

Manasseh Repents (c. 648–645 BC)

2 Chronicles 33:11–17

- 11 So the LORD brought against them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria. They seized Manasseh, put hooks in his nose, bound him with bronze chains, and carried him away to Babylon.
- 12 In his pain Manasseh asked the LORD his God for mercy and truly humbled himself before the God of his ancestors.
- 13 When he prayed to the LORD, the LORD responded to him and answered favorably his cry for mercy. The LORD brought him back to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh realized that the LORD is the true God.
- 14 After this Manasseh built up the outer wall of the City of David on the west side of the Gihon in the valley to the entrance of the Fish Gate and all around the terrace; he made it much higher. He placed army officers in all the fortified cities in Judah.
- 15 He removed the foreign gods and images from the LORD's temple and all the altars he had built on the hill of the LORD's temple and in Jerusalem; he threw them outside the city.
- 16 He erected the altar of the LORD and offered on it peace offerings and thank offerings. He told the people of Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.
- 17 The people continued to offer sacrifices at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.

The Death of Manasseh (643t BC)

2 Kings 21:17–18

2 Chronicles 33:18–20

- 17 The rest of the events of Manasseh's reign and all his accomplishments, as well as the sinful acts he committed, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of the Kings of Judah.
- 18 Manasseh passed away and was buried in his palace garden, the garden of Uzzah, and his son Amon replaced him as king.

- 18 The rest of the events of Manasseh's reign, including his prayer to his God and the words the prophets spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel.
- 19 The Annals of the Prophets include his prayer, give an account of how the LORD responded to it, record all his sins and unfaithful acts, and identify the sites where he built high places and erected Asherah poles and idols before he humbled himself.
- 20 Manasseh passed away and was buried in his palace.
- His son Amon replaced him as king.

Amon, Manasseh's Son, Assumes the Throne of Judah (643t BC)

2 Kings 21:19–22

2 Chronicles 33:21–23

- 19 Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned for two years in Jerusalem. His mother was Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz, from Jotbah.
- 20 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, just like his father Manasseh had done.
- 21 He followed in the footsteps of his father and worshiped and bowed down to the disgusting idols which his father had worshiped.
- 22 He abandoned the LORD God of his ancestors and did not follow the LORD's instructions.

- 21 Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned for two years in Jerusalem.
- 22 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, just like his father Manasseh had done.
- He offered sacrifices to all the idols his father Manasseh had made, and worshiped them.
- 23 He did not humble himself before the LORD as his father Manasseh had done. Amon was guilty of great sin.

Amon is Assassinated by His Servants (641t BC)

2 Kings 21:23–26

2 Chronicles 33:24–25

- 23 Amon's servants conspired against him and killed the king in his palace.
- 24 The people of the land executed all those who had conspired against King Amon, and they made his son Josiah king in his

- 24 His servants conspired against him and killed him in his palace.
- 25 The people of the land executed all who had conspired against King Amon, and they made his son Josiah king in his

place. 25 The rest of Amon's accomplishments are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of the Kings of Judah. 26 He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzzah, and his son Josiah replaced him as king.	place.
--	--------

Josiah, Amon's Son, Assumes the Throne of Judah (641t BC)

2 Kings 22:1–2	2 Chronicles 34:1–2
1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned for thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother was Jedidah, daughter of Adaiah, from Bozkath. 2 He did what the LORD approved and followed in his ancestor David's footsteps; he did not deviate to the right or the left.	1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned for thirty-one years in Jerusalem. 2 He did what the LORD approved and followed in his ancestor David's footsteps; he did not deviate to the right or the left.

Zephaniah's Prophecy to Judah – The Day of the Lord (c. 635–630 BC)

Zephaniah 1–3

Superscription

1:1 This is the prophetic message that the LORD gave to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah. Zephaniah delivered this message during the reign of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah:

Judgment on the Entire Earth

- 2 "I will destroy everything from the face of the earth," says the LORD.
3 "I will destroy people and animals;
I will destroy the birds in the sky
and the fish in the sea.
(The idolatrous images of these creatures will be destroyed along with evil people.)
I will remove humanity from the face of the earth," says the LORD.

Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem

- 4 "I will attack Judah
and all who live in Jerusalem.
I will remove from this place every trace of Baal worship,
as well as the very memory of the pagan priests.
5 I will remove those who worship the stars in the sky from their rooftops,
those who swear allegiance to the LORD while taking oaths in the name of their 'king,'
6 and those who turn their backs on the LORD
and do not want the LORD's help or guidance."
7 Be silent before the Lord GOD,
for the LORD's day of judgment is almost here.
The LORD has prepared a sacrificial meal;
he has ritually purified his guests.
8 "On the day of the LORD's sacrificial meal,
I will punish the princes and the king's sons,
and all who wear foreign styles of clothing.
9 On that day I will punish all who leap over the threshold,
who fill the house of their master with wealth taken by violence and deceit.
10 On that day," says the LORD,
"a loud cry will go up from the Fish Gate,
wailing from the city's newer district,
and a loud crash from the hills.
11 Wail, you who live in the market district,
for all the merchants will disappear
and those who count money will be removed.
12 At that time I will search through Jerusalem with lamps.
I will punish the people who are entrenched in their sin,
those who think to themselves,

‘The LORD neither rewards nor punishes.’

- 13 Their wealth will be stolen
and their houses ruined!
They will not live in the houses they have built,
nor will they drink the wine from the vineyards they have planted.

Judgment at the Great Day of the Lord

- 14 The LORD’s great day of judgment is almost here;
it is approaching very rapidly!
There will be a bitter sound on the LORD’s day of judgment;
at that time warriors will cry out in battle.
- 15 That day will be a day of God’s anger,
a day of distress and hardship,
a day of devastation and ruin,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and dark skies, [[Joel 2:1–2](#)]
- 16 a day of trumpet blasts and battle cries.
Judgment will fall on the fortified cities
and the high corner towers.
- 17 I will bring distress on the people
and they will stumble like blind men,
for they have sinned against the LORD.
Their blood will be poured out like dirt;
their flesh will be scattered like manure.
- 18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them
in the day of the LORD’s angry judgment.
The whole earth will be consumed by his fiery wrath.
Indeed, he will bring terrifying destruction on all who live on the earth.”
- 2:1 Bunch yourselves together like straw, you undesirable nation,
2 before God’s decree becomes reality and the day of opportunity disappears like windblown chaff,
before the LORD’s raging anger overtakes you—
before the day of the LORD’s angry judgment overtakes you!
- 3 Seek the LORD’s favor, all you humble people of the land who have obeyed his commands!
Strive to do what is right! Strive to be humble!
Maybe you will be protected on the day of the LORD’s angry judgment.

Judgment on Philistia

- 4 Indeed, Gaza will be deserted
and Ashkelon will become a heap of ruins.
Invaders will drive away the people of Ashdod by noon,
and Ekron will be overthrown.
- 5 Those who live by the sea, the people who came from Crete, are as good as dead.
The LORD has decreed your downfall, Canaan, land of the Philistines:
“I will destroy everyone who lives there!”
- 6 The seacoast will be used as pasture lands by the shepherds
and as pens for their flocks.
- 7 Those who are left from the kingdom of Judah will take possession of it.
By the sea they will graze,
in the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down in the evening,
for the LORD their God will intervene for them and restore their prosperity.

Judgment on Moab and Ammon

- 8 “I have heard Moab’s taunts
and the Ammonites’ insults.
They taunted my people
and verbally harassed those living in Judah.
- 9 Therefore, as surely as I live,” says the LORD who commands armies, the God of Israel,
“be certain that Moab will become like Sodom

and the Ammonites like Gomorrah.
They will be overrun by weeds,
filled with salt pits,
and permanently desolate.
Those of my people who are left will plunder their belongings;
those who are left in Judah will take possession of their land.”

- 10 This is how they will be repaid for their arrogance,
for they taunted and verbally harassed the people of the LORD who commands armies.
- 11 The LORD will terrify them,
for he will weaken all the gods of the earth.
All the distant nations will worship the LORD in their own lands.

