

Lessons from the Prophets

Preparation

Text: Ezekiel 3:16-21

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. WARNING AS RESPONSIBILITY

(EZEKIEL 3:16-21)

- A. In a previous lesson it was noted that prophets were “warning watchmen” (Ezekiel 33:1-7).
- B. The work of warning the lost and the wayward was a tremendous responsibility with severe consequences.
- C. If a prophet failed to warn the wicked, the sinner would be lost, and the prophet would bear guilt (cf. Genesis 9:5-6; 42:22; Luke 11:50-51; Acts 20:26-27).
 1. If the prophet warned the wicked and he refused to repent, the sinner would still be lost.
 2. However, the prophet would not be guilty in this situation.
- D. The same was true for a righteous person who had gone astray.
 1. If he failed to return, he would be lost.
 2. If he did return, he would be saved.
 3. If the prophet failed to warn him, he would bear guilt for the sinner’s lost state.
 4. If the prophet did warn him, then he cleared himself of all guilt.
- E. The prophet’s role as a warning watchman was a serious responsibility.

II. WARNING AGAINST ERROR

(JEREMIAH 5:30-31)

- A. True, faithful prophets of God supported one another (cf. 1 Kings 18:4).
- B. However, the faithful prophet of God was strongly opposed to false prophets and their errors.
- C. In Jeremiah’s time, the prophets, priests, and people were all committed to and corrupted by false prophecy.
- D. God’s prophets had a responsibility to confront this error, but with a heart of reverence and love (cf. Jeremiah 14:14; 23:9-15).
- E. The teachers and the hearers had to be warned about their sin (Jeremiah 23:16-32).
- F. The attitude of Jesus toward false prophets and error was the same (Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24; cf. 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1).

III. WARNING ABOUT SHEPHERDS

(JEREMIAH 23:1-4)

- A. The shepherds of Israel were their leaders – including the kings, priests, and prophets.
- B. God was their true Shepherd; thus, He condemned human shepherds who led the people astray.
- C. This responsibility of warning about the shepherds fell to God’s faithful prophets.
- D. The shepherds themselves had to be warned.

Lessons from the Prophets

1. There was a “woe” upon them.
 2. They would be punished for their actions.
 3. They would be replaced by loyal shepherds.
- E. God was against the negligent and unfaithful shepherds (Ezekiel 34:1-10).
- F. These principles still apply to God shepherds today – the elders of the Lord’s church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
1. Their work is primarily spiritual – watching for souls (Hebrews 13:17).
 2. This requires knowledge of and faithfulness to God’s Word (Titus 1:9).
 3. It demands both strength and compassion (Isaiah 40:1-11).
- G. Godly shepherds will heed God’s warning.