

OT 501--Old Testament Introduction

Lecture Notes—Isaiah (“First Isaiah”) and Micah

I. Who Was Isaiah?

--From the Priestly/Royal Family?

--A Jewish tradition makes Isaiah a relative of King Uzziah. If not a relative, Isaiah was certainly close to the royal family, as his ready access to them shows.

--Family:

--Married to a prophetess (8:3) [This could be simply “prophet’s wife.”]

--Sons

--*Shear-Jashub* (“A remnant shall return”—7:3) This name is a word of promise for the time following judgment, although the negative word of the certainty of judgment and defeat was also inherent in the name. At least a remnant would survive the judgment.

--*Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz* (“Speed Spoil, Hasten Prey”—8:3) This is a word of judgment, specifically military defeat.

II. Where Did He Preach?

--Jerusalem, at least we see him in Jerusalem.

III. When Did He Preach?

--740 BC, “Year of Uzziah’s death”—He may have preached prior to this time, but his commissioning comes at this time (Isaiah 6).

--734-732 BC, Syro-Ephraimitic War (Isaiah 7-8) Isaiah advised Ahaz to trust God in the face of his enemies, Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Aram, after they attacked him for refusing to join them in a rebellion against Assyria. Ahaz did not heed Isaiah’s word, rather he called upon Assyria’s king Tiglath-Pileser III for help, which did come. Damascus was destroyed and Israel reduced to vassal status.

--701 BC, Sennacherib Crisis (Isaiah 36-37) Isaiah advised Hezekiah during the siege by Sennacherib, following a revolt against Assyrian rule by Hezekiah and other area kings. Hezekiah did listen to Isaiah and was blessed by God.

IV. The Structure of The Book of Isaiah

--1. Isaiah 1-39

--Audience

--Judah and Jerusalem in the 8th century BC. Isaiah preached a message of coming judgment for the sins of Judah.

--Themes

-- A remnant would return and a “messianic” leader would lead them, but judgment for sin is the primary issue in much of this section. A primary thrust of the text is to trust in the Lord rather than ritual, human strength, or foreign powers.

--Historical References

--Isaiah, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Sennacherib

--2. Isaiah 40-55—*Deutero-Isaiah*

--Audience

--Judah in exile.

--Themes

--Comfort and encouragement for an exiled people. Deliverance and redemption would eventually come for them, but for now they needed to trust in the Lord.

--Historical References

--Cyrus, the “Lord’s anointed=messiah”

--3. Isaiah 56-66—*Trito-Isaiah*

--Audience

--A people once again settled in Judah, apparently after the exile, although many of the references are ambiguous concerning context.

--Themes

--Chastising, calling to obedience for sin, even the sin of idolatry. Condemnation of sin and future judgment for failure to repent. A major point of contention was failure to keep the Sabbath.

--Historical References

--none

V. Authorship

--Scholarly consensus for over 100 years has argued for at least two or three, and sometimes more, authors in the Book of Isaiah. They recognize the change in setting and theme, but they must ignore the linguistic continuity between the sections and the canonical attestation of Isaianic authorship.

--Many conservative scholars would argue that Isaiah of the 8th century wrote the entire book from a prophetic viewpoint. This view recognizes the continuity between the sections and allows for the current canonicity of the entire book, but sometimes it does discount the apparent multiple settings of the texts.¹

--The student should note that something of a middle ground is possible. Even if Isaiah did write the entire book of Isaiah, or at least major sections throughout, some [perhaps extensive] editing likely took place as the work of Isaiah was used throughout the centuries. This editorial work would have produced literary works for particular times and would account for the differences in setting, without losing Isaianic authorship throughout.

¹ See John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 2 vol., New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986, 1998), for a cogent, critical defense of Isaianic authorship.

