

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

VOLUME 110, NUMBER 4

THE PROPHETS: GOD’S SPOKESMEN

Ross Haffner

What kind of man did it take to be chosen to be a spokesman for God? Out of 39 Old Testament books, 17 bear the name of a prophet. Apart from them, there are dozens of prophets who make appearances in the Biblical narrative who played their part in revealing the will of God. Despite the honor of the position, ordinary men were chosen to leave their current circumstances to become men of God, ready to deliver His message no matter how unpopular it sat with their contemporaries.

A prophet would often tell his hearers about future events because he spoke for God, who sees all of time all at the same time. But a prophet was so much more than that. He was a chosen spokesman to deliver the particular message God wanted a group of people to hear at a particular time. Often the message was about impending wrath from God in judgment of their wickedness (Jon. 3:4, Jer. 2-6). They had already received from Moses what wonderful blessings their faithfulness would produce for them, and the merciful forgiveness that was available to them, so when they departed from that law, they needed to understand that God would not allow their sin to go unpunished. The prophet would let them know they should repent and return to God who would receive them gladly.

Sometimes the prophets would look back on past faithlessness and remind the twelve tribes about the lessons learned to prepare them for a path forward. Ezekiel places the fault of the captivity at the feet of the shepherds (leaders) of the people in chapter thirty-four of his book but offers hope going forward through life brought to the valley of dry bones in chapter thirty-seven. In his day, Joshua

admonished the people to choose between the mistakes of the past and the prosperous path God had laid out for them (Josh. 24:14-15).

Prophets would often speak of things to come about which they could not have a full understanding. Consider the magnitude of Isaiah’s four messages about God’s servant (Isa. 42:1-7, 49:1-13, 50:4-11, 52:13-53:12) or the prophecy about an important child being born (Isa. 9:6). Also Jeremiah foretells the New Covenant and Zechariah mentions the triumphal entry and price for Jesus’ betrayal (Jer. 31:31-34, Zech. 9:9, 11:12-13). They did not fully

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

APRIL 2024

MY SERVANTS, THE PROPHETS (I)

| | |
|--|---|
| The Prophets: God’s Spokesmen ROSS HAFFNER..... | 1 |
| Why Study the Prophets? CODY WESTBROOK..... | 2 |
| Preaching <i>Like</i> The Prophets RONNIE SCHERFFIUS..... | 3 |
| Preaching <i>From</i> the Prophets KERRY CLARK..... | 5 |
| From the Director’s Desk TRENT KENNEDY..... | 8 |

FROM THE EDITOR:

WHY STUDY THE PROPHETS?

Cody Westbrook

There are 39 Old Testament books in your Bible. Each one inspired of God and full of great lessons and eternal truths which every child of God should learn and apply. Though it is no longer in force as law, it is there for our learning. As Romans 15:4 says, “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

The “writing prophets” make up 17 of the 39 Old Testament books. From shepherds to statesmen, the prophets were all unique men of God in their own right. But each one stood forth to proclaim God’s Word to humanity. We may be tempted to neglect a study of these books, supposing them to be irrelevant for our time, but we do so to our own peril. Wayne Jackson said,

The Bible student who neglects a study of the prophets does a great disservice to their own development of faith.. More study needs to be given to these ancient scribes of divine revelation and their literary productions. The prophets’ lives, including weaknesses and strengths, contain rich lessons from which so much can be learned (cf. Rom. 15:4) (Jackson, *The Prophets*).

