

PRESENT JUDGMENT / FUTURE DELIVERANCE – COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF MICAH

by Paul G. Apple, September 2006

WHO IS A GOD LIKE YAHWEH?

DESPITE PERVASIVE COVENANT DISLOYALTY WHICH BRINGS NECESSARY JUDGMENT, YAHWEH STANDS ALONE AS A GOD OF FORGIVENESS AND LOYAL LOVE WHO WILL YET DELIVER HIS PEOPLE AND PROVIDE THE SHEPHERD-KING TO REIGN IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE

*“Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity
And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?”
(Micah 7:18)*

For each section in the Book of Micah:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

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BACKGROUND OF BOOK OF MICAH

Boice: The minor prophets largely convey a message of God's judgment. . . in Micah's case the message of judgment was heeded, repentance followed, and the disaster was postponed for a century. . . In coming to Micah we should be encouraged to learn that one man did make a difference. . . The preaching of Micah about the impending judgment of God bore fruit during the reign of King Hezekiah, whose story is told in 2 Kings 18-20. . . Hezekiah's was not the only reign during which Micah prophesied. In fact, he tells us at the beginning of his book that the Lord spoke to him during three succeeding reigns: those of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The first two reigned for sixteen years each. So at the very least, assuming that Micah began his work in the very last months of Jotham's reign and that the revival came in the very first months of Hezekiah's reign, Micah preached for sixteen years without succeeding. It is more likely, indeed highly probable, that there were twenty or twenty-five years of work before the awakening. . . Never give up.

Kroll: But the man Micah himself is called by God to bring a message of judgment, both to the ten tribes to the north-the northern kingdom-and more specifically, to the tribes to the south, the southern kingdom. This book is a book about judgment.

But it's also a book about repentance and it's a book about restoration. When judgment comes and repentance follows that judgment, and restoration follows that repentance, then, my friends, we discover the joy of victorious living.

Now Micah is a contemporary of the man Isaiah. We all know Isaiah. That makes him an 8th century BC prophet. . .

Now Micah essentially has three messages he wants to give. The first message is found in the first two chapters. The second message is found in chapters 3 and 4 and 5, the middle three chapters. And the last message is found in the last two chapters, 6 and 7. We're going to look at all three of these messages in the course of this series on Micah. We're going to learn something about God's judgment, and we're going to learn something about repentance that comes as a result of God's judgment, and we're going to learn something about the joy of victorious living that comes after that-when we are restored, knowing that we have a right relationship with God.

Dr. Constable: Micah witnessed the fall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria in 722 B.C. He also lived through the invasion of Judah by the Assyrians under King Sennacherib in 701 B.C. According to Sennacherib's own records he captured 46 of King Hezekiah's strong cities, walled forts, and countless small villages. He claimed to have taken captive over 200,000 Judahites plus innumerable animals. Two of the Judean cities taken were Lachish, second only to Jerusalem in importance, and Moresheth-gath, Micah's hometown. Micah referred to the distress that this foreign invasion produced in Judah (1:10-16; 5:6). . .

As many of the prophetic books, Micah is primarily poetry. One of the prominent

features of Hebrew poetry is parallelism of thought, and this marks Micah. Micah used his native language as a craftsman. He utilized puns, wordplays, and probing questions. This book, like most of the other Prophets, is a collection of messages that Micah delivered.

J. Vernon McGee: For many this is the favorite of the Minor Prophets. The writing is pungent and personal. Micah was trenchant, touching, and tender. He was realistic and reportorial — he would have made a good war correspondent. There is an exquisite beauty about this brochure, which combines God’s infinite tenderness with His judgments. There are several famous passages that are familiar to the average Christian. Through the gloom of impending judgment, Micah saw clearly the coming glory of the redemption of Israel.

OUTLINE:

The more natural division of the prophecy is to note that Micah gave three messages, each beginning with the injunction, “Hear” (1:2, 3:1, 6:1).

The first was addressed to “all people”; the second was addressed specifically to the leaders of Israel; the third was a personal word of pleading to Israel to repent and return to God.

“WHO IS A GOD LIKE UNTO THEE” IN:

I. Proclaiming future judgment for past sins, Chapters 1— 3

- A. Prophet’s first message, directed against Samaria, reaches to Jerusalem, Chapter 1
- B. Prophet’s second message describes specific sins, Chapter 2
- C. Prophet’s third message denounces leaders for sins, Chapter 3

II. Propheying future glory because of past promises, Chapters 4, 5

- A. Prophecies of last days, Chapter 4
- B. Prophecy of first coming of Christ before second coming and kingdom, Chapter 5

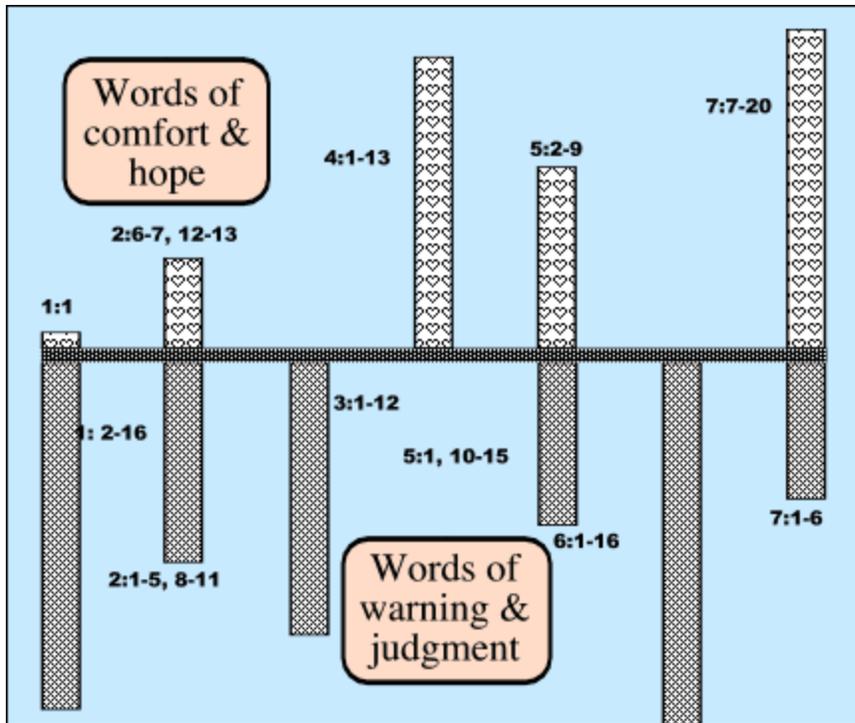
III. Pleading present repentance because of past redemption, Chapter 6

IV. Pardoning all iniquity because of who God is and what He does, Chapter 7

<http://www.thruthebible.org/atf/cf/%7BF5A5B386-48F1-4797-9023-5F77EED319B7%7D/Micah.pdf>

Bucknell:

The following diagram shows how many times and where in Micah words of comfort and hope are used compared to words of warning and judgment. Remember the chapter divisions are artificial but even still the diagram enables us to get a good overview of the book and God's purpose. For example one can see God's faithful words even to a recalcitrant society.



Wiersbe: Jeremiah 26:18 informs us that it was the ministry of Micah that encouraged the great reformation in Judah under the leadership of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:20).

Society in Judah was rapidly changing from rural to urban. In defiance of the Law of Moses, wealthy investors were buying up small family farms and developing huge land holdings, which created serious problems for the poor. . .

Having come from a farming community, Micah championed the oppressed poor and rebuked the “robber barons” for their selfishness. Micah saw the coming judgment of the Northern Kingdom under Assyria (722) as well as the fall of Jerusalem and Judah under the Babylonians (606-596).

He sought to call the Jews back to faithful worship of Jehovah and sincere obedience to His covenant, but they refused to listen. He pled for social justice and a concern for the helpless, but the people would not repent.

I. A warning message: judgment is coming – 1:1 – 2:13

1. The Judge appears – 1:1-5
2. The nations are judged – 1:6-16
 - (1) Judgment on Samaria – 1:6-9
 - (2) Judgment on Judah – 1:10-16
3. Why judgment is coming – 2:1-11
 - (1) Because of covetousness – 2:1-5
 - (2) Because of false prophets – 2:6-11
4. Hope for the remnant – 2:12-13

II. A promise message: a Deliverer is coming – 3:1 – 5:15

1. The sins of the leaders – 3:1-12

2. The future of the nation – 4:1-13
3. The coming of the Messiah – 5:1-5
4. The defeat of the enemy – 5:6-15

III. A challenge message: trust the Lord now – 6:1 – 7:20

1. In spite of the indictment – 6:1-8
2. In spite of the sentence - 6:9 – 7:6
3. Because of the Lord's mercies – 7:7-20

Finley:

Judah Under Jotham:

Jotham was a righteous king, but he failed to remove the “high places,” where the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense. . .

Jotham inherited a kingdom from his father that was militarily strong and that had expanded into some of the territory that had been lost in previous times (2 Chron. 26:6-15). . .

Early in Micah's ministry, the kingdom of Judah was strong politically and militarily, but there were already signs of a serious need for religious reforms. That need became much more evident during the reign of Jotham's son Ahaz.

Judah Under Ahaz:

Ahaz corrupted the worship of the Lord in Judah by adopting the idolatrous practices of the northern kingdom of Israel, by replacing the bronze altar that Solomon had built with an altar based on an Aramean (Syrian) model, and by changing other parts of the temple in Jerusalem (2 Kings 16:2-4, 10-18). . .

Conditions in Judah deteriorated considerably during the reign of Ahaz, both religiously and politically. It seems reasonable to assume that Micah conducted the bulk of his ministry during the time of Ahaz's sole reign.

Judah Under Hezekiah:

Hezekiah, unlike his predecessors, tore down the high places and other symbols of idolatry (2 Kings 18:4). . .

Hezekiah set the example for the people in turning to the Lord for help.

[Argues against the threefold division of the book along the lines of the repeated call to the people to listen to God's Word.]

Morgan: The message of Micah centers around the subject of authority. The prophet arraigned and condemned the false authority of those who had departed from the true standards of government, whether princes, prophets, or priests. This the prophet did by showing the influence of prostituted power and the judgments which resulted: “*Zion – ploughed; Jerusalem – heaps; the mountain – the high places of a forest.*” The hope of the nation, according to this prophecy, was in the coming of a Ruler to Israel. The great central statement of the prophecy is this, “*This man shall be our peace,*” and the restoration of order that would follow the coming ruler: the mountain of the Lord's house established; from Zion, instruction going forth; from Jerusalem, the Word of the Lord.

Then the nations around would flow in and share in the blessing. In His establishment all false confidences are to be destroyed (5:10-15).

Leslie:

- I. Approaching judgment of Israel and Judah because of persistent sin. 1:2-16
 - A. The call to attention. 1:2
 - B. Terrible coming of the Lord Jehovah announced and described. 1:3,4
 - C. Sins of the capital city representative of those of the nation. 1:5
 - D. Fearful consequences of this judgment. 1:6-7
 - E. The prophet's reaction and his vision of this judgment. 1:8-16
- II. Doom of corrupt oppressors and false prophets. 2:1 – 3:12
 - A. Woe upon the land monopolizers. 2:1-5
 - B. False preaching of lying prophets. 2:6-13
 - C. Denunciation of the leaders of the people. 3:1-7
 - D. Micah's consciousness of power from the Spirit of Jehovah. 3:8
 - E. Gross sin and crime to bring destruction upon Jerusalem. 3:9-12
- III. Vision of hope through the Coming One. 4:1 – 5:15
 - A. Final triumph of Jerusalem. 4:1 – 5:1
 - B. Coming mighty leader to be born in Bethlehem and to restore the remnant of Jacob. 5:2-15
- IV. Lawsuit of Jehovah. 6:1 – 7:20
 - A. First complaint of Jehovah. 6:1-5
 - B. Israel's first reply. 6:6-8
 - C. Second complaint of Jehovah. 6:9-16
 - D. Israel's second reply – a confession of sin. 7:1-10
 - E. Israel's promised blessing to follow judgment. 7:11-13
 - F. Final plea for Israel – gathered from many nations. 7:14-17
 - G. Doxology: The triumph of grace. 7:18-20
 1. Jehovah, the God of forgiving love. 7:18
 2. Jehovah, the God of redeeming power. 7:19
 3. Jehovah, the God of perpetual faithfulness. 7:20

Malick:

THROUGH A SERIES OF THREE ORACLES MICAH INDICTS ISRAEL AND ESPECIALLY JUDAH OF COVENANT DISLOYALTY WHICH WILL BRING CERTAIN DEVASTATION UPON THEM (AND ESPECIALLY JERUSALEM), BUT ALSO PROCLAIMS THAT YAHWEH WILL ONE DAY SAVE THEM, JUDGE THEIR ENEMIES, AND SHEPHERD THEM AS THEIR KING OUT OF HIS GOOD LOYAL CHARACTER

- I. Introduction: The word of God came to Micah, the Morashite at the times of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah about the nation's capitals Samaria and Jerusalem 1:1
- II. First Oracle--Judgment against the Nations, Israel & Judah, and the Hope of Deliverance from Captivity:2 Even though

Micah warns of Yahweh's coming judgment for the nations, Israel, and especially Judah because of her covenant unfaithfulness, he promises to regather them together as their Shepherd/King 1:2--2:13

