

It is a common practice among the great writing prophets, after rebuking the sin of the people, declaring the punishment that is bound to come, and exhorting the people to turn away from their sin, then to turn their attention to the little group of the godly. These people believed that the prophets spoke from God. They accepted the prophetic message as true. They knew that the nation, if it did not repent, must inevitably be punished for its sin. They felt themselves to be implicated in the sin of the nation; as they saw their associates rushing headlong toward disaster they might easily give way to despair and think that God in His wrath would cast away the people whom He had so blessed in the past. Time after time, after declaring a great message of rebuke, a prophet would turn to this godly element and would look far beyond the coming judgment to give them assurance that God was not through with His people, that God would indeed fulfill His purposes, that after the fulfillment of the judgment there was blessing ahead for those who put their trust in Him. Most of the passages that are memorized and beloved by Bible-believing Christians fall into this category. They are messages addressed to the godly, and in the great majority of cases come after a message of rebuke to the nation as a whole.

Sometimes the original headings in the King James Version receive a great measure of criticism because they seem constantly to attribute all the judgments to Israel and all the blessings to the Church. Such an attitude would be quite wrong. God had both rebuke and blessing for Israel. He has both rebuke and blessing for His followers in the present age. Yet the headings of the King James Version are not as far from the truth as some might think. God's righteous people all through the ages make up a church; they are a group gathered out from the mass of people, including all who put their trust in God and His righteous promises, whether looking forward to the One who is to come, or looking back to the One who has been so marvelously revealed and who is yet to return to complete His work. His great