

THE BIBLE

in a nutshell



Micah

—by Peter Hammond

"He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8

Micah arranged his 19 prophecies into three cycles. Each began with a warning of impending judgement and concluded with a promise of God's mercy. The three sections of Micah deal with: **crime and punishment** (chapters 1-3), **peace and security** (chapters 4-5) and **justice and mercy** (chapters 6-7).

Micah deals with **sin, judgement and salvation**. One third of Micah targets the sins of God's people. Another third looks at the punishments of the Lord to come. Another third of Micah promises hope for the faithful who repent.

The themes in Micah

Each section begins with condemnation and ends with consolation. Sin must be punished before it is pardoned. The three main categories of evil condemned by the

prophet Micah are identified as: idolatry, immorality and injustice.

Samaria, the capital of Israel, had adopted calf worship, Baal worship and other Canaanite and Assyrian idol worship. God sent Elijah, Elisha and Amos to warn the ten Northern tribes of Israel to repent, but they persisted in their wickedness. *"Hear, all you peoples! Listen, O earth, and all that is in it! Let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy Temple. For behold, the*

commitments. "...Behold, against this family I am devising disaster...For this is an evil time" Micah 2:3.

Woe to evildoers

Injustice injures others. *"Hear now O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the House of Israel: Is it not for you to know justice? You who hate good and love evil..."* Micah 3:1. The rulers of Israel are condemned for exploiting the people whom they were responsible to serve.

The book of Micah is a prophetic one, sixth of the twelve minor prophets in the Bible. Micah condemns idolatry, immorality and injustice.

Lord is coming...The mountains will melt under Him...for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel...I will make Samaria a heap of ruins...All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces, and all her pay as a harlot shall be burned with the fire..." Micah 1:2-7.

Idolatry, immorality, injustice

Idolatry insults God by substituting something for Him, worshipping anyone or anything other than the Lord. Immorality is indulging ourselves at the expense of others and in violation of God's Law and our

The princes, priests, prophets, profiteers and people are condemned for the curse of corruption, covetousness, cheating, cruelty and escalating crime. *"Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds!... They covet fields and take them by violence, also houses, and seize them...A man and his inheritance"* Micah 2:1-2. *"Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who make My people stray; who chant 'Peace'"* Micah 3:5.

Bribery and profiteering

"Now hear this, you heads of the house of



Who is Micah?

The name of the prophet means, 'who is like the Lord?' In Micah 7:8, the prophet uses a play on his own name by saying: *"Who is a God like you?"* Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah who had also ministered in Judah, and Hosea who ministered to the ten Northern tribes of Israel. Micah prophesied during the reigns of King Jotham (750-731 BC), Ahaz (731-715 BC), and Hezekiah (716-686 BC).

False teachers, fake religion

The very people who should have upheld the Law of God were being financially rewarded to say the things that the people wanted to hear. They were tickling the people's ears with what they were itching to hear. Prophets prophesying for profit. Preachers pandering to people's preferences. Compromise, cowardice, covetousness. The prophets, priests, princes, profiteers and people of Judah are condemned. "But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord, nor do they understand His counsel..." Micah 4:12.



Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity: Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, 'Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us.' Therefore because of you Zion shall be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the Temple like the bare hills of the forest" Micah 3:9-12.

fairness, loyalty, compassion, caring, forgiveness, grace, generosity and hospitality. Our actions, our motivation and our attitudes are dealt with here.

Hypocrisy insults God

In His great rebuke of the Jewish scribes and pharisees in the Temple, in Matthew 23, the Lord Jesus condemns them because they "...do not do according to their words; for they say, and do not do. But all their works

Jesus Christ echoes the prophet Micah and summarises the essence of Micah 6:8: The weightier matters of the Law are: justice, mercy and faith. Here Faith is plainly equated with walking humbly with our God.

Micah presents God's legal suite against the people of Israel and Judah. "Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear Your voice. Hear, O you mountains, the Lord's complaint, and you strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a complaint »

Idolatry condemned

"And it shall be in that day," says the Lord, "That I will cut off...the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds. I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers. Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst; you shall no more worship the work of your hands; I will pluck your wooden images from your midst; thus I will destroy your cities" Micah 5:10-15.

What does God require of us?

"He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8.

Justice demands adherence to the letter of the Law. **Mercy** requires compassion. **Humility** requires an attitude of devotion to God, fearing the Lord and humbly depending upon Him. Justice requires respect for life, liberty and property. Just weights and measures. The sanctity of life. Respect for property, respect for truth, respect for God.

