

Pre-Exilic Prophet: **MICAH**

INTRODUCTION

Micah (735 – 690 BC), a prophet who was strengthened by the Spirit of God, was from the southern kingdom of Judah. He prophesied around the same time as Isaiah, Amos, and Hezekiah (Micah 3:8)! Just like most of the prophets, Micah foretold coming judgement against Israel and Judah. As the book begins, Micah paints a picture of fire and smoke above Israel beckoning imagery from Mount Sinai...but this time, God isn't making a covenant. He's foretelling judgement.¹ *But why did God's people deserve judgement?*

Israel was intended to be a blessing to the nations. To accomplish such a feat, they had to be loyal to their God. Micah points out that Israel's leaders and prophets have been abusing their power and violating the Torah. They had also become inappropriately wealthy due to great greed. One of the things they did was sell families' lands, which was against God's instruction. These warnings of judgement ultimately foretell the coming of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, as Israel was not doing what God had called them to do.

However, there are some great messages of hope following these warnings! Micah foretells the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem and the remnant's return. He even shows us that a ruler from the line of David will be born in Bethlehem and will rule over the nations. In the end, Micah returns to addressing the sinful practices of Israel, which will lead to their ruin. Micah points out that the Lord has clearly laid out what He requires of His people, yet Israel failed to rise to God's standard.

Interestingly, once they are brought to ruin, Micah explains how God's people will be like a desperate individual who begs for help. And on what basis would they beg? The Abrahamic Covenant—that though God will bring judgement, he will one day soon bring compassion and fulfill his promises.

IMAGE FOR UNDERSTANDING

At the end of the book, Israel is personified as a distressed, vanquished, and troubled individual who begs God for help. While living in Dallas, or other major cities, we often see homeless people on the street corners. But in whom do those beggars trust? Or, on what basis will those passing by respond to their plea or refuse to reply? The answer must vary from person to person.

This desperate person pleads for help based on God's character and promises. The beggar presented at the end of the book pleads for help based on God's character when he says, "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love" (Micah 7:18). Additionally, the beggar knows who God is and what it means to be part of his family when he says, "You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old" (Micah 7:20).

BOOK ORGANIZATION

Chapters 1-2: Hear ye, Samaria & Jerusalem

Chapters 3-5: Hear ye, rulers of Israel

Chapters 6-7: Hear ye, all the earth

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFEUEcylwLc>

JESUS IN THE BOOK OF MICAH

Micah 5:2 shows us explicitly that one day the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. When we fast forward to the New Testament and read the accounts of the Christmas story, we learn that the wise men were told that the Prince of Peace would come from Bethlehem. The book of Micah is filled with messages surrounding sin, the consequences of it, the need for repentance, and future restoration; however, those things can only find their true fulfillment in Jesus who took the ultimate punishment for our sins and allows us access to God.²

BIBLE STUDY SPECIFICS: HOW TO APPROACH THE BOOK OF MICAH

OBSERVATION

- When we observe the text, we ask the who, what, when, and where questions. Simply put, we're asking, "What do I notice?" When it comes to Micah, a straightforward observation approach should take you far.

INTERPRETATION

- **Literary context:** Micah is a very short prophetic book. When we think about the literary genre prophecy, we have to remember that God is speaking *through* a person.
- **Narrative context:** Micah's message was delivered around the same time as Isaiah and Amos. As you seek to understand what you're reading, consider exploring what issues those prophets addressed.

APPLICATION

- Read Micah considering Christ. While you may not be reading Micah at Christmas time, he does foretell the coming of Christ in Bethlehem. Consider how you can marvel at the Christmas story or posture your heart gratuitously in light of the Christmas story.
- Instead of asking, "is there a command to obey?" try asking "what commands did Israel fail to obey?" and "what commands might I be failing to obey in my own day?"
- Often, we ask, "Is there a sin to repent from?" when we respond to the scriptures. One of the biggest sins seen in God's people throughout the book of Micah is greed. While our greed today may look different from that of the Israelites, it is just as toxic. Spend some time asking the Lord to search your heart and reveal any hidden greed.
- If you ask, "Is there a promise to cling to?" Look for opportunities to be encouraged by God's character as a promise keeper. Yes, God will bring judgement upon his people, but he still offers future restoration. How can you be encouraged by the simultaneous nature of God's judgement and mercy?
- Practically speaking, what do you think it means to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God today? Ask God's Spirit to show you how he'd have you respond.

PRAYER

- Lord, would you help me to remember you keep your promises—even when all hope seems lost?
- God, I confess that just like Israel, I am prone to greed. Would you help me to _____ so that I can better honor you?
- Father, at the time of Micah you were also using other bold messengers. Sometimes I feel like I am the only one who is speaking up for what is right. Would you help me to remember that I am not alone? Would you show me what you are doing in and through the lives of other believers around me?

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-Micah.html>

CHURCH HISTORY: WHAT HAS CHURCH HISTORY SAID ABOUT THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

On Micah 5:2, Augustine said, "But now, the same star which led the magi to the place where the infant God was to be found with his virgin mother could of course have led them right to the very city. But it withdrew, and didn't appear at all to them again, until the Jews themselves had been questioned about the city where Christ was to be born. This was to oblige them to name it themselves, on the evidence of divine Scriptures, and to say themselves, 'In Bethlehem of Judah. For so it is written, 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah; for from you shall come forth the leader who will rule my people Israel.'" What else can divine Providence have meant by this, but that among the Jews would remain only the divine Scriptures by which the nations would be instructed, they themselves being blind? This evidence they would carry about with them not as an assistance to their own salvation but as evidence of ours. Because today it may happen that when we bring forward prophecies about Christ, uttered long before and now made clear by the events that have fulfilled them, the pagans whom we wish to gain will say that they weren't foretold so long ago but have been composed by us after the event, so that what has later occurred may be thought to have been previously prophesied. Then we can cite the volumes owned by the Jews, to clear the doubts of the pagans, who were already prefigured in those magi, whom the Jews instructed from the divine books about the city in which Christ was born, without themselves either seeking or acknowledging him." – Augustine, AD 430

