

DECEMBER 16

Micah 5-7

When you read this "minor" prophet, you get a sense that he might have had a major influence. Since we didn't live at that time, we don't know what kind of interaction Micah and Isaiah had. God makes the prophet by giving him his message and God certainly said more through Isaiah than through Micah, but this portion we'll read today is very strong and inspiring. Some of the things Micah said about the Messiah and the future glory of Israel would have inspired both Isaiah and Hezekiah. What Micah says about God's desire and His forgiveness of sins is tender and profound.

Micah 5

This chapter belongs to and concludes the message to Judah that started in chapter 3. The end of chapter 4 was very end-times in its force, with the Messiah arriving and bringing glory to Israel among the nations.

V. 1 In the Hebrew Bible, this verse belongs to chapter 4. It seems to be a reference to a nation humiliating one of the kings of Judah. Some think this is Babylon punishing King Zedekiah.

Vs. 2-5 But a ruler will come who will lead Israel forever. You should recognize v. 2 as being from the birth of Jesus and quoted in Matthew 2:6. God is promising Judah that there will be eternal blessing for Judah in spite of the kingdoms rising against Israel. This would have given Jerusalem hope. It is interesting that HE shall be their peace. HE is everyone's peace.

Vs. 5-9 This pronouncement of victory over the enemies of Israel is definitely future, and although Assyria is mentioned, it is also mentioned as the land of Nimrod. This is northern Iraq-Iran, eastern Turkey and Armenia. The upshot is that whoever attacks Israel from this area will get more than they bargained for.

Vs. 10-15 In order for God to use Israel as a tool of judgment for the nations, God will cleanse them. That will involve humbling them in terms of their reliance on military power or the pride and safety of their cities. It will also involve God returning their hearts in devotion to Him.

In chapters 3-5 there are a lot of hard things said to Jerusalem and to Hezekiah, but with those judgments, there was the hope of a Messiah and a glorious future. I'm sure this message was something that helped Hezekiah lead the people to stand in hope against the hopelessness of resisting the Assyrians.

Chapters 6-7 make up the final climatic sermon in Micah.

Micah 6

Vs. 1-2 God is calling all creation to witness His contention against His people. That's pretty dramatic. It just blows me away to think that we should be so rebellious before the God of the universe whose wisdom imagined the foundations of the earth, and yet He's willing to even take the time to try and speak sense to us.

Vs. 3-5 These are instances of God saving His people. These are grace, love and mercy for anyone with a spiritual perspective.

Vs. 6-8 So here Micah speaks. What does God really want of us? That last line in v. 7 is great. Verse 8 assumes you also know His Word.

Vs. 9-16 God again cries out against Jerusalem. Notice the parallel between vs. 14-15 and Isaiah 55:1-2.

Micah 7

I'm not sure, but I think Jesus knew this chapter very well.

Vs. 1-6 This is Micah's lament. He has heard what the Lord has said and as he looks at the people he knows that God will have to punish them. Verse 1 reminds me of Jesus' curse of the fig tree in Mark 11:20 and one of His parables in Luke 13:6-9.

V. 4 Look at Isaiah 55:13. I'll bet that Micah and Isaiah used to meet at Starbucks© and shoot the ox. Jesus also used references to briars and thorns in Luke 6:44.

V. 6 Now this surprised me. Jesus used this to teach His disciples to endure rejection as they followed Him in the harvest. He used this portion of Scripture with the disciples in Matthew 10:35, when He called the Twelve and then about a year and a half later, just months before the cross in Luke 12:49-53. Obviously Jesus was God, but as a man, He Himself knew the Word.

V. 7 This is pivotal, and it is the hope and refuge of all of His disciples.

Vs. 8-10 This is Micah sensing how the nations will gloat over Judah and Jerusalem as the Lord humbles them for their sins. Verse 8 could have applied to Jesus in His trials. Verse 9 applies to us.

Vs. 11-14 But Micah also sees the vindication of Jerusalem before the nations.

V. 15 God Himself confirms this vindication.

Vs. 16-17 Micah says God will chasten the nations and they will come to Him in fear.

Vs. 18-20 You could call this the song of Micah. It is a beautiful testimony to God's *steadfast love* and *faithfulness*, not just to Israel, but to all of mankind. He has patiently endured our sin and insanity and then He sent His Son into this darkness to save us. That sounds like the Christmas story.