Judgment on Cush

- 12 “You Ethiopians will also die by my sword!”

Judgment on Assyria and Nineveh

- 13 The LORD will attack the north
and destroy Assyria.
He will make Nineveh a heap of ruins;
it will be as barren as the desert.
- 14 Flocks and herds will lie down in the middle of it,
as well as every kind of wild animal.
Owls will sleep in the tops of its support pillars;
they will hoot through the windows.
Rubble will cover the thresholds;
even the cedar work will be exposed to the elements.
- 15 This is how the once-proud city will end up—
the city that was so secure.
She thought to herself, “I am unique! No one can compare to me!”
What a heap of ruins she has become, a place where wild animals live!
Everyone who passes by her taunts her and shakes his fist.

Jerusalem’s Future—Destruction of the Rebellious

- 3:1 The filthy, stained city is as good as dead;
the city filled with oppressors is finished!
- 2 She is disobedient;
she refuses correction.
She does not trust the LORD;
she does not seek the advice of her God.
- 3 Her princes are as fierce as roaring lions;
her rulers are as hungry as wolves in the desert,
who completely devour their prey by morning.
- 4 Her prophets are proud;
they are deceitful men.
Her priests defile what is holy;
they break God’s laws.
- 5 The just LORD resides within her;
he commits no unjust acts.
Every morning he reveals his justice.
At dawn he appears without fail.
Yet the unjust know no shame.
- 6 “I destroyed nations;
their walled cities are in ruins.
I turned their streets into ruins;
no one passes through them.
Their cities are desolate;
no one lives there.
- 7 I thought, ‘Certainly you will respect me!

Now you will accept correction!
If she had done so, her home would not be destroyed
by all the punishments I have threatened.
But they eagerly sinned
in everything they did.

- 8 Therefore you must wait patiently for me,” says the LORD,
“for the day when I attack and take plunder.
I have decided to gather nations together
and assemble kingdoms,
so I can pour out my fury on them—
all my raging anger.
For the whole earth will be consumed
by my fiery anger.

Jerusalem’s Future—Deliverance of the Righteous

- 9 Know for sure that I will then enable
the nations to give me acceptable praise.
All of them will invoke the LORD’s name when they pray,
and will worship him in unison.
- 10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,
those who pray to me will bring me tribute.
- 11 In that day you will not be ashamed of all your rebelliousness against me,
for then I will remove from your midst those who proudly boast,
and you will never again be arrogant on my holy hill.
- 12 I will leave in your midst a humble and meek group of people,
and they will find safety in the LORD’s presence.
- 13 The Israelites who remain will not act deceitfully.
They will not lie,
and a deceitful tongue will not be found in their mouth. [[Rev 14:5](#)]
Indeed, they will graze peacefully like sheep and lie down;
no one will terrify them.”

Jerusalem’s Future—Millennial Joy

- 14 Shout for joy, Daughter Zion!
Shout out, Israel!
Be happy and boast with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem!
- 15 The LORD has removed the judgment against you;
he has turned back your enemy.
Israel’s king, the LORD, is in your midst!
You no longer need to fear disaster.
- 16 On that day they will say to Jerusalem,
“Don’t be afraid, Zion!
Your hands must not be paralyzed from panic!
- 17 The LORD your God is in your midst;
he is a warrior who can deliver.
He takes great delight in you;
he renews you by his love;
he shouts for joy over you.”
- 18 “As for those who grieve because they cannot attend the festivals—
I took them away from you;
they became tribute and were a source of shame to you.
- 19 Look, at that time I will deal with those who mistreated you.
I will rescue the lame sheep
and gather together the scattered sheep.
I will take away their humiliation
and make the whole earth admire and respect them.
- 20 At that time I will lead you—
at the time I gather you together.

Be sure of this! I will make all the nations of the earth respect and admire you when you see me restore you,” says the LORD.

Josiah Begins to Seek After God (633t BC)

2 Chronicles 34:3a

3a In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his ancestor David.

Scripture quoted by permission. All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996–2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://bible.org> All rights reserved. This material is available in its entirety as a free download or online web use at <http://netbible.org/>.