To see the modern relevance of the prophets, one need look no further than the sin which they addressed. Doing so reveals that modern sins aren’t so modern after all. Amos vividly described the rampant greed and materialism in Israel. The righteous were sold for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes (Amos 2:6). The “cows of Bashan” - the wives of the rulers and the rich - were guilty of oppressing the poor, crushing the needy, and saying to their husbands “bring wine, let us drink!” (Amos 4:1). Isaiah pronounced woe on drinking alcohol (Isa. 5:11-12), Jeremiah condemned theft (Jer. 7:9-10), Hosea cried out against adultery and fornication (Hos. 4:14), and Micah decried the false prophets in the land (Mic. 3:11). Idolatry is still a

problem in our time and is a major point of emphasis in the prophets (Hos. 2:5-7; 13; 4:10-13; 13:2). People still embrace error (Amos 2:12; 5:10), struggle with spiritual indifference (Haggai), labor under corrupt justice officials (Mic. 2:1-2), and live under wicked government officials (Mic. 7:3). The prophets were called by God to address contemporary concerns in their day, but those concerns were not unique to their time only. They are still alive and well in 21st Century America.

The prophets did not only address concerns germane to their own time, they also spoke of things to come in the future. Chief among these future considerations is Messianic prophecy. More than 300 prophetic utterances of the Messiah can be found in Old Testament Scripture, many of which are found in the books of the prophets. These prophecies address the Messiah’s person, work, and Kingdom.

Of Christ the prophets foresaw...

- His virgin birth (Isa. 7:14).
- His place of birth (Mic. 5:2).
- His betrayal (Zech. 11:12-13).
- His death (Zech. 13:7; Isa. 53).
- His relation to David (Isa. 11:1ff).

Of the Christ’s Kingdom the prophets foresaw...

- It’s time of establishment (Dan. 2).
- It’s place of establishment (Isa. 2).
- The power that would signal its coming (Joel 2).
- It’s universal appeal and existence (Micah 4).

A proper understand of these, and many other, Messianic prophecies, is paramount to a proper understanding of the life and work of Christ as recorded in the New Testament. Failure to do so often results in false doctrine. Consider the doctrine of Premillennialism and its abuse of Kingdom prophecy as an example. As well as false ideas about Heaven which

stem, at least partially, from a misinterpretation of Isaiah's discussion of "new heavens and new earth" in Isaiah 65 and 66.

Why study the prophets? The question should really be, "Why not study the prophets?" The lives and work of these great men of God help us greatly in our desire to be the people God would have us to be

CW

PREACHING LIKE THE PROPHETS: THE EXAMPLE OF MACHAIAH

Ronnie Scherffius

What type of preaching is heard from our pulpits today? What is the character of the men who call themselves gospel preachers? Are they men of the book? Do they speak only "what the Lord saith" (1 Kings 22:14)? Do they stand in the counsel of God, turning those that hear to the way of the Lord (Jer. 23:21, 22)?

Encouraging the saints to endure grief, James pointed to the paragon of the prophets of old, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (Jas. 5:10). The Old Testament prophets lived exemplary lives, not only in patient endurance but also in righteous conduct and spiritual stamina. One of the more enduring examples is Micaiah.

Micaiah was an oral prophet, contemporary with Elijah and King Ahab of Israel. He is mentioned in only one event during the life of Ahab (1 Kings 22; 2 Chron. 18), but the impact of his presence on the prophetic stage established him as an example to all who would declare God's Word. From the inspired record (1 Kings 22:1-28), there are four lessons we can glean from the conflict between Micaiah and the infamous King.

Reputation. Micaiah had a reputation as a *man of God*.

And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord

today. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so (1 Kings 22:5-8).

Our reputations are established by our conversation and comportment. Micaiah distinguished himself from the false prophets and established himself as a man of God by his courageous conduct and soundness of speech.

Truth. Micaiah spoke only the Word of the Lord.

And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak (1 Kings 22:13-14).

Though encouraged to "tailor his tongue" to the accepted error of the false prophets, Micaiah stood resolute. He boldly announced that only the truth of God would flow from his mouth.

Skill to expose error. Micaiah turned the words of the false prophets against their purpose.

So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord (1 Kings 22:15-16)?

One can hear the words of the man of God dripping with sarcasm.

False prophet: "Please come and echo our words to the king. For he knows your words are from God.

Micaiah: "Of course, I will come and speak the truth."

