

### Introduction to Jonah

#### Author and Date

Jonah prophesied during the peaceful and prosperous time of Jeroboam II ([2 Kings 14:23–28](#)), who ruled in Israel (the northern kingdom) from 782 to 753 BC.

#### The Gospel in Jonah

On the surface, the story of Jonah lends itself to a moralistic interpretation: God sends Jonah to the notoriously evil city of Nineveh ([1:1–2](#)), but Jonah runs away instead ([1:3](#)). So God sends a storm and a fish to rescue Jonah from his disobedience (ch. [2](#)), he tells Jonah to go a second time ([3:1–2](#)), and finally Jonah gives in and obeys ([3:3](#)). Then God rewards Jonah's obedience by bringing him surprising success among the Ninevites ([3:6–10](#)).

But this interpretation leaves us with a number of problematic questions: Why is chapter [4](#) included? Why isn't our hero, Jonah, a better model of obedience in the end? Why is he still angry *after* his success in Nineveh? Once we begin to pull back the layers of the story, we discover that it is not really about what Jonah is doing for God, but what God is doing for Jonah.

Jonah is about the disturbing possibility that, having pledged our life to God, we could end up spending much of that life avoiding the God we set out to serve. You may have already discovered this strange contradiction that lies at the heart of all Christian experience: while loving Christ, you find yourself turning from him; while trusting Christ, you often battle fear and anxiety; while serving Christ, you sometimes struggle with disappointment about certain events in your life. You are not alone!

Some people teach us by their example; Jonah teaches us by his weakness. By confessing his own failures, Jonah holds up a mirror for us to see the struggles and enigmas of our Christian lives ([1 Cor. 10:11](#)). He wants us to discover the grace of God—which, once we see it, is stronger than all our fears, anxieties, and disappointments. The real hero in the story is God. We catch glimpses of God's extraordinary patience with weak people like Jonah ([Jonah 3:1–2; 4:4, 9–10](#)), his relentless pursuit of lost people like the Ninevites ([1:2; 4:11](#)), and the ultimate victory of his love ([2:9; 3:10](#)).

### Jonah Outline

The story of Jonah includes seven episodes, with the first three paralleled by the second three. The final episode stands alone as the climax of the story:

- Jonah's Commissioning and Flight ([1:1-3](#))
- Jonah and the Pagan Sailors ([1:4-16](#))
- Jonah's Grateful Prayer ([1:17-2:10](#))
- Jonah's Recommissioning and Compliance ([3:1-3a](#))
- Jonah and the Pagan Ninevites ([3:3b-10](#))
- Jonah's Angry Prayer ([4:1-4](#))
- Jonah's Lesson about Compassion ([4:5-11](#))

### Introduction to Amos

#### Author and Date

Amos was not a prophet by profession ([1:1](#); [7:14–15](#)) but nevertheless was entrusted with bringing a message from the Lord to the northern kingdom of Israel. He prophesied sometime between 793–739 BC.

#### The Gospel in Amos

In four ways, the Old Testament book of [Amos](#) is essential for a robust understanding of the gospel. First, Amos was written with God's people in mind. While [Amos 1:2–2:3](#) includes judgments against the nations surrounding Israel, the bulk of the book is directed at Israel (with Judah, the southern kingdom, included). Importantly, the restoration of all the nations called by God's name in [9:11–15](#) brings the book full circle, as those once judged are ultimately blessed under a new affiliation. As such, the audience is both particular and universal. New Testament quotations from Amos refer to both of these groups. When quoted by Stephen in [Acts 7](#), the words of Amos anticipate the covenant family of Israel as the audience. Yet eight chapters later ([Acts 15:16–17](#)), James will reference the book of [Amos](#) in terms of what God is saying to all the families of the earth (i.e., the Gentiles). Thus, Amos has something to say to ancient Israel as well as to the whole world—even to us.

Second, Amos was written with practicality in view. Christians often quote Amos for its emphasis on social justice, and rightly so. Yet we must learn to handle this emphasis properly. Amos's condemnation of Israel's life of luxury and laziness at the expense of the poor should not be treated in a way that reduces the heart of Christianity merely to social ethics. The heart of Christianity is the gospel. The necessary societal implications of the gospel must not be confused with the gospel itself. Both are crucial; our challenge is to understand how mercy is integral to the Christian's identity without reducing the entirety of the Christian message to doing acts of mercy. To see the gospel as a call merely to extend mercy to others without rooting this in the gospel's call to receive God's mercy toward us as sinners is to lose the gospel itself.

