

Lesson #18  
How To Read the Bible  
The Prophets

Reading the biblical prophets can be confusing. But there is so much to discover when we learn to read these books with attention and context.

They spoke some about the future but real role is to talk ON BEHALF OF GOD!

Very concerned about the mutual partnership between God and the Israelites.

They are representatives of God's character TO THE NATIONS!

Leaders, Kings and Priests led the people astray.

They remind people of partnership (Covenant) in 3 ways.

1. Accuse people for violating covenant e.g. idolatry and alliances.
2. Repent, but the people refused to repent.
3. Announced consequences i.e. the Day of the Lord. Used cosmic imagery.

There are 15 Prophetic books divided into Major and Minor prophets.

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Bible Project Book Overview  
Isaiah 1-39

The book of Isaiah is filled with sobering accounts of Israel's sin and rebellion and warnings of their coming judgement. But along with warnings, Isaiah also offers a message of hope, a suffering servant, a coming Messiah who would come to establish God's Kingdom on earth and create a new Jerusalem.

Isaiah lived in Jerusalem in latter half of Israel's Kingdom.

Focused on leaders of Jerusalem and Judah.

Spoke words of judgment to corrupt leaders.

Their rebellion against God's covenant will come at a great cost!

Judgement combined with message of hope. God would fulfill promises and send a King through David's line. (2 Sam. 7; Exodus 19 and Gen. 12)

The book has complex literary design. There are three large sections:

1. Ch. 1-12, 13-27, 28-39 are Judgements.
2. After chapters is the Exile.
3. Ch. 40-66 – After EXILE there is hope.

1. Chapter 1-12 Judgement and Hope for Jerusalem

- a. Leaders idolatry etc.
  - i. God uses nations to conquer.
    1. Purifying fire.
  - ii. Will produce a new Jerusalem.
    1. All nations come to a New Jerusalem.
  - iii. Justice and peace for all nations.
- b. Ch. 6 Vision of God on the Throne.
  - i. God is Holy but people are corrupt.
    1. Burning coal to purify so he can speak on God's behalf.
    2. People don't listen but he continues to preach!
- c. Ch. 7-12 Isaiah confronts Ahaz.
  - i. Assyria will chop down Israel.
  - ii. God will send new King, Immanuel.
    1. God with us.
    2. New shoot from the old stump i.e. destroyed Israel.
  - iii. King from line of David.

2. Chapter 13-27 God's judgement.

- a. Fall of Babylon and Assyria
- b. List of Nations that God will judge. Ch. 13-23.
- c. Ch. 24-27 Tale of two cities.
  - i. Lofty evil City
  - ii. Will be replaced by new Jerusalem.
- d. Ch. 28-39 Rise and Fall of Jerusalem.
  - i. Ch. 28-35 Accuse Jerusalem's leaders of turning to Egypt for protection.
  - ii. Only trust in God with repentance can save Israel.

iii. Ch. 36-38 The Rise of Hezekiah

1. Defeats Assyrian Army by divine deliverance i.e. faith.

iv. Ch. 39 Hezekiah's fall by hosting delegation from Babylon.

v. 100 years later Babylon destroys Israel.

Isaiah  
Chapters 40-66

Chapters 40-66 explores the great hope of a new Jerusalem.

1. Ch. 40-48 Announce Hope and comfort for Israel.
  - a. Ch. 40 Babylonian captivity is predicted to be over. Judgement is done.
    - i. Return and rebuild.
  - b. Isaiah writing in the past but his scrolls were preserved. When time and events completed i.e. future, proves he was a true prophet.
    - i. His disciples also added to the writings.
  - c. The future HOPE has come!
  - d. Israel becomes God's servant.
    - i. Israel rejects their role to nations..
    - ii. Say that God is ignoring their cause.
      1. Exile caused them to lose faith in God. Not so powerful.
  - e. Ch. 41-47 Trial scene with God on trial.
    - i. Exile is not neglect but judgement.
    - ii. It was for Israel's benefit. Cyrus destroys Babylon and sends people of Israel back to Israel to fulfill Isaiah's words.
    - iii. God is King of all nations, not the idols of those nations.
  - f. Ch. 48 Israel is still rebellious.
    - i. God rejects them.
    - ii. God still intends to BLESS all the NATIONS.
    - iii. God will do a NEW thing. Isaiah 49:2.
  - g. Ch. 49-55 The Servant Fulfills God's Mission.
    - i. He will do what Israel failed to do.
    - ii. Servant is now refers to "Israel".
    - iii. Be a light to the nations. Isaiah 49:6
  - h. Servant brings God's Kingdom by dying.
    - i. Dying on behalf of Israel/People.

- ii. Makes people righteous.
- i. Ch. 54-55 Two ways to respond to Servant.
  - i. Humility – Becomes the Holy “seed”.
  - ii. The Wicked resist and reject the Servant.
- j. Ch. 56-66 The Servants inherit God’s Kingdom.
  - i. 3 beautiful poems describing how the Spirit empowered Servant is now announcing Good News to the poor.
  - ii. Re-affirms all the promises of hope from the beginning of the book.
  - iii. New Jerusalem is a blessing to the nations.
- k. God will bring justice to wicked who pollute the world.
- l. Those that repent will inherit the New Jerusalem i.e. New Creation. No more death and suffering. Rev. 21:4
  - i. All nations are invited to the New Kingdom.