



HOSEA, JOEL, AMOS, OBADIAH

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Read on your own or with others,
which ever you prefer.

This leaflet is just a brief overview of the 'big picture' of these books. If you have been reading the Bible for some time you will be aware there is much more to it than you'll find here.

If you are new to reading the Bible don't worry too much if there are details you do not quite get at the moment - focus on the 'big picture'.

INTRODUCTION

These four books form part of a collection of twelve biblical books that are often called the Minor Prophets. The word minor here refers to the length of the books rather than the importance of the message that they contain.

The Minor Prophets include messages from God to Israel, Judah and beyond that were given between 850 BC (the end of Elijah's ministry) and 430 BC (after the people of Judah returned from exile in Babylon).

Each prophet was different which brings variety to these books. However, there are various common themes that come up again and again.

1. Sin exposed

These books give us dramatic insight into how God views sin, particularly the sin of idolatry and social injustice. They dig beneath the respectable surface to show us the sinful heart.

2. Judgment decreed

The Minor Prophets remind us that God is not just talk, but he is action as well. Through his prophets he decrees judgment for the persistent sin of his people and the surrounding nations.

3. Hope given

Sometimes the Minor Prophets can overwhelm us with the reality of God's just judgment. Yet, don't read them too fast otherwise you will miss the consistent reminders of God's grace and mercy.

THE FIRST FOUR BOOKS

1. HOSEA

Hosea was a prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel and he was alive at the same time as the prophet Isaiah in the southern kingdom of Judah.

He is called by God to take a wife who would be unfaithful to him. Later he is told to take her back and to love her again. God shows us how this is a picture of his relationship with Israel. They have turned to idols and walked away from him. Judgment will come, but his love will not waver - see Hosea 11:8.

Note that when God looks to the future in this book he does not speak of a hope that only includes Israel. The promises here are for people from all over the world who will come to know him through Jesus - Hosea 1:10

2. JOEL

Joel probably carried out his ministry in the southern kingdom of Judah in the 9th century BC. He writes about a plague of locusts that has devastated the land and calls the people to repent and turn back to the Lord (Joel 1:13-20).

Later in the book (Joel 2:28 - 3:21) the message expands from a local judgment for a local sin to speaking about the great 'day of the Lord'. This is a day that begins with the coming of Jesus (see Acts 2:14-21 and the use of Joel 2:28-32) and will end with the return of Jesus when he comes to judge the nations (Joel 3:12-13) and bring his people into eternal glory (Joel 3:18-21).

3. AMOS

Amos was a shepherd from Tekoa, about six miles south of Bethlehem in Judah. He was given a message from God for the northern kingdom of Israel (Amos 1:1).

Through Amos God condemns Israel for their mistreatment of the poor and needy as well as their immoral living (Amos 2:6-7). He calls them to repent and turn to God and live with a devotion to him that touches their lives and not just their ceremonies (Amos 5:21-24).

Israel doesn't turn so Amos proclaims God's promise to bring destruction on Israel (Amos 9:1-10). However, this is not the final word. The book ends with the hope of a better day when David's tent will be restored (Amos 9:11). This is clearly a reference to Jesus, the Son of David.

4. OBADIAH

The book of Obadiah is a message from God that is aimed towards the nation of Edom who are the descendants of Esau (Genesis 36). God is seen as the judge who has heard the case against Edom and their persistent hostility towards the people of Israel and is now passing sentence.

This book would have been a comfort to the people of Israel and Judah as God takes action against their enemies. However, the message is bigger than this. At the end of the book we look forward and we are reminded that while the world may persecute God's people through the ages, God sees, and God will handle it. In the end the nations will be judged, the people of God will be safe and the kingdom of God will be established (Obadiah 21).

ASKING THE QUESTIONS THE BIBLE WANTS YOU TO ASK

What does this book teach you about Jesus? (Luke 24:45-47)

What does this book teach you about yourself? (James 1:23 & 2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you encouraged? (2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you corrected? (Romans 15:4)

What difference do the truths of this book make in your life (Matthew 7:24-27)