

Introduction

I. Who Are The Prophets?

- A. A “Prophet” Was A Spokesman For Another, (Ex 7:1; 4:16)
 - a. Literally the word means “to boil up like a fountain”. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit a prophet was the spokesman of God.
 - i. Deut 18:15-22 ~ God’s prophet spoke God’s words.
 - ii. Heb1:1 ~ God spoke to fathers by the prophets.
 - iii. 2 Pet 1:21 ~ They spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Other terms used of prophets.
 - i. Seer ~ 1Sam 9:9
 - ii. Man of God ~ 1Sam 9:6; 1Kgs 17:18
 - iii. Servant of God ~ 1Kgs 18:36; 1Chron 6:49
 - iv. Messenger (angel) ~ Is 42:19
 - v. Watchman ~ Ezek 3:17; 33:7
 - c. A prophet was required by God to speak the words he was given. Ezek 3:16-21
 - d. Prophets also foretold of future events. This was one of the proofs of their inspiration ~ Is 42:9; Deut 18:21-22
- B. Numerous Figures Are Called Prophets
 - a. Abraham ~ Gen 20:7
 - b. Moses ~ Deut 18:15-18; 34:10
 - c. Miriam ~ Ex 15:20
 - d. Deborah ~ Judges 4:4
 - e. Samuel was seen as the beginning of prophetic age ~ Acts 3:24; 1Sam 3:1
 - f. There are numerous unnamed prophets ~ i.e 1Sam 10:5-13; 1Sam 19:18-24; 1Kgs 13:1, 18:13
 - g. Many oral prophets such as Nathan (2Sam 12:1), Elijah (1 Kgs 17), Micaiah (1Kgs 22:7), Elisha (2Kgs 2), Gad (2Sam 24:11), Ahijah (1Kgs 11:29), Shemaiah (1Kgs 12:21-24), Jehu (1Kgs 16:1-7), Elieze (2Chr 20:37), and others
 - h. The literary prophets ~ Isaiah – Malachi (16 authors of 17 books)

II. How Are The Prophetic Books Classified?

- A. The Jews Had Two Classes Of Prophetic Books
 - a. The earlier prophets ~ Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
 - b. The later prophets ~ Which was broken into two parts
 - i. Greater prophets ~ Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial
 - ii. Lesser prophets ~ also referred to as “The Book of The Twelve”. According to rabbinical tradition these were put into one book to prevent any from being lost.
- B. We Usually Classify These As “Major” And “Minor” Prophets

- a. The terms major and minor have no reference to chronology or importance simply their relative size. In fact the dates and prophets overlap and are sometimes contemporaries.
- b. Each of the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekial are longer than all twelve of the minor prophets put together.

III. How Can We Understand Their Message?

A. Some Things To Keep In Mind As One Studies

- a. Seek To understand the political, moral, social and religious conditions at the time the prophecy was delivered.
 - i. First try to understand what it meant to the people it was delivered to.
 - ii. Then make application to ourselves carefully. The New Testament does this often for us, but we must avoid pure speculation when making application.
- b. Try to understand what repentance God wanted from the people.
- c. Understand the hope God gives them, if they will repent and follow Him. In most cases their hope will be the coming King and His kingdom. Acts 26:4-7; 28:20

B. Some Of The Great Themes Developed By The Prophets

- a. Holiness of God
- b. Sovereignty of God
- c. Dependability of God's Word
- d. Sin
- e. Repentance
- f. Praise & Thanksgiving To God

Recommended Study Books:

A Commentary On The Minor Prophets, by Homer Hailey, Baker Book House

Commentary On The Old Testament, by C.F. Keil & F. Delitzch, Hendrickson Publishers Inc.

Old Testament Survey Series: The Minor Prophets, by James E. Smith, College Press Publishing Company

The Minor Prophets, A Study Workbook For Teachers and Students, by Robert Harkrider, Norris Book Company

Introduction Questions

1. What is the difference between literary and oral prophets?
2. What is the difference between the Major prophets and the Minor prophets?
3. What was the difference between a priest and a prophet?
4. What was the difference between a judge and a prophet?
5. What were the general conditions during the age of the prophets?