

Week of June 20-26

Chronological List of Prophets in the Old Testament

The Prophets	The Dates	Kings and Events
Prophets of Israel		
Jonah	810-790 BC	Jehoash, Jeroboam II (Amaziah)
Joel	790-760 BC	Uzziah
Amos	780-760 BC	Jeroboam II (Uzziah)
Hosea	785-725 BC	Jeroboam II to Hoshea (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz)
Isaiah	750-695 BC	Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah
Micah	745-725 BC	Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah
Prophets of Judah		
Nahum	660-630 BC	Manasseh, Amon, Josiah
Zephaniah	630-620 BC	Josiah
Habakkuk	620-610 BC	Josiah, Jehoahaz
Jeremiah	628-588 BC	Josiah to Zedekiah. The Captivity
Prophets of the Captivity		
Daniel	606-534 BC	The Captivity (Reign of Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus)
Obadiah	587 BC	After Jerusalem's Destruction (Reign of Nebuchadnezzar)
Ezekiel	596-574 BC	to the Jews Before and During the Captivity (Reign of Nebuchadnezzar)
Prophets of the Return to Jerusalem		
Haggai	520-518 BC	Rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem (Reign of Darius I)

Zechariah	520-510 BC	Rebuilding and Dedication of the Temple (Reign of Darius I)
Malachi	420-397 BC	Second Reformation by Nehemiah (Reign of Artaxerxes I)

Zephaniah watched Judah revert back to their evil ways under Manasseh and Amon. He prophesied during the revival under good king Josiah's reign. He condemned the worship of Canaanite and Assyrian gods and predicted disaster for the pagan nations, including Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and Assyria.

Zephaniah 3 God will judge the nations and restore His people

Zephaniah closes this message with an appeal to his people (3:1-7). If God judges the sins of the heathen, how much more will He judge the sins of Judah? He calls Jerusalem filthy and polluted — yet Josiah had removed all the idols. God could see their hearts, and in their hearts, He saw rebellion. They had no real faith in the Lord. The princes and judges were like prowling animals, seeking someone to devour. The prophets lacked the seriousness of thought and concern. They led the people astray. The priests polluted whatever they touched, including the holy sanctuary. They could see God's judgment day after day, but they did not take it to heart. They saw Him punish other nations, but they said, "It will never happen here."

Well, it did happen there. In 586 B.C. the Babylonians came and destroyed the nation, the city, and burned the temple to the ground.

Zephaniah closes his message with a promise: God will one day regather His people, punish the Gentile nations, and restore Israel and Judah to their land.

What were the believing Jews to do because of Zephaniah's message? For one thing, they were to wait (3:8) and let God work out His purposes. Then, they were to sing (3:14 ff) and rejoice at the goodness of the Lord. The nation would have to go through a time of trial and testing, but God would be in their midst (3:17), and she would not have to fear even in the time of judgment. God would love and care for them. Then, when His wrath had been ended, He would restore the nation and rejoice over them. He would afflict those who had afflicted the Jews (3:19) and would bring the Jews back to their land. This happened after the seventy years of captivity ended.

2 Kings 22 The Revival initiated by Josiah saved the nation

How could a father like Amon have a son like Josiah? With Josiah's accession came the last attempt to reform the nation before Judah was swept into captivity. His first act was to restore the Temple. Everything that followed grew out of that.

In connection with it came the discovery of the book of the Law. The nation had become utterly corrupt during the 57 years covering the reigns of Manasseh and Amon. The Temple was neglected and deserted, and it would seem as though neither king nor priest knew about this book. The sacred writings had been neglected, and the actual Temple copy lost.

The effect of the book on the king revealed his ignorance of its content. He discovered how far the nation had wandered from God's ideal and how terrible were the curses pronounced on them for their wandering. He at once realized both the danger threatening them and its cause and turned for counsel to the prophetess Huldah. She recognized the sincerity of the king and the corruption of the people and

declared that because of Josiah's loyalty to God, the nation would not be destroyed until after Josiah's death.

2 Kings 23 Josiah's reforms and Tragic Death

We have a graphic account of the reformation following the discovery of the book of the Law. It was carried out by Josiah, and it is interesting to note its process. First came the public reading of the book of the Law, followed by a covenant into which everyone entered to restore the lost order. Then the work went forward, and idol worship was completely removed. The Temple was cleansed of all the vessels of false religions, and also of the priests. From one end of the country to the other, the idolatrous idols and altars were swept away.

