

Historical Background to the Prophets (1050-430BC)

1050 BC – Saul becomes the 1st King of the United Kingdom of Israel

(1 Samuel 9-31 & 1 Chronicles 8-10)

1010 BC – David becomes the 2nd King of the United Kingdom of Israel

(1 Samuel 16-2 Samuel 24; 1 Kings 1:1-2:12; 1 Chronicles 11-29)

970 BC – Solomon becomes the 3rd King of the United Kingdom of Israel

(1 Kings 1-11 & 2 Chronicles 1-9)

NOTE: There were various Prophets who ministered during the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon. None of them wrote any biblical books. The most notable prophets were Samuel, prophet (and judge/deliverer) who ministered in the transition to the monarchy, and Nathan who ministered during David's reign.

922 BC – Israel is divided into 2 countries [North=Israel & South =Judah]

First 6 Kings of the Northern Kingdom (Israel)

Jeroboam I (1 Kings 11:26-15:25 & 1 Chronicles 10:2-13:20) [22 year reign]

Jeroboam built a new capital city, for the Northern Kingdom, in Samaria. The notorious “high places” and golden calf worship plagued Israel throughout its 200 year history. 1 Kings records that God decided to abandon Israel during the reign of Jeroboam.

Nadab (1 Kings 15:25-32) [2 year reign]

Jeroboam's son followed the errors of his father in every way. He ended up falling victim to a murder plot launched by Baasha.

Baasha (1 Kings 15:33-16:7 & 2 Chronicles 16) [24 year reign]

Gaining the throne through murder, he showed no inclination to reverse the evil practices of Israel. The prophet Jehu predicted his death in 1 Kings.

Elah (1 Kings 16:8-14) [2 year reign]

Elah, son of Baasha, is killed – along with all the other descendants of Baasha – therefore Israel's second dynasty only lasted 26 years.

Zimri (1 Kings 16:15-20) [7 day reign]

The army revolted against him, ending his 7 day reign in a suicidal fire in the palace.

Omri (1 Kings 16:21-28) [12 year reign]

The Bible records him as sinning “more than all those before him.” Secular history records him as one of Israel's most powerful and capable political rulers. Assyrian records call Israel “the land of Omri.” He also expanded Israel's lands.

NOTE: Again, there were various prophets who ministered in Israel during these first 62 years. None of them wrote any biblical books.

During the reign of these first 6 Kings of Israel, there were 3 Kings of Judah – all descending from King David. Likewise, there were various prophets who ministered in Judah during the first 61 years; none of them wrote any biblical books either.

First 3 Kings of the Southern Kingdom (Judah)

Rehoboam (1 Kings 11:43-14:31 & 2 Chronicles 10-12) [17 year reign]

Sometimes obeying God and listening to the various prophets – but sometimes not, idolatry found its way into Judah and Israel. Judah suffered humiliating punishment from the armies of Egypt during Rehoboam's reign.

Abijah (1 Kings 15:1-8 & 2 Chronicles 13) [3 year reign]

War with Israel in the North dragged on throughout Abijah's 3-year reign. Abijah offered no improvement on his father Rehoboam's immoral ways.

Asa (1 Kings 15:9-24 & 2 Chronicles 14-16) [41 year reign]

Asa did “what was right in the eyes of the Lord.” He began religious reforms, driving heathen cults out of the land (even removing his own grandmother as queen mother because of her idolatry), which ushered in a revival. Late in his reign, though, he backslid and got bogged down in foreign wars, making an alliance with neighboring Aram to hold Israel at bay.

Prophetic History of Elijah (875-848 BC)

2 Kings of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) during the ministry of Elijah

Ahab (1 Kings 16:29-22:40 & 2 Chronicles 18) [22 year reign]

Arguably the worst king of Israel, he married the notorious pagan priestess – Jezebel – who promptly installed Baal worship as Israel’s official religion. Elijah appeared to represent the true God against Queen Jezebel’s religion; and God gave Ahab plenty of opportunities to reform. Ahab did forge a successful alliance with Judah so that the divided kingdoms lived in peace for the first time since Jeroboam.

Ahaziah (1 Kings 22:40-2 Kings 1:18) [2 year reign]

Ahaziah, like his father Ahab, continued to worship Baal and fight against Elijah.

2 Kings of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) during the ministry of Elijah

Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:41-50 & 2 Chronicles 17-20) [25 year reign]

Jehoshaphat, like Asa, did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He sent out princes to teach from the Book of the Law. His one serious mistake was in linking himself to Israel’s wicked king, Ahab, through marriage and military alliance.

