

### The Prophetic books - The promises of God - Part 1:

**Tonight's question:** *Tonight we begin with the prophetic books of the Bible. The Prophetic Books contain the mighty promises of God. What is your definition of a promise?*

*What is a promise?* When a man and a woman stand at the wedding altar and promise each other, what are they doing? They are committing themselves to give of themselves to each other. *A promise, basically, is a commitment to share yourself.* If you give a promise to someone, you are committing or sharing something of your time, your energy, your resources to that person.

*That is what a promise is. It is a sharing of self.*

*The great promises of the Bible are the efforts of God to share Himself with us. When we understand the promises, we will understand something more of the nature and the character of our God. Every promise is a commitment on God's part to give of himself.*

This is why an understanding of the prophets is so important to us when reading the Bible, because it is here that we *understand what God says He will do*. How can you exercise faith if you don't have a promise to rest upon?

Faith is of absolutely no value if it does not rest upon a promise. A promise is the fact that faith grabs, and then makes available all that God wants to give.

**[Read Hebrews 4:12]** Only the Word of God can cut into our lives and change us by cutting away the cancer of sin and delivering us from the chains which have enslaved us.

**[Read 1 Corinthians 1:18]** God's Word is a word of power. We must not forget the tremendous power which is hidden away in it.

Dr. Richard Halverson - a contemporary of Billy Graham - tells about speaking to a group of students one night. During a question-and-answer period, one of them asked him, "*Dr. Halverson, how can I make the Word of God relevant to the situation in which I live?*" He was about to answer that question when time ran out and he had to carry it over to the next night.

During the next day he was thinking about that question. "*The longer I thought about it,*" he said, "*the more I began to see the underlying egotism of a question like that: 'How can I make the Word of God relevant?'*" He thought of 1 Corinthians 1:18: "*the word of the cross ... is the power of God.*" When the time came to answer the question, he said: "*I would like simply to substitute the phrase 'the Word of God' in this question with what the Word of God says is the equivalent: 'the power of God.'*"

*The question then would read this way: 'How can I make the power of God relevant? How can I, a puny human creature, make that which is the power of God meaningful to human life?' Well, that is the most egotistical of questions, isn't it?"*

As Charles Spurgeon once said about the Bible: *“You are wasting your time defending it. You don't need to defend the Bible. The Bible is like a lion. Who ever heard of defending a lion? Turn it loose; it will defend itself!”* The Scriptures are like that.

Now we come to the books of the great prophets of the Old Testament. There are *sixteen* Prophetic Books, but we cannot dwell long on them, just long enough to discover what each books has to say to us.

*So at the end of the Prophetic Books we will have discovered what each book's “promise” is:*

The promise of the book of *Isaiah*, is essentially the promise of the *cleansing of God*, or the promise of a *new beginning*. **[Read Isaiah 1:18]** This is the key verse of the Book of Isaiah.

The prophet himself experiences this promise in the sixth chapter - **[Read Isaiah 6:1-8]** Isaiah's reaction is clear in **verse 5**. *What was God's promise?* An angel took a burning coal from the altar, touched Isaiah's lips with it and declared his guilt taken away and his sin forgiven - *the promise of the new beginning* - and God commissioned him to go and declare God's promises. **[Read Isaiah 53:5 - which is one of the greatest promises in the entire Scripture!]**

*Isaiah declares that whenever we discover that in some weakness or failure we have wandered off into sin and despair, God always has a place of new beginning.*

In the book of *Jeremiah* we have exactly the opposite. Jeremiah is the promise of the *absence of God*. God promises to be absent (*not found*) from your life, under certain conditions! I am not saying that God is actually is absent - He is everywhere - but He promises to leave us without any sense of his fellowship or of His person. He does this deliberately, under certain conditions. This is the message of Jeremiah. **[Read Luke 13:35]**

*Throughout the whole Bible you have references to this, when, in our own incredible vanity, we attempt defy God, and we refuse to bow our wills to his - God will ultimately let us have our way, so we wander off into weakness and desolation of spirit, exactly as Jerusalem was left, finally - desolate.*

Jeremiah was sent to Jerusalem to declare to them that their city was lost, and that they were going into captivity for seventy years. **[Read Jeremiah 15:3-4 & 19-21]** The book however closes with a bright ray of hope. God never leaves us lost. When the heart repents and turns back, then the promises of Isaiah become operative - *the promise of a new beginning*.

*Ezekiel's* book is the promise of the *presence of God*, as Jeremiah's was the promise of the *absence of God*. It is the Old Testament book which sets forth the corresponding promise in the New Testament in **John 14:23**. The prophecy of Ezekiel begins with a vision of God which is the most remarkable in the whole Bible.

This is a book which sets forth what God is like. **[Read Ezekiel 1:4-10]** It opens with this marvelous vision of God (*these 4 heavenly creatures feature again in Revelation 4:6-9*) and closes with the Temple of God, where God is at rest with his people. In between it shows how God moves to bring about his presence in the human heart.

**Daniel** is the great prophetic book of the Old Testament and reveals the *promise of the illumination* of the human mind by God. It corresponds to Jesus' New Testament promise of **John 8:12**.

It is the story of a teenager (*Daniel*) in captivity, in a hostile environment, and of how God enabled Daniel to stand against the most powerful empire in history. The book of Daniel shows how God illuminated this man's mind to enable him to see through all the deception of his day and to see the truth of the living God and what God was doing in that nation, and to predict what God would do with all the nations down through the course of history, even beyond today.

**Hosea** is the most beautiful book in the Bible. It is a love story - the story of a broken marriage and of the heartache of unfaithfulness. It is a story of the persistence of God, the *promise of God's persistent redemption*. It is the New Testament equivalent of the promise of **Philippians 1:6**.

*It is the story of how God sent the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute. When she left him and returned back to her sinful trade, God sent Hosea back to her again to redeem her to himself. This woman gave Hosea heartbreak, shame and humiliation, but God kept Hosea's heart aflame with love for her, and finally she was won back and restored.*

It is a marvelous story, beautifully picturing the love of God.

In **Joel** you have the *promise of the meaning of history*. If you are troubled by what is going on in the world, read the book of Joel. The New Testament promise of **Romans 8:28** links with Joel. Joel shows how God is at work among the nations, bringing about his purposes, so that even the tragedies and the catastrophes are part of His plan with history.

The book of **Amos** is the book of the *promise of perfection*. **Jude verse 24**, is the New Testament equivalent of the promise of Amos. The message of the book of Amos is that God will never let down his standards. When we say: "Lord, I have grown so much and I am much better than I was ten years ago! I think I have grown far enough!" Then Amos comes along and says: "No. God will never be content with this, will never rest, will never give up until he has brought you through to the absolute perfection of Jesus Christ." Amos is the book of the plumb line of God.

**Obadiah** is the *promise of spiritual victory*. It is the story of two men, Jacob and Esau, who are the symbols of walking in the Spirit and walking in the flesh. This book is the equivalent of the New Testament promise of **Romans 6:14**. This is the book which declares that the flesh is always a failure, but that the Spirit will always triumph. **[Read Obidiah 1:21]**

Isn't this is what we want in our lives - for the kingdom of our lives to be the Lord's. We are constantly fighting this in God's program, but God has a way around that. The book of Obadiah is the promise of that victory.

*Next time we will start to look at the next 8 prophetic books of the Bible. What do you think are the promises of these books? Choose one book and see if you can spot the promise of that book. Often the introduction of the books in some Bibles will give you a clue!*