



# JONAH, MICAH, *and* NAHUM

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Kristofer D. Holroyd



**J. I. Packer**

THEOLOGICAL EDITOR

**Dane C. Ortlund**

SERIES EDITOR

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Numbers	Song of Solomon	Mark	1–2 Thessalonians
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Ezra and Nehemiah			
Job			

**J. I. PACKER** is Board of Governors' Professor of Theology at Regent College (Vancouver, BC). Dr. Packer earned his DPhil at the University of Oxford. He is known and loved worldwide as the author of the best-selling book *Knowing God*, as well as many other titles on theology and the Christian life. He serves as the General Editor of the *ESV Bible* and as the Theological Editor for the *ESV Study Bible*.

**LANE T. DENNIS** is President of Crossway, a not-for-profit publishing ministry. Dr. Dennis earned his PhD from Northwestern University. He is Chair of the *ESV Bible Translation Oversight Committee* and Executive Editor of the *ESV Study Bible*.

**DANE C. ORTLUND** is Executive Vice President of Bible Publishing and Bible Publisher at Crossway. He is a graduate of Covenant Theological Seminary (MDiv, ThM) and Wheaton College (BA, PhD). Dr. Ortlund has authored several books and scholarly articles in the areas of Bible, theology, and Christian living.

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Kristofer D. Holroyd

 **CROSSWAY**<sup>®</sup>  
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## S E R I E S   P R E F A C E

**KNOWING THE BIBLE**, as the series title indicates, was created to help readers know and understand the meaning, the message, and the God of the Bible. Each volume in the series consists of 12 units that progressively take the reader through a clear, concise study of one or more books of the Bible. In this way, any given volume can fruitfully be used in a 12-week format either in group study, such as in a church-based context, or in individual study. Of course, these 12 studies could be completed in fewer or more than 12 weeks, as convenient, depending on the context in which they are used.

Each study unit gives an overview of the text at hand before digging into it with a series of questions for reflection or discussion. The unit then concludes by highlighting the gospel of grace in each passage (“Gospel Glimpses”), identifying whole-Bible themes that occur in the passage (“Whole-Bible Connections”), and pinpointing Christian doctrines that are affirmed in the passage (“Theological Soundings”).

The final component to each unit is a section for reflecting on personal and practical implications from the passage at hand. The layout provides space for recording responses to the questions proposed, and we think readers need to do this to get the full benefit of the exercise. The series also includes definitions of key words. These definitions are indicated by a note number in the text and are found at the end of each chapter.

Lastly, to help understand the Bible in this deeper way, we urge readers to use the ESV Bible and the *ESV Study Bible*, which are available in various print and digital formats, including online editions at [esv.org](http://esv.org). The *Knowing the Bible* series is also available online.

May the Lord greatly bless your study as you seek to know him through knowing his Word.

J. I. Packer  
Lane T. Dennis

# WEEK 1: OVERVIEW



## Getting Acquainted

Jonah, Micah, and Nahum reveal God's directing of the nations for his purposes during the reemergence and ascendancy of the Assyrian Empire. With messages of judgment against both Assyria and God's own people in Israel<sup>1</sup> and Judah, these prophets bring God's explanation of world events to his people as they endure both prosperity and punishment from the Lord.

Jonah begins our study with what seems to be a simple word of judgment against the Assyrian city of Nineveh. However, as we look more closely at the book, it becomes clear that this judgment is directed not just at Israel's enemies but actually against the people of Israel themselves. In their time of military expansion, wealth, and peace, Israel has become arrogant and self-focused, delighting in God's steadfast love toward them but wanting to keep that love for themselves.

Micah continues this judgment against Israel and Judah for their turning away from God, especially through their mistreatment of the weak and powerless among them. This wickedness, perpetrated and promoted by the leaders, prophets, and priests in Israel, would bring about the judgment of God at the hands of the Assyrians and, later, of the Babylonians. Nevertheless, God forgives sins and delights in restoring his people. Accordingly, Micah promises a coming Shepherd-King who will deliver God's people, restore them, and even take away those very things that led them astray.

Nahum concludes this time period with a condemning word against the



## WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

Assyrians. Although they experienced God’s mercy and forgiveness because of their earlier repentance in the time of Jonah, they have once again exulted in violence and greed, and God’s Word to them, like their treatment of others, is graphic and devastating. The city of Nineveh will be destroyed completely by the avenging warrior God of Israel. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 1683–1718; available online at [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org).)

