

# He Gave Us Prophets

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## Study Guide

LESSON  
ONE

ESSENTIAL  
HERMENEUTICAL  
PERSPECTIVES



THIRD MILLENNIUM  
MINISTRIES

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## STUDY GUIDE

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### How to use this lesson and study guide

- **Before you watch the lesson**
  - **Preparation** — Complete any recommended readings.
  - **Schedule breaks** — Review the outline and the time codes to determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions in the outline.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
  - **Notes** — Use the Notes section to follow the lesson and to take additional notes. Many of the main ideas are already summarized in the notes, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
  - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
  - **Review Questions** — Questions on the basic content of the lesson. Answer review questions in the space provided. Review questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
  - **Application Questions** — Questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

## Outline

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## Notes

### I. Introduction

### II. Our Confusion

Pastors and other Christian leaders tend to avoid careful explanations about Old Testament prophets because they're so confused about this part of the Bible.

#### A. Sources of Confusion

##### 1. Prophetic Books

The books of prophecy in Scripture are probably the most difficult parts of the Bible to grasp.

The kings, nations, wars and other events are so complex that we have a hard time keeping our bearings.

## **2. The Church**

When it comes to interpreting Old Testament prophecy, there is hardly any harmony at all, only disagreements.

### **B. Results of Confusion**

#### **1. Victimization**

There's so much disagreement and confusion that so-called prophecy experts rise to bring order to the confusion.

Christians are easily victimized by so-called experts.

#### **2. Apathy**

Many Christians seem to go through phases in their approach to prophecy. First, they begin with a lot of enthusiasm.

Believers find themselves in a crisis.

In many cases, Christians give up trying to understand this part of the Bible.

We need to learn about Old Testament prophecy so that:

- We will not be victimized by every wind of doctrine
- We can avoid apathy.

### **III. Prophet's Experience**

There are at least three common misconceptions about the experiences of prophets.

#### **A. Mental State**

Many act as if prophets were practically out of their minds when they received their prophecies.

Some mistakenly think that biblical prophets went into a state of feverish delirium, much like Canaanite prophets of Baal, and other religions of the ancient and modern world.

## **B. Inspiration**

### **1. Mechanical Inspiration**

Prophets were not passive instruments of revelation. They were not mere mechanical mouthpieces of God.

### **2. Organic Inspiration**

The Holy Spirit inspired the writings of prophets so that they have no errors.

God used the personalities, thoughts, backgrounds and outlooks of human writers.

**C. Comprehension**

Prophets understood much of what they said.

Commonly misinterpreted passages about prophetic understanding:

- Daniel 12:8

Daniel understood what he had heard and written. He knew the vocabulary and grammar. But he didn't understand precisely how the prophecy would be fulfilled.

- 1 Peter 1:11

Old Testament prophets remained ignorant of the details of timing and circumstances. But they still comprehended much of what they were saying.



#### **IV. Original Meaning**

- We must first discover the original meaning of a passage, and then submit ourselves to the authority of that original meaning.
  
- With Old Testament prophecy, we forget this basic hermeneutical principle.

##### **A. Popular Exegesis**

###### **1. Atomistic**

It's very typical for Christians to read the prophets as collections of loosely connected predictions.

Most Evangelicals don't concern themselves with the historical context of prophets.

Christians tend to look at what is happening in the world around us today and we seek to fill the empty canisters of prophecy with current, historical events.

## **2. Ahistorical**

Reading without a concern for the historical context of the writer and audience.

## **B. Proper Exegesis**

- We have to apply the basic principles of interpretation that we use in other parts of the Bible.
- The original meaning of prophecy is to be discovered through grammatico-historical exegesis.

### **1. Literary Context**

We have to learn how to handle large sections of material, verses and chapters, sections of books, even whole books of prophecy.

### **2. Historical Context**

Proper exegesis includes reading prophecies within their historical context.

**V. New Testament Perspectives****A. Authority**

Jesus and the apostles were fully convinced of the authority of Old Testament prophets.

**1. Prophetic Scriptures**

Jesus and his apostles affirmed their submission to the sacred Scriptures of the prophets.

**2. Prophetic Intentions**

Jesus and his apostles were submissive to the original intentions of the prophets as well.

New Testament writers did not have a God-given right to interpret the Old Testament any way they wanted.

- Acts 2:29-31
  - Peter did not read Christian ideas into Psalm 16.
  - He interpreted David's prophetic words in the light of David's experience and David's intentions.
  
- John 12:39-40
  - John did not take Isaiah's prophecy in a way that was convenient for his own goals.
  - He sought to submit himself to the organically inspired intentions of the prophet.

## **B. Application**

Christ and his followers were committed to applying the prophetic word to the dramatic events that were happening in their day.

### **1. Prophetic Expectations**

The prophets looked forward to a time when God would restore his people and make all things new.

God would intervene into the world and bring all things to their final end.

## 2. **Prophetic Fulfillments**

The New Testament saw the fulfillment of Old Testament prophetic expectations in Christ.

Jesus insisted that the interpretation of the prophecies must be centered around him.

Old Testament prophets set a trajectory of hope, a direction of expectation. The New Testament traces this trajectory to its fulfillment in:

- the first coming of Christ
- his kingdom today
- the end of the world when Jesus returns in glory

Followers of Christ must also learn how to apply the expectations of Old Testament prophecy to:

- the first coming of Christ
- the continuation of his kingdom
- the second coming of Christ

## **VI. Conclusion**

## Review Questions

1. In understanding the prophets, what are the two main sources of our confusion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are the results of this confusion? What should we do in response to this confusion?

3. What was the true mental state of the Old Testament prophets?

4. Contrast the two outlooks on prophetic inspiration mentioned in the lesson.







9. How did Jesus and the apostles affirm the authority of Old Testament prophets?

10. How did Jesus and his followers apply Old Testament prophecies to events happening in their day?

## Application Questions

1. Describe the problems that might be created in a church that experienced the types of confusion mentioned in the lesson.
2. What are some improper responses to this confusion? What is the proper way to respond to this confusion?
3. Using an Old Testament prophecy as an example, explain how popular exegesis of that prophecy can lead to misunderstanding and problems, and how proper exegesis can lead to understanding and useful application.
4. In light of the importance of original meaning, what process should we follow in order to apply Old Testament prophecy to events in our day?
5. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?