

2014 Winter Bible Study Series
The Minor Prophets: The Man and His Work

The Prophet Micah

February 11, 2014
Elder Douglas Skinner
Covenant MBC
Indianapolis, Indiana

I. Micah, the Man

Micah, as prophet of God, was a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. Some have referred to the book of Micah as “Isaiah in miniature” and the primary distinction seems to be audience as Isaiah wrote to the royal household and Jerusalem while Micah spoke to the common people of the land. Micah’s ministry has been best framed between the years 735 and 700 BC, which would be about 150 years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. His life is said to have encompassed the reigns of kings Jotham (735-731 BC), Ahaz (736-715 BC), and Hezekiah (715-686 BC) of Judah.*.

Micah 1:1 *“The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem”*

Micah was a Morasthite, an inhabitant of Moresheth-Gath, a small village 22 miles SW of Jerusalem. This village was located in the Shephelah (rolling hills of Judah and likely destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 BC despite having been fortified by Rehoboam (**2 Chronicles 11:5-12**).

Micah 1:14 *“Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moreshethgath: the houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel.”*

Micah’s name means, “Who is like Yahweh (God)?” which is interestingly used in the song of redemption in **Micah 7:18**, *“Who is a God like unto thee...”* and Micah is counted as the sixth of the twelve minor prophets. Minor prophets simply being those who wrote shorter prophecies than the four “major” prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. We may

accurately consider Micah a “country boy” who was inspired to rail upon the wickedness of the “big cities” of Samaria, Jerusalem and the wicked powers which resided in those places. His message preceded the eventual destruction of Samaria by less than 25 years and perhaps as little as a decade.

Micah 1:6 “Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.”

His message preceded the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem by 133 -150 years. While Jerusalem maintained its autonomy longer, its destruction was inevitable per Micah’s message of judgment.

II. History

The period of history which Micah experienced is described in **2 Kings 15-20**, **2 Chronicles 27-32**, and **Isaiah 36-39**. It was a dark period of upheaval and crisis. Israel and Judah were both demonstrating spiritual lethargy, apostasy, and hypocrisy as people continued to worship Yahweh, but only in form. There was no life-changing reality to their worship or manner of life as heart-felt worship had been replaced by empty ritual. The people had divorced God’s standards of justice from their daily lives in order to conceal their unscrupulous dealings. Seemingly, there appeared a widespread misconception that as long as external acts of worship were enacted the people were entitled to the divine favor and protection. Ceremonial observances were thought to meet all religious requirements.

The ruling classes also were utilizing their position and power to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor:

a. They coveted the land of those around them. (city people wanting land of the poor)

Micah 2:1-2 “Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.

² And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.”

b. They robbed the poor.

Micah 2:8 “Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war.”

c. Corrupt business practices were the norm.

Micah 6:11 "Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?"

d. False prophets were numerous.

Micah 2:11 "If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people."

e. False prophets motivated by reward.

Micah 3:11 "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us."

f. Priests also taught for a price.

See **Micah 3:11**

g. Rulers and judges could be bribed.

Micah 7:3 "That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up"

While this decay grows from inside Judah and Israel, Micah's prophecy also warns of a power rising in the east - Assyria. King Ahaz makes a treaty with Assyria and thereby makes Judah a vassal state to the Assyrians (**2 Kings 16:5-9**) and after Assyria captures Israel, their hold upon Judah is virtually complete. King Hezekiah (Ahaz's son and Jotham's grandson) leads a rebellion which causes Sennacherib, the Assyrian to invade Judah in 701 BC. Sennacherib decimates 46 cities of Judah with a two-pronged attack; the first attacks north of Jerusalem on the Central Benjamin Plateau, blocking entry into Jerusalem. The second sweeps through the Sephalah of Judah, capturing the approaches into the hill country to the south of Jerusalem (**Micah 1:10-15**). *This battle plan may also be studied in **Isaiah 10**. Micah's hometown is destroyed only Jerusalem is spared and defended by the angel of the Lord.

III. Purpose of the book of Micah

God used Micah to reprove the spiritual and carnal sins of His people, and to warn them of His coming judgments. This was not just a laundry list of their sins of idolatry and moral corruption, but also a reminder that true faith in God results in personal holiness and ethical social behavior. Worship and morality cannot be divorced from one another; they are two sides of one coin. God had observed the contradiction between their creed and conduct; they had been professing much and performing little. The final purpose of Micah's prophecy was to assure God's people they would not be utterly destroyed; He promised to restore their nation from a repentant remnant.

IV. Outline of the Book of Micah

- Three sections
 - Section 1 Chapters 1-2
 - Focus is on God's justice and reminds the people that God will judge them for their sin and disobedience. He will punish them because they worship idols (1:2-4); describes how God will punish Samaria (1:5-9). Its people will be slaves in another country (2:10); but then promises success and a wonderful return (2:12-13)
 - Section 2 Chapters 3-5
 - This section especially to the rulers and leaders of the people and faults them for having evil desires and for stealing from the people. God curses the people, but then blesses them with a promise that He (God) will ultimately establish a kingdom whose king would reign in righteousness after the people are allowed to return to their country.
 - Section 3 Chapter 6-7
 - Israel and Judah are convicted of their sin and sentenced to judgment. God calls a meeting with His people, recounts His goodness and faithfulness to them and attests that He has done what He promised to do (Micah 7:16-20).

