

# Lesson 10 Notes – 02/26/2008

## *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, Part III

This lesson consists of an all too brief consideration of two more types of Biblical literature – prophetic writings and letters – and distinctive characteristics about them which affect their interpretation.

### **Prophetic Writings**

1. The books – Isaiah through Malachi + Revelation
2. Additional passages scattered throughout Genesis, Deuteronomy, Psalms, and the teachings of Jesus, and more.
3. Hebrew word for “prophet” was *nabi* and came from the word meaning “to pour forth, to bring out.” This emphasized the prophet’s role as a ***forth-teller*** of God’s message, not just a ***fore-teller***!
4. Not all prophets in the Bible wrote books: Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, Agabus (Acts 21:10)
5. The writings (and messages) of the prophets varied between narrative, proclamation, and prediction. Jeremiah an outstanding example of all three.
6. Things to consider when studying the books of the prophets:
  - a. Author - in OT, all the prophetic books bear men’s names. Were they the authors?
    1. Some used scribes, like Jeremiah – Jeremiah 36:1-4, 17-18
    2. Some books give us detail about the prophet’s personal life, others do not (like Obadiah and Malachi)
  - b. Historical context – all prophetic books in OT are within a historical period of about 750 to 450 BC. We need to know what was happening as each ministered and spoke God’s word.
  - c. Remember the “meta-narrative” or big story that is behind the narratives (and all other parts) of the Bible.
  - d. Major themes of covenant breaking, judgment, and deliverance
  - e. Primarily an immediate application to their first hearers, though some parts of their messages might look forward to an indefinite glorious time in the future
7. Interpretation: look to how the New Testament writers used the Old Testament prophets
  - a. “This is that...” usually meant something specifically predicted by a prophet
  - b. “Shadow and reality” found especially in Hebrews, was not prophetic

writings so much as OT things or practices like the tabernacle and sacrifice

- c. Types and anti-types – similar to the “shadow and reality” but usually meant people of the OT who were a type or likeness of Christ. Examples would be Melchizedek, Moses, David, and Joshua the high priest.
- d. Physical and spiritual – Jerusalem, Zion, Israel, tabernacle
- e. Similar themes – events in the OT that seemed somewhat like “deja vu” in the New Testament

## **The Epistles**

1. Romans through Jude in the New Testament
  - a. New Testament world knew about “public letters” which were composed for an audience larger than just the named recipient
  - b. The New Testament letters, or epistles, range from very personal (Philemon, 3 John) to very proper and formal public letters (Romans, Hebrews), with variations in between
2. They were “occasional documents” written for a specific need and occasion
  - a. We need to determine the specific occasion or need addressed
  - b. The author and the letter may or may not clearly state the occasion or need
  - c. We often feel like someone hearing only one side of a phone conversation – we clearly are lacking some information needed to clarify things
3. Historical context
  - a. Paul or other author’s personal situation
  - b. Recipients situation and relationship to author
4. Literary context - the main point and arrangement of the letter
5. Challenge of interpretation is to determine what is of eternal relevance, and what is of specific application to the immediate occasion or need.

Effective Bible Study

Instructor: Richard Cravy

Winter Term 2008, Sunset International Bible Institute

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