

GROWTH GROUP
STUDY GUIDE



Behold
THE BOOK OF THE 12
HOSEA TO MALACHI

Behold

THE BOOK OF THE 12

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INTRODUCTION

The fact that the 12 books (known also as the Minor Prophets) have come down to us in a particular form, should lead us to read each book individually but also with an eye to how they interact with one another and have been deliberately placed in a specific order. The Book of Psalms, as a collection of 5 discrete books is a helpful model. Each Psalm stands alone and they were most likely composed over a long period of time. However at a certain moment in history, they were brought together in a deliberate order into the collection that we now know. They are grouped into 5 discrete "books", each of which has a particular

shape. And the 5 books together give shape to the whole collection.

Likewise the twelve books from Hosea to Malachi span some 400 years of God's people's history - covering the period in which Israel and Judah experienced tumultuous times - cast out of the land in punishment for their sin, sent into exile and subsequently returned to the land. Through this period of pre-exile, exile and post-exile, the LORD was always keeping his covenant promises and saving his people. In this series we'll read each book with an eye to how it contributes to the overall shape of the whole collection.

ORIENTATION

The book of the 12 belongs to the latter prophets. These include the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. These last 3 span the same period as the 12, i.e., (8th-5th centuries B.C.). Our English translations reflect the order of the latter prophets in the early Jewish manuscripts, i.e., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve. (see the appendix for diagrams, maps, timelines etc.) In our Growth Group series we are picking up the Crossroads Book of the Twelve Sunday sermon series started in early July. The studies cover only the last 4 weeks of the series. Each week we'll explore a different prophet, dipping into the Book that carries his name. In our modern Bibles as well as in the earliest Jewish manuscripts, the books of the Twelve are not placed in chronological order. The 4 books we have selected for this series are drawn from the whole 400 year period (pre-exile, exile and post-exile).

STUDY 1

August Outreach



**COME
& SEE**

**Church on Sunday
17 August**



**TASTE
& SEE**

**4 Themed meals over 4 weeks
starting Tuesday 19 August**

"We want to see the news of Jesus producing more and more life-long disciples, who together see the gospel reach further and deeper into Canberra and beyond." We're going to take 10 minutes out of our Growth Group study time now & over the next 2 weeks to pray and plan for 2 different Crossroads reach events in August (just a few weeks away !):

"Come and See" (in all services on Sunday 17 August)

A great opportunity for us to invite friends, family, colleagues and acquaintances to join us at church. The service will be tailored to suit first timers - a gospel talk from John 4 and some special food to share after the service. During the service we'll be advertising a second opportunity.

August Outreach

Taste the Bible's
big story—one
dinner at a time.
Join us for four
themed dinners

over four Tuesday nights, each
revealing a step in God's
unfolding plan.

TASTE
& SEE

We're inviting people join the first dinner on 19/8 of "Taste and See" and afterwards decide whether they would like to come for the remaining 3 dinners. Check out the "Taste and See" website www.tasteandsee.org.au to see how it has been hosted by other churches and used by God to share the gospel with many people throughout Australia.

Now that we're clear on what Crossroads is offering, it's time for each of us to commit praying and inviting people we know to come. We'll be doing this in a "Come and See"/"Taste and See" slot during Growth Group over the next two weeks. As a Growth Group, let's encourage one another through prayer and in sharing how we're going in inviting people to "Come and See" & "Taste and See".

When it comes to actually inviting someone it will be good to mention both events. That way if they come to "Come and See" on 17/8 they will already be primed for the "Taste and See" announcement.

4 Tuesday evening dinners over 4 weeks, the first being 6.30 pm
Tuesday 19 August at the Crossroads Ministry Centre in Belconnen



THE TWELVE'S OVERARCHING MESSAGE

The LORD's faithfulness to his covenant promises both in sending judgement against and in saving his people. Saving them meant restoring them - bringing them back to the promised land, but also bringing the nations in to worship the God of Israel. And throughout, the Twelve point to the coming of the one who would save in such a way that the whole of creation would know the LORD. He is faithful and he keeps his age-old promises to bless the world through his chosen king.

