

# Micah

Micah 1:1-7:20

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2020-01-26

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## I. The overall message of Micah

When Kevin Peacock was in high school, his physics teacher played a joke on the class by giving them a fake final exam. When they opened it up it had one question: “Describe the universe and give two examples.” And he was somehow amused by the crestfallen look on their faces. They were no doubt thinking, how on earth can you describe the universe and then give two examples of that universe? Either part of that question is almost impossible to answer. He of course later gave them their real exam.

Well, Micah asks an equally difficult question in chapter 7:8, but it is a legitimate question. The question is, “Who is a God like You?” God can’t be compared to anyone else or anything else. He is incomparable. And that is why this book chastises the citizens of Israel and Judah for the many ways that they compared God to man and man’s measly aspirations. Rather than standing in awe of God’s infinite attributes, they had turned God into a small “g” god that could be manipulated and would be their mascot and their servant. Oh yes, they would bow before God, but the reality was that God was there to serve their whims.

Over and over Micah presses home the fact that there are no substitutes for the sovereign God of the Bible. And even Micah’s name declares that fact. Micah is the shorted form for Micaiah, which means, “Who is like Yehowah.” Micaiah is made up of three parts: Mi, which means “who?” the preposition ka, which means “like,” and Yah, the shortened form of Yehowah. Throughout this book, Micah presents a God who is matchless and incomparable; a God who leaves us breathless and standing in awe of His sovereign majesty. And He gains great glory when we acknowledge His greatness and we acknowledge our own weakness. He gains great glory by bringing a universe out of nothing, and victory out of defeat, and strength out of weakness. He is a God that does not allow the creation to take credit for His acts.

But if God is sovereign (a central theme of Micah), then that logically means that humans are responsible to serve Him and have our lives count for Him. And this is not just theoretical. Micah points out that the citizens of these two nations were responsible to Yehowah for how they have treated other people. So themes of justice and mercy are found throughout the book. I

highly recommend George Grant's book, *The Micah Mandate*. I won't be getting into that theme today. But all of these other themes are tied in to the Lordship of our sovereign God.

And if God is sovereign, then nothing in life is meaningless and all of history has a purpose. This book shows not only a final day toward which every moment of history is irresistibly heading, but it shows judgments in history and the eventual total victory of Christ's kingdom in history. And you can see that if you look at the outline of the book, which is in the form of a chiasm. We have seen quite a few chiasms in this survey of the Bible. Just to remind you, a chiasm is a literary form of parallelism that follows an abcdcba format.

- A **Basis for future judgment** by Assyria and Babylon (1)
- B A corrupt **nation** (2:1-11) yet **hope for nation after exile** (2:12-13)
- C Nothing but judgment left for corrupt **leaders** (3)
- D Contrast of total victory of grace under **Messiah** (4-5)
- C Nothing but judgment left for corrupt **leaders** (6)
- B A corrupt **nation** (7:1-7) yet **hope for nation after exile** (7:8-13)
- A **Basis for reversal of future judgment** by Assyria and Babylon (7:14-20)

The heart of the book is chapters 4-5 that give a genius description of how God's purpose for planet earth is to govern history in a way where He alone gets the glory. The apostasy of Israel and Judah and the apparent triumph of pagan nations is not a problem for our God. He gets great glory through judgment and He gets great glory through the salvation of the nations. And the apostasy and worldwide darkness of Micah's day was simply a prelude to God establishing Christ to bring beauty out of disaster, victory out of defeat, strength out of weakness, the light of Christianity out of the darkness of paganism, and the fullness of the nations out of the remnant of the nations. This way, He alone gets the glory. Even the King of the kingdom is presented two times as being an unrecognized king born in obscurity in Bethlehem rather than being a recognized king born into royalty in Jerusalem. It's just the way God loves to work.

And because Micah is writing to encourage the remnant of believers in his day that all is not lost (when it sure looked to them like all was lost), he uses the heart of the heart of the book to encourage them to take their eyes off of their weakness, and to fix their eyes on the future Messiah. It is by looking to Jesus that we can begin to believe great things from God and attempt great things for God.

## II. An overview of Micah

So if you take a look at the first chart of the book as a whole, I want to give a bird's eye view of how Micah develops this encouraging theme.