- A. Judah's Exile--Judgment against the Nations, Israel & Judah: Micah urges the people to listen to this word against them from the Lord because He is coming to judge the "high places of the earth including Samaria and especially Judah because of her premeditated evil, hardness of heart, abuse of the covenant community and uncleanness 1:2--2:11
- B. Restoration from Exile by Yahweh:5 Micah proclaims that Yahweh will regather the people after their exile and lead them as their shepherd-King 2:12-13

III. Second Oracle--The Prophet's Indictment of the Leaders of Israel & Judah, and Judah's Future Glory: Micah urges the leaders of Judah and Israel to hear that they will be judged now and Jerusalem will be destroyed because of their self-serving evil, but then the Lord will bring about victory for Judah through a divinely sent ruler from Bethlehem who will gather the nation and bring about peace 3:1--5:15

- A. Judgment against the Rulers and False Prophets of the Land: Micah as a true prophet urges the leaders, prophets, and priests of Judah and Israel to hear that they will be judged and Jerusalem will be destroyed because of their high handed, self-serving use of position to consume people 3:1-12
- B. Salvation of Jerusalem:6 Although Jerusalem will have glory among the nations in the last days, she must first be taken into captivity, then the Lord will bring about victory through a divinely sent ruler from Bethlehem 4:1--5:15

IV. Third Oracle--God's Lawsuit with Israel and the Ultimate Triumph of the Kingdom of God: Although Micah (on behalf of the nation) admits to Yahweh's charge of covenant unfaithfulness and is willing to suffer for his (the nation's) sin, he warns their enemies not to scoff at their punishment because the Lord will restore the nation, and judge the earth, whereupon he and the nation pray for the Lord to shepherd them, and praise Him for the wonderful works that He will do out of His loyal character 6:1--7:20

- A. Final Round of Judgment: When the Lord in His faithfulness charges the nation with covenant disloyalty, Micah, on behalf of the nation, admits his

(their) sin, and yet waits for the Lord to save them
6:1--7:7

- B. Final Promise of Salvation: Even though Micah is willing to suffer punished for his (and the nation's) sin, he warns the enemies not to scoff because the Lord will restore the nation, and judge the earth, whereupon he and the nation pray for the Lord to shepherd them, and praise him for the wonderful works that He will do out of His loyal character 7:8-20

David Graves:

JUDGEMENT FOR SIN (Ch. 1-2)

Judgment (Ch. 1)

False Prophets (Ch. 2)

JUDGEMENT AND SALVATION (Ch. 3-5)

Leaders Condemned (Ch. 3)

Kingdom of God (Ch. 4)

Deliverer from Bethlehem (Ch. 5)

COVENANT CONTROVERSY (Ch. 6-7)

Israel's Guilt (Ch. 6)

Hope for Israel (Ch. 7)

<http://www.abu.nb.ca/ecm/Micah00o.htm>

Hope College:

I. Judgment Against Israel and Judah (1-2)

Disaster (1:2-2:11)

Salvation (2:12-13)

II. Judgment Against the Leaders (3-5)

Disaster (3:1-12)

Salvation (4:1-5:15)

III. Judgment Against Judah (6-7)

Disaster (6:1-7:7)

Salvation (7:8-20)

http://www.hope.edu/bandstra/RTOT/CH13/CH13_TBC.HTM

Goins

Micah's prophesies in this little book focus on two characteristics of God: the fact that he is a God of justice and judgment, but also a God of mercy, hope and grace. He is a God who delivers his people from the hopelessness of moral failure. Micah emphasizes God's undeserved grace, and keeps repeating the fact that God's salvation, his initiative in saving us, is unstoppable. God finishes what he starts in saving his people. We clearly see this in the theme verse at the end of the book: " *Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love* " (Micah 7:18).

Now if that is true, and Micah was convinced it was, then in response, our lives as God's covenant people ought to reflect his character. We ought to relate to people the way God does. Our lifestyles should reflect fairness toward others in human relationships; loving, steadfast, covenant-loyalty to God and a willingness to walk humbly and thoughtfully before God. Perhaps the most famous verse in Micah, chapter 6, verse 8, sets forth what God requires of us.

*He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God?*

OUTLINE OF MICAH

WHO IS A GOD LIKE YAHWEH?

DESPITE PERVASIVE COVENANT DISLOYALTY WHICH BRINGS NECESSARY JUDGMENT, YAHWEH STANDS ALONE AS A GOD OF FORGIVENESS AND LOYAL LOVE WHO WILL YET DELIVER HIS PEOPLE AND PROVIDE THE SHEPHERD-KING TO REIGN IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE

3 ORACLES OF PROMISED JUDGMENT AND FUTURE DELIVERANCE

Each introduced by a call to attention: “*Hear*” – 1:2; 3:1; 6:1

(:1) INTRODUCTION: THE BURDEN OF THE PROPHET

- A. Source of the Message
- B. Herald of the Message = the Prophet Micah
- C. Time Period
- D. Target Audience

I. (1:2 – 2:13) ORACLE #1 -- WHO IS A HOLY GOD LIKE YAHWEH – AWESOME IN JUDGMENT

(1:2) Call to Attention – Audience = All Peoples warned of coming judgment but God Himself will deliver

*“Hear, O peoples, all of you;
Listen, O earth and all it contains,
And let the Lord God be a witness against you,
The Lord from His holy temple.”*

A. (1:2 – 2:11) PROMISED JUDGMENT – THE SINS OF IDOLATRY AND REBELLION AND EXPLOITATION BRING INESCAPABLE AND PAINFUL DESTRUCTION

- 1. (1:2-16) The Sovereign God Judges Idolatry
 - a. (:2-7) The Coming Devastating Judgment of a Holy God Lays Bare the Idolatry of His Own Rebellious People
 - (1). (:2) Call to Attention (cf. Is. 3:13)
 - (2). (:3-4) Catastrophic Coming Judgment
 - (3). (:5) Charge of Rebellion and Idolatry Against Both Judah and Israel
 - (4). (:6-7) Certainty of Complete Devastation – the Extent of God’s Judgment

- b. (:8-16) The Corresponding Shame and Cause for Mourning Spreads Across the Entire Land
 - (1). (:8-9) Severity of the Offense Cause for Mourning
 - (2). (:10-15) Scope of the Shame – 11 Cities Cited
 - (3). (:16) Sign of Identification with the Shame and Suffering
- 2. (2:1-11) The Sovereign God Judges Righteously
 - a. (2:1-5) Exploitation by the Rich will be Judged – Taking the Land Away from the Land Grabbers
 - (1). (:1-2) Targeting Evil Doers for Judgment
 - (2). (:3-5) Turning the Tables on the Land Grabbers
 - b. (2:6-11) Explanation of Israel’s Reproach: Uncleanness Brings Destruction
 - (1). (:6-7) Cover Ups and Complaints Accomplish Nothing
 - (2). (:8-9) Charge of Shameful Exploitation
 - (3). (:10) Sin Demands Destruction
 - (4). (:11) Value System Driven By Empty Decadence

**B. (2:12-13) FUTURE DELIVERANCE --
EXPECTATION OF THE REGATHERING OF ISRAEL AND
THE REIGN OF THE MESSIAH – THE SHEPHERD-KING**

- 1. (:12) Regathering of Israel
- 2. (:13) Reign of the Messiah – the Shepherd-King

**II. (3:1 – 5:15) ORACLE #2 -- WHO IS A RIGHTEOUS GOD LIKE YOU –
DEMANDING AND IMPLEMENTING JUSTICE?**

(3:1) Call to Attention – Audience = National Leaders of Judah (especially Jerusalem) especially culpable but God Himself will deliver

“Hear now, heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel.”

**A. (3:1-12) PROMISED JUDGMENT --
THE LORD WILL TURN HIS BACK ON HIS EVIL HOLY CITY WITH ITS
EVIL RULERS AND FALSE PROPHETS WHO PERVERT JUSTICE**

- 1. (:1-4) Condemnation of Evil Rulers – The Lord Will Hide His Face and Not Answer
What distinguishes a wise and righteous ruler from a foolish and wicked ruler?
 - a. (:1) Justice Should be Paramount
 - b. (:2-3) Loving and Practicing What is Good (by serving the people) vs What is Evil (by exploiting the people)
 - c. (:4) Enjoying the Favor of the Lord vs His Condemnation
- 2. (:5-8) Condemnation of False Prophets – the Lord Will Darken Their Vision and Not Answer
What distinguishes a faithful prophet of the Lord (who shepherds people according to the

truth) from a false prophet (who leads God's people astray)?

- a. (:5) Motivated by Truth Rather Than Personal Gain
- b. (:6) Enlightened by the Lord vs. Darkened in Their Vision
- c. (:7) Commended by Their Intimacy with God vs. Ashamed of Their Estrangement
- d. (:8) Empowered to Proclaim the Unpopular Word of Judgment

3. (:9-12) Judgment Will be Executed Upon Jerusalem – The Lord Will Destroy Jerusalem

- a. (:9-11) Summary Condemnation
- b. (:12) Devastation of Jerusalem

B. (4:1 – 5:15) FUTURE DELIVERANCE – JUSTICE WILL REIGN SUPREME IN THE COMING KINGDOM UNDER THE SHEPHERD/KING = THE MESSIAH

1. (4:1-13) The Coming Kingdom --
After Pulverizing Her Enemies, Jerusalem Will Reign Supreme in the End Times and Administer Justice

- a. (:1-8) Justice Will Characterize the Dominion of the Messianic Kingdom in the End Times
 - (1). (:1-5) The Solid Foundation of Justice Will Be a Messianic Kingdom Driven By the Word of God
 - (2). (:6-7) The Merciful Implementation of Justice Will Provide Security for the Weak and Disadvantaged
 - (3). (:8) The Ultimate Dominion of Justice Will Flow From its Messianic Throne in Jerusalem
- b. (:9-13) Present Suffering Prepared the Daughter of Zion for Future Redemption and the Pulverizing of Her Enemies
 - (1). (:9-10) Present Suffering of Israel Compared to Birth Pangs
 - (2). (:11-13) Future Threshing Campaign Will Pulverize the Gloating Pagan Nations

2. (5:1-15) The Coming Shepherd/King --
The God of Peace Will Purify His People, Shepherd His Flock and Execute Vengeance According to His Timetable --

Four Promises Fulfilled by the Coming Messiah

- a. (:1-3) Promise of Delayed Deliverance Through God's Appointed Ruler (Who Has Been Actively Working From Eternity Past)
 - (1). (:1) Leadership Crisis in Context of Warfare
 - (2). (:2) Messianic Deliverer Promised
 - (3). (:3) Deliverance Delayed Until the Regathering of the Nation Under the Messiah
- b. (:4-6) Promise of Protection by the Majestic Reign of the Shepherding

Messiah Who is Our Peace

- (1). (:4) Protection Assured By His Majestic Greatness
 - (2). (:5) Protection Advanced By His Leaders Who Wage War to Keep Peace
 - (3). (:6) Protection Accomplished By Deliverance from All Attackers
- c. (:7-9) Promise of Pervasive Victory to the Remnant of Jacob – Bringing Blessing to the Righteous and Destruction to the Wicked
- (1). (:7) Analogy #1 – Refreshing Like the Morning Dew – to the Righteous
 - (2). (:8-9) Analogy #2 – Destructive Like the Predatory Lion – to the Wicked
- d. (:10-15) Promise of Purification of God’s Restored People Under the Leadership of the Messiah
- (1). (:10) Purified From False Military Dependence
 - (2). (:11) Purified From False Security (and Pride) of City Fortifications
 - (3). (:12) Purified From False Religious Charlatans
 - (4). (:13-14) Purified From False Idolatrous Worship
 - (5). (:15) Purified From Pagan Enemy Nations

III. (6:1 – 7:20) ORACLE #3 -- WHO IS A FORGIVING GOD LIKE YOU – COMPASSIONATE IN LOYAL LOVE?

(6:1) Call to Attention – Audience = God’s chosen people indicted but God Himself will deliver

“Hear now what the Lord is saying”

A. (6:1 – 7:6) PROMISED JUDGMENT -- THE LORD BRINGS INDICTMENT AGAINST HIS PEOPLE FOR UNJUSTIFIED PERSISTENCE IN WICKEDNESS AND EXPLOITATION AND VIOLENCE

1. (:1-5) Israel’s Offense is Particularly Egregious in Light of the Lord’s Loyal Love
 - a. (:1a) Call to Attention
 - b. (:1b) Offer Your Defense
 - c. (:2) Court Room Antagonists – The Lord Bringing Indictment Against Israel
 - d. (:3) No Excuse of Provocation
 - e. (:4-5) Demonstration of Loyal Love
2. (:6-8) Religious Ritual and Empty Sacrifice Cannot Compensate for Failure to Observe God’s Clear Requirements
 - a. (:6-7) Ritual and Sacrifice Cannot Atone for Sin
 - b. (:8) God’s Clear Requirements

3. (:9-16) The Lord's Indictment Spells Out the Specific Crimes and Corresponding Punishments

- a. (:9) Authoritative Voice of the Supreme and Sovereign Judge
- b. (:10-12) Specific Crimes
- c. (:13-15) Corresponding Punishments
- d. (:16) Apostate Society

4. (:1-6) The Prophet Looks at His Nation – Bankrupt of Godliness

- a. (:1-2a) No Godly Person Can Be Found
- b. (:2b-4) Universal Corruption and Exploitation
- c. (:5-6) No One Can Be Trusted

**B. (7:7-20) FUTURE DELIVERANCE –
THE PROPHET EXPRESSES CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S FUTURE BESTOWAL
OF FORGIVENESS, RESTORATION AND BLESSING**

1. (:7-10) The Prophet Looks at Himself – *“But as for me”*
Confident Anticipation of Deliverance and Vindication

- a. (:7-8) Confident Expectation of Deliverance
- b. (:9-10) Confident Expectation of Vindication

2. (:11-20) The Prophet Looks at his God –
Heart of Compassion and Loyal Love to Bestow Forgiveness, Restoration and Blessing

- a. (:11-13) Messianic Kingdom Expansion and Domination
- b. (:14-17) Messianic Shepherding
- c. (:18-20) WHO IS A GOD LIKE YAHWEH? – Climax of the Book

*“Who is a god like You, who pardons iniquity
And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?
He does not retain His anger forever,
Because he delights in unchanging love.”*

TEXT: Micah 1:1-16

TITLE: *SIN IS A CRYING SHAME*

BIG IDEA:

**WHO IS A HOLY GOD LIKE YOU -- AWESOME IN JUDGMENT?
THE SOVEREIGN LORD JUDGES IDOLATRY**

(:1) INTRODUCTION: THE BURDEN OF THE PROPHET

Allen: An editorial introduction to the book briefly gives four fundamental pieces of information: the divine source of the following oracles, the identity of the prophet through whom they came, the period over which he ministered, and the scope of his oracles. The prophetic books generally have introductions of this type prefixed, although the amount of information supplied in them varies.

