

# **Basic Training Bible Ministries**

## **“Seven Signposts of the End Times”**

**A Study in the Book of Micah**



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## **The Book of Micah**

### **Seven Signs of a Terminal Generation**

#### Author and Date:

Micah gives the time of writing as *“in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah,”* (Mic 1:1). This places his ministry from about 740 to 710 B.C. This book of his prophecies was likely compiled around 700 B.C. He was a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah. His name is a shortened form of *“Micaiah”* (cf. 1Ki 22:8–28, another prophet), meaning *“Who is like Jehovah.”* In Mic 7:18 the prophet asks, *“Who is a God like You?”* His prophecy of Mic 3:12 was later quoted by the elders in Jerusalem in defense of Jeremiah (Jer 26:16–19). He was also quoted by Jesus when He was sending out the apostles (cf. Mic 7:5–6 with Mat 10:35–36). His home town of Moresheth (Mic 1:1, Mic 1:14) was in southwest Judea, near the Philistine city of Gath.

#### Theme and Purpose:

Micah’s theme is that the Lord is coming to earth to judge and to redeem (Mic 1:3, Mic 2:7, Mic 4:1–2, Mic 5:3–4, Mic 6:8, Mic 7:7–8). His message could be summarized by Psa 89:14, *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face,”* and by Rom 11:22, *“Therefore, consider the goodness and severity of God ...”* The prophet’s warnings include both *“Samaria [Northern Kingdom] and Jerusalem [Southern Kingdom]”* (Mic 1:1). Both kingdoms are rebuked for their defection from the covenant of God, their idolatry, and the corruption and greed which had affected all classes of the people. In fulfillment of his prophecies, the Northern Kingdom went into the Assyrian captivity in 721 B.C., and the Southern Kingdom fell to Babylon in 586 B.C. Although the Assyrian army laid siege to Jerusalem in Micah’s time, the repentance of Hezekiah at the word of Isaiah led to a fascinating deliverance (Isa 37:21–38; 2Ki 19:20–37), which is a type of Israel’s deliverance at the second coming of Jesus Christ (Mic 5:5–15; Zec 14:12–15; Rev 19:11–21). Passages like Mic 4:6–7 and Mic 5:5–9 (see notes) will help to explain the title *“Lord of hosts”* as used of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will lead four distinct armies at His second coming.

One distinction between the message of the Old Testament versus that of the New is that in the messages of the prophets, judgment is the foremost theme, followed by an offer of forgiveness (cf. Mic 7:1–10), where in the New Testament the *“good news”* comes first, followed by the warning of judgment (cf. Joh 3:14–21). This shift of perspective is due to the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The astounding thing about the first coming of our Lord is that, He truly did come to judge sin, but He chose to bear that judgment Himself (2Co 5:21; 1Pe 2:24–25). Even in the midst of dire warnings of judgment, Micah offers hope of deliverance to those who will place their trust in the Lord (Mic 2:12–13; Mic 4:1–8; Mic 5:3–6; Mic 6:8; Mic 7:7–9, Mic 7:14–20).

## Book Outline and Study Method

The book of Micah is divided into three messages of the prophet, each containing warnings of judgment and promises of deliverance to those who respond in faith. Each message begins with a call to “hear” (Mic 1:2; Mic 3:1; Mic 6:1), reminiscent of the prophet *Micaiah* (1Ki 22:28).

### I. The First Message (Mic 1:1–2:13)

The prophet warns that the Lord is coming down to judge His people, both Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Judah (Southern Kingdom). Micah mourns over the sins of his people, warns them of impending disaster, and offers hope in the Lord (1:3) and His Spirit-inspired Word (2:7).

### II. The Second Message (Mic 3:1–5:15)

In two parts Micah reveals coming judgment on the rulers and leaders of the nation (3:1–12) for their idolatry, corruption, and greed. He then gives a promise of deliverance and blessings in the coming kingdom of the Messiah (4:1–5:15). This section is a fascinating look into events that are beginning to unfold in our own time!