### Outlines of Micah

- A **Basis for future judgment** by Assyria and Babylon (1)
- B A corrupt **nation** (2:1-11) yet **hope for nation after exile** (2:12-13)
- C Nothing but judgment left for corrupt **leaders** (3)
- D Future victories after the exile & under Messiah (4-5)**
- C Nothing but judgment left for corrupt **leaders** (6)
- B A corrupt **nation** (7:1-7) yet **hope for nation after exile** (7:8-13)
- A **Basis for reversal of future judgment** by Assyria and Babylon (7:14-20)

### Future Victories out of Weakness (chapters 4-5)

- A The final goal of history – total shalom under the Messiah (4:1-5)
- B That future kingdom will begin in weakness and as a remnant (4:6-7)
- C **Rulership (מְשֻׁלָּה)** will begin at Migdal-Eder (Bethlehem) in the midst of labor pangs and out of weakness (4:8-10)
  - D On the basis of this message, the current (“now” = **אָתָּה**) generation is urged to be strong in the Lord till the future “judge of Israel” suffers in their place (4:11-5:1)
- C' **Rulership (לְשׂוּיָהּ)** will come out of Bethlehem in the midst of labor pangs (5:2-5a)
- B' That future kingdom will begin in weakness and as a remnant, but none will be able to stop its victory (5:5b-9)
- A' That future kingdom will begin as a remnant yet conquer all enemies (5:10-15)

Before Micah gives the good news he first gives the bad news of their sin and God's judgment. That's a good model for evangelism. Before people will be motivated to consider the good news, they must come to realize the terrible state of affairs in their own life. Things are much worse than people realize. The people of Israel and Judah could not believe that they were as bad as God said that they were. And God says in this section, “Oh, no! You are much worse than you think your are.” So in verse 2 Micah says,

2 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.

When I get a letter from the IRS, my pulse quickens because I know I will probably have to respond and they probably want more money. If you got a summons to appear in court, the same is probably true. But Micah says that this is not simply a summons to a court appearance. They have already been judged as guilty and the dark storm clouds of judgment are right now

looming over their heads. Verse 3:

3 For behold, the LORD is coming out of His place; He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. 4 The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. 5 All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem? 6 “Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the field, places for planting a vineyard; I will pour down her stones into the valley, and I will uncover her foundations. And he goes on to document the basis for this imminent judgment - a judgment of northern Israel through Assyria and a judgment of southern Judah through Babylon. And he guarantees that Israel would go into captivity. Anyway, that’s the bad news.

And since the book is constructed like a chiasm, you will see either synonymous parallelism or contrasting parallelism between the first and second halves of the book. Micah has both forms of parallelism. The first A section gives the basis for the future judgments by Assyria and Babylon. The second A section gives the basis for reversing that judgment after the exile. I love the note of hope in the midst of judgment at the end of the second A, where God says in chapter 7,

18 Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. 19 He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. 20 You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old.

If you are discouraged about your sanctification, meditate on these verses. I have found great comfort from each phrase of Micah 7:18-20. They describe a God of patience, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and covenant faithfulness to His promises. He doesn’t grudgingly give you mercy; He delights in showing mercy. He casts our sins into the depths of the sea where they can never again be retrieved. But He not only promises to forgive our sins, but to subdue our iniquities. In other words, He can give us victory over besetting sins. So both of those judgment sections also give hope to the nations of Israel and Judah.

The two B sections each describe the corruption of the nations of Israel and Judah. By the time you have read each chapter you have no question about the fact that they deserved to be cast into exile. All covenant lawsuits document the evil that is being judged.

Yet even those two sections also end with messages of hope - that God will also judge the nations that cast them into exile and that God will use this judgment to restore a remnant to Himself so that they are once again faithful. I especially like the way chapter 7:8-13 is worded. This is the second B

section. Hope and restoration are blended with admissions that they got what they deserved.

8 Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise; When I sit in darkness, The LORD will be a light to me. 9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD, Because I have sinned against Him, Until He pleads my case And executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I will see His righteousness. 10 Then she who is my enemy will see, And shame will cover her who said to me, "Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will see her; Now she will be trampled down Like mud in the streets. 11 In the day when your walls are to be built, In that day the decree shall go far and wide. 12 In that day they shall come to you From Assyria and the fortified cities, From the fortress to the River, From sea to sea, And mountain to mountain. 13 Yet the land shall be desolate Because of those who dwell in it, And for the fruit of their deeds.

