

Figurative prophecy.

Grounds-- In prophecy, as in any form of speech and writing that endeavors to set forth truth graphically, there is an abundance of figurative language; but, as I recall these chapters, the figures are not obscure and meaningless; rather they state a fact forcibly, and the point of the figure is quite evident. In other words, the figures are to be interpreted literally-- the author's purpose in using them is made clear by the context. For example, in 25.15 the prophet speaks of the wine-cup of God's wrath which all the nations shall be compelled to drink, but the passage obviously means just one thing-- judgment will fall upon these countries. Occasionally, however, the meaning may be debatable as in 5:6. But even here the point is clear-- judgment will devastate the land of Judah. There is, then, no insuperable difficulty with figurative prophecy; its import can almost invariably be determined.

Time in Jer.26-33.

Grounds-- The prophecy of this section is very perplexing. Its meaning is not disputed-- after curse, blessing; first dispersion, then regathering. But as to the time, it is difficult to say. The return under Cyrus is in sight, but the prophecy surely was not fulfilled then. (33.15); many elements of it are as yet unknown to history; hence if we adhere to a literal fulfillment (and the literal fulfillment of many parts almost necessitates this), it must be in the future. As to its meaning, the passage in 31:33 ff. causes difficulty since it is applied in Hebrews to the Christian Church; it raises the ugly question, May we not therefore "spiritualize" the whole? I think not because of the literalness (historically proved) of the context. The spiritualization in Hebrews must be treated as an interesting problem and exception.