

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Haggai

Historical context of Haggai & Zechariah:

- Haggai & Zechariah both prophesied in and around Jerusalem, starting in 520 B.C.
 - prophesied to those who had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon almost 20 years earlier
 - encouraged them to rebuild the Temple
- Timeline
 - 538 B.C. - King Cyrus' decree permits the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-5)
 - approx. 50,000 Jews return to Jerusalem and start rebuilding the Temple ~536 B.C. (Ezra 2-3)
 - laid the foundation of the Temple, but opposition arose from enemies who were living in the land, resulting in a stop to the work for the next ~15 years (Ezra 4:1-5, 24)
 - 520 B.C. (second year of King Darius) - encouraged by Haggai & Zechariah, the work of rebuilding the Temple resumes (Ezra 5:1-2; Haggai 1; Zechariah 1:1)
 - Haggai's recorded prophecies date from August 29-December 18, 520 B.C.
 - Zechariah starts prophesying ~October 520 B.C. and continues at least until December 518 B.C.
 - Key figures in the rebuilding process:
 - Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, the governor (grandson of King Jehoiachin)
 - Joshua, son of Jozadak, the high priest
 - ~519-518 B.C. - Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates province, opposes the rebuilding and writes to King Darius to report it (Ezra 5:1-17)
 - Darius responds by confirming that the rebuilding had been decreed by King Cyrus and orders them not to interfere with the work, but rather to pay for the cost of the rebuilding and for any sacrifices that might need to be made (Ezra 6:1-12)
 - March 12, 516 B.C. - the Temple is completed and dedicated (Ezra 6:13-15)

Introduction to Haggai:

- Haggai
 - very little known about this prophet
 - name may mean "festal" - may have been born during one of the feasts
- Book records 4 prophecies during a 4-month span from August 29 to December 18, 520 B.C.
 - central focus: a call to rebuild the House of God (i.e. the Temple)
- 520 B.C. (year of Haggai's prophecy) - A time of discouragement for those who had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon
 - work on the Temple had stopped ~15 years earlier due to opposition from the locals
 - initially due to opposition, but never resumed, as people tried to eke out an existence
 - life was difficult
 - returned from exile and had to rebuild, often in the face of opposition
 - there had been drought, crop failures, economic hardship

"You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes." (1:6)

- the people were concerned with providing for their own houses --> no longer cared for building God's house (the Temple)

Summary of the book

- 4 messages:

I. A call to rebuild the Temple (1:1-11)

- Haggai confronts the people's lame excuse for not building the Temple: "These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD." (1:2)
- God's revealing answer: "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?" (1:4)
 - i.e. the people were in fact focused on building and enriching their own houses while neglecting God's house
- The people thought they had to do this because things were hard economically, without realizing that their hardship was in fact God's judgment on them for neglecting His house (1:5-6, 9-11)
 - working harder was of no use - "You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes." (1:6)
- God calls on them to start rebuilding the Temple (1:8)
- The people's respond by coming together and resuming work on the Temple, under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua (1:12-15)

II. A promise of the glory of the new Temple (2:1-9)

- approx. 1 month after they start rebuilding, The LORD encourages those working on the Temple to be strong and to work, because He is with them
 - even though for those who saw the previous Temple in its glory, the current building might seem like nothing, God promises to fill this new house with glory
 - God will shake the heavens and the earth, and fill the house with glory, so that the glory of the new house would be greater than the glory of the former one

III. A promise of blessings for a defiled people (2:10-19)

- God promises to bless His people, though they have been unclean

IV. A promise to Zerubbabel (2:20-23)

- God has chosen Zerubbabel and would honor him - make him like a signet ring
- a reversal of the curse placed on King Jehoiachin (Jer. 22:24)

Major Themes and Concepts in Haggai

- God
 - His glory
 - He takes pleasure in being glorified by His people (1:8)
 - He (and not the building itself) is the glory of His Temple
 - His faithfulness to His people, in spite of their unfaithfulness
 - faithful also to discipline them so that they will return to Him and be blessed
- God's people
 - the consequences of disobedience

"Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the LORD, how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail...." (2:15-17)
 - the blessings of obedience and seeking and honoring God first

Glimpses of Christ in Haggai

- "For thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts.... The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts." (2:6-7,9)
 - the greater glory of the new temple would not come from the building itself, but the from coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to it (cf. Malachi 3:1)

Zechariah

Historical context: see Historical context for Haggai

Introduction to Zechariah:

- Zechariah, son of Berechiah, son of Iddo
 - from a priestly family (Nehemiah 12:16)
- contemporary with Haggai, but may have ministered for much longer
 - With Haggai, encouraged the people to rebuild the Temple, starting in 520 B.C.
 - but his prophecies also go further, with more emphasis on the future glory of God's Kingdom (esp. chapters 9-14)

Summary of the book

- Two major sections:
 - Chapters 1-8 - prophecies regarding issues of more immediate relevance to the post-exilic community
 - Chapters 9-14 - two oracles concerning the coming King and His Kingdom

- Chapters 1-8

- I. Introduction to Zechariah (1:1)

- II. A call to repentance (1:1-6)

"Thus declares the Lord of hosts: Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the Lord." (1:3-4)

- III. 8 visions in the night (1:7-6:8)

1. A horseman and horses of different colors (1:7-17)
2. Four horns and four craftsmen (1:18-21)
3. A man with a measuring line (2:1-13)
4. A change of clothes for Joshua the high priest (3:1-10)
5. A golden lampstand (4:1-14)
6. A flying scroll (5:1-4)
7. A woman in a basket (5:5-11)
8. Four chariots (6:1-8)

- the visions deal with several inter-related issues
 - God will punish the nations for Jerusalem's distress
 - God will be with His people, to bless, uphold, and prosper them
 - God will purify His people
 - God will again bless Jerusalem

- IV. A crown for Joshua, the high priest (6:9-15)

- Zechariah instructed to make a crown of silver and gold for Joshua the high priest
- a promise of a coming kingly priest who would build the temple of the LORD

- V. A question about fasting (7:1-8:23)

- The people ask Zechariah about whether to continue observing a fast instituted during of the exile
- God calls the people to "true fasting" by practicing justice, kindness, and mercy
- God promises to restore Jerusalem, so that the fasts would become times of joy and feasting
 - the nations would come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord's favor

- VI. Oracle 1 (9:1-11:17): The coming King and Shepherd of the sheep

- the King comes and saves His people (9:1-17)
- judgment on Judah's shepherds, but salvation of the flock (10:1-11:3)
- the Shepherd rescues the flock but is rejected (11:1-17)

- VII. Oracle 2 (12:1-14:21): Restoration and exaltation of God's people

- God's will judge the nations and save Judah (12:1-9)
- God's people will mourn for their sin (12:10-14)
- The people and the land will be cleansed from sin (13:1-6)
- the coming Day of the Lord (14:1-21)
 - judgment followed by transformation of the land
 - Jerusalem exalted, with the nations brought into submission

Major Themes and Concepts in Zechariah

- God
 - His faithfulness
 - to be with His people
 - to save and deliver His people
 - to cleanse and restore His people
 - His sovereignty over the nations and the events of history
- God's people
 - their utter dependence on God
 - a call to repent and return to God

"Thus declares the Lord of hosts: Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the Lord." (1:3-4)

Glimpses of Christ in Zechariah

- the Branch - A Kingly Priest

Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. And say to him, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.'" (6:11-13)

- Joshua as a type of Christ - both a king and a priest
 - under the old covenant priests were of the tribe of Levi, and kings from the tribe of Judah
- the King, coming to reign, riding on a donkey

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth." (9:9-10; cf. Matt. 21:1-5)
- 30 pieces of silver (11:12-13; cf. Matt. 27:9-10)
- mourning for the one they pierced

