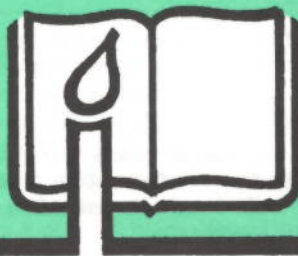


STUDIES IN THE BIBLE



The Poets And Prophets

Lesson 9

Our study of the Old Testament thus far has been largely concerned with the history it relates. Yet we should realize that twenty-two of its thirty-nine books are either poetry or prophecy and it is these that we shall study in this lesson.

The Poetical Books

The poetry of the ancient Hebrews did not have meter or rhyme as does that to which we are accustomed. It consisted rather of rhythmic thought in which the same ideas would be repeated in successive statements in different words. There are five poetical books in the Old Testament—**Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon**. Solomon was the author of the last three. Of the 150 Psalms, 73 are ascribed to David and it is likely that he wrote several of the anonymous Psalms. The authorship of Job is unknown.

The book of Job is the story of a righteous man by that name who lost everything he had—children, wealth and health—but still remained faithful to God. Much of the book is in the form of a debate between Job and his friends who tried to convince him that his plight was the result of his sin. Job protested his innocence and for his faithfulness to Jehovah was rewarded with greater blessings than he had possessed before his affliction.

One of the best loved books in the entire Bible is the Psalms. Although the Psalms are often found at the end of New Testament copies, they actually belong to the Old Testament. A “psalm” is a song of praise. Some of the Psalms have been set to music and are sung by Christians today. Originally the book was divided into five sections. The shortest and middle chapter in the Bible is Psalm 117 while Psalm 119 with 176 verses is the longest.

It has been said that Solomon wrote the Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs) when young, Proverbs when middle-aged, and Ecclesiastes when old. This may be true. The Song of Solomon is a beautiful song of wedded love. Proverbs is a group of unconnected wise sayings, many of them familiar to us all. Ecclesiastes is the most pessimistic book in the Bible. It was written after Solomon has unsuccessfully tried everything in an effort to find happiness. He begins with the thought, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity” (Ecc. 1:2) and ends by concluding, “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecc. 12:13.)

The Prophetical Books

The seventeen Old Testament books of prophecy may be divided into five major prophets and twelve minor prophets, so called because the books of major prophecy are of greater length than the minor. So far as we know they were all written by the men whose names they bear except Lamentations which was written by Jeremiah.

The prophets were the messengers who brought God's word to man. Most of them lived during the troublous times when Israel was turning to idolatry. Some were priests and others were of royal blood. Their message was divinely inspired and often was written in symbolic language. Not all of the prophets wrote books. Two of the greatest, Elijah and Elisha, have left us no written record.

The prophets were the conscience of Israel. Their mission was to try to save the nation from idolatry, and failing in this, to warn that it would be destroyed. But they held out a ray of hope. A REMNANT of Israel would be saved out of which there would come an influence to bring the world to Jehovah. This influence they call THE BRANCH, a prophecy of the coming of Christ, a branch out of the family tree of David who became the Savior of the world.

Although the books of prophecy contain some history and much warning and exhortation, there is also a predictive element. They foretell the destruction of such great cities as Nineveh and Babylon, and dwell at length upon the coming of the Messiah, or Christ, who would be a deliverer and establish His kingdom. The fulfillment of these many prophecies strengthens our faith in God, in Jesus Christ as our Savior, and in the Bible as the inspired word of God.



The Major Prophets

Foremost among the major prophets was **Isaiah**. Since much of his message deals with the coming of Christ he has been called the "messianic prophet." He correctly predicted that the Messiah would be of the seed of David. The 53rd chapter of his book is probably the most beautiful prophecy of Christ in the Bible.

Jeremiah was the weeping prophet as the title of one of his books, Lamentations, indicates. He warned Judah to repent, forecasting its destruction if it did not. A bachelor, he was fearless in his preaching and often imprisoned. **Ezekiel** and **Daniel** were prophets during the Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel's writings are highly symbolic and somewhat difficult to understand. The book of Daniel, on the other hand, contains considerable history as well as predictions pertaining to the future of Babylon and Persia. It was he who so clearly foretold the establishment of the kingdom of Christ by saying, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Daniel 2:44.)