Jehoram (2 Kings 8:16-24 & 2 Chronicles 21) [8 year reign]

After 60 good years under Asa and Jehoshaphat, Judah experienced a terrible regression under Jehoram. First, killing his brothers he married Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, who promptly led him into Baal worship. Elijah, who mostly prophesied to Israel, sent a letter to Jehoram predicting the severe bowel disease that would lead to his death.

Prophetic History of Elisha (848-797 BC)

4 Kings of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) during the ministry of Elisha

Joram (2 Kings 3:1-9:26) [12 year reign]

Joram was better than his father Ahab, but ultimately failed to do right. The nation of Aram was attacking from the east. An internal plot, led by Jehu, against Ahab’s heirs resulted in Joram’s murder and ending the evil dynasty founded by Omri.

Jehu (2 Kings 9-10) [28 year reign]

Not to be confused with the prophet with the same name, Jehu was a military man on a mission to purge Ahab’s influence out of Israel and Judah. Unfortunately, his actions mean mass violence with no concern for the nation’s spiritual health. The nation of Israel was torn apart for generations and they also lost political strength.

Jehoahaz – (2Kings 13:1-9) [17 year reign]

Jehu’s extermination of Baal worship was immediately reinstated by his son, Jehoahaz. During his reign he suffered a series of embarrassing military defeats at the hands of neighboring Aram.

Jehoash (2 Kings 13:10-14:16) [16 year reign]

Although Jehoash did not break the evil pattern of Israel’s kings, he showed some bright spots. He honored the prophet Elisha, and God allowed him to recover much of the territory that Aram had taken from Israel. NOTE: Judah had a king named Joash, a shortened version of the name Jehoash.

4 Kings of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) during the ministry of Elisha

Ahaziah (2 Kings 8:25-29 & 2 Chronicles 22:1-9) [1 year reign]

A mere puppet representative of Queen Athaliah, Ahaziah fell victim to the bloody purge of Jehu.

Athaliah (2 Kings 11 & 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21) [7 year reign]

Queen Athaliah, after corrupting her husband Jehoram and dominating her son Ahaziah, killed off her infant grandchildren to remove rivals to the throne. She came within one baby of wiping out David's royal line. Joash was hidden away by his mother and emerged at the age of seven to lead a popular revolt against Athaliah. The queen led Judah into a dark time of Baal worship and evil. Athaliah, the only woman to rule either of the two kingdoms, was the last of Ahab's family to die.

Joash (2 Kings 12 & 2 Chronicles 24) [40 year reign]

Joash did well as long as he followed the advice of Jehoiada, the priest. He organized massive projects to repair the temple. After Jehoiada died, however, Joash allowed idolatry to prosper once more. He strayed so far from the ideals of his youth that he ordered the prophet Zechariah (not the Zechariah who has a book of the Bible named for him) to be stoned. Punishment came swiftly, at the hands of a plundering army. Joash's own servants turned against him and avenged Zechariah's murder.

Amaziah (2 Kings 14:1-22 & 2 Chronicles 25) [29 year reign]

Amaziah began his rule by executing those who had killed his father. Then he ignored a prophet's advice and attacked Edom, bringing back idols from there. Flushed with military success, he launched a foolhardy campaign against Israel. The trouncing that resulted discredited his leadership and he spent his last 12 years in exile.

Prophetic History of Jonah (783-743 BC)

AND

Prophetic History of Amos (760-750 BC)

King of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) during the ministry of Jonah & Amos

Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:23-29; Jonah; Amos) [41 year reign]

It seems that God gave Israel one last chance under King Jeroboam II. During his reign Israel recovered nearly all of its former territory, restored the boundaries of Israel in accordance with the prophecy of Jonah (2 Kings 14:25). There was peace between Judah and Israel. Jeroboam II king ruled a strong and prosperous nation, which was enjoying a false sense of security, encouraged by the weakness of Egypt, Babylon, and especially Assyria. There was significant social and religious corruption during these affluent times.

King of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) during the ministry of Jonah & Amos

Azariah {a.k.a. Uzziah} (2 Kings 15:1-17; 2 Chronicles 26; Jonah; Amos; Hosea; Isaiah 1:1) [52 year reign]

Called Azariah in 2 Kings and Uzziah in 2 Chronicles and in the books of the Prophets, this king had the longest reign of Judah's kings. Under Azariah/Uzziah the nation was significantly strengthened militarily, but not spiritually. He did not remove the high places and he violated the Law of Moses by taking on the work of priests himself.

