

# Lessons from the Prophets

## Ethics

**Text: Genesis 5:22-24; 6:9**

### Introduction:

1. The prophets of God taught many things about the coming of the Messiah.
2. Yet they also had much to teach for the people of their own time.
3. The inspired word of God they preached was to correct and guide men in their faithfulness.
4. The examples they set in their lives demonstrated true obedience to God.
5. Thus, from the prophets many important lessons can be learned.

### I. DEFINITIONS

- A. Ethics is the science of human behavior seeking to determine if one's actions are right or wrong.
- B. Man, in his own wisdom, has devised many theories and beliefs concerning ethical behavior.
- C. The prophets understood and taught ethical behavior as being aligned with the will of God.
  1. An action is wrong when it contradicts the Word of God.
  2. An action is right when it harmonizes with the Word of God.
  3. God's Word is the absolute standard for ethics.
  4. The duty of man is to know and obey the will of God.
  5. This removes any human ideal as a standard or goal.
  6. Thus, an ethical person is one who walks with God (cf. Genesis 5:22-24; 6:9).
- D. That which is ethical is righteousness; that which is unethical is sin.
- E. As a result, sin is clearly defined and described by the prophets of God.
  1. **Sin** (*chata'*) - deviation from the right way; to miss the mark or goal
    - a. This is the primary word used for sin (580 times).
    - b. It is illustrated clearly (Judges 20:16; Job 5:24; Proverbs 19:2).
    - c. "Sin is no thin veneer over the essential goodness, but is cut into the heart of stone with a diamond pointed pen (Jeremiah 17:1)" (Jack P. Lewis).
  2. **Transgression** (*pasha'*) - rebellion (Isaiah 1:2, 20, 28; cf. Amos 1:3; 2:6; 4:4; 5:12)
  3. **Iniquity** (*'awon*) - to twist the standard, pervert; crooked behavior (231 uses)
    - a. Beth-el ("House of God") becomes Beth-aven ("House of sin") because of iniquity (Amos 5:5; Hosea 4:15; 5:8; 10:5, 8).
    - b. Rejecting God's Word produces iniquity (Isaiah 30:12-13).
  4. **Err** (*shaghah*) - to stray; to go or wander astray (Ezekiel 34:6; Isaiah 28:7-8)
  5. **Unjust** (*awal*) - to act wrongfully (Isaiah 26:10; Hosea 10:13)
  6. **Guilt** (*'asham*) - wrongdoing and the guilt incurred from such; being held guilty (Hosea 5:15; 13:16; Ezekiel 22:4)
  7. **Violence** (*chamas*) - wrongdoing involving cruelty, injustice, and oppression (Ezekiel 7:23; 8:17; Amos 3:10; 6:1-3)
  8. **Destruction** (*shodh*) - oppression of the poor (through deceit and violence); often refers to the abuse of power (Isaiah 59:6-9)
- F. There are other words that define and describe sin as evil, wickedness, and ungodliness.
- G. God's standard for ethical behavior is clear and powerful.

## Lessons from the Prophets

- II. SPECIFIC SINS
  - A. Greed
  - B. Pride
  - C. Drunkenness
  - D. Stealing
  - E. Murder
  - F. Breach of Covenant
  - G. Lying
  - H. False Prophecy
  - I. Sexual Immorality
    - 1. Homosexuality
    - 2. Incest
    - 3. Adultery
    - 4. Fornication
    - 5. Prostitution
    - 6. Idolatrous Sex Rites
    - 7. Symbolic adultery
      - a. Politically
      - b. Spiritually
    - 8. Divorce
    - 9. Inter-marriage with Gentiles
  - J. Other sins...
    - 1. Disrespect for parents (authority)
    - 2. Abduction (kidnapping, slave raids)
    - 3. Dishonesty
      - a. Borders
      - b. Business
      - c. Bribery
    - 4. Charging Interest
    - 5. Lack of Knowledge of God's Word
  - K. God wanted men to understand sin so it could be avoided and made right.
  - L. The prophets served faithfully by teaching the truth about sin.