

DECEMBER 15

Not only are you closing in on the end of the year, but you are closing in on having read The One Year Bible for a year. Today you begin the 33rd book of the Old Testament with only six more books to go. If you are still reading, even struggling, God will reward you, so keep going. Christmas chocolates and cookies might help.

Micah 1-4

One of the challenges reading the minor prophets is to pay attention and try to understand what makes this messenger unique. After a while, it just seems like "Blah, blah, blah, blah, oh, blah, blah, blah, blah, sickness, sorrow and despair, people dying everywhere, blah, blah, blah, blah, oh, blah, blah, blah, blah." Reading the Bible every year gives you the basic events. What we don't often understand is the working behind those events. For example, Cyrus sent the people back to Jerusalem to build the temple, but how did God move him to do that? Then, when you put Daniel 5 & 6 next to that event, you understand how God moved Cyrus and you see the glory and grace of God.

The same is true with Micah. Micah has some "stand-alone" bright spots, that is, a few verses dealing with Jesus' birth and one passage dealing with devotion to God. Yet, we have something in Jeremiah that shows us how God actually used Micah and his messages.

Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.' Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and did not the LORD relent of the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster upon ourselves. (Jeremiah 26:18-19)

So, you wonder how it was that Hezekiah was spiritually ready to stand against the massive force of Assyria coming against Jerusalem. It was Micah. Sure, it might also have been God working in Joel and the grasshoppers. Hezekiah had Isaiah close at hand too, but it was definitely the influence of these messages by Micah that helped Hezekiah. These seven chapters are full of judgments, but they also have some great promises to the future glory of Israel. In that sense, they fit nicely with our reading in Revelation.

Remember to look at the chart, "Kings of Judah and Israel and the Preexilic Prophets."

Micah 1

V. 1 This message is mainly to Israel, the northern kingdom, but notice how God says that their sickness has infected Judah and come to Jerusalem.

Vs. 2-4 What do you think about this call to all the peoples of the earth? Notice that the temple is immediately in view and is, so to speak, the center of the world. The Lord's judgment will begin with His own people. Again, Israel is serving the world as a lesson, but very few people or nations are paying attention.

V. 5 This seems to say that both of these cities are guilty. Calling Jerusalem a *high place* was a way of chiding Judah for the idolatry that had been, and would be, practiced there.

Vs. 6-9 This judgment of Israel by Assyria will come to the gate of Jerusalem. We know from 2 Kings 18 & 19 that the Assyrians came, they saw, they threatened, they taunted God and they went home broken.

Vs. 10-16 When Assyria swept Israel away, they also came into the kingdom of Judah and took cities and villages. The names of some of these places were in Judah, but God only allowed Assyria to come to the *gate of Jerusalem*.

Micah 2

The message, perhaps years later than chapter 1, came during the time of Hezekiah and was aimed at Judah.

Vs. 1-5 This seems to cite some of the sins of the people, probably the rich.

Vs. 6-11 This is a word against the false prophets who told the people what they wanted to hear. Verse 6 shows the message of the false prophets against the true prophets. In the minds of the false prophets, the people needed good news, not bad news. In v. 11 you have the false preachers again, probably citing both their wages and their inspiration.

Vs. 12-13 This is not only a note to future blessing, but within it, it is a threat that only a remnant of them will be saved.

Micah 3

Vs. 1-4 This is God's judgment of the *rulers* of Jerusalem and Judah. The leaders used the people for their own advantage.

Vs. 5-7 Naturally, this disrespect of God was powered by false *prophets*.

V. 8 The lies told to the people must have gotten Micah's blood boiling.

Vs. 9-12 This is what was quoted in Jeremiah 26 and was directed to King Hezekiah. Like the king of Nineveh, but unlike the kings of Israel, Hezekiah took this to heart and repented.

Micah 4

Because of the salvation to Jerusalem that Hezekiah's response would bring, God discloses this future blessing.

Vs. 1-4 You not only have the Messiah, but also peace and prosperity. Notice how the Messiah is associated with the Word.

V. 5 This is a present contrast between the moment Micah was writing and what the future will hold for Israel.

Vs. 6-8 God will take weak Israel and make them a witness and leader for the nations.

Vs. 9-12 This is a very quick confirmation that Judah will go into exile in Babylon, but will also be returned, not only to Jerusalem, but to usefulness for the Lord.

V. 13 I guess you could title this "Victory in Jesus."

So, remember that the force of this really convicted Hezekiah. If you look at the context of the passage in Jeremiah, if the events were similar, Hezekiah might even have been moved to anger against Micah when he first heard this. If so, Hezekiah humbled himself and obeyed the Word that the Lord spoke through Micah.

