

KNOWING CHRIST THROUGH THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

I. Overview

MAJOR PROPHETS

The five Major Prophets are not called "major" because of their message or quality, but rather because of the length of the books. The prophets brought God's word which included warning of judgment, warnings and hope for the immediate future (as well as warnings and hope for the distant future), and hope in the coming Messiah.

ISAIAH

Who: Isaiah
What: Prophecy and Judgement
Where: Judah
When: c. 701 BC–681 BC
Why: To convince the people that salvation was possible through repentance and hope in the coming Messiah.

Outline (Chapter)

- Condemnation (1–39)
- Comfort in Exile (40–55)
- Future Hope (56–66)

Key Verse: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

JEREMIAH

Who: Jeremiah
What: Prophecy and Judgement
Where: Judah
When: c. 626 BC–582 BC
Why: To warn Judah of their destruction, to remind them of their sin, and convince them to submit to the Babylonian invaders.

Outline (Chapter)

- Jeremiah (1–10)
- Prophetic Warnings (11–28)
- New Covenant (29–39)
- The Fall of Jerusalem (40–52)

Key Verse: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)

LAMENTATIONS

Who: Unknown (Jeremiah)
What: Dirge Poem (Lament)
Where: Babylon
When: c. 586 BC
Why: To express the despair of the people of Judah over the loss of their land, city, and temple.

Outline (Chapter)

- Sorrows of Captives (1)
- Anger with Jerusalem (2)
- Hope and Mercy (3)
- Punishment (4)
- Restoration (5)

Key Verse: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22–23)

EZEKIEL

Who: Ezekiel
What: Prophecy and Warning
Where: Babylon
When: c. 593 BC–571 BC
Why: To confront people about their sin, give them one last chance to repent, and offer hope.

Outline (Chapter)

- Ezekiel (1–3)
- Judgment of Judah (4–24)
- Judgment on the Nations (25–32)
- The End of the Age (33–39)
- Restoration of Temple (40–48)

Key Verse: I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)

DANIEL

Who: Daniel
What: Prophecy and Apocalyptic
Where: Babylon
When: c. 605 BC–535 BC
Why: To convince the Jewish exiles that God is sovereign and to provide them with a vision of their future redemption.

Outline (Chapter)

- Daniel and His Friends (1–6)
- Apocalyptic Visions (7–12)

Key Verse: In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. (Daniel 2:44)

MINOR PROPHETS

The 12 Minor Prophets, called "The Book of the Twelve" in the Hebrew Bible, are just as important as the Major Prophets. They are called "minor" because of the shorter length of the books. They also brought God's word to the people regarding judgment and hope.

HOSEA

Who: Hosea
What: Prophecy and Warning
Where: Israel
When: c. 752 BC–722 BC
Why: To illustrate Israel's spiritual adultery and warn of destruction.
Outline (Chapter)
 • The Unfaithful Wife (1–3)
 • The Unfaithful Nation (4–14)
Key Verse: Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children. (Hosea 4:6)

JOEL

Who: Joel
What: Prophecy and Judgment
Where: Judah
When: Unknown
Why: To call Judah to repentance in order to avoid judgment.
Outline (Chapter)
 • Locusts (1)
 • Blessings and Curses (2–3)
Key Verse: And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. (Joel 2:28)

AMOS

Who: Amos
What: Prophecy and Judgment
Where: Israel
When: c. 760 BC–753 BC
Why: To accuse and judge Israel for injustice and lack of mercy.
Outline (Chapter)
 • Neighbors Punished (1)
 • Israel's Destruction (2–8)
 • Future Hope (9)
Key Verse: Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. (Amos 5:14)

OBADIAH

Who: Obadiah
What: Prophecy
Where: Judah
When: c. 586 BC
Why: To prophesy against Edom.
Outline (Verses)
 • Judgment on Edom (1–9)
 • Edom's Violations (10–14)
 • Israel's Victory (15–21)
Key Verse: Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. (Obadiah 10)

JONAH

Who: Jonah
What: Story of God's Mercy
Where: Nineveh
When: c. 783 BC–753 BC
Why: To show that God loves all.
Outline (Chapter)
 • Jonah Flees (1)
 • Jonah Prays (2)
 • Jonah's Anger with God's Mercy (3–4)
Key Verse: I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. (Jonah 4:2b)

MICAH

Who: Micah
What: Prophecy and Judgment
Where: Israel and Judah
When: c. 738 BC–698 BC
Why: To warn people of judgment and to offer hope.
Outline (Chapter)
 • Judgment and Deliverance (1–5)
 • Confession and Restoration (6–7)
Key Verse: He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

NAHUM

Who: Nahum
What: Prophecy and Judgment
Where: Judah and Nineveh
When: c. 663 BC–612 BC
Why: To pronounce judgment on Nineveh and the Assyrian empire.
Outline (Chapter)
 • Judgment and Mercy (1)
 • Nineveh's Destruction (2–3)
Key Verse: The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him. (Nahum 1:7)

HABAKKUK

Who: Habakkuk
What: Prophecy and Judgment
Where: Judah
When: c. 609 BC–598 BC
Why: To affirm that the wicked will not prevail and to remind Judah that God is in control.
Outline (Chapter)
 • Tough Questions (1–2)
 • Praise to the Lord (3)
Key Verse: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. (Habakkuk 3:18)

ZEPHANIAH

Who: Zephaniah
What: Prophecy and Judgment
Where: Judah
When: c. 641 BC–628 BC
Why: To motivate repentance.
Outline (Chapter)
 • Judgment on Judah (1)
 • Judgment on the Nations (2)
 • Promise of Restoration (3)
Key Verse: The great day of the Lord is near—near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the Lord will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. (Zephaniah 1:14)

HAGGAI

Who: Haggai
What: Prophecy and Hope
Where: Judah
When: c. 520 BC
Why: To urge the people to complete rebuilding the temple.
Outline (Chapter)
 • Rebuild the Temple (1)
 • Blessings and David's Throne (2)
Key Verse: This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear. (Haggai 2:5)

ZECHARIAH

Who: Zechariah
What: Prophecy and Hope
Where: Judah
When: c. 520 BC–518 BC
Why: To give hope to the remnant.
Outline (Chapter)
 • Zechariah's Visions (1–8)
 • Oracles against the Nations (9–14)
Key Verse: Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9)

MALACHI

Who: Malachi
What: Prophecy and Judgment
Where: Judah
When: c. 400s BC
Why: To examine Judah's actions and make sure God has priority.
Outline (Chapter)
 • Six Prophetic Speeches (1–3)
 • Day of the Lord (4)
Key Verse: But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. (Malachi 4:2)

