

Living Way Church
Biblical Studies Program
Old Testament Survey – May/June 2013
Supplemental Outline for Lesson Five (The Old Testament Prophetic Books)

- I. The Division of the Old Testament
 - A. There are two ways to divide the canon of the Old Testament
 - 1. Most English translations follow the Greek pattern:
 - a. Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy)
 - b. History (Joshua through Esther)
 - c. Poetry (Job through Song of Songs)
 - d. Prophecy
 - (1) Major prophets: Isaiah through Daniel
 - (2) Minor prophets: Hosea through Malachi
 - 2. The Hebrew arrangement has only three sections:
 - a. Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy)
 - b. Prophets
 - (1) Former prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
 - (2) Latter prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve (the twelve minor prophets)
 - c. Writings
 - (1) Poetic: Psalms, Job, Proverbs
 - (2) Scrolls: Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther
 - (3) Prophetic: Daniel
 - (4) Historical: Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles
 - B. The books that comprise the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament are the same
- II. General Introduction to the Prophetic Books of the Old Testament¹
 - A. Prophecy in Israel needs to be seen as a whole
 - 1. The first person to be referred to as a prophet is Abraham (Gen 20:7)
 - 2. Aaron is designated by God as Moses' prophet in the coming conflict with Pharaoh (Ex 7:1)
 - 3. Miriam, the sister of Aaron and Moses, is designated a "prophetess" (Ex 15:20)
 - 4. With Moses, the title "prophet" is not applied to him until the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 18:15-22; 34:10)
 - B. The prophet functions as the mediator between God and the people, specifically to convey the word of God; signs and wonders go "hand-in-hand" with the mediation of God's saving word and become themselves

¹This outline is drawn from Graeme Goldsworthy's chapter on "Preaching from the Old Testament Prophets" in *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, pages 167-171.

- instruments of salvation
- C. Deuteronomy 34:11-12 tells us that Moses was unequaled as the mediator of God's Torah (Law) – Moses was, above all, the prophet who spoke the words of God to the people of God
 - D. Additional Old Testament Prophets
 - 1. The unnamed prophet in Judges 6:8-10
 - 2. The next prophet named is Samuel, who is not only a prophet but also a judge and a “king maker”
 - a. The mediatorial role of Samuel is clear
 - b. He acts as the conscience of the first king and of the nation as a whole
 - 3. For king David, the prophetic office continues particularly through Nathan and Gad
 - 4. Elijah and Elisha operated at a time when the nation is on the verge of complete apostasy
 - a. They are sent to call Israel back to the covenant of Sinai and to do battle with the forces seeking to seduce the people of God into apostasy
 - b. There are two features of the combined ministry of these prophets that are relevant to placing them in the context of salvation history:
 - (1) The first is the prophetic challenge to Israel to return to a faithful acceptance of the covenant
 - (2) The second is the concentration of signs and wonders performed by these two men
 - c. In both their ministries, we also see the reaching out of God's grace to the Gentiles at a time when Israel is in danger of turning it back on its responsibility to become a vehicle of blessing to the nations (see Luke 4:25-27)
 - E. The covenant of grace, mediated by Moses, structures the life of the people who are elect and redeemed in the Exodus
 - 1. All prophecy after Moses reinforces and reapplies this definitive Mosaic ministry
 - 2. The king, like the prophet, is to be a guardian of Israel's covenant status and behavior
 - F. However, things go bad and the kingdom is broken into two parts
 - 1. At the start of this decline, Elijah and Elisha are sent to demonstrate the grace of God to a wayward people and call them back to the covenant of Sinai, to live as those redeemed by grace
 - 2. But to no avail
 - G. Elisha's ministry extends into the eighth century B.C. and is soon followed by the early writing prophets
- III. The writing prophets, which make up the section of the Hebrew prophetic canon usually called the "latter prophets" cover an extensive period of history

- A. They are often grouped as “pre-exilic,” “exilic,” and “post-exilic”
- B. “It is reasonable to speculate that a theological basis exists for the words of these latter prophets being preserved in writing while notables like Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha are known to us only from historical narrative text – we have no record of the oracles of these three men that match the collection of sermons and pronouncements in the latter prophets. Could it be that the reason lies in the fact that God is announcing a new thing through this new breed of prophet?” (Goldsworthy, pp. 170-171)
- C. The writing prophets span the entire period of Old Testament history from the decline of the divided kingdom (930 B.C.) to the end of the Old Testament period (420 B.C.)
- D. Each of the classical prophets had a distinct message that had largely to do with historical situation into which the prophet spoke; yet, all of them contain three main ingredients to their message:
 - 1. They address the covenant breaking of the people in oracles of stinging indictment and accusation
 - 2. They warn of the consequences of this folly as they speak of the judgment that has come and will yet come
 - 3. They remind people of the covenant faithfulness of God, who will yet act in some conclusive way to bring about his purposes
 - a. These oracles of restoration are the “linchpin” of Old Testament eschatology
 - b. They take the patterns of salvation history established in the period from Abraham to David and project them into a future of unparalleled glory and splendor when God will act on His great day to save His people
 - c. On that day, the nations of the earth will see the light of Israel, and out of the nations will come a multitude to find salvation through the blessings of Israel