

A WORD ON WORSHIP

REVIEW OF MESSAGE FROM DECEMBER 6, 2015

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Revelation 8:13

"Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, 'Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!'"

I think most of us would agree at the outset that these prophetic books are among the most difficult parts of the Bible to interpret or to read with understanding. We shouldn't be embarrassed to admit we have difficulty reading the prophets. In referring to the prophets, Martin Luther once said the following: "They have a queer way of talking, like people who, instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next so that you cannot make heads or tails of them or see what they are getting at." Now that is a comment to which I can relate.

The primary difficulty for most modern readers of the prophets stems from an inaccurate understanding of the words "prophet" and "prophecy." The word prophet refers to one who tells forth (or proclaims), as well as one who foretells. But we often limit the meaning of prophecy to foretelling the future, so many Christians refer to the prophets only for predictions about Christ's first coming, or his second coming, and the end times as though prediction of events far distant to their own day was their main concern.

It should be pointed out that less than 2% of Old Testament prophecy is messianic. Less than 5% specifically concerns the New Covenant age. The prophets did indeed announce the future, but it was usually the immediate future of Israel, Judah, and the surrounding nations, not our future - except here in the Book of Revelation. To see the prophets as primarily predictors of future events is to miss their primary function, which was, in fact, to speak for God to their contemporaries.

Through the prophets, God makes predictions of imminent doom using the device of the "woe," and no Israelite could miss the significance of the use of that word. Woe oracles contain, either explicitly or implicitly, three elements that uniquely characterize this form: an announcement of distress (the word "Woe," for example), the reason for the distress, and a prediction of doom. You can read Habakkuk 2:6-8 as an example of a woe oracle spoken against Babylon. The oracle announces "woe" in Verse 6. The reason is also given in Verse 6, where Babylon is personified as a thief and extortionist. Disaster is predicted in Verses 7-8, when all those Babylon has oppressed will one day rise up against it.

So what was it the prophets were seeking in their ministry? You might say restoration and a restored covenant relationship with God. Yes, that was the ultimate goal. But what the prophets truly sought was repentance. Restoration was the goal, but repentance is what they hoped to see from the people. In fact, this message of the prophets was so prevalent that Zechariah (one of the last prophets) was able to sum up in one sentence all the prophets that preceded him: "the earlier prophets proclaimed: Thus says the Lord of Hosts, turn from your evil ways and doings," (Zechariah 1:4). The heart of Revelation is that all would come to repentance so that none would perish. And this is one reason the study of Revelation is so important to the church today.



Sunrise Community Church
Come acknowledge the Lord in our midst
EVERY SUNDAY BEGINNING AT 8:45 A.M.

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