
- The curses and blessings had already been established and the prophets were merely reminding the people of the ramifications of their actions.

THE EXEGETICAL TASK

- The books of the prophets require outside help
 - Bible Dictionaries
 - Commentaries
 - Bible Handbook – Halley's or MacArthur

THE EXEGETICAL TASK

- Historical Context

- Refers to two aspects:

- The actual point of history (Larger Context)

- The context of the actual words (Specific Context)

THE EXEGETICAL TASK

- Larger Context

- Why were all 16 books written within a narrow window of time (760 BC – 460 BC)?
- There was a need for *covenant enforcement mediation* based on 3 characteristics of the time

THE EXEGETICAL TASK

- Need for Covenant Enforcement Mediation
 - Unprecedented political, military, economic, and social upheaval
 - Unprecedented levels of religious unfaithfulness
 - Unprecedented shifts of boundaries and power

THE EXEGETICAL TASK

- Need for Covenant Enforcement Mediation
 - In ~930 BC, Israel was fractured into a Northern (Israel or Ephraim) and Southern (Judah) tribe
 - Ephraim was defeated in 722 BC by Assyria
 - Judah devolved into sinfulness and was destroyed in 586 BC – Most focus on Judah and the rise of Babylon

THE EXEGETICAL TASK

- Specific Context

- Each prophecy was set in a specific subset of the greater history and was directed towards a specific event or group of people

THE EXEGETICAL TASK

- Forms of Prophetic Utterance
 - The Lawsuit – God charging Israel
 - The Woe – Announcement and Prediction of disaster
 - The Promise – “Salvation Oracles” declaring blessing
 - The Enactment Prophecy – Acting out events
 - The Messenger Speech – “The Lord says...”

HERMENEUTICAL SUGGESTIONS

- Prophecy as Foreteller of the Future
 - They did foretell the future, but the future is now past.
 - Ezekiel 25-39 – The vast majority of these prophecies were fulfilled within decades

HERMENEUTICAL SUGGESTIONS

- Prophecy as Foreteller of the Future
 - Often, we are so interested in the end times, that we make Scripture say what we want rather than hearing what God intended to say
 - This is not to say that there are not eschatological overtones, but the key points were near term

HERMENEUTICAL SUGGESTIONS

- Prophecy and Second Meanings
 - We see the *sensus plenior* but this is clear through inspired writings.
 - It is not our right to determine the second meaning as we are not inspired authors of Scripture.

HOMEWORK

- Read Chapter 10
- Read Ezekiel 37:1-14 and exegete and interpret
- Read Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20:1-13
- Compare those to 1 Corinthians 10:4 (*sensus plenior*)

HERMENEUTICAL SUGGESTIONS

- Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy
 - The underlining intention is still the same today
 - Malachi 4:6 – “He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”

HOMework

- Read Chapter 11
- Pick your favorite Psalm and exegete it
 - What type is it?
 - What is the context?
 - What does it mean for us?