A. Source of the Message

“The word of the Lord”

B. Herald of the Message = the Prophet Micah

“which came to Micah of Moresheth”

prophet Micah = *“Who is like Yahweh?”*

how can idolatry even be an option in light of the uniqueness and majesty of our God? We should listen because the message has divine authority.

Allen: This was a country village or small town over on the western and lower side of Judah, halfway between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean coast.

Moresheth -- SW Judah on border by the Philistines --

- significant from standpoint of military campaigns;
- Micah identified with common people in rural areas who suffered much -- both from foreign armies and from exploitation by fat cats in the big cities

C. Time Period

“in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah”

Ryrie: Though for the most part a good king, Jotham did not remove the idolatrous high places from his kingdom. Ahaz, a wicked king, adopted a pro-Assyrian foreign policy, and during his reign the captivity of the northern tribes took place. Hezekiah, one of Judah’s best kings, was anti-Assyrian and withstood the siege of Jerusalem which Sennacherib led in 701.

D. Target Audience

“which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.”
focuses on the capital cities

I. (:2-7) THE COMING DEVASTATING JUDGMENT OF A HOLY GOD LAYS BARE THE IDOLATRY OF HIS OWN REBELLIOUS PEOPLE

A. (:2) Call to Attention (cf. Is. 3:13)

1. We Should Listen Because God is the Universal Judge

*"Hear, O peoples, all of you;
Listen, O earth and all it contains,"*

2. We Should Listen Because God is Sovereign and Omniscient

"And let the Lord God be a witness against you,"
His Judgment is Accurate and Certain; there can be no argument; there can be no escape

Allen: God appears as witness for the prosecution, with incriminating evidence to present against the peoples of the world. He is witness, plaintiff, and judge at one and the same time, for He has the knowledge of wrongdoing, the right and concern to prosecute as the upholder of social welfare, and the wisdom and authority to judge with equity.

3. We Should Listen Because God is Holy

"The Lord from His holy temple."

There is a great gulf between our dwelling place on earth in sin and the habitation of God in His holy temple -- He is the one deserving of all worship and service.

God's Judgment is Just & Righteous -- based on His Holiness

B. (:3-4) Catastrophic Coming Judgment

*"For behold, the Lord is coming forth from His place.
He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth.
The mountains will melt under Him,
And the valleys will be split,
Like wax before the fire,
Like water poured down a steep place."*

We should look because the intervention of our transcendent God -- (the Creator) -- is Powerful in its Destruction;

"He shall come down and shall tread" -- repeated action;

Similar descriptions of such awe-inspiring manifestations of Jehovah occur in Ex. 19:18,19; Jud 5:5; Isa. 64:1; Hab. 3:6;

The Lord can come in blessing or He can come in judgment

Here God is angry at His people because they have broken the covenant.

Constable: The Lord was about to intervene in the affairs of His people. He is not only transcendent above all but immanent in the world, one of the most basic concepts in Old Testament theology. When He came, all the earth would melt, split, and quake

before His awesome power (cf. Judg. 5:4-5). Since He could affect the physical creation so drastically, His people needed to fear Him. Treading on the high places of the land, where the Israelites worshipped in idolatry (cf. 2 Chron. 33:17), probably also implies that He would crush pagan worship.¹¹

C. (:5) Charge of Rebellion and Idolatry Against Both Judah and Israel
Why does a loving God have to judge and destroy?

*“All this is for the rebellion of Jacob
And for the sins of the house of Israel.
What is the rebellion of Jacob?
Is it not Samaria?
What is the high place of Judah?
Is it not Jerusalem?”*

1. "transgression" -- rebellion, breaking away, apostasy
2. "sins" -- missing the mark (as when a marksman shoots and misses)
God sets up the target
3. "high place" -- Idolatry -- locations for idolatrous worship
the two capital cities are charged with being the focal point for the sins of the whole nation

These are obviously capital offenses (pinpointing the blame at the highest levels – in Samaria and Jerusalem.)

D. (:6-7) Certainty of Complete Devastation – the Extent of God’s Judgment

1. (:6a) City in Ruins

*“For I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country,
Planting places for a vineyard.”*

2. (:6b) Foundations Laid Bare

*“I will pour her stones down into the valley,
And will lay bare her foundations.”*

3. (:7a) Pride Smashed

*“All of her idols will be smashed,
All of her earnings will be burned with fire,
And all of her images I will make desolate”*

4. (:7b) Shame Exposed

*“For she collected them from a harlot’s earning,
And to the earnings of a harlot they will return.”*

very graphic language; God gives us pictures we can remember

Constable: God would smash Samaria's idols proving them incapable of defending themselves much less helping others. He would burn the luxurious ornaments that the people offered as temple gifts in the conflagration that would accompany Samaria's overthrow. All the pagan images that the people had made would perish. The Lord viewed these physical treasures as the earnings of harlot Israel who had been unfaithful to Him (cf. Hosea). The Israelites had committed adultery with temple prostitutes, but the Assyrians would destroy the gifts that they had brought into their temples and use them for their own idolatrous worship.

II. (:8-16) THE CORRESPONDING SHAME AND CAUSE FOR MOURNING SPREADS ACROSS THE ENTIRE LAND

A. (:8-9) Severity of the Offense Cause for Mourning

1. (:8) Expression of Mourning

*“Because of this I must lament and wail,
I must go barefoot and naked;
I must make a lament like the jackals
And a mourning like the ostriches.”*

Our hearts should be broken so that we would be repentant and contrite in spirit.
"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" -- Prophet identifies himself with the nation
"Therefore I"

Nakedness was the common lot of a captive.

Kroll: I suggest to you from this passage of Scripture that the point is this: When repentance is real, you'll be able to see it. It will not just be inside. There will be signs of repentance when repentance is real.

2. (:9) Severity of the Offense

*“For her wound is incurable,
For it has come to Judah;
It has reached the gate of my people,
Even to Jerusalem.”*

Prophet foresees the coming Assyrian invasion; its progress, city by city -- from the Philistine coastal plain through the Judean hills to Jerusalem. Samaria was captured by Assyria in 722; Jerusalem was besieged by Sennacherib in 701 (2 Kings 18:13-16) and by Nebuchad. in 605 and later.

City Gate -- refers to the place of counsel and power;
the king's counselors or cabinet -- this sin had reached to the very top and defiled the entire nation

Goins:

There is no hint here of accusation or condemnation toward his people. He identifies with them empathically, sympathetically. There is an incredible intensity to this determination to lament because of what is happening in the north with the fall of the northern kingdom, but in verse 9 he adds an additional reason for the lament--because of his own country, his identification with his own people. In other words, Samaria's illness is communicable and terminal. Her sin sickness has already infected Judah, and the cure for Judah is going to be just as radical as for Israel; it will be the cure of God's judgment. Micah weeps as he delivers this sermon, as we notice in the language he chooses: "lamenting," "wailing," "lamenting in mourning," "through tears." In his weeping, Micah is not trying to manipulate his congregation's emotions. His lament comes from real inner agony.

B. (:10-15) Scope of the Shame – 11 Cities Cited

The Meaning of the City Names (they sound like what they symbolize):

Stewart Briscoe (*Hearing God's Voice Above The Noise*) says that it would be like an American preacher on prime time TV saying, "Living in Pittsburg is the pits.... Los Angeles is no city of angels.....Wisconsin should only be pronounced Wiscon-SIN."

That would sort of get attention, don't you think? – **Ken Gehrels**

1. Gath-- sounds like the Hebrew word for "tell" – Tell it not in Tell City

*"Tell it not in Gath,
Weep not at all."*

2. Beth-le-aphrah – House of dust – Roll in the dust in Dust City

"At Beth-le-aphrah roll yourself in the dust."

rolling in the dust signifies abject mourning;

Prophet dreaded the outpouring of the scorn of these heathen cities when they should learn of the terrible judgment experienced by God's own people

3. Shaphir – Things are shameful in Pleasant City

"Go on your way, inhabitant of Shaphir, in shameful nakedness."

sounds like Hebrew for "beauty, pleasant" contrasted with shame

4. Zaanán -- sounds like a verb meaning "to go out"

"The inhabitant of Zaanán does not escape."

people are unable to escape; will be terrified to go out of the house

5. Beth-ezel -- sounds like "foundation"

"The lamentation of Beth-ezel: He will take from you its support."

but they had none "God lay bare her foundations" -- vs.6

Wiersbe: Beth Ezel means "house of taking away," and the city would be taken away.

6. Maroth -- like a word meaning "to wait for good"
*"For the inhabitant of Maroth
Becomes weak waiting for good,
Because a calamity has come down from the Lord
To the gate of Jerusalem."*

they were waiting for evil (or sounds like Hebrew word for "bitter")

7. Lachish
*"Harness the chariot to the team of horses,
O inhabitant of Lachish –
She was the beginning of sin
To the daughter of Zion –
Because in you were found
The rebellious acts of Israel."*

Wiersbe: Since Lachish sounds like the Hebrew word for "a team of swift horses," he warned them to harness their horses to the chariots and try to escape.

8. Moresheth-gath
*"Therefore you will give parting gifts
On behalf of Moresheth-gath"*

Wiersbe: sounds like a Hebrew word meaning "betrothed"; and brides were given farewell gifts. In other words, the town would no longer belong to Judah but would "leave home" and belong to the invaders.

9. Achzib -- place of deceit
*"The houses of Achzib will become a deception
To the kings of Israel."*

defense against the invaders will be helpless or even turn traitor

10. Mareshah
*"Moreover, I will bring on you
The one who takes possession,
O inhabitant of Mareshah,"*

Wiersbe: sounds like the word for "conqueror," and the town would be conquered by the enemy.

11. Adullam

“The glory of Israel will enter Adullam.”

C. (:16) Sign of Identification with the Shame and Suffering

*“Make yourself bald and cut off your hair,
Because of the children of your delight;
Extend your baldness like the eagle,
For they will go from you into exile.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) If the Lord God were to *testify against us* . . . what would He report?
- 2) What prideful areas in our lives do we need the Lord to “*tread on*” and trample under foot?
- 3) What type of *idolatry* characterized God’s people back then . . . and now?
- 4) How shameful is it for God’s own people to be deserving of such severe discipline and judgment?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Apple: Alternate Outline:

BACKGROUND (1:1)

I. (:2) LISTEN WITH COMPLETE ATTENTION TO THE VERBAL JUDGMENT OF THE LORD

II. (:3-4) LOOK IN COMPLETE AWE AT THE PHYSICAL JUDGMENT OF THE LORD

III. (:5-7) LEARN FROM THE JUDGMENT OF THE SOVEREIGN LORD

A. LEARN THE REASON FOR GOD’S JUDGMENT (:5) –

Why does a loving God have to judge and destroy

B. LEARN THE EXTENT OF GOD’S JUDGMENT (:67) –

How bad will it be?

IV. (:8-16) LAMENT BECAUSE OF THE JUDGMENT OF THE SOVEREIGN LORD

Piper: Micah is a hard prophet to understand because the book alternates back and forth between threats of doom and promises of hope. It is hard to figure out what situations he is referring to and how the hope and doom relate to each other. Probably the reason the book is arranged like this is to make the point that where God and his people are concerned there is always hope, even in the darkest catastrophe. So Micah mingles

gloom and glory through his book. We will take a look at the gloom first and then focus in on his great promise about the Messiah who will come from Bethlehem in the Majesty of the name of the Lord.

Copeland: Characterization of the Prophet Micah

- a. "He was the prophet of the poor and downtrodden." (Homer Hailey)
- b. "He had Amos' passion for justice and Hosea's heart for love." (J.M.P. Smith)
- c. Comparing Micah to his contemporary Isaiah (as suggested by Hailey)
 - 1) Micah was a man of the fields, Isaiah was of the city
 - 2) Micah took little interest in politics, giving himself to the concern over spiritual and moral problems; Isaiah was in close contact with world affairs, the associate of kings and princes
 - 3) Both Micah and Isaiah...
 - a) Saw God as the infinite Ruler of nations and men
 - b) Recognized the absolute holiness and majesty of God
 - c) Stressed that violating principles of God's divine sovereignty and holiness would bring judgment and doom

Kroll: Today we talk about cheap forgiveness. People want forgiveness very, very quickly because they want restoration very, very quickly. But there's no shame. There's no repentance. There's no real feeling awful about what we have done. Micah says, "Look, if you're going to feel shame for what you've done, you're going to wail like I've wailed and you're going to weep the way I've wept." Micah had nothing to be ashamed about, but he was the leader of these people because he was God's man on the scene.

