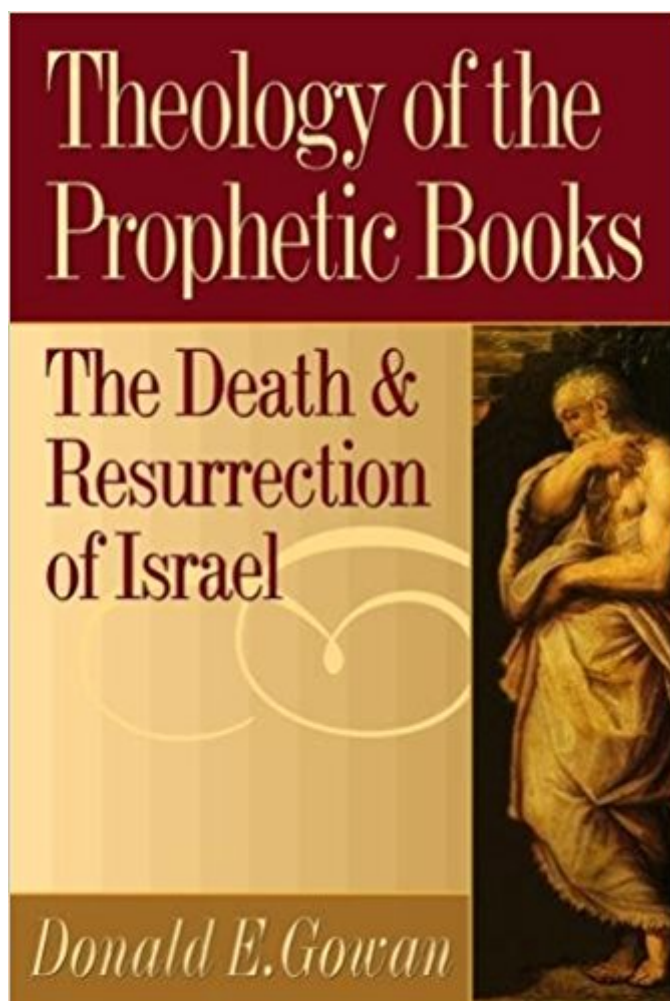


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Theology Of The Prophetic Books: The Death And Resurrection Of Israel



Synopsis

Donald Gowan offers a unified reading of the prophetic books, showing that each has a distinctive contribution to make to a central theme. These books--Isaiah through Malachi--respond to three key moments in Israel's history: the end of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE, the end of the Southern Kingdom in 587 BCE, and the beginning of the restoration from the Babylonian exile in 538 BCE. Gowan traces the theme of death and resurrection throughout these accounts, finding a symbolic message of particular significance to Christian interpreters of the Bible.

Book Information

Paperback: 264 pages

Publisher: Westminster John Knox Press; 1st edition (August 1, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0664256899

ISBN-13: 978-0664256890

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #327,402 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #72 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Prophets #231 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > History & Culture #378 in Books > History > Middle East > Israel & Palestine

Customer Reviews

Donald E. Gowan is Robert Cleveland Holland Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is a minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and has authored several books on the Old Testament, including *Theology in Exodus* and *Theology of the Prophetic Books*.

Very interesting information. It provides rare insights into the lives of the prophets.

Difficult read. Needed for a class and kept the dictionary by while reading. That's not a problem, but the writing is so...technical. Not for the faint of heart.

This book is OK, I use it for an Old Testament class in Divinity school. It can be difficult to read but it

serves the purpose.

Perfect condition I appreciate.

I am using this book in a seminary course, and I find the content to be very useful in placing the prophetic books into context. I will be keeping this book on my shelf as a reference and turning to it to locate the prophetic books in history etc. I am very happy with this book!