The Minor Prophets

Joel was possibly the first prophet to leave us a book. His prophecy to Judah included a call to repentance by God's people. **Jonah** was sent to warn the wicked city of Nineveh to repent. It did, but 150 years later the Lord found it necessary to send **Nahum** to repeat the warning. This time it did not repent and was destroyed. The prophecy of **Obadiah**, only one chapter long, is also directed against a neighboring country, the land of Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea. The forecast of its doom was remarkably fulfilled in the utter destruction of the nation.

The prophets **Amos** and **Hosea** were contemporaries who bore a special message to the northern kingdom of Israel. Amos, a herdsman, did not confine his warnings to Israel, however, but also pronounced his woes upon Judah and other nations. Hosea used the tragedy of his own life to show that as his wife had proved unfaithful to him, so Israel had committed spiritual adultery in its unfaithfulness to the laws of God.

Zephaniah and **Micah** were both sent to Judah. They denounced the sins of God's people, but still held out hope for them. Zephaniah prophesied that a remnant of Israel would be saved. Micah declared that the Messiah would come from the little village of Bethlehem.

The justice of God is vindicated in the writings of **Habakkuk** who lived during the beginnings of the Babylonian oppression of Judah. The keynote of the book is expressed in the thought, "The righteous shall live by his faith." (Hab. 2:4—A.S.V.) The prophets **Haggai** and **Zechariah** were sent to the Jews to inspire them in the rebuilding of the temple after the return from Babylonian captivity. The book of Zechariah is strongly messianic. Among other things it foretold that Christ would be sold for thirty pieces of silver. **Malachi** closes the Old Testament prophecies with a denunciation of the vain worship of the Jews and a promise that God would send Elijah the prophet before the day of the Lord. This was a prediction that John the Baptist would precede the Christ.

"Seek and Ye Shall Find"

Fill in the blanks:

1. What is the longest chapter in the Bible?
2. What book tells about a man who lost everything?
3. What book is a collection of wise sayings?
4. How many books of prophecy are there in the Old Testament?
5. Who wrote the book of Lamentations?
6. Who is often called the "messianic prophet"?
7. Who was the weeping prophet?
8. What is the last book of the Old Testament?
9. What two men prophesied against Nineveh? and

Circle the letter representing the correct scripture location:

- a b c 1. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." (a) Ecclesiastes 1:2; (b) Psalm 23:1; (c) Psalm 117:1.
- a b c 2. "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." (a) Job 42:2; (b) Song of Solomon 1:1; (c) Psalm 9:2.
- a b c 3. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." (a) Psalm 19:7; (b) Ecclesiastes 12:13; (c) Proverbs 22:1.
- a b c 4. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." (a) Job 42:12; (b) Ecclesiastes 12:1; (c) Song of Solomon 2:15.
- a b c 5. "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley." (a) Psalm 24:8; (b) Song of Solomon 2:1; (c) Proverbs 12:16.
- a b c 6. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." (a) Ecclesiastes 3:1; (b) Job 9:29; (c) Proverbs 23:9.

a b c 7. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies?" (a) Song of Solomon 4:1; (b) Proverbs 31:10; (c) Proverbs 14:12.

a b c 8. "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever." (a) Psalm 121:2; (b) Job 1:22; (c) Psalm 118:1.

Fill in the blanks in the following prophecies:

1. Isaiah 53:7 (speaking of Christ) — "He was _____, and he was afflicted, yet he _____ not his mouth: he is brought as a _____ to the slaughter, and as a _____ before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

2. Zechariah 11:12 (speaking of Christ's being sold by Judas) — "And I said unto them, If ye think _____, give me my _____; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price _____ pieces of silver."

3. Jeremiah 50:40 (concerning the eternal destruction of Babylon) — "As God overthrew _____ and _____ and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the Lord; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of _____ dwell therein."

4. Jonah 3:4 (Jonah's prophecy against Nineveh) — "And Jonah began to enter into the _____ a day's _____, and he cried, and said, Yet _____ days, and Nineveh shall be _____."

Name.....

Grade.....

Address.....

Date.....

City.....

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