Third, the apostles' use of the concept of *place* in [Amos](#) reveals God's mission to the world. Place signifies more than mere geography. Amos uses a variety of terms for place (e.g., house, tent, city) to represent the people's relational proximity to or distance from God. For Amos, place becomes a way of addressing the people's orientation toward God as well as God's orientation toward them. From the opening verses to the book's closing, God announces and executes a ministry of justice and mercy from particular places: from Zion and Jerusalem ([Amos 1:2](#)), and from the altar ([9:1](#)). Once we grasp its importance in [Amos](#), the concept of place will help us better understand the book's message and our mission in the world. Both times that Amos is directly quoted in the New Testament, the concept of place relating to God's family is in play. In [Acts 7](#), Stephen uses Amos to vindicate God's judgment of his household when its members put their own well-being above his kingdom and rule. Later, in [Acts 15](#), James references Amos, and *place* is again significant. This time, however, the message of Amos is used to validate God's plan for rebuilding his household from among all the nations of the earth.

## Week 1: Sept 20-25, 2020 Weekly Overview

Fourth, Amos's use of poetry reveals the intensity of God's relationship with the world. The book is largely a blistering declaration of God's impending judgment on Israel and the world. In fact, Amos uses a phrase for eschatological (end-time) judgment—"the day of the LORD" ([Amos 5:18-20](#))—that the New Testament repeatedly echoes. That this judgment is expressed in poetry surprises many readers. And this raises the question: why did God give us Amos in poetic verse rather than in legal arguments? After all, in our day, poetry is often the language of love and not lawsuit. Yet poetic language can also express anger, disdain, or lament. As such, it is the genre best suited to convey the idea of God as a divine warrior, driven on by an emotive sense of justice that is at the same time grounded in love.

### Amos Outline

- Superscription ([1:1](#))
- Oracles of Judgment ([1:2-6:14](#))
- Visions of Judgment ([7:1-9:15](#))

## Introduction to Hosea

### Author and Date

Hosea prophesied during the latter half of the eighth century BC (c. 753–722 BC). This period was an extremely difficult time in Israel's history, just before the northern kingdom went into exile.

### The Gospel in Hosea

The message of the prophets is based squarely on earlier Scripture, and particularly significant are passages such as [Leviticus 26](#), [Deuteronomy 4:25–31](#), and [Deuteronomy 28–32](#). In those passages Moses prophesied that Israel would enter the Promised Land, break the covenant, and be driven into exile under the curse of the covenant. From exile, however, they would seek the Lord, finding him faithful to his covenant when they sought him once more with all their hearts (cf. [Deut. 5:29](#)). The basic message of the prophets is that what Moses prophesied will indeed come to pass. As they point forward to the restoration after exile, they compare God's future deliverance of his people to the exodus from Egypt. This new exodus from exile will be followed by a return to the Promised Land, a new conquest of the land, and a new covenant between God and his people, who are themselves a new Adam, figuratively speaking, in a new Eden with a new David as their king.

This is the basic fund of Old Testament theology and imagery from which the authors of the New Testament draw to explain how the salvation God has accomplished in Messiah Jesus is the fulfillment of all that was prophesied in the Old Testament (see note on [Hos. 12:1–14](#)).

One particularly poignant way in which these salvation themes are seen in [Hosea](#) involves the covenant between God and Israel initiated at Sinai being treated as a marriage. This analogy sees all the indictments of Israel's idolatry as spiritual adultery. In addition, when God promises to save his people after he judges them (ch. [2](#)), he depicts their future salvation as a new marriage ceremony at a new Sinai (cf. esp. [2:14–23](#)). Jesus later came calling himself the bridegroom of God's people (e.g., [Matt. 9:15](#)), and Paul strikingly states that the great mystery of marriage "refers to Christ and the church" ([Eph. 5:32](#)). Jesus comes to initiate the new covenant, which is like the new betrothal prophesied in [Hosea 2:14–23](#) (cf. [2 Cor. 11:2](#)), and it will culminate in "the marriage of the Lamb" ([Rev. 19:7](#)), when "the Bride, the wife of the Lamb," comes "down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" ([Rev. 21:9–11](#)).

Hosea also prophesies of the sinful nation of Israel being struck down by Yahweh, who comes at them like a lion ([Hos. 5:14](#)). But, with striking echoes of future salvation events, the prophet says that this death of the nation will happen when the people are driven into exile. Then, after the exile, Yahweh will raise his people from the dead on the third day ([6:2–3](#)).