In The theology of the prophetic books, Donald Gowan exposes the prophets and brings out the distinctive contribution of each of them with a great insight into the major moments in Israel's beautiful history. He elaborates on the fall of the two rival kingdoms of the North and the South (722 BC and 538 BC respectively) and their restoration beginning from the Babylonian exile which dates as far back as 538. This is indeed a great contribution to the theology of rise and fall of Israel. Gowan, unlike many other prophets scholars does not deal with the general phenomenon of prophecy but to the message of the canonical prophets which are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve minor prophets. His book can be summarized into two major parts. The first part treats the Assyrian threat and the eventual death of Israel. This was made even more easy by the relative weakness that Israel suffered at that time. Jeroboam was king of the Northern kingdom (785-745) and during those years Israel enjoyed relative peace and prosperity but when he died after twenty years of reign (was succeeded by Zachariah), the Assyrians invaded them. The prophets (Amos, Hosea, Micah and proto-Isaiah) who give us some ideas on what was going on, think that God was at work in the midst of the disaster and that there was a reason for it. But why will God inflict such a big blow on Israel which apparently was no worse than the other neighboring states? It is when we consider the questions and answers such as these that we really see how Gowan is so unique in his style of treating the prophetic books. Israel is indeed Yahweh's firstborn (Exod 4:22). Because they occupied such a prioritized position before Yahweh, any nonsense from them was not to be smiled upon by Yahweh. The people had turned to injustice, oppressing the poor and the helpless and embracing pagan gods. They had to be punished for their iniquities (Amos 3:1-2, Hosea 8:13). In the words of Micah "Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins" (Micah 3:12). Proto-Isaiah's words are even more strong : "Because you have raged against me and your arrogance has come to my tears, I will put my hook into your nose and my bit in your mouth, I will turn my back on the way by which you came" (Is.37:29) The late seventh and early centuries were the time of the neo-Babylonian threat and the death of Judah. It was during that time that we saw

the rise of prophets such as Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Obadiah, Ezekiel and Jonah. Their messages were very much clear on what God was doing in the mist of the coming disaster. Disaster was sure to come but what next. What about the future of those exiled and those left in Judah? Jeremiah's good and bad tree vision makes us understand that those on exile are better off. This really is no indication that they are morally superior but in fact as Gowan says they have had their fill of punishment. Exile is the highest punishment one can ever endure. God's intention for those in exile is good (Jer.24:6) for they will be brought back to their land. The restoration of the exiled back to their land is repeated umpteenth times throughout the books of the prophets. On the other hand, Jeremiah tells the people to make Babylon their home, for restoration is to take seventy years. The second part of the book dwells on the resurrection (536 B.C.E) and the post exilic period. It is the period between the mid six centuries and later. The prophets who appear during this time of the "resurrection" or the restoration to the promised land are Isaiah 40-55,(Deutero Isaiah) Haggai and Zechariah, Isaiah 56-66 (Trito-Isaiah), Malachi and Joel. Yahweh has raised up Cyrus according to Isaiah to bring the Babylonian empire to an end, for the time of exile is over. God had forgiven all their sins and he will lead them back to their home land and Jerusalem will be rebuilt in splendor "Confort, O comfort my people says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her That she has served her term, That her penalty is paid That she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins' (Isa 40:1-2) After the restoration, what happens with the temple? This was the main concern of the prophet Haggai " Thus says the Lord of Host: these people say the time has not yet come to rebuilt the Lord's house" (Haggai 1:2). Calling for the rebuilding of the temple is an indication that the Lord of host yearns to give himself again fully without reservation. I am not a scripture scholar but reading Gowan's Theology of the prophetic books leaves one with a strong insight and a full appreciation of the rise and fall of Israel. The key moments that gave rise to this principle are the fall of Samaria which took place in 722 B.C.E, the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E and the restoration of the community after 538 B.C.E. The first two moments speak of the death and the last one dwells on the resurrection. Gowan's analyses are pregnant with a Jewish understanding that Israel died and was reborn, was punished through exile and then forgiven and restored. One cannot not appreciate the post-exilic "second temple era" as the setting from which the canonical books of the law and the prophets achieve their normative status. His work is well researched and well done, although one is tempted to think that he does not dwell so much on covenant theology as one would have wished. My respect to you Sir, May you live long and continue to work for the democratization of knowledge.

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