

III. The Old Testament – Key Events in the History of Israel: Exile to Return

A. Introduction to the Prophets

1. As Israel and Judah continue to decline in sin, God raises up prophets to rebuke the people for their disobedience. The message of the prophets was one of judgment, but also one of restoration.
2. While prophets existed before the writing prophets, it is in the writing prophets that we receive a detailed picture of God's judgment and restoration of Israel.
3. The words of the prophets are framed in the language of the people so that they could understand what God was doing. The prophets described the judgment and restoration of Israel by recounting the past and using it to point forward to the future.
4. *It is a necessary feature of effective communication, which we have all experienced and understand that when we wish to describe to a friend something that he or she has not yet experienced, we do so by appeals to what our friend has already experienced. In order to communicate to God's people still living under the old covenant, the prophets by the Spirit's inspiration spoke of the blessings of God would pour out under the new covenant in terms of the typological images so familiar to the old covenant saints. - Robert Strimple*
5. The prophets recapitulated the history of Israel as a means to convey the promise of the future. They spoke about a new exodus, a new king, a new covenant, a new kingdom, and a new creation.
6. There are two types of genre in the prophetic literature.
 - a. Prophetic: Prophetic language is used to call the nation to return and remember their origins.
 - b. Apocalyptic: Apocalyptic language is used to describe the promises of restoration.

7. God's work for Israel in the future would be the fulfillment of his promises to their forefathers.

B. The Message of the Pre-Exilic Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea-Zephaniah)

1. The message of the pre-exilic prophets was a message of hope despite impending judgment.
2. These prophets include: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah (and Jonah and Nahum to the Assyrians and Obadiah to the Edomites).

Isaiah

1. In the early chapters of Isaiah, the prophet promises that despite Israel's sin God will raise up a branch from the root of Jesse that will bring about justice and righteousness (Isa 9:1-7; 11:1-10).
 - a. God will fulfill his promises to David (cf., Isa 22:20-25).
 - b. Within the context of this kingship will be a restoration of God's people. He will gather for himself a remnant from all over the world (Isa 11:11-16).
 - c. The remnant idea is predominant in the early chapters of Isaiah (cf., Isa 2:3; 14:1; 18:7; 24:14-16; 25:6-8; cf., 46:3-4).
2. There are key themes of restoration found in Isaiah 40-66.
 - a. God is high and lifted up as the king of Israel (Isa 6:1ff; 41:21; 43:14-15; 44:6; 66:1).

- b. What is important to recognize in these chapters is that God speaks to both the nation (Isa 41:8-9; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4) and to his chosen servant (Isa 42:1-7; 49:3; 50:6; 53:1ff).
- c. A re-gathering and restoration of God's people (Isa 43:6-7; cf., Isa 44:24-28; 45:14; 49:23; 54:1-3; 60:4).
- d. God will pour out his Spirit on his restored people (Isa 44:3; 53:10; 59:21; cf., Isa 55:1; 58:11; 61:6; 66:21).
- e. Part of God's restoration is to bring others or outsiders into his kingdom (Isa 40:3, 5; 42:6; 49:6; 55:5; 56:3-8; 60:3, 10; 65:1-2, 23; 66:19-21).
- f. Restoration is not merely a return to former things, but a new cosmic creation (Isa 25:6-12; 60:19-20; 65:17-18; 21, 25; 66:22-23; cf., Isa 11:6-9; 30:26).

Jeremiah

- 1. Jeremiah laments at the prospect of exile (Lamentations; cf., Jer 31:15).
- 2. Despite impending judgment there are key themes of restoration found in Jeremiah.
 - a. The Ark of the Covenant. The symbol of God's covenant relationship with Israel would one day be trivial (Jer 3:15-23; cf., Jer 6:16; 16:14-15).
 - b. God will raise up a righteous king, in contrast to the unrighteous kings of Jeremiah's time (Jer 23:1-8).
 - i. The nation will be fruitful and multiply.
 - ii. The king is a shepherd who brings righteousness and justice.

- iii. God will bring his people back in a second exodus.
- c. God promises to make a new covenant with the house of Judah and the house of Israel (Jer 31:31-34). On that day God will accomplish four things.
- i. He will put his law on their hearts.
 - ii. He will be their God.
 - iii. They will all know him from the least of them to the greatest of them.
 - iv. He will forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more.
3. The new covenant that God will make with Israel will be developed further in the book of Ezekiel.

Hosea, Joel, and Amos

1. Hosea, Joel, and Amos are three pre-exilic prophets that speak of God's judgment, but all three offer important insight into the restoration of Israel.
 - a. The relationship between Hosea and Gomer is a power metaphor for Israel's unfaithfulness to their covenant God. Despite their sin God will restore them.
 - i. Though he has called them Lo-ammi (not his people), he will call them his people once again (Hos 1:9-11; 2:14-23; cf., Deut 32:21).

- ii. He will perform a second exodus. He will deliver his people from exile and will bless them and make them great (Hos 6:1-3; 11:1-11; 13:14ff; 14:1-9).
 - b. Joel envisions a day when God will bring judgment.
 - i. God will come at the appointed time to rescue Israel (Joel 2:1-2).
 - ii. Once God has delivered his people he will pour out his Spirit on them (Joel 2:18-32; cf., Num 11:29).
 - iii. God will also pour out his Spirit on all mankind.
 - iv. God will judge the nations and the new age will be characterized by abundance and newness (Joel 3:18-21).
 - c. Amos denounces the sin of Israel, particularly their hypocrisy, idolatry, and injustice. It is only at the end of Amos that we find hope and restoration. It is in the context of the covenant with David that God will bring restoration (Amos 9:11-15).
 - i. He will rebuild the house of David (Amos 9:11).
 - ii. He will save the Edomites; Israel's traditional enemies (Amos 9:12; cf., Obadiah).
 - iii. He will bring newness to the land (Amos 9:13-15).
- 2. God will establish his kingdom (Amos), he will secure his people and save them (Hosea), and the identifying mark of God's promise of restoration and presence with them is by his Spirit (Joel).

Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah

1. Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah offer a message of restoration in light of God's coming judgment.
 - a. Micah addresses Israel's injustice like Amos.
 - i. Micah highlights that after the exile a remnant of God's people shall return (Micah 2:12; 4:1-7; 5:7-8; 7:18).
 - ii. The remnant will flourish and multiply as they will reign with their God (Micah 7:7-20).
 - iii. As the kingdom is restored, so is the king (Micah 2:13; 4:8; 5:2-6).
 - b. Habakkuk speaks of the judgment of God and the need for the people to have faith.
 - i. Only those who trust God by faith will be justified and restored (Hab 2:1- The presence of faith in the life of Israel is an indication that God has restored his people.
 - ii. God will deliver his people as a warrior who will destroy their enemies and cause them to walk on high places (Hab 3:16-19).
 - c. Zephaniah vividly portrays God's judgment.
 - i. His prophecies are not just local in their focus, but also cosmic (Zep 1:18; 3:8).

- ii. Zephaniah sees a day when God will gather his remnant along with those beyond the borders of Israel (Zep 3:8-20).
- 2. God will fulfill the promises given to David (Micah), save those who trust in him by faith (Habakkuk), and bring about cosmic restoration (Zephaniah).