

## D. The 17 Books of Prophecy

### 1. 5 Major Prophets (5 Books) 740 BC - 538 BC

#### Introduction

The major prophets are essentially in chronological order and cover a period of over 200 years of Jewish history starting with Isaiah about 20 years before the fall of Israel through Daniel who ministered to Judah during the Babylonian captivity. Three of these prophetic books were pre-exilic (**Isaiah** and **Jeremiah/ Lamentations**) and two were exilic (**Ezekiel** and **Daniel**). They are called “major” prophets because of the length and relative significance of their writings. The major prophets have great theological importance and reveal why God judged His people with the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. They also reveal God’s redemptive purpose for both Jews and Gentiles alike and His eternal plan which is being worked out in human history. The prophetic books record what God is looking for and expects from His people.

#### 1. Why Study Prophecy

The Study of Prophecy is important because:

- ï 20-25% of the Bible was prophecy when written.
- ï Prophecy demonstrates the faithfulness, sovereignty and supernatural power of God. **Isaiah 37:26-29. What is this demonstrating in the context of the passage? How can this encourage and comfort us in this day and age?**
- ï Prophecy encourages believers to have hope.
  - ï **It focuses on the faithfulness of God**
  - ï **It provides a purpose for all events both past and present**
- ï Prophecy motivates believers to godly living.
- ï Prophecy discloses God’s truth and the nature and consequences of sin, especially disobedience to God’s Word.
- ï Prophecy reveals God’s eternal plan and purpose.

*Old Testament Survey*

#### 2. Nature of God’s Prophets

A prophet is **one who announces** – a person designated by God to speak to men on behalf of God as God’s mouthpiece or spokesman.

Prophet. → **speaks the word of God to people in the power of God**

Characteristics of a **true prophet** (see **Dt. 18:14-22**)

There have always been false and true prophets. Scripture show us how to evaluate if a prophet is true or false. A true prophet:

- ï is called by God and speaks for God, i.e. Yahweh's words (see **Jer. 1:9-10**) (*see study note*)
- ï always had 100% of his prophecies come true
- ï needed no props because his prophecy was based on divine revelation
- ï always had his prophetic word confirmed — many times by miracles
- ï functioned in the power of the Spirit (see **Isa. 61:1**)
- ï was a man of consistent godly character

**3. Message of Prophet** → verbal    visual    written

While the message of the prophet might be in the form of

**-Drama**

**-Object lessons**

**-Acted out sermons**

It was basically two-fold — **condemnation** and **consolation**.

Prophecy is used in two senses:

Foretelling the future (*foresight*)

Telling forth the truth (*insight*)

Thus the prophet of God would speak forth the truth about

- ï **current spiritual conditions** and
- ï **coming significant events.**

In the process the prophet would:

a. **Proclaim moral/ethical truth** and expose sin.

Often prophecy was in the form of a **Warning**

**Jonah 3:4-5. 8-9 clarify.**

condemning sin calling for repentance

cautioning about disobedience

**The goal was to turn people away from sin and back to God.**

b. **Pronounce judgment** (emphasizing reaping/sowing and consequences of sin).

c. **Predict and Preview the future** (provide blessings and hope for comfort).

The prophet would:

ñ reveal God's word (message)

ñ predict the Messiah (Savior)

ñ preview the millennial kingdom

ñ put forth God's eternal plan and purpose.

\* But all prophecy would ultimately center on

**Christ. (Lk. 24:25-27, 44)**

**Isaiah** provides a good example of how a biblical prophet functioned.

**Isa. 37:1-6, 21**

**Isa. 38:1-6**

**Isa. 39:1-8**

God's prophetic plan has now been completely revealed as scripture makes clear in **Heb. 1:1-2 Christ as culmination of OT not merely Answer NT (Grace) to a Problem raised in OT (Law).**

and **Rev. 1:1-3**

**1:19**

**21:5**

**22:8-21 vs. 20-21**

The function of the gift of prophecy today relates essentially to telling forth the truth of God's Word, not foretelling the future.

