

OT-OV

Lesson 130

1. Last week I taught in part an overview of the book of Obadiah and when time expired we were about to look at several summary points.
2. We need to review some of that learned last week and then complete our summary.
3. Obadiah was written by Obadiah from Judah in about 580. Obadiah, along with Daniel and Ezekiel, was an exilic prophet. Edom's past conduct and their future judgment are the subjects of the book.
4. The Edomites had violated the bonds that hold related tribes together, and had committed terrible crimes against Judah. They had participated in the sacking of Jerusalem with the Babylonians. Their sins had to be punished!
5. The Nabataeans defeated the Edomites in c. 646 and thus there was a near term fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy and later when the Lord comes back He will discipline Edom in spades.

6. Summary of Message

6.1 The emotional tone of Obadiah's prophecy is strong but not bitter enough to justify the charge that it is a hymn of hate. The intense mood of the poem is undergirded by a keen sense of justice.

6.2 Kinsmen had violated the bonds that hold related tribes together, and had committed terrible crimes. Their sins had to be punished! The Israelites could not undertake to punish the Edomites themselves. Instead, they recognized their God as the Judge of all the nations, believing He would execute justice on the basis of their crimes.

6.3 God is here regarded as universal in his power therefore, no nation can escape his all-seeing eye. God is concerned for the oppressed and will lift them up restoring what has been taken from them.

6.3.1 There is a strong note of hope and comfort in the prophecy. The sovereignty of God is never far from sight. God is Judge at the beginning of the book and King at its end.

Now we are ready to overview the book of Jonah.

1. Jonah was a prophet who did not want to take the Word to Assyria, God intervenes with a sea monster and Jonah takes the gospel to Nineveh where many are saved.

2. The book receives its name from the main character of the narrative. Jonah (his name means dove); he is identified as the son of Amittai. Jonah was written by the rebellious prophet himself probably from around Nineveh in about 760.

Jeroboam II King of Israel (782-753)

2Ki 14:23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years.

2Ki 14:24 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit.

2Ki 14:25 He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hopher.

2Ki 14:26 The LORD had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering; there was no one to help them.

3. This prophet named Jonah had predicted the successful conquests of Jeroboam II in the first half of the eighth century. There is little doubt that the prophet of Gathhepher was the same man as the prophet of our book.

4. Authorship

4.1 Nowhere in the text is there any statement that the prophet himself wrote the book, although the prayer in chapter 2 is in the first person singular. However, tradition has steadfastly maintained that Jonah was himself the author.

5. Historical Background

5.1 Taken as a historical narrative of a prophet active in the time of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, the events of the book would have occurred sometime between 780 and 750.

5.2 Jeroboam II had succeeded in re-establishing the power of Israel over most of the territory north of Judea controlled by David and Solomon.

5.3 In the previous century the Assyrian empire had been a threat along the eastern Mediterranean coast, and had become well known as a cruel and ruthless oppressor.

5.4 During the reign of Jeroboam II, though the power of Assyria had subsided, it was still to be reckoned with. Nineveh had not yet become the capital of the empire, but Calah, one of the parts of the old city-state complex that included Nineveh, was the capital between 880 and 701.

5.5 There is no Assyrian inscription stating that a revival like that described ever occurred; but during the time when Queen Semiramis was co-regent with her son Adad-Nirari III, there is historical record of a brief national move toward monotheism.

5.6 There were two severe plagues in Assyria in 765 and 759 B.C., as well as a total eclipse in 763, all of which were normally regarded by the ancients as evidences of divine judgment and could have prepared the hearts of the people for the preaching of Jonah.

6. The Assyrian Empire - Its History And Development

6.1 The Assyrian Empire at its height was bounded on the west by the Mediterranean, on the east by the Persian Gulf, on the north by Asia Minor and the Caucasus, and on the south by the Arabian Desert.



6.2 Since Assyria proper was a highland limestone plateau, it had a more invigorating climate than that of Babylonia. It was cold and wet in the winter, but rather warm during the summer months. The major river in the country was the Tigris, which originated in the mountains of Armenia about 25 miles from the source of the Euphrates.

6.3 It flowed swiftly through the hills of Assyria and joined the Euphrates before emptying into the Persian Gulf. Other important rivers were the Zab Rivers and the Khoser River, on which was situated Assyria's best known city, Nineveh.

6.4 For the most part, the land was hilly, with well watered plains along the Tigris River. The hills were covered with oak and pine trees, while the main products of the country were fruits, dates, olives, wine, wheat and barley.

6.4.1 Larger wild beasts included bears, panthers, wolves, lynxes, foxes, marmots, deer, lions, and wild boar. Domesticated animals included goats, camels, sheep, oxen, horses, and dogs.

6.5 Assyria was undoubtedly founded by Babylonian colonists. "From that land he (Nimrod and his descendants) went to Assyria, and built Nineveh." Gen 10:8-12.

Gen 10:8 Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth.

Gen 10:9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD."

Gen 10:10 The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar.

Gen 10:11 From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah

Gen 10:12 and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

6.6 Some Sumerians apparently lived in Asshur, the early capital, for a temple dedicated to Ishtar was found there with Sumerian architectural designs.

