

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 13A, Session 14, Hermeneutical Principles for Interpreting Prophetic Writings Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 13A, Session 14, Hermeneutical Principles for Interpreting Prophetic Writings, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Robert Vannoy's lecture on "Hermeneutical Principles for Interpretation of Prophetic Writings" explores critical aspects of understanding biblical prophecy. He highlights that prophecy isn't mere future-telling but is rooted in God's historical purpose, culminating in Christ's return. **Vannoy distinguishes prophetic discourse from historical writing, noting prophecy's enigmatic nature and unique time perspective.** The lecture examines how predictive prophecy progresses and uses culturally specific language. Finally, Vannoy discusses different approaches to interpreting culturally dated terminology in prophecy, such as literal fulfillment, spiritualization, and looking for equivalents.

2. 27 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 13A, Session 14 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Foundations).



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3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 13A, Session 14, Hermeneutical Principles for Interpreting Prophetic Writings

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Robert Vannoy's "Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 13a," focusing on hermeneutical principles for interpreting prophetic writings:

Briefing Document: Vannoy on Interpreting Biblical Prophecy

Main Theme: Vannoy outlines and discusses several key hermeneutical principles crucial for properly interpreting biblical prophetic writings. He emphasizes that prophecy is not merely about predicting the future, but about God's purposeful movement in history, culminating in Christ's return and impacting our present lives. He cautions against common misinterpretations of prophecy, particularly regarding its relationship to historical writing, and introduces principles for understanding its unique character.

Key Ideas and Facts:

1. **The Purpose of Predictive Prophecy:** Prophecy is not just about future prediction but about understanding God's overarching purpose in history and its implications for contemporary living. As Vannoy notes, prophecy is given "in the context of God's purposeful movement in history ultimately pointing to the period of consummation when Christ returns and how that is to affect how we live today."
2. **Predictive Prophecy vs. History Writing:** Vannoy addresses two erroneous views about the relationship between prophecy and history:
 - **Prophecy as History Written After the Event:** This view, often held by critical scholars, denies genuine predictive prophecy, claiming it's simply history written after the fact. Vannoy, quoting Mickelsen, refutes this, stating, "but prophecy is not history written after the event. Ordinary historical writing in the Bible lacks the enigmatic character of prophecy." He highlights that historical discourse is detailed and chronological, while prophetic discourse is more enigmatic and less detailed.
 - **Predictive Prophecy as History Written Beforehand:** Vannoy clarifies that while prophecy does speak of the future, it doesn't provide the same level of detail as historical accounts. He asserts, "Prophetic discourse does not normally give as complete a picture of an event as historical discourse does...instead you get that

enigmatic character." While fulfillment is recognizable, it may contain unforeseen "twists and turns."

1. **Example: Isaiah 9 and Matthew 4:** Vannoy uses the example of Isaiah 9 and its fulfillment in Matthew 4 to illustrate how prophecy can be fulfilled in ways not completely foreseen. While Matthew sees Jesus' ministry in Galilee as a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy about a great light in the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, Isaiah's original context involved a threat to King Ahaz and the devastation of the area by Tiglath-pileser.
2. **The Progressive Character of Predictive Prophecy:** Revelation and predictive prophecy unfold gradually, providing increasing detail over time. While more information is given on certain prophetic themes, the ambiguity is never completely eliminated, leading to various interpretations. The example of the Antichrist is given as an illustration.
3. **Prophetic Time Perspective:** Prophecy often lacks precise chronological information and compresses events in time, a concept referred to as "the prophetic perspective" or "foreshortening of the prophet's horizon." Vannoy quotes Berkhof, "The prophets compressed great events into a brief space of time, brought momentous movements close together in a temporal sense, and took them in at a single glance." He uses the analogy of a traveler viewing a mountain range to illustrate this.
4. **Example: Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:** Jesus reads from Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4, stopping before the phrase "the day of vengeance of our God," indicating that the first part of the prophecy (proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor) was fulfilled in His first advent, while the latter part will be fulfilled at His second advent. Vannoy points out that "Between Isaiah 61:2a, and 61:2b, there is a time gap."
5. **Culturally Dated Terminology:** Prophetic messages are conveyed using the language, thought patterns, and cultural context of the prophet's time. This raises the question of how to interpret this culturally dated terminology.
6. **Three Approaches to Culturally Dated Terminology:** Vannoy presents three common approaches:
 - **Literal Fulfillment:** Insisting on a literal fulfillment, even of culturally dated terminology. Vannoy argues that this approach doesn't adequately consider the prophet's cultural context and would have rendered the message incomprehensible to the original audience.