#### **4. Time Periods and Emphases of Biblical Prophecy**

Four great emphases of biblical prophecy

1. Spiritual conditions of their day (e.g. Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah)
2. Babylonian captivity and return (e.g. Jeremiah)
3. First Advent of Christ (e.g. Isaiah)
4. Second advent – judgment followed by blessings of Millennial kingdom (e.g. Zechariah)

Go back to page 195 to letter “c.” What the prophet would do, last point. How does what Christ accomplishes/represents interact with each of these emphases? (Start with 3 & 4 they are obvious)

The writing prophets functioned for over 400 years from about 840 BC 420 BC

Schools of prophets developed in the time of Samuel (see **1 Sa. 10:5-10; 1 Sa. 19:18-24**) and Elijah/Elisha (see **2 Ki. 2:1-17**). Prophets continued until the close of the OT. For 400 years silence followed until John the Baptist, **the last OT prophet, predicted and prepared the way for Christ.** Jesus himself as The Prophet (see **Dt. 18:15-16**) had much to say about His second coming, heaven, hell, etc. during his earthly ministry (see **Mt. 24-25**). Both Paul (**1 Th. 4:13-18**) and Peter (**2 Pe. 3:1-13**) also made many prophetic statements. But it was the apostle John between 90-100 A.D. who provided God’s final prophecy in the book of the **Revelation**.

(For chart on page 197 of manual go to page 1232 in Study Bible)

Discuss Chart on page 198

What is the main unifying factor of these covenants?

Jesus – Abrahamic (Galatians 3:16)

- What is the source of salvation under the Old Covenant?
  - o Law or Grace?
  - o Psalm 51:7-12, 16-19

Brief introduction to views of Millennium (Rev 20:4-6):

- Pre-millennium
- Post Millennium
- Amillennium

Page 2495 Chart showing overview of Bible. Note parallels on either side.

## Isaiah

### 4. Summary of content

#### Introduction

Isaiah was the consummate prophet. He ministered for God immediately before Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BC and then to Judah for about 35 years to warn them not to make the same mistake. His prophetic ministry extended over 53 years during the reigns of such southern kings as Uzziah and Hezekiah. **Isaiah is the most quoted Old Testament prophet being referred to over 85 times in the New Testament.** Isaiah died 100 years before the fall of Judah to Babylonia.

The majesty and scope of his prophecy is staggering as he paints a portrait of God and His attributes and unfolds God's sovereign purpose and plan in human history. His prophecy includes more emphasis on the coming of the Messiah and His millennial kingdom reign than any other Bible book.

**Isaiah's 66 chapters represent a mini-Bible** and are divided into two parts. The first, chapters 1-39, corresponds to the OT and reveals the holiness, righteousness and justice of God which demands punishment for sin. Part 1 thus predicts the coming of Christ as Messiah. **The second part, chapters 40-66, corresponds to the NT and reveals God's plan of redemption to deal with man's sin problem through His suffering servant Messiah.** It focuses on consolation and salvation. Part 2 reveals the glory of Christ as Messiah. God is uniquely referred to in both parts as the "Holy one of Israel." And both parts are quoted in the NT and attributed to Isaiah. **The unity and authorship of Isaiah is further**

confirmed by the Dead Sea scrolls found in 1947 which included a scroll of Isaiah with chapters 39 and 40 on the same page.

## Chapters 1-39 Condemnation of God for sin

Isaiah condemns Judah for despising God by committing various sins

1. rebellion
2. empty religious ritual
3. injustice
4. idolatry
5. immorality

Repentance is Judah's only hope for avoiding the kind of devastating judgment which Israel suffered at the hands of Assyria. A preview is then given of the glory of God's final form of kingdom on earth and the call of Isaiah is recorded amidst the background of God's holiness and man's sin. Isaiah predicts the virgin birth of Christ and then moves to reveal God's judgment on the Gentile nations for their sins. God's blessings cannot be poured out until sin has been judged. Only then God is free to bless individuals and nations. The first part closes with a recounting of God's deliverance of Judah from the hands of Assyria while Hezekiah was king. Isaiah's Ministry for God and to Hezekiah is highlighted in this section.