Do not slander or gossip, do not hold back wages overnight, do not move boundary stones. Care for widows and orphans, the poor, the sick, the handicapped, and the unfortunate. Honour, respect, consideration,

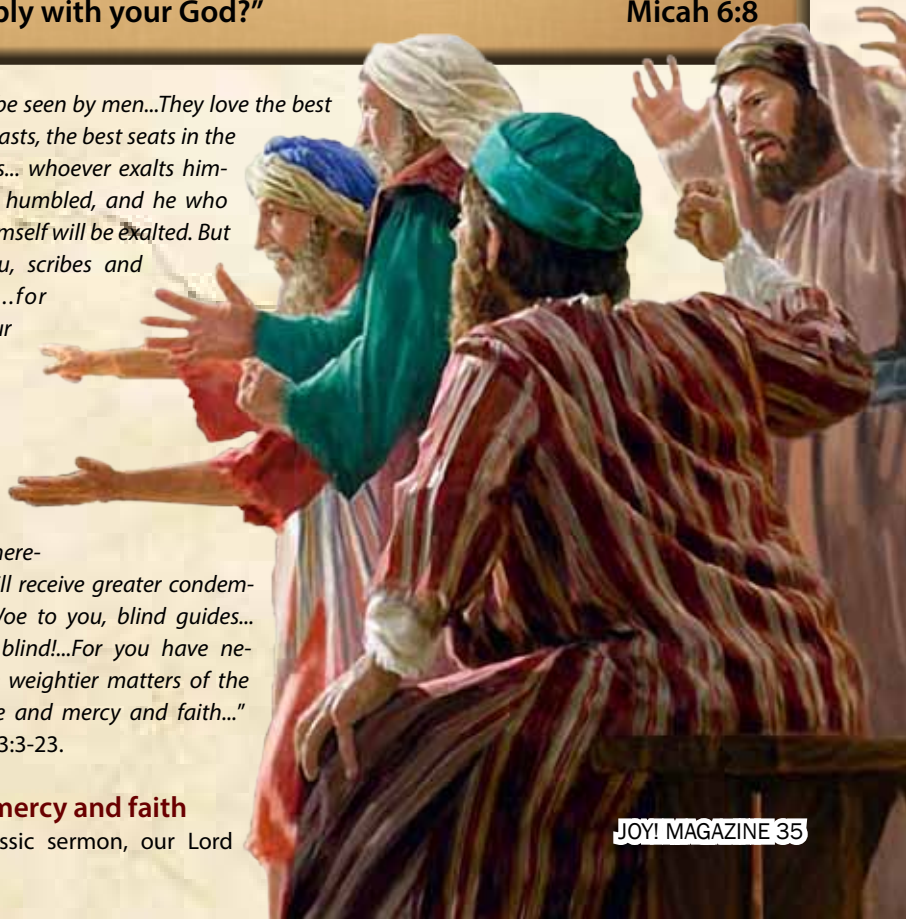
they do to be seen by men...They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues... whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and pharisees...for you devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation... 'Woe to you, blind guides... Fools and blind!...For you have neglected the weightier matters of the Law: justice and mercy and faith..." Matthew 23:3-23.

Justice, mercy and faith

In this classic sermon, our Lord

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Micah 6:8



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Justice and mercy

Micah reveals both the justice and mercy of our Lord. God's holiness requires that sin be punished. His love mercifully provides atonement for the repentant. Changed hearts always lead to changed lives. Justice, mercy and a humble walk of Faith. The Lord's judgement on the unrepentant is inevitable and His blessings upon those who repent is proclaimed. He is consistent in judging sin and He is faithful to the remnant of His people who repent. At the Cross we see God's perfect justice (the death penalty for sin) and also His perfect mercy that the repentant go free, because the Just has died in the place of the unjust.

against His people, and He will contend with Israel" Micah 6:1-2.

Empty rituals, worthless sacrifices

"For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O My people, remember now...That you may know the righteousness of the Lord. With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?" Micah 6:4-6.

The Lord condemns the empty rituals and worthless sacrifices of thousands of lambs and ten thousand rivers of oil as worthless

Debasing currencies

Dishonest weights and scales, usury, inflation and the debasing of currencies is condemned as a deceitful abomination that will inevitably bring God's judgement upon the wicked. As the Lord is holy and righteous, He cannot tolerate persistent evil. Idolatry and sorcery, deceit and fraudulent dealings, seizing lands and confiscating the inheritance of widows and orphans violates God's standards of justice and demands decisive condemnation.

Greed leads to judgement

"The faithful man has perished from the earth,

Micah reveals both the justice and mercy of our Lord. His judgement on the unrepentant is inevitable and His blessings upon those who repent is proclaimed.

hypocrisy. King Jothan failed to remove the high places from the land. These high places were both idolatrous and also where the Canaanites sacrificed babies. King Ahaz was an evil king who not only failed to stop the evil practices, but he even encouraged it.