- **Symbolic Meaning/Spiritualization:** Interpreting the prophecy symbolically, viewing the language as representing spiritual realities rather than physical events.
 - **Looking for Equivalents/Correspondences:** Accepting figurative language but looking for equivalents or counterparts to the culturally dated terminology in the time of fulfillment. For example, bows and arrows might be interpreted as tanks and rockets. The enemies of God's people are replaced with equivalent contemporary enemies.
1. **Example: Isaiah 11 and the Spiritualizing Approach:** Vannoy uses E.J. Young's commentary on Isaiah 11 as an example of the spiritualizing approach. Young interprets the prophecy of the gathering of Israel and the subjugation of surrounding nations not as literal events, but as symbolic of the worldwide spread of the gospel and the unity of believers in Christ. For example, Young says that Isaiah's description of the defeat of the Philistines "cannot, of course, be understood in a literal sense. Rather, here is a beautiful picture of the unity that is the possession of the saints of God...and of the vigorous, active participation in the work of conquering the enemy world."

Overall Significance:

Vannoy's lecture emphasizes the importance of a nuanced approach to interpreting biblical prophecy. He cautions against simplistic interpretations and highlights the need to consider the historical context, the literary genre, the progressive nature of revelation, and the challenges posed by culturally dated terminology. He presents various interpretive approaches, acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately encourages careful and thoughtful engagement with the prophetic texts.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 13A, Session 14, Hermeneutical Principles for Interpreting Prophetic Writings

Foundations of Biblical Prophecy: A Study Guide

I. Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Vannoy, what is the primary purpose of predictive prophecy?
2. What are the two common but erroneous ideas about the relationship between predictive prophecy and history writing?
3. What does Mickelsen mean when he says that prophecy has an "enigmatic character?"
4. How can the enigmatic character of predictive prophecy still allow for recognizability of fulfillment?
5. How does the example of Isaiah 9 and Matthew 4 illustrate the character of prophetic discourse?
6. Explain the concept of the "progressive character of predictive prophecy."
7. What does Vannoy mean by the statement "Predictive prophecy has its own peculiar time perspective"?
8. Explain the concept of the "foreshortening of the prophet's horizon," using the analogy of viewing a mountain range in the distance.
9. What are the three basic ways in which interpreters have dealt with culturally dated terminology in predictive prophecy?
10. What does it mean to "spiritualize" prophecy, and how does E.J. Young's interpretation of Isaiah 11 exemplify this approach?

II. Quiz Answer Key

1. The primary purpose of predictive prophecy is not merely to satisfy curiosity about the future, but to reveal God's purposeful movement in history, ultimately pointing to the consummation when Christ returns and how that affects present-day living. It is meant to shape our present lives in light of God's ultimate plan.

