

Micah

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Micah is the sixth of the twelve Minor Prophets. His prophecy is *The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah - the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.*(1:1)

- Author** Micah of Moresheth. He was a prophet who was *filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin.* (3:8). Moresheth was a village near the Philistine border, about 40km southwest of Jerusalem.
- Date** Micah prophesied in the 8th century BC, during the reigns of three kings of Judah: Jotham (750–735 BC), Ahaz (735–715 BC), and Hezekiah (715–686 BC). This is reinforced by Jeremiah who says that Micah *prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah.* (Jeremiah 26:18). Micah was probably a contemporary of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah.
- Background** Micah's prophecy is addressed to *all the peoples of the earth* (1:2), but is focused on Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah. In the early part of the eighth century BC Israel and Judah had experienced a period of relative peace and prosperity under their kings Jeroboam and Uzziah. In 745 BC Tiglath-pileser III became king of Assyria and began to create the Assyrian Empire. Samaria was overtaken in 722 BC and many wealthy and influential people were taken into captivity in Assyria (2 Kings 15:29-30; 17:1-41). In Judah the kings had most of their powers taken away by the Assyrians, and Jerusalem never recovered. After the fall of the Assyrian Empire Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC, and many Jews were taken away into captivity in Babylon.
- Message** The book of Micah is made up of a number of separate messages of judgment and hope, addressed to the people of Samaria and Jerusalem, and to people like land grabbers, false prophets, corrupt judges and evil priests. The common theme is that God will judge the people for their sin, so they need to turn back to the Lord. *He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* (6:8). Restoration to the Lord is possible because God will always keep the covenant He made with Abraham (7:18-20); and because He is compassionate towards His people. Micah wants the people to repent of their evil ways so they don't miss out on God's future benefits.
- Micah also looks forward to the time when a future ruler of Israel would be born in Bethlehem. (Jesus). *He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.* (5:2-4).

Outline

Introduction. 1:1,2.

Micah introduces his book as *the word of the Lord*. It is a prophecy concerning Samaria and Jerusalem, *but all peoples* must listen to it, so that the Sovereign Lord may witness against them.

Judgment on Samaria and Jerusalem. 1:3-16.

The *Lord is coming* in great power because of the sins of Samaria and Jerusalem. Samaria will be reduced to a *heap of rubble*, reaping the reward of her idolatry and prostitution. Because of this Micah will weep and wail. God's judgment will even reach Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. This will come through a conqueror and the people will be taken into exile. This was accurately fulfilled a few years later when Samaria and Jerusalem were overtaken by the Assyrians and then in 586 BC, when the Jews were taken into captivity in Babylon.

Judgment on those who plot evil. 2:1-5.

The next judgment is on *those who plan iniquity and plot evil on their beds*. They covet fields and seize other people's houses, but their own property will be taken from them.

Judgment on false prophets. 2:6-11.

False prophets told Micah not to prophesy about these things because they didn't believe that the Spirit of the Lord was angry with them. Micah reminds them that his words *do good* to those whose *ways are upright* and lists some of the evils the false prophets have carried out. They have become *like an enemy* to God by robbery, lying and deception. They even prophesy *plenty of wine and beer* for those who they want to impress!

The Lord will deliver. 2:12,13.

God will surely gather a remnant of His people and bring them *together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture*. He will lead them out into His purposes: *the king will pass through before them, the Lord at their head*. This shows that God never gives up on His people. No matter how much we sin against Him we can always repent and come back into relationship with Him.

Judgment on leaders and prophets. 3:1-12.

Micah now pronounces God's judgment on leaders, rulers and prophets. They have been unjust, hated good and loved evil, abused people, distorted the truth, taken bribes and caused much bloodshed. They have even said that no disaster could come on the people because the Lord was with them! Yet, they wonder why the Lord has not answered them when they cried out to Him. Micah proclaims that he is *filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin*. Because of the peoples' sin, Jerusalem will become a *heap of rubble*, and the temple will be destroyed.

The Lord's plan. 4:1-5:5.

