

The chart “Putting the Prophets in Their Place” (pages 85–87) should help you with the first three hurdles described above. Keep it nearby while reading during the next few weeks.

As for the last hurdle, sometimes it is easy to tell, but many times it isn't. Welcome to the books of the prophets! Just remember, absorb what you can, and don't worry about the rest.

Good news: The next stop after the books of the prophets is the New Testament. At that point, you'll be in the home stretch. Keep reading!

Putting the Prophets in Their Place			
Book	Era	Audience	Theme(s)
Isaiah (chs. 1–39)	Pre-exile c. 700 B.C.?	Judah	Judgment against Judah and Israel; prophecies of promise and blessing; judgments against nations
Isaiah (chs. 40–55)	Exile c. 680 B.C.?	Judah	Deliverance and restoration of Israel; the servant's ministry; God's call to salvation
Isaiah (chs. 56–66)	Uncertain	Judah	Condemnation of wicked; worship; restoration; everlasting deliverance, everlasting judgment
Jeremiah	Pre-exile 7th/6th century B.C.	Judah	Warnings and exhortations; his suffering; fall of Jerusalem; judgment against nations
Lamentations (Jeremiah)	Pre-exile/exile c. 580 B.C.	Judah	Laments over destruction of Jerusalem

Book	Era	Audience	Theme(s)
Ezekiel	Exile 6th century B.C.	Jews in Babylon	God's sovereignty over creation, people, nations and history; God's holiness; judg- ment against Judah and pagan nations; God's future work in history
Daniel	Exile c. 530 B.C.	Jews in Babylon	Prayer; spiritual war- fare; living by God's standards in a hostile environment; God's sovereignty
Hosea	Pre-exile 8th century B.C.	Israel	Just as Hosea is be- trayed by his beloved, God is betrayed by his beloved Israel; loving commitment can overcome betrayal
Joel	Pre-exile Uncertain	Judah	God's people have a choice: keep doing wrong and be judged, or repent and receive God's forgiveness and salvation
Amos	Pre-exile 8th century B.C.	Israel	Israel ignores what matters to God— justice, compassion and worship from the heart—and God's impending judgment
Obadiah	Pre-exile c. 587 B.C.	Edom	Edomites, who treated Israel unjustly, now face God's anger

Book	Era	Audience	Theme(s)
Jonah	Pre-exile 8th century B.C.	Assyria	God's forgiveness of us; our need to forgive others
Micah	Pre-exile 8th century B.C.	Judah	God's judgment for idolatry and oppression; his mercy for the obedient; our need to show mercy; the coming Messiah
Nahum	Pre-exile 7th century B.C.	Assyria	The judgment of Assyria and its capital, Nineveh
Habakkuk	Pre-exile 7th century B.C.	Judah	Is God ignoring evil, or will he settle the score?
Zephaniah	Pre-exile 7th century B.C.	Judah	Judgment day is coming; closing promise
Haggai	Post-exile 6th century B.C.	Jews in Jerusalem	God's blessings, and what the Jews did to hinder them; Jews rebuild the temple
Zechariah	Post-exile 6th/5th (?) century B.C.	Jews in Jerusalem	God's encouragement to exiles who return from Babylon; prophecies about the coming Messiah; salvation
Malachi	Post-exile 5th/4th (?) century B.C.	Jews in Jerusalem	God's readiness to replace the old covenant with the new; prophecies about the Messiah, who will usher in the new covenant

[Source: Zondervan Handbook of the Bible, 411, and the author.]