2. One erroneous idea is that predictive prophecy is simply history written after the event, a view held by critical scholars who deny genuine predictive prophecy. The other is that predictive prophecy is history written beforehand, implying it provides as complete a picture of events as historical discourse, which it does not.
3. Mickelsen means that prophetic discourse doesn't present all the details of an event in an ordered, synchronous way, unlike historical discourse. Instead, prophecy offers a few particulars without providing the complete picture, making it somewhat mysterious and incomplete.
4. While prophecy may not provide all the details, it offers enough information that when the predicted events occur, they can be recognized as fulfilling the prophecy. However, the fulfillment might come in ways not entirely foreseen or anticipated, with surprising twists and turns.
5. Isaiah 9 foretells a great light in the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, which Matthew 4 connects to Jesus' ministry in Galilee. However, Isaiah's prophecy doesn't specify Jesus directly, demonstrating the "enigmatic character" of prophetic discourse, where details are not fully filled in until fulfillment.
6. The "progressive character of predictive prophecy" refers to the gradual unfolding and development of prophetic themes. As revelation progresses, more details are revealed, but the ambiguity and enigmatic nature of prophecy are not totally eliminated.
7. Predictive prophecy typically lacks a strong emphasis on precise chronological information, and events are often presented in a compressed manner, making them seem closer in time than they actually are. This unique perspective affects how we interpret the timing of predicted events.
8. The "foreshortening of the prophet's horizon" is like a traveler viewing a mountain range: the mountains appear close together, but in reality, they are far apart. Similarly, prophets see future events as if they are compressed in time, even when significant gaps may exist between them.
9. The three approaches to culturally dated terminology are: (1) insist on a literal fulfillment, even in the details; (2) see the prophecy as symbolic, spiritualizing the language; and (3) look for equivalents or correspondences, understanding that tangible, material realities are still being referenced.
10. To "spiritualize" prophecy means to understand the words not in a physical or material sense, but as symbolic of spiritual realities and forces. E.J. Young's

interpretation of Isaiah 11 illustrates this by viewing the restoration of Israel and the defeat of its enemies as symbolic of the spread of the gospel and the unity of believers in Christ.

III. Essay Questions

1. Discuss the implications of understanding predictive prophecy as distinct from historical writing. How does this distinction affect our interpretation of prophetic texts?
2. Explain the concept of "culturally dated terminology" in predictive prophecy. Provide examples of how different interpretive approaches (literal, symbolic, equivalence) can lead to varying understandings of a specific prophetic passage.
3. Explore the tension between the "enigmatic character" of prophecy and the need for recognizable fulfillment. How can interpreters balance these two aspects to arrive at a sound understanding of prophetic texts?
4. Analyze the significance of the "progressive character of predictive prophecy" in relation to the interpretation of eschatological themes (e.g., the Antichrist, the Day of the Lord).
5. Evaluate the impact of the "prophetic time perspective" on our understanding of prophetic timelines. How can we account for the "foreshortening of the prophet's horizon" when interpreting prophecies related to the end times?

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Predictive Prophecy:** Prophecy that speaks of events that are to happen in the future.
- **Hermeneutics:** The branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts.
- **Enigmatic Character:** The mysterious, incomplete, or puzzling nature of prophetic discourse, where all the details are not explicitly provided.
- **Prophetic Discourse:** The specific style and form of communication used in prophetic writings, characterized by an enigmatic character.
- **Historical Discourse:** A type of writing that provides a detailed, chronological account of events, typically focusing on specifics and ordered details.
- **Progressive Revelation:** The gradual unfolding and development of God's truth and plan through history, where more details are revealed over time.
- **Antichrist:** A figure who opposes Christ and God's people, often described in prophetic texts.
- **Prophetic Time Perspective:** The unique way in which time is presented in prophetic writings, often lacking precise chronological information and compressing events.
- **Foreshortening of the Prophet's Horizon:** The compression of time in prophetic vision, where distant events appear closer together than they actually are.
- **Culturally Dated Terminology:** Language, concepts, and imagery in prophetic texts that reflect the cultural context of the prophet and their audience.
- **Spiritualization:** An interpretive approach that understands prophetic language as symbolic of spiritual realities rather than literal events.
- **Equivalence/Correspondence:** An interpretive approach that looks for counterparts or analogous realities in the fulfillment of prophecy, recognizing that culturally dated terminology may not be literally fulfilled.
- **First Advent:** The first coming of Jesus Christ to earth.
- **Second Advent:** The future return of Jesus Christ to earth.
- **Eschatology:** The study of the end times or last things.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 13A, Session 14, Hermeneutical Principles for Interpreting Prophetic Writings, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About Interpreting Biblical Prophecy

1. What is the primary purpose of predictive prophecy, according to the lecture?

Predictive prophecy isn't just about satisfying curiosity about the future. Its main purpose is to reveal God's purposeful movement in history, ultimately pointing to the consummation when Christ returns. Understanding this is meant to influence how we live today, making our present lives more meaningful in light of God's ultimate plan.