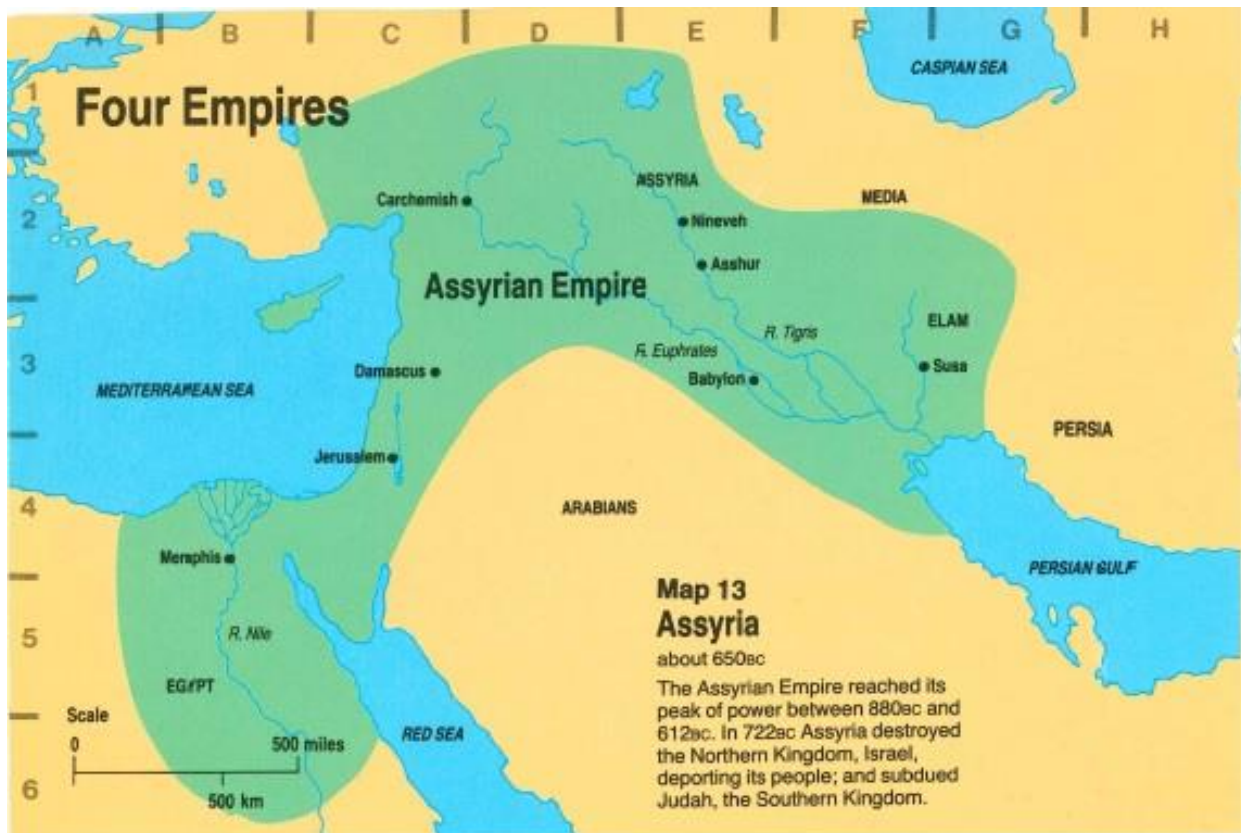


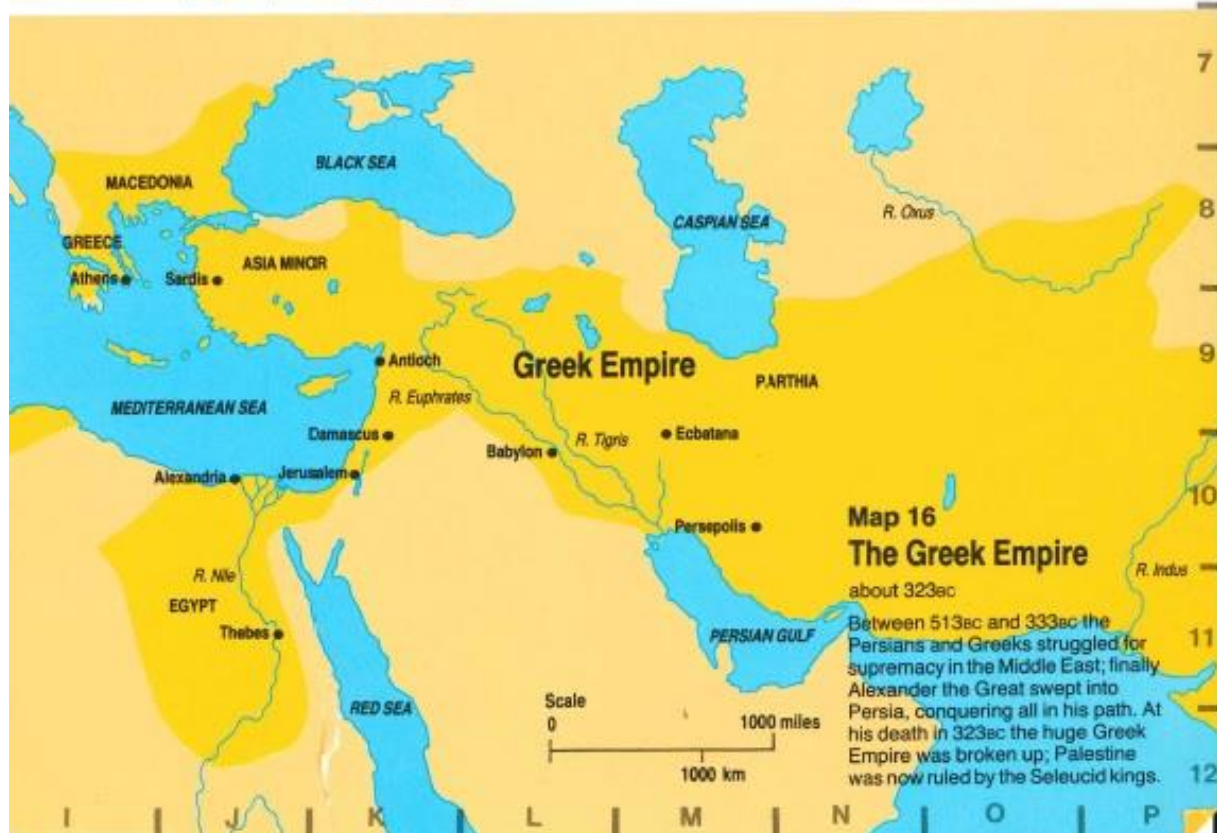
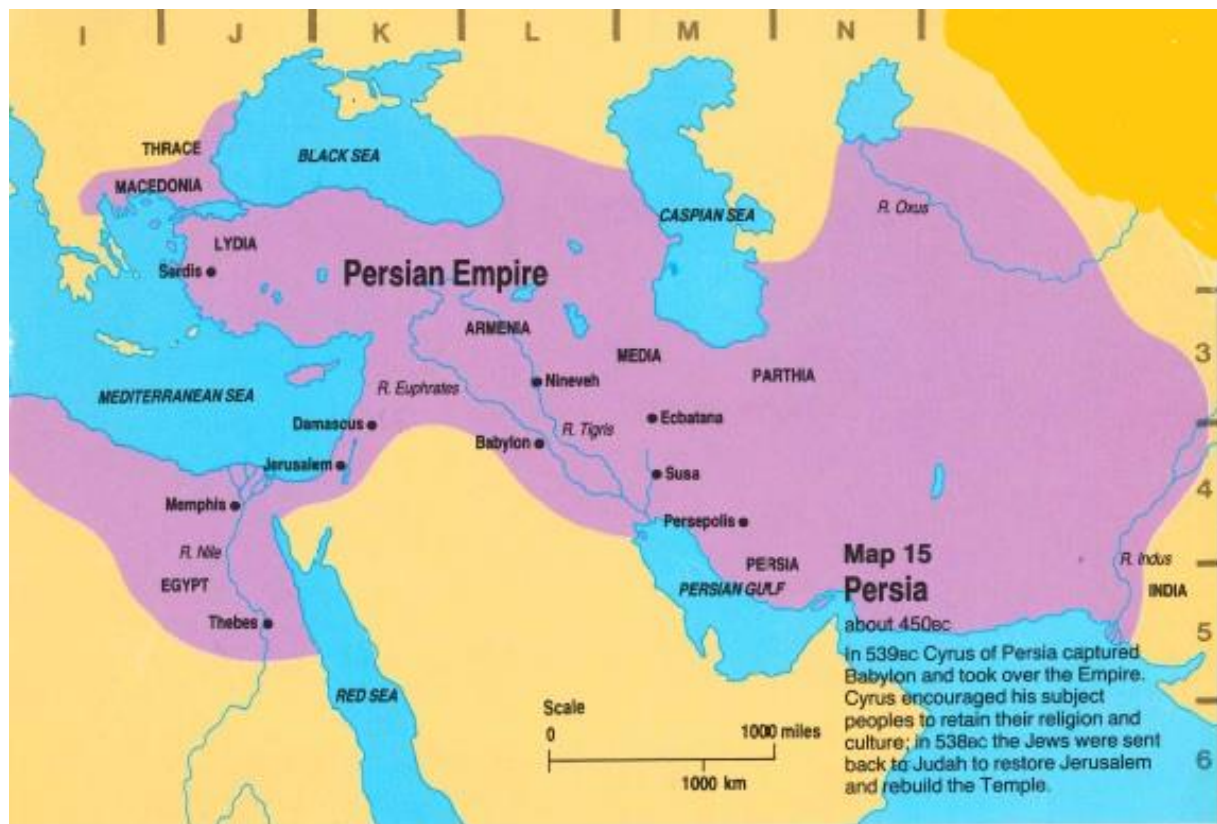
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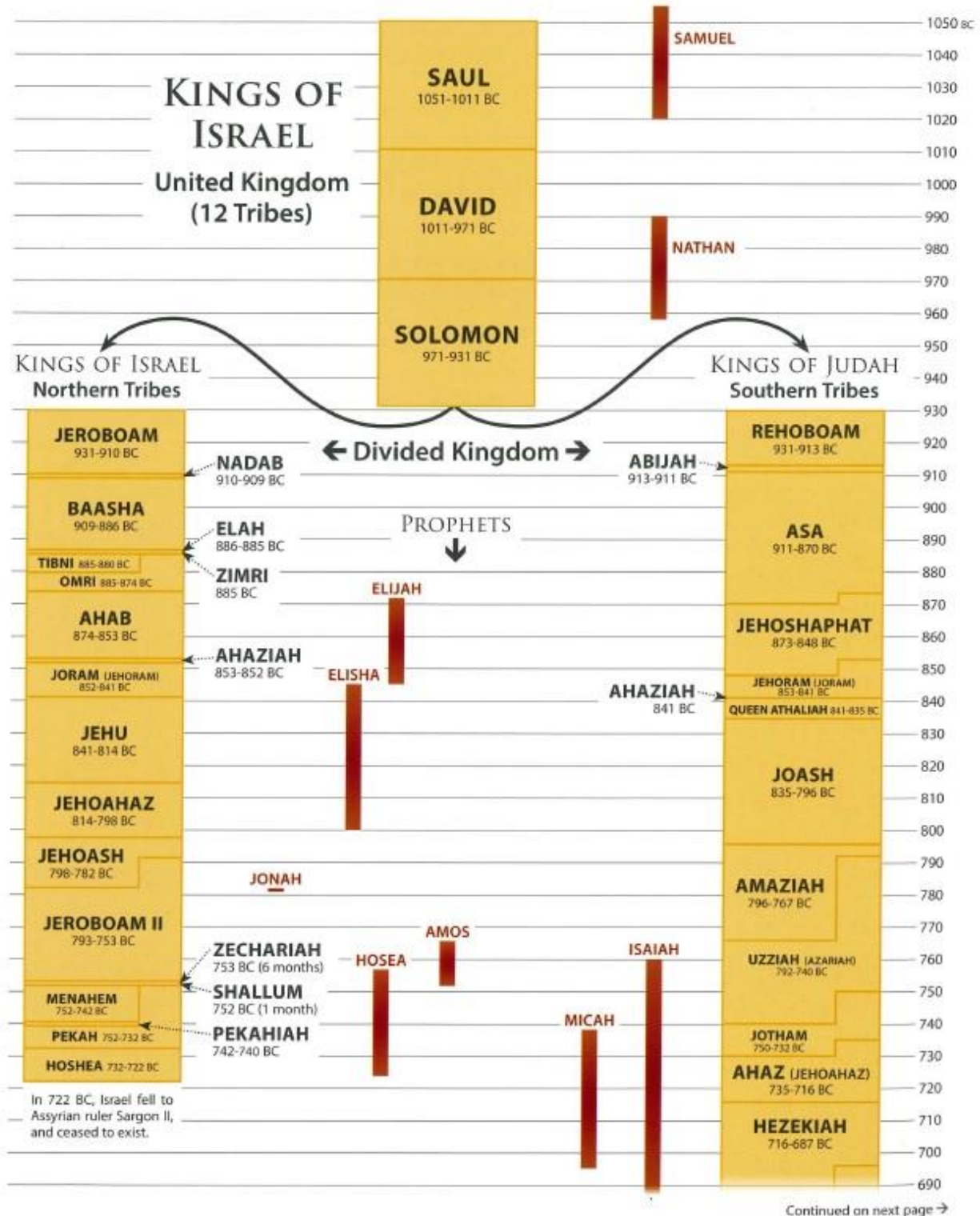


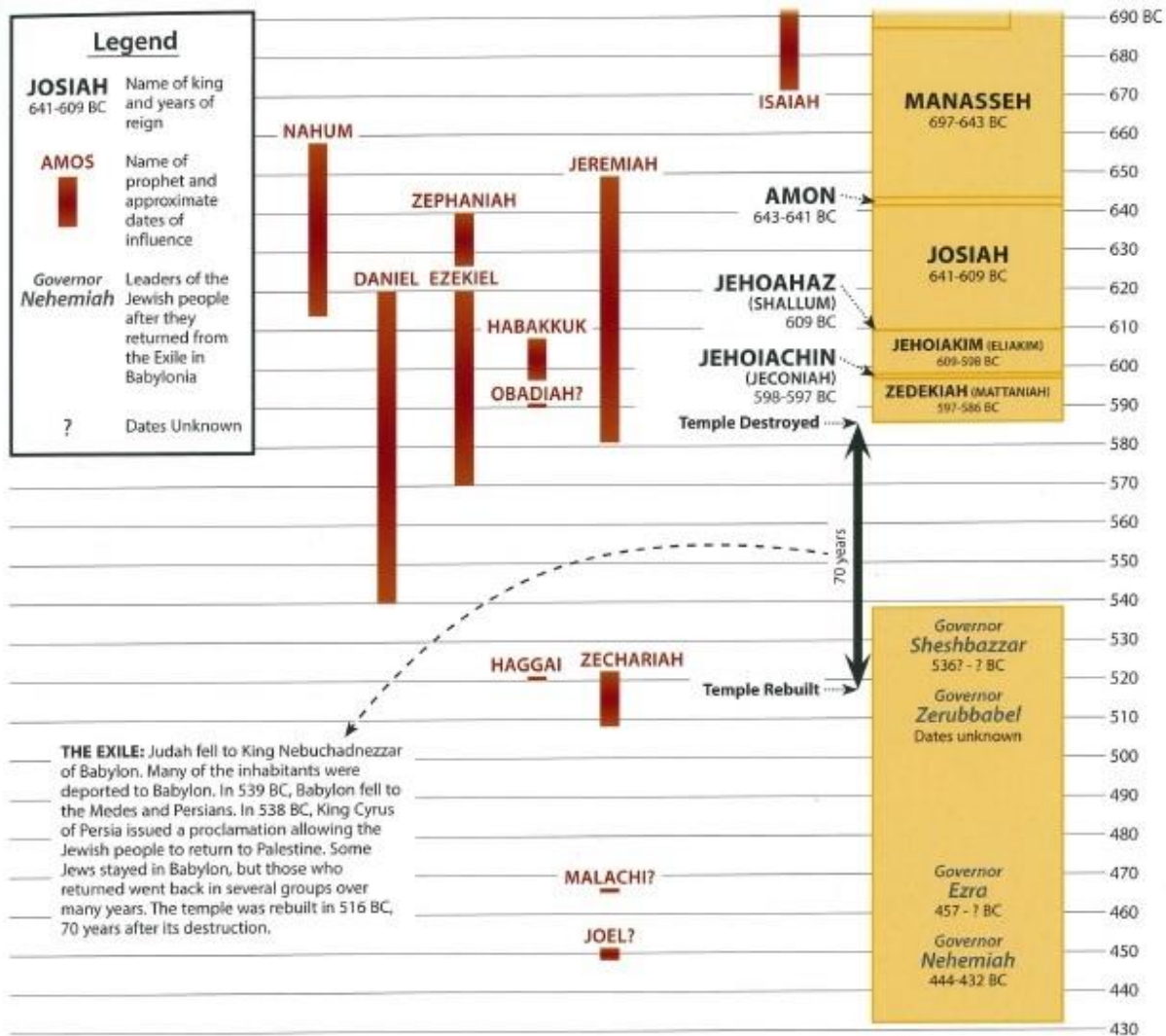
931 Kingdom divided (Jeroboam ruled northern; Rehoboam ruled southern)
 722 Israel (northern) defeated by Assyrians and scattered throughout Assyria
 605, 597, 586 Judah (southern) defeated by Babylonians and deported in groups to Babylon





KINGS & PROPHETS





FASCINATING FACTS

DOMINANT POWERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

900-612 BC - Assyria 612-539 BC - Babylonia 539-332 BC - Medo-Persia

What made a king "good" or "bad"?

The biblical writers were not as interested in a king's abilities as an administrator as they were in the king's desire to follow God's commands. Kings that followed God's law and those who outlawed the altars to foreign gods, the high places, and idol worship were designated as good. Those who did not, were evil. The Bible uses the phrase "He did evil in the eyes (or *sight*) of the Lord," to evaluate the king's reign. In secular history, one of the important kings was Omri of Israel, who conquered the Moabites; but in the Bible this evil king's victories go unmentioned.

Dates of the kings adapted from Edward R. Thiele's *Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*. Used by permission of Zondervan.
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II. Introduction to the Prophetic Books

A. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile - Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed) - Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled) - Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets - Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile - Judah returned beginning 538 - Temple rebuilt by 516
To Israel: Amos (765) Hosea (755) To Ninevah: Jonah (760) Nahum (660)	To Judah: Isaiah (740) Micah (735) Zephaniah (630) Jeremiah (626) Habakkuk (607) Lamentations (586)	To Jews in Babylon: Daniel (605) Ezekiel (592) To Edom: Obadiah (580?)	To the remnant after returning: Haggai (520) Zechariah (520) Joel (500?) Malachi (430?)

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

B. Summary¹¹²

1. What is a prophet?

Prophets are humans who speak on God's behalf. Abraham (Genesis 20:7), Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10), Samuel (1 Samuel 3:19-20), Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:15-16) were all OT prophets, along with the "writing prophets" we are studying today. John the Baptist (Matthew 11:9-14) and Jesus (John 7:40) were NT prophets.

2. What is prophecy?

A prophecy is a message claiming to be of divine origin. Prophecies can be about:

- a. The past (reminding the people of their special relationship with God)
 - i. Freeing the people from Egyptian captivity
 - ii. Parting the Red Sea
 - iii. Defeating enemy territories in Canaan
- b. The present ("FORTHTELLING") calling people to repentance for their wrongdoing
 - i. Worshipping false gods
 - ii. Oppressing the poor
 - iii. Using corrupt judicial systems
 - iv. Unjustly attacking other nations
- c. The future ("FORETELLING")
 - i. God's judgment of Israel
 - ii. God's restoration of Israel
 - iii. God's judgment of the nations
 - iv. God's restoration of the nations

¹¹² <https://overviewbible.com/prophets>.

3. Why isn't prophecy always clear?

- a. The future scenarios the prophets see are presented in long poems, dramatic displays, dialogues, and vivid dreams. They're not always direct, clear statements about what is going to happen.
- b. The prophets frequently blend future scenarios together. Partial fulfillments in the foreseeable future might be merged with distant and then ultimate fulfillments. This is called "prophetic foreshortening." Events far removed in the future are spoken of as if they are close together (like looking at distant mountains; they may appear close together but actually be far apart).

4. How were OT prophets authenticated to be speaking for God?

- a. A true prophet will never teach the people to serve another god.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (Moses speaking)

¹ "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, ² and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' ³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him. ⁵ But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst."

- b. A true prophet will speak the truth about future events

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 (Moses speaking)

"²² When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him."

III. Major Prophets

A. Isaiah

1. Author

Isaiah's father was Amoz (1:1), but the Bible says nothing more of him. He was a married man and a father (7:3; 8: 3, 18). He appears to have been a resident of Jerusalem.

