

Week of June 13-19

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

JUDAH

Approximate

Hezekiah (good king) reign 29 years

(No bad critique)

Manasseh (worst king) reign 55 years

Amon reign 2 years

Josiah (good king) reign 31 years (found Book of the Law in 621BC)(No bad critique)

Jehoahaz (Shallum) reign 3 months (Captured and chained up by Egyptian Pharaoh Neco)

Jehoiakim (Eliakim) reign 11 years (Placed on throne by Egyptian Pharaoh Neco)

Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) reign 3 months (Taken captive to Babylon)

Zedekiah (Mattaniah) reign 11 years (Last King of Judah)

Destruction of Jerusalem and second Babylonian Captivity 586 B.C.

ISRAEL

Approximate

The fall of Samaria and the Assyrian

Captivity in 722 B.C.

2 Kings 21 Manasseh and Amon's Evil Reigns

Manasseh began reigning as vice-regent with his father Hezekiah when he was 12 years old in 697 B.C. This arrangement continued for 11 years until Hezekiah died in 686 B.C. For a total of 55 years, Manasseh was king of Judah (697 B.C. - 642 B.C.) and reigned longer than any Hebrew king. He was Judah's most evil king spiritually, committing every pagan atrocity.

The story of Manasseh's sin was not merely of personal wrongdoing, but of the deliberate undoing of what his father had taken such pains to accomplish. Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before Israel. He is blamed for the eventual fall of Jerusalem.

Amon reigned two years (642 B.C. - 640 B.C.). Rather than continuing to follow the Lord, which his father's repentance encouraged, Amon reverted to the policies of Manasseh's earlier reign and rebelled against God completely. This provoked some of his officials to assassinate him. Again, we see that rebellion against God often leads to one's premature personal destruction. To their credit, the leaders of Judah executed the king's assassins and so prevented anarchy.

History shows that a good father does not always make a good son. Manasseh was wicked like his grandfather Ahaz and unlike his father Hezekiah who was a good ruler. This marks the lowest period in the history of Judah.

2 Chronicles 33 Manasseh's Repentance

The writer's account of Manasseh's reign (697-687 B.C.) includes the unusual story of Manasseh's imprisonment in Assyria. During this exile, he repented, and God answered by returning him to Jerusalem. The writer explains how God forgives and restores the humble. Upon his return, Manasseh repaired the temple and renewed proper worship.

His successor was his son Amon (642-640 B.C.) for whom the writer had no words of commendation.

The utter corruption of human nature is seen in Amon. With the awful experience of his father before him and no doubt encouraged by Manasseh to serve the LORD and be true to Him, he deliberately followed the bad example of his father. He died in his sins.

Nahum 1 God Deals with the Assyrian Oppressor

Nahum is unknown except for verse 1. Elkosh is also unknown. Although no date or period is provided, the subject of Nineveh's imminent destruction places it in the late 700s B.C. This book is completely concerned with Nineveh's destruction because of its oppression of Israel and Judah.

Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, had become God's enemy and earned His wrath. Now judgment had come, and no one was strong enough to withstand God's wrath. Nineveh's past role in punishing Israel would now end. Judah could begin to keep their festivals again without oppression.

In verse 9, Nahum asks Nineveh, "What are you thinking of, Nineveh, to defy the Lord? He will stop you with one blow not needing to strike again. What are you thinking, Nineveh?"

Nahum 2 The Siege of Nineveh

The great prophecy was fulfilled about 90 years later when Nineveh was at the pinnacle of her glory. The prophecy was fulfilled by the Medes and Babylonians in an alliance against Nineveh. Nahum addresses Nineveh and urges her to get ready to defend herself against the siege. The attackers wore crimson tunics, and the chariot wheels were armed with cutters that flashed as they turned. Ladders were already against the walls, and the gates of the rivers would soon be opened because of a flood. Fire and sword completed Nineveh's ruin.

This is what happens to the enemies of God's people. If God stays true to his threatenings, how much more is He true to His promises!

Nahum 3 Nineveh Deserved Doom

Nahum describes Nineveh as a "bloody city," evil and cruel. Then the siege is described as the chariots rush forward against her. Her idolatrous practices and witchcraft were deceptive methods used to entice nations to worship her false gods, bewitching people everywhere and plundering all of the neighboring nations. God's vengeance was then described as He pointed out that no one anywhere regrets the fate of Nineveh.

Nahum inquired, "Are you better than Thebes?" The argument was that Thebes, which was not as corrupt as Nineveh, had been destroyed, notwithstanding her strength. How much more certain then was the destruction of Nineveh. Nineveh's corruption had canceled her strength, and God's vengeance had begun.

Nineveh's princes laid dead in the dust; her people were scattered across the mountains with no shepherd to gather up their bodies. The destruction was far too deep to cure. Everyone clapped his hands for joy since all had suffered from her cruelty.

The fall of Nineveh shows God's control over history. Nineveh was only about 150 years old when it crumbled and was hated. The minor prophets call this the turning point for Israel and Jerusalem although it had to wait almost 100 years before the restoration of Jerusalem was complete.

Zephaniah 1 The Day of Judgment Is Coming to Jerusalem and Judah

Zephaniah reveals very little of himself in his prophecy; not even his birthplace is given. If the Hezekiah mentioned in 1:1 is a reference to the former king of Judah, then Zephaniah was

related to Judean royalty and presumably lived in Jerusalem. He delivered oracles of judgment against Jerusalem in the time of Josiah.

The Book of Zephaniah, looks toward the punishment of all sinful nations, including Judah, followed by the restoration of Judah and the nations as well.

Zephaniah 1 begins by declaring that the land would be reduced to complete desolation; afterwards, Judah, Jerusalem, their false gods, and their priests, would be destroyed by the hand of God. The idolaters, those who mingled the name of Jehovah with that of other gods, those who had turned back from Jehovah, those who had not sought Him, each one is called to hold his peace at the presence of the Lord; for the Day of the Lord was at hand. He had prepared His sacrifice, He had invited His guests; and in the day of His sacrifice, the king, the prince, and the king's children would be visited by his hand. Violence and deceit would receive their just reward.

The Day of the Lord would cause a cry to be heard from the gates of Jerusalem. God would search Jerusalem as with lanterns, to show the foolishness of those who denied His intervention either for good or for evil. Zephaniah then declares the terrors of the Day of the Lord. The fire of His jealousy would consume the whole land. We have here the entire land, including Jerusalem and Judah, judged in the great Day of God.

Zephaniah 2

The nation had no remorse, no desire for God; but there were a few meek and lowly souls, and hope was held out to them that they would be hidden from the coming overthrow. God discriminates in His judgments, as when He sent angels to save Lot out of Sodom. The judgment of the surrounding nations (Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and Assyria), is mentioned. God never forgets the treatment of His people by their enemies. The captivity of Israel would be turned again, but there was no hope of recovery for the people that had rejoiced in their overthrow. It seemed incredible that great Nineveh would become a wilderness, yet so it has been for centuries. Whenever an individual or nation dwells carelessly, destruction is not far away.

Zephaniah declares that all nations, even Judah itself, would fall under the divine wrath if they continued to defy God. But his message is more than one of judgment. He shows that God is working for the salvation of mankind.