Prophetic History of Isaiah (740-681 BC)

AND

Prophetic History of Hosea (750-710 BC)

AND

Prophetic History of Micah(750-710 BC)

6 Kings of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) during the ministry of Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah

Zechariah & Shallum (2 Kings 15:8-16) [7 month reign]

After Jeroboam II, the nation splintered into rival factions. The first king (Zechariah) ruled for six months, the second (Shallum) only one month. Both died violently

Menahem (2 Kings 15:14-22) [10 year reign]

Menahem gained the throne by murder, and his reign showed a similar ruthlessness. The first of Assyria's invasions occurred during Manahem's reign (**738 BC**) and he frantically tried to buy off the invaders.

Pekahiah (2 Kings 15:23-26) [2 year reign]

Israel was quickly sliding toward anarchy and extermination. Pekahiah was eventually overthrown by a military coup.

Pekah (2 Kings 15:27-31) [20 year reign]

Pekah attempted to dethrone the king of Judah; however, Judah bought help from Assyria, which promptly invaded Israel for the second time (**734 BC**) (under Tiglath-Pileser III) Assyria began deporting thousands of conquered Israelites to other lands.

Hoshea (2 Kings 17) [9 year reign]

Hoshea angered Assyria by turning south to Egypt for aid – the help from Egypt never came. The Assyrians attacked, and after a terrible three-year siege, the capital city of Samaria was conquered (**722 BC**) (under Shalmaneser V) Assyria deported the vast majority of Israel's population, who became the "ten lost tribes of Israel."

3 Kings of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) during the ministry of Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah

Jotham (2 Kings 15:32-38; 2 Chronicles 27; Isaiah; Hosea; Micah) [16 year reign]

After serving as Azariah's/Uzziah's proxy king for 15 years (while Azariah/Uzziah was quarantined with leprosy), Jotham took over and continued the practices of his father. He expanded Judah's economic and military strength but did not pursue religious reforms as fully as he should have.

Ahaz (2 Kings 16; 2 Chronicles 28; Isaiah; Hosea; Micah) [16 year reign]

As Ahaz was being crowned, King Pekah was leading the armies of the north into Judah. Ahaz ignored the prophet Isaiah's advice to put his trust in God rather than military alliances. Turning to the mighty empire of Assyria, he purchased aid with treasures from the temple and the king's palace. The strategy worked temporarily, as Israel's armies withdrew to defend themselves. But Ahaz opened the doors for later Assyrian invasions into Judah. Worse, he made copies of foreign gods, and set them up in Jerusalem. Under Ahaz, religion in Judah took a significant drop.

722 BC - SAMARIA, THE CAPITAL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM, IS CONQUERED AND ISRAELITES ARE TAKEN INTO EXILE. JUDAH IS ALL THAT REMAINS FOLLOWING THE ASSYRIAN INVASION OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM.

Hezekiah (2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 29-32; Isaiah {esp. 36-39}; Hosea; Micah) [29 year reign]

2 Kings stresses the political side of Hezekiah's reign. 2 Chronicles reports on his religious reforms. Both were impressive; Hezekiah was one of the best and most important kings of Judah. He immediately stopped idolatry by reopening and cleansing the temple and calling for a period of national repentance. He resurrected the Passover celebration, and worship in Israel reached a peak that had not been seen since the time of David and Solomon. In all this, he listened carefully to advice from the prophet Isaiah. Judah faced imminent danger from Assyria and barely survived an invasion and siege ("Sennacherib Invasion" **701 BC**). God honored his faithfulness with a miraculous military intervention; and added 15 years to Hezekiah's life.

Prophetic History of Zephaniah(640-630 BC)

AND

Prophetic History of Nahum(640-620 BC)

AND

Prophetic History of Jeremiah(630-580 BC)

AND

Prophetic History of Habakkuk(610-600 BC)

AND

Prophetic History of Ezekiel(593-571 BC)

7 Kings of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) leading to the Babylonian Exile

Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1-18; 2 Chronicles 33:1-20; Isaiah; Hosea; Micah) [55 year reign]

All the good Hezekiah did was undone in his son's 55 year reign, the worst of Judah's history. He reversed reforms, brought in all forms of idolatry, killed prophets, erected idols in the temple, and sacrificed his own sons on the altar of a heathen god. The Assyrians took him prisoner, leading him away with a hook through his nose. He later repented, but the damage had been done. God pronounced a judgement on the future of Judah.

Amon (2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chronicles 33:21-25; Isaiah; Hosea; Micah) [2 year reign]

In his short reign, Amon continued the evil practices of his father Manasseh. He died at the hands of his officials, who were subsequently killed by the people.