Revelation 6

For me, the best way to understand Revelation is chronologically; that is, most of the events happen one after another. There are a few exceptions, but it seems to be the way things are laid out by the Spirit. You have the church, then the introduction of the Ancient of Days, then comes the Lamb to take the scroll and then He opens the seals, then come the trumpets and then the bowls, etc. Then comes the end.

Since I'm not God and since no one really fully understands this book, I'll suggest some order to things, but I reserve the right to change my mind later as the Spirit makes things clearer to me.

Vs. 1-2 So though we know what the *white horse* means, we don't really understand how it fits to the Tribulation. Since this sounds a lot like Jesus in Revelation 19:11, I'm going to suggest this "could" be the Lord taking the church. The church finishing its mission would be considered conquerors. The church gets taken at the beginning of the Tribulation and this guy doesn't seem to have any negative connotations or to be inflicting disaster on the earth. This is just a guess. Of course, if a lot of people suddenly disappeared off the face of the earth, it would not only make the evening news, it would create a lot of havoc worldwide. It would also be that sign that would

cause Israel to wake up, to be "jealous" of the church and to come to faith in Christ. Their wake-up call will come when the number of the Gentiles (the church) is complete. (Romans 11:25-26)

Vs. 3-4 Now this *second seal* and horseman do create disaster on the earth. This could be the anarchy created after so many believers from every country are removed. (Matt. 24:6-8)

Vs. 5-6 The *third seal* and the black horse bring financial chaos and famine on the earth. This will make what's happening in the U.S. and in Europe today look like a picnic.

Vs. 7-8 A very simple thing like a plague, a flu, a divine something, will wipe out a quarter of the earth's population. That would be about 1.75 billion people. That is more than the population of India. Compared to that number, the U.S. is just a drop in the bucket. And imagine the disease and disorder that will come from that. Imagine the disorder when politicians, doctors, pilots, and geeks who keep the internet going are suddenly sick and dying. We humans think we are so big.

Vs. 9-11 This *fifth seal* is a call for justice, or God's vengeance, I believe it is from those martyred for Christ since His resurrection to that day. What will follow in the Tribulation will be the slaughter of God's people, the Tribulation saints, because they name the name of Christ and/or protect the Jews. I think this persecution of believing Jews and followers of Christ will begin soon after the beginning of the Tribulation and will intensify during the final 3.5 years. (Matt. 24:9-13)

Vs. 12-16 This is only the *sixth* of seven seals. I don't know if this is a result of the call for justice from those saints or whether this is a stand-alone curse on the earth. Whatever it is it will look like the natural result from the earthquake or volcano or both. It could be that the atmosphere of the earth will be changed because of volcanic ash or something. Yet, there could also be a spiritual or cosmic element to this too. It looks like the heavens and the stars are affected as well. The result will be so devastating and make people feel so emotionally helpless and distraught that they will wish for death. There will be no place to hide, and they will hate the two witnesses, but they will understand that this is from the Lord.

Now as a note here, somewhere in all of this are the actions of the two witnesses. They might come after the sealing of the 144,000. They will be like Aaron and Moses, walking around in Jerusalem and being the human agency that calls down the wrath of God on the earth, as the seals are broken in heaven.

Also, it is interesting to note that Jesus said that as soon as the Tribulation begins, normal life will end. Weddings, business ventures, and having a good time at the mall will all cease. If you can imagine the trauma of these first six seals, you can see there will be great fear, anxiousness and disorder on the planet. And, the real fun hasn't even begun. This is designed by God as a last effort to prepare the hearts of men to trust Christ, while also bringing a much deserved judgment against mankind. Tomorrow we'll meet the missionary force sent out into this dark time of harvest. Then we'll see that the judgment of the earth is just, in that those who reject the message will show their hearts by taking out their anger against God on those who follow Christ.

Psalm 134

Vs. 1-3 This looks like a song of the pilgrims approaching Jerusalem to inspire the priests and the Levites who would stand before them and the Lord.

It would be good today if people would appreciate, trust, and follow their leaders who are truly shepherding them into the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples.

Proverbs 30:1-4

I don't think *Agur* is being too humble here. I think that the closer we walk with the Lord, the more amazed we are with the depth of our depravity and the wonder of God's help to us. What would we do without the Word and the Spirit daily in our lives?

While claiming he is too human to have wisdom, Agur suddenly says something that is very amazing. You kind of wonder who that *son* is that Agur mentions. Here is something Jesus said. This is pretty cool.

No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. (John 3:13)