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile		Exile Prophets	Prophets after the Exile
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed) - Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled) - Jerusalem temple destroyed 586 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judah in Babylon 586-538 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judah returned beginning 538 - Temple rebuilt by 516
To Israel:	To Judah:	To Jews in Babylon:	To the remnant after returning:
Amos (765) Hosea (755)	Isaiah (740) Micah (735) Zephaniah (630) Jeremiah (626) Habakkuk (607) Lamentations (586)	Daniel (605) Ezekiel (592)	Haggai (520) Zechariah (520) Joel (500?) Malachi (430?)
To Ninevah:		To Edom:	
Jonah (760) Nahum (660)		Obadiah (580?)	

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

3. Occasion¹¹³

Isaiah's prophetic ministry to Judah spanned 740 – 701 B.C.

- In chapters 1-39, he prophesied to the people of Judah who were living during his time. During this period, Assyria defeated the northern kingdom of Israel. However, the southern kingdom of Judah, by God's power, fended off Assyria's advance (under King Hezekiah's leadership). Isaiah . . .
 - Challenged the leaders of Judah on their hypocrisy, greed, self-indulgence, and cynicism.
 - **Predicted the fall of Israel to Assyria (which occurred in 722 B.C).**
- In chapters 40-55, he prophesied to the people of Judah who would be exiled in the future in Babylon. Isaiah . . .
 - **Predicted the fall of Babylon, the appointment by God of King Cyrus of Persia, and the return of the remnant to Judah.**
 - **Predicted the Servant of the Lord who would bring justice to the nations, establish Israel in a new covenant with the Lord, become a light to the Gentiles, willingly suffer to achieve these victories, and take away the sins of his people.**
- In chapters 56-66, he prophesied to all people of all time (including us) who follow the true God.

¹¹³ *New Geneva Study Bible*, 1020-1021.

4. Major Events in Isaiah's Life

1. Isaiah's Call to Prophetic Ministry (740 BC)

- Reference: Isaiah 6
- In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah received a dramatic vision of the Lord seated on His throne, surrounded by seraphim. This marked the beginning of Isaiah's prophetic ministry.
- He responded to God's call with the famous words: *"Here am I. Send me!"*

2. Confrontation with King Ahaz (735 BC)

- Reference: Isaiah 7
- During the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, Isaiah counseled King Ahaz of Judah not to fear the alliance of Syria and Israel.
- He gave the prophecy of Immanuel: *"The virgin shall conceive and bear a son..."* as a sign of God's presence and deliverance.

In Isaiah's time, the prophecy of a child born to a "virgin" (Hebrew *almah*, meaning young woman) served as a sign to King Ahaz that God was with Judah during a time of military threat. Likely fulfilled by the birth of a child—perhaps Isaiah's son or a royal child—this sign assured that before the child matured, the kings of Syria and Israel would be defeated. Indeed, within a few years, both enemy nations were overthrown by Assyria. The child, called "Immanuel" ("God with us"), symbolized God's protective presence with His people in that immediate historical crisis.

Isaiah 7:14 is quoted in the New Testament in Matthew 1:22–23, which says: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'* (which means 'God with us')."

Matthew applies Isaiah's prophecy directly to the **virgin birth of Jesus**, showing that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the sign given in Isaiah's time. While Isaiah had a near-term fulfillment in Ahaz's day, Matthew sees a greater, messianic fulfillment in the miraculous conception and birth of Christ.

3. Prophecies during Hezekiah's Reign (715–686 BC)

- Reference: Isaiah 36–39; 2 Kings 18–20
- Isaiah played a central role during King Hezekiah's reign:
 - He encouraged Hezekiah to trust God when the Assyrians, led by King Sennacherib, besieged Jerusalem.
 - God miraculously delivered the city by striking down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.
 - Isaiah also foretold Hezekiah's healing and added 15 years to his life.

4. Prophecies of the Future Exile and Return (700 BC and beyond)

- Reference: Isaiah 40–66
- Though Isaiah lived in the 8th century BC, he prophesied about Judah's future Babylonian exile and the eventual return.
- He also foretold the coming of a [suffering] *"Servant of the Lord"* who would bring salvation—a key Messianic theme fulfilled in Christ.

Isaiah's ministry spanned the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. His prophetic work profoundly shaped both the immediate political-religious context of Judah and the future Messianic hope.

5. Themes¹¹⁴

With God himself as the center of Isaiah's vision (Isaiah 6:1-8, the call of Isaiah), multiple supportive themes are entailed:

1. God is offended by religious ritual, however impressive, if it conceals an empty heart and a careless life (1:10–17; 58:1–12; 66:1–4).
2. God's true people will become a multinational community of worship and peace forever (2:2–4; 19:19–25; 25:6–9; 56:3–8; 66:18–23), and the predominant culture of a new world (14:1–2; 41:8–16; 43:3–7; 45:14–17; 49:19–26; 60:1–22).
3. God opposes all manifestations of human pride (2:10–17; 10:33–34; 13:11; 16:6; 23:9; 28:1–4).
4. The foolish idols that man creates are destined for destruction (2:20–21; 19:1; 31:6–7; 44:9–20; 46:1–7).
5. Though God's judgment will reduce his people to a remnant, his final purpose is the joyful triumph of his grace (1:9; 6:1–12:6; 35:1–10; 40:1–2; 49:13–16; 51:3; 54:7–8; 55:12–13).
6. God is able to judge people by rendering them deaf and blind to his saving word (6:9–10; 28:11–13; 29:9–14; 42:18–25).
7. The only hope of the world is bound up in one man—the promised Davidic king (4:2; 7:14; 9:2–7; 11:1–10), the servant of the Lord (42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12), the anointed preacher of the gospel (61:1–3), and the lone victor over all evil (63:1–6).
8. God is actively using creation and history, and even the wrongs of man, for his own glory (10:5–19; 13:1–27:13; 36:1–39:8; 40:12–26; 44:24–45:13).
9. With a great and holy God ruling all things, man's duty is a repentant trust in him alone (7:9; 10:20; 12:2; 26:3–4; 28:12, 16; 30:15–18; 31:1; 32:17–18; 36:1–37:38; 40:31; 42:17; 50:10; 55:1–7; 57:13, 15; 66:2).
10. God's people, feeling abandoned by God (40:27; 49:14; 51:12–13), foolishly put their trust in worldly powers (7:1–8:22; 28:14–22; 30:1–17; 31:1–3; 39:1–8).
11. God will uphold his own cause with a world-transforming display of his glory (4:2–6; 11:10; 35:1–2; 40:3–5; 52:10; 59:19; 60:1–3; 66:18).
12. God uses predictive prophecy to prove that his hand is guiding human history (41:1–4, 21–29; 44:6–8; 44:24–45:13; 46:8–11; 48:3–11).
13. God's past faithfulness and the certainty of his final victory motivate his people toward prayer and practical obedience now (56:1–2; 62:1–64:12).
14. The wrath of God is to be feared above all else (5:25; 9:12, 17, 19, 21; 10:4–6; 13:9, 13; 30:27; 34:2; 59:18; 63:1–6; 66:15–16, 24).

6. A Few Key Passages

Isaiah 2:4

⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

¹¹⁴ *ESV Study Bible*, 1236–1237.

Isaiah 6:1-8

- ¹ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"
- ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"
- ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."
- ⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

Isaiah 7:14 (Isaiah speaking to King Ahaz of Judah)

- ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.¹¹⁵

Isaiah 9:2-7

- ² The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.
- ³ You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
- ⁴ For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
- ⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.
- ⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;

¹¹⁵ In the immediate historical sense, Isaiah's prophecy likely referred to a child born in that generation, perhaps to Isaiah's wife or a young woman in the royal household. The Hebrew word translated "virgin" (*'almah*) can also mean a young woman of marriageable age. Before this child would grow old enough "to know how to refuse the evil and choose the good," the threat from Syria and Israel would be gone (Isaiah 7:16). Thus, the prophecy reassured Ahaz that God was with His people in their present crisis. Centuries later, the Gospel of Matthew identifies a greater, ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's words in the birth of Jesus Christ: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)." — Matthew 1:22–23. Here, Matthew uses the Greek term *parthenos*, meaning virgin, and applies the prophecy directly to Mary, who conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit. While Isaiah's prophecy had a near-term sign for Ahaz, it also pointed forward to the incarnation of God Himself—the true *Immanuel*, Jesus Christ—who embodies God's presence with His people forever.

and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 52:7

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 (prophesying about the "Suffering Servant")

52 ¹³ Behold, my servant shall act wisely;
he shall be high and lifted up,
and shall be exalted.
¹⁴ As many were astonished at you—
his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—
¹⁵ so shall he sprinkle many nations.
Kings shall shut their mouths because of him,
for that which has not been told them they see,
and that which they have not heard they understand.
53 ¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us?^[c]
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
² For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.
³ He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;

*and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*

⁷ *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.*

⁸ *By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?*

⁹ *And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,*

*although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.*

¹⁰ *Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.*

¹¹ *Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.*

¹² *Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

Isaiah 61:1-3 (The future Messiah is speaking)

¹ *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*

² *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;*

³ *to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.*

B. Jeremiah

1. Author

Jeremiah's call came in 626 B.C. He was a priest. Because he was frequently opposed to the authorities, his life was often in danger. Few people believed his message. Jeremiah prophesied for 40 years.

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile		Exile Prophets	Prophets after the Exile
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed) - Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled) - Jerusalem temple destroyed 586 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judah in Babylon 586-538 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judah returned beginning 538 - Temple rebuilt by 516
To Israel: Amos (765) Hosea (755) To Ninevah: Jonah (760) Nahum (660)	To Judah: Isaiah (740) Micah (735) Zephaniah (630) Jeremiah (626) Habakkuk (607) Lamentations (586)	To Jews in Babylon: Daniel (605) Ezekiel (592) To Edom: Obadiah (580?)	To the remnant after returning: Haggai (520) Zechariah (520) Joel (500?) Malachi (430?)

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

3. Occasion¹¹⁶

Jeremiah's prophetic ministry to Judah spanned 626 – 586 B.C.

Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of the last kings of Judah before Judah was defeated by Babylon in 605, 596, and 586. The book of Jeremiah is set during the politically tumultuous times following the fall of the Assyrians and the rise of the Babylonians. Jeremiah witnessed multiple deportations of Judeans to Babylon and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

Jeremiah had a difficult life. His messages of repentance delivered at the temple were not well received (7:1–8:3; 26:1–11). His hometown plotted against him (11:18–23), and he endured much persecution in the pursuit of his ministry (20:1–6; 37:11–38:13; 43:1–7). At God's command he never married (16:1–4). A faithful preacher, he apparently had only two converts: Baruch, his scribe (32:12; 36:1–4; 45:1–5), and Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian eunuch who served the king (38:7–13; 39:15–18). These are the only two mentioned in the entire book who respond favorably to Jeremiah's preaching. Though the book does not reveal the time or place of Jeremiah's death, he presumably died in Egypt, where he had been taken by his countrymen against his will after the fall of Jerusalem (43:1–7).

¹¹⁶ *ESV Study Bible*, 1364-1265.

4. Major Events in Jeremiah's Life

1. Call to Prophetic Ministry (Jeremiah 1)
 - Age and context: Jeremiah was called as a young man around 626 BC, during the reign of King Josiah.
 - Divine commission: God appointed him “a prophet to the nations,” and told him he would face opposition but be divinely protected.
2. Warning Judah of Impending Judgment
 - Over many years, Jeremiah warned the people and leaders of Judah that their idolatry, injustice, and covenant unfaithfulness would lead to destruction.
 - He confronted kings (Jehoiakim, Zedekiah), priests, and prophets, often making him unpopular and persecuted.
3. Temple Sermon and Arrest (Jeremiah 7, 26)
 - Jeremiah gave a sermon in the temple declaring that the temple would not save Judah from judgment if the people did not repent.
 - This angered the religious leaders, and he was arrested and nearly executed, but was spared due to the intercession of some officials.
4. The Broken Pottery Symbol (Jeremiah 19)
 - Jeremiah smashed a clay jar before the elders as a symbol of how God would shatter Judah and Jerusalem because of their sin.
5. Conflict with False Prophets (Jeremiah 28)
 - Jeremiah clashed with Hananiah, a false prophet who predicted peace.
 - Jeremiah predicted Hananiah's death, which occurred that same year, vindicating Jeremiah's words.
6. The Scroll Incident (Jeremiah 36)
 - Jeremiah dictated his prophecies to Baruch, his scribe.
 - King Jehoiakim burned the scroll piece by piece as it was read to him.
 - God commanded Jeremiah to rewrite it, with added content.
7. Imprisonment and Persecution (Jeremiah 37–38)
 - Under King Zedekiah, Jeremiah was imprisoned for saying Jerusalem would fall to Babylon.
 - He was later thrown into a cistern and left to die but was rescued by Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian court official.
8. Fall of Jerusalem and Aftermath (Jeremiah 39–43)
 - Jeremiah witnessed the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC.
 - The Babylonians treated him favorably, offering him the choice to go to Babylon or stay in Judah. He chose to stay.
 - Later, he was forcibly taken to Egypt by rebellious Judeans, despite warning them against this move.
9. Final Ministry in Egypt (Jeremiah 44)
 - In Egypt, Jeremiah continued to call the people to repentance, but they remained idolatrous.

5. The New Covenant¹¹⁷

“Jeremiah’s message of salvation is crystallized in the prophecy of the New Covenant in 31:31-34. The new covenant prophecy is built around the main ingredients of the Mosaic Covenant at Sinai: it spoke of God’s desire to have a relationship with His chosen people, and of the requirement upon them to return His love with obedience (Ex. 19:3-6; Deut. 7:6-11). The New Covenant speaks of the empowerment of God’s people to obey Him (31:33). Although it is promised in national terms, it is something new, which the New Testament shows to be fulfilled in the greater ‘Israel of God’ (Gal 6:16) through Christ (Hebrews 8:7-13).”

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.** And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Hebrews 10:15-25

¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

¹⁶ “This is the covenant that I will make with them
after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws on their hearts,
and write them on their minds,”

¹⁷ then he adds,

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

¹¹⁷ New Geneva Study Bible, 1144.

What is new about the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31?

1. Internalized Law (v.33)

“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts...”

