

Critics have often spoken of the writing prophets as being reflective of that institution that gave Israel its faith. We are prone to think that God was the author of that faith and whatever the various prophets contributed it was at the instigation of the Spirit. The prophets served as interpreters of God's will and this was based on the concept of the law. So if you can see our overall concept of this...the panorama...

The law gives the will of God

The prophets show how it is carried out in life

The writings will show how it affects the believer.

The latter prophets are normally divided into two units and we will follow this as well: The major prophets and the minor prophets. In the Hebrew Old Testament the minor ones are treated as one book...the book of the Twelve. But in this syllabus (a survey thing) we will have a little spot for each of them although the total coverage of a one chapter book may not be so extensive in these notes as is the coverage for a forty chapter book. That figures, doesn't it?

A. The Major prophets

The term has only to do with size and not quality. There are three in this connexion: Isaiah ---God's holiness
 Jeremiah --God's judgment
 Ezekiel ---God's preservation

(Still continuing our thematic identification for each book!)

1. Survey study of the Book of Isaiah (we are still following the same format begun in the Pentateuch and using as foundational material the studies of F.C.Putnam as originally given in ETERNITY magazine and now used by permission).

ISAIAH

a. An Overview:

Until the late eighteenth century Isaiah was unanimously regarded as the author of this book. The assertion then made was that the book was by at least two authors and this theory and its developments have dominated the field of Old Testament studies since the middle of the last century.

The original division of Isaiah into two major sections was based on three main arguments: chapters 40-66 seem to reflect the exile (Jerusalem destroyed, captives deported), but Isaiah 1-39 were written long before the exile (1:1); there is a great difference in style, language and ideas between the two sections; if a prophet generally addresses his contemporaries in light of their circumstances, why would Isaiah, an eighth-century prophet, address the problems of a sixth-century people? The general conclusion is that an anonymous prophet, living in Babylon, near the end of the exile wrote Isaiah 40-66 and this was later attached to Isaiah's book (1-39). A major problem with these criteria (which may seem reasonable in themselves) is that once this process of division and re-assignment of portions is begun there seems to be no end to it--and no consensus arises from it, which would be a reasonable expectation of any "scientific" process as this claims to be.

Other problems with this view include the consensus of tradition regarding Isaiah as the author of the entire book. The differences in vocabulary and style can be explained by the difference in subject matter between the sections.