Josiah (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34-35; Zephaniah, Nahum, Jeremiah, Habakkuk) [31 year reign]

Judah's slide to destruction, because of Manasseh and Amon, was interrupted by the remarkable rule of Judah's best king. Josiah came to the throne at just 8 years old, but followed the good counsel of the high priest and carried out the most extensive reforms Judah had ever seen. He removed and destroyed the idols, altars, and symbols of pagan worship throughout the land. He oversaw the rediscovery of the Law of Moses and immediately acted on what it taught. He even extended reforms into the decimated regions of Israel in the north. There was military peace while the reign of the Assyrian empire was disintegrating. His one great mistake was marching against Egypt, where he died suddenly in battle.

Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:30-34; 2 Chronicles 36:1-4; Jeremiah, Habakkuk) [3 month reign]

The third son of Josiah lasted just three months before being overthrown by the pharaoh.

Jehoiakim/Eliakim (2 Kings 23:36 – 24:6; 2 Chronicles 36:5-8; Jeremiah, Habakkuk) [11 year reign]

The second son of Josiah was a puppet king of Egypt, whose true alliance was to pharaoh. When Egypt was defeated by the surging Babylonian empire, he quickly shifted allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. One of Judah's worst kings, he tried to have the prophet Jeremiah put to death, rather than listen to God's word from him. Jeremiah repeatedly speaks scornfully of Jehoiakim. Ultimately, an ill-advised revolt against Nebuchadnezzar results in his death.

Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:6-17; 25:27-30; 2 Chronicles 36:8-10; Jeremiah, Ezekiel) [3 month reign]

After holding out for three months against Nebuchadnezzar, Jehoiachin surrenders. He lives in a Babylonian prison for 40 years.

Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:17 – 25:7; 2 Chronicles 36:11-20; Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Obadiah[?]) [11 year reign]

Ruling for the final 11 years of Judah's existence as an independent state, Zedekiah was a weak king who listened to bad advice and made unwise decisions. He ignored Jeremiah's prophetic counsel to remain loyal to Babylon, by joining an allegiance against the empire. As a result Nebuchadnezzar laid siege against Jerusalem for 2 years, finally breaching the wall, burning down the temple, palace, and other buildings, and plundering the entire city.

586 BC - JERUSALEM, THE CAPITAL OF THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM, IS CONQUERED AND JUDAHITES ARE TAKEN INTO EXILE. THEREFORE, ALL "ISRAEL" (ISRAEL & JUDAH) ARE NOW IN THE TIME OF THE BABYLONIAN EXILE.

Prophetic History of Daniel(605-530 BC)

Babylonian Exile (Esther, Ezekiel, Daniel) [586-538 BC].

Prophetic History of Zechariah(October, 520 – 470 BC)

AND

Prophetic History of Haggai(August 29 – December 18, 520 BC)

AND

Prophetic History of Malachi(433-430 BC)

Restoration (Ezra-Nehemiah) [538-516 BC] – Groupings of the remnant return from exile to Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. Rebuilding the temple is the top priority under the leadership of Zerubbabel. The temple is rebuilt in 516 BC – 70 years after the 586 BC Babylonian Exile began. There is also a 70 year period between the beginning campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar against Judah (605 BC), and the first exiles, to the Cyrus Edict to release the first remnant from exile (538 BC).

Rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem follows, under the leadership of Nehemiah.

Ezra returned in 458 BC. Nehemiah returned in 445 BC.

Ezra was a scribe and a priest, and may be the "Chronicler" who wrote and/or edited the books of Chronicles as well as Ezra-Nehemiah.

Malachi is the final prophet, and final book, of the Old Testament. Thus the Old Testament Canon was completed around 430 BC.

The ministry dates for the prophets are approximate (except where more specific dates are noted). See the Reading Guides for each of the prophets.

Assyrian Campaigns against Israel & Judah

743-732 BC = Tiglath-Pileser during reigns of Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah; and Jotham, Ahaz

725-722 BC = Shalmaneser V during the reign of Hoshea

701 BC = Sennacherib Invasion of Judah during the reign of Hezekiah (cf. 2 Kings 19; Isaiah 36-37)

Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Campaigns against Judah (605-586 BC)

597 BC = Conquest of Jerusalem during reign of Jehoiachin

586 BC = Destruction of Jerusalem during reign of Zedekiah

Chronology of Major Empires

Neo-Assyrian Empire (911-626 BC)

Babylonian Empire (626-539 BC)

Medo-Persian Empire (539-330 BC)

Greek Empire (330-63 BC)

Roman Empire (63 BC – 410 AD)