- Unlike the old covenant written on stone tablets, the New Covenant is written **on the hearts** of God’s people.
- Obedience will come from **inward transformation**, not just external commands.

2. Personal Knowledge of God (v.34)

“They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest...”

- Every individual will have **direct, personal access** to God.
- Unlike the old covenant, which relied heavily on priests and intermediaries, **all believers will know God intimately**.

3. Complete and Final Forgiveness (v.34)

“I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

- Forgiveness in the old system required repeated sacrifices.
- In the New Covenant, **God promises full and permanent forgiveness**, fulfilled in Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice (see Hebrews 10:14–18).

Summary:

The New Covenant brings **inner transformation, personal relationship, and lasting forgiveness**, in contrast to the external, conditional, and repetitive nature of the old covenant. It’s a covenant of **grace and heart-renewal**, ultimately fulfilled through Jesus Christ (see Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8).

C. Lamentations

1. Author

The Book of Lamentations does not identify its author. It is traditionally attributed to Jeremiah. The setting is Judah. It is almost certainly the period after the fall of Judah to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. As Jeremiah had foretold the fall of Jerusalem, Lamentations expresses the pain of the event itself.

2. Notes¹¹⁸

- a. The author, in five poems, affirms that belief in God's mercy and faithfulness is the key to a restored relationship with God. Hope, not despair, is the final word in Lamentations.
- b. Lamentations was most likely written to be prayed or sung in worship services devoted to asking God's forgiveness and seeking restoration to a covenant relationship with God.
- c. Lamentations presents five intricately interconnected poems. Together they describe a movement from horrible loss and personal shame, to restored hope and prayer for renewal. This movement has both community and individual components.

Lamentations 3:19-24

¹⁹ *Remember my affliction and my wanderings,
the wormwood and the gall!*

²⁰ *My soul continually remembers it
and is bowed down within me.*

²¹ *But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:*

²² *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;*

²³ *they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

²⁴ *"The Lord is my portion," says my soul,
"therefore I will hope in him."*

[v. 19: *Wormwood* is a bitter herb. *Gall* is a bitter poison.]

¹¹⁸ *ESV Study Bible*, 1475-1477.

D. Ezekiel

1. Author

Ezekiel belonged to the priestly class and was married. He likely had no children. He prophesied from 593 B.C. until about 571 B.C. (22 years). **In 1:1, he received visions while by the River Chebar. God called Ezekiel in chapter 2.**

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile		Exile Prophets	Prophets after the Exile
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed)- Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled)- Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah in Babylon 586-538	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah returned beginning 538- Temple rebuilt by 516
To Israel: Amos (765) Hosea (755)	To Judah: Isaiah (740) Micah (735) Zephaniah (630) Jeremiah (626) Habakkuk (607) Lamentations (586)	To Jews in Babylon: Daniel (605) Ezekiel (592)	To the remnant after returning: Haggai (520) Zechariah (520) Joel (500?) Malachi (430?)
To Ninevah: Jonah (760) Nahum (660)		To Edom: Obadiah (580?)	

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

3. Literary Features¹¹⁹

The book of Ezekiel is one of the most complex books in the Bible because so many different genres converge in it. There is no single overarching story line. The general arrangement of the material is one that several other OT prophetic books also follow—a general movement from (1) oracles of judgment against the prophet's own nation of Judah (usually called Israel in the text), to (2) oracles of judgment against the surrounding pagan nations, to (3) oracles of future, eschatological blessing on those who believe in God.

Several observations are in order. First, much of the book consists of visionary writing, which transports readers to a world of the imagination where the rules of reality are obviously suspended in favor of highly unusual visions. To understand and relish the book of Ezekiel, readers often need to abandon expectations of realism. Second, Ezekiel employs a technique known as symbolic reality, which occurs when a writer consistently transports the reader to a world of visionary experience where the most important ingredients are symbols—symbols like a vine, a boiling pot, or a valley full of dry bones. Third, prophecy is itself a genre, made up of oracles (pronouncements from God through the agency of a prophet) that fall into two main categories—oracles of judgment and oracles of blessing. These sections often portray events at the end of history. Finally, readers should not overlook the obvious—the prophet Ezekiel expresses himself in the form of poetry.

¹¹⁹ *ESV Study Bible*, 1498-1499.

In addition to abandoning expectations of consistent realism, readers should give themselves to the sheer strangeness of what is presented. Ezekiel talks about real, historical events, but much of the time he does not portray these events in literal terms. Instead he prefers extravagant visions as his mode. Additionally, readers need to be ready for a kaleidoscope of details, always shifting and never in focus for very long.

4. Key Events, Visions, and Symbols in Ezekiel

Chapters 1–3: Ezekiel’s Call and Vision of God

- **Vision of God’s Glory (ch. 1):**
 - Ezekiel sees a storm cloud with four living creatures (cherubim), each with four faces and wings.
 - Wheels within wheels full of eyes move with the creatures—symbolizing God’s omnipresence and omniscience.
 - Above is a throne with a radiant figure—God’s glory.
- **Ezekiel’s Commission (chs. 2–3):**
 - God calls Ezekiel to be a prophet to a rebellious Israel.
 - Ezekiel eats a scroll filled with lamentation—it tastes sweet, symbolizing God’s Word absorbed into the prophet.

Chapters 4–5: Symbolic Acts of Judgment

- **Siege of Jerusalem (ch. 4):**
 - Ezekiel builds a model of Jerusalem under siege.
 - Lies on his side 390 days for Israel, 40 for Judah.
 - Eats defiled food—symbolizing famine and defilement in exile.
- **Cutting Hair (ch. 5):**
 - Hair is shaved and divided: burned, struck with a sword, and scattered—representing various judgments on the people.

Chapters 6–7: Pronouncements of Judgment

- Idolatry is condemned.
- Doom is prophesied against the land of Israel and its inhabitants.

Chapters 8–11: Vision of Temple Corruption and God’s Glory Departing

- **Temple Abominations (ch. 8):**
 - Ezekiel sees idol worship in the temple.
- **Executioners and the Marking (ch. 9):**
 - Angels kill idolaters; one marks the faithful to spare them.
- **God’s Glory Leaves the Temple (chs. 10–11):**
 - The cherubim and wheels reappear as God’s glory departs from the temple—symbolizing God leaving His sanctuary.

Chapters 12–24: Oracles of Judgment Against Israel

- **Signs and Parables (ch. 12):**
 - Ezekiel packs bags and digs through a wall—symbolizing exile.
- **False Prophets Condemned (ch. 13):**
 - God rebukes prophets who speak lies.
- **Idolatry and Unfaithfulness (ch. 14–16):**
 - Israel's idolatry is compared to adultery.
- **Parables of Judgment (chs. 17–24):**
 - Includes the **eagle and the vine**, **Jerusalem as an unfaithful bride**, and the **boiling pot** (ch. 24).
- **Death of Ezekiel's Wife (ch. 24):**
 - God tells Ezekiel not to mourn her death—a sign of Jerusalem's destruction, where no mourning will be allowed.

Chapters 25–32: Oracles Against Foreign Nations

- Judgment is declared against **Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt**.
- **Lament for Tyre (ch. 27)** and **for Egypt (ch. 32)** are poetic and symbolic.

Chapters 33–39: Restoration and Hope

- **Watchman's Role Reaffirmed (ch. 33):**
 - Ezekiel must warn the people of judgment.
- **Shepherds and the New David (ch. 34):**
 - God condemns false shepherds; promises to shepherd His people and raise up a "Davidic" shepherd (Messianic).
- **Restoration of Israel (ch. 36):**
 - God promises a new heart and spirit, cleansing from sin.
- **Valley of Dry Bones (ch. 37):**
 - A vision of bones reassembling and receiving life—symbolizing Israel's national and spiritual resurrection.
- **Two Sticks Joined Together (ch. 37):**
 - Judah and Israel will be united under one king.
- **Gog and Magog (chs. 38–39):**
 - A future enemy coalition attacks restored Israel, but God supernaturally defeats them.

Chapters 40–48: Vision of a New Temple and Land

- **New Temple Vision (chs. 40–43):**¹²⁰
 - Detailed measurements of a future temple.
 - God's glory returns to dwell in the temple (ch. 43).

¹²⁰ *ESV Study Bible*, 1564.

The **ESV Study Bible** outlines several major interpretive **views of Ezekiel's temple vision in chapters 40–48**, each seeking to explain the **meaning and fulfillment** of the detailed temple, worship, and land arrangements. Here's a **summary of the main views**:

1. Literal-Future View

- **Summary:** This view sees Ezekiel's temple as a **literal, physical temple** that will be built during a future **millennial reign of Christ on earth**.
- **Details:**
 - Sacrifices are interpreted as **memorials**—pointing back to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, not replacing it.
 - Emphasizes the **specificity of measurements** and rituals as pointing to a real future structure.

2. Idealized or Symbolic-Future View

- **Summary:** The temple is seen as an **ideal vision**, symbolizing God's **perfect presence, order, and holiness**—not necessarily intended to be built exactly as described.
- **Details:**
 - The detailed design represents **theological truths** rather than blueprints.
 - Emphasizes God's holiness and the centrality of worship.

3. Fulfilled-Spiritually-in-Christ-and-the-Church View

- **Summary:** This view interprets the temple vision as **symbolically fulfilled** in **Jesus Christ**, who is the true temple (John 2:19–21), and in the **Church**, the temple of the Holy Spirit.
- **Details:**
 - The **river of life** (Ezek. 47) finds fulfillment in Christ (John 7:37–39) and Revelation 22.
 - No need for future sacrifices, as Christ's atonement is sufficient (Heb. 10:1–14).
 - The vision anticipates **the new heavens and new earth** more than a physical temple.

4. Historical View

- **Summary:** Some see this as a **blueprint** for the temple to be rebuilt after the Babylonian exile (i.e., the second temple), though it was **never implemented** due to historical and practical limitations.
- **Details:**
 - Intended as an encouragement for exiles to envision a restored worship system.
 - The second temple built under Zerubbabel and later expanded by Herod does not match Ezekiel's design.

Key Theological Themes (Regardless of View):

- **God's presence** returning to dwell with His people (Ezek. 43).
- **Holiness** and separation from sin.
- **Renewal** and restoration of worship and community life.
- **Hope** for a future where God's glory fills His people and land.

- **Renewed Worship and Priesthood (chs. 44–46):**
 - Instructions for proper temple worship.
- **Restoration of the Land (chs. 47–48):**
 - **River from the Temple (ch. 47):** Life-giving water flows from the sanctuary—symbolizing renewal.
 - Land is redistributed among the tribes, with God dwelling among His people.

Summary: Ezekiel moves from **judgment and exile** to **hope, restoration, and God's return**—centered around the presence and holiness of God.

5. A New Heart and a New Spirit

Ezekiel 18:31

³¹ *Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and **make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!** Why will you die, O house of Israel?*

Ezekiel 11:19

¹⁹ *And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh.*

Ezekiel 36:22-29

²² *“Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. ²³ And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. ²⁴ I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. ²⁸ You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses.”*

Ezekiel 36:26–27 is a prophetic preview of the **“new birth”** [also called **REGENERATION**] that Jesus describes in John 3:3-8:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

... “Unless one is **born of water and the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

... “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

Jesus tells Nicodemus that entrance into God's kingdom requires a **spiritual rebirth** — something beyond human effort, accomplished by the **Spirit of God**.

- **“Water and Spirit”** (John 3:5) echoes **Ezekiel 36:25–27**, where God promises to:
 - “sprinkle clean water” (v. 25) → cleansing from sin
 - “a new Spirit I will put within you” (v. 27) → inner renewal
 Jesus likely expected Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, to recognize this language from Ezekiel.
- Both describe a **sovereign act of God** — not external ritual, but inner transformation.
- Both result in a **new nature** that loves and obeys God.
- Both mark the **beginning of the New Covenant** — Ezekiel's promise is fulfilled as Jesus inaugurates it (see also **Jeremiah 31:31–34**).

Ozymandias

by Percy Bysshe Shelley (British poet, 1792–1822)

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

E. Daniel

1. Author and Historical Context

The book of Daniel, named after and written by Daniel in the sixth century, B.C., records the events of the life and visions that he saw from the time of his exile in 605 until the third year of King Cyrus in 536. Daniel was a young man of noble blood who was exiled from Judah and lived thereafter at the Babylonian court. After the fall of the Babylonian Empire, he served the Medo-Persian Empire that succeeded it.¹²¹

Prophets before the Exile		Exile Prophets	Prophets after the Exile
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To Israel:	To Judah:	To Jews in Babylon:	To the remnant after returning:
Amos (765) Hosea (755)	Isaiah (740) Micah (735) Zephaniah (630)	Daniel (605) Ezekiel (592)	Haggai (520) Zechariah (520) Joel (500?) Malachi (430?)
To Ninevah:	Jeremiah (626) Habakkuk (607) Lamentations (586)	To Edom:	
Jonah (760) Nahum (660)		Obadiah (580?)	

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

2. Theme

The central theme is God's sovereignty over history and empires, setting up and removing kings as he pleases (2:21; 4:34-37). All the kingdoms of the world will come to an end and will be replaced by the Lord's kingdom, which will never pass away (2:44; 7:27). Though trials and difficulties will continue for the saints up until the end, those who are faithful will be raised to glory, honor, and everlasting life in this final kingdom (12:1-3).¹²²

3. Organization

Chapters 1-6: Hero stories comprised of six self-contained ordeals. **Chapters 7-12: Series of visions** that employ highly symbolic images to portray vast stretches of future (occurring after the time of Daniel) political and spiritual history.

¹²¹ *ESV Study Bible*, 1581.

¹²² *ESV Study Bible*, 1582.