You might wonder how we know a section has ended. In the Hebrew there are actually symbols at the end of a paragraph that show either a minor break or a major break. Sadly, translations don't always take those into account. But beyond those obvious clues, there are also textual clues. And finally, there are clear thematic changes.

You might think that the B sections and the C sections are identical, but they are not. The B sections deal with the nation as a whole, and there will be national restoration. But the C sections deal with the corrupt leaders who have led the nation astray, and there is no mercy for them whatsoever. The false rulers, priests, and prophets are blasted, and in 3:12 he tells them,

2 Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest.

Leaders always have worse judgment because they are more accountable.

That's why James 3 says,

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

But I want to spend the rest of my time looking at the heart of this chiasm - and that is chapters 4-5. You can see from the outline that these two chapters are also constructed like a chiasm within a chiasm. The first A section shows the total shalom that will occur under the Messiah, and the second A section shows how no enemy will be left. All enemies will be placed under Christ's feet. But if you ever want encouragement of where this world is headed to, read the first A section, which is chapter 4:1-5.

1 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.

This is talking about all peoples coming into church. Verse 2:

2 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 forth, and the word of the LORD from

Jerusalem.

There is coming a time when nations as nations will learn God's laws and will walk in God's paths. This is the goal of the Great Commission - making Christian nations that obey everything revealed in the Bible. God guarantees in these verses that the Great Commission will be a success. It doesn't happen all at once. Repeated judgments of nations must occur. Verse 3:  
3 He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they [that "they" is referring to the nations being rebuked - "they"] shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

So the rebuke of Christ obviously works. They listen and turn away from their war. Notice the absolute statement "anymore." It says, "neither shall they learn war anymore." There will be no final apostasy and tribulation at the end of history as Amils and Premils claim. In my series on Revelation I showed how Revelation 20 does not describe a new Gog and Magog warring. It's the same Gog and Magog that were 100% annihilated in the time of the Minor Prophets and Esther. So Revelation 20 is describing the nations of Gog and Magog on the day that they are resurrected from the dead and in their resurrection bodies they attempt unsuccessfully to start a war, but God will judge them before they can do so. But these verses speak of a literal worldwide non-stop peace that the Gospel will eventually usher all nations into. It is an absolute statement: "neither shall they learn war anymore." This whole section should inform our eschatology. Verse 4:  
4 But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

These are symbols of wealth and shalom. There is outward shalom and inward shalom. This is not a fake victory of the kingdom. Christ's kingdom reign will pervade everything outside of us and everything inside of us. And that this is not mere wishful thinking, but is instead the guarantee of God can be seen by that last statement - "for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken." If God speaks, it is as good as done. There will be peace on earth and the victory of the Gospel.

The last verse in this section (verse 5) is in the present tense and says what the attitudes of Micah's generation should be. Micah states,

5 For all people walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.

So Micah and the remnant with him were in effect saying, "Given the glories God guarantees in the future, we will be faithful to the Lord no matter what any other nations do." When every generation has that kind of commitment, eventually the gods of the earth will be replaced by the one true God. And the second A section says that all other gods and idols and enemies of Christ

will be completely conquered. That's the goal of the New Covenant kingdom. The A sections (in other words, the beginning of chapter 4 and the end of chapter 5) promise total victory and worldwide conquest of the Gospel.

But the B sections deny that this kingdom will come in power all at once; all in one day. It is a gradual process that seems impossible on the surface. Look at what the kingdom starts like in chapter 4:6-7. This is the first B section.

6 "In that day," says the LORD, "I will assemble the lame, I will gather the outcast and those whom I have afflicted; 7 I will make the lame a remnant, and the outcast a strong nation; so the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever. That is not impressive. Christ starts His kingdom with the equivalent of lame people, outcast people, and persecuted people. Basically they are the off-scouring of the earth; the despised; the rejected ones. Yes they will eventually be a strong nation, but they start off as an outcast people. And He is quite clear that at the beginning of Christ's kingdom these weak and lame people are only going to constitute a remnant. But as Romans 11 points out (and as Micah points out), remnant theology gives way to fullness theology. The remnant of Israel and the remnant of the Gentiles turns eventually into all Israel and all Gentiles being saved.