### 1-12 Dealing with Judah's Sins

Judah's sins laid out. Chapter 1 (see list above)

Chapter 2 starts with a glimmer of hope.

- Who is the subject. (v. 1)
- When will it take place? Latter days is
  - o a general term for a period sometime in the future.
  - o specifically referring to time of Messiah
    - due to parallels with 11:4 language this is specific to messiah
- A restoration of God's people as his representatives
- A time of peace
- Who does this affect?

Chapter 2 continues with a warning against the coming "Day of the Lord"

- a phrase referring to a period of God's judgment.
  - o It can be directed to individual nations
  - o but culminates in the ultimate "Day of the Lord" at the end of time.

Pre-Mill view would see 2-4 specifically referring to events in the Millennium.

Other views would see these things as fulfilled between first advent and second advent of Christ.

Ch. 6 Vision of the Lord

- How does Isaiah respond? v.5
- Judgment is proclaimed though the nation will not repent
- v. 13 continues the hope a remnant will be kept by God.

Ch 7 Ahaz ( a descendant of David) is trusting in the Assyrian help rather than God against the threat of Syria and Ephraim.

- God then gives a sign in v. 14 of the coming Messiah who would fulfill the destiny of the descendants of David.

### **Ch. 13-23 Judgment upon the Nations**

#### **Ch 24-27 More on the Day of the Lord**

- **After independently condemning the nations who opposed God (broad use of day of the Lord) Isaiah moves into the ultimate Day of the Lord.**
- **24:1-6 Condemnation**
- **24:6-9 Salvation**

#### **Ch. 28-35 Woes of Israel, Judah, and Assyria**

#### **Ch. 34-35 Further Description of the Day of the Lord**

- **For Pre-Mil 2<sup>nd</sup> coming ushers in Millennial Kingdom**
- **For Post/A mil 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming ushers in New Heaven/New Earth.**
- **35:8-9**

#### **Ch 36-39 Narrative of Isaiah and Hezekiah**

- **Hinge of the Book.**
  - o **1<sup>st</sup> Part is warning/ Judgement of sin and description of Hope**
  - o **2<sup>nd</sup> Part delves into the Messiah, the source and way of obtaining salvation**
  - o **Hezekiah, though a good king ultimately fails, this is an illustration of why we need the Messiah**

## **Chapters 40-66**

### **Consolation of God for salvation**

While chapters 1-39 emphasized the judgment of God for sin, chapters 40-66 underscore the glory of God as revealed in Messiah who will accomplish God's plan of redemption. Man is not able to deal with his sin problem, so God in mercy and grace will provide a Savior — the suffering servant Jesus Christ to bear the sins of the world as God's ultimate "sacrificial lamb." Those who confess their sins and trust in Him will be "saved." But Christ was rejected in His first coming and God's kingdom on earth must await His second coming after God's judgment for sin in the Great Tribulation. At that time God will usher in the millennial kingdom reign of Christ on earth when the glory of God will fill the earth and Israel will be restored as God fulfills all of His specific covenant promises.

Part 2 emphasizes the majesty of God, the Messiah to come and the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth.

## 40-48 The Majesty of God shown through his redemption

- 40:1-2 Comfort for his People
  - o v. 3 Cited in Matthew about John the Baptist
- 40:9-17 the Glory of God
- Ch. 45:1 Cyrus Named as a tool of God. (This was fulfilled over 150 years later)
  - o 45:13 (Ezra 1, 6)
- Ch. 48:20 Isaiah predicts the return from the Babylonian Captivity.
- However this sovereignty over the nations and rescue of his people is but a picture telling of the true rescue:

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

## Summation of Final Judgment

65:1-7 It is the idolatry of the people, the perversion of their worship of the true God that condemns them.

65:11-

There is no grander panorama of God's redemptive purpose in human history than is disclosed in **Isaiah**. Nor does any other book exalt sovereign Holy God as does Isaiah.

## 5. Theme/purpose/applicational message

### Theme/purpose

Isaiah wrote to predict how holy, sovereign God would manifest His glory and holiness by judging sin and by saving and blessing the righteous through His coming Messiah.

### Applicational message

the glory and blessing of God as we trust in Messiah on from our sins.