Undermining foundations

The corruption in Jerusalem began to infect and infest the country towns. The prevalence of bribery amongst judges and corruption of both prophets and priests and the exploitation of the poor by money-changing profiteers eroded respect for life and property and broke down trust. Family relationships, the basic building block of society, began to unravel and undermine the very fabric of the social order. *"Shall I count pure those with the wicked scales, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth"* Micah 6:11-12.

and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood...The prince asks for gifts, the judge seeks a bribe...so they scheme together...Do not trust in a friend; do not put your confidence in a companion...For son dishonours father, daughter rises against her mother...A man's enemies are the men of his own household." Micah 7:2-6.

The people of Israel ignored the prophetic warning of Micah and Amos and so they were overrun by the Assyrians. The capital of Israel, Samaria, fell in 722 CC to the Assyrian King Sennacherib (727-722 BC).

Repentance leads to deliverance

However under King Hezekiah (715-686 BC) the Southern Kingdom of Judah, repented and turned back to the Lord (2 Chron 29-31). Micah's bold message of judgement and call for repentance made King Hezekiah to call his people to repentance and reformation.

As a result the Lord delivered Jerusalem from Sennacherib of Assyria (2 Chron 32).



“He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I will see His righteousness.”

Micah 7:9

When Sennacherib of Assyria besieged Jerusalem in 701 BC (2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chron 32), the Lord sent His Angel to deliver Jerusalem (2 Chron 32: 21). The Kingdom of Judah endured another 150 years after the fall of the capital of Israel, Samaria.

Fulfilled prophecy

Micah 1:5-6 records a prophecy that Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, would be destroyed. It would be turned into a vineyard and its foundations would be uncovered. In fact, the walls of Samaria were cast down 722

for the Temple sacrifices. Yet the prophecy of Micah 5:2 was fulfilled. Through the decree of Caesar Augustus for registration for a poll tax, Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem and a Child was born, a Son was given, the Bread of life and the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

“He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion the Law shall go forth, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many nations and rebuke strong nations afar off... We will walk in the Name of the Lord our God forever and ever” Micah 4:2-5.

At the Cross we see God’s perfect justice (the death penalty for sin) and also His perfect mercy that the repentant go free, because the Just has died in the place of the unjust.

BC and today vineyards grow where once the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel stood. Archaeologists have excavated to expose the very foundations of the city (Isa 46:9-10).

Christ in Micah

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting” Micah 5:2.

It is this passage from Micah that is quoted in Matthew 2:5-6 when the wise men from the East were seeking the One who was to be born King: *“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel”* Isa 9:6-7.

The King will come to Bethlehem, a most unlikely place. Bethlehem was small and insignificant, apart from its provision of bread for the Jerusalem market and lambs

“He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” Micah 7:18-19.

“He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I will see His righteousness” Micah 7:9.

“As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them wonders” Micah 7:15. *“Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me”* Micah 7:7.

The Prince of Peace

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s House shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the Law shall go



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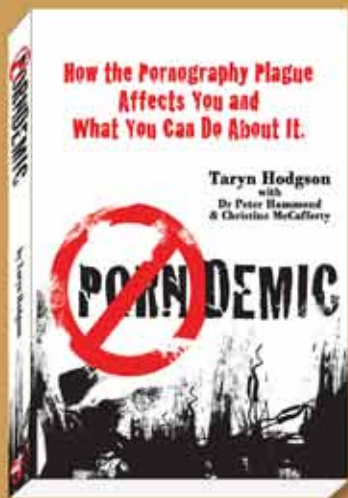
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forth, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" Micah 4:1-3.

The Messianic prophecy

It is the last part of that prophecy that is dishonestly plagiarised by the United Nations, who have placed that Messianic prophecy in stone outside the UN Headquarters in New York: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." Incredibly, the UN misappropriates this Messianic prophecy to themselves, without attributing its source. The United Nations is not even capable of bringing peace to Somalia or Bosnia. How do they expect to bring peace to the whole world? There is no peace without the Prince of Peace.

When we pray the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom come..." we are praying for what Micah proclaimed: "that we walk in the Name of the Lord our God!"

Enemies of His own household

When the Lord sent out His Twelve Apostles, He quoted Micah 7:6: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it" Matt 10:34-39.

Thy will be done

When we pray the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven..." we are praying for the fulfilment of what the prophet Micah proclaimed: "That the mountain of the Lord's House shall be established...many nations shall come and say 'Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord...He will teach us His ways and we shall walk in His paths...the Law shall go forth in the Word of the Lord. He shall judge between many nations...we will walk in the Name of the Lord our God, forever and ever." ■