4. Chapter Summaries¹²³

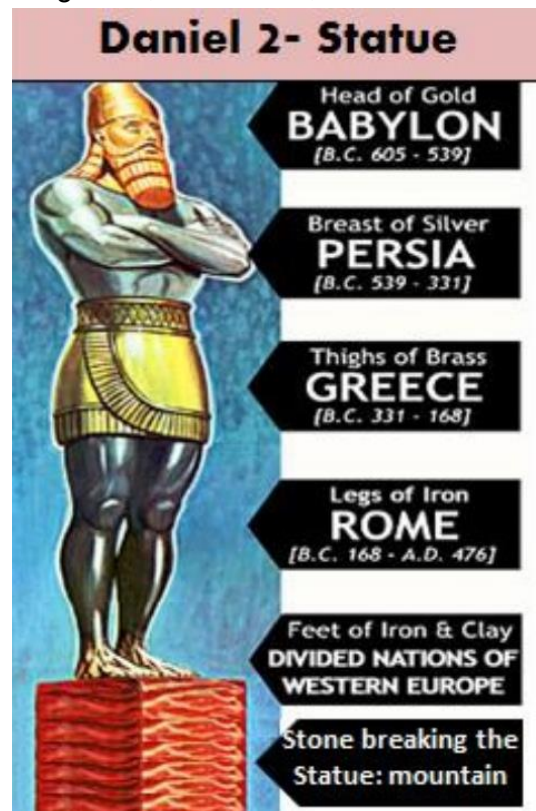
1 Daniel and his three companions remained faithful to God by refusing the king's food, and God blessed them with wisdom and favor in Babylon.

In 605 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged Jerusalem and took young Jewish men of noble blood to Babylon to be taught the literature and language of the nation. Among them were Daniel and his three companions (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah). The Babylonians gave them new names: Daniel was called Belteshazzar, and the three friends were renamed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The men respectfully asked to be excused from eating the royal food and wine. After ten days of consuming vegetables and water, they emerged healthier than their Babylonian counterparts. God gave the four men great wisdom and understanding.

2 Daniel interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue, revealing successive world empires and God's eternal kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar had a perplexing dream. He summoned his magicians, enchanters, and sorcerers to tell him not only the meaning of the dream, but even the content of the dream. They obviously could not do that, so he sentenced all the wise men of Babylon, including Daniel and his friends, to death. Daniel appealed to the king to give him time to discern the dream and its meaning. That night, God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel. Daniel revealed it to the king. Nebuchadnezzar in his dream had seen an enormous statue with a head of gold; breast and arms of silver; belly and thighs of bronze; legs of iron; and feet of mixed iron and clay. He then saw the statue destroyed by a rock that turned into a mountain filling the whole earth. Daniel explained the dream to the king: the statue symbolized four successive kingdoms, starting with Nebuchadnezzar, all of which would be crushed by God's kingdom, which would endure forever.

Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the supremacy of Daniel's god, promoted Daniel over all his wise men, and placed Daniel's three friends over the province of Babylon.



¹²³C.L. Seow, *Daniel* (John Knox Press, 2003) and the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Oxford University Press.), summarized in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel.

3 Nebuchadnezzar had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to bow down to a statue, but God miraculously delivered them.

Nebuchadnezzar had a large golden statue built (not the statue or image he dreamed about in chapter 2). He commanded all the people to bow down to it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to it.

Daniel 3:16-18

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

The king had them thrown into a fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was astonished to see a fourth figure in the furnace with the three, "and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods" (v. 25).¹²⁴ The king called the three to come out of the fire, and he blessed the God of Israel and decreed that anyone who spoke against their god would be torn limb from limb.

4 God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar by putting him through a period of madness until he acknowledged God's sovereign rule.

Speaking in the first person, Nebuchadnezzar described his dream of a huge tree that was suddenly cut down at the command of a heavenly messenger. He summoned Daniel to interpret the dream. The tree was Nebuchadnezzar himself, who for seven years would lose his mind and live like a wild beast. All of this happened until, at the end of the specified time, Nebuchadnezzar's reason returned to him, he acknowledged the true God, and God restored his rule.

5 Divine handwriting interrupted Belshazzar's blasphemous feast; Daniel interpreted the writing as God's judgment, and that night, Babylon fell.

Belshazzar, a descendent of Nebuchadnezzar and the last king of Babylon, and his lords blasphemously drank from sacred Jewish temple vessels, offering praise to the gods of gold and silver, until a mysterious hand suddenly appeared and wrote on the wall. The horrified king summoned Daniel, who confronted him for his lack of humility before God and interpreted the **handwriting on the wall**: Belshazzar's kingdom would be given to the Medes and Persians. Belshazzar rewarded Daniel and raised him to be third in the kingdom. That very night Belshazzar was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom.

6 King Darius the Mede had Daniel thrown into a den of lions for praying to God, but God miraculously protected Daniel, leading to Darius honoring Daniel's God.

Darius elevated Daniel to high office, exciting the jealousy of other officials. Knowing of Daniel's devotion to his God, his enemies tricked the king into issuing an edict forbidding worship of any other god or man except Darius for a 30-day period. Daniel continued to openly pray to God three times a day facing Jerusalem. The king was forced by his own decree to have Daniel thrown into the lions' den. God shut the mouths of the lions, and the next morning Darius rejoiced to find him unharmed. The king cast Daniel's accusers into the lions' pit together with their wives and children to be instantly devoured, while he himself acknowledged Daniel's God as the one whose kingdom would never be destroyed.

¹²⁴ "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were joined in the fire by a fourth individual, who had the appearance of a divine being like a son of the gods, who was either a Christophany (a physical appearance of Christ before his incarnation) or an angel." *ESV Study Bible*, 1592.

7 Vision of the beasts from the sea. In the first year of Belshazzar Daniel has a dream of four monstrous beasts arising from the sea. The fourth, a beast with ten horns, devours the whole earth, treading it down and crushing it, and a further small horn appears and uproots three of the earlier horns. The Ancient of Days judges and destroys the beast, and "one like a son of man" is given everlasting kingship over the entire world. One of Daniel's attendants explains that the four beasts represent four kings, but that "the holy ones of the Most High" would receive the everlasting kingdom. The fourth beast would be a fourth kingdom with ten kings, and another king who would pull down three kings and make war on the "holy ones" for "a time, two times and a half," after which the heavenly judgment will be made against him and the "holy ones" will receive the everlasting kingdom.




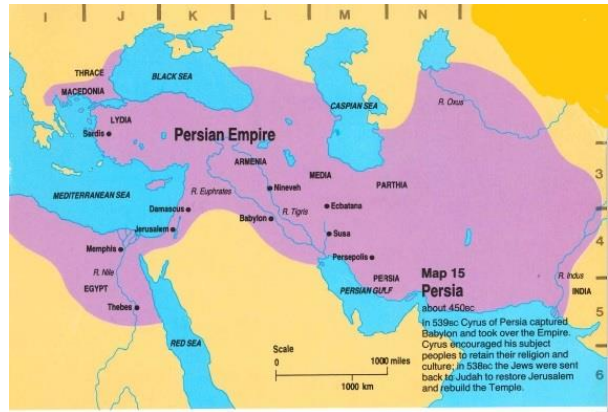
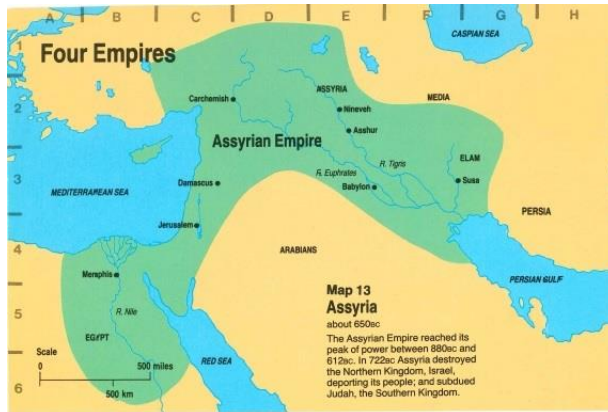
<https://www.mbcmi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Chapter-2.pdf>

8 Vision of the ram and goat. In the third year of Belshazzar Daniel has a vision of a ram and goat. The ram represents the Medo-Persian Empire. The goat represents the Greek Empire. The ram has two mighty horns, one longer than the other, and it charges west, north and south, overpowering all other beasts. A goat with a single horn appears from the west and destroys the ram. The goat becomes very powerful until the horn breaks off and is replaced by four lesser horns. A small horn that grows very large, it stops the daily temple sacrifices and desecrates the sanctuary for two thousand three hundred "evenings and mornings" (which could be either 1,150 or 2,300 days) until the temple is cleansed. The angel Gabriel informs him that the ram represents the Medes and Persians, the goat is Greece, and the "little horn" is a wicked king.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Chapter 8 apparently prophecies the reign of the evil King Antiochus Epiphanes IV. He was king of the Seleucid Empire, one of the four kingdoms that emerged from Alexander the Great's former Greek empire. He was a tyrant who tried to unify his kingdom by forcing all his subjects to adopt Greek cultural and religious practices. He banned circumcision, ended sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem (8:11), and deliberately defiled the Jewish temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar and placing an object sacred to Zeus in the Holy of Holies (8:13). He burned copies of the Scriptures and slaughtered those who remained true to their faith in God (8:10, 24-25). *ESV Study Bible*, 1605.

Visions in Daniel

IDENTIFICATION OF THE FOUR KINGDOMS			CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EMPIRES IN DANIEL	
Vision in Daniel: Ch. 2	Vision in Ch. 7	Vision in Ch. 8	IDENTIFICATION	
 <p>HEAD OF GOLD</p> <p>CHEST AND ARMS OF SILVER</p> <p>BELLY AND THIGHS OF BRONZE</p> <p>LEGS OF IRON</p> <p>FEET OF CLAY & IRON MIXED</p>	LION		BABYLON 2:37	626 B.C.
	BEAR	RAM	MEDO-PERSIA 8:20	539 B.C.
	LEOPARD	GOAT	GREECE 8:21	330 B.C.
	TERRIFYING AND FRIGHTENING BEAST		ROME	63 B.C.
				A.D. 70 Fall of Jerusalem



The Student Bible Atlas

9 Vision of the Seventy Weeks. In the first year of Darius the Mede, Daniel meditates on the word of Jeremiah that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years; he confesses the sin of Israel and pleads for God to restore Israel and the "desolated sanctuary" of the Temple. The angel Gabriel explains that the seventy years stand for seventy "weeks" of years (490 years), during which the Temple will first be restored, then later defiled by a "prince who is to come," "until the decreed end is poured out."

10-12 Vision of the kings of north and south. In the third year of Cyrus, Daniel sees in his vision an angel (called "a man", but clearly a supernatural being) who explains that he is in the midst of a war with the "prince of Persia," assisted only by Michael, "your prince." The "prince of Greece" will shortly come, but first he will reveal what will happen to Daniel's people.

Daniel 11: A future king of Persia will make war on the king of Greece, a "mighty king" will arise and wield power until his empire is broken up and given to others, and finally the king of the south (identified in verse 8 as Egypt) will go to war with the "king of the north." After many battles a "contemptible person" will become king of the north; this king will invade the south two times, the first time with success, but on his second he will be stopped by "ships of Kittim." He will turn back to his own country, and on the way his soldiers will desecrate the Temple, abolish the daily sacrifice, and set up the abomination of desolation.¹²⁶ He will defeat and subjugate Libya and Egypt, but "reports from the east and north will alarm him," and he will meet his end "between the sea and the holy mountain."

Daniel 12: At this time Michael will come. It will be a time of great distress, but all those whose names are written will be delivered. "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt; those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." In the final verses the remaining time to the end is revealed: "a time, times and half a time" (three years and a half). Daniel fails to understand and asks again what will happen and is told: "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days."

Observations about chapters 7-12:

- Analysis of these prophecies is beyond the scope of this class.
- Everyone should buy an ESV Study Bible to sort out the options.
- There are end-times prophecies mixed in with near-term prophecies.

Daniel 12:1-3

¹ "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. ² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

¹²⁶ This is apparently King Antiochus Epiphanes IV, also prophesied in chapter 8. See the footnote for chapter 8.

IV. Minor Prophets

A. Hosea

1. Author

Aside from his calamitous marriage, little is known of the life of the prophet Hosea. He lived in Israel. He was the son of Beeri (1:1), husband of Gomer (1:3), and father of two sons and a daughter (1:4,6,9). **Hosea had a real compassion for his people, and his personal suffering because of the behavior of his wife gave him insight into God's grief over Israel's sin.**¹²⁷

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed)- Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled)- Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah returned beginning 538- Temple rebuilt by 516
To Israel: Amos (765) Hosea (755) To Ninevah: Jonah (760) Nahum (660)	To Judah: Isaiah (740) Micah (735) Zephaniah (630) Jeremiah (626) Habakkuk (607) Lamentations (586)	To Jews in Babylon: Daniel (605) Ezekiel (592) To Edom: Obadiah (580?)	To the remnant after returning: Haggai (520) Zechariah (520) Joel (500?) Malachi (430?)

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

The book of Hosea was written to the Northern Kingdom of Israel on the brink of disaster. Outwardly, the nation was enjoying a time of prosperity and growth. Inwardly, moral corruption and spiritual adultery permeated the lives of the people. God instructed Hosea to marry an immoral, unfaithful woman (not necessarily a prostitute)¹²⁸, and Hosea found in his own life a vivid illustration of the unfaithfulness of God's people and the faithfulness of God. Hosea repeatedly echoes his threefold message: God abhors the sins of his people; judgment is certain; but God's love stands firm.¹²⁹

3. Theme

Hosea depicts Israel's unfaithfulness with a number of images from family and nature. Israel is like: a promiscuous wife, an indifferent mother, an illegitimate child, an ungrateful son, a stubborn heifer, a silly dove, a luxuriant vine, and grapes in the wilderness. Yet Israel's unfaithfulness and obstinacy are not enough to exhaust God's redeeming love that outstrips the human capacity to comprehend.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts, 242.

¹²⁸ "Some have supposed that God commands Hosea to marry a prostitute, but this does not suit the words. The word translated 'whoredom' throughout the book is a broad term for various kinds of sexual misconduct, and only in certain contexts does it refer to prostitution. In Hosea it generally refers to a married woman being unfaithful to her husband, which is why it serves as a metaphor for Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord, her husband." *ESV Study Bible*, 1623.