### Placing These Three Books in the Larger Story

These three short books together highlight the patience of God. Eager to forgive sins, God often allows the evil deeds of the wicked to pile up before he executes judgment, and this eagerness to forgive extends to all people everywhere, not just to Israel. In fact, Israel is supposed to be the herald of this great patient forgiveness, but, because of her own evil, God will bring judgment upon his people, too. These books, then, expose our sin, shame, and need for forgiveness and also point to the Great Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep, making such forgiveness possible. Indeed, for those who put their trust in Jesus Christ, God will tread their iniquities underfoot and cast their sins into the depths of the sea.

### Key Verses

“Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity<sup>2</sup> and passing over transgression<sup>3</sup> for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” (Mic. 7:18–19)

### Date and Historical Background

Around 780–745 BC the Assyrian Empire, which had largely ruled the ancient world for nearly a century, seemed to wane in power, and as a result of this temporarily waning influence, Jeroboam II continued his father’s military expansion of Israel (2 Kings 14:23–28). Assyria’s ebbing power, however, would not last long. Tiglath-pileser became king of the Assyrian Empire in 745 BC and quickly reestablished Assyrian dominance throughout the region. Like many of the Assyrian kings before him, Tiglath-pileser’s reign was characterized by cruelty and destruction, especially upon those nations and peoples the Assyrians conquered. The northern kingdom of Israel experienced this cruelty, and in 722 BC it was devastated by the subsequent Assyrian king, Shalmaneser V, who ruled from 727–722 BC. Two kings later, Sennacherib (704–681 BC), made the prominent Assyrian city Nineveh the capital of the empire, enhancing the city

and its defenses. However, less than one hundred years later, the city would be completely destroyed, and only a handful of years after that the empire itself would also be totally removed from history.

Into these world events, God sends his prophets with a message not just for Israel and Judah but also for Nineveh. The prophets of Jonah and Nahum sit as bookends surrounding Nineveh's reestablishment as a world power, with Jonah prophesying during the reign of Israel's king Jeroboam II (782–753 BC) and Nahum recording his oracles<sup>4</sup> and visions in Judah likely sometime between 660 and 630 BC. The ministry of Micah lasts a minimum of 20–25 years, though perhaps longer, as he prophesies during the reigns of Judah's kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, placing Micah's words sometime between 750 and 687 BC.

## Outlines

### Jonah

- I. Jonah's Commissioning and Response (1:1–2:10)
  - A. Jonah's commissioning and flight (1:1–3)
  - B. Jonah and the pagan sailors (1:4–16)
  - C. Jonah's grateful prayer (1:17–2:10)
- II. Jonah's Recommissioning and Response (3:1–4:4)
  - A. Jonah's recommissioning and compliance (3:1–3a)
  - B. Jonah and the pagan Ninevites (3:3b–10)
  - C. Jonah's angry prayer (4:1–4)
- III. Jonah's Lesson about Compassion (4:5–11)

### Micah

- I. Superscription (1:1)
- II. The Announcement of Judgment on Israel and Judah (1:2–2:13)
  - A. God's punishment of Samaria and Judah (1:2–16)
    1. Judgment on Samaria (1:2–7)
    2. Judgment on Judah (1:8–16)
  - B. Abuses and abusers of Yahweh's land (2:1–11)
    1. Indictment and future punishment (2:1–5)
    2. Rejection of the prophetic word (2:6–11)
  - C. The divine promise to gather Jacob (2:12–13)

## WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

### III. The Present Injustice and the Future Prospect of Just Rule in Jerusalem (3:1–5:15)

#### A. Present leaders denounced (3:1–12)

1. Judgment against the heads of Jacob (3:1–4)
2. Judgment against the prophets (3:5–8)
3. Judgment against the heads of Jacob (3:9–12)

#### B. Jerusalem's restoration among the nations—promised (4:1–7)

1. Nations approach Zion in peace (4:1–5)
2. Divine promise to gather Zion (4:6–7)

#### C. Jerusalem's restoration among the nations—accomplished (4:8–5:15)

1. Restoration of Zion's dominion (4:8)
2. Nations approach Zion for battle (4:9–13)
3. The Shepherd-King arrives and the remnant is restored (5:1–15)

### IV. The Lord's Indictment and Restoration of His People (6:1–7:20)

#### A. Israel accused: covenant violation (6:1–8)

1. The prophetic summons (6:1–2)
2. Divine interrogation and saving acts (6:3–5)
3. People's response and prophetic reply (6:6–8)

