

He Gave Us Prophets

RESOURCES

STUDY GUIDES BY SECTION



HE GAVE US PROPHETS
STUDY GUIDE 1
Lesson 1: Essential Hermeneutical Perspectives

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Our Confusion

A. Sources of confusion

1. Prophetic Books
2. The Church

B. Results of Confusion

1. Victimization
2. Apathy

II. Prophet's Experience

A. Mental State

B. Inspiration

1. Mechanical Inspiration
2. Organic Inspiration

C. Comprehension

III. Original Meaning

A. Popular Exegesis

1. Atomistic
2. Ahistorical

B. Proper Exegesis

1. Literary Context

2. Historical Context

IV. New Testament Perspectives

A. Authority

1. Prophetic Scriptures
2. Prophetic Intentions

B. Application

1. Prophetic Expectations
2. Prophetic Fulfillments

Summary

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In understanding the prophets, what are the two main sources of our confusion?
2. What are the results of this confusion? What should we do in response to this confusion?
3. What was the true mental state of the Old Testament prophets?
4. Contrast the two outlooks on prophetic inspiration mentioned in the lesson.
5. Describe the level of understanding that prophets had regarding their own prophecies.
6. Contrast the two approaches to exegesis mentioned in the lesson.
7. What are the two characteristics of proper exegesis?
8. How does popular exegesis hinder us as we seek to understand the original meaning of prophecy? How does proper exegesis help us?
9. How did Jesus and the apostles affirm the authority of Old Testament prophets? What does Matthew 5:17 teach us about Jesus' view?
10. How did Jesus and his followers apply Old Testament prophecies to events happening in their day?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. Using an Old Testament prophecy as an example, explain how popular exegesis of that prophecy can lead to misunderstanding and problems, and how proper exegesis can lead to understanding and useful application.
2. In light of the importance of original meaning, what process should we follow in order to apply Old Testament prophecy to events in our day?

3. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?

4. In order to apply the teachings of these lessons, we will do an analysis of Isaiah 11:1. For this lesson, read the verse and its surrounding context. a) Write down some errors that people might make if they interpreted this verse in an "atomistic" way or in an "ahistorical" way. b) Then write down what you can learn about the literary context and the historical context.

HE GAVE US PROPHETS
STUDY GUIDE 2
Lesson 2: A Prophet's Job

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Job Titles

- A. Primary Term
- B. Secondary Terms

II. Job Transitions

- A. Pre-Monarchy
- B. Monarchy
- C. Exile
- D. Post-Exile

III. Job Expectations

- A. Popular Models
 - 1. Medium/Shaman
 - 2. Fortune Teller
- B. Covenant Model
 - 1. Past Understandings
 - 2. Contemporary Understandings

Summary

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the Greek work from which we get the English word "prophet"? This term can have two meanings. What are they?
2. What is the most common Hebrew word in the Old Testament translated "prophet? What is its basic meaning?
3. Note other secondary Hebrew words for "prophet" and indicate their meaning.
4. What were the characteristics of the prophet's job before the monarchy?

5. What were the characteristics of the prophet's job during the monarchy?
6. What were the characteristics of the prophet's job during the exile?
7. What were the characteristics of the prophet's job after the exile?
8. In what ways did prophecy become more or less prominent and formal as the institution of the monarchy rose and fell?
9. Describe two popular ways that interpreters of the Bible have thought about the job of the prophet. How have these ways of thinking impacted their understanding of prophecy?
10. What is the "covenant model" for understanding a prophet's job? Why is this model more helpful than others?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. By studying the titles of prophets, how has your understanding of a prophet's job broadened?
2. How do ancient Near-Eastern treaties help us understand God's relationship with Israel?
3. How does Isaiah 6 illustrate the covenant role of a prophet?
4. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?
5. Read Isaiah 53 in your Bible, and write a list of the prophecies that refer to Jesus.
6. Continue the analysis of Isaiah 11:1. Does this prophecy come from before the monarchy, during the monarchy, during the exile, or after the exile? What was the prophet's job at this time? How does this affect your interpretation of the verse?
7. There is much debate today regarding the continuation or cessation of miraculous spiritual gifts since the time of the New Testament. Some people believe all the same gifts occur today, just like they did in the Bible times. Others believe that many gifts have totally ceased. Some are concerned that if revelatory gifts such as prophecy still occurred today, it might mean there is new revelation, beyond what we have in Scripture. If we believe that the canon is now closed, there can be no new revelation for the Church. Vern Poythress addresses this issue in the article, "Modern Spiritual Gifts as Analogous to Apostolic Gifts: Affirming Extraordinary Works of the Spirit Within Cessationist Theology"

His argument is as follows:

While some kinds of "visions" and "prophecies" may occur today, they are not inspired, because the canon of the Bible is complete.