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn." (12:10; John 19:34-37)
- "a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins"

"On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness." (13:1)

- the Shepherd struck, the sheep scattered

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me," declares the Lord of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." (13:7; cf. Matt. 26:31)

Malachi

Historical context:

- Malachi - name most likely means "my messenger"
- Date uncertain
 - after the completion of the second Temple (516 B.C.), but in a period of spiritual decline
 - likely early (or late) 5th century, before (or some time after) the reforms of Ezra & Nehemiah
 - shares some similar concerns as Ezra/Nehemiah e.g. lack of tithing, intermarriage with non-Jews

Summary of the book

- 1:1 - introduction
- structured around six "disputes" that God has with His people
 - God states a complaint against His people
 - the people respond by (cynically) questioning God's statement: "How have we ___?"
 - e.g. "I have loved you', says the LORD. But you say, 'How have you loved us?'" (1:2)
 - God responds with further details
- 1. 1:2-5 – God's love, unappreciated by His people
 - God's love shown in His choosing to bless Israel (Jacob) over Edom (Esau)
- 2. 1:6-2:9 – God dishonored by His people and priests
 - God is a great King (1:14), as well as their Father and master (1:6), yet they profane His name by offering polluted sacrifices on His altar
 - the people were offering second-rate animals (blind, lame) as sacrifices
 - the priests were profaning the altar by offering these animals
- 3. 2:10-16 – Judah's unfaithfulness to the covenant
 - men were marrying daughters of foreign gods
 - men were divorcing their wives to marry younger women
 - God calls His people back to faithfulness
 - makes it clear that He hates divorce, and that He desires godly offspring from marriages among His people
- 4. 2:17-3:5 – God's justice questioned by His people
 - in seeing the apparent prosperity of the wicked, people were asking "Where is the God of justice?"
 - God promises

- to send His messenger to purify His priests
 - to draw near to judge the wicked
5. 3:6-12 – God robbed by His people
 - the people were holding back on tithes and offerings
 - God calls on them to bring their full tithes, that they might live under His blessing
 6. 3:13-4:6 - God's people's harsh words against Him
 - the people were saying that it was futile to serve God, since evildoers not only prospered but put God to the test and get away with it
 - God promises the coming day (i.e. the Day of the LORD)
 - justice will be done, and will be seen to be done - "you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked"
 - the arrogant and evildoers will be burned up
 - the righteous will be spared and will tread down the wicked
 - the coming Day of the LORD will be preceded by the coming of the prophet Elijah

Major Themes and Concepts in Malachi

- God
 - His love for His people, and His faithfulness to them
 - His greatness and worthiness of honor
 - the LORD of hosts (or the LORD Almighty)
 - the name used for God 24 times in this book
 - He is our father, our master, our King (1:6,14)
 - He is not to be trifled with or dishonored

"For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts." (1:11)
 - His justice
 - justice deferred is not justice denied - the Day of the LORD is coming
- God's people
 - their contempt towards God
 - in offering contemptible sacrifices
 - in questioning God's justice
 - in speaking harshly of God
 - in ignoring His design for marriage
 - in neglecting the tithe
 - their unfaithfulness to the covenants
 - to God's covenant with Levi (the priests) (2:4-8)
 - to God's covenant with their fathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) (2:10)
 - to their covenants with their wives (2:14)
 - their need for repentance and return to God

Glimpses of Christ in Malachi

- The coming of the Lord, preceded by His messenger

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. (3:1-4; cf. Matt. 11:10-11)

- fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ, preceded by John the Baptist

This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. (Matt. 11:10-11)

- The coming of the Lord, preceded by the prophet Elijah

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction. (4:5-6; cf. Mat. 11:13-14; 17:10-13)

- John the Baptist as Elijah coming before Christ

For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. (Matt. 11:13-14)

And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist. (Matt. 17:10-13)

References & Resources

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