

Micah-by Tommy Lee

Chapter 1

Welcome to what is perhaps the most neglected part of the Bible... the minor prophets. Isaiah - Daniel are referred to as the "major prophets," because their books are generally longer. Hosea - Malachi are referred to as the "minor prophets," because their books are generally shorter. Imagine, if you will, someone standing in front of the World Trade Center twin towers on September 10, 2001 warning that all of this will be destroyed and leveled within 24 hours. You'd think the person was nuts, right? That's how Micah would have seemed, as he called the world to "*hear*" and "*pay attention*" (v.1) to the words of this prophecy during a time of extraordinary wealth and prosperity. It was ludicrously unthinkable. And yet... everything that Micah here predicts does happen. And Micah's vivid imagery actually even evokes pictures of 9/11 for us, doesn't it? Everything melting like waters falling down a steep place (v.4)? A heap of stones, uncovered foundations (v.6)? This book is one of God's reminders: the wages of sin is certain judgement and death (vs.3,5). And yet, Micah will also speak of Christ!

Chapter 2

Micah will alternate between words of warning and words of hope; we need to hear both. Verses 1-5 are words of warning to the powerful, covetous (see Exodus 20.17) people of his day who find ways to seize the houses and fields of the poorer and less powerful. According to vs.3-5, the Lord is planning to bring disaster upon these greedy crooks: everything that they have unjustly taken will be taken from them—which they will then bitterly complain about; see Micah's sarcasm in v.4. This prophecy was fulfilled when the Assyrians and Babylonians conquered Israel and Judah. But greedy land-grabbers aren't the only people Micah warns in this chapter. In vs.6-11 he takes on the greedy false prophets ("liberal preachers," we might say today) who rebuke Micah for preaching these things. "*One should not preach these things; disgrace will not overtake us*" (v.6). This kind of culture only wants preachers who "*utter wind and lies*," Micah says in v.11. But now... hear the words of hope. There will come a Shepherd (v.12) who will open a way and go before them as their King (v.13). The Lord Yahweh.

Chapter 3

Now we are back to words of warning: there are three oracles of judgment here, each oracle consisting of 4 verses (vs.1-4; 5-8; 9-12). Each starts with naming the offending parties (v.1, "*you heads... and rulers*"... v.5, "*the prophets who lead my people astray*"... v.9, "*you heads... and rulers*"). Each then proceeds to the list of accusations against those parties; these accusations are introduced by the repeated word "*who*" (see vs.2, 3, 5, 9-11). And then each oracle moves to the awful sentence of God's judgment upon them, introduced either by the word "*then*" or "*therefore*" (vs.4, 6, 7, 12). The third oracle of judgment (v.12) is the climactic one; as goes the leaders (heads, rulers, prophets, priests—all mentioned here), so goes the people and the nation. Examine each oracle of judgment carefully for the common theme of God's concern for "*justice*" (vs.1, 8, 9) in society. Reflect on all the ways that an unjust society is here described. How and where might these same things be seen in our society today? In v.8 Micah contrasts himself (the true prophet) with the false prophets addressed in vs.5-7.

Chapter 4

Now we are back to words of promise and hope. The "old Jerusalem / Zion" Micah described in yesterday's reading fell and was destroyed because it was ruled by corrupt leaders. The "new Jerusalem / Zion" Micah describes here is rescued and established and it will triumph and enjoy true rest... because it will be ruled by the coming Messiah. This chapter includes several snapshots of what this vision

means. Using imagery from the Old Testament world, vs.1-5 shows us the exaltation of *"the mountain of the house of the Lord"* (v.1), with all nations streaming to it so that they might worship the Lord and be disciplined by his teaching and receive the benefits that follow from walking in his ways. It's a glorious picture, and it's fulfilled in history by the church taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to every tribe, language, people, and nation. Does it seem to you sometimes that history is *not* moving in this direction? Well, in truth, it is. Ask for the sermon Paul Kooistra preached at DPC once, showing the flow of history in this regard. But as we wait for the fullness of this promise, let us live out v.5 together.

Chapter 5

In Matthew chapter 2 wise men from the east come to Jerusalem looking for the newborn king; they have seen his star, and they want to worship him. *"Where is he?"* they ask. Herod assembles all the chief priests and scribes, questioning them about where the Messiah is supposed to be born. These religious scholars promptly answer, *"In Bethlehem of Judah, for so it is written by the prophet,"* and then they proceed to quote Micah 5. That's usually the context in which we meet Micah 5: the Christmas story. But what else do we learn of our Lord Jesus from this chapter? He comes *"for me"* we read in v.2; that is, he comes for God the Father's advantage, not necessarily for his own immediate advantage. His coming forth is *"from of old, from ancient days"* we also read in v.1: a reference to the "eternal everlastingness" of Christ's being (see Psalm 90.2). Israel will have been without a king for some time (*"he shall give them up,"* v.3), until the time when *"she who is in labor has given birth"* (v.3). But when this *"ruler"* (v.2) inaugurates his kingdom... just read the beautiful description of his reign (vs.4,5a).

Chapter 6

"Hear what the Lord says" (v.1). In vs.1-8, Israel is formally accused of breaking covenant with God, and the legal language of the accusation signifies the gravitas of a courtroom scene. Our lawyers should feel right at home in this chapter. The mountains are called as witnesses to the Lord's indictments against his people (v.2); before these enduring foundations of the earth, Israel can arise and plead her case (v.1). The indictment itself unfolds dramatically: in v.3, the plaintiff (the Lord) asks the accused how he has *"wearied"* them, that they desire to break covenant with him. And then in vs.4&5, he reminds them of how graciously he's treated them: he's freely given them deliverance, redemption, godly leaders, mighty acts of rescue, a miraculous journey full of *"righteous acts"* of salvation, etc. In vs.6&7, he reminds them that he (the Lord) is not looking for costly gifts from his people. See v.8: he is looking for faithfulness. In vs.9-16, the Lord specifies his accusations against his people (vs.10-12) and passes sentence (vs.13-16). For context, see Leviticus 26:14-46; Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

Chapter 7

This final chapter of Micah begins with a deep lament: *"Woe is me!"* (v.1). And in the next few verses Micah describes and decries the rampant unfaithfulness he sees among the people of God during his day. In the middle of v.4, he begins describing the judgment of God that is about to fall upon the nation because they have ignored their *"watchmen"*—the true prophets of God who have been warning Israel that this day would come (v.4). The stress and strain of the coming punishment (the invasion of the Assyrians) will break and crush even the strongest of human relationships (vs.5,6). But Micah's own hope is described in v.7. The remainder of the chapter is a celebration of this faith and hope in God's promise of salvation. Every single sentence is worthy of prayerful meditation: consider, for example, the penitent humility of vs.8&9... the missionary hope for the nations in vs.11&12... the final wages for those who remain in sin, in v.13... the prayer for restoration and God's promised response in vs.14-17... and finally: the piled up attributes of our God, ultimately fulfilled at the cross, in vs.18-20.

Reflecting on Micah-

Before moving on to our next book of the Bible, take some time today to reflect on what we've read in Micah. Perhaps re-visit a favorite chapter or an especially meaningful passage. Or read the beginning chapter(s) again, now that you've read the whole. Or go back to a part of the book that struck you as curious and see if it makes more sense now. Or speed-read the whole thing again, seeking to reinforce its main themes. Or... perhaps you need a catch-up day to finish Micah before we move forward?

"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Romans 15.4