

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Micah

Scripture: Micah

Code: MSB33

Title

The name of the book is derived from the prophet who, having received the word of the Lord, was commissioned to proclaim it. Micah, whose name is shared by others in the OT (e.g., Judg. 17:1; 2 Chr. 13:2; Jer. 36:11), is a shortened form of Micaiah (or Michaiah) and means “Who is like the LORD?” In 7:18, Micah uses a play on his own name, saying “Who is a God like You?”

Author and Date

The first verse establishes Micah as the author. Beyond that, little is known about him. His parentage is not given, but his name suggests a godly heritage. He traces his roots to the town of Moresheth (1:1,14), located in the foothills of Judah, approximately 25 mi. SW of Jerusalem, on the border of Judah and Philistia, near Gath. From a productive agricultural area, he was like Amos, a country resident removed from the national politics and religion, yet chosen by God (3:8) to deliver a message of judgment to the princes and people of Jerusalem. Micah places his prophecy during the reigns of Jotham (750–731 B.C.), Ahaz (731–715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.). His indictments of social injustices and religious corruption renew the theme of Amos (mid-eighth century B.C.) and his contemporaries, Hosea in the N (ca. 755–710 B.C.) and in the S Isaiah (ca. 739–690 B.C.). This fits that which is known about the character of Ahaz (2 Kin. 16:10–18) and his son Hezekiah prior to his sweeping spiritual reformations (2 Chr. 29; 31:1). His references to the imminent fall of Samaria (1:6) clearly position him before 722 B.C., at approximately 735–710 B.C.

Background and Setting

Because the northern kingdom was about to fall to Assyria during Micah's ministry in 722 B.C., Micah dates his message with the mention of Judean kings only. While Israel was an occasional recipient of his words (cf. 1:5–7), his primary attention was directed toward the southern kingdom in which he lived. The economic prosperity and the absence of international crises which marked the days of Jeroboam II (793–753 B.C.), during which the borders of Judah and Israel rivaled those of David and Solomon (cf. 2 Kin. 14:23–27), were slipping away. Syria and Israel invaded Judah, taking the wicked Ahaz temporarily captive (cf. 2 Chr. 28:5–16; Is. 7:1,2). After Assyria had overthrown Syria and Israel, the good king Hezekiah withdrew his allegiance to Assyria, causing Sennacherib to besiege Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 18,19; 2 Chr. 32). The Lord then sent His angel to deliver Judah (2 Chr. 32:21). Hezekiah was used by God to lead Judah back to true worship.

After the prosperous reign of Uzziah, who died in 739 B.C., his son Jotham continued the same policies, but failed to remove the centers of idolatry. Outward prosperity was only a facade masking rampant social corruption and religious syncretism. Worship of the Canaanite fertility god Baal was increasingly integrated with the OT sacrificial system, reaching epidemic proportions under the reign of Ahaz (cf. 2 Chr. 28:1–4). When Samaria fell, thousands of refugees swarmed into Judah, bringing

their religious syncretism with them. But while Micah (like Hosea) addressed this issue, it was the disintegration of personal and social values to which he delivered his most stinging rebukes and stern warnings (e.g., 7:5,6). Assyria was the dominant power and a constant threat to Judah, so Micah's prediction that Babylon, then under Assyrian rule, would conquer Judah (4:10) seemed remote. Thus, as the prophet Amos was to Israel, Micah was to Judah.

Historical and Theological Themes

Primarily, Micah proclaimed a message of judgment to a people persistently pursuing evil. Similar to other prophets (cf. Hos. 4:1; Amos 3:1), Micah presented his message in lawsuit/courtroom terminology (1:2; 6:1,2). The prophecy is arranged in 3 oracles or cycles, each beginning with the admonition to "hear" (1:2; 3:1; 6:1). Within each oracle, he moves from doom to hope—doom because they have broken God's law given at Sinai; hope because of God's unchanging covenant with their forefathers (7:20). One third of the book targets the sins of his people; another third looks at the punishment of God to come; and another third promises hope for the faithful after the judgment. Thus, the theme of the inevitability of divine judgment for sin is coupled together with God's immutable commitment to His covenant promises. The combination of God's 1) absolute consistency in judging sin and 2) unbending commitment to His covenant through the remnant of His people provides the hearers with a clear disclosure of the character of the Sovereign of the universe. Through divine intervention, He will bring about both judgment on sinners and blessing on those who repent.

Interpretive Challenges

The verbal similarity between Mic. 4:1–3 and Is. 2:2–4 raises the question of who quoted whom. Interpreters are divided, with no clear-cut answers on either side. Because the two prophets lived in close proximity to each other, prophesying during the same period, this similarity is understandable. God gave the same message through two preachers. The introductory phrase, "in the latter days" (4:1), removes these verses from any post-Exilic fulfillment and requires an eschatological timeframe surrounding the Second Advent of Christ and the beginning of the Millennium.

Apart from Is. 2:2–4, three other passages from Micah are quoted elsewhere in Scripture. Micah 3:12 is quoted in Jer. 26:18, thereby saving Jeremiah's life from King Jehoiakim's death sentence. Micah 5:2 is quoted by the chief priests and scribes (Matt. 2:6) in response to Herod's query about the birthplace of the Messiah. Micah 7:6 is employed by Jesus in Matt. 10:35,36 when commissioning His disciples.

Outline

I. Superscription (1:1)

II. God Gathers to Judge and Deliver (1:2–2:13)

A. Samaria and Judah Punished (1:2–16)

B. Oppressors Judged (2:1–5)

C. False Prophets Renounced (2:6–11)

D. Promise of Deliverance (2:12, 13)

III. God Judges Rulers and Comes to Deliver (3:1–5:15)

A. The Contemporary Leaders are Guilty (3:1–12)

B. The Coming Leader Will Deliver and Restore (4:1–5:15)

IV. God Brings Indictments and Ultimate Deliverance (6:1–7:20)

A. Messages of Reproof and Lament (6:1–7:6)

B. Messages of Confidence and Victory (7:7–20)

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