

Hermeneutics session 11
Interpreting Prophecy, Part 1

- The Old Testament prophets are divided between the “former prophets” and the “latter prophets.”
 - Former prophets: Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings.
 - Latter prophets (or the “writing prophets”): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the 12 minor prophets.
- Prophecy: The giving of a message from God. May refer to the past, present, or future.
- Interpretation begins with finding the scope (the reason that God inspired the book) and the plan (the organization of the book that fulfills God’s reason for the book).
 - Who was it written to? When was it written?
 - One good tool is a study Bible which includes an introduction and timeline to the book.
 - A common theme in prophecy is the relationship that God’s people had with God at a particular time. God was a perfect husband to His people; the problem was not with God, but with the people.
 - There were repeated warnings of judgment because of the unfaithfulness of the people
- The Lord sometimes inspired the prophet to include the prophet’s “credentials.” This might be a recounting of a vision. The credentials were sometimes necessary because the prophet was bringing difficult words from the Lord. The credentials established that the prophet did not come by his own authority, but by the Lord’s authority.
- The Lord also spoke to surrounding nations and great empires through His prophets. This shows that God is not just a regional or national deity like the idols of the nations. He is God over all history and over every nation.
- When interpreting a particular prophetic passage, it’s important to find out if God was speaking (from the standpoint of the original hearers) of the past, the present, the near future, or the distant future.
- A prophet was sometimes inspired by the Lord to use the language of a covenant lawsuit.
 - A covenant lawsuit included language describing a legal charge, because of the unfaithfulness of Israel in the covenant marriage.
 - The covenant lawsuit included language describing the accuser (the Lord), the accused (God’s people), the summary of charges, witnesses, specific accusations and statements of fact brought into evidence, and the accused being summoned to receive their just sentence.
- The Lord sometimes commanded prophets to physically act out a prophecy as a visible sign before the people.