Fourth Quarter Class Schedule/April 2024 - July 2024

Southwest School of Bible Studies



Chapel @ 8:30 AM / Lunch @ 11:50-1:00

| Time | First Year | Time | Second Year |
|------------------|--|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| Monday | | | |
| 9:00-9:50 | Prov., Eccl., & S.of S.- Trent Kennedy | 9:00-9:50 | Hebrew (Language)-Steven Lloyd |
| 10:00-10:50 | Greek 1-Steven Lloyd | 10:00-10:50 | Personal Evangelism - Matt Gibson |
| 11:00-11:50 | 1, 2 Kings-Matt Gibson | 11:00-11:50 | Hebrews (the book)-Steven Lloyd |
| 1:00-2:20 | Christian Evidences-Matt Gibson | 1:00-2:20 | Minor Prophets 2-Clay Bond |
| 2:30-3:50 | Acts 2-Matt Gibson | 2:30-3:50 | Teaching Methods-Clay Bond |
| Tuesday | | | |
| 9:00-11:50 | Job-Ronnie Scherffius | 9:00-11:50 | Preaching Practicum 2 - Trent Kennedy |
| 1:00-3:50 | Galatians/Ephesians-Cody Westbrook | 1:00-3:50 | Restoration History- Ronny Scherffius |
| Wednesday | | | |
| 9:00-9:50 | Prov., Eccl., & S.of S.- Trent Kennedy | 9:00-9:50 | Hebrew (Language)-Steven Lloyd |
| 10:00-10:50 | Greek 1-Steven Lloyd | 10:00-10:50 | Personal Evangelism - Matt Gibson |
| 11:00-11:50 | 1, 2 Kings-Matt Gibson | 11:00-11:50 | Hebrews (the book)-Steven Lloyd |
| 1:00-2:20 | Christian Evidences-Matt Gibson | 1:00-2:20 | Minor Prophets 2-Clay Bond |
| 2:30-3:50 | Acts 2-Matt Gibson | 2:30-3:50 | Teaching Methods-Clay Bond |
| Thursday | | | |
| 9:00-11:50 | Messiahship-Wade Webster | 9:00-11:50 | 1, 2, 3 John-Trent Kennedy |
| 1:00-3:50 | Topical Preaching-Wade Webster | 1:00-3:50 | Revelation - Steven Lloyd |
| Friday | | | |
| 9:00-9:50 | Prov., Eccl., & S.of S.- Trent Kennedy | 9:00-9:50 | Hebrew (Language)-Steven Lloyd |
| 10:00-10:50 | Greek 1-Steven Lloyd | 10:00-10:50 | Personal Evangelism - Matt Gibson |
| 11:00-11:50 | 1, 2 Kings-Matt Gibson | 11:00-11:50 | Hebrews (the book)-Steven Lloyd |
| 1:00-3:50 | GSP | 1:00-3:50 | GSP |

See Academic Calendar for Special Events

Ahab: “Shall we go to the battle?”

Micaiah: “By all means, Ahab, go and prosper! Undoubtedly, the Lord is on your side!”

Micaiah skillfully took the “great swelling words” of Ahab’s “yes men” and used them, knowing that Ahab would demand the truth. Thus, Micaiah exposed the false prophets as frauds and pretenders.

Suffering. Micaiah spoke the truth of God, even to his own hurt (1 Kings 22:17-28).

And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king’s son; And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace. And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you (1 Kings 22:26-28).

Faced with threats and certain suffering, Micaiah refused to waver. Rather than soften his words, he suffered. He did not stumble at tribulation but stood with God. Micaiah sided with God, whatever the consequence.

What an excellent example Micaiah is for preachers today. Let us ever guard our reputation by speaking only the words of God. Let us strive to develop the skill to effectively defend the truth and expose error (1 Pet. 3:15). Let us stand boldly in the truth, even when threatened with punishment. Let us follow the example of Micaiah. Let us preach like the prophets.