Revelation 7

V. 1 The sixth seal has been broken and now there is an interlude in the judgments. Apparently there has now been enough judgment on earth for the hearts of men and the hearts of the Jews to be open and to be aware that what is happening has a very spiritual source.

Vs. 2-8 Now God seals His servants for this time of harvest. Apparently God kept track of the lineage of all of these people. As mentioned before, I think the tribe of Dan is missing because of what they did at the end of the book of Judges. They were the first tribe that went totally apostate. Keep in mind that none of these 144,000 are mentioned as martyrs. I think they stay under the radar for a long time. Remember the earth is getting pretty wrecked, so they can scatter all over the place almost unnoticed. And now people are finally ready to ask whether God has a wonderful plan for their lives. ☺

Although it never says that these 144,000 are missionaries, they are sealed for something. Along with this we have Jesus' words about this time of Tribulation in Matthew 24:14, *And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.* There will be worldwide preaching during the entire Tribulation. If you add up all the missionaries from every mission agency in the world today, you do not come up with 144,000. God will be organizing the greatest outreach, during the storm, that the world has ever seen. How is that for grace and mercy?

Vs. 9-10 And this is the fruit of their ministry. This is a vision, a prophetic summary, of all who will come to Christ from the work of these servants. During the Tribulation there will be lots of people who will come to Christ from all nations and many of them will die for their love of Christ. As we'll see, there will be a worldwide search for those who believe in Christ. Believers will stand out not only by their testimony to the lost, but also, for example, by the refusal to receive the mark of the beast in Revelation 13:17.

Vs. 11-12 The praise of this multitude moved the elders and the creatures to fall before God and worship Him. Again, out of disaster, chaos and judgment, God brings salvation and shows great mercy and love.

Vs. 13-17 I always wonder if this elder wasn't the future John talking to himself here. That comes from watching too many sci-fi movies.

But notice that God is drawing our attention to who these people are. It doesn't say that all of these people were martyred, although they may have been, but that they all suffered. What they all have in common is that they were in the Tribulation and were made clean by the blood of the Lamb.

V. 15 Their privilege and reward for coming to faith in the Tribulation will be to live in the presence of God *day and night*. Again, not many of us would consider that a reward. That just shows how sin pickles our souls.

V. 16 They suffered. Not every believer will be killed during the Tribulation, but all will suffer. Some believers will be alive and go into the Millennial Kingdom as unresurrected, reproducing humanity.

V. 17 Jesus Himself will be their reward and their comfort. Note that the wiping of *every tear* was mentioned in Isaiah 25:8, *He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.*

Yet as we read this comforting of these people, that is still future in the book of Revelation, waiting for the return of Christ to the earth. We are still in chapter 7 and there is still a lot of the Tribulation ahead. It is at this crucial time after the sixth seal that the earth is ready for these servants of God to fan out on the earth and carry the message of Christ into this very dangerous harvest field. Isn't it interesting how God still shows us that He will always be extending love, mercy and forgiveness? It is interesting to have read in Micah 5:5, *And He shall be their peace.* And that is in the harvest during the Tribulation. He should be our peace too, as we follow Him now in this time of harvest.

Psalm 135

This is a song either of, or for, the servants of the Lord. Notice that among the blessings at the end are those of the house of Aaron and Levi, putting the emphasis on those servants. Actually, Israel was the servant of God to bring the message of redemption to all the nations. And, as we're seeing in Revelation, Israel will fulfill that service.

Vs. 1-4 The privilege of knowing and serving the Lord.

V. 5 A pivotal statement of God's greatness.

Vs. 6-7 His greatness over all of nature.

Vs. 8-12 And His greatness is over all nations.

Vs. 13-14 As His name and renown are unending and never changing, so is His plan for His people Israel.

Vs. 15-18 The nations are totally lost. Just think, during the millennial reign of Christ, there won't be a "religious tolerance" day. Everyone will know that Jesus is God.

Vs. 19-21 So the servants of the Lord are told to praise God for the privilege of knowing Him and having good news to tell.

Proverbs 30:5-6

Amen. The focus on the Word is our life and health. I was thinking this morning that when Jesus had fasted for forty days and Satan suggested He turn a stone into bread, Jesus quoted the Word about the importance of the Word. Here is the entire verse from Deuteronomy 8:3, *And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*

We are His messengers and what He says should be said by us in humility, with as little of us mixed into it as possible.