STUDY 1 - MICAH 7:8-20

AIM: *To be amazed through seeing the LORD's ongoing plans for his fallen people and his great kindness in forgiving them. In both, He is being true to His covenant promises.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF MICAH

Along with the prophet Isaiah, Micah preaches a message of judgement against the southern kingdom, Judah at the turn of the 8th century B.C. (see Micah 1:1) This was a period of deep crisis for God's people. Both he and Isaiah would have witnessed the complete destruction of the northern kingdom, Israel (known also as Ephraim) by the Assyrians in 722 BC. With the northern kingdom destroyed, Judah herself was vulnerable to attack. In 701BC during the reign of king Hezekiah, the Assyrian threat to Judah

climaxed in Jerusalem coming under siege. (see Micah 1:12) This time the LORD spared Judah although it was a narrow escape.

Like the prophet Isaiah, Micah continues to announce the LORD's judgement and even predicts the events that will take place 130 years later - the eventual fall of Judah to the Babylonians and the people's 70 year exile before they returned to the land. (see Micah 4:9-10)

The book of Micah is organized around repeated call for God's people to "hear...." (see Micah 1:1, 3:1, 6:1)

In Micah 6:1-5 - What is the basis of the LORD's complaint against Judah?

In Micah 7:1-7 - we read the prophet Micah's personal cry - he speaks as the representative of God's people.

READ MICAH 7:8-10A



Micah continues to speak here for his own people. How does he describe their current (or perhaps future) plight and what has caused it? Where does he find hope?

READ MICAH 7:10B-13

He now speaks to Jerusalem and looks forward not only to her restoration but to something far greater. What is this?



READ MICAH 7:14-17

Who is the shepherd spoken about in verse 14? See Micah 5:2-6.



What will be the extent and effect of this shepherd's rule?

Where in the NT do we see this prophecy fulfilled? (see Matthew 2:1-6)

READ MICAH 7:18-20



What assurance and comfort do you find from these verses?

The emphasis here is on the LORD's covenant faithfulness. That faithfulness is shown in the LORD both judging and saving his people. Read Exodus 34:5-9 to see how much these verses draw from that period of Israel's history.

How wonderfully do LORD's promises here in Micah help us appreciate how in the NT we see their full and complete fulfilment in the person and work of Jesus! Without Micah, we would be so much poorer in our grasp of the breathtaking grace of the LORD towards us in Christ Jesus. Along with the prophet Micah we can truly ask the question, "Who is a God like you....?"

In the light of this reality, finish your time together in praise to the Father, Son and Spirit .

STUDY 2

August Outreach



COME
& SEE

Church on Sunday
17 August



TASTE
& SEE

4 Themed meals over 4 weeks
starting Tuesday 19 August

Remind yourselves about both these events (see study 1 for details).

Establish a list of potential people to invite for whom your group can be praying for. Pray for them now.

Ask yourselves and share together your response to the following:

- "How deep a relationship do you need with a person to be able to invite them?"
- "Are we predicting the outcome of the conversation even before it takes place?" i.e., Are we sort of playing God and assuming that the person is not interested even before we ask them?
- "If the person has turned down an invitation in the past can we be certain that they will do so again?"
- "And last time was it outright rejection or were there other reason why the person could not make it?"

STUDY 2 - NAHUM 1

AIM: *That we would praise our great and gracious God for the wonder of the gospel that in Christ sees the nations come from eternal death to life. When we trust in Jesus we are swept up into that great movement.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF NAHUM

The name Nahum means comfort. Although we do not know the precise dates of the period during which Nahum prophesied, our best guess is sometime between the fall of Thebes in 663-4BC (mentioned in Nahum 2:8) and the destruction of Ninevah in 612BC. Nahum therefore would have been preaching to Judah prior to their exile in 587BC.

Much of the burden of Nahum's vision is about the threatened judgement

directed against the Assyrian city of Ninevah. (Nahum 1:1a)
Nahum's message is in direct contrast to that of the book of Jonah in which the LORDS's prophet is sent to preach against and call the Ninevites to repent. And repent they do! Time has passed however between the presumed date of Jonah's preaching compared with Nahum's. Assyria's conquering pride and might will give rise to her utter downfall as described in Nahum chapter 3.

READ NAHUM 1:1-6

Take each of the verses of this section in turn and list what we learn about God's character.



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In the light of his introduction, Nahum's question in verse 6 gives us pause for thought. Why is this such an important question for us to grapple with?

We saw in last week's study in Micah 7:18-20 reflects the what

the LORD reveals about himself to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7.

Where do you see a reflection of the same passage of Scripture in these first six verses of Nahum?