There is a parallel with modern preaching, as compared to apostolic preaching. While apostolic preaching was inspired, modern preaching is not inspired, and it is authoritative only when it is based on the Scriptures.

In a similar way, any modern "visions" or "prophecies" are not inspired, and are authoritative only when based on the Scriptures.

[See: http://www.frame-poythress.org/poythress_articles/1996Modern.htm]

Do you agree? Why or why not? Explain your response to his position.

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STUDY GUIDE 3
Lesson 3: People of the Covenant

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Humanity in Covenant

A. Central Concerns

1. Adam

2. Noah

B. Prophet's Dependence

1. Sins of the Nations

2. Redemption for the Nations

II. Israel in Covenant

A. Abraham

1. Central Concerns

2. Prophet's Dependence

B. Moses

1. Central Concerns

2. Prophet's Dependence

C. David

1. Central Concerns

2. Prophet's Dependence

D. The New Covenant

III. Salvation in Covenant

A. Outside Covenant

B. Visible Covenant

C. Invisible Covenant

Summary

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. List in the proper order the five key people from the Old Testament with whom God made covenants.
2. What are the universal covenants?
3. To whom did the prophets especially address their messages?
4. Describe the central concerns and the prophets' dependence upon the covenant with Abraham.
5. Describe the central concerns and the prophets' dependence upon the covenant with Moses.
6. Describe the central concerns and the prophets' dependence upon the covenant with David.
7. How were the Old Testament prophecies related to the new covenant?
8. Describe the category of those who were outside the covenant community.
9. Describe the category of those who were within the visible covenant community.
10. Describe the category of those who were within the invisible covenant community.
11. What is the "visible" Church?
12. What did they mean when the prophets used terms like the "elect"?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. Why is it important to recognize the distinctions Old Testament prophets made among people with regards to salvation and covenant status? How do the three distinctions of salvation in relation to covenant enhance your understanding of the Church today?
2. How were the promises that were given to God's people in the Old Testament realized in the new covenant? How should this understanding affect your view of Scripture as a whole?
3. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?
4. Continue the analysis of Isaiah 11:1. a) Write down the period of the covenant at the time of this prophecy. In other words, with whom had God made the covenant? b) Who were the people of the covenant at this time? What was their condition? c) To whom would the promises of this verse apply today?

HE GAVE US PROPHETS
STUDY GUIDE 4
Lesson 4: Dynamics of the Covenant

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Covenant Ideals

A. Covenant Structures

B. Prophetic Ministry

II. Covenant Judgment

A. Types of Judgment

1. Judgment in Nature

2. Judgment in Warfare

B. Process of Judgment

1. Divine Patience

2. Increasing Severity

3. Particular Climax

III. Covenant Blessing

A. Types of Blessings

1. Blessing in Nature

2. Blessing in Warfare

B. Process of Blessings

1. Grace

2. Degrees

3. Climax

Summary

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the two fundamental aspects of the covenants God makes with Israel?
2. Summarize the basic structures of the covenant between God and Israel.
3. What are the two main ways covenant judgment was manifest in the Old Testament?
4. How did the role of prophets relate to the basic structures of God's covenant with Israel?
5. Indicate the three steps in the process of divine judgment in the correct order.
6. What role did the prophets play in this system of judgment?
7. Describe the two main types of covenant blessing.
8. What role did the prophets play in this system of blessing?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. According to Deuteronomy 29:25-28, God's people can provoke his anger. What are some ways that modern Christians might be angering God?
2. Faithful Israelites knew that God's blessings depended on his mercy and forgiveness, not on human merit. In what ways do modern Christians erroneously seek to merit God's blessings? How might this affect their relationship with God? What practical steps can they take to begin to rely on God's mercy and forgiveness?
3. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?
4. Continue the study of Isaiah 11:1. Can you identify any results of judgments in this verse? Identify also the blessings that are prophesied.

HE GAVE US PROPHETS
STUDY GUIDE 5
Lesson 5: Historical Analysis of Prophecy

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Early Monarchy

A. Major Events

1. United Kingdom
2. Divided Kingdom

B. Prophetic Ministries

1. Covenant Ideals
2. Divided Kingdom

II. Assyrian Judgment

A. Major Events

1. Syrian-Israelite Coalition
2. Fall of Samaria
3. Sennacherib Invasion

B. Prophetic Ministries

1. Jonah
2. Hosea
3. Amos
4. Micah
5. Nahum
6. Isaiah

III. Babylonian Judgment

A. Major Events

1. First Incursion

2. Second Incursion

3. Third Incursion

B. Prophetic Ministries

1. Jeremiah

2. Zephaniah

3. Joel

4. Obadiah

5. Habakkuk

6. Ezekiel

7. Daniel

IV. Restoration Period

A. Major Events

1. Israelites return to the Land

2. Rebuilding of the Temple

3. Widespread apostasy

B. Prophetic Ministries

1. Haggai

2. Zechariah

3. Malachi

Summary

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When did prophecy become more prominent?
2. When did David become king?
3. Describe the major events of the kingdoms of David and Solomon.
4. What characterized the prophetic ministry during the early monarchy?
5. Describe the major events of the Assyrian judgment.

