

In the study of the prophetic book a mistake that is commonly made is to desert scientific methods and instead of going from the simple to the complex, endeavor to proceed from the complex to the simple. That is to say, it is quite common to take a difficult statement in the prophetic book and undertake to explain exactly what is meant by it without first making an attempt to understand the more simple matters in order to have them as foundations for undertaking the difficult problems. It is only when we go from the simple to the complex that we can be sure of having correct results in our study.

One great difficulty in the study of the prophetic books of the Old Testament is that the historic background of them is often only sketchily given. There are allusions and references which are not explained in the text. The reason for this, of course, is that we have in it the statement of the prophets rather than the history of the times. They are in a way similar to editorials or speeches which are given in the present day. They do not tell the background of that with which they are dealing since that is thoroughly known to the people to whom they are speaking. Yet everything they say is closely and intimately related to that background and cannot be properly understood without some understanding of it.

We have a great advantage in dealing with the prophetic books in that we can take up the study of the actions of the prophets as told in the historical books of the Old Testament. Here we have not merely what the prophets said but also the situation in which they made their statement and often an account of the events which followed their statement. The prophetic books sometimes give this information but very often fail to do so. In order to understand properly all that is involved in the statements of the prophets, it is important to see just how the actual statements of the prophets that are given us in the historic books are related to the events which had preceded and the fulfillments which followed their utterance.

From this viewpoint, in order to lay a proper foundation for study of the