2. What are the two common, but erroneous, views about the relationship between predictive prophecy and history writing?

One erroneous view is that predictive prophecy is simply history written after the event. This perspective, often held by critical scholars, denies genuine prediction and suggests it's just historical narrative disguised as prophecy. The other misconception is that predictive prophecy is history written beforehand, implying it provides a complete and detailed picture of future events like a historical account would.

3. How does prophetic discourse differ from historical discourse in the Bible?

Prophetic discourse is characterized by an "enigmatic character." It doesn't provide all the details of an event in an ordered, synchronous way like historical discourse does. Instead, it offers key particulars but omits many subordinate details, creating a less complete picture and often requiring interpretation to fully grasp its meaning.

4. What does it mean to say that predictive prophecy has a "progressive character"?

The "progressive character" of predictive prophecy refers to the gradual unfolding and development of prophetic themes over time. As revelation progresses, we receive more information and details about certain prophecies, but this doesn't entirely eliminate the ambiguity or enigmatic nature of prophecy. The example of the antichrist is used to illustrate that more information is given over time but not enough to create a complete picture.

5. What is meant by the "prophetic time perspective," and how does it affect our understanding of prophecy?

The "prophetic time perspective" refers to the way that prophecy often compresses events into a seemingly shorter period of time than they actually occupy. This can lead to a foreshortening of the prophet's horizon, where events that are far apart in time appear to be close together. An example of this is Isaiah 61:1-2, where Jesus in Luke 4 only reads part of the verse, indicating that the "day of vengeance" was not to be fulfilled during his first coming. This is compared to looking at a mountain range in the distance where all the mountains look close but upon arrival are farther apart than they seemed.

6. What does it mean to say that the message of predictive prophecy may be couched in "culturally dated terminology"?

This means that prophets communicated with their contemporaries using the language, thought patterns, and cultural references of their own time. They used terms related to transportation (horses, chariots), weaponry (swords, bows), and surrounding nations (Moab, Edom) that were familiar to their audience. This raises the question of how we should understand this culturally dated terminology when interpreting prophecy today.

7. What are the three basic approaches to interpreting culturally dated terminology in predictive prophecy?

There are three main approaches: * **Literal Fulfillment:** Insisting that even the culturally dated terminology will be fulfilled literally. For example, if a prophecy mentions horses and chariots, they will literally be present at the time of fulfillment. * **Symbolic Meaning/Spiritualization:** Interpreting the entire prophecy symbolically, viewing the culturally dated terminology as representing spiritual realities or forces rather than physical events. * **Equivalents or Correspondences:** Looking for equivalents or counterparts to the culturally dated terminology in the modern context. For example, bows and arrows might be interpreted as representing modern weapons like tanks or rockets.

8. Can you provide an example of the "spiritualizing" approach to interpreting culturally dated terminology, using Isaiah 11?

E.J. Young's commentary on Isaiah 11 is used as an example of spiritualization. Instead of interpreting the references to Assyria, Egypt, Edom, and Moab literally, Young suggests they represent the spread of the gospel and the inclusion of all nations into the Christian faith through missionary work. The "gathering of the exiles" is interpreted as the Messiah drawing people to himself, and the unity between Ephraim and Judah is seen as the abolition of national distinctions in Christ. The destruction of the enemies is not literal despoilation but "the unity of faith in opposition to the hostility of the world."