Constable: Micah urged the Israelites not to report the Assyrian invasion of Jerusalem in Gath (cf. 2 Sam. 1:20), not even to indicate a crisis by weeping publicly. Why Gath? It was an enemy (Philistine) town, and news of Jerusalem's siege would encourage Israel's enemies. Specifically, "Gath" (*gat*) may have been chosen because of its similar sound in Hebrew to the verb "tell" (*taggidu*; cf. 2 Sam. 1:20). However, in the cities of Israel, like Beth-le-aphrah (Beth Ophrah, house of dust), the inhabitants should roll in the dust expressing their distress (cf. Josh. 7:6; Job 16:15; Isa. 47:1; Jer. 25:34).

1:11 Residents of Shaphir ("beautiful," "pleasant") would become the opposite of their name, shamefully naked, when the invasion came. Inhabitants of Zaanán, a town name that sounds like the Hebrew word translated "come out," would not be able to come out of their town to escape. The people of Beth-ezel ("house of removal") would lament because the Lord would remove its support.

1:12 Residents of Maroth, which sounds like the Hebrew word translated "bitterness," would become weak as they waited for help that would not come. Their expectation would become bitter because God would send

calamity to the gates of Jerusalem. Before Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem in 701 B.C., he defeated 46 other towns in Judah (2 Kings 18—19).

1:13 Sarcastically, Micah urged the people of Lachish (Heb. lakish), a town known for its horses, to hitch a team (Heb. rekesh) of horses to a chariot to escape from the enemy. They would not be able to escape, however, because Lachish had led Jerusalem, as horses lead a chariot, into the sin of idolatry.

1:14 Zion (Jerusalem) would give Moresheth-gath as a portion of a parting gift to the invader. The Davidic king would not be able to prevent the Assyrians from taking Moresheth-gath captive. The people of Achzib (Heb. 'akzib), represented here by their houses, would become deceitful (Heb. 'akzab) to the kings of Israel because they could not fend off the enemy.

1:15 The Lord would bring on the inhabitants of Mareshah ("possessor") one who would take possession of them. The glory of Israel, probably her leaders, would flee ashamedly for safety to Adullam, as David had done earlier (1 Sam. 22:1).¹⁷

1:16 Micah called on the Judeans to cut their hair very short as a sign of sorrow over the departure of their children into exile. The eagle appeared to be bald because its head was white.

Wiersbe:

(1:2) The court is convened

(1:3-4) The judge arrives

(1:5) The judge names the defendants

Goins: Here Comes the Judge

Micah begins by describing the Lord's appearance, which triggers in the people not only awe and fear, but also a sense of joy because God is revealing his majesty. Micah's Hebrew listeners would be joyful because they expect that God, as it says in verse 3, is coming forth, literally marching out to battle. He is coming out to be a warrior, and they hope that he is there to defend them and defeat their enemies, especially this Syrian superpower that is threatening them. That's what they're hoping this warrior God will do for them. He did it before. He brought them out of Egypt in the exodus under Moses. He did it in the conquest of Canaan under Joshua's leadership. . .

It is important to pay special attention to the fact that this initial call to hear is addressed to all the nations of the earth. Every human being needs to see and hear what God is doing, not just the Hebrew people in Judah. His words have universal application. He appears as the Sovereign of the entire earth and he comes from his kingly palace in heaven to dispense justice. God is holy, so all of his activity is holy and just. He comes to judge his overt enemies, those in active opposition to him, but also to witness against anyone who practices injustice. Nothing escapes his notice or his fair response.

TEXT: Micah 2:1-13

TITLE: MERCY TRIUMPHS OVER JUDGMENT

BIG IDEA:

**WHO IS A HOLY GOD LIKE YOU – AWESOME IN JUDGMENT?
THE SOVEREIGN GOD JUDGES RIGHTEOUSLY AND WILL ULTIMATELY
BRING RESTORATION AS THE SHEPHERD-KING**

**I. (2:1-5) EXPLOITATION BY THE RICH WILL BE JUDGED – TAKING
THE LAND AWAY FROM THE LAND GRABBERS**

A. (:1-2) Targeting Evil Doers for Judgment

1. (:1) Evil Doers Assume They Are In Control

*“Woe to those who scheme iniquity.
Who work out evil on their beds!
When morning comes, they do it,
For it is in the power of their hands.”*

2. (:2) Evil Doers Rob the Defenseless

*“They covet fields and then seize them,
And houses, and take them away.
They rob a man and his house, A man and his inheritance.”*

Ryrie: The wealthy lie awake at night on their *beds* planning the next day’s evil deeds. *It is in the power of their hands.* The land-grabbing upper classes thought that “might makes right.” They unjustly took away the land (*inheritance*, v. 2) of the poor, a most serious matter in an agricultural community.

B. (:3-5) Turning the Tables on the Land Grabbers

1. (:3) Crushing Their Pride

*“Therefore thus says the Lord,
‘Behold, I am planning against this family a calamity
From which you cannot remove your necks;
And you will not walk haughtily,
For it will be an evil time.’”*

2. (:4) Converting Their Possessions

*“On that day they will take up against you a taunt
And utter a bitter lamentation and say,
‘We are completely destroyed!
He exchanges the portion of my people;
How he removes it from me!
To the apostate He apportions our fields.’”*

3. (:5) Canceling Their Privileges

*“Therefore you will have no one stretching a measuring line
For you by lot in the assembly of the Lord.”*

Goins: This is a frightening summary of these covetous people, who will reap what they have sown. This dreadful harvest of their sins will appear one day, even though they find it hard to believe right now. Self-confidence and pride will be stripped from them. Their authority will be gone, holdings torn from their possession, and they will see everything they've lived and worked for, and sinned to acquire, ripped out of their grasp. The Assyrian and then the Babylonian invaders will take all of their possessions, and the people who survive will be taken off to exile. They will die apart from their home land, but will also be separated from all the property around which they have built their life.

II. (2:6-11) EXPLANATION OF ISRAEL'S REPROACH: UNCLEANNES BRINGS DESTRUCTION

A. (:6-7) Cover Ups and Complaints Accomplish Nothing

1. (:6) Only the Truth Can Lead to Repentance

*“Do not speak out, so they speak out.
But if they do not speak out concerning these things,
Reproaches will not be turned back.”*

Constable: The writer used another wordplay. False prophets were "speaking out" (lit. "dripping," Heb. *natap*) and telling Micah not to "speak out," not to announce the message of coming judgment for sin. These prophets were trying to silence him because they did not like his message (cf. Isa. 30:10; Amos 7:10-13). They were saying that Micah and his fellow true prophets, such as Isaiah, should not prophesy as they were doing. As long as they did, disgrace (for the sins they were charging the people with) would not leave the Israelites.

A. Fraser: Angered by this straight speaking, they tell Micah to be quiet; but the prophet answers bitterly that it is because they do not care to be made to feel uncomfortable that they wish him to desist. Or the whole of verse 6 may be taken as the words of the rich men who, when remonstrated with, reply with confused cries: "Stop your prophesying! They are prophesying (at us)! They shall do no such thing! Will their reproaches never cease?"

2. (:7) God Remains Blameless

*“Is it being said, O house of Jacob;
'Is the Spirit of the Lord impatient?
Are these His doings?'*

Key: *Do not My words do good to the one walking uprightly?"*

B. (:8-9) Charge of Shameful Exploitation

“Recently My people have arisen as an enemy –

*You strip the robe off the garment from unsuspecting passers-by,
From those returned from war.
The women of My people you evict,
Each one from her pleasant house.
From her children you take My splendor forever.”*

C. (:10) Sin Demands Destruction

*“Arise and go, for this is no place of rest
Because of the uncleanness that brings on destruction,
A painful destruction.”*

D. (:11) Value System Driven By Empty Decadence

*“If a man walking after wind and falsehood had told lies and said,
‘I will speak out to you concerning wine and liquor,’
He would be spokesman to this people.”*

Contrasted with Messianic leadership of v. 13

Constable: Micah bemoaned the fact that the Israelites had become so responsive to the false prophets that if one of them even spoke out (cf. v. 6) promising alcohol galore they would follow him. Any prophet who preached greater affluence and prosperity would have a receptive audience. In contrast, Micah's message of doom was unpopular. God's people would follow anyone whose prophetic fantasies blew with the wind, in contrast to being led by the Spirit (v. 7), or who lied to them by speaking falsehood.

III. (2:12-13) EXPECTATION OF THE REGATHERING OF ISRAEL AND THE REIGN OF THE MESSIAH – THE SHEPHERD-KING

A. (:12) Regathering of Israel

*“I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob,
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.
I will put them together like sheep in the fold;
Like a flock in the midst of its pasture
They will be noisy with men.”*

B. (:13) Reign of the Messiah – the Shepherd-King

*“The breaker goes up before them;
They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it.
So their king goes on before them,
And the Lord at their head.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How important was possession and cultivation of *the land* to the family in the Jewish economy?
- 2) Compare the “*Woe*” described in vs. 1 to some of the “*Woes*” proclaimed by Christ against the religious leaders of His day. How can people claim that Christ speaks only love and not judgment?
- 3) Has Israel been *regathered* yet to their land by the Lord? What are the implications for how we interpret modern day events in the Middle East in terms of their relevance to end times?
- 4) What is meant in vs. 13 by the imagery of “*the breaker goes up before them?*”

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kroll: God has a future for His people Israel. God has a future for these people who have sinned against God. Now I tell you why I'm so interested in that is that means God has a future for me, because I've sinned against God, too. The future for me does not lie in judgment. The future for me lies in repentance and restoration and the joy of victorious living. But if I don't ever get to repentance, I will never get to restoration. And if I don't get to restoration, I'll never get to the joy of victorious living. . .

God still judges sin. God still wants us to repent of sin. God still would love to be able to give forgiveness to us.

It is true. If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior. Do you know that forgiveness from God? You can. God is still in the forgiving business when we are still in the repenting business.

Wiersbe: The wealthy “robber barons” in Micah’s day were bent on acquiring large estates on which they could enslave the poor and thus make huge profits with little investment. So intent were they on their pursuit of wealth that they made their ruthless plans in bed at night and then got up early the next morning to carry them out. Because of their wealth and their authority in the land, these men controlled the courts and the councils at the city gates. Thus they got what they wanted.

Boice: In talking about this evil Micah uses a very important word: “*covet.*” It comes from the last of the Ten Commandments, in which God says, “You shall not *covet* your neighbor’s house. You shall not *covet* your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exod. 20:17). Micah accuses the people of breaking this tenth commandment. Their

covetousness has led them into the plotting and violence they are blamed for.

What does *coveting* mean? It means to want earnestly something you do not have, particularly something belonging to another person. It means not to be satisfied with what God has already given you. It means to be materialistic and greedy. The tenth commandment reveals that sin is essentially a matter of the heart, for coveting is something that exists internally long before it expresses itself in any outward action.

Chisholm: The Lord announced judgment upon the perpetrators of these crimes (vv. 3-5). This judgment would be appropriate, a fact emphasized by wordplay and irony. The Lord was “planning disaster” (v.3) against those who had done the same (cf. v.1). The words translated “evil” (v.1) and “disaster” (v.3) are virtually identical in Hebrew. On that day bystanders would ridicule (lit. “lift up a taunt song over”) those who had stolen from others (“take” in v.2 is lit. “lift up,” the same word translated “ridicule” in v.4). This taunt song, the words of which are quoted in verse 4, takes the form of a mocking lament, in which the mockers quote the words of the mourning rich people. Ironically the rich, who had stolen the fields of others (v.2), would now lament the fact that these fields were being stolen from them. The words translated “we are utterly ruined” . . . sound like the word for “fields” . . ., emphasizing the appropriate nature of these field-robbers’ punishment. Not only would those who disregarded the Lord’s division of the land have their land stolen, but they would also be excluded from participating in any future redivision of the land among the Lord’s people (v.5).

Goins: With Liberty and Justice for All

In chapter 2, Micah gets very specific about the sins that were introduced in the first chapter. He has spoken of the rebellion of Jacob, the sins of the house of Israel, and her idolatry as the issues that are triggering God's judgment. This week he explains what the specific sins are, this rebellion of which she is guilty. Micah makes two main points in this section. One concerns materialism, Judah's premeditated pattern of coveting. The second sin is an unwillingness to hear truth, at least hard truth, including rejecting God's message through his spokesman. . .

That the materialistic people of Judah didn't listen to Micah's message of warning. As a result, in Paul's words, they were "plunged" into "ruin and destruction." The good news for us today is that we can stop and listen to what God has to say. We can confess whatever covetousness God may have revealed to us. We can repent of whatever materialism or idolatry may have come to light. Wanting to hang on to what we have, or obsessing about what we don't have--either way it's idolatry. We can ask the Lord to help us cultivate what Paul calls godliness, contentment, and gratitude.

I was convicted a few years ago by a sermon of John Stott's, *The Christian and the Poor* . Listen to what he has to say about this issue.

