

Paradise to Promised Land

A Bible study about the history of the Old Testament

Prophets and Exile

Prophets were God's messengers sent to His people, especially to the leadership of His people, to bring both messages of judgment and comfort to His people. While prophets, like kings, not anymore a part of our current day experience of God's reign, we still know what it means for us to have prophets.

- **Where do we see prophet-like activities in our world today?**

The Prophetic Books and Their Contexts

The table below shows the prophets and their contexts including where and when they took their offices in chronological order.

Prophet	Time	King(s)	Place
Joel	Divided Monarchy	Joash	Judah
Jonah	Divided Monarchy	Jeroboam II	Israel
Amos	Divided Monarchy	Jeroboam II	Israel
Hosea	Divided Monarchy	Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hoshea, Hezekiah	Israel and later Judah (Fall of Israel happens during Hosea's ministry)
Isaiah	Divided Monarchy, Post Israel	Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah	Judah
Micah	Post Israel	Jotham Ahaz	Judah
Nahum	Post Israel	Manasseh	Judah
Zephaniah	Post Israel	Josiah	Judah
Habakkuk	Post Israel	Josiah	Judah
Jeremiah	Post Israel	Josiah, Jehoaz, Johaiakim, Johaichin, Zedekiah	Judah (Fall of Judah happens just after Jeremiah)
Ezekiel	Exile	Zedekiah	Judah, Exile
Obadiah	Exile	NA	Exile
Zechariah	Exile	NA	Exile and Return
Haggai	Exile	NA	Exile and Return
Malachi	Exile	NA	Exile and Return

- Without getting into the individual stories of the prophets, what questions or observations do you come away from this table with?

Joel: Major Aspects of the Text

Joel uses the plague of many locusts coming on the fields of Judah as a picture of what it will be like when God sends judgment upon Judah. Joel also foretells of a time when God will send His spirit to be with His people.

- Read Joel 1:1-7

Jonah: Major Aspects of the Text

Jonah, probably the best known minor prophet, shows a repentant Assyria just before Assyria is allowed to take Israel away in exile. This could have been to show God's righteousness in using Assyria, or irony in having "even Assyria" repent when Israel does not.

- Read Jonah 3:6-10

Amos: Major Aspects of the Text

Amos is sent to Israel from Judah to prophesy to them about their wickedness, which is shown especially in the lavish lifestyles of their rich. Amos is not a court prophet, but is rather a “dresser of figs” who is given the prophetic office and sent to Israel.

- Read Amos 7:10-16

Hosea: Major Aspects of the Text

Hosea uses marital imagery in order to show how the people of Israel have been defiling their relationship with God. The judgment of Israel is clear in Hosea, but so is God’s sorrow over having to bring judgment upon Israel. Hosea has an incredibly long ministry, serving many kings and seems to escape the Assyrian exile to end his days in Judah.

- Read Hosea 1:2-11

Isaiah: Major Aspects of the Text

Isaiah is another well-known prophet with an incredibly long ministry, serving many kings. Scholars often break Isaiah into two or three time periods (some assuming an “Isaianic dynasty” or prophetic community). Isaiah is often the reason that we consider prophecy to be a “foretelling,” as Isaiah foretells many things including Judah’s fall to Babylon as well as the return from Exile.

- Read Isaiah 39:1-8

Micah: Major Aspects of the Text

Micah prophesies about the fall of Israel for its sins to the people of Judah, but does this as a warning to the people of Judah, showing what will happen to them due to their sins that continue to mark them for the same kind of punishment as Israel.

- Read Micah 1:2-9

Nahum: Major Aspects of the Text

Nahum wrote during one of the darkest times of Judah, during the reign of the evil king Manasseh. God reveals to Nahum His plan to strike down the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, but also gives warning to the Judahites of a coming day of judgment for them and their sins.

- Read Nahum 3:5-7

Zephaniah: Major Aspects of the Text

Zephaniah likely comes with a warning sticker as it is probably the most clear and therefore most disturbing notice of God’s judgment for Judah. Zephaniah makes sure that the people of Judah understand that a “day of the Lord” is coming with fire (Zephaniah’s predominant image) that will burn up the sinful people of Judah.

- Read Zephaniah 1:2-6

Habakkuk: Major Aspects of the Text

A contemporary of Zephaniah, Habakkuk is given a vision or oracle from God about the coming Babylonian invasion. God tells Habakkuk that this is something that could not be imagined by anyone, but will come to pass in its own time.

- Read Habakkuk 1:5-11

Jeremiah: Major Aspects of the Text

Jeremiah is the last of the pre-exilic prophets. He brought an unpopular message to Jerusalem as a sort of last warning. God uses Jeremiah not so much to warn Judah as to inform them of the coming doom and the reasons for the doom. Jeremiah

ends with the people of Judah being taken into captivity, but with a glimmer of hope that they will return one day after the current generation has died off.

- Read Jeremiah 29:10-14