### III. The Third Message (Mic 6:1–7:20)

This section unfolds like a courtroom scene in which Jehovah indicts His people (6:1–5), the prophet intercedes for the repentant remnant (6:6–8), the Lord then reviews their sins and corresponding punishments (6:9–16), the prophet again intercedes (7:1–14), and concludes with the Lord’s promise of future deliverance for His people (7:15–20).

## Principles of Interpretation in Prophetic Literature

When we come to Old Testament prophecy, there are several hermeneutical principles (the science of biblical interpretation) to keep in mind. First of all, while the prophets are prone to use figurative and symbolic language, we seek to interpret these images in a literal fashion, guided by God’s Word, “*comparing spiritual things with spiritual*” (1Co 2:13). Thus, while the Lord’s coming causes mountains to shake and valleys to split (Mic 1:3–4), we also know that these are used to represent men, as when John the Baptist quotes Isaiah, saying “*Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low*” (Isa 40:3–4; Luk 3:4–6), fulfilling the principle, “*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*” (Jam 4:6). The use of poetic and symbolic language does not deny its literal implications, as confirmed by other Scriptures. At the Lord’s coming, literal mountains will shake (Eze 38:18–20; Zec 14:3–5; Rev 16:18–20), at the same time the proud and mighty will be brought down (Rev 6:15–17; Rev 19:17–21).

Another thing to bear in mind is the dual fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. The visions of the prophets generally have a primary focus on the Lord’s literal coming, in either His first advent (Mic 5:2) or His second (Mic 7:15–20). However, they also have a near fulfillment for the prophets’ generation, as in the captivity of Israel (721 B.C.) and Judah (586 B.C.). Naturally, the near fulfillment is the lesser, and the far fulfillment is the greater. Often in a single prophecy, both the first and second coming of the Lord are in view, as in Isa 61:1–4. Note that in our

Lord's reading of this passage, He stopped in mid-verse (Luk 4:16–19), in order to deal only with the portion relating to His first coming.

### Micah's Prophecy in a Nutshell

Using "key" verses from each chapter, we can summarize the message of the book. This is helpful to gain a simple overview of the prophet's vision. The following is an example:

The Lord is coming down to judge the earth (Mic 1:3), yet His Spirit is not restrained from also delivering those who will heed His words in faith and obedience (Mic 2:7). Those who stand firm by the power of His Spirit (Mic 3:8) will one day reign with Him from Mount Zion (Mic 4:6–7). Although His kingdom is small in its beginning (Mic 5:2), and is built by humble men who walk by faith (Mic 6:8), yet His final rule will encompass the whole earth (Mic 7:14–17).

For our study, we will look at each message, dividing it along the chapter divisions and building each chapter around its key verse. The key verses give us seven "signs" of this seventh terminal generation.

#### I. The First Message, (Mic 1:1–2:13)

##### A. The Lord is Coming to Judge, Micah 1—the sign of approaching footsteps (social decay combined with natural disturbances)

Here the key verse is Mic 1:3, in which the prophet warns of the Lord's coming down to judge the earth. This is a message for all the people of Israel (v. 1) as well as the whole earth (v. 2). Micah borrows the call of his namesake, *Micaiah* (1Ki 22:28), saying, "*Hear, all you peoples!*" The prophets, and apostles often used each others' material (cf. Mic 4:1–3 with Isa 2:1–4 and Jud 11 with 2Pe 2:15). This was not plagiarism, since the word belonged to the Lord, not the prophet. This judgment has a three-fold fulfillment: (1) in the captivities under Assyria and Babylon, (2) in the first advent of Jesus Christ and the judgment of His cross, and (3) in the ultimate judgments surrounding His second coming.

