

THE PROPHETS OF OLD

“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place...” —2 PETER 1:19

For many people, the Old Testament prophets and their books are a little like entering dark mysterious houses, and when you walk into the first chapter, you wish someone would turn on a light. It seems full of doom and gloom and confusion. There are many judgments and rebukes, but there are also glimpses of light. Amongst all the rubble, the lights are like finding diamonds in the rough, which are beautiful truths of Scripture.

A prophet basically talked about three things. They told the people what was wrong with the world, and in particular, Israel and Judah. Their messages were diagnostic in nature and would speak about what was happening and why. Secondly, their messages would deliver what God was going to do to bring about correction, which usually involved chastisement, judgment or the threat of an invading power that would overrun the nation of Israel. The third aspect was that in the midst of devastation and turmoil, there was the offer of hope. Chastisement was not an end in itself, but was always remedial, designed to bring people back into fellowship with God.

One of the most dramatic ways God communicated through His prophets was their personal experiences. Jeremiah was melancholy and needed companionship, but God told him never to marry,

because that would send a message that he believed in the future when God wanted to convey to the people that Judah would be destroyed. Ezekiel was not allowed to mourn in public the loss of his wife whom God had put to death. He had to grieve silently and privately. Hosea was told to take an adulterous wife, who left him, turned to prostitution, and he bought her back at half the price because no one wanted her. A great portion of his book reveals God's broken heart over the adultery of His people with other gods.

As it was with the prophets, if we are going to personally know God, with little exception, we are going to enter into a heart that experiences pain. The truth of God must come to us first before it can ever go through us. God gifts us with touching His heart in our pain so that we may become channels of blessing to others in the area of our suffering. In the process, we learn something of God's heart, and in hindsight, can see those diamonds glittering amongst the rubble of our pasts, because God does not waste anything in our lives. He uses them not only to build and strengthen us, but greatly blesses us with a deeper revelation of Himself.

PRAYER: Precious Lord, keep me in harmony with your heart, and with an ever increasing desire to turn the hearts of others towards You. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I think about God's heart over people's rejection of Him?