Materialism is an obsession with material things. Asceticism is the denial of the good gifts of the Creator. Pharisee-ism is binding ourselves and other people with rules. Instead, we should stick with principles. The principle of simplicity is clear. Simplicity is the first cousin of contentment. Its motto is "we brought nothing into this world and we can certainly carry nothing out." It recognizes that we are pilgrims. It concentrates

on what we need and it measures this by what we use. It rejoices in the good things of creation but hates waste and greed and clutter. It knows how easily the seed of the word is smothered by the cares and riches of this life. It wants to be free from distractions in order to love and serve God and others. (1)

That is the godliness of grateful contentment.

TEXT: Micah 3:1-12

TITLE: DEVASTATION OF JERUSALEM

BIG IDEA:

**WHO IS A HOLY GOD LIKE YOU – AWESOME IN JUDGMENT?
THE LORD WILL TURN HIS BACK ON HIS EVIL HOLY CITY WITH ITS
EVIL RULERS AND FALSE PROPHETS**

INTRODUCTION:

Remember what Jerusalem represents

**I. (:1-4) CONDEMNATION OF EVIL RULERS – THE LORD WILL HIDE HIS
FACE AND NOT ANSWER**

What distinguishes a wise and righteous ruler from a foolish and wicked ruler?

A. (:1) Justice Should be Paramount

*“And I said, ‘Hear now, heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel.
Is it not for you to know justice?’”*

B. (:2-3) Loving and Practicing What is Good (by serving the people) vs What is Evil
(by exploiting the people)

*“You who hate good and love evil,
Who tear off their skin from them and their flesh from their bones,
Who eat the flesh of my people, Strip off their skin from them,
Break their bones and chop them up as for the pot and as meat in a kettle.”*

Wiersbe: The description of these rulers’ actions reminds you more of ravenous beasts than of human beings. Instead of being faithful shepherds who protected the flock (Micah 2:12; 7:14), they attacked the sheep, skinned them alive, butchered them, chopped them up, and made stew out of them! But the day would come when these wolves in shepherds’ clothing would cry out for God’s mercy, but no mercy would be given.

C. (:4) Enjoying the Favor of the Lord vs His Condemnation

*“Then they will cry out to the Lord, But He will not answer them.
Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time
Because they have practiced evil deeds.”*

Kroll: Regarding God’s judgment against crooked politicians:

Isn't it interesting? We have that ceremony where the President of the United States puts his hand on God's Word and is sworn in. If they'd open it after that and read it, we'd be a lot better off.

II. (:5-8) CONDEMNATION OF FALSE PROPHETS – THE LORD WILL DARKEN THEIR VISION AND NOT ANSWER

What distinguishes a faithful prophet of the Lord (who shepherds people according to the truth) from a false prophet (who leads God’s people astray)?

A. (:5) Motivated by Truth Rather Than Personal Gain

*“Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray;
‘When they have something to bite with their teeth, They cry, ‘Peace,’
But against him who puts nothing in their mouths they declare holy war.”*

B. (:6) Enlightened by the Lord vs. Darkened in Their Vision

*“Therefore it will be night for you – without vision,
And darkness for you – without divination.
The sun will go down on the prophets,
And the day will become dark over them.”*

C. (:7) Commended by Their Intimacy with God vs. Ashamed of Their Estrangement

*“The seers will be ashamed and the diviners will be embarrassed.
Indeed, they will all cover their mouths because there is no answer from God.”*

D. (:8) Empowered to Proclaim the Unpopular Word of Judgment

1. Preaching in Power

“On the other hand I am filled with power – “

2. Filled with the Spirit

“With the Spirit of the Lord – “

3. Courageously Pleasing the Righteous God
Rather Than Capitulating to Sinful Men

*“And with justice and courage
To make known to Jacob his rebellious act, even to Israel his sin.”*

Goins: Micah mentions four spiritual resources that God has given him to speak the truth. One is power, clearly the power of God. God has given him strength to persevere in the face of opposition and discouragement. Second, he says, the Spirit of the Lord fills him. In the Old Testament, one mark of being Spirit-filled was having a zeal for justice, his third resource. God had given him discernment to understand right and wrong, moral absolutes. He understood the plight of the poor and the plight of the powerful, and God gave him the ability to speak to these issues. He understood justice and he could speak to justice because his understanding came from God. Finally, God gave him courage. This great word is a military term which is always used for soldiers going into battle. Only God can give that internal fortitude to fight fear in the face of enemies and opposition.

III. (:9-12) JUDGMENT WILL BE EXECUTED UPON JERUSALEM – THE LORD WILL DESTROY JERUSALEM

A. (:9-11) Summary Condemnation

1. (:9A) Pay Attention

*“Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob
And rulers of the house of Israel”
The fish stinks from the head down*

2. (:9B) Perverters of Justice

*“Who abhor justice
And twist everything that is straight,”*

3. (:10) Exploiters of the Innocent

*“Who build Zion with bloodshed
And Jerusalem with violent injustice.”*

4. (:11A) Money-Driven Leaders

a. Dishonest Rulers

“Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe”

b. Covetous Priests

“Her priests instruct for a price”

c. Greedy Prophets

“And her prophets divine for money”

5. (:11B) False Security and False Expectations

a. False Security

*“Yet they lean on the Lord saying,
‘Is not the Lord in our midst?’”*

b. False Expectations

“Calamity will not come upon us.”

B. (:12) Devastation of Jerusalem

*“Therefore, on account of you
Zion will be plowed as a field,
Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins,
And the mountain of the temple will become high places of a forest.”*

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What are some examples of current day leaders perverting justice and exploiting

people?

2) What are some examples of preachers proclaiming “Peace” for their own financial gain rather than faithfully preaching the whole counsel of God?

3) What type of prophet is described as being effective? How did Jesus Christ model all of the characteristics of the ultimate prophet?

4) What are our motivations for spiritual service?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kroll: And then look at verse four. These politicians not only have taken advantage of people and they've not loved the Lord God, but in verse four it says they don't know how to get through to God. They don't know how to pray and have God answer their prayers. In fact, it may shock you that there are so many places in the Bible God says, "Don't bother praying to Me. I'm not even going to listen." . . .

Now what we're looking for in our leaders, our political leaders, the politicians of the land or any land, we're looking, number one, for integrity, aren't we? We're looking for people who have integrity with God. In fact, Job said, "Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, I will not let go, my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live." Now I want to tell you, if Job ran for office, I'd vote for him. We're looking for leaders with integrity.

Holwick: The Politicians Stink (condensed version)

I. Failings of current political leadership.

A. [Current Day Examples]

B. Cynicism rampant.

1) Politicians say anything to get elected.

2) They only line their own pockets.

3) Thus my title: "The Politicians Stink!"

II. Micah's condemnation of national leadership.

A. Power at expense of people.

B. Self-serving attitude. 3:5

C. Whole system corrupted.

D. No power, sense of justice, or perception of God. 3:6-8

E. Better leadership is coming.

III. Promise of the Messiah.

A. What ideal king is going to be like. 5:4-5

1) Humble yet strong.

2) Concern for people. 5:4 a

- a) "Shepherd" nature.
- 3) Security for people. 5:4 b
- 4) Peace. 5:5
 - a) Not just give peace, but "be" it.

B. Predicted Messiah is Jesus. Matt 2:1-6, John 7:42

- 1) Breaks mold of earthly leaders.
 - a) They are only interested in getting ahead.
 - b) (like disciples!)
- 2) Humbly died on cross.
- 3) Will return as glorious King of earth, perhaps soon.

IV. The Shepherd model of leadership. Micah 5:4 a

A. Serve instead of being served. Mark 10:45

- 1) Think of others ahead of self.
- 2) In this way we imitate Jesus.

Constable: In contrast to the false prophets who were full of greed (cf. Acts 5:3), Micah claimed to be full of spiritual power (not ecstasy) as a result of God's Spirit.³⁴ He followed the will of God, and God's Spirit filled him (cf. Eph. 5:18). Justice marked his pronouncements (cf. vv. 1-3, 5) and courage his ministry (cf. vv. 4, 6-7; cf. Acts 4:13). He did not tailor his prophecies to his honorarium or fear what people might withhold from him if his message was negative (cf. 1 Thess. 2:2-6). His ministry was to declare the sins of the Israelites (as well as their future hope), and he fulfilled it faithfully and boldly.

Wiersbe: Any theology that makes it easy for us to sin is not biblical theology. Had the rulers, prophets, and priests read and pondered Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-30, they would have discovered that the God of the covenant is a holy God who will not countenance high-handed sin. They would also have learned that the blessings of the covenant depended on their obeying the conditions of the covenant, and that God punishes His people when they disobey.

Boice: What troubled Micah (and God far more) was the sin in the courts, palaces, and temple. All three branches of government were corrupt. Worse yet they worked hand in hand. The politicians got their way in the courts, and the judges were paid for their destruction of justice. The prophets also benefited from this arrangement and supported the government in turn. *"Is not the Lord among us?"* they said. *"No disaster will come upon us"* (Mic. 3:11).

Goins: Perverted Politicians, Prophets and Pastors

In chapter 3 we see that even Judah's leadership treats the poor inhumanely. They selectively interpret God's law to their own financial benefit. These civil leaders don't value fairness. They end up cynically demeaning justice. Judges accept bribes. Spiritual leaders are mostly concerned with how much they are being paid. At the same time, all

these corrupt leaders, both political and religious, deceitfully claim to be servants of God. They say that they are protected and blessed by God in their religious institutions and political structure.

This chapter is comprised of three perfectly matched sections of four verses each. In each section, God calls the people to attention, then states the accusations--the indictments against each group of leadership--and concludes by pronouncing judgment...

In addition to perversion and violence, the third charge is that of financial greed. The leaders, priests, and prophets are all motivated by personal gain. Judges are on the take, accepting bribes. That is in direct disobedience to God's law. They refuse to administer justice evenhandedly. The mention of priesthood has to do with their teaching ministry. They are to teach the Bible, teach the Law to the people, but they are charging steep tuition. What they really care about is making money off the Word of God. They are selling their biblical knowledge.

We have already seen how the prophets are in on the scam. The corruption is incredible, the duplicity unbelievable. They are covering it all up with a false religiosity. That's addressed in the last half of verse 11, where we see their arrogance: "Calamity will not come upon us" they say. Both the religious leaders and the political leaders are acting on the basis of false theology which says, "Isn't God here in our midst, in the middle of our government and our religious institutions? Isn't he in our worship at the temple?" This is total hypocrisy because on one hand, they reject God's justice, but on the other hand, they welcome his protection. The Bible is very clear, however, that God is not a protector of unjust people. All of the corrupt national leadership will suffer God's judgment.

TEXT: Micah 4:1-13

TITLE: *ULTIMATE DOMINION OF THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM FROM JERUSALEM*

BIG IDEA:

**WHO IS A RIGHTEOUS GOD LIKE YOU – IMPLEMENTING JUSTICE?
AFTER PULVERIZING HER ENEMIES, JERUSALEM WILL REIGN
SUPREME IN THE END TIMES AND ADMINISTER JUSTICE**

**I. (:1-8) JUSTICE WILL CHARACTERIZE THE DOMINION OF THE
MESSIANIC KINGDOM IN THE END TIMES**

A. (:1-5) The Solid Foundation of Justice Will Be a Messianic Kingdom Driven By the Word of God

Ryrie: (Re 4:1-3) Almost identical to Isa. 2:2-4, this passage describes the glories of the millennial kingdom, the mountain of the house of the Lord. Jerusalem and the Temple on Mount Zion, which will be the center of the government of the kingdom, as the chief.

1. (:1-2) Word of God Proclaimed From Jerusalem
 - a. (:1) Establishment of Supremacy of Jerusalem as a Magnet
*“And it will come about in the last days
That the mountain of the house of the Lord
Will be established as the chief of the mountains.
It will be raised above the hills,
And the peoples will stream to it.”*
 - b. (:2) Eagerness of the Nations to Be Taught the Word of God
*“Many nations will come and say,
‘Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord
And to the house of the God of Jacob,
That He may teach us about His ways
And that we may walk in His paths.’
For from Zion will go forth the law,
Even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”*
2. (:3a) Justice Administered From Jerusalem
*“And He will judge between many peoples
And render decisions for mighty, distant nations.”*

Martin: Many peoples and even strong nations will bring their disputes to the Lord. They will submit to God’s judgment, realizing that he will decide what and who is right. Micah’s readers were chafing under the Word of God, not wanting to be told by Him or by His prophet that they were wrong. By contrast eventually the whole world

will submit willingly to God's Word and His decision.

3. (:3b-4) Peace and Security Enjoyed by All Nations

a. (:3b) Abandonment of Any Military Agenda

*“Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
And never again will they train for war.”*

b. (:4) Assurance of Peace and Security

*“Each of them will sit under his vine and under his fig tree,
With no one to make them afraid,
For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.”*

4. (:5) People Committed to Following the Lord

*“Though all the peoples walk each in the name of his god,
As for us, we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and
ever.”*

This concluding verse of the section seems to make application to the present times in terms of a challenge to follow the Lord now despite the tendency of the other nations to follow after false gods.

