

An Introduction to Micah

Micah 1:1

Introduction – Why should we study the prophets? And particularly, why turn and study one of the *minor* prophets? Even Martin Luther said at one point, “*They have a queer way of talking, like people who, instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next, so that you cannot make head or tail of them or see what they are getting at*”. Of course, Jesus and the apostles didn’t think so. Their quotations of the prophets throughout the New Testament are very numerous. What does God expect, therefore, with regard to your knowledge of history, cultures, languages, literature, and the Word of God?

The Old Testament is for the People of God – This is important to keep in mind. We are God’s people, His church. This is not a book for practicing, so-called orthodox Jews. That is the religion of Judaism and is contrary to scripture, the old and the new. Romans 11 teaches us that we have been grafted into the people of God. It also teaches us what has happened to those who were in the covenant but refused to believe in the Messiah – the Messiah promised in Micah.

All Scripture – is inspired by God and is profitable. You either believe that and seek understanding, or you don’t, and go do something else. We are conscientiously seeking to bring the whole counsel of God from His Word to bear on all of our life corporately, and our lives individually.

General Historical Context –

Time Frame – Micah is a contemporary of Isaiah, who began his ministry slightly earlier, during the reign of Uzziah, the father of Jotham. Micah prophesies during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (750 BC – 686 BC). Assyria is the world power, destroying the northern kingdom in 722 BC and remains a constant threat to Judah. And in verse 1, we must note that Micah is addressing *both* kingdoms; the ‘liberal’ north as well as the ‘conservative’ south.

‘of Moresheth’ – Micah is not from Jerusalem, but from the foothills southwest in Judah. Isaiah seems often more focused on the international events while Micah is more concerned about what is going on at home. Micah is sure of his prophetic calling (3:6-8).

Structure of Micah –

Reading the Prophets – Luther is right, but only at first glance. The prophetic books cannot be read like the narratives (Jonah is an exception) because the chronological order is often missing, and often isn’t the point. They cannot be read as epistles strictly, because that kind of flow of argument isn’t there. But there is a literary flow and structure in each of the books of prophecy.

Bookends – Micah (v1) means “who is like Yahweh?”. Notice how the book ends in 7:18.

Cycles of Gloom and Glory – A key imperative marks each of the three sections of Micah – “hear” – in 1:2, 3:1, and 6:1. Each cycle proclaims the guilt of Israel’s sin and is followed with pronouncements of wrath and destruction. Each cycle then concludes with a contrasting message of God’s mercy and the hope of forgiveness and restoration. Like movements of a symphony, each cycle is separate and yet related to one another as a whole.

Preparing for Micah – Of course, you should read and reread the book and each cycle. Refresh your studies on the times of Micah (2 Kings 15:32 – 20:21, 2 Chron 27-32) and read his contemporary Isaiah as well. Watch for these major themes throughout the book.

The Abuse of Power – How does the proverb go – ‘*power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely*’. Power in the hands of fallen men who serve their idols always breeds tyranny. Idolatry has bred covetousness in Judah (2:1-2), and the offices of prophet, priest, and king have all been defiled (3:11).

Reaping What You Sow – They have trusted in idols that will be destroyed (1:7). They have acted as if God were their enemy and become His enemies (2:8). They treat the sacrifices with contempt and act as if God were a vending machine, needing just one more quarter to work (6:6-7).

The Fragility of Nations – Samaria and particularly Jerusalem, think they are impenetrable. But their days are numbered. But even the nations that bring Israel down will perish in judgment as the enemies of God (7:16-17).

The Mercy of God – Each cycle ends with promises of restoration, shepherding, and the mercy of God, because God *delights* in mercy (7:18).

The Promise of God – God uses little towns, youngest sons, and slingshots to show forth His glory (Mic 5:2). And Micah promises He will do so again (vv2-4). Remember what David said to Goliath (1 Sam 17:45-47), and what God promised David (2 Sam 7:12-16). All of this is promised in spite of ourselves – “*God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty*” – (1 Cor 1:27). Why does God do it this way? – “*Where is boasting then? It is excluded....*” – (Rom 3:27). Micah reminds the people of these promises at a time when Israel is sinking into oblivion. It does not matter how many centuries have passed; the Word of the Lord endures forever (Is 40:6-8). And God continues to promise His people the great work of their Messiah not only to a small remnant, or only to the land of Canaan, but also to the ends of the world (5:4, Rom 15:8-9).