

OT 501--Old Testament Introduction

Lecture Notes—Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk

Zephaniah

--Historical Context

--Zephaniah preached during the reign of Josiah. The Book of Zephaniah could be dated anywhere from 640-609, although the traditional dating is 627-621, the period between the death of Ashurbanipal & the reform of Josiah.

--Message

--Yahweh will judge Judah & Jerusalem for their sins. Jerusalem is stubborn & rebellious. Her leaders are like lions & wolves; they devour everything in their sight. Her prophets are arrogant. They apparently prophesy falsely & are not ashamed. Her priests are guilty of profaning the temple. Their judgment will be complete & total devastation.

--Yahweh will judge the nations.

--A remnant of Judah will survive. The remnant will be purified. The proud will be removed from Jerusalem. Only the humble will remain, those who trust in Yahweh. Those remaining will speak only words of truth. Deceit will be removed. There will be no fear.

Nahum

--Message

--The Book of Nahum is in the genre of Foreign Prophecies, in which the prophet proclaims Yahweh's control over all nations. He holds all nations accountable for their actions.

--God is all-powerful in creating & controlling the world. Thus, no one can stand against Him, & this is what Assyria has been doing.

--Nineveh is the epitome of evil & opposition to Yahweh & what is right.

--Therefore, Nineveh will be completely destroyed! God will hold Nineveh accountable for the Assyrians' abuse of power & their ruthless treatment of enemies.

--Historical Context

--The destruction of Thebes is mentioned in 3:8. Thebes was the capital of Egypt during much of its history. In 663 Ashurbanipal destroyed Thebes (see Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 64). Nahum obviously prophesied after this date.

--The destruction of Nineveh seems imminent. This destruction took place in 612, at the hands of the Babylonians, Medes, & Scythians.

--The Babylonians began their rise in 627/626. Nahum's prophecies likely took place between 626-612.

--However, some would argue that the lack of direct reference to Babylon would seem to place the prophecy before 626. This may well be correct, thus placing the Book of Nahum between 640-630.

Habakkuk

--Historical Context

--“The Rise of the Chaldeans” (1:6) points to the Babylonians, better the neo-Babylonian Empire.

--612—Fall of Nineveh—Habakkuk prophesied after this date, when the Chaldeans had begun their rise to power.

--605—Battle of Carchemish—The final demise of Assyria & Egypt before the Babylonians. Some of Habakkuk points to a time when the Babylonians had risen & begun running over smaller nations.

--587—Fall of Judah—Habakkuk obviously prophesied before this date.

Habakkuk’s prophecy dates between 612-587, probably over a period of time.

--Message

--Theodicy—In short, the problem of evil.

--Why does sin go unpunished?

--Why does God allow the evil to mistreat the righteous?

--Theology:

--Presupposition of God’s control of the universe.

--The righteous will live in faithfulness to God.

Obadiah

--Historical Background

--Following the destruction of Jerusalem in 586, the Edomites took advantage of Judah’s predicament and claimed much of southern Judah as their own, possibly even coming to Jerusalem to take advantage of Judah’s defeat. God took exception to this land grab.

--Message

--God will judge Edom for their sins against His people.