	1:1-2	Brief description of the book
Section 1	1:3-2:13	Punishment and Rescue
	1:2-16	God will punish the people in Samaria and Judah
	2:1-11	Evil leaders and false prophets will suffer
	2:12-13	God will bring a remnant back to Zion
Section 2	3:1-5:15	Micah accuses false leaders; promises a good and fair king will come
	3:1-12	The false leaders of Jerusalem will fail and the city will fall
	4:1-8	New Jerusalem will have a high position over the nations
	4:9-13	Zion's (Jerusalem's) people will suffer pains that will lead to the beginning of a new age
	5:1-6	The Messiah's birth and his future greatness
	5:7-9	The remnant will rule the nations
	5:10-15	God will protect his new "spiritually clean" nation
Section 3	6:1-7:20	Third series of prophecies; God will forgive the remnant of his people
	6:1-8	Micah accuses Israel's people b/c they have not obeyed the covenant
	6:9-16	The curses in the covenant will all become true for Jerusalem's people
	7:1-7	Jerusalem's social structures will break apart
	7:8-20	The Song about Success

V. A Visual Illustration

The Book of Micah

Focus	Coming Judgment	Coming Justice	Coming Comfort
Divisions	Condemnation of Judah's People	Condemnation of Judah's Leaders	Controversy Between Judah & Jehovah
	1	2 3	5 6 7
Topics	Sin & It's Outcome	The King & His Kingdom	The Lord & His Justice
	Incurable	Inevitable	Inescapable
Place	Judah & Israel		
Time	About 25 Years (735-710 B.C.)		
Author	The Prophet Micah		

VI. Micah's Message to Today

Why would God burden us with such ancient history and lessons from centuries ago? As all Scripture is timely, pertinent and beneficial (2Timothy 3:16), we must be diligent in gleaning the lessons for God's children. We sinners remain corrupt while God remains righteous, holy, and incorruptible. The lessons of the past are recounted in order to discourage continued sin as well as facilitate the spiritual prosperity of men and the glorification of God.

While Micah's message was certainly NOT written directly to America, sin and its consequences remain the same. God's justice also remains the same; our immutable God is a just God. He is wonderfully merciful and full of grace, but not at the expense of justice. Every sin will be recompensed. (Praise God! Christ has paid our penalty and His stripes have provided our healing.)

Many of God's children have prayed for years desiring a general revival in our nation and

our churches. This certainly is needful and recommended as a continual practice. Without doubt, divine providence played a large role in the founding of this nation which has been a blessing to millions of people both inside and outside her borders. Yet, as Americans, should we operate under the assumption that America deserves special privileges of avoidance of retribution of sin? God dealt harshly (and justly) with the sins of HIS OWN CHOSEN PEOPLE in the days of Micah.

Unavoidable and alarming parallels may be drawn with Micah's prophecy and present day America. Through Micah, God condemned the eroded moral of His people, the corruption of her leaders, and the false prophets among them. The erosion of moral character and standards in America are on display in every aspect of her society. The American family structure is crumbling under the weight of divorce and immoral laws which permit the killing of unborn children and same sex "marriage". American schools no longer teach right and wrong according to God's laws. The American marketplace celebrates perversion and denigrates morality. American governments have dethroned God as lawgiver and supreme ruler and elevated themselves in His place. This has been coupled with a plethora of "Christian" mega churches with smiling devils teaching people a "health and wealth" gospel while hiding sin, repentance, faith and the new birth from searching hearts. This polluted gospel sells well, and enriches the false prophets greatly.

America has also experienced a shifting of wealth. The chasm between the "haves" and "have nots" has widened from the oppression of the middle class, the rock and anchor of traditional American (Christian) culture. Meanwhile, many elected officials not only abuse their power at the expense of American citizens, but also take advantage of stranger (immigration reform) for their own power and wealth. Many of America's founders sacrificed health, home, and wealth for the establishment of a country of free people-people free to worship God. (You would be challenged to find a penniless person in Congress today).

Justice is often discussed in American public life; everyone demands justice. So does our God. Society defines justice as fairness or equality, but God defines it as righteousness (2 Timothy 2:3-4). The unjust (unrighteous) judges, prophets, and priests of Micah's prophecy were promised righteous punishment for all their unrighteous acts.

Israel was meant to be a shining light of contradiction to the darkness and sin surrounding it. The same may be said regarding the Lord's people / church today. God had promised the Israelites that He would be their God, and they would be His people - a peculiar people

(Deuteronomy 14:2). Micah's prophecy reproved their apostasy and reminded them of God's requirements (Micah 6:8)

DO justly, **LOVE** mercy, and **WALK** humbly with thy God

This sounds a lot like loving God and your neighbor as yourself, doesn't it? Israel violated both of these requirements by worshipping idols and cheating their fellow man and were destroyed. The Lord's church is also considered a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9), the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13) and the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). If the Lord's church hopes to prevent America's destruction as a nation that forgets God (Psalm 9:17), she must not ignore Micah's message. The Lord's promise to be with her all the way to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20) is a consolation much like the one found in Micah 7:7-9:

⁷ Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

⁸ Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.

⁹ I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness"

May God have mercy on us. So that America once again blesses God.