6.6.1 The Assyrian people were Semitic with strains of Hurian, Sumerian, and Hittite.

6.7 An early literary reference to Assyria was found in a tablet written in 2350 B.C. Nuzi lay east of Asshur near Kirkuk in modern Iraq. It is here that much evidence of the religious customs of the early patriarchs have been found.

6.8 The Assyrians of historic times were a fierce, war-loving people, much more aggressive than their neighboring Semitic cohorts of Babylonia.

6.9 The language of the Assyrians differed only dialectally from that of the Babylonians. Like the Babylonians, the Assyrians wrote in cuneiform script on clay tablets.

6.9.1 The contents of the tablets varied from royal and private letters, lists of taxes, bills of sale and receipt, to mythological, astrological and incantation texts.

6.10 In the cultural program of Ashurbanipal, an early Assyrian King, his agents ransacked the libraries of Babylonia and the contents sent to Nineveh, where royal scribes copied and edited the ancient texts. Later came commentaries on these texts, and even some interlinear translations; all of which have helped students understand the ancient language of the Sumerians.

6.10.1 Many thousands of these tablets were discovered by excavators in the royal library of Nineveh. So much literature and of such a varied nature has been found that a separate department on Assyriology has been created in leading institutions in both America and Europe.

6.10.2 Often a tyrant at home, Assyrian Kings also served as army field generals; they rarely missed expeditions to exact tribute or to plunder their neighbors. The whole organization of the state in Assyria was built around the king and his military.

6.10.3 The king was supreme. The palace dominated, and the temple was merely a royal chapel attached to the palace. This accounts for the preponderant size of the king's palace in comparison to the temples of Assyria. In Babylonia, a theocratic state, the temples were larger than the palace.

6.11 The culture and religion of Assyria were essentially Babylonian except for the predominance of the national god, Asshur. Asshur was the incarnation of war, represented in art by the sun disc, topped by an archer shooting a shaft. He was always honored as the divine founder of the nation.

6.11.1 Since there was an abundance of stone in Assyria, the natives did not build with brick as in Babylonia. Instead of painted or tiled walls as in Babylonia, they faced the palaces with sculptured slabs. However, the quality of sculpture lagged behind that of relief, and thus the statuary was quite inferior to that of Babylonia.

6.11.2 The British Museum affords excellent opportunities to see the Assyrian wall reliefs removed from Assyria by British and French excavators during the 19th century. The early history of Assyria was permeated with Babylonian influence.

6.12 One of the early rulers, Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 B.C.), left a rather full account of a lengthy reign and a series of conquests. He claimed to have conquered 42 countries with their princes. He was distinguished by his restoration of several conquered cities.

6.13 Shalmaneser III (858-824) also had a long and effective rule. His record relates 33 campaigns. He strengthened his conquests by placing governors over the conquered districts.

6.14 During his reign, Assyria began to loom large on the horizon of Israel. Certain writers of antiquity tell of contact between Shalmaneser and Israel at the battle of Qarqar (c. 853).

6.14.1 Here Shalmaneser met the combined forces of Damascus, Hamath, Bedouin Arab nomadic forces and King Ahab of Israel. According to the Assyrian record, Ahab provided 2,000 (or 200) chariots and 10,000 foot soldiers.

6.14.2 The battle was not decisive, as Shalmaneser had to fight the same foe in c. 849, and again in 846. In 842, he defeated Hazael of Damascus, and according to his famous Black Obelisk (now in the British Museum) he claimed tribute from Tyre, Sidon, and Jehu, king of Israel.

6.15 Tiglath-Pileser III (745-726) was one of Assyria's most celebrated warriors. He was tremendously successful in his concerted drive to revive the Assyrian Empire. He secured the boundaries to the north, east, and south, and then moved west to claim for Assyria a port on the Mediterranean.

6.15.1 His drive was not just to annex land, but to gain control of the caravan routes that plied the coastal regions and thus to pour the wealth of the world into the coffers of Assyria. Tiglath-Pileser III is the Pul of 2Ki 15:19-20, according to 1Ch 5:26.

2Ki 15:19 Then Pul king of Assyria invaded the land, and Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver to gain his support and strengthen his own hold on the kingdom.

2Ki 15:20 Menahem exacted this money from Israel. Every wealthy man had to contribute fifty shekels of silver to be given to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria withdrew and stayed in the land no longer.

1Ch 5:26 So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria (that is, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria), who took the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh into exile.

6.16 Although the Assyrians continued to be an international power up to 612 when they were defeated by Babylonians, that later history goes beyond our overview of Jonah. Recall the book is thought to have been written in c. 760 of an event which occurred somewhere around 800.

7. Interpretations of the book

7.1 Much controversy has arisen concerning the meaning of the Book of Jonah, precipitating a wide range of views. The great fish has also caused significant debate as you no doubt have read and perhaps heard.

7.2 Those who have maintained the historical character of the book have held that an actual prophet (Jonah) experienced what is recorded and thus fulfilled, in part, the missionary task of Israel in ancient times.

7.3 For us Jonah is a factual story. Important passages that support this view are found in the New Testament. (Mat 12:39-40; Luk 11:29-32)

Mat 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

Mat 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Mat 12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

Luk 11:29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

Luk 11:30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

Luk 11:31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Luk 11:32 The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

7.4 Those of us holding this view use these references in a double sense: to verify the historicity of the story and to set forth its typical meaning. The position of this overview is that the story of Jonah is an historical account.

End Lesson