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Isaiah and His Contemporaries

IT IS QUITE ERRONEOUS to think of the prophets as men sitting in ivory towers, dreaming of events in the distant future and writing books that would be of little value until centuries after they had been written.

The Old Testament makes it very clear that the prophets were vitally interested in the situations of their own time. Much of what they said consisted of rebuke for the sin of their contemporaries, and sometimes these sins were of a type rarely found today. The prophets were greatly interested in the attitudes of the contemporary rulers and would frequently point out God's desire for the handling of particular situations.

In some places these messages seem to have little relevance to our own time. Yet we can know that God caused them to be preserved as part of His holy Book because He intended that they should have a real meaning for us. Sometimes this meaning relates directly to our circumstances; in other cases careful study will reveal analogies that are useful in ascertaining God's will today.

The Old Testament prophets declared God's intention in particular situations and also gave remarkable predictions about the more distant future. It is easy to fasten our attention on one type of material to the exclusion of the other, but God desires His people to seek to understand every part of His Word. Those passages that may seem more interesting to us generally become more understandable when we connect them with the passages that were particularly related to their own immediate situation.

Even the messages that predict events that would not occur