Why does God start things off so pathetically small in the first century AD? So that He alone gets the glory. It becomes clear that this is His kingdom and that He reigns forever. The second B section gives the same message, with the symbol of Assyria being conquered by a tiny remnant. It's a miracle. It ends with these words: "Your hand shall be lifted against your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off." I love that - all your enemies shall be cut off. His kingdom grows out of weakness and eventually completely takes over the world.

And this is true in each individual Christian's life as well - it is out of weakness that His power is made perfect. Don't be discouraged that you are unknown, defeated, and weak. God delights in showing mercy to such, because those kinds of people don't tend to take the glory for themselves. They praise God. They cling to God. They affirm, without Christ I can do nothing.

But I want you to notice that its not just the kingdom that starts small, obscure, and weak. The C sections of this center chiasm show that the King of this kingdom (Jesus) will in the future start off small, obscure, and weak. You will see the same themes of rulership, Bethlehem, labor pangs, and weakness associated with Jesus in both parallel C sections.



Chapter 4, verse 8's reference to the "tower of the flock" is Migdal-Eder, right outside of Bethlehem - right at the place where the temple lambs were raised in the pastures. Why would God have Jesus born in a manger, of a stable, of an unknown inn, to an obscure and unknown woman? Why would He have the first visitors be the poor shepherds from Migdal-Eder? Well, it's how God's kingdom works. To start in Jerusalem in a king's crib would have been to give glory and credit for the kingdom's success to man. But God starts with the lowly, the weak, and the impossible so that He alone receives the glory. Are you beginning to get a sense that this is a repeated theme in Micah?

And the birth pangs of verses 9-10 of the first C section have been taken by commentators as either the birth pangs of Mary, or more likely the birth pangs of the entire people of God - the way Revelation 12 pictures Jesus being born after the birth pangs of the Old Testament church. But either way, they parallel the birth pangs in the second Bethlehem section. I hope you are seeing the perfectly framed parallelism of these chiasms. These are not made up. They jump out of the text.

If you look at chapter 5:2-5 you will see the second C section, which is a clear reference to the birth of Jesus. And this too is in Bethlehem. This too begins the kingdom in weakness.

2 "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." 3 Therefore He shall give them up, Until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; Then the remnant of His brethren Shall return to the children of Israel. 4 And He shall stand and feed His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; And they shall abide, For now He shall be great To the ends of the earth; 5 And this One shall be peace.

And that ends this section. What a marvelous statement about the King of the kingdom. He too starts as an obscure weak baby, yet verse 4 says that He shall stand in the strength of Yehowah. Everything Jesus did, He did in the power of the Spirit. And because He feeds His flock, His flock shall abide despite being small themselves. And they will spread the kingdom to the ends of the earth. Out of weakness this King shows Himself to be strong. And it affirms that though He starts as a babe, "this One shall be peace." He is Shalom and the source of all shalom. He is the Prince of Peace. Without Him this world will never know the peace of the first A section. So even the King of the small kingdom starts small as a baby born in obscurity.

Well, that brings us to the heart of the heart of the book; and we will end with this. You will notice that the central section is not about the glories of the kingdom. If I was writing this book, I might have been tempted to put the

glories of the kingdom at the heart of the heart of the book. But what does a persecuted minority need to hear? They needed to hear that just as the Messiah would not in the future despise the day of small beginnings, Micah's remnant in his own day should not despise the day of small beginnings. He is in effect encouraging them with a theology that says, "Hey! Your labors in Lord are not in vain - even when you are an Old Testament persecuted minority." Every labor you exert on earth is somehow used by God to advance His ultimate goal of extending His knowledge and His glory so pervasively that it is likened to the depth of waters covering the ocean beds. And brothers and sisters, if every effort of the remnant in Micah's day was meaningful to God's overall plan to subdue planet earth, how much more is this true of you? Your labors in the Lord are not in vain. When you prepare the food on Sunday and clean up afterwards, those are labors that God is using to promote His ultimate goal in history. How He does it, we don't know, but we do know that your labors contribute to His kingdom - even the giving of a cup of cold water.

So let's read chapter 4:11-5:1, because those words to a tiny remnant to be valiant are words that we can relate to. These words are the heart of the heart of the book.

