



JONAH, MICAH, NAHUM, HABAKKUK

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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

The last twelve books of the Old Testament are often called the books of the Minor Prophets. Jonah, Micah, Nahum and Habakkuk are the middle four of these books and they vary greatly in their style and message.

Jonah is a narrative giving the account of his mission to preach to the Assyrians in Ninevah. Many years later, Nahum announces God's judgment on the city of Ninevah. Micah brings a message from God to the people of Judah. Habakkuk wrestles with God's decision to use the Babylonians as his instrument to deal with the wickedness of his people.

In their different ways these books speak of sin and the justice of God. Yet, they are more than just books of judgement. Each one points forward in hope.

OVERVIEW

1. JONAH

Jonah is probably the most well-known book of the Minor Prophets. It tells the story of the prophet Jonah who was given a message from God to take to the Assyrian city of Ninevah around 800 - 750 BC. He refuses to go because he doesn't want God to be merciful to the enemies of Israel (Jonah 4:1-2). He runs the other way and the book tells us what happens next.

The book of Jonah speaks of the depth of God's love and mercy. It reminds us that his grace reaches beyond a small geographical area and one family of people physically descended from Abraham. He is a global God with a global heart for people to be saved (Jonah 4:10-11).

At the heart of this book is also a story of salvation as Jonah, the disobedient prophet, repents and is restored to God through the God-ordered action of a fish. Jesus tells us clearly that this incident is a pointer to the saving work of his death and resurrection (Matthew 12:39-40).

2. MICAH

Micah was ministering around 750 BC - 686 BC and was around during the reign of King Hezekiah (Jeremiah 26:18). His messages are a mixture of announcements of doom and announcements of hope.

This is a book where sin is carefully exposed for what it is. Micah speaks to the nation as a whole as well as to the false prophets and leaders in particular. The case is a watertight one and God's judgment is clear (Micah 6).

Yet, throughout the book of Micah, God announces hope. Chapters 4 & 5 speak of a kingdom that will be set up with a king who will be born in Bethlehem - no prizes for guessing who that is! The end of the book speaks about a time when God will forgive the sins of his people (Micah 7:18-20).

3. NAHUM

Ninevah was the capital city of the Assyrian Empire. Jonah had visited the city around 100 years earlier with a message of judgment from God and the Assyrians had repented and God had mercy on them.

When Nahum preached this message, the Assyrians were the most powerful nation in the region. Among the countries they had conquered was the nation of Israel. We also know that they had hoped to take Judah as well (2 Kings 17-19). Through Nahum, God announces his judgement for their bloodthirsty actions (Nahum 3:1-4).

The bulk of the book is given over to God's statements of action against the city of Ninevah. Yet, that is not all. Nahum reminds us of God's care for his people (Nahum 1:7), points us forward to the message of the Gospel (Nahum 1:15) and promises restoration for God's people (Nahum 2:2).

4. HABAKKUK

Habakkuk lived in Judah in the early 600's BC and was a contemporary of Jeremiah. The book allows us to listen in on an extended conversation between Habakkuk and God.

The book can be divided into three parts:

1:1-11 – Here Habakkuk asks God when he will act against the wickedness in Judah. God answers and tells Habakkuk that he will bring judgement by bringing the Babylonians against Judah.

1:12-2:20 – Habakkuk is shocked by God's answer. Surely God cannot use a wicked nation for his good purposes. God answers and makes it clear he is not on the side of the Babylonians. They will be judged, though not yet (Habakkuk 2:3). Habakkuk is confused, but is encouraged to trust in God (Habakkuk 2:4)

3:1-19 – In the light of God's judgement, Habakkuk prays for mercy and for God to work in Judah as he had done in the past. The book ends with one of the most incredible statements of faith in God that we have in the whole Bible.

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)