¹²⁹ Nelson's, 242.

¹³⁰ *ESV Study Study*, 1619.

4. Key Verses

Hosea 1:2-3

² When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord.” ³ So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

Hosea 8:7

⁷ For they sow the wind,
and they shall reap the whirlwind. ¹³¹

Hosea 11:1

¹ When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.

Matthew 2:13-15

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

¹³¹ Trusting flimsy alliances (“sowing the wind”) will exacerbate the situation by bringing on a ruthless invader (“reaping the whirlwind”). *ESV Study Bible*, 1633.

B. Joel

1. Author

“Joel, the son of Pethuel,” whose name means “Yahweh is God,” gives the book its title. Little is known of Joel except what is learned from the book itself. His references to Judah and Jerusalem, along with his knowledge of the activities of priest and temple, suggest that he was from Judah or perhaps even Jerusalem. His address to priests and elders likely eliminates him as a member of either group.¹³²

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed)- Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled)- Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah returned beginning 538- Temple rebuilt by 516
To Israel: Amos (765) Hosea (755)	To Judah: Isaiah (740) Micah (735) Zephaniah (630) Jeremiah (626) Habakkuk (607) Lamentations (586)	To Jews in Babylon: Daniel (605) Ezekiel (592)	To the remnant after returning: Haggai (520) Zechariah (520) Joel (500?) Malachi (430?)
To Ninevah: Jonah (760) Nahum (660)		To Edom: Obadiah (580?)	

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

Disaster struck Judah in the form of a cloud of locusts. In a matter of hours, the fields were stripped bare, and the prophet Joel seized this opportunity to proclaim God's message. **The plague of locusts is seen as a foreshadowing of the coming Day of the Lord.** In light of this, the book warns of approaching judgment, calls the people to repentance, and gives God's people hope of the coming day of salvation that will follow judgment. The theme of disaster runs throughout the book (locust plagues, famine, raging fires, invading armies, celestial phenomena), but promises of hope are interspersed with the pronouncements of coming judgment.¹³³

3. Theme

The Day of the Lord” is the dominant theme of the book of Joel. Both the nations (3:2–3) and Israel (1:15; 2:1–2) experience this judgment. However, for the repentant community, the “day” also holds out the hope of restoration (2:12–14). Ultimately, the Lord's covenant faithfulness is expressed in his promises of abundance and protection (2:23–26; 3:1), which evidence his dwelling in the midst of his people (2:27; 3:17, 21). This is epitomized in the great promise of “my Spirit” that would be poured out on “all flesh” (2:28, 29; cf. Acts 2:17–21).¹³⁴

In the prophetic books of the Bible, the **Day of the Lord** often has both **near-term** and **end-times (eschatological)** fulfillment. This is a common feature of biblical prophecy known as **“prophetic telescoping”** or **“double fulfillment.”**

¹³² *ESV Study Bible*, 1643.

¹³³ *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 246-248

¹³⁴ *ESV Study Bible*, 1643.

1. Near-Term Fulfillments

Many Old Testament prophets spoke of imminent judgments—within a few years or decades—against specific nations (including Israel and Judah). These events are described as the **Day of the Lord** and include:

- **Assyrian invasion** of Israel (Amos 5:18–20).
- **Babylonian destruction** of Judah and Jerusalem (Joel 1–2; Zephaniah 1).
- **Judgment on surrounding nations** like Edom or Egypt (Obadiah; Isaiah 13).

In these cases, the Day of the Lord refers to **historical acts of God's judgment** within the prophet's own time or shortly thereafter.

2. End-Times Fulfillment

At the same time, many of these same passages shift tone or language to describe something far more **cosmic, final, and universal**—often linked with:

- The **final judgment** (Zephaniah 1:14–18).
- The **return of Christ** (Malachi 4:5).
- The **renewal of creation** (Joel 3:18–21).
- The **rescue and vindication** of God's people (Isaiah 2:10–22; Zechariah 14).

These point toward an **ultimate Day of the Lord**, which includes both **judgment of the wicked** and **salvation for the righteous**—themes picked up by Jesus, Paul, and John in the New Testament (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 6–19).

4. Key Verses

Joel 2:28-32

²⁸ “And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
²⁹ Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.
³⁰ “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of
smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and
awesome day of the Lord comes. ³² And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the
name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who
escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.”

Acts 2:14-21 (on the day of Pentecost)

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of
Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my
words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of
the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:
¹⁷ “And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.
¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.
²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

C. Amos

1. Author

The first verse of the book identifies it as the work of Amos, one of “the shepherds of Tekoa.” Nothing else is known about Amos apart from what he says about himself in 7:14–15. There Amos insists that he is not a prophet by profession, but a “herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs” whom God entrusted with the special task of carrying a divine message to the people of the northern kingdom.¹³⁵

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed)- Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled)- Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah returned beginning 538- Temple rebuilt by 516
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Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

The Book of Amos addresses the excessive pursuit of luxury, self-indulgence, and **oppression of the poor** which characterized the period of prosperity and success in the northern kingdom of Israel. Amos's message of doom seemed incongruent with the elaborate trappings of that era. But with divinely given insight, he saw the corruption beneath the brilliantly colored exterior and announced that the nation was rotten to the core. The book stands as an eloquent witness against those who subordinate human need and dignity to the pursuit of wealth and pleasure.¹³⁶

3. Theme

The theme of Amos is the universal justice of God. **The Israelites clearly expected a “day of the LORD” when all their enemies would be judged (1:2–2:5). What they were not prepared for was that the judgment of that day would fall on them as well (2:6–9:10).** Far from enjoying favored status, they would be held more accountable than their neighbors.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ *ESV Study Bible*, 1655.

¹³⁶ *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 249.

¹³⁷ *ESV Study Bible*, 1655.

4. Key Verses

Amos 6:1,4-8 WARNING

- ¹ *"Woe to those who are at ease in Zion,
and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria,
the notable men of the first of the nations,
to whom the house of Israel comes!*
- ⁴ *"Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory
and stretch themselves out on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock
and calves from the midst of the stall,*
- ⁵ *who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp
and like David invent for themselves instruments of music,*
- ⁶ *who drink wine in bowls
and anoint themselves with the finest oils,
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!*
- ⁷ *Therefore they shall now be the first of those who go into exile,
and the revelry of those who stretch themselves out shall pass away."*
- ⁸ *The Lord God has sworn by himself, declares the Lord, the God of hosts:
"I abhor the pride of Jacob
and hate his strongholds,
and I will deliver up the city and all that is in it."*

Amos 8:9-10 JUDGMENT

- ⁹ *"And on that day," declares the Lord God,
"I will make the sun go down at noon
and darken the earth in broad daylight.*
- ¹⁰ *I will turn your feasts into mourning
and all your songs into lamentation;
I will bring sackcloth on every waist
and baldness on every head;
I will make it like the mourning for an only son
and the end of it like a bitter day."*

Amos 9:11-15 RESTORATION

- ¹¹ *"In that day I will raise up
the booth of David that is fallen
and repair its breaches,
and raise up its ruins
and rebuild it as in the days of old,*
- ¹² *that they may possess the remnant of Edom
and all the nations who are called by my name,"
declares the Lord who does this.*
- ¹³ *"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord,
"when the plowman shall overtake the reaper
and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed;
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and all the hills shall flow with it.*
- ¹⁴ *I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.*
- ¹⁵ *I will plant them on their land,
and they shall never again be uprooted
out of the land that I have given them,"
says the Lord your God.*

D. Obadiah

1. Author

The superscription for the book identifies the genre as a “vision,” a prophetic revelation from God spoken through his prophet “Obadiah.” Unfortunately, the only thing known about this prophet is his name (a common one in the OT), which means “one who serves Yahweh.”¹³⁸

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile - Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed) - Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled) - Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets - Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile - Judah returned beginning 538 - Temple rebuilt by 516
To Israel: Amos (765) Hosea (755) To Ninevah: Jonah (760) Nahum (660)	To Judah: Isaiah (740) Micah (735) Zephaniah (630) Jeremiah (626) Habakkuk (607) Lamentations (586)	To Jews in Babylon: Daniel (605) Ezekiel (592) To Edom: Obadiah (580?)	To the remnant after returning: Haggai (520) Zechariah (520) Joel (500?) Malachi (430?)

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

The Book of Obadiah (21 verses, shortest book in the Old Testament) deals with the bitter rivalry between Edom, the descendants of Jacob's twin brother Esau, and the people of Israel. Obadiah pronounces condemnation against Edom and prophesies their total destruction because of their persistent opposition to God's chosen people. Obadiah proclaims Edom's day in the divine court, complete with arraignment, indictment, and sentence. This prophet of poetic justice describes how the Judge of the earth will overthrow the pride of Edom and restore the house of Jacob. The prophetic theme of the Day of the Lord is prominent. As in the prophecy of Joel, this climactic day brings both judgment and deliverance. For Edom, this is a pronouncement of doom, but for Judah it will bring deliverance as God's people experience blessing and restoration to their land.¹³⁹

3. Theme

On the one hand, Edom, together with all other nations that oppose Israel's God and his people, will experience God's retributive judgment. On the other hand, God's own covenant people, who have already experienced God's judgment, will receive restoration from their God. The book ends with the promise of the kingdom of God.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ *ESV Study Bible*, 1677.

¹³⁹ *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 253-255.

¹⁴⁰ *ESV Study Bible*, 1677.

4. Key Verses

Obadiah 3-4

³ The **pride** of your heart has deceived you,
you who live in the clefts of the rock,
in your lofty dwelling,
who say in your heart,
“Who will bring me down to the ground?”
⁴ Though you soar aloft like the eagle,
though your nest is set among the stars,
from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord.

Obadiah 15,17,21

¹⁵ For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations.
As you have done, it shall be done to you;
your deeds shall return on your own head.
¹⁷ But in **Mount Zion** there shall be those who escape,
and it shall be holy,
and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions.
²¹ Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion
to rule Mount Esau,
and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

Zion

The term Zion in the Bible carries several related but distinct meanings, evolving over time:

1. A Specific Hill in Jerusalem

Originally, Zion referred to the Jebusite fortress David captured (2 Samuel 5:7). This hill later became known as the City of David.

2. Jerusalem as a Whole

Zion expanded to represent all of Jerusalem, especially in poetic and prophetic texts (e.g., Psalm 48:2; Isaiah 1:27). It became symbolic of God's dwelling place among His people.

3. The Jerusalem Temple

Sometimes Zion is closely associated with the Jerusalem Temple, where God's presence dwelled (Psalm 132:13).

4. The People of God

Zion can also symbolize God's people, especially in prophetic and exilic contexts (e.g., Isaiah 51:16), representing the community of the faithful.

5. The Future Heavenly Jerusalem

In the New Testament, Zion takes on a spiritual meaning, pointing to the heavenly Jerusalem or God's eternal kingdom (Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 14:1).

The Day of the Lord in the Prophets¹⁴¹



¹⁴¹ *ESV Study Bible*, 1668.

E. Jonah

1. Author

The title of the book is the name of the main character, Jonah. The book is anonymous, and there are no indicators elsewhere in Scripture to identify the author. The foundational source for the book was likely Jonah's own telling of the story after his return from Nineveh.¹⁴²

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed) - Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled) - Jerusalem temple destroyed 586 		Exile Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judah in Babylon 586-538 	Prophets after the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judah returned beginning 538 - Temple rebuilt by 516
To Israel: Amos (765) Hosea (755) To Nineveh: Jonah (760) Nahum (660)	To Judah: Isaiah (740) Micah (735) Zephaniah (630) Jeremiah (626) Habakkuk (607) Lamentations (586)	To Jews in Babylon: Daniel (605) Ezekiel (592) To Edom: Obadiah (580?)	To the remnant after returning: Haggai (520) Zechariah (520) Joel (500?) Malachi (430?)

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

God's loving concern for the Gentiles is not a truth disclosed only in the New Testament. More than seven centuries before Christ, God commissioned the Hebrew prophet Jonah to proclaim a message of repentance to the Assyrian city of Nineveh. Jewish nationalism, however, blinded Jonah to God's worldwide purpose of salvation. The account of Jonah is one of the clearest demonstrations in Scripture of God's love and mercy for all peoples. The book is rich in irony: the disobedience of the prophet is contrasted with the surprising faith of the mariners (ch. 1), and Jonah's petty concern for the plant contrasts with God's gracious care and concern for the people of Nineveh (ch. 4). The book also served to challenge the nationalistic pride of Israel and her failure to comprehend the nature of her missionary task and the purpose of God to bestow his loving-kindness upon all peoples. The change in Jonah's own attitude is symbolic of the change God required of Israel as a whole. Jonah's three-day experience in the belly of the fish also serves as a type of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Matt. 12:39-41).¹⁴³

3. Theme

The Lord is a God of boundless compassion not just for "us" (Jonah and the Israelites) but also for "them" (the pagan sailors and Ninevites).¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² *ESV Study Bible*, 1673. Nineveh was a great city in Assyria but not yet the capital at the time of Jonah. It became the capital in 705 B.C.

¹⁴³ *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 256-258.

¹⁴⁴ *ESV Study Bible*, 1673.

4. Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 – Jonah Flees from God

God commands Jonah [who lived in Gath-hepher in northern Israel near Nazareth] to go preach to Nineveh, but Jonah runs away and boards a ship in Joppa heading west in the Mediterranean Sea toward Tarshish [probably in Spain]. A violent storm threatens the ship, and Jonah is eventually thrown overboard by the crew to calm the sea. He is swallowed by a great fish appointed by God.

Chapter 2 – Jonah’s Prayer from the Fish

From inside the fish, Jonah prays a poetic prayer of repentance and gratitude. God hears his prayer and commands the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land [not sure where, but apparently he hadn’t traveled very far when the storm hit].