6. What characterized the prophetic ministry during the Assyrian judgment?
7. Which prophets ministered in the northern kingdom of Israel during the Assyrian judgment?
8. Which prophet ministered in the southern kingdom of Judah after the Assyrian judgment, but addressed his message to Assyria?
9. Which prophet went to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, to prophesy?
10. Describe the major events of the Babylonian judgment.
11. In what year did Babylon make their final incursion into Judah and capture Jerusalem?
12. What characterized the prophetic ministry during the Babylonian judgment?
13. Describe the major events that took place during the restoration period.
14. Which prophets ministered in Judah during the restoration period?
15. What characterized the prophetic ministries during the restoration period?
16. What were two of the common sins that the prophets of the restoration were called to denounce?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. Jonah's place of ministry was unique among the prophets. He was called to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. To Jonah's dismay, the people repented. What does Jonah's ministry reveal to you about God's fame throughout the nations? What does Jonah's ministry reveal to you about your enemies?
2. The prophet Isaiah called for trust in the Lord even during periods of judgment. How did Isaiah attempt to persuade his audience? What can modern Christians learn from Isaiah's strategy?
3. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?
4. Continue the study of Isaiah 11:1. Try to identify the following: "the stump of Jesse," "the shoot" that comes from the stump, the "branch," the "roots," and the "fruit." For now, think only of the historical identity during the Old Testament.

HE GAVE US PROPHETS
STUDY GUIDE 6
Lesson 6: Literary Analysis of the Prophets

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Historical Narratives

A. Types of Narratives

1. Biography
2. Autobiography

B. Content of Narratives

1. Prophetic Call
2. Symbolic Actions
3. Vision Reports
4. Historical Backgrounds

II. Communication with God

A. Prayers of Lament

1. Sins of People
2. Judgment

B. Prayers of Praise

1. Judgment
2. Blessings

III. Communication with People

A. Speeches of Judgment

1. Judgment Oracles
2. Woe Oracles
3. Lawsuits

B. Speeches of Blessing

1. Judgment of Enemies

2. Oracles of Blessing

C. Mixed Speeches

1. Judgment-Salvation Oracles

2. Call to Repentance

3. Call to War

4. Prophetic Disputation

5. Parables

Summary

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the three general kinds of content in the prophetic books?
2. Describe the variety of contents found in Old Testament prophetic narratives.
3. Describe the meaning of each symbolic action in Jeremiah.
4. How are historical narratives used within Old Testament prophetic writings?
5. Habakkuk talked to God about two big problems. What were they?
6. What do prayers of lament look like, and how did the prophets use them?
7. What do prayers of praise look like, and how did the prophets use them?
8. What do speeches of judgment look like, and how did the prophets use them?
9. What kinds of judgment were pronounced by the prophets?
10. What do we mean when we say that God is immutable?
11. What do speeches of blessing look like, and how did the prophets use them?
12. What are mixed speeches, and how did the prophets use them?
13. In general, why did prophets prophesy?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. When was the last time you spent time lamenting to God? What type of lament did you offer? How often do you interpret suffering in your life as a result of divine judgment? Are there other reasons that Christians suffer? What can we learn from the ways the prophets lamented that might incline God to respond to us positively?

2. The theme of praise for judgment appears many places in the prophetic writings. Is it appropriate for Christians to praise God for his judgments? Why or why not?

3. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?

4. Read Jeremiah 42:1-43:7.

This passage gives us a picture of the spiritual condition of the remnant that was in Jerusalem after the return from Babylonian captivity.

What did they ask Jeremiah to consult of the Lord? (42:1-6)

What was the Lord's answer to Jeremiah? (42:7-22)

How did the people respond to Jeremiah's report of the Lord's answer? (43:1-7)

What can we learn from this episode at the end of the Old Testament history?

How does this episode point to the need for Jesus to come?

5. Continue the analysis of Isaiah 11:1. Applying the teachings of the lesson, how would you describe the kind of prophecy contained in this verse?