#### B. Crisis in relationship (6:9–7:7)

1. Divine indictment of treachery (6:9–12)
2. Divine sentence for treachery (6:13–16)
3. Consequence of disobedience: social upheaval (7:1–7)

#### C. Zion's repentance and renewed faith in Yahweh's help (7:8–13)

#### D. Restoration of the relationship between Israel and Yahweh (7:14–20)

## Nahum

### I. Introduction (1:1)

### II. A Psalm Descriptively Praising the Lord (1:2–8)

- A. The Lord takes vengeance on his guilty adversaries (1:2–3a)
- B. The Lord rules creation in majesty, and no one can stand before his wrath (1:3b–6)
- C. The Lord delivers those who take refuge in him (1:7)
- D. The Lord destroys his adversaries (1:8)

### III. The Lord's Coming Judgment on Nineveh and Deliverance of Judah (1:9–15)

- A. The destruction of wicked, plotting Nineveh (1:9–12a)
- B. Judah, having been afflicted by the Lord, is freed from Assyrian bondage (1:12b–13)

- C. The termination of vile, idolatrous Nineveh (1:14)
- D. Peace and deliverance for Judah (1:15)
- IV. Focus on Nineveh: The Lord’s Coming Judgment (2:1–13)
  - A. The beginning of the attack on Nineveh (2:1)
  - B. Reasons for judgment: the Assyrians’ plundering of Judah, though Judah’s restoration by God is planned (2:2)
  - C. Attacking soldiers and military action at Nineveh (2:3–5)
  - D. The fall and plundering of Nineveh (2:6–9)
  - E. A taunting song portraying Nineveh’s destruction because of the city’s lust for conquest (2:10–12)
  - F. The Lord speaks a word of judgment (2:13)
- V. Again, Focus on Nineveh: More concerning the Lord’s Coming Judgment (3:1–19)
  - A. Reasons for judgment: the violence, lying, and greed of Nineveh (3:1)
  - B. Military action at Nineveh and the ensuing slaughter of the Assyrians (3:2–3)
  - C. Reasons for judgment: the wickedness of Nineveh (3:4)
  - D. The Lord speaks a word of judgment (3:5–7)
  - E. Comparison with the conquest of Thebes (3:8–11)
  - F. A taunting song presenting Nineveh’s inevitable destruction because of the city’s incessant evil (3:12–19)

**As You Get Started**

Read each book—Jonah, Micah, and Nahum—straight through in one sitting. What are your first impressions? What stands out to you?

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What words, phrases, and themes seem to span across these three books?

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WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

What questions do you have as you begin this study?

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**As You Finish This Unit . . .**

**Take a few minutes to ask God to bless you with increased understanding and a transformed heart and life as you begin this study of Jonah, Micah, and Nahum.**

**Definitions**

<sup>1</sup> **Israel** – Originally, another name given to Jacob (Gen. 32:28). Later applied to the nation formed by his descendants, then to the 10 northern tribes of that nation, who rejected the anointed king and formed their own nation. In the NT, the name is applied to the church as the spiritual descendants of Abraham (Gal. 6:16).

<sup>2</sup> **Iniquity** – Any violation of or failure to adhere to the commands of God, or the desire to do so.

<sup>3</sup> **Transgression** – A violation of a command or law.

<sup>4</sup> **Oracle** – From Latin “to speak.” In the Bible, refers to a divine pronouncement delivered through a human agent.



**THE BOOKS OF JONAH, MICAH, AND NAHUM** announce the judgment of God through his prophets—flawed messengers who nevertheless served as vehicles for God’s compassion, calling their hearers to repent of their evil, turn from their false gods, and worship the one true God.

Over the course of 12 weeks, this study helps readers see the steadfast love, mercy, and patience of the Lord, the deliverer and protector who offers forgiveness to all who turn from their sin and trust in him.

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## ABOUT THE *KNOWING THE BIBLE* SERIES

Over the course of 12 weeks, these studies explore books of the Bible and:

- Ask thoughtful questions to spur discussion
- Show how each passage unveils the gospel
- Tie the text in with the whole story of Scripture
- Illuminate the doctrines taught in each passage
- Invite you to discover practical implications
- Help you better understand and apply God’s Word

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**GRAEME L. GOLDSWORTHY**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Kristofer D. Holroyd** (PhD, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit) serves as senior pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Muncie, Indiana.

BIBLE STUDY