Chapter 3 – Jonah Preaches in Nineveh

God gives Jonah a second chance to go to Nineveh. Jonah obeys and delivers God’s message: the city will be overthrown in 40 days. The people of Nineveh, including the king, repent, fast, and humble themselves. God shows mercy and spares the city.

Chapter 4 – Jonah’s Anger and God’s Lesson

Jonah becomes angry that God spared Nineveh. He sits outside the city, hoping to see it destroyed. God causes a plant to grow and provide Jonah shade, then causes it to wither. Through this, God teaches Jonah a lesson about compassion and the value of people over personal comfort.



Mark Berry

5. Key Verses

Jonah 1:17

¹⁷ And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Matthew 12:39-41

³⁹ But [Jesus] answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”

Here it should be noted that the Hebrew idiom, “three days and three nights,” only requires a portion of the first and third days.¹⁴⁵

Jonah 3:5,10

⁵ And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

¹⁰ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

Jonah 4:11 (God speaking)

¹¹ And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

¹⁴⁵ Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts, 256-258.

F. Micah

1. Author

Rather than being identified by his father or family, this prophet is identified by a location, “Micah of Moresheth” (Mic. 1:1). It was about 22 miles (35 km) southwest of Jerusalem in the “lowland” or Shephelah region. Unlike the calls to prophetic office of some other prophets, Micah’s call is not recorded. Micah is never explicitly referred to as “prophet,” but the source of his power is explicitly attributed to the “Spirit of the LORD” (Mic. 3:8; cf. 2 Pet. 1:20–21). The name “Micah” may be translated as a simple rhetorical question: “Who is like Yahweh?” Similarly, the book concludes with an inquiry: “Who is a God like you?” (Mic. 7:18). These questions underscore the unrivaled character and actions of the Lord.¹⁴⁶

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile - Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed) - Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled) - Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets - Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile - Judah returned beginning 538 - Temple rebuilt by 516
To Israel: Amos (765) Hosea (755) To Ninevah: Jonah (760) Nahum (660)	To Judah: Isaiah (740) Micah (735) Zephaniah (630) Jeremiah (626) Habakkuk (607) Lamentations (586)	To Jews in Babylon: Daniel (605) Ezekiel (592) To Edom: Obadiah (580?)	To the remnant after returning: Haggai (520) Zechariah (520) Joel (500?) Malachi (430?)

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet’s public ministry.

The book of Micah teaches that Israel’s doom is certain and Judah’s is not far behind. The people plan wickedness and oppress the poor without any concern for divine judgment on their behavior. The corruption of the political and religious leaders of Judah is also highlighted (ch. 3). God will restore his people and give them a true Ruler who will lead them in victory, but that hope stands only on the other side of the judgment that is coming because they failed to accept their covenant responsibilities as God’s chosen people.¹⁴⁷

3. Theme

The theme of Micah is judgment and forgiveness. The Lord, the Judge who scatters his people for their transgressions and sins, is also the Shepherd-King who in covenant faithfulness gathers, protects, and forgives them.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ *ESV Study Bible*, 1693.

¹⁴⁷ *Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 263.

¹⁴⁸ *ESV Study Bible*, 1693.

4. Key Verses

Micah 4:1-2

¹ It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and it shall be lifted up above the hills;
and peoples shall flow to it,
² and many nations shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Micah 5:2,4-5

² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.
⁴ And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.
⁵ And he shall be their peace.

Matthew 2:1-6

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king,
behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, “Where is he who has
been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come
to worship him.” ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem
with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired
of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea,
for so it is written by the prophet:
⁶ “‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

Micah 6:8

⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 7:18

¹⁸ Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity
and passing over transgression
for the remnant of his inheritance?
He does not retain his anger forever,
because he delights in steadfast love.

G. Nahum

1. Author

The book is named after its author, the prophet Nahum of Elkosh. His name means “comfort.” The message given to him by God, that Nineveh would be destroyed, brings comfort to Judah. The location of Elkosh is uncertain, although the date and the address to Judah (1:15) make it likely that Nahum was from Judah.¹⁴⁹

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed)- Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled)- Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah returned beginning 538- Temple rebuilt by 516
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Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

In contrast to his predecessor Jonah, whose ministry resulted in the repentance of the Ninevites, the prophet Nahum proclaims the downfall of the great Assyrian city of Nineveh. The Ninevites have forgotten their revival and returned to their habits of violence, idolatry, and arrogance. As a result, Babylon will be destroyed so that no trace of it will remain—a prophecy fulfilled in painful detail. The nature of God, specifically his wrath, holiness, justice, and power, makes it inevitable that his enemies will perish.¹⁵⁰

3. Theme

Nineveh, the arrogant capital of the Assyrian Empire, would be destroyed. Nahum was God's messenger to announce the fall of Nineveh and the complete overthrow of Assyria. This coming judgment from the Lord was certain and irrevocable, as was Obadiah's message concerning Edom.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ *ESV Study Bible*, 1709.

¹⁵⁰ *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 264-266.

¹⁵¹ *ESV Study Bible*, 1709.

4. Key Verses

Nahum 1:2-8

- ² *The Lord is a jealous and avenging God;
the Lord is avenging and wrathful;
the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries
and keeps wrath for his enemies.*
- ³ *The Lord is slow to anger and great in power,
and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty.
His way is in whirlwind and storm,
and the clouds are the dust of his feet.*
- ⁴ *He rebukes the sea and makes it dry;
he dries up all the rivers;
Bashan and Carmel wither;
the bloom of Lebanon withers.*
- ⁵ *The mountains quake before him;
the hills melt;
the earth heaves before him,
the world and all who dwell in it.*
- ⁶ *Who can stand before his indignation?
Who can endure the heat of his anger?
His wrath is poured out like fire,
and the rocks are broken into pieces by him.*
- ⁷ *The Lord is good,
a stronghold in the day of trouble;
he knows those who take refuge in him.*
- ⁸ *But with an overflowing flood
he will make a complete end of the adversaries,
and will pursue his enemies into darkness.*

H. Habakkuk

1. Author

Little is known about the prophet Habakkuk. He was likely a contemporary of Zephaniah and Jeremiah, and possibly even of Ezekiel and Daniel, but none of the other prophets mention him. His name appears twice in the book (1:1; 3:1), and he is clearly the main character.¹⁵²

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed)- Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled)- Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah returned beginning 538- Temple rebuilt by 516
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Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

The prophet Habakkuk ministered during the death throes of the nation of Judah. Although repeatedly called to repentance, the nation stubbornly refused to change her sinful ways. Asking how long this intolerable situation would continue, Habakkuk is told by God that the Babylonians would be his chastening rod on the nation—an announcement that sends the prophet to his knees. **Though perplexed, Habakkuk acknowledges that the just in any generation shall live by faith (2:4), not by sight, and he concludes by praising God's wisdom even though he doesn't fully understand God's ways.** God also gives Habakkuk a vision of his infinite glory, a vision somewhat reminiscent of the one given in Job 38-41. The book also stresses God's sovereign freedom to accomplish his good ends in his own way. In spite of appearances to the contrary, God is still on the throne as the Lord of history and the Ruler of the nations. **The book depicts the prophet's struggle of faith, and in so doing the centrality of faith in the lives of God's people is highlighted.**¹⁵³

3. Theme

By the end of the book, Habakkuk is a changed person—he has learned to wait and trust in God, who works out all things for his glory. Habakkuk, like Job, questions God's justice, but in the end both realize that God is sovereign and his justice is far beyond their comprehension. Habakkuk's message of judgment on Judah would not have been well accepted, for the nation had been blinded by sin while false prophets were declaring that God would not punish his chosen people. **But God's justice demands that wickedness be punished, whether found in pagan nations or in his own people.**¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² *ESV Study Bible*, 1719.

¹⁵³ *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 267-269.

¹⁵⁴ *ESV Study Bible*, 1719.

4. Key Verses

Habakkuk 1:2-4

² O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not hear?
Or cry to you "Violence!"
and you will not save?
³ Why do you make me see iniquity,
and why do you idly look at wrong?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.
⁴ So the law is paralyzed,
and justice never goes forth.
For the wicked surround the righteous;
so justice goes forth perverted.

Habakkuk 2:4

⁴ "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,
but the righteous shall live by his faith.

Habakkuk 3:17-19

¹⁷ Though the fig tree should not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
¹⁹ God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer's;
he makes me tread on my high places.
To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

I. Zephaniah

1. Author

While the originator of the words of this book ultimately was Israel's God ("the LORD"), the prophetic intermediary who delivered them to Judah was Zephaniah, after whom the book is named. Little is known about him apart from his name and pedigree. That the prophet was named "Zephaniah," which means "Yahweh has hidden/protected," could indicate his parents' piety, as they trusted in God during the godless reign of Manasseh. Indeed, the genealogy in 1:1 may indicate that Zephaniah was a descendant of Hezekiah, the pious ruler of Judah before two wicked kings assumed the throne.¹⁵⁵

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed)- Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled)- Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah returned beginning 538- Temple rebuilt by 516
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Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

On the whole, Zephaniah is a fierce and grim book of warning about the coming day of the Lord. Desolation, darkness, and ruin will strike Judah and the nations because of the wrath of God upon sin. This day of the Lord is seen as having two components: judgment that results in the destruction of Judah by foreign armies, but also restoration and hope for the people of God. Zephaniah sees this second aspect of the day of the Lord as a terminal event, bringing history to a close. Thus the message shares some characteristics with apocalyptic literature that portrays the end times.¹⁵⁶

3. Theme

The theme of Zephaniah, one preached more consistently by him than by any other prophet, is the "day of the LORD" (1:7, etc.). This approaching day shows two faces: one of judgment against those who sin against God, and one of blessing for those who follow him. God will show himself just in both punishment and praise.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ *ESV Study Bible*, 1729.

¹⁵⁶ *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 271-273.

¹⁵⁷ *ESV Study Bible*, 1729.

4. Key Verses

Zephaniah 1:17-18

¹⁷ I will bring distress on mankind,
so that they shall walk like the blind,
because they have sinned against the Lord;
their blood shall be poured out like dust,
and their flesh like dung.
¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold
shall be able to deliver them
on the day of the wrath of the Lord.
In the fire of his jealousy,
all the earth shall be consumed;
for a full and sudden end
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Zephaniah 2:3

³ Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land,
who do his just commands;
seek righteousness; seek humility;
perhaps you may be hidden
on the day of the anger of the Lord.

Zephaniah 3:14-20

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem!
¹⁵ The Lord has taken away the judgments against you;
he has cleared away your enemies.
The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
you shall never again fear evil.
¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
"Fear not, O Zion;
let not your hands grow weak.
¹⁷ The Lord your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.
¹⁸ I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival,
so that you will no longer suffer reproach.
¹⁹ Behold, at that time I will deal
with all your oppressors.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
²⁰ At that time I will bring you in,
at the time when I gather you together;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes," says the Lord.

J. Haggai

1. Author

The book of Haggai contains messages delivered by the prophet Haggai, and thus it is reasonable to consider Haggai its author. The name Haggai, which means “festal,” promotes the conjecture that his birth occurred during a festival of Israel, or perhaps links his name with his message, anticipating the restoration of Israel’s great feasts within a restored temple. Nothing is known of his genealogy.¹⁵⁸

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed)- Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled)- Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah returned beginning 538- Temple rebuilt by 516
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To Ninevah: Jonah (760) Nahum (660)		To Edom: Obadiah (580?)	

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet’s public ministry.

In 538 B.C., Cyrus of Persia issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their land and rebuild their temple, and in 536, work on the temple commenced. The returning exiles met with strong opposition from the Samaritans in the land, and work on the temple stopped in 534. It was in this context that God called his prophets Haggai and Zechariah to the same task of urging a discouraged and apathetic people to complete the temple.¹⁵⁹

3. Theme

The restoration of the Lord’s house by the people of God will mediate God’s presence. Haggai motivates the leaders (Zerubbabel and Joshua) and the people of God to consider their current economic and spiritual circumstances and to renew their efforts to complete the work of temple restoration.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ *ESV Study Bible*, 1741.

¹⁵⁹ *Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 274-276.

¹⁶⁰ *ESV Study Bible*, 1741.

4. Key Verses

Haggai 1:2-4,9-11

² “Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.” ³ Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, ⁴ “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?”

⁹ “You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. ¹¹ And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.”

Haggai 2:3,6-9

³ “Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? . . . ⁶ “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. ⁷ 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. ⁸ The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts. ⁹ 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.”

The house of the Lord (his temple) symbolizes his presence and looks forward to Christ as temple (John 1:14; 2:19-21), the church as temple (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:20-22), individual believers as temple (1 Cor. 6:19), and the dwelling of God in the new Jerusalem as temple (Rev. 21:3; 21:22-22:5).¹⁶¹ In 2:3, some old-timers were discouraged the rebuilt temple was not as glorious as Solomon’s temple. However, a future temple would be even more glorious, because it would be Christ himself: John 1:14: The Word became flesh and dwelt (literally, “tabernacled”) among us.

Haggai 2:20-23

²⁰ The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, ²¹ “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, ²² and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. ²³ On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.”

Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, was an ancestor of Christ (Matt. 1:13; Luke 3:27).

¹⁶¹ *ESV Study Bible*, 2661.

K. Zechariah

1. Author

The prophet Zechariah was a priest, the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo. He was a member of a prominent priestly family who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel in about 538 B.C. (Neh. 12:4). Zechariah began his ministry in 520 B.C., shortly after Haggai had begun his prophetic work, and there are many points of contact between Haggai and Zechariah 1–8.¹⁶²

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile - Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed) - Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled) - Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets - Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile - Judah returned beginning 538 - Temple rebuilt by 516
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To Ninevah: Jonah (760) Nahum (660)		To Edom: Obadiah (580?)	

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet's public ministry.

