

How to Read the Prophets (Cyprus Tr: week 1, session 10)

Intro: Can divide the 66bks of the Bible into 6 great shelves ([bookshelf h/o](#)). I think Prophets = most avoided (unpack...)
This session: 6 vital principles... [[more detail in [booklet](#)...]]

1) The Prophets are Part of Israel's History (→ *History Bks*)

First writing prophets (Isaiah, Amos & Hosea) some time early in the 8thC BC (775 BC)

Last OT prophet = Malachi (some time in 5thC BC, up to 100 yrs *after* the return from Exile). [See Bible Overview poster](#)

So as you get to know your **OT history** (partic 2nd½ of 2Kgs; 2Chr.26ff; Ezr & Neh) an added benefit = help w prophets.

Some prophets contain historical Narr, either ||el (Isa.36-39; bits in Hag & Zech) or that we don't have e/w (Jer; also a bit in Amos; Daniel & Jonah contain signif proportn of narr).

Also helpful to know **who** is being addressed: Amos+Hosea: N Kgd; Jonah, Nahum & Obad = foreign Nns; rest = South.

2) The Prophets are Poets & Preachers (→ *Wisdom: Pss*)

Meet the same thought rhyme & word pics as in Pss (tho' not so much Prayers & Praise as Challenge [& s.t. comfort])

Read narrative (history, gospels) in *episodes*, & NT letters in *paragraphs*, so read prophets in *oracles*. (s.t. v clear: Hag (dates); Ezek ("The Wd of the Ld came..."); others harder...)

S.t. includes visions, or even dramatic episodes (Ezek!)

Now come to most important key! Imagine a hammock... No better e.g. than v end of OT, **Mal.4v4-6**...

3) The Prophets are 'Covenant Enforcmt Heralds' (→ Law)

Cannot overstate the importance of what happ'd at Mt Sinai. Ex.20-24; Deut = "Covenant treaty" (Common in ANE, made by e.g. a king w a subject Nn).

Certain elts: intro history (Ex.20v2); key laws re loyalty, 10Cs; detailed stipulns; witnesses ('god list', tho' not in Bible!); sanctions (blessing & curse...); & details re doc storage etc.

Sanctions partic important: Lev.26, Deut 28 [indeed blessing & curse = key theme in Scr from beg to end]

- **Blessings**: life, health, abundance of food, prosperity, safety/victory, respect/renown.

- **Curses**: death, disease, drought, dearth, danger, destructn, defeat, deportation, destitution, and disgrace (10 'D's!).

Prophets (partic pre-exile) call out disloyalty & announce the corrresp jdgmts. (Not religious innovators or social reformers but calling 'back to the Bible!'). **2Kgs.17v13-14a,15ab,16a**

NB: Nnl cov, applies corporately (hard on godly individuals!)

=> "The *Prophets* apply the sanctions of the *Law* to the situations of the *History* books, often in the poetry of the *Psalms*!"

4) The Prophets look fwd to the Day of the Lord (→ NT)

Other end of hammock! Even in this, not innovators.

The Cov itself included a roadmap: e.g. **Deut.30v1-6** (underneath the broken Sinai Cov = safety net of promises to Abr)

Latter Days, Day of the Lord. Composite picture ([refs in bklet](#))

• Cosmic Turmoil; God's decisive intervention, rescuing his people from great tribulation, in which enemies threaten to overrun them, but in fact Israel defeats her enemies.

- ...yet also, a judgment on those amongst 'God's people' who have not remained faithful to him
 - ...and yet *also*, a transformn of God's people, such that they have his law written on their 'circumcised' hearts, and thus return to him and offer acceptable worship.
 - A unity amongst God's People (no longer Judah vs. Israel!)
 - A new covenant; and the outpouring of the HS;
 - God's universal rule over all Nns, & their universal worship
 - Peace, Prosperity & Renown!
 - God delivering+ruling thro his Anointed, a Kg in David's line
 - Resurrection, death conquered, and a great banquet feast – with the wicked, the enemies of God, excluded & punished
 - New Hvn's & a New Earth – all creation restored to harmony
- Some elts seem hard to fit together (w/o NT hindsight!). In partic, ambig re 'Nns', (problem? part of the glorious future?)
 E.g. "Moab will be trampled...as straw is trampled down in the manure" (Isaiah 25v10); "I will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days, declares the Lord" (Jer.48v47 ESV)

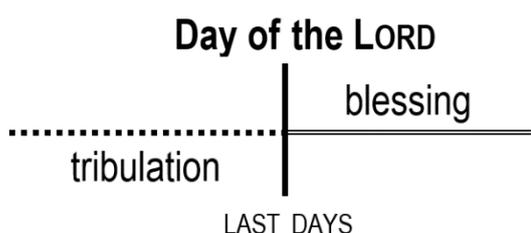
Next thing to add into the mix is "What actually happened"

5) The prophets, like all the OT, ult'ly pt fwd to J & †

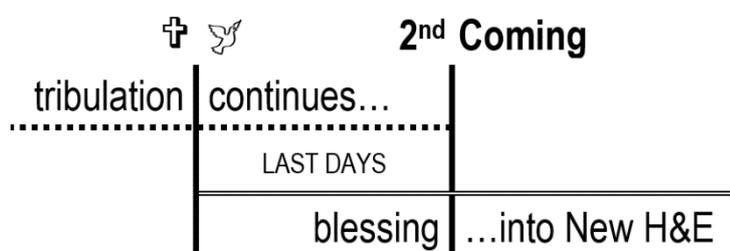
The NT takes the OT prophecies of a coming age of blessing and applies them to the gospel age (Joel 2 in Ac.2, Am.9 in Ac.15, Jer.31 in Heb.8). God's decisive intervention has occurred, the Lord has come to his temple, God's judgment on sin has fallen, the enemies of God's people have been routed by Messiah, the resurrn of the righteous has taken

plc, the HS has been poured out, & the Davidic King reigns over the whole world... all in the person & work of J! In this sense the first Easter was “the day of the Lord”. As a result the Nns (i.e. Gentiles) are becoming part of God’s people. But... we still await a decisive interventn, namely Xt’s return, “the day of the Lord” (2Thes.2v2), and now we live in a time of (uncomfortable!) overlap betw the present evil age & the KgdM of God – yet the day is coming when everything that is now true of Christ will also be fully true for his people....

OT Perspective



NT Reality



6) The Prophets don't distinguish the various fulfilments

Jdgmts predicted =? historical (e.g. defeat, drought); ult'ly in exile; but also final jdgmt, falling on Xt & yet to fall (Isa.2)

So also blessings: e.g. under Hez; return from exile (but fragile & ltd; fell short...) gospel, NHvns&NE.

Cf. Isa.61v1-2 w Lk.4v18-19: year of Lord's fav, but not (yet) the day on vengeance...). We are living in the 'day of Salv'n' Prophets speak of Xt, & what he has done, is doing, & will do (tho w/o nec'ly perceiving those distinctions, 1Pet 1v10-12).

Meanwhile: immediacy of God's address ♦ relig & social sins addressed; right belief & right behaviour ♦ call for loyalty ♦ blessing & curse (& yet borne for us by Xt)...