Then the Passover feast, long neglected, was observed with all its ancient glory with sincerity and loyalty. The people, however, were simply following the lead of the king, not under any sense of penitence or return to God. Therefore, God did not turn from His necessary judgment. Josiah had done all he was able to do and was killed in battle. Thus, as God moved forward, he delivered the godly from the judgment as it fell on the godless.

And now, in rapid succession, the judgments fell. Jehoahaz succeeded to the throne and returned immediately to evil ways in his reign of three months. The king of Egypt deposed him and set Jehoiakim on the throne. However, he reigned for 11 years only as tributary to Pharaoh. The lesson of righteousness was not learned, and Jehoiakim continued his evil ways.

2 Chronicles 34 Josiah Repairs the Temple and the Book of the Law is Discovered

The story of Josiah's reign is full of brightness. The conditions around him were terrible, but in this boy king, especially as he developed to manhood, his desire to serve God was obvious. Ascending to the throne when he was eight, at the age of sixteen, he began to seek after God. Four years later, he began the actual work of reformation. There was no place in his heart for the evil things around him, and with all his strength, swept out all idol worship.

At the age of twenty-six, he set out to repair the temple, during which a remarkable thing happened. While the Temple was being cleansed the book of the Law was discovered. When Josiah learned the facts concerning his people, he gathered them together, and publicly made a covenant with God and insisted that the people should abide by it.

2 Chronicles 35 Josiah Celebrates the Passover and Is Killed

This chapter gives us the story of the great Passover, in which, following in the steps of Hezekiah, after the cleansing of the land and the restoration of the people, Josiah restored the great feast.

The comparison is made with the times of Solomon. Under Josiah, this goes further back than Solomon and declares that none like it was kept by any king.

Following the story of his death, we read of the weeping of the people. Josiah was beloved by them, and the probability is that the reforms he instituted were based on that love rather than on the people's real return to God. Hence the nature of the reformation was short lived.

Habakkuk asked two questions to God: 1) Why He allowed such evil to continue in Judah for so long and go unpunished and 2) How could a holy God allow the Cruel Babylonians to defeat His people. In response to the first question, God revealed to Habakkuk the future destruction and restoration of Jerusalem.

Habakkuk 1 The Prophet Habakkuk is Perplexed

The book begins with a cry to God: "How long?" and is found repeated in Scripture from Ex 10:3 to many times in the Psalms. The opening speech recognizes chaotic violence all around (1:1-4). God called His people to recognize His hand at work in the situation (v. 5). He had raised up the Babylonians, terrible as they were (1:6-11). The prophet recognized that this had been the divine purpose of judgment (1:12-13), for God could not put up with evil. God makes humans, who like fish and insects know no ruler (v. 14); They do as they please. In verses 15-17, humankind is described as fishermen who worship their nets because they make them rich. Could this kind of idolatry go on forever (v. 17)?

Habakkuk 2 God's Answer to Habakkuk

Habakkuk took a stand to wait for God's reply to his complaint (2:1). He did not have to wait long before he was commanded to write down his vision and publish it plainly because it still had to be fulfilled (vv. 2-3).

The most meaningful and important verse in Habakkuk follows (2:4). It describes the person who can survive such testing times. First the bad news: He who is puffed up will die. Those who are proud, arrogant, and filled with false pretenses cannot survive such testing. Then the good news:

The person in the right relationship with God and with his neighbors will live by simply being faithful. People will live by faithfully doing every day what in faith they were accustomed to do.

The continuation of the chapter is a prediction of the judgments that will fall on the Babylonians for their cruelty and idolatry.

Habakkuk 3 Habakkuk Praises God in Song

Chapter 3 is Habakkuk's prayer-psalm. He remembers reports of God's great acts in the past and prayed for Him to bring redemption in this time.

Habakkuk 3:3-15 is a poetic portrayal of God's salvation of His people from Egypt. In verse 16, Habakkuk recounts his acceptance that God was active in his own moment in time as well as the high points in history. He would "wait patiently" for God's vengeance against the Babylonians. He recognized that his own day was for waiting, not for action.

The closing verses announced his joy in the Lord despite the troubles he had to endure. God was his strength.