CW



PREACHING FROM THE PROPHETS

Kerry Clark

Gospel preachers need to stand boldly as the apostles did and preach from the prophets. As more preachers are moving away from the simple preaching of God’s Truth and being turned to fables (2 Tim. 4:4); the preaching we draw from the prophets is both humbling and empowering. But the question we are considering is how does one preach from the prophets?

We need to look no further than the preaching recorded in the book of Acts to find the answer to our question. Acts Chapter Two is a text-book example of how the apostles preached. Notice from verse 14, “But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them...” Peter then quotes from Joel, David (Psalm 16), Samuel (2 Samuel 7), and David again (Psalm 110). In fact, it is difficult to determine exactly how many times Peter is quoting from the prophets in these verses, but rest assured, the apostles used the method we call “proof-texting.”

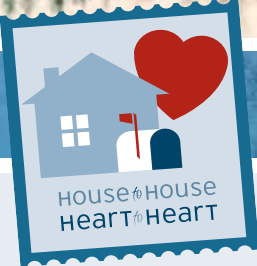
In Chapter Three, Peter reminds them “But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled” (verse 18). In Chapter Four, Peter quotes from Psalm 118:22-23. Acts Chapter Seven is an inspired history of Israel based on the writings of Moses and Solomon. Stephen ties many Old Testament verses together to give us the entire history of Israel in a matter of a few words.

The apostle Paul in Romans 3:10-18 quotes from so many different prophets in the Old Testament that it is difficult to list all his references.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.



What Must I Do to Be
Saved?



House to House Heart to Heart

One HUGE mailing. Three million homes.

We are inviting every church of Christ in the country to participate in the July issue of *House to House/Heart to Heart*. This year's big issue will address, "What Must I Do to Be Saved?" A Study of Acts 2:38.

Your congregation can reach a home in your community with a customized magazine for just 40¢ (which pays for customizing, printing, and mailing it for you). You pray and plan the follow up, and we will take care of everything else. This is perhaps the most important issue we have ever sent. Let's tell the people in your community what to do to be saved.

Please respond by May 25. Simply call Matt Wallin toll-free at 1-877-338-3397 or email Matt@housetohouse.com.



www.HousetoHouse.com

House to House / Heart to Heart is a work of the East Ridge church of Christ.

Another notable example of preaching from the prophets is found in the book of Hebrews. The first two chapters are filled with quotes from the Old Testament prophets. The writer begins with this statement,

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they (Heb. 1:1-4).

The entire book of Hebrews relies on making application of the Old Testament to the New Testament.

The book of Revelation contains four hundred and four verses of Scripture. At least two hundred and seventy-eight are references to the Old Testament.

So, we come by to the original question, how does one preach from the prophets today? This question has hopefully been answered. You look at the original context of what the prophet was teaching, you compare it to the fulfillment in the New Testament; then you make the application for our lives today. The prophets are deep, rich, breathtaking texts filled with meaning and application for us. Read the prophets, believe the prophets, and preach from a well which will never run dry!

CW

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

understand the reach that their message would ultimately have, whereas we can appreciate our all-knowing God and His plan of salvation He conceived before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

We do not need special individuals to fill these prophetic roles today because we have the completed word of God revealing the entirety of what we need to obey Him (1 Cor. 13:10). Revelation of God's will has been fully accomplished, but God's prophets lived in a time when that job was not yet finished. This means that when we proclaim

God's truth to the world we are similar to the prophets. However, we should not expect a new prophet in the future to show up and declare some previously unknown but all-important truth that "changes everything!"

The character of these men was important and often tested. Prophets had to be bold like Amos. Prophets had to represent God's character like Hosea. Prophets had to be humble and submissive like Habakkuk. Prophets had to trust God to take care of their needs like Elijah. Prophets had to be persistent almost to the point of stubbornness like Jeremiah. Prophets had to be brave like Nathan. Prophets had to find their place in uncomfortable surroundings like Daniel.