V. The Message of the Isaiah 1-39

--God's Holiness

1. Isaiah 6:1-10—Isaiah's response is to the holiness of God, and in comparison his own unholiness & unworthiness. (cf. Is. 55)
2. "Holy One of Israel"—25 out of 31 uses of the phrase are in Isaiah.
 - God is holy, completely other, the only holy God.
 - God has chosen Israel as His own people.

--Israel's Sin & Coming Judgment

1. Isaiah 1:2-3, 18-20
 - There is "no knowledge" (cf. Hosea). He raised and cared for His people, but now they did not know Him. They did not even have the sense of the donkey and ox to recognize its owner & provider.
2. Isaiah 5:1-7 --"The Song of the Vineyard"
 - God did everything for the vineyard (Israel) in order to expect good fruit ("justice" and "righteousness"), but they put forth wickedness instead. Therefore God would allow the vineyard to be destroyed. So for the vineyard (Israel) to survive, the people must show justice & righteousness.
 - Note that God did the work, all the people had to do was walk in the work that God had already completed.
 - Jesus alluded to this in Mt. 21:33.
3. "Justice & Righteousness"
 - Isaiah 1:21—Justice and righteousness are necessary.

 - Isaiah 9:6-7—The Messiah (although the term itself is not used here, the concept of a messianic ruler is present) will rule with justice and righteousness in contrast to the rulers of the present day.

 - Isaiah 11:1-5

Micah

I. Who was Micah?

1. His name (מִיכָהּ =Micah) means, "Who is like Yahweh?" (Probably short for Micaiah.) Part of his message is that only Yahweh is God. He alone is sovereign.
2. He is from Moresheth, a small town about 25 miles SW of Jerusalem.

II. When did he preach?

1. He preached during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, & Hezekiah—742-686.
2. He probably preached from about 725 until 700, but maybe a little before or after that. Micah 1:2-7 contains reference to Samaria, which fell in 722. 1:10-16 contains what appears

to be a description of military action, probably by Sennacherib in 701. Jeremiah 26:18 tells us that Micah announced the judgment against Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah, i.e. probably 701.

III. What was his message?

--Judgment is coming. Why?

--Because of sin, rebellion, iniquity. They rob and steal from the poor without remorse.

The people have forgotten their responsibility before God as a partner in covenant. Micah says that God will hold His people accountable to the covenant.

--A remnant will survive—Hope for the future

IV. The Book of Micah:

I. 1:1— Superscription, followed by three sets of prophetic sayings on judgment & hope.

II. 1:2-2:13 Judgment & Hope

III. 3:1-5:15 Judgment & Hope

IV. 6:1-7:20 Judgment & Hope

V. Selected Passages

1. Micah 5:2—Promises Ruler

--Bethlehem is promised a future ruler. This is a cryptic and obscure prophecy. Its fulfillment in Jesus' birth is fairly extraordinary, & shows God's providence and planning.

2. Micah 6:6-8—What the LORD Requires

--What is a proper response to what Yahweh has done? Burnt offerings? Rivers of oil? My firstborn? NO! He has shown His people what he requires:

--“Do justice”—Live with justice to all people. Treat everyone properly, i.e. according to covenantal law & expectations.

--“Love mercy/kindness/devotion”—They are to love *chesed* (חֶסֶד), i.e. be completely devoted to Yahweh & to each other.

--“Walk humbly/wisely with your God”—This is true worship, letting God lead in His wisdom. This is what God requires!

“To say that God requires ultimately nothing that man can bring does not mean that men ought not to worship Him. Worship is necessary for man, because it is the outward expression of true humility before God, of that humble trust which is essential. It is when worship ceases to be this that it is a hindrance and not a help; so long as it is the outcome of true and humble conscious devotion to God, it can and does strengthen those bonds which bind God and man together through Christ. Worship is also necessary because a man should be full of praise and thankfulness to God; but as soon as the aim of hymns and songs and music generally becomes aesthetic, it is the time to beware” (N. Snaith, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, Epworth Preacher's Commentary [London: Epworth, 1956], p. 104).