

Micah

Introduction

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Why read this book?

If you've ever wondered how faith fits in an increasingly corrupt and violent society, you'll be able to identify with the message in this book. When God seems distant and uninvolved, Micah reminds us that he still cares and offers hope for those who choose to remain faithful to him. Reading this book reminds us that God is still active in this world, and will not allow sin to hinder his purposes.

Who wrote this book and was it written?

The prophet Micah, whose name means *Who is like the Lord?*, wrote it during the reigns of Jotham (750–735 B.C.), Ahaz (735–715 B.C.) and Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.), kings of Judah.

What was happening in the world at this time?

The powerful Assyrian empire was expanding westward, demanding surrender and tribute. When the northern kingdom of Israel rebelled, the Assyrians destroyed its capital city of Samaria and took many Israelites into exile. Later King Hezekiah of Judah, the southern kingdom, rebelled. The Assyrians invaded Palestine in 701 B.C., devastated Judah and carried many into captivity. Though they besieged Jerusalem, God delivered the city in answer to Hezekiah's prayer.

To whom was it written and why?

Micah wrote to the people of Judah to warn them that God's judgment was approaching because they had rejected God and his law. Micah also encouraged the godly few, assuring them that judgment would not permanently destroy Israel. The nation would eventually be restored.

What to look for in Micah:

Pay close attention to how Micah portrays God, balancing his divine attributes of justice and mercy. Remember that Micah uses poetry. Many figures of speech make his messages more vivid and create a profound emotional impact.

—From the Quest Study Bible (Zondervan)

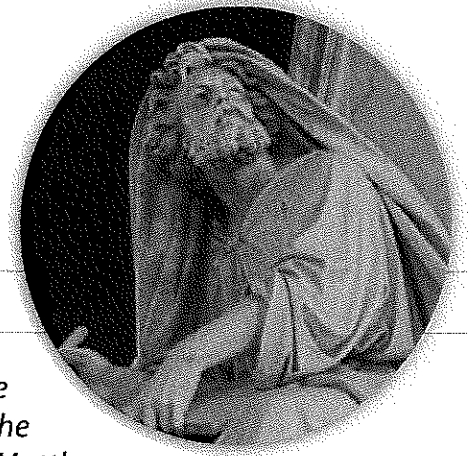


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What God expects of us

Micah 5:2 is perhaps one of the few verses we know from the Book of Micah. It appears in the prophecies of the Christmas story as told by Matthew (Matt. 2:6). However, there is a lot more to Micah than just this one verse. This study will look at Micah's message to Israel about God's judgment, hope, and repentance.

Scripture: Micah

Based On: "The Minor Prophets: God Still Speaks to Us Today," by Tom Cowan



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Part 1 Identify the Issue

Micah was a prophet sometime between 750 and 686 B.C., and was a contemporary of Isaiah. As a nation, Israel was experiencing the heights of economic prosperity, but was wallowing in the depths of spiritual decadence.

While the nation appeared to be strong externally, internal decay was sapping the strength of the nation and threatening to destroy the social fabric of the country. The problem lay in more than social wrongs. Canaanite religion had influenced many of God's people.

Micah spoke out strongly against the social injustices of the ruling classes against those who were poor and vulnerable in society. Micah did not come from a distinguished family, as the better-known Isaiah seems to have done. He came from a small country village called Moresheth (see 1:1). Micah was a rural person who came to the city to bring a word from the Lord. In this way he is like Amos.

It is sometimes hard to create outlines for the prophets, since their writings are often a series of loosely connected speeches given as prophecies. One helpful way to see the book of Micah is to follow the three main oracles. The following outline may help you in your reading and study.

First Oracle: Israel's impending judgment and her future restoration (1:1–2:13).

Second Oracle: The prophet's indictment of the leaders of the house of Israel and Israel's future hope (3:1–5:15).

Third Oracle: God's case against Israel and the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God (6:1–7:20).

Optional Activity:

Purpose: *To get a better handle on the Book of Micah, form pairs. Give each pair a chapter to read. Ask them to write a one-sentence summary of what that chapter says to them (main themes, emphasis, etc.).*

[Q] What did you know about the Book of Micah before today?

[Q] Why does God often work through seemingly insignificant people?

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Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: This is not how it was meant to be; God will judge injustice.

Treacherous neighbors. Treacherous religious leaders. Treacherous politicians. Micah the prophet pronounces God's judgment on Israel and Judah. Read Micah 1–3.

[Q] How is the Lord described in 1:2–4 as coming out of his holy place to address what is going on?

[Q] As you reflect on the book, how does Micah describe the ways in which the rich have exploited those who are poor and therefore vulnerable?

[Q] In what ways are people who have influence through money or power today able to use that influence over those who are less powerful?

[Q] Put Micah into a contemporary setting. What setting do you imagine that to be? What would Micah say if he were living today?

Teaching Point Two: There is a new kingdom to come; God gives hope.

Read Micah 4:1–5. You may recognize a chorus in these words.

[Q] What kind of picture does this create in your mind?

[Q] Read 5:2–5. This prophecy about the Messiah was made 700 years before Christ's birth. What will his reign be like?

[Q] How does the prophecy encourage you in your present circumstance?

Optional Activity:

Purpose: *To encourage others with the hope God gives.*

Activity: *Distribute note paper and envelopes, or postcards, to the members of your small group. Have each person write a note of encouragement to someone who could use it. Use verses from chapter 5 as the basis for the encouraging notes.*

Teaching Point Three: There is an opportunity; God pleads for repentance.

Despite every reason to be so, God is not through with his people yet. Read Micah 6–7.

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[Q] How does Micah describe what is happening in society?

[Q] How does Micah describe the heart of God in 7:18–20?

[Q] What does this say to us about the nature of God?

[Q] How do God's promises here motivate you?

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Micah is describing a monumental breakdown in society. There is a breakdown in morality. Political and spiritual leadership is bankrupt. There is a breakdown in the family. Human relationships are failing.

[Q] How does Micah encourage us to press on when we are tempted give up in the face of the breakdown of society?

[Q] How are you encouraged by this book?

Action Point: We live in an unjust world. Memorize the following verse this week, and share it with someone you know who is struggling under the burden of a corrupt culture: "But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me" (Micah 7:7).

—Study by Tom Cowan, with Kyle White