While these are specific attributes you would have wanted from anyone who would serve as a prophet of God, it is striking to note the differences in the men who served. Amos's preaching against the nations in the northern kingdom is very different from Daniel's prophesying about the coming Kingdom of God (the church) in Babylon from King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Sometimes we get a lot of narrative mixed with specific prophecies and object lessons like Jeremiah or Ezekiel and other times we have very short messages of communication between the prophet and God recorded for the people like Habakkuk. Some prophets are mostly known for the miracles they performed like Elisha and others perform no miracles but are just as impressive with their boldness in prophesying like Nathan. The bold judgment against Nineveh from Joel is a stark contrast to the relatively quiet praise of Simeon at the appearance of the Messiah.

While we are amazed to read of all that these prophets accomplished, we would do well to remember that they were ordinary people who were called by a great God to do great things. Jonah was certainly an imperfect vessel to carry God's message to the Assyrians, and all the prophets must have had their individual strengths, weaknesses, styles, and preferences. Regardless, God could use them all the same. While the work looks different in the context of the New Testament church, we should not fail to recognize that God still works through everyday people to save souls eternally. In that respect, our work is of greater importance.

A study of the prophets reminds us of the unique qualities of God's servants today. There is a beautiful oneness in the church through doctrine and fellowship (Eph. 4:1-6). Yet our differences make us able to cover a greater span of needs with our faithful service to the King.

CW



www.swsbs.edu

SOUTHWEST

SOUTHWEST SCHOOL OF BIBLE STUDIES

Southwest graduates serve as preachers, authors, campus directors, missionaries, and school leaders on five continents. Whatever your passion, with strong academics and hands-on training, our collegiate program will empower you to serve Christ and His church.

FACULTY

Trent Kennedy: Director
Steven Lloyd: Assoc. Dir.
Clay Bond
Matt Gibson
Carl McCann
Ronnie Scherffius
Cody Westbrook

- Two year full-time program for men and women
- Well-respected Bible faculty
- Verse-by-verse study of the entire Bible
- Training in expository preaching
- No tuition
- Living expense assistance available
- Studies in Biblical languages

“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”

From the Director's desk



Trent Kennedy
Director
SWSBS

The power of God is on full display in the work of the Prophets. Isaiah's prophecy of Cyrus (Isa. 44:24-45:7) demonstrates the foreknowledge of God and shows His power to perform His will in the governments of men. However, King Cyrus and his government pale in comparison to another King that Isaiah predicts. Isaiah describes a King (Isa. 9:7) Who would sit on David's throne and rule a spiritual kingdom. This King could be called "God" and described as "eternal" (Isa. 9:6). However, this King would take on the form of a man (Isa. 9:6). To make certain that the Israelites did not miss this coming King, Isaiah would prophesy specifically about Him saying,

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14).

There are four words in this verse that call for our consideration:

- "You" is plural and does not speak concerning King Ahaz but of all Judah and, by extension, the world. Note that in Matthew 1:21 Jesus would save "his people" from their sins.
- "Virgin" is a generic term that identifies a younger woman. However, the default meaning of this word is an "unmarried" woman whose virginity is then assumed (cf. Gen. 24:43). This case is sealed with the New Testament term "virgin" in Matthew 1:23.
- "Son" connects Isaiah 7:14 directly to Isaiah 9:6-7 and leaves no doubt that the "son" here is God, is eternal, and would be King on David's throne.
- "Immanuel" is interpreted in the text for the reader to demonstrate that the one born of a virgin would be God dwelling among His people. Matthew 1:23 shows that Isaiah's prophecy stands fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God.

Kings like Ahaz and Cyrus come and go. Meanwhile, the reign of the Messiah, King Jesus, has no end. This message (Isa. 52:7) is the glad tidings of good things because Zion would shout and all the messengers of God could echo: "Your God reigns!"

www.swcofc.org