B. (:6-7) The Merciful Implementation of Justice Will Provide Security for the Weak and Disadvantaged

*“In that day,’ declares the Lord,
‘I will assemble the lame and gather the outcasts,
Even those whom I have afflicted.
I will make the lame a remnant
And the outcasts a strong nation,
And the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion
From now on and forever.”*

C. (:8) The Ultimate Dominion of Justice Will Flow From its Messianic Throne in Jerusalem

*“As for you, tower of the flock, Hill of the daughter of Zion,
To you it will come – Even the former dominion will come,
The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.”*

Ryrie: *tower of the flock.* I.e., Jerusalem, which, in the figure, watches over Israel as a shepherd watches his sheep from a tower. The millennial kingdom will be greater in extent than David's or Solomon's, *the former dominion.*

II. (:9-13) PRESENT SUFFERING PREPARES THE DAUGHTER OF ZION FOR FUTURE REDEMPTION AND THE PULVERIZING OF HER ENEMIES

- A. (:9-10) Present Suffering of Israel Compared to Birth Pangs
1. (:9) Present Labor Pains Attributed to Void of Leadership
*“Now, why do you cry out loudly?
 Is there no king among you,
 Or has your counselor perished,
 That agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth?”*
 2. (:10) Pain of Babylonian Captivity Precedes Redemption and Deliverance
*“Writhe and labor to give birth, daughter of Zion,
 Like a woman in childbirth;
 For now you will go out of the city,
 Dwell in the field, and go to Babylon.
 There you will be rescued;
 There the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.”*

Ryrie: These verses refer to the Babylonian captivity and later return to Palestine under Cyrus. In Micah’s time Babylon was only a vassal of powerful Assyria, making this an even more startling prophecy.

- B. (:11-13) Future Threshing Campaign Will Pulverize the Gloating Pagan Nations
1. (:11) Thirst of Nations to Stomp on Israel
*“And now many nations have been assembled against you
 Who say, ‘Let her be polluted,
 And let our eyes gloat over Zion.’”*
 2. (:12) Theocratic End Times Program Will Shock the Nations
*“But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord,
 And they do not understand His purpose;
 For He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor.”*
 3. (:13) Threshing Reversal – Jerusalem Will Pulverize the Nations
*“Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion,
 For your horn I will make iron
 And your hoofs I will make bronze,
 That you may pulverize many peoples,
 That you may devote to the Lord their unjust gain
 And their wealth to the Lord of all the earth.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can many argue that God has no more plans to establish a kingdom that will reign supreme from Jerusalem?

2) What is the fallacy in pursuing a national policy of pacifism before the Messiah establishes His reign of justice and righteousness?

3) What are we actively doing to provide assistance to the disadvantaged?

4) Why is it important to understand God's program for the end times?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wiersbe: [Re vs. 11-13.] Israel will look weak and defenseless, but the Lord will make their soldiers sharp threshing instruments to "harvest" the nations (Rev. 14:14-20). God will give them "horns" (a symbol of power) and "hoofs" so that they will have both power and speed as they attack their enemies. This great battle is usually called "the battle of Armageddon," although that phrase is not found in Scripture (Rev. 16:16; 19:17-21). When the battle is over, the victorious Jewish army will devote all the spoils to the service of the Lord.

Boice: [Includes 4:1-5 with chapter 3 as the concluding note of hope] Micah is saying [at the end of chapter 3] that by their mismanagement and sin these corrupt rulers had made the mountain of God into a little mound, overgrown with thorns. But even so, Jerusalem was still to be God's mountain, the place of His justice where He demonstrates the righteousness of His name. So Micah says that God is going to raise it up to become a mountain again. In fact, it will be the mountain of mountains, the chief mountain. People will stream into it to worship the God who has done these things.

- freedom from ignorance (v.2)
- freedom from war (v.3)
- freedom from want (v. 4)
- freedom from fear (v. 5)

Feinberg: Who will do the threshing? God has appointed that the beleaguered daughter of Zion shall thresh the godless nations. Like an ox treading out the corn, her horn will be made strong as iron and her hoofs of brass will inflict terrifying punishment upon the rebellious hordes that have come against the congregation of the Lord.

This whole sad transaction will not be one of wreaking vengeance on inveterate enemies. All will be done for the glory of God (Is 60:1-9). Heathen conquerors used to set apart a portion of their spoils to the gods in their temples. Victorious Israel will devote the wealth gained from her triumphs to adorn the Temple of the Lord. He will be known in that day as the Lord of the whole earth. Marvelous God is ours who can bring ultimate glory to His praiseworthy-name from the carnage and wreckage and rebellion of sinful man.

Martin: Israel, Micah wrote, would be rescued and redeemed by the covenant God, who cares for her. The Exile, besides punishing the nation, was used to purge her and to

encourage the people to more godly living. Captivity also was necessary because God had said that He would cast them out of the land if they did not obey Him. In a sense the Exile was a test of God's integrity.

Fraser: The prophet, lifting his eyes away from the sordid abuses which surrounded him, no longer gazes at the cloud of impending judgment but beholds afar off a glorious vision of the last days (1-4) . . .

In contrast with the punishment which will soon overtake Zion for the sins of the people, there is this dazzling vision of the supremacy of God's house in the last time. It rises "*on mountain tops above the hills*". Towards it the nations converge. Rivers of people, having their beginning afar off, and growing in ever-increasing volume, *flow unto it*. (1). Nations exhort one another to seek the guidance of God's law.

Recognizing that they cannot settle disputes by themselves, they desire to be taught God's ways and to walk in them (2). So Zion will become the legislative centre for the whole earth, and all disputes will be brought before the God of Jacob. Strong nations, who would otherwise be unchecked in their aggressions, will accept His rebuke; nor will distance lessen His authority. They will scrap their armaments in which once lay their confidence and pride, and will turn the metal into implements of peace. No longer will they declare war on one another; the energy, ingenuity and wealth, once devoted to learning war, will now be directed to more constructive and profitable ends (3). So tranquil will the earth become that every man shall dwell in peace . . . The old days of guards, raids and terrors by night will have become things of the past, for *none shall make them afraid* (4). The nations will be able to develop their lives undisturbed.

Goins: The Promise of Ultimate Blessing

The fulfillment of this vision--Micah's vision of this promised Messianic Kingdom--is of paramount importance to the ultimate future of the world we all live in. Even though we can't see it now, the good news here is that God does have a plan already in progress. So, as followers of Christ, we are motivated to follow his leadership even in difficult times. Practically, this means that we don't have to be afraid that the world is spinning out of control. Whether we experience prosperity, natural disaster or disease, whether we experience good fortune or accidents or persecution, none of that--the good or the bad--can undo or frustrate the final goal God has for each one of us in Christ Jesus. We may not understand why things happen the way they do. We may not know how God is ever going to straighten out the mess the world is in. But we can look confidently at the future, knowing that eventually, God will put all the parts together in such a way that his plan is accomplished and the picture will finally make sense.

TEXT: Micah 5:1-15

TITLE: *FOUR PROMISES FULFILLED BY THE COMING MESSIAH*

BIG IDEA:

WHO IS AN ETERNAL GOD LIKE YOU – WORKING OUT YOUR PLAN OF DELIVERANCE ACCORDING TO YOUR PROVIDENTIAL TIMETABLE? THE GOD OF PEACE WILL PURIFY HIS PEOPLE, SHEPHERD HIS FLOCK AND EXECUTE VENGEANCE

I. (:1-3) PROMISE OF DELAYED DELIVERANCE THROUGH GOD'S APPOINTED RULER (WHO HAS BEEN ACTIVELY WORKING FROM ETERNITY PAST)

God's concept of time and the fulfillment of His program according to His sovereign schedule is key in this section

A. (:1) Leadership Crisis in Context of Warfare

1. Battle Cry to Israel

"Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops;"

2. Impotency of Israel's Human Leadership

"They have laid siege against us;

With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek."

B. (:2) Messianic Deliverer Promised

1. Humble, Surprising Origins

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,

Too little to be among the clans of Judah"

2. Divinely Appointed Ruler

"From you One will go forth from Me to be ruler in Israel"

3. Eternal, Incomprehensible Origins

"His goings forth are from long ago,

From the days of eternity."

C. (:3) Deliverance Delayed Until the Regathering of the Nation Under the Messiah

1. Temporary Suffering – Birth Pangs

"Therefore He will give them up until the time

When she who is in labor has borne a child."

2. Timely Regathering and Deliverance

"Then the remainder of His brethren

Will return to the sons of Israel."

II. (:4-6) PROMISE OF PROTECTION BY THE MAJESTIC REIGN OF THE SHEPHERDING MESSIAH WHO IS OUR PEACE

A. (:4) Protection Assured By His Majestic Greatness

1. His Anticipated Coming

“And He will arise”

2. His Awesome Shepherding

“and shepherd His flock”

a. *“In the strength of the Lord,”*

b. *“In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God.”*

3. His Abiding Security

“And they will remain”

4. His Acknowledged Greatness

“Because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth.”

B. (:5) Protection Advanced By His Leaders Who Wage War to Keep Peace

“This One will be our peace.

When the Assyrian invades our land,

When he tramples on our citadels,

Then we will raise against him

Seven shepherds and eight leaders of men.”

C. (:6) Protection Accomplished By Deliverance from All Attackers

“They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword,

The land of Nimrod at its entrances;

And he will deliver us from the Assyrian

When he attacks our land

And when he tramples our territory.”

III. (:7-9) PROMISE OF PERVASIVE VICTORY TO THE REMNANT OF JACOB – BRINGING BLESSING TO THE RIGHTEOUS AND DESTRUCTION TO THE WICKED

Cf. 2 Cor. 2:14-16

A. (:7) Analogy #1 – Refreshing Like the Morning Dew – to the Righteous

“Then the remnant of Jacob Will be among many peoples

Like the dew from the Lord, Like showers on vegetation

Which do not wait for man Or delay for the sons of men.”

B. (:8-9) Analogy #2 – Destructive Like the Predatory Lion – to the Wicked

“The remnant of Jacob will be among the nations,

*Among many peoples like a lion among the beasts of the forest,
Like a young lion among flocks of sheep,
Which, if he passes through, tramples down and tears,
And there is none to rescue.
Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries,
And all your enemies will be cut off.”*

Wiersbe: Though small in number, the Jewish remnant of the last days will experience great help from the Lord as they face their enemies. Micah used two similes to illustrate this blessing: the refreshing dew from heaven and the conquering strength of the lion. God will enable His people to overcome like lions and then bring fruitfulness to the world like the dew that watered Israel’s crops (Psa. 133:3). Israel will triumph over her enemies through the power of the Lord.

IV. (:10-15) PROMISE OF PURIFICATION OF GOD’S RESTORED PEOPLE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE MESSIAH

A. (:10) Purified From False Military Dependence

*“It will be in that day,’ declares the Lord,
‘That I will cut off your horses from among you
And destroy your chariots.’”*

B. (:11) Purified From False Security (and Pride) of City Fortifications

*“I will also cut off the cities of your land
And tear down all your fortifications.”*

C. (:12) Purified From False Religious Charlatans

*“I will cut off sorceries from your hand,
And you will have fortune-tellers no more.”*

D. (:13-14) Purified From False Idolatrous Worship

1. Man-made Idols

*“I will cut off your carved images
And your sacred pillars from among you,
So that you will no longer bow down to the work of your hands.”*

2. Pagan Gods

*“I will root out your Asherim from among you,
And destroy your cities.”*

Fraser: wooden poles erected to symbolize the Canaanite deity Astarte.

E. (:15) Purified From Pagan Enemy Nations

*“And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath
On the nations which have not obeyed.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why is it significant that the Messiah was to come from the city of Bethlehem?
- 2) How is His shepherding contrasted with that of the false shepherds whom God indicts in the Book of Micah?
- 3) What types of false dependencies would the Lord like to strip away from His church today?
- 4) How will the anger and vengeance of the Lord be unleashed in the last days?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

A. Fraser: Verses 5 and 6 form in Hebrew a strophe of ten lines. They envisage a different and more immediate historical situation than the foregoing. The word *man* supplied by the AV in verse 5 is better omitted. Read, “*this shall be the peace.*” Invasion is anticipated, and with good reason, from Assyria. An indefinite number of national leaders, seven or eight, shall be raised up against the invader, so that the enemy is beaten back into his own country (5, 6). But then the several leaders are merged into one; thus shall he deliver us (6).

Verses 7-9 consist of a poem which has for its theme the remnant of Jacob, upon whom the King will bestow His own lion-like strength. The two strophes begin with an almost identical phrase, *and the remnant of Jacob shall be . . . in the midst of many people* (8). One aspect of the people is given in the first strophe; they are free and beautiful as summer rain, gentle, refreshing, sparkling, elusive. In the second strophe they are represented as being strong, terrible, kingly, irresistible. These two strophes form one poetic gem.

Wiersbe: Now Micah looks ahead to the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. So many soldiers are encamped around Jerusalem that Micah calls her “the city [daughter] of troops.” When King Zedekiah and his officers see that their situation is hopeless, they try to escape, but the Babylonians catch up with them and capture them (2 Kings 25:1-7). Of course, they humiliate the king by striking him with a rod across his face. They kill his sons, put out his eyes, bind him, and take him to Babylon. . .

Bethlehem (“house of bread”) has an interesting history. Jacob’s favorite wife, Rachel, died near Bethlehem when she gave birth to Benjamin, and she was buried nearby (Gen. 35:16-20). Matthew cites this when he reports the slaying of the innocent children by Herod (Matt. 2:16-18; see Jer. 31:15). In her pain, Rachel named her son Ben-oni,

which means “son of my sorrow”; but Jacob renamed the boy, calling him Benjamin, “son of my right hand.” These two names remind us of our Lord’s suffering and glory, the cross and the throne at the Father’s right hand.