HE GAVE US PROPHETS
STUDY GUIDE 7
Lesson 7: The Purpose of Predictions

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Divine Sovereignty

A. God's Immutability

1. God's Character
2. Covenant Promises
3. Eternal Counsel

B. God's Providence

II. Predictions & Contingencies

A. General Patterns

1. Observation
2. Explanation
3. Elaboration

B. Specific Examples

1. Prediction of Shemaiah
2. Prediction of Jonah

III. Certainty of Predictions

A. Conditional Predictions

B. Unqualified Predictions

C. Confirmed Predictions

1. Words
2. Signs

D. Sworn Predictions

IV. Goals of Predictions

A. Popular Perspectives

B. Correct Perspectives

1. "Who Knows?" Reaction

2. Twofold Reaction

Summary

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do we mean when we say that God immutable?
2. What do we mean when we say that God governs creation through providence?
3. In what ways does God interact with secondary causes, or creaturely causes?
4. How are predictions affected by historical contingencies?
5. According to Dr. Pratt, what was the meaning of the symbolism in Jeremiah 18, where the potter worked with the lump of clay, shaping it as seemed best to him?
6. What do the examples of Shemaiah and Jonah imply about the relationship between predictions and historical contingencies?
7. Describe the four strategies prophecies use to communicate God's level of determination to fulfill predictions.
8. What are the mistaken popular perspectives on the purpose of Old Testament predictions?
9. What was the purpose of Old Testament predictions?
10. What is the significance of the "who knows?" reaction?
11. What reactions did Old Testament prophets hope to inspire in their original audiences?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. How does it make you feel that your choices and reactions to God affect the direction of history?
2. Knowing that prayer can affect the way prophecy is fulfilled, what new kinds of prayers might Christians be motivated to pray?
3. How does the idea that prophecy is fundamentally conditional make you feel? Does it reassure you? Does it frighten you?
4. Does the conditionality of prophecy challenge anything else you believe?
5. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?

6. Continue the study of Isaiah 11:1. What do you think was the purpose of this prophecy at the time it was made? What was the message for the people who first heard it?

HE GAVE US PROPHETS
STUDY GUIDE 8
Lesson 8: Unfolding Eschatology

OUTLINE FOR TAKING NOTES

Introduction

I. Mosaic Eschatology

A. Covenant Cycles

B. Covenant Culmination

II. Early Prophetic Eschatology

A. Similarities to Moses

B. Additions to Moses

1. Kingship

2. Temple

3. Gentiles

III. Later Prophetic Eschatology

A. Jeremiah's Expectation

B. Daniel's Insight

C. Final Outlooks

1. Initial Hopes

2. Final Hopes

IV. New Testament Eschatology

A. Terminology

1. Gospel

2. Kingdom

3. Latter Days

B. Structure

1. John the Baptist

2. Jesus

C. Themes

1. Exile

2. Restoration

Summary

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe the cycles of blessing and cursing that Moses foresaw for God's people.
2. Describe Moses' view in which three stages of covenant life would eventually culminate in great blessing for God's faithful people.
3. In what ways was the early prophets' eschatology similar to Moses' eschatology?
4. In what ways did the early prophets' add to Moses' eschatology?
5. What was Jeremiah's expectation regarding the length of the exile, and how was this fulfilled?
6. What prophetic insight did Daniel give regarding the exile and restoration?
7. In the final outlooks of later prophetic eschatology, during the restoration period, what were the early and later hopes, and how did they differ?
8. Briefly describe the New Testament's terms "gospel," "kingdom," and "latter days," and explain how they relate to one another.
9. Describe the three stages of the restoration of the kingdom in the New Testament age.
10. How does the New Testament handle the theme of exile in the three stages of the kingdom?
11. How does the New Testament handle the theme of restoration in the three stages of the kingdom?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

1. How do covenant blessings and curses apply to believers today?
2. How might the behavior of the modern church affect the way the kingdom comes in the future?
3. How should the understanding that we are living during the continuation of the kingdom of God affect the way modern Christians read Scripture and apply it to their lives?
4. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this course? Why?
5. Before studying this course, what was your attitude regarding the prophetic books of the Bible? These lessons have changed your attitude in any way? Explain how.

6. Do you feel that some of the themes from the prophetic books have personal application for you? Which ones?
7. Did this course change your understanding of prophecy in any way? Explain how.
8. Did this course change your attitude regarding prayer? Explain how.
9. Write down any changes that you plan to make in your life as a result of studying this course.
10. Finish the analysis of Isaiah 11:1. a) Write down the different stages of its fulfillment. b) Write down what this means to God's people today? How would you make a contemporary application of the verse?
11. Optional: In order to help you feel the joy of seeing how Christ fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament, we suggest that you find a video or an audio file of Handel's "Messiah," and that you listen to sections such as "Unto Us a Child is Born," noting the words. Identify biblical prophecies as you enjoy this wonderful musical piece.

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