Micah has just prophesied that the temple will be destroyed but now he shows that the Lord's plan *in the last days* is for it to be restored. *The mountain of the Lord's temple will be established and peoples will stream to it*. At this time God will *teach us His ways so that we may walk in His paths. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*. This will bring in a time of peace and *we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever*. In that day the nations will be gathered and *the Lord will rule over them in Mount Zion*. The former glory of Jerusalem will be restored

In the meantime, though, Jerusalem has many gathered against her (primarily the Assyrians) who don't understand God's plan. Soon she will go into captivity in Babylon but from there will be rescued. *The Lord will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies*.

It's good to know that the Lord has a plan for history, and that nothing can thwart this plan. Sometimes when we are going through difficult times we forget that God knows what He is doing, and that His purposes are being worked out, regardless.

The main way that God's plan will be implemented is through One who will *be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times*. In other words, Messiah! He (Jesus) would come from *Bethlehem* and will *stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God*.

This is one of the most well-known Old Testament prophecies because it was quoted to the three wise men when they enquired where Jesus was to be born. See Matthew 2:1-12.

Jesus was the way by which God made salvation available to all. Jesus the Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep, and now says to all *Whoever enters through Me will be saved. I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full*. See John 10:1-21.

The day of the Lord.

The events described here relate to *the day of the Lord* when Jesus returns and God completes the final part of His plan for mankind. Micah's account of end-time events reinforces those given in many other parts of the Bible. See *Isaiah 65, 66; Daniel 9, 12; Joel 2:28-3:21; Zephaniah 1-3; Zechariah 12-14; Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4,5; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Timothy 3; 2 Peter 3; 1 John 2; Revelation 6-22*.



The Assyrian invasion. 5:5-15

During the Assyrian invasion there will be a *remnant of the people of Jacob* who will be *like a young lion among flocks of sheep*. They will triumph over the enemy. For most of the people, though, God will use the situation to get rid of the evils that His people had embraced. *I will take vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations that have not obeyed Me.*

God's case against His people. 6:1-8.

God now presents His *case against His people*. He has consistently done good to them and He asks them to remember this. What is important to Him is not burnt offerings. No, *He has shown you, O man what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* This is one of the clearest and most powerful statements in the whole Bible of what God wants from His people. He isn't interested in our religious observances, no matter how well we might do them or how sincerely. No, He wants us to have righteous hearts; to relate to Him with integrity, and to demonstrate this in our daily lives.

The guilt of God's people. 6:9-7:7.

God has already begun to punish His people for their sinfulness. He will give them over to *ruin* and to *derision*, so that they will *become the scorn of the nations*. Micah is miserable about this, because the godly have been swept from the land; *not one upright person remains*. Yet he still has hope. *I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Saviour; my God will hear me.* Jesus obviously had a similar feeling about the situation in His day when He quoted from Micah 7:6. (See Matthew 10:21, 35-36).

The last part of Micah's prophecy is much more positive and hopeful! It is like a psalm in which Micah recognises that God's goodness will ultimately prevail.

Israel's restoration and God's goodness. 7:8-20.

Though he had fallen under the Lord's wrath Micah believes God will *bring me out into the light*, and he will *see His righteousness*. No longer will God's enemies have anything to boast about because *the day for building your walls will come; the day for extending your boundaries*. God will *shepherd His people; the flock of His inheritance* as in days past. The nations will see this and will *turn in fear to the Lord our God*.

That's because God *pardons sin and forgives the transgression of His people*. He *does not stay angry forever*, but *delights to show mercy*. He will again *have compassion on us*; and will *tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea*. He will honour the covenant He made with Abraham and the forefathers.

Micah shows us that because God is a God of justice He must and will judge sin. But He is also a covenant-keeping God – a God of love, mercy and forgiveness. If we repent of our sins *God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness*. 1 John 1:9.

Discussion questions

Micah declared that God would judge the nations because of their sin. Does God still do this today? If so, how does He do it? If, not, why doesn't He do it?

How does Micah perceive God's nature or character? What is God like to him?

How were the prophecies in Micah fulfilled through the Assyrians; through the Babylonians; and through the Lord Jesus Christ? How will they be fulfilled at the 'day of the Lord'?

Micah 6:8 is one of the most important verses in the Bible. Put this verse into your own words. How does it influence the way we should behave, and our religious observances? What does it show us about God's desire for the way we live/

What have you learned from your study of Micah? How will you apply this in your life?