Finley: At the beginning of his prophecy about the king in Israel, Micah saw a vision of the people in great pain because they had no king (4:9). Micah now returns to this theme, predicting that enemy troops will defeat and dishonor Israel’s ruler (5:1). That need not discourage the people, however, for the Lord plans to raise up a new ruler who will be born in Bethlehem, the birthplace of David (5:2). Until he is born the nation will be “*abandoned*” or given over to occupation by enemy powers (5:3). After his birth the divided nation will be reunited, and the new ruler will establish the kingdom of peace (5:4-5a) that Micah described in 4:1-5. At that time no nation (“*Assyria*”) will be able to stand against Israel in her land; the new ruler will deliver his people from every threat (5:5b-6).

Feinberg: This Ruler comes forth from Bethlehem in time, but He is not circumscribed by time. His goings forth have been from old, from everlasting. These goings forth were in creation, in His appearances to the patriarchs, and throughout the Old Testament history of redemption. The phrases of this text are the strongest possible statement of infinite duration in the Hebrew language (Ps 90:2; Pr 8:22-23). The preexistence of the Messiah is being taught here, as well as His active participation in ancient times in the purposes of God. . .

In order that Israel may be usable in the hand of the Lord, He will remove all carnal supports in which she trusted. Evil of every kind must be uprooted and done away with. (Cp. Is 47:6-22 for a striking parallel passage.) Horses and chariots, in which Israel often placed her confidence, will be destroyed. They had been forbidden even in the time of Moses. (Deu 17:16). Her fortified cities will be demolished. Witchcrafts manipulated by hand will be abolished and soothsayers will be no more. Pillars, which were heathen symbols of the Canaanite worship, will be destroyed. Asherim will be utterly exterminated from her midst with the cities where these services were performed. The Asherim were trees or posts set up as idols and dedicated to the Canaanite goddess of nature. They were prohibited (Deu 16:21) and to be destroyed (Ex 34:13), but the ungodly in Israel had them nevertheless (2 Ki 13:6 and 23:6).

Goins: The Once and Future King

Micah uses two pictures or analogies to illustrate the help they receive from God. The first is the image of dew, or rain showers. Think about precipitation, whether it is dew or showers or pounding rain storms. It’s always a mysterious gift from God. Humankind does not control the weather—all we can do is wait for it to rain. I think Micah’s point to Israel is that there is little or nothing that they can do to control the future. All they can do is trust the sovereign plan of God and wait for him to act. The divine initiative on their behalf will accomplish everything he has promised, but it will be in his timing and according to his purposes.

Micah also uses the strength of a lion to illustrate God’s help. Verse 8 compares the remnant to a mauling lion. I think this analogy affirms the promise back in verses 5 and

6 about defeating their enemies. The last line of verse 8 is very important: “And there is none to rescue.” That focuses Israel’s attention on God’s control over these events. No one is going to rescue these evil nations because God has determined their destiny. With a statement of guaranteed victory, in verse 9, we are reminded of Psalm 2, the psalm of Messianic victory. The forces of evil cannot triumph over the Lord and his anointed. Neither Israel nor the pagan nations of the world are in control of their own futures. Micah is trying to persuade his Judean audience, and us as well, that God is the only one who sovereignly determines all coming events. So we must realize our complete dependence on him. We have got to look to him only for hope for the future. There is never room for human pride over what we are going to do to help bring in the Kingdom of God.

TEXT: Micah 6:1-16

TITLE: COURT ROOM DRAMA

BIG IDEA:

**WHO IS A GOD TO BE FEARED LIKE YOU – RIGHTEOUS IN JUDGMENT?
THE LORD BRINGS INDICTMENT AGAINST HIS PEOPLE FOR
UNJUSTIFIED PERSISTENCE IN WICKEDNESS AND EXPLOITATION AND
VIOLENCE**

INTRODUCTION:

**I. (:1-5) ISRAEL'S OFFENSE IS PARTICULARLY EGREGIOUS IN LIGHT
OF THE LORD'S LOYAL LOVE**

Definition of *egregious*: "conspicuously bad"

A. (:1a) Call to Attention

"Hear now what the Lord is saying"

Phrase marks out significant divisions in the book

B. (:1b) Offer Your Defense

*"Arise, plead your case before the mountains,
And let the hills hear your voice."*

All of nature is presented as the listening jury

Ryrie: The mountains and hills were present at Sinai when the Lord made His covenant with Israel and when the commandments were written and placed in the ark of the covenant as a permanent witness (cf. Dt. 31:26).

C. (:2) Court Room Antagonists – The Lord Bringing Indictment Against Israel

*"Listen, you mountains, to the indictment of the Lord,
And you enduring foundations of the earth,
Because the Lord has a case against His people;
Even with Israel He will dispute."*

D. (:3) No Excuse of Provocation

*"My people, what have I done to you,
And how have I wearied you? Answer Me."*

E. (:4-5) Demonstration of Loyal Love

1. (:4a) In Redeeming His People from Egypt

*"Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt
And I ransomed you from the house of slavery"*

2. (:4b) In Providing Faithful Leaders
“And I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam.”
3. (:5a) In Consistently Blessing His People
*“My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled
 And what Balaam son of Beor answered him”*
4. (:5b) In Bringing Them Into the Promised Land
“And from Shittim to Gilgal”

Ryrie: *Shittim* being the last encampment E of the Jordan River and Gilgal the first on the W bank.

5. (:5c) Summary: In All His Righteous Deeds
“In order that you might know the righteous acts of the Lord.”

II. (:6-8) RELIGIOUS RITUAL AND EMPTY SACRIFICE CANNOT COMPENSATE FOR FAILURE TO OBSERVE GOD’S CLEAR REQUIREMENTS

- A. (:6-7) Ritual and Sacrifice Cannot Atone for Sin
*“With what shall I come to the Lord And bow myself before the God on high?
 Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves?
 Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts,
 The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”*

B. (:8) God’s Clear Requirements

1. Not Hidden but Revealed
“He has told you, O man, what is good;”
2. Not Complicated but Straightforward
“And what does the Lord require of you”
 - a. Justice in Defending the Helpless (vs. Exploitation)
“But to do justice”
 - b. Kindness in Word and Deed (vs. Meanness)
“to love kindness”

Finley: the true worshiper of the Lord will love to demonstrate kindness and forgiveness to other human beings. As one who has himself drunk deeply of God’s mercy, he will want to share that mercy with all who are around.

- c. Humility in Serving God (vs. Pride)
“And to walk humbly with your God.”

I. (:9-16) THE LORD'S INDICTMENT SPELLS OUT THE SPECIFIC CRIMES AND CORRESPONDING PUNISHMENTS

A. (:9) Authoritative Voice of the Supreme and Sovereign Judge

*"The voice of the Lord will call to the city –
And it is sound wisdom to fear Your name:
'Hear, O tribe. Who has appointed its time?'"*

B. (:10-12) Specific Crimes

1. (:10-11) Wickedness Demonstrated in Cheating and Defrauding

*"Is there yet a man in the wicked house,
Along with treasures of wickedness
And a short measure that is cursed?
Can I justify wicked scales
And a bag of deceptive weights?"*

2. (:12) Wickedness Demonstrated in Violence and Deceit

*"For the rich men of the city are full of violence,
Her residents speak lies,
And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth."*

C. (:13-15) Corresponding Punishments

1. (:13) Physical Suffering

*"So also I will make you sick, striking you down,
Desolating you because of your sins."*

2. (:14a) Frustration and Emptiness

*"You will eat, but you will not be satisfied,
And your vileness will be in your midst."*

3. (:14b) Plundering of Inheritance

*"You will try to remove for safekeeping,
But you will not preserve anything,
And what you do preserve I will give to the sword."*

4. (:15) Suspension of Harvest Law

*"You will sow but you will not reap.
You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil;
And the grapes, but you will not drink wine."*

D. (:16) Apostate Society

1. (:16a) Sinful Practices

*"The statutes of Omri
And all the works of the house of Ahab are observed;
And in their devices you walk."*

Example of wicked kings of Israel who led their people astray

Ryrie: Omri (Ca. 885-874 B.C.) He was the founder of Samaria and of Ahab's wicked house as well as a supporter of Jeroboam's superstitions (cf. 1 Ki 16:16-28).

2. (:16b) Shameful Judgment

*“Therefore I will give you up for destruction
And your inhabitants for derision,
And you will bear the reproach of My people.”*

Ryrie: The people had degenerated to the low level that characterized the days of Omri and Ahab, a period that had become a byword for apostasy (cf. 1 Kings 16-22).

MacArthur: The Lord was sending judgment; God Himself had appointed the time and instrument to punish His people. The Lord spoke, noting that their corrupt deeds perpetrated on the poor were still continuing, in spite of His warnings and discipline (vv. 10-12). Therefore, a severe judgment was coming (vv. 13-15); it would happen to them just as it did to their northern neighbor, Israel (v. 16) when led by the counsel of wicked kings.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Would we be so quick to complain against the Lord and His gracious acts towards us if we stood before His court and really had the sense that we were in His presence?
- 2) What are we forgetting in terms of the Lord's deliverance and faithfulness in the context of our own family?
- 3) How do we rate in terms of meeting the Lord's clear requirements as spelled out in this chapter?
- 4) What specific injustices would cause God to indict the people who are called by His name today?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: Micah opens this third cycle of oracles (6:1 – 7:20) with a dramatic courtroom motif moving back and forth between 3 speakers: the Lord pleading His case, the people responding under conviction, and the prophet as the lawyer for the plaintiff.

Chisholm: The people of Judah, despite their heavy involvement in religious activity, had miserably failed to live up to this ethical standard (cf. Isa. 1:10-20; Mic. 2:1-5, 8-9; 3:1-3, 9-11; 6:10-12; 7:2-3, 6). Consequently their ritual was totally unacceptable to God and only heightened their guilt by adding hypocrisy to injustice.

Finley: Micah lists five positive aspects of that period.

First, the people were delivered from a foreign country. They would not be a nation if the Lord had not loved them.

Second, they were delivered from slavery.

Third, He provided outstanding leaders for them.

Fourth, the Lord frustrated the evil plans of Balak and Balaam (Numbers 22-24; 31:16). Should the people now consider Him powerless against superpowers such as Assyria, Babylon, or Egypt?

Fifth, the Lord led them into the Promised Land itself, moving them across the Jordan River from Shittim, their last encampment east of the Jordan (Josh. 3:1), to Gilgal, their base of operations within Canaan during the conquest (Josh. 4:19).

Feinberg: The piety that God approves consists of three elements: a strict adherence to that which is equitable in all dealings with our fellowmen; a heart determined to do them good; and diligent care to live in close and intimate fellowship with God. . . . Liberals who love to make a religion out of this verse fail to realize that these requirements of the Law are impossible of fulfillment by the unregenerate man. Only the Spirit of God can enable any man to fulfill the righteous ordinance set forth in the Law (Ro 8:3,4; Phil 2:13).

Goins: Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly With Your God

So what does God do when we, like Judah, begin to mistrust his love and live in ways that contradict his law and his commandments? How does God seek to draw us back into relationship with him when that relationship has been strained, almost to the breaking point? Chapter 6 reveals that God takes this very seriously. When we, like Judah, begin to mistrust his love, he gives us a chance to dialogue with him about it. He is willing to listen to us. Micah 6 is a conversation between God and his people. It begins in a courtroom setting, a place of objectivity, of fairness to both sides. In the first eight verses of chapter 6, God brings a covenant lawsuit against his people. The first five verses focus on God's accusation concerning his people; specifically, their ingratitude. . . .

In the beginning of verse 6, the people finally speak to God, but they speak out of hard hearts, still in deliberate rebellion against him. They do raise the sin issue and talk about their own sin against God, but their questions show how shallow their spiritual life really is. They are ignorant of the enormity of their sins and the high cost of

forgiveness. Verses 6-8 summarize a defensive response from an ungrateful nation. . .

Since there has been no justice for others, no deep desire to cultivate loving loyalty in relationships, no concern for walking with God in humility, God pronounces the verdict of his covenant lawsuit against his people. In verses 9-12, God summarizes his accusations against them concerning covenant disloyalty. These things we've heard before he summarizes with the word wickedness, expressed in deceit, in violence, injustice.

TEXT: Micah 7:1-20

TITLE: *THREE PERSPECTIVES OF THE PROPHET – REALISM COUPLED WITH HOPE*

BIG IDEA:

WHO IS A FORGIVING GOD LIKE YOU – COMPASSIONATE IN LOYAL LOVE?

DESPITE THE PRESENT SPIRITUAL BANKRUPTCY, THE PROPHET EXPRESSES CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S FUTURE BESTOWAL OF FORGIVENESS, RESTORATION AND BLESSING

INTRODUCTION:

The prophet has the perfect balance between facing the harsh realities of the present (no matter how bleak and how painful) and yet maintaining his unshakeable confidence that God will ultimately accomplish the victory he longs for. The link between these two widely divergent views is the character of God Himself who demonstrates a heart of compassion and loyal love in remaining faithful to His promises. It is the unique forgiveness of God that is magnified in this closing summary section.

Some interesting parallels can be found in the business theories of Jim Collins in his book aimed at executive management: *From Good to Great*.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0066620996?v=glance>

All good-to-great companies began the process of finding a path to greatness by confronting the brutal facts of their current reality. Collins found that when a company starts with an honest and diligent effort to determine the truth of its situation, the right decisions often become self-evident.

