

OT 501--Old Testament Introduction

Lecture Notes—Obadiah-Malachi

Isaiah 40-66

--**God as Redeemer** (Isaiah 49:7)

--The Holy One will deliver and redeem his people.

--**Need to Trust in Yahweh**

Isaiah 40:1-2, 28-31—The exiled Israelites needed to trust in Yahweh for their deliverance and redemption. He had not forgotten them and would strengthen them.

--**“The Servant of the Lord”**

1. 42:1-4—The “Spirit” is upon Him. He is a messianic figure who will establish justice (cf. Is. 9 & 11).

2. 49:1-6—The servant appears to be “Israel,” but he will also “bring Jacob back.” This suggests a possible fluid understanding, or even a dual understanding of the servant, perhaps as the nation and then as a prophet or messianic figure representing Israel.

3. 50:4-9—“Suffering” servant, but not with an atoning quality as in Isaiah 53. This could be seen as the prophet or even as Israel, except when juxtaposed with Isaiah 53.

4. 52:13-53:12—In this passage the servant suffers to atone for the sins of the people, thus presenting a suffering messiah. Many parts of this passage are applied to Jesus in the NT.

[5. 61:1-3]—This may be a 5th “Servant Song.” It contains many of the same themes as the other songs. Jesus quotes the passage as a basis for His own ministry in Luke 4.

Joel

Historical Background

--An early 6th century date makes most sense, and as Stuart (Word Biblical Commentary) argues, 600-586 seems to be a strong candidate, with the siege & the already present theme that Judah will be punished for her sin. However, Joel may be the most widely dated prophetic book, with scholars arguing for dates ranging from the 9th to the 5th centuries.

Message

--Yahweh’s Sovereignty—Yahweh controls all things, all nations, every army, & all the world.

--Day of Yahweh—The Day of the Lord is two-fold:

1. A day of judgment for Judah. This is the major theme of much of the book.
2. A day of judgment for the nations, when Yahweh will restore Judah & Jerusalem.

--The Spirit of Yahweh—The book teaches that a day will come when Yahweh will pour out His Spirit on all people, i.e. there will be no need for intermediaries such as priests & prophets.

Jonah

Historical Background

--Jonah lived in the days of Jeroboam II, in the 1st half of the 8th century (2 Kings 14:25).

--When was the book written? Most scholars would probably argue that the book was written much later, possibly even in the post-exilic period to show God's concern for people other than the Jews. This is certainly possible, but not necessary.

Nature of the Book

--Is the book a historical account of an experience in Jonah's life, a legend about the ancient prophet, or an allegory of the Jewish people neglecting their call to bring outsiders to faith in Yahweh? Any of these is possible from a literary standpoint, and in reality the message is not altered regardless of one's belief about the book. From a humanistic viewpoint, the account of Jonah and fish are impossible, but from God's viewpoint, nothing is impossible (& of course the storm and miraculous calm are just as impossible, except by coincidence).

Message

--“Don't be like Jonah?” God's servant cannot expect to oppose God & get away with it.

--Narrow nationalism is unacceptable to God. Not only the Jews were worthy of God's forgiveness & mercy. God desires that everyone come to Him. The Book of Jonah is a word against believing that anyone, or group of people, is out of God's reach or out of His love.

--“What right do you have to be angry?” God challenges Jonah's right to expect judgment rather than mercy. God loves the Ninevites as well as the Jews. Jonah should have felt the same compassion, but he did not.

Haggai

Historical Background

--Four specific dates are given in the book, all in late 521 BC and early 520 BC. Remember that this followed the important dates of 586 (exile) and 536 (return from exile).

[(1) 1st day of the 6th month in the 2nd year of Darius.

--This would be the late summer of 521.

(2) 24th day of 6th month in the 2nd year of Darius.

--This would also be the late summer/early fall of 521.

(3) 21st day of the 7th month in the 2nd year of Darius.

--This would also be in the fall of 521-520.

(4) 24th day of the 9th month in the 2nd year of Darius.

--This would be in the late fall/early winter of 521-520.]

Message

--The people are neglecting the work of Yahweh's temple, & this neglect is bringing about diminished crops (i.e. cursed crops?).

--The people must complete the building of the temple, because only then can Yahweh pour out His blessings on His people, i.e. eschatological Day of the Lord/Messianic age, although Haggai does not use the specific phrases. Actually Zerubbabel appears as the messianic figure in the book, the "signet ring" of the Lord (Haggai 2:20-23).

Zechariah

Historical Background

--Zechariah is also specifically dated to after the exile, between 520-518 BC. He addressed the same group of people as Haggai, those rebuilding Jerusalem.

--Most scholars would separate Zech. 1-8 from 9-14. They are certainly quite different & may have a different background from the previous passages, which are addressed to the leaders & builders of Jerusalem after the exile. Why divide Zechariah?

--(1) The setting of 1-8 appears peaceful, 9-14 a time of war.

--(2) No clear historical or personal references in 9-14.

--(3) The superscription "Burden . . ." in 9:1 & 12:1 seems to separate these passages out from ch. 1-8, where no such superscription appears. It also appears in Malachi 1:1. Some have thus suggested that the same author, or at least editor, composed Zech. 9-14 & Malachi. The editorial process may be correct, or at least it is an incredible coincidence.

--(4) There are no visions or interpreting angels in 9-14.

Message

--The temple will be rebuilt. Zechariah, like Haggai, exhorts the builders to finish the work on the temple in Jerusalem, because only then can glory return to Jerusalem & the temple.

--Messianic Hope, esp. in Zech. 9-14. This is a hope for glory in the future.—In fact, the NT quotes Zechariah often in reference to Jesus as the Messiah, i.e. 13:7-9—The shepherd & sheep; 9:9-10—The king on the donkey; 11:12-13—Thirty pieces of silver (attributed to Jeremiah); & 12:10—Pierced messiah

--Call to moral & ethical living. He called for "Truth" (*'emeth*, אֱמֶת), "Justice" (*mishpat*, מִשְׁפָּט), "Loyalty" (*chesed*, חֶסֶד), & "Compassion" (*racham*, רַחֵם).

Malachi

Historical Background

--After the exile, & probably after 516, because of the Persian word for "governor" in 1:8 & because the temple apparently is standing (1:10, 3:1, 10). These verses do not necessarily require that the temple be standing, since "temple" & "house" can be used metaphorically, but they do imply its existence.

--Perhaps near the time of Nehemiah, noting the common themes of both: Social & religious abuses (3:5, Neh. 5:1-13), Tithing (3:7-10, Neh. 10:37-39), & Divorce & mixed marriages (2:10-16, Neh. 10:30, 13:23-29)

--This would suggest a date between 500-430 BCE, from before Nehemiah's return & possibly during it as well.

Message

--Repent of sin & return to Yahweh. This theme involves social injustice, marriage & divorce, improper worship, & arrogance toward God.

--Reassurance of Yahweh's care for His people. He is faithful to His covenant. He watches them & will judge and/or redeem. He promises a messiah, preceded by a "forerunner," whom the NT understands to be John the Baptist.