For a dozen years or more, the task of rebuilding the temple had been half completed. The prophet Zechariah was commissioned by God to encourage the people to complete this important task. Rather than exhorting them with strong words of rebuke, Zechariah offered a very positive goal: the temple must be built, for someday the glory of the Messiah would inhabit it.¹⁶³

3. Theme

Zechariah used a series of eight visions, four messages, and two burdens to portray God's future plans for his covenant people. The first eight chapters were written to encourage the remnant while they were rebuilding the temple. The last six chapters were written to anticipate Israel's coming Messiah. Zechariah progressed from gentile domination to messianic rule, from persecution to peace, and from uncleanness to holiness. Zechariah foretold the rise of Greece, the advent and rejection of the Messiah, and the final triumph of the Messiah.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² *ESV Study Bible*, 1750.

¹⁶³ *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 279-281.

¹⁶⁴ *Nelson's*, 279-281.

4. Key Verses

The book of Zechariah is densely mined for quotations by the NT, whose authors discerned in it several prophecies concerning the Messiah's coming. The clearest instances come from Zechariah 8:16 (in Eph. 4:25), Zechariah 9:9 (in Matt. 21:5 and John 12:15), Zechariah 11:12–13 (in Matt. 27:9–10), Zechariah 12:10 (in John 19:37), and Zechariah 13:7 (in Matt. 26:31 and Mark 14:27). In addition to these are numerous allusions, which are sometimes difficult to assess; one estimate, however, finds about 54 passages from Zechariah echoed in about 67 different places in the NT, with the lion's share of these found in the book of Revelation.¹⁶⁵

Zechariah 3:8 [see Isaiah 4:2, 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5—the Messiah would be a branch from David's father Jesse]

⁸ Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, **I will bring my servant the Branch.**

Zechariah 4:6

⁶ Then he said to me, **"This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."**

Zechariah 8:16 [see Ephesians 4:25]

¹⁶ These are the things that you shall do: **Speak the truth to one another;** render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace.

Zechariah 9:9 [see Matthew 21:5]

⁹ 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.

Zechariah 11:12-13 [see Matthew 27:9]

¹² Then I said to them, "If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." **And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver.** ¹³ Then the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord, to the potter."

Zechariah 12:10 [see John 19:37]

¹⁰ "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."

Zechariah 13:7 [see Matthew 20:31]

⁷ "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;
I will turn my hand against the little ones."

¹⁶⁵ ESV Study Bible, 1750.

L. Malachi

1. Author

The Hebrew name “Malachi” means “my messenger,” or perhaps “messenger of (the LORD).” 3:1 offers an important wordplay on the prophet’s name: “Behold, I send *my messenger*, and he will prepare the way before me.” This wordplay suggests that **Malachi’s own ministry was intended to foreshadow that of the coming messenger, who is identified in the New Testament as John the Baptist.**¹⁶⁶

2. Historical Context

Prophets before the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Israel fell to Assyria in 722 (dispersed)- Judah fell to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 (exiled)- Jerusalem temple destroyed 586		Exile Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah in Babylon 586-538	Prophets after the Exile <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Judah returned beginning 538- Temple rebuilt by 516
To Israel: Amos (765) Hosea (755)	To Judah: Isaiah (740) Micah (735) Zephaniah (630) Jeremiah (626) Habakkuk (607) Lamentations (586)	To Jews in Babylon: Daniel (605) Ezekiel (592)	To the remnant after returning: Haggai (520) Zechariah (520) Joel (500?) Malachi (430?)
To Ninevah: Jonah (760) Nahum (660)		To Edom: Obadiah (580?)	

Dates indicate the approximate start of the prophet’s public ministry.

Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets and the author of this final book of the Old Testament. He directed his message of judgment to a people plagued with corrupt priests, wicked practices, and a false sense of security. Using the question-and-answer method, he probed deeply into their problems of hypocrisy, infidelity, mixed marriages, divorce, false worship, and arrogance. The people had become disillusioned and doubtful. They wondered if God’s messianic promises would ever be fulfilled and whether it was worth serving God at all. These attitudes were manifested in empty ritual, cheating on tithes and offerings, and indifference to the moral and ceremonial law. **The last two chapters contain dramatic prophecies of the coming of the Lord and of John the Baptist.** Israel flocked to the Jordan River 400 years later when “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord’” (Matt. 3:3; compare to Malachi 3:1) appeared, thus breaking the long period of prophetic silence.¹⁶⁷

3. Theme

Malachi’s contemporaries may have been free from blatant idolatry and relatively orthodox in their beliefs, but theirs had become a dead orthodoxy. They were all too ready to make ethical compromises and to dilute the strenuous demands of proper worship. In response to the cynicism and religious malaise of his contemporaries, Malachi’s prophecy comes as a wake-up call to renewed covenant fidelity.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ *ESV Study Bible*, 1771.

¹⁶⁷ *Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 283-285.

¹⁶⁸ *ESV Study Bible*, 1771.

4. Key Verses

Malachi 1:11

¹¹ 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.

Malachi 2:13-16

¹³ And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. ¹⁴ But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. [“I hate divorce” NASB] So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.”

Malachi 3:1

¹ "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."

Malachi 3:6-12

⁶ "For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. ⁷ From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?' ⁸ Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. ¹⁰ Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. ¹¹ I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. ¹² Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 4:1-3

¹ "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ² But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. ³ And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 4:5-6

⁵ "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ⁶ 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." [John the Baptist will come in the spirit and power of Elijah.]

V. Summary of Old Testament History¹⁶⁹

2091 BC	God calls Abram (Abraham)
1899	Joseph is sold into Egyptian slavery
1876	Jacob and family move to Egypt
1526	Moses is born
1446	Exodus from Egypt occurs
1406	Israel enters Canaan after 40 years in the wilderness
1375-1051	Judges rule over Israel
1051	Saul becomes King of Israel
1011	Ish-bosheth becomes King of Israel
	David becomes King of Judah
1004	David becomes King of United Kingdom
971	Solomon becomes King of United Kingdom
931	Kingdom divides
	Jeroboam becomes King of Israel
	Rehoboam becomes King of Judah
880-612	Assyrian Empire is the main power in the region
722	Israel falls to the Assyrians and is scattered throughout Assyria
612-539	Babylonian Empire is the main power in the region
586	Judah falls to the Babylonians and is deported to Babylon
	Jerusalem temple is destroyed
539-333	Persian Empire is the main power in the region
538	Persian King Cyrus says Judah is allowed to return home
516	Temple is rebuilt
430	Malachi writes the last book of the Old Testament

¹⁶⁹ Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*.

VI. Bonus: Intertestamental Period

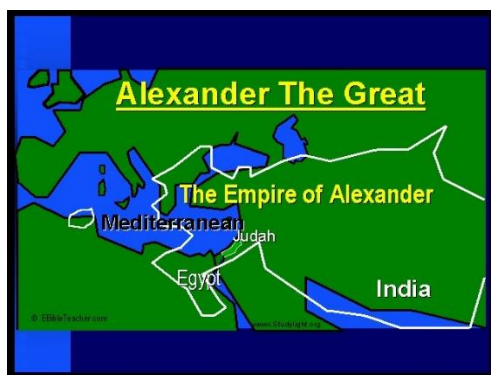
The Intertestamental Period is the 425 years from the close of the Old Testament in approximately 430 B.C. to the birth of Christ in approximately 5 B.C.

THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

539-333 The Persian Empire controlled this region at the close of the New Testament.

THE GREEK EMPIRE

333-63 The Greek Empire controlled this region after Alexander the Great defeated Darius III of Persia in 333.



323 After his death in 323, Alexander's empire was broken up into smaller kingdoms ruled by generals.

- Macedon & Greece (under Antipater & Cassander)
- Thrace & Asia Minor (under Lysimachus)
- Syria (under Seleucus I Nicator)
- Palestine & Egypt (under Ptolemy I Soter)

For the next 150 years, the Seleucid (Syria) and the Ptolemaic (Egypt; including Palestine initially) kingdoms fought each other. Palestine found itself right in the middle of these battles as the two kingdoms fought each other over control of Palestine.



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Ptolemaic rule over Palestine

At the Battle of Panium (later Caesaria Philippi), the Seleucids (Syria) won a decisive victory over the Ptolemies (Egypt). After more than a century of Ptolemaic rule, Palestine came under the rule of the Seleucids.



Seleucid rule over Palestine

- 176 Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Epiphanes = “manifest god”) came into power as the ruler of the Seleucids (Syria). He is the famous “king . . . having fierce features . . . who understands sinister schemes . . . (who shall) destroy the mighty, and also the holy people” described in Daniel 8:9-12, 23-25 and who will “defile the sanctuary fortress . . . take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation” in Daniel 11:29-35.
- 168 Antiochus IV changed Jewish laws in an attempt to bring the Jewish people in line with Hellenistic (Greek) patterns. He took aggressive steps against Jewish worship. He looted the temple. He had a fortress erected (called the Akra) near the temple in order to keep an eye on the activities there. Most distressingly, he stopped the daily sacrifices on the altar and placed in the temple an idolatrous object, probably a meteorite representing Baal Shamem (the Syrian version of Zeus). This object is called the “abomination that causes desolation.” It was constructed upon the altar of burnt offerings in the temple courtyard. It was on this altar and similar ones outside Jerusalem that swine were said to have been offered after the cessation of the traditional, daily Jewish sacrifices.¹⁷⁰
- 166-164 The anti-Greek Jews (those who opposed Antiochus IV and his plan to Hellenize Judea) were called the Maccabeans. They were initially led by a priest named Mattathias and his five sons: John, Simon, Judah, Eleazar, and Jonathan. Mattathias was the descendant of a priest named Hashmon, and therefore the members of his family were sometimes called Hasmoneans. After the death of Mattathias, his son Judas Maccabeus led the aroused Maccabeans in a guerilla war and several times defeated the generals Antiochus IV had commissioned to deal with the uprising. Judas retook Judea with the exception of the Akra fortress in Jerusalem. In December 164, he was able to tear down the altar of Zeus and reconsecrate the temple.

The reconsecration of the temple in December 164 is celebrated today as the Jewish feast of Hannukah (“Feast of Dedication”).

¹⁷⁰ Longman, 279-280. See Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 12:11; Matthew 24:15.

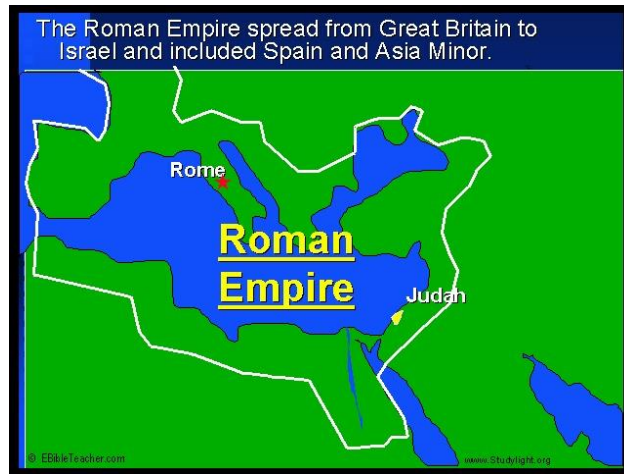
163-140 Some of the Jews stopped fighting, but Judas Maccabeus carried on the war to achieve political independence from Syria. He made a treaty of friendship with the Romans, who were interested in weakening the Seleucid power. From 163-140, the Jews under the leadership of the Hasmonean family (the Maccabeans) gradually gained control of the Holy Land from the Syrians (Seleucids).



140-63 During this period, the Hasmonean dynasty expanded its territory to include not only Judah but also Samaria, some areas east of the Jordan, and areas south into Idumea (Edom). Unfortunately, the original religious reasons for regaining control of the Holy Land were replaced by personal ambition and cruel oppression.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

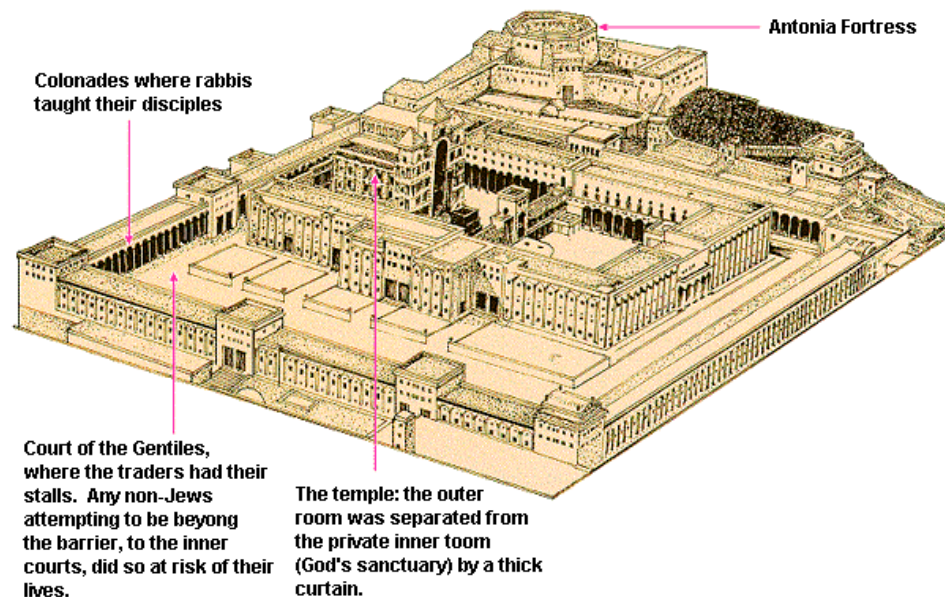
63 B.C.- A.D. 395 During this period, which included Christ's birth in approximately 5 B.C., Judea was under Roman control.



63 The Romans first made Syria a Roman province; then they captured the Jerusalem temple under the leadership of Roman General Pompey. Judea, now called Judea, came under the control of the Roman proconsul of Syria.

63 - 40 B.C. Palestine was ruled by various Roman governors of Syria.

40 - 4 B.C. Palestine was ruled by King Herod the Great. He was famous for his building programs. In 19 B.C., he began the expansion and rebuilding of the Second Temple (the one that had been completed in 516 B.C.). This rebuilding of the Second Temple is known as Herod's Temple.



To be continued . . .