These redemptive themes in Hosea's prophecy are supremely fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus came as Israel's representative, and in his death he became the one who bore the curse of the covenant ([Gal. 3:13](#)). He was struck down under the wrath of God, and "he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" ([1 Cor. 15:4](#); cf. [Hos. 5:14–6:3](#)). Jesus laid down his life for his bride, the church ([Eph. 5:25](#)), buying her back from slavery to sin (cf. [Hos. 3:1–5](#)). He ransomed her as God had ransomed Israel at the exodus, and in his resurrection he justifies her ([Rom. 4:25](#)),

## Week 1: Sept 20-25, 2020 Weekly Overview

accomplishing the prophesied new exodus and setting the return from exile in motion. The great consummation will be celebrated at the marriage feast of the Lamb, in fulfillment of all the prophets, not least Hosea.

This prophetic book sobers us and fills us with renewed hope. As ugly as Israel's adulterous faithlessness has been, it cannot extinguish God's resilient redemptive love that defies human calculation or annulment.

### Hosea Outline

Chapters [1-3](#) use Hosea's own marriage as a parable for the relationship between God and Israel. The dominant image is of Israel as an unfaithful wife. Chapters [4-14](#) detail the comparison, with its series of accusations, warnings, appeals, and motivations for God's people to return.

- Biographical: Hosea's Family ([1:1-3:5](#))
- Accusations, Warnings, and Promises for Israel ([4:1-14:9](#))

### Introduction to Micah

#### Author and Date

Micah prophesied during the reigns of the Judean kings Jotham (750–735 BC), Ahaz (735–715), and Hezekiah (715–687). This was about the same time as Hosea and Isaiah.

#### The Gospel in Micah

God deals with sinners in one of two ways: deserved justice, or undeserved grace. In Micah's day, both Samaria and Judah clearly deserved God's judgment for their oppression, idolatry, and corruption. They lived out this wickedness right alongside the motions of offering sacrifice, expecting that because they had the covenant promises and the temple in their midst, God would accept and protect them.

In his great grace, however, God sent the prophet Micah to confront their sin, warn them of judgment, and call them to repentance. Micah prophesied of the coming judgment, when God would abandon them (for a time) to the invading enemies of Assyria and Babylon, who would trample their cities and carry their people off to exile.

But while God is a righteous Judge who carries out deserved judgment, he is also a merciful Savior who gives undeserved grace and full forgiveness to those who turn to him in repentance. The specific hope Micah presented was the promise of a Shepherd-King who would gather his faithful remnant back in the land, tenderly care for them, and defeat their great enemy. The result would be that people from many nations would come to worship Israel's God. To God's people who had suffered under a line of failed kings and oppressive foreign regimes, Micah announced the coming of a Shepherd-King who would arise from Bethlehem, saying, "He shall be their peace" ([Mic. 5:2–5](#)).

Ultimately, Jesus himself is the long-anticipated Shepherd-King who has made peace with God. He has done it, however, not through the raw power of military deliverance but through "the blood of his cross" ([Col. 1:20](#)). He did not come to destroy but to be destroyed, laying down his life for his sheep ([John 10:15](#)). He now rules over his people in perfect justice and abundant mercy, empowering his people, by his Spirit, to walk humbly in his just and merciful ways ([1 John 2:6](#))—the very life Israel in Micah's day had abandoned.

Because of this Shepherd-King, all those who look to Christ in trusting faith experience his kindness instead of his anger. They can expect that God will "pass over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance" ([Mic. 7:18](#)) because the prophet who confesses, "I have sinned against him [the Lord]," also proclaims, "he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication" (v. [9](#)). Ultimately the transgression of all such persons has been put upon God's firstborn, Jesus Christ ([Rom. 3:24–26](#)). Christ will "bear the indignation of the LORD" on their behalf ([Mic. 7:9](#)). Though we may suffer and fall in our life's battle with evil, we shall rise, as the prophet believed he himself would, due to the Lord's vindication (vv. [8–9](#))—and, as indeed will all those who are united to Christ by faith ([Rom. 6:5](#)). This is the wonder of the gospel in Micah.

### Micah Outline

- Superscription ([1:1](#))
- The Announcement of Judgment on Israel and Judah ([1:2–2:13](#))
- The Present Injustice and the Future Prospect of Just Rule in Jerusalem ([3:1–5:15](#))
- The Lord's Indictment and Restoration of His People ([6:1–7:20](#))