

Some verses have only two or three words in them and some verses have two or three or even four sentences. The verses vary so much in their length and there is really no logical reason in many cases why the verse division is made the way it is. So we have to figure out our own divisions in the Scripture if we are going to understand it. But it is a vital thing in studying any part of Scripture to try to determine where the divisions of thought take place. Some of these are minor divisions, some are extremely major divisions. But they can be very important in understanding it.

Then another thing that is important particularly in the study of the prophetic books, is the fact there is a certain sequence of thought that is common to most of the prophetic books. This is particularly true in Jeremiah. It is also to some extent in just about every other one of the prophetic books that most usually they begin with a section with a denunciation of sin. The prophet assails people for their sins. He describes the sin, how terrible it is. He condemns people for their sin. Then that is often followed by a declaration of the punishment he is going to give for their sin. I used to put these two together though they have this sequence--the description of the sin and the punishment for it--I used to put them together and call them "rebuke" as one type of material. Rebuke usually beginning as a description of the sin, and then going on for the punishment for the sin.

Then it is quite common in the prophets, very often in Jeremiah and a good many times in just about every other one of the prophets, to have the section declaring God's punishment against sin followed by a very different type of material. Often the change is made very suddenly. Occasionally in the middle of the verse, rarely that but sometimes, but very often in the middle of a chapter there is a sudden change, it seems, as the prophet thinking of the great mass of the nation sunk in sin and deserving God's wrath, he thinks of the Godly people who tend to give way to sorrow at seeing what is bound to come to their nation for the sin of the nation in which they of course are implicated. We are all sinners, but those who love the Lord and want to follow Him tending to give way to despair, the prophet suddenly, sometimes very suddenly changes from his denunciations to a statement of future blessing that God is bringing. Usually things that He will bring after the punishment is over.

So we have a tendency to go through the prophets and look at the statements about the blessings and ignore the rest, and just to read those and the tremendous-- and to be tremendously interested in the predictions they contain but I think when we do so we miss a great part of what God wants us to have. Because I am sure that the declaration about their sin can be very good for us in helping us to see our sin and see our need and see the way God must punish sin and to become more aware of our own need of a Saviour.

So to have in mind that progress of thought, I believe is very helpful in understanding a section of the Bible. Micah begins by saying this is the word of the Lord that came to him in the reigns of Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Isaiah begins in about the same way, except he says Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah. He mentions one more king.