READ NAHUM 1:7-12A

Although we know very little about the prophet Nahum's situation, we can assume that Judah was still living in the land during the time of Nahum's teaching. The Northern tribe had been destroyed over a century earlier by the Assyrians in 722 BC.

What comfort would these verses have been for God's people at the time?

Nahum's prophecy against Ninevah resembles that of Obadiah's against Edom. In Obadiah, Edom is held responsible for its heartless response towards Judah in her misfortune. Likewise in Nahum, Ninevah becomes the personification of every nation that sets itself against God's chosen people. All those who oppose God's people are setting themselves in opposition to the LORD himself and will incur his wrath. (see the LORD's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3)

READ NAHUM 1:12B-15

Presumably at the time of Nahum's prophecy, Judah's fall to the Babylonians was imminent. They would have been living in troubled times as the mighty Assyrian empire was about to be eclipsed by the Babylonians. And yet here the LORD promises hope and safekeeping for his chosen people - a safekeeping that will outlast the period of their exile.

Compare Nahum 1:15 with Isaiah 52:7-12. What do you notice?

Isaiah, writing c. 700 B.C., sees far into the future God's people's return from exile. Almost a century later, much closer in time when the events occur, Nahum employs the same language as Isaiah, describing the good news of the LORD's intervention. The same language is picked up by the apostle Paul in Romans 10:15 as he writes about the gospel of the Lord Jesus which he calls the "word of Christ" v.17. Once

again, I we see here in Nahum how the promises of God are fully realized in the person and work of the Lord Jesus. In Nahum, the good news spoken by the prophet sees Assyria as the embodiment of the nations opposed to the LORD, judged and fallen. In Romans, Paul writes about the nations turning to the Lord in faith through hearing the good news of the gospel announced to them.

The two key questions that the prophet poses in Nahum 1:6 hang over every one of us. However, in the verse that follows, we find Nahum's wonderful response. We were without hope and eternally lost and yet because of his goodness to us in Christ, we have a refuge in the storm. Finish your time praising God for his immense kindness and grace in Christ Jesus.

STUDY 3

August Outreach



COME
& SEE

Church on Sunday
17 August



TASTE
& SEE

4 Themed meals over 4 weeks
starting Tuesday 19 August

If needed, remind yourselves about both these events (see study 1 for details)

Pray for your list of potential invitees and share together your wins and setbacks at inviting people. (Encourage without judging).

Share your answers to the following:

"Do you believe that someone will become a Christian after attending "Come and See" and/or "Taste and See"?

Let's not decide in advance how they will respond. Let's leave it to God to answer our prayers knowing that it is His work to save people .

STUDY 3 - HAGGAI 2

AIM: *The reality of the period of the return from the exile saw God's people asking important questions about God's faithfulness. Haggai helps us to see that there will be an amazing future restoration that far surpasses anything that they have known before. In Jesus we are the inheritors of these wonderful promises.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

In the book of Haggai, we come to a later period of the history of God's people - the period of their return from exile. In 539 BC, the Persian ruler Cyrus gave the order allowing God's people to return to their land. (see Ezra 1:1-11) Subsequently, in 520BC, the prophet Haggai brings messages from the LORD to the returnees (see Haggai 1:1, 2:1, 2:10, 20)

READ HAGGAI 1:1-15

- *What problem in the life of the returned exiles does the LORD identify in Haggai 1:1-11?*
- *What has been the consequence of them living in this way?*
- *How do the people respond to Haggai's preaching? (Haggai 1:12-15)*



READ HAGGAI 2:1-9

What problem affecting the returnees of God's people is Haggai seeking to address in verses 1-3?



The temple was the place where God chose to dwell with his people. The great temple of the past, built by Solomon, had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.. This newly built temple was but a shadow of its former glory. (see Haggai 2:3, Ezra 3:10-13) The people's perception is one thing. God's promise to them is something else.

In what way does the LORD's message through Haggai redress the problem for the returnees?

What in his message gives them grounds for hope and confidence?



READ HAGGAI 2:10-23

At first sight, in verses 10-13, the prophet seems to have gone on a tangent. However in verse 14, Haggai draws the threads together and in the following verses applies his teaching to the people's situation. "This people and this nation" may well refer, not to the exiles but to those living in the land prior to their return; people who were actively opposing the rebuilding of the temple - see Ezra 4:4. Whichever is the case, in verse 19b there is a clear promise from the LORD.

