

is very clear to us because the book of Micah tells us in the very first verse when it was given.

The word of the Lord given to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of ~~Je~~ Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah--the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." Now that immediately suggests to us the beginning of the book of Isaiah. That book begins: "The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem"--you notice Micah said "concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." Isaiah says "Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amos saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah kings of Judah.

There are two differences, many similarities. The first difference is that Micah specifically says "Samaria and Jerusalem" which Isaiah says "Judah and Jerusalem." You might say that confines Micah a bit more than Isaiah, but of course Micah is a much shorter book. Probably it was all given pretty much at one time and at that time Samaria was still an important factor. While when Isaiah was given it spread over a period of perhaps half a century, and after the first part of that century Samaria had been conquered by the Assyrians and become part of the Assyrian empire. So Samaria is somewhat more important in relation to Micah than it is to Isaiah.

The historical background is much more important in relation to Isaiah than to Micah. But it does have a definite importance in relation to both of them.

Another principle that is of considerable importance in approaching any book of the Bible is to note where the sections are. Two verses right next to each other may be part of a continuing discussion. Of one of them may be the end of one and the other the beginning of a different one. So it is very important to determine what are the divisions of the thought. Where are there sharp transitions made? We are apt to be misled by the wonderful thing we have in having the Bible in chapters and verses. It is a marvelous help to us because we can find any verse of Scripture so quickly once you have the reference. So I would not want any change in the chapters and verses that are so very useful to us in helping to determine places.

But they can be very misleading because the chapter divisions were put in by an English Archbishop in the 12th century in his Latin Bible, and he put them in, they say, riding horseback making calls, and they say when the horse stumbled he made a mistake where he put it, and some of the chapter divisions are very very poorly placed. I think when reading any part of the Bible it is always good to start your examination a little before the beginning of the chapter, and when you are finished to go a little bit beyond so that you can see whether there is a real division there. I heard the great preacher G. Campbell Morgan once say he thought 9/10th of the chapter divisions were in the wrong place. I think that is much too extreme. I would think that probably 3/4 of them are probably very well placed. But there are some that are so poorly placed that they can easily mislead us.

What's even worse than that is the fact that the verse divisions are often very poorly placed. There are places where you have a poem with two stanzas and the last line of the first and the first line of the second will be combined together into one verse. Of course that's very confusing.