

Sunday School Lesson

(Continued from Page 2)
ethical ideals and in the quality of their literary style.

What Is Prophecy?

Put in its simplest terms, prophecy is speaking for God; the prophet is God's spokesman (we might even say, God's "mouthpiece" — Exodus 4:16). The prophet is a forth-teller, a preacher; he is not one whose main task is to predict the future.

As a spokesman for God, the prophet had rather clearly defined tasks. He was to speak the words God gave to him. These

were words about his time, but nearly always they had some reference to what would happen in the immediate future if the people did not respond to God's call to responsible action in the present.

The prophet warned of impending doom in terms of political or military crisis; and he called the people to repent, that is, to turn away from their sinful ways in order that the impending doom might be avoided. Like Jack Shea, the prophets burned a hole in the conscience of their contemporaries.

Here one might rightly ask

how the prophet came to know what God intended to do. The answer comes to us in our memory selection for this lesson.

The Hebrew word translated in the memory selection as "secret" refers to intimate conversation — perhaps even a sitting in on the deliberation of the "heavenly council" to hear what God plans for mankind. The prophets spoke in the certainty that God had shared with them the innermost secrets of his intended dealings with man. Hence the prophet read the signs of the times with unusual clarity of vision and warned of what was to come unless the

chain of cause and effect was broken by the repentance of the people.

The "D" Philosophy

The prophets were informed in their views of historical happenings by what is known as the "Deuteronomic philosophy of history." What this means is simply that the prophets saw in historical events the action of Yahweh (the Hebrew name for God) to punish a wicked people or to reward a faithful people.

To put it bluntly, the prophets felt that when Israel succeeded in an undertaking, it was because she had obeyed the will

of Yahweh. On the other hand, disobedience to Yahweh's statutes brought defeat and disillusionment to Israel. This view is called Deuteronomic because it dominates the Book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 4:1) and in many passages that have been "touched up" by Deuteronomic editors. (See 1 Kings 3:14.)

The Deuteronomic formula is clearly present in the framework of the Book of Judges; for example, in Judges 2:11-12, 14-16, 18-20. This viewpoint is a "cyclical" view of history (that is, history is seen as repeating

(Continued on Page 4)

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