The book finishes with the LORD expressing his choice of Zerubbabel, the Persian appointed governor of Judah, the LORD's servant. Zerubbabel will appear a number of times in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Zechariah.

Compare Jeremiah 22:24 with Haggai 2:23. What do you notice?

Barry Webb in The Message of Zechariah writes:

Both Haggai and Zechariah saw enormous significance in the fact that Zerubbabel had been appointed governor. For Zerubbabel was a direct descendant of king David, whose son Solomon had built the first temple. Furthermore he had played a leading role in starting the work on the new temple, even before he became governor (Zech 4:9).... No wonder, then, that the appointment of Zerubbabel as

governor, with Joshua as high priest at his side, was greeted with such enthusiasm by Zechariah and his contemporaries. Zerubbabel was only a governor, to be sure not a king. But his rise to leadership gave strong encouragement to those who were looking for the fulfilment of Isaiah and Jeremiah's prophecies.

Zerubbabel, therefore is a messiah figure drawing on many OT promises that point ultimately to the one true king who will rule on the throne of David forever - Jesus.

From the small and disillusioned post-exilic community there will rise an eschatological people of God. The LORD has not forgotten his promises.

STUDY 4

STUDY 4: AMOS 9 - "PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD, O ISRAEL."

AIM: *Out of the ashes of the fire of God's judgement is a wonderful picture of restoration. Amazingly, the prophet Amos sees this from afar and describes what the LORD will do on the other side of the judgement of the exile. We are swept up into this great movement which finds its fulfilment in Christ.*

READ AMOS 9:1-4



Amos has already been given a number of visions. (see 7:1-9, 8:1-2). What does he see in verse 9:1?

Israel's leadership has already attempted to silence him but without success. (see 7:10-17)

How penetrating are verses 2-4! Compare these verses with Psalm 139:5-12. What do you notice?

READ AMOS 9:5-10

Amos is preaching these words during a time of relative peace and prosperity for the both kingdoms. (the earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1 is known to have taken place in the first half of the eighth century B.C.

before the significant geopolitical changes that took place in the second half). Israel's destruction however is promised (it will take place within 30 years) while Judah's will not be total (see 9:8).

READ AMOS 9:11-15

What do we learn in verses 11-12 about the restoration of God's people?

The mention of the fallen booth of David being raised up looks forward to the time when the schism between the northern and southern tribes dating back to the time of Jeroboam and Rehoboam would be healed. Amos, it would seem, knows that Judah, at a much later time, will go into exile and only then, from the furnace of God's judgement, would the total restoration of God's people take place.

In verses 13-15, Amos describes the restoration of God's people as being extraordinary.

What stands out to you in his description?

Amos employs imagery here drawing from a number of key Old Testament motifs. Can you list them?

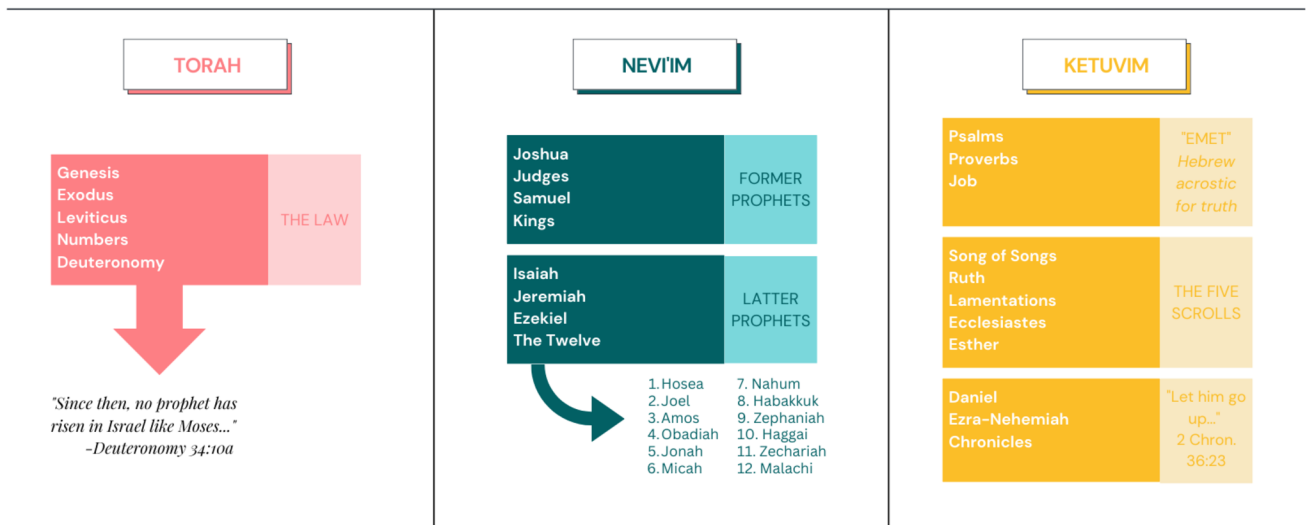
In Acts 15:1-21, Luke writes about the events that took place during the Jerusalem council. The issue needing to be resolved is whether Gentiles who came to put their faith in Christ needed to be circumcised or not. After hearing of the conversion of the Gentiles in verse 12, James declares them to be full members of God's people. He goes on to quote these last verses from the book of Amos in support of his argument. Amos has spoken in Amos 9:12