Chronological Notes

1) Manasseh’s repentance.

- A) The Assyrian ruler responsible for deporting Manasseh to Babylon was Ashurbanipal (668–627). The reference to Babylon provides a helpful chronological clue since Ashurbanipal did not bring Babylon under his control until 648.¹ Thus Manasseh’s repentance can be placed c. 648–645 BC.

2) Zephaniah.²

- A) The superscription of Zephaniah specifies that the prophecy was given during the reign of Josiah (641t–610t) and there has been little debate to the contrary. Rather, discussion concerning the date and background of the book has centered chiefly on the specific period within Josiah’s reign.
- (1) The moral and spiritual conditions mentioned by Zephaniah have been taken by many to refer to Judah’s persistent apostasy and immorality despite the Josianic reform that began in earnest after the finding of the Book of the Law (2 Kgs 22:8) in 621 B.C. (e.g., Fausset, Feinberg, Hannah, Keil, Reid, and Walker).
- (2) Others, however, believe that such matters as Zephaniah denounces could only be true of the earlier portion of Josiah’s reign, either when the boy king was yet unable to deal with the longstanding effects of the wickedness of Judah’s two previous kings, Manasseh and Amon, or when his reformation had only recently got underway (e.g., Bewer, Bullock, Craigie, Eiselen, Eissfeldt, Freeman, Hailey, Harrison, Hummel, Kapelrud, Laetsch, Larue, Pusey, Robinson, Smith, and von Orelli).³
- B) With capable scholars on both sides of the question, one is tempted to conclude with D. A. Schneider that “the evidence is insufficient to decide this debate.”⁴ In examining the internal data, however, several items seem to favor the earlier period in Josiah’s reign: (1) religious practices in Judah were still plagued with Canaanite syncretistic rites such as characterized the era of Manasseh (1:4–5, 9); (2) many failed to worship Yahweh at all (1:6); (3) royalty were enamored with wearing the clothing of foreign merchants (1:8) who had extensive business enterprises in Jerusalem (1:10–11); and (4) Judahite society was beset by socio-economic ills (1:12–13, 18) and political and religious corruption (3:1–4, 7, 11). Moreover, several of the specific sins (e.g., 1:4–5, 9; 3:4) would likely have been corrected in Josiah’s reforms. “Accordingly, I am inclined to side with those who prefer a date before 621 BC.”⁵
- C) But how much before? Some have suggested that the political situation brought about by a Scythian raid (c. 630 BC) occasioned both Zephaniah’s response to God’s call and his urgent message concerning God’s impending judgment of the

¹ Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p. 435.

² Richard D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah: An Exegetical Commentary*, pp. 249–250. Note that Patterson favors a date for Habakkuk of sometime in Manasseh’s reign.

³ A good discussion of the setting of the book is given by F. C. Fensham, “Book of Zephaniah,” *IDBSup*, pp. 983–84. Fensham also favors a date for Zephaniah early in Josiah’s reign.

⁴ D. A. Schneider, “Book of Zephaniah,” *ISBE* 4:1189.

⁵ Patterson, 250.

world. However, because the evidence of such an invasion is now considered to be tenuous at best, “the Scythian hypothesis has now been almost universally abandoned.”⁶ Thus the search for a precise date for Zephaniah cannot be pressed too far. Nevertheless, when one considers that Josiah was only eight years old when he ascended the throne in 641t and was dependent upon royal officials of questionable integrity (cf. 3:3), the cause for Zephaniah’s alarm is apparent. Further, that Josiah’s reforms were not instituted until the twelfth year of his reign (629t), a few years after his initial spiritual awakening (2 Chr 34:3), suggests that Zephaniah’s prophetic activities may have had a salutary effect in the reformation of that era. Thus a date of 635–630 bc is not unlikely.

⁶ Fensham, “Zephaniah,” p. 983. For a defense of the Scythian hypothesis, see CAH 3:295 where the somewhat fantastic elements of Herodotus’s account are duly recognized as well as the probability that the supposed Scythian sack of Ashdod was as much an Egyptian enterprise as Scythian. See also R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 940.