This vision, Collins goes on to explain, must be balanced with an unwavering confidence in ultimate success. Of course in the business model the objectives are met by resolve and focus to stay on track with regards to the most basic core competency of the organization (the hedgehog principle). When it comes to the kingdom of God, the Messiah Himself will bring it about according to God’s timetable.

I. (:1-6) PERSPECTIVE #1: THE PROPHET LOOKS AT HIS NATION – BANKRUPT OF GODLINESS

A. (:1-2a) No Godly Person Can Be Found

Endangered Species Has Become Extinct

1. (:1) No Godly Fruit on the Vine

“Woe is me! For I am like the fruit pickers, like the grape gatherers. There is not a cluster of grapes to eat,

Or a first-ripe fig which I crave.”

2. (:2a) Total Extinction of the Godly
*“The godly person has perished from the land,
And there is no upright person among men.”*

B. (:2b-4) Universal Corruption and Exploitation

1. (:2b) Everyone Attacks Everyone Else
*“All of them lie in wait for bloodshed;
Each of them hunts the other with a net.”*
2. (3) All the Leaders Are Corrupt
*“Concerning evil, both hands do it well.
The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe.
And a great man speaks the desire of his soul;
So they weave it together.”*

3. (:4a) Everyone is Worthless and Hurtful
*“The best of them is like a briar,
The most upright like a thorn hedge.”*

4. (:4b) Judgment is Coming
*“The day when you post your watchmen, Your punishment will come.
Then their confusion will occur.”*

C. (:5-6) No One Can Be Trusted

1. (:5a) No Loyalty From Friends or Neighbors
*“Do not trust in a neighbor;
Do not have confidence in a friend.”*
2. (:5b-6) No Loyalty From Family
*“From her who lies in your bosom Guard your lips.
For son treats father contemptuously,
Daughter rises up against her mother,
Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
A man’s enemies are the men of his own household.”*

MacArthur: Christ used v. 6 as an illustration when He commissioned the twelve (Mt 10:1,35,36).

**II. (:7-10) PERSPECTIVE #2 -- THE PROPHET LOOKS AT HIMSELF –
CONFIDENT ANTICIPATION OF DELIVERANCE AND VINDICATION**

A. (:7-8) Confident Expectation of Deliverance

1. (:7) Assured of Coming Deliverance – God is my Salvation
“But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the Lord;

*I will wait for the God of my salvation.
My God will hear me.”*

2. (:8) Assured of Ultimate Victory – the Lord is My Light
*“Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy.
Though I fall I will rise;
Though I dwell in darkness, the Lord is a light for me.”*

B. (:9-10) Confident Expectation of Vindication

1. (:9) God Will Execute Justice in Raising Me Up
 - a. God Disciplines Me Now For Sin – Short Term Pain
*“I will bear the indignation of the Lord
Because I have sinned against Him,”*
 - b. God Acts as My Advocate – Justice Will Prevail
“Until He pleads my case and executes justice for me”
 - c. God Restores Me Ultimately to the Light – Eternal Fellowship
*“He will bring me out to the light,
And I will see His righteousness.”*
2. (:10) God Will Vindicate Me in Devastating My Enemies
 - a. Mocking Enemies Put to Shame
*“Then my enemy will see;
And shame will cover her who said to me,
‘Where is the Lord your God?’”*
 - b. Spectacle of Their Devastation
*“My eyes will look on her;
At that time she will be trampled down
Like the mire of the streets.”*

**III. (:11-20) PERSPECTIVE #3 -- THE PROPHET LOOKS AT HIS GOD –
HEART OF COMPASSION AND LOYAL LOVE TO BESTOW
FORGIVENESS, RESTORATION AND BLESSING**

- A. (:11-13) Messianic Kingdom Expansion and Domination
1. (:11) Kingdom Expansion – The Reign of the Messiah Takes Hold
*“It will be a day for building your walls.
On that day will your boundary be extended.”*
 2. (:12) Kingdom Sovereignty – Nations Will Come to Bow Down
*“It will be a day when they will come to you
From Assyria and the cities of Egypt,
From Egypt even to the Euphrates,
Even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain.”*

3. (:13) Kingdom Domination – Resistance Will Mean Destruction
*“And the earth will become desolate because of her inhabitants,
On account of the fruit of their deeds.”*

B. (:14-17) Messianic Shepherding

1. (:14) Challenge to Shepherd – Protect, Prosper, Feed the Flock
*“Shepherd Your people with Your scepter, The flock of Your possession
Which dwells by itself in the woodland, In the midst of a fruitful field.
Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead As in the days of old.”*
2. (:15) Commitment to Shepherd – Impressive Deliverance and Provision
*“As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt,
I will show you miracles.”*
3. (:16-17) Cringing Response of the Nations – Trembling in the Fear of God
*“Nations will see and be ashamed Of all their might.
They will put their hand on their mouth, Their ears will be deaf.
They will lick the dust like a serpent, like reptiles of the earth.
They will come trembling out of their fortresses;
To the Lord our God they will come in dread
And they will be afraid before You.”*

Martin: When God miraculously regathers Israel the nations will see it and be ashamed (cf. 3:7; 7-10) for His power will be greater than theirs. Overwhelmed, they will be speechless and will refuse to hear about Israel’s victories. In humiliation they will lick the dust like snakes (cf. Ps. 72:9; Isa. 49:23), and like animals coming out of their hiding places (dens) they will surrender to the Lord and will be fearful of Israel. These facts must have greatly encouraged the righteous remnant in Micah’s day.

C. (:18-20) WHO IS A GOD LIKE YAHWEH? – Climax of the Book

1. (:18-19) Excelling in Forgiveness and Loyal Love (chiastic structure)
 - a. (:18a) Excelling in Forgiveness
*“Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity
And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His
possession?”*

cf. Es. 15:11; Deut. 33:26,27; I Kings 8:23; Ps 35:10; 71:19; 89:6;113:5,6; Is. 46:5

- b. (:18b) Excelling in Loyal Love
*“He does not retain His anger forever,
Because He delights in unchanging love.”*
- c. (:19a) Excelling in Compassion
“He will again have compassion on us;”

d. (:19b) Excelling in Forgiveness
*“He will tread our iniquities under foot.
Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.”*

2. (:20) Blessing His People with Truth and Unchanging Love
*“You will give truth to Jacob
And unchanging love to Abraham,
Which you swore to our forefathers From the days of old.”*

Feinberg: The last three verses of this book are joined to the book of Jonah for reading in the synagogue on the afternoon of the Day of Atonement. Once a year on the afternoon of New Year, the orthodox Jew goes to a running stream or river and symbolically empties his pockets of his sins into the water, while he recites verses 18-20. The service is called “Tashlich” after the Hebrew word meaning “*thou wilt cast.*”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are we disappointed when we look around us at work or in whatever circles we live and fail to find the support and encouragement of godly believers? How treacherous will it be in the days of the Tribulation?
- 2) Do we still express confidence in our God when things look the bleakest?
- 3) How do we respond to the discipline of the Lord?
- 4) How awesome is our God when it comes to forgiving our sins?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Finley: The prophet uses three reflective literary forms to bring his prophecy to a conclusion that is full of hope and trust. The chapter can be divided into three parts on the basis of these forms, and they include a soliloquy about the desperate condition of the country (7:1-7), a personification of Jerusalem as someone who looks forward to her eventual victory (7:8-13), and a prayer or psalm that calls on the Lord to restore the people and that praises Him for His compassion and mercy (7:14-20).

Wiersbe: Few passages in Scripture contain so much “distilled theology” as Micah 7:18-20. We see in them a reflection of what God told Moses on the mount (Ex. 34:5-7). The better we know the character of God, the more we can trust Him for the future. The better we know the promises and covenants of God, the more peace we will have in our hearts when things around us fall apart. When Micah wrote this confession of his faith, the future seemed hopeless; yet he had hope because he knew God and fully

trusted Him.

No matter how dark the day, the light of God's promises is still shining. No matter how confusing and frightening our circumstances, the character of God remains the same. You have every reason to trust Him!

Boice: Micah rehearses the ways in which the true God is unlike all others. Deliverance by mighty acts is among those ways. Yet his emphasis is on God's willingness to forgive sin and show mercy, which he concludes is the supreme measure of God's surpassing excellence. . .

The people who join Micah in praising God for His forgiveness here are quite different from the arrogant, self-righteous people who have appeared throughout the book. These earlier people could not imagine how they had offended God and actually blamed Him for their failures, claiming they had not been told clearly enough what to do. The people who speak here have been humbled under God's hand and are now quite willing to acknowledge their sins. Moreover, it is precisely because they know themselves to be sinners that they are so aware of God's mercy. Because they know Him as a God of mercy, they are anxious to avoid sinning again.

Ryrie: Micah bemoaned the sinfulness of Israel. It is universal (v.1), unrestrained (vv. 2-3), involves the leaders (v. 3), and exhibits itself in perverse (v. 4) and unnatural (vv. 5-6) ways. But God is merciful, and in Him there is hope (vv. 7-10).

McGee: In the first nine verses of chapter 7, the prophet Micah confesses that God is accurate in His complaint against Israel. The charge and the accuracy of it touch the heart of the prophet. He is not unfeeling. He is moved and motivated by the judgment which is coming upon his people. We have in this first section, therefore, a soliloquy of sorrow, a saga of suffering, a wail of woe, an elegy of eloquent grief.

Fraser: So there afflicts the members of this society the inevitable nemesis of isolation, for where none may be trusted, each must stand alone, and it is every man for himself. Shattered are the closest ties of friendship and kinship. Society disintegrates, because its members do not fulfill the conditions of mutual good faith upon which social life depends (5,6).

Chisholm: The book concludes with a hymn praising the incomparable God of Israel for His grace and covenantal faithfulness (vv. 18-20). Israel's experience of forgiveness forms the basis for its affirmation of God's uniqueness. The Lord's restoration of exiled Israel would demonstrate that ultimately His "mercy" (*hesed*, "loyal love, devotion") takes precedence over His wrath in His dealings with His covenant people. Though He lashes out in anger against His sinful people, His compassion prompts Him to forgive and restore them (cf. Hos. 11). His energies are then directed to discarding His people's sins, which is compared here to subduing an enemy and to hurling an object into the depths of the sea.

The foundation for God's gracious dealings with Israel is the unconditional covenant of grace given to Abraham and inherited by his offspring through Isaac and Jacob.

Because of His irrevocable oath to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 22:16; 26:3; 50:24), whereby He promised the land of Palestine and numerous offspring, the Lord would restore His people, thus demonstrating His faithfulness to the fathers.

Goins: Where is the Lord Your God?

This last chapter of Micah, chapter 7, begins very ominously, like a dark sky, but it culminates in brilliant sunshine. The prophet begins his message in lonely isolation, but ends the book with one of the greatest statements of community hope in the entire Old Testament. This has been true throughout this powerful prophetic book. Micah continues to plead with his people to repent of sin and return to the Lord. He is asking the nation to trust the Lord. The primary call of these final two chapters is to trust the Lord, not in spite of difficult circumstances, but because of difficult circumstances. . .

Micah laments the fact that the entire social fabric of the nation is unraveling. Unfaithfulness among friends and family members is pervasive. When truth is no longer the standard for society, everything begins to fall apart. In Judah, it had gotten to the point that a person couldn't trust his best friend anymore. Husbands and wives couldn't trust each other, and respect for parents had vanished.

If we step back and look at these six verses, it's helpful to remember that Micah is lamenting the state of affairs in his nation. We live in a very similar time in terms of social disintegration and lawlessness, and the scarcity of people who are really committed to godly "*hesed*," loving loyalty in relationships, and spiritual integrity. Three things stand out in Micah's grief and lament.

His example is very similar, as I have said, to the lament we looked at in chapter 1. In neither setting does he try to hide his disappointment. He is painfully honest. Micah is so secure in the fact that God knows him inside out, that he is willing to express his deep sorrow, frustration, loneliness and alienation. In prayer before the Lord, he is lifting this horrible situation up to God. More often than not, in the face of problems like this, I'm am stoic and try to keep a stiff upper lip. I avoid getting in touch with the pain in my own heart, or I just complain and whine about how bad things are—mostly because it disrupts my life! However, we are called to the kind of lament that Micah models for us.

Another aspect of his lament that has touched me at different times through the years is his sense of loneliness and inability to trust other people. Every one of us has probably struggled like that. "Who can I really trust to share this struggle with, this burden, this fear?" And yet, as God's people, we have to find people of sincere faith who we can ask to help bear the burden and with whom we can be honest about our struggles. We also need people who can share our vision and enthusiasm for ministry.

The third point of personal application in Micah's lament is the fact that he engages these struggles of life and identifies the good as good and the bad as bad. He refuses to take a pluralistic view of different moral choices and call them all "acceptable alternatives." He doesn't just differentiate between the righteous and wicked, but he

speaks out against violence and oppression. He takes a moral stand which, as we've already seen in earlier chapters, makes him very unpopular with certain segments of his society. All of us today who proclaim the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, by default take a stand on positions of crime, sexuality, materialism or the plight of the poor and all other kinds of oppression. We take a stand by what we do and say, as well as by what we do not do and do not say. How we spend our time and money represents our stand on the same kinds of issues that Micah faced.

Because of His great mercies, trust the Lord!

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