of God's restored people possessing the nations. In the light of the coming of Christ, James understands Amos to be pointing to the day when everyone who calls on the name of Jesus, irrespective of their ethnic origin, becomes part of God's chosen people in worshipping Israel's Messiah. Thus the question at hand is decisively resolved. We are all one in Christ Jesus, irrespective of our origins.

Praise God that in Christ we who were "far off" , have been brought near. (see Ephesians 2:11-22)

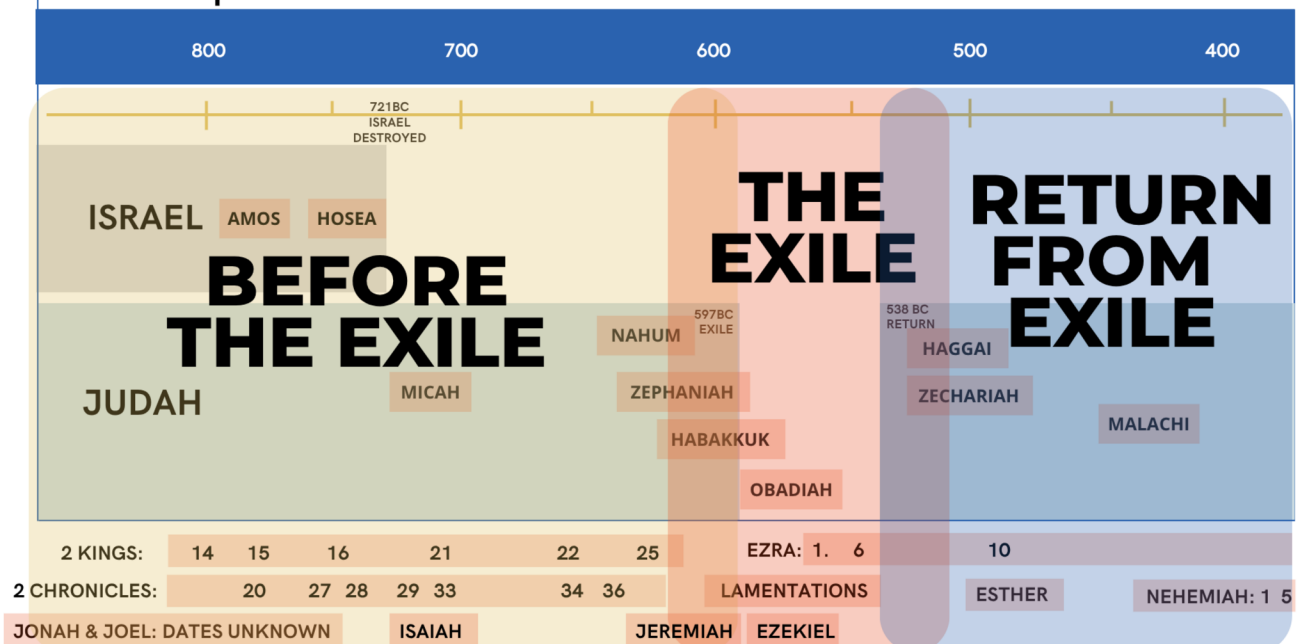
APPENDIX

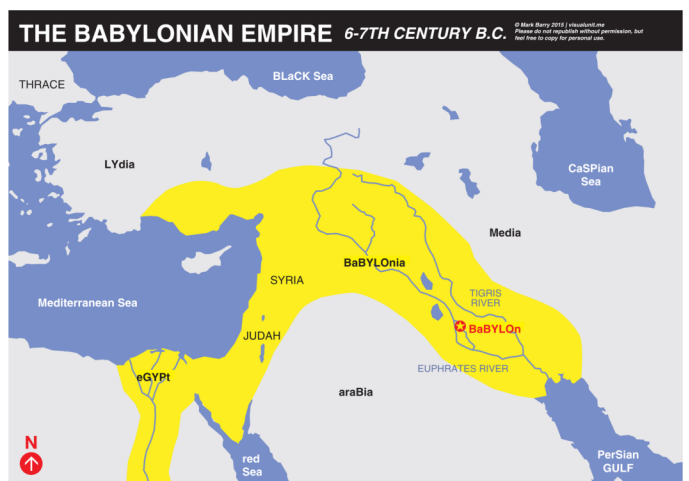
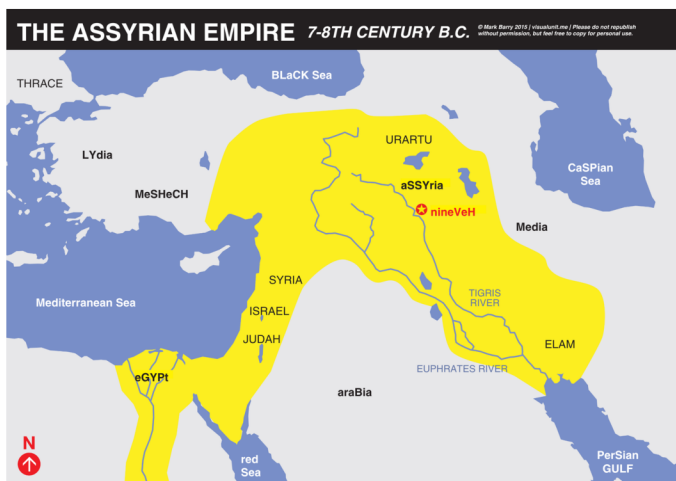
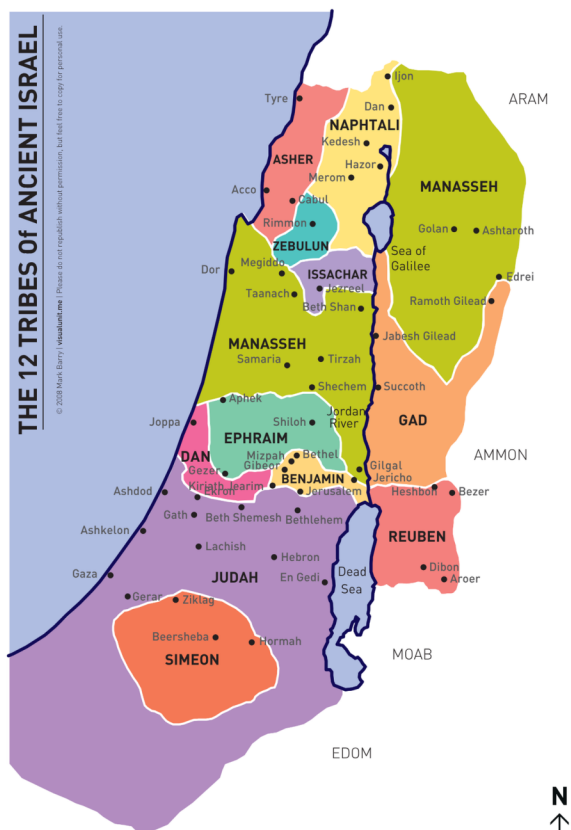
The TaNaK Structure



Now [Jesus] said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."
-Luke 24:44

Behold THE BOOK OF THE 12 Minor Prophets HOSEA TO MALACHI





CROSSSTRAIN

GET READY FOR TERM 3 & 4



Block 3 - 28 Jul, 11, 18, 25 Aug
Block 4 - 20, 27 Oct, 3 & 10 Nov



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Two August Outreach Events



**Church on
Sunday 17
August**



Come and See (in all services on sunday 17 August)
A great opportunity for us to invite friends, family,
colleagues and acquaintances to join us at church.



**4 Themed meals
over 4 weeks
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August**



Taste & See the Bible's big story. Join us for four
themed dinners over four Tuesday nights, each
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