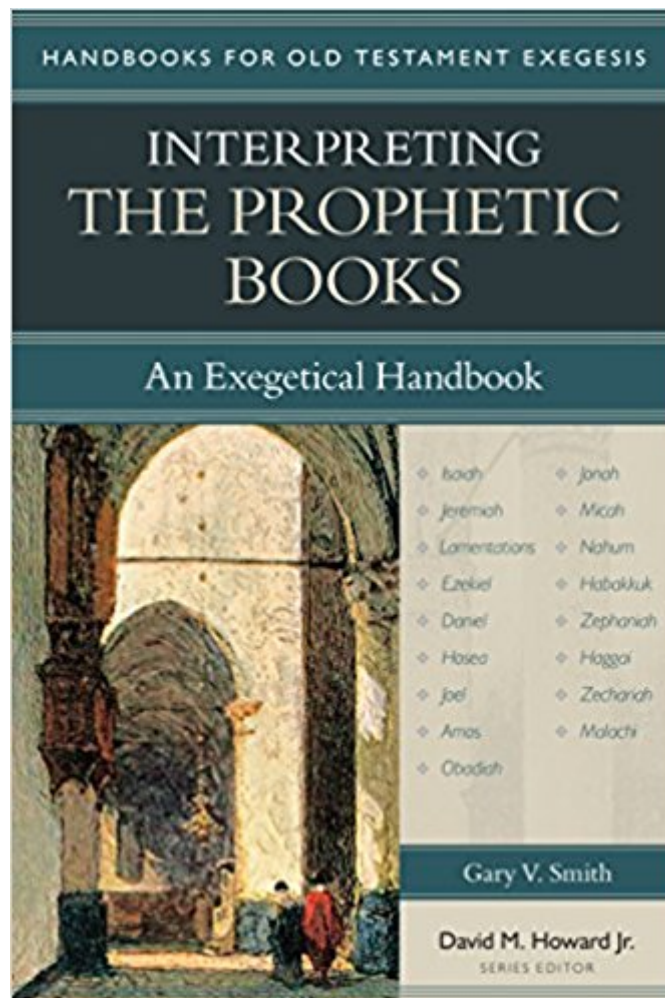


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Interpreting The Prophetic Books: An Exegetical Handbook (Handbooks For Old Testament Exegesis)



Synopsis

A guide for students and pastors to interpret and communicate the messages of the prophetic books well. Preaching from a prophetic text can be daunting because it can be difficult to place these prophecies in their proper historical setting. The prophets used different literary genres and they often wrote using metaphorical poetry that is unfamiliar to the modern reader. This handbook offers an organized method of approaching a prophecy and preparing a persuasive, biblically based sermon that will draw modern application from the theological principle embedded in the prophetic text.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

David M. Howard, Jr. (Ph.D. University of Michigan) is Professor of Old Testament at Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, MN. He has published seven books and numerous journal articles, book chapters, and essays, and is a past president of the Evangelical Theological Society.

The prophets don't get the air play that the rest of Scripture does. Isaiah gets rolled out for the holidays, Daniel is featured at every End Times conference, Jeremiah is selectively quoted, but by and large the prophetic literature is left untouched. No 'Book of the Twelve' on a Sunday morning because the church does not serve minors! Those who do try to delve into the prophets are often left confused about historical context, genre, and application. Gary Smith is a Old Testament scholar

and commentator who has dug deeply and discovered the treasures that await us in the Prophets. In *Interpreting the Prophetic Books: An Exegetical Handbook* (part of Kregel's 'Handbooks For Old Testament Exegesis' series) Smith walks us through the process of interpreting the prophets well. The book is designed especially for students who are working with biblical languages, but the working pastor whose Hebrew is gone with the ruach, will find this a fairly accessible guide. Smith begins in chapter one by discussing the nature of prophetic literature. Distinctive features include the temporal categories in prophecy (prophecies describing present events, prophecies about a future era, and the apocalyptic/symbolic). Smith also describes the genres of prophecies and the poetic parallelism within the prophetic literature. Chapter two explores the primary themes of each book. Chapter three identifies the things you will need for interpreting the prophets wisely. These include knowing the historical setting of each book (and Smith provides a brief overview of the pre-exilic prophets of Israel and Judah, the exilic prophets and post-exilic), prophecy in the Ancient Near East context, awareness of text critical issues, and the best commentaries and resources at your disposal. Chapter four is where the fun starts. Smith discusses various interpretive issues related to the prophetic literature. Including: are prophecies literary or metaphorical? Are they limited by context? Are they conditional or unconditional? Are they about the near or the far future? How the New Testament authors interpret the prophets and is their method legitimate for us? Chapters five and six describe the exegetical process for interpreting the prophets. Chapter five walks through how to 'proclaim the text' (interpreting with an eye for the central principle and application). Chapter six lays out a method which integrates all the earlier chapters. I don't expect exegetical handbooks to be exciting reading. There is too much method and too little metaphor, by the nature of the format. However I found Smith's discuss of themes, historical backgrounds and interpretive issues to be highly interesting. I will likely refer back to this book the next time I preach or teach on the prophets. That will likely be when I roll out Isaiah for the holidays. Oh and other times to, because I really like the prophets. I think it is sad that we don't acquaint ourselves with them more. Maybe with Smith's guide we will. I give it four stars. Notice of material connection: I received this book from Kregel Academic in exchange for my honest review.

The prophetic books of scripture are rich with imagery about how God deals with the nations and His people. If we study these books, we will gain a fuller picture of our great God. Unfortunately, the prophetic books can be difficult for the modern reader to understand. We need to learn how to interpret the difficult prophetic passages. So we turn to a seasoned interpreter, Gary Smith. Dr. Smith helps us with many of the hurdles that we encounter as we read the prophetic texts. This

book addresses such issues as: the genres of prophecies, poetic expression in prophecy, parallelism in prophetic literature, and imagery in prophecy. The author also helps us by pointing out the major themes in the prophetic books. Dr. Smith equips the reader by giving us a tool box of interpretation with the goal of proclaiming the text. We are taught how to benefit from learning about the historical setting of each book. The reader is taught how to identify variant readings and choose the best reading. Dr. Smith also includes a listing of useful commentaries on each of the prophetic books. We are also guided through interpretive issues such as: literal or metaphorical, contextual, conditional or unconditional, and terms of fulfillment. The reader is then taught how to bridge the gap between interpreting and proclaiming the text. Dr. Smith illustrates this process by giving us two example texts with their interpretations and applications. Pastors, teachers, and students will all benefit greatly from this handbook. Some handbooks are cumbersome and unwieldy. This book, coming in at around 200 pages, is immediately useful and accessible. I learned much in my first reading and intend to return to this volume as I read and study through the prophetic books. My reading of these passages has gone from apprehension to delight as I have learned how to navigate and interpret these precious writings. I am grateful to Dr. Smith and Kregel for this excellent volume in the Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis series. Disclaimer: I received this book from the publisher in exchange for my unbiased opinion.

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