



# JOEL, AMOS, *and* OBADIAH

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Kristofer D. Holroyd



**J. I. Packer**

THEOLOGICAL EDITOR

**Dane C. Ortlund**

SERIES EDITOR

“This series is a tremendous resource for those wanting to study and teach the Bible with an understanding of how the gospel is woven throughout Scripture. Here are gospel-minded pastors and scholars doing gospel business from all the Scriptures. This is a biblical and theological feast preparing God’s people to apply the entire Bible to all of life with heart and mind wholly committed to Christ’s priorities.”

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# KNOWING THE BIBLE

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Deuteronomy	Isaiah	Luke	1–2 Timothy and Titus
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Judges	Lamentations, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah	Acts	James
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1–2 Samuel	Daniel	1 Corinthians	1–3 John
1–2 Kings	Hosea	2 Corinthians	Revelation
1–2 Chronicles	Joel, Amos, and Obadiah	Galatians	
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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A 12-WEEK STUDY



Kristofer D. Holroyd

*Knowing the Bible: Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, A 12-Week Study*

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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

Joel, Amos, and Obadiah were prophets who ministered over a long span of Israel's history, and identifying exactly when each prophet ministered remains difficult, with no real consensus found among Bible scholars. Nevertheless, each of these three prophets anticipates the "day of the Lord." On that day, God will judge the earth and relieve his people from their suffering at the hands of their enemies, refreshing and reestablishing them.

This day of the Lord begins, however, with judgment upon God's own people. God had given Israel his presence, his Word, and a special relationship with him, but they grew complacent and self-indulgent and even took advantage of the weak and impoverished among God's people. Therefore, God promised to begin judgment with his own people, which would arrive through the armies of the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

Even so, God offered hope to his people, if they would but return to him. If his people would turn back to God and away from their false worship, complacency, indulgence, and mistreatment of the weak and impoverished, then God would defeat their enemies, restore them to the Promised Land, and, most importantly, be reconciled to them.

Through our study of the books of Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, which consist primarily of poetry in the form of judgment or vision oracles, we will be confronted with sin and judgment, but we will also be offered the hope of God's salvation through our Savior, Jesus Christ. As the prophets Joel, Amos, and Obadiah



## WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

awaited a coming day of the Lord, we, too, eagerly await the day of the Lord in which our King and Savior Jesus Christ will return and establish his rule over all nations. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 1643–1679; available online at [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org).)

### Placing These Three Books in the Larger Story

God chose the Israelites out of all the nations of the world to be his witnesses in that world. Their mission was to represent and reveal God by the way they worshiped and lived. Instead, however, throughout her history Israel was no different than the rest of the nations: her wealthy preyed upon the poor, the strong took advantage of the weak, and worship of the Lord devolved into empty rituals. Accordingly, despite the evil in the world around them, judgment would begin with the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17), and God’s people would face the fearful day of the Lord. Moreover, if the judgment of God falls first on the people of God, how much more does it fall on his enemies and the enemies of his people! The day of the Lord, then, is a day of judgment for both God’s people and the nations of the world. Even so, in the midst of judgment lies salvation, as God promises to establish his rule over the nations, a rule that includes not only Israel but all of God’s people gathered from all the nations on earth. This promised salvation anticipates the saving work of Jesus Christ, who would be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords.

### Key Verses

“‘Yet even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.’ Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.” (Joel 2:12–13)

### Date and Historical Background

The Assyrian Empire ruled the ancient Near East<sup>1</sup> for almost a century, but then, around 780–745 BC, the empire waned in power. During this period, both Israel<sup>2</sup> and Judah experienced stability and prosperity. However, Assyria’s diminished influence did not last long, and in 745 BC, when Tiglath-pileser III became king of the empire, Assyria once again began to dominate the region. This dominance included the conquering of the northern kingdom of Israel and the relocation of the inhabitants of Israel to other areas throughout Assyria’s empire.

Although Judah was spared destruction by the Assyrians, a new world power would soon rise: Babylon. Babylon would supplant Assyria as the predominant empire and in 586 BC would conquer Judah and carry the inhabitants of Judah into exile. Edom,<sup>3</sup> Judah's southeastern neighbor and ethnic cousin, not only refused to help Judah in her times of crisis—especially during the Babylonian assault on Judah—but even took advantage of Judah's various vulnerabilities, plundering Judah whenever possible.

Into these tumultuous times God sent his prophets Joel, Amos, and Obadiah. During their respective ministries, they brought God's perspective on, and explanation for, the surrounding world events.

## Outline

### Joel

- I. The Judgment against Judah and the Day of the Lord (1:1–2:17)
  - A. Locust invasion: Forerunner of the day of the Lord (1:1–20)
  - B. Army invasion: The arrival of the day of the Lord (2:1–17)
- II. The Mercy of the Lord and Judgment against the Nations (2:18–3:21)
  - A. Mercy: The Lord responds by restoring his people (2:18–32)
  - B. Judgment: The Lord's judgment against the nations and his dwelling with his people (3:1–21)

### Amos

- I. Superscription (1:1)
- II. Oracles of Judgment (1:2–6:14)
  - A. Judgments on Israel's neighbors (1:2–2:5)
  - B. Judgments on Israel (2:6–6:14)
    1. Introductory announcement of judgment on Israel (2:6–16)
    2. Detailed announcements of judgment on Israel (3:1–6:14)
      - a. An oracle of warning (3:1–15)
      - b. An oracle of doom (4:1–13)
      - c. An oracle of entreaty (5:1–17)
      - d. An oracle of woe (5:18–6:14)





**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 Joel, Amos, and Obadiah.**

**Definitions**

<sup>1</sup> **Ancient Near East** – The land, people, and cultures of early civilizations in the region roughly corresponding to the modern Middle East.

<sup>2</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>3</sup> **Edom** – The nation established by the descendants of Esau (see Genesis 25–28); throughout history, the fraternal strife between Jacob and Esau continued to show itself in the strife between Israel and Edom.



**THE BOOKS OF JOEL, AMOS, AND OBADIAH** are revelations from God spoken through his prophets, calling his chosen people to repent and return to him. Even though God promises judgment for their unfaithfulness, he also offers hope of restoration in the Promised Land and reconciliation to him as their Lord.

This 12-week study helps readers see how the justice and mercy of God lead to the hope of glorious salvation, as we wait for the day when Jesus returns to free us from our enemies and our sin and establish his rule over all the nations.

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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