He starts with the words, "Now also." That is not a throwaway "now." Sometimes the Hebrew waw is translated with a throwaway "now." But this is the Hebrew word atah (אתה), which means "now in this present time" as opposed to in the "latter days" that I had been talking about earlier. And the "also" shows that just as the remnant in the latter days would be able to experience God's power despite the whole world ganging up on it, so too the people in Micah's day could claim God's power in faith. He calls for a faith to believe God for great things against all odds and to attempt great things for God against all odds. So the "now" indicates that he has switched times from the future and is about to make application of this theology to his audience. The "also" indicates that the application will be good for both eras. Beginning at verse 11:

11 Now also many nations have gathered against you, Who say, "Let her be defiled, And let our eye look upon Zion." 12 But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD, Nor do they understand His counsel; For He will gather them like sheaves to the threshing floor. 13 "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion;

When he calls the remnant of his day to thresh the nations, he is in effect saying, "You can take on Assyria and conquer them with the Gospel. You can take on Babylon and conquer it with the Gospel." This is exactly what happened under Jonah. This is exactly what happened with Daniel,

Shadrack, Mesheck, and Abednego. They saw emperors converted, and God's laws brought to the Gentiles. This is what happened with Nehemiah, and Mordecai, and Esther. He is calling people in his own day to quit looking at the dark side of life and coming to the false conclusion that it is impossible, and to begin seeing with spiritual eyes that nothing is impossible for God. He wanted them to see the obstacles as opportunities.

The remnant might have thought, "There is no way we can thresh these nations and produce a harvest. We are tiny remnant." But Micah calls the remnant to quit thinking negatively about their weakness and to begin to think with faith about God's promised power. God loves to conquer with a donkey's jawbone in the hands of Samson. Why? Because the donkey's jawbone cannot take credit to itself. He loves to convert a Naaman through the weak testimony of a little slave girl. Why? Because God alone gets the credit. He loves to use a widow of Zarapeth. In fact, when Jesus pointed out that God bypassed all the leper's in Israel and saved a Gentile leper, and he bypassed the widows of Israel and saved the widow of Zarapeth, the men got furious and they wanted to kill Jesus. Why? Because God's ways hurt their pride. Proud man does not like the sovereignty of God. God was in effect saying that God does not need us. Indeed, it is rare that God chooses the wise and the mighty. Let me read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 to you because it so beautifully sums up the message of Micah.

1Cor. 1:26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But 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; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— 31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

Well, I have really gone down a rabbit trail. But back to the text, Micah says, "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion..."

For I will make your horn iron, And I will make your hooves bronze; You shall beat in pieces many peoples; I will consecrate their gain to the LORD, [Why? Because it was the Lord who did it through them.] And their substance to the Lord of the whole earth."

Did God do what He just promised in that verse? Yes He did. The book of Esther tells us that in the face of apparent extermination, God turned things around and many Gentiles became Jews; they became believers. There is nothing too hard for the Lord, and the Lord loves it when His people have the faith to do impossible things. He goes on in chapter 5:1,

1 Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops; He has laid siege against us; They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.

He is saying, “Be prepared for spiritual warfare. You will be opposed just like Jesus will be. But I can turn you into a spiritual shock troops.” And many commentators point out that this Judge of Israel who would be struck with a rod on the cheek is the Lord Jesus. If He was willing to suffer for God’s glory, so too should we. If He had faith that out of persecution He would win the battle, then so should we. God delights in giving strength to the weak and victory to the overwhelmed. If you are overwhelmed this morning, you are a great candidate for God’s grace - He loves to use people just like you.

Faith always looks to Christ’s resources, not to ourselves. And of course, the very next verse leads us to the birth of Christ and shows that God Himself had this same humility that He calls us to have. Though He was divine and His goings forth were from everlasting, yet He was willing to be born as a babe in a stable in Bethlehem. If you want to be like God, be humble; be expendable; be faith-filled; be hopeful. Don’t give up. Don’t be discouraged. If God’s plans for planet earth that Micah talks about are true, then Paul gives the application in 1 Corinthians 15:58:

1Cor. 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. You see, that Incarnation of Jesus is the symbol of God’s methods for victory. The Jews of the first century would have loved it if Jesus would have appeared out of heaven with His angels, overthrown Rome, and instantly put the Jews into power. But that’s not the way He works. We don’t need the government on our side. We need Jesus. We don’t need the media on our side. We need Jesus. And if God is for you, who can be against you? Who is a God like Yehowah. He is incomparable And nothing can withstand His purposes for planet earth.

Obviously there is a lot more to the book of Micah, but that in a nutshell is the substance of this glorious book. Let’s pray.