##### 1. Israel (Samaria) and Judah (Jerusalem) indicted of their sins, Mic 1:1–7

The prophet calls on Israel, Judah, and all the earth to hear and heed the warning of coming judgment. This judgment is foretold by disturbances in the natural realm (vv. 3–4). We know that in the days of Uzziah, who reigned just prior to Jotham (cf. Isa 1:1), there was a terrible earthquake (Zec 14:5). Jesus warns of natural disturbances increasing as a sign of His return (Mat 24:4–8). Since man was put in charge of the natural creation (Gen 1:28), whenever man revolts against God, creation rebels against man. In other words, increasing natural disturbances are a clear sign of spiritual revolt in the nations. God's people are likened to a harlot who profits by her sinfulness (cf. Jam 4:1–4).

2. The prophet mourns over the condition and coming judgment of the sinful nation, Mic 1:8–16.

One of the great but overlooked ministries of a truly spiritual believer is that of intercession. Paul tells us to pray for all men, especially those in positions of power (1Ti 2:1–7) because Christ died for them. It is impossible to truly intercede without entering into the need of those we pray for. Here, the prophet grieves over the sin of his people, and the inevitable judgment that must fall. He prophetically declares that the judgment will come “*to the gate of Jerusalem*” (Mic 1:12). This was fulfilled by the invasion of Sennacherib, and the deliverance of the Angel of the Lord (Isa 37). From Mic 1:10–16, the prophet uses place-names having meanings similar to the judgments about to fall on Israel and Judah.

### The Judgment of God on Sinners

1. It is inevitable, due to the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, that God must judge both sin and sinners. Psa 97:2–3.
2. Sin and death leave a trail through the history of mankind, Gen 3:6, Gen 4:8, Gen 5:3; Rom 3:23, Rom 5:12; 1Co 15:22, 1Co 15:25–26.
3. Moses predicted the rebellion of Israel and set before them the choice of cursing or blessing, Deu 11:26–28, Deu 30:15, Deu 31:16–23.
4. The amazing thing is that when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world, He chose to bear the judgment of God against sinners in our place, Psa 22; Isa 53; Joh 3:14–19; 2Co 5:21.
5. The offer of forgiveness and deliverance is always open to those who will humble themselves and trust in the Lord, Gen 4:7; Isa 1:16–20; Jer 7:1–7; Hab 3:17–19; Joh 5:22–24; Rom 3:23–24.
6. The Bible makes it clear that Christ died for every man, and God does not desire the sinner’s judgment, but rather his salvation, Eze 18:23, Eze 30–32, Eze 33:11; Act 17:26–31; 1Co 15:22; 1Ti 2:3–6; 2Pe 3:9.

### The Seven Terminal Generations

The people of Micah’s day were living in a terminal generation—that is, one in which the judgment would be so great that everything would change forever. In the Bible, there are seven generations of mankind set forth as terminal generations, and each one is given sufficient warning to know that they are “the” generation.

1. The “flood” generation—Gen 5:21–6:8.  
Note: the prophecy of Lamech (Gen 5:29) and the 120-year time limit (Gen 6:3).

2. The “Exodus” generation—Gen 15:1–18.  
Note: “400 years” (vv. 13, 16) and “430 years” (Exo 12:40 with Gal 3:17).
3. The “captivity” generation—Jer 25:9–11, Jer 26:18 with Mic 3:12.
4. The “return from exile” generation—2Ch 36:21; Jer 25:11, Jer 29:10; Zec 1:12, Zec 7:5; Ezc 1:1.
5. The generation of “Messiah’s birth”—Dan 9:24–27; Mat 16:3; Luk 2:25–32, Luk 19:44.
6. The “70 A.D.” generation—Luk 19:43–44; Mat 23:34–36.
7. The “Second Coming” generation—Mat 24:4–8, Mat 32–34 with Mat 21:18–22.

B. The Lord is Able to Deliver, Micah 2—the sign of God’s Word rejected

In Mic 2:7, we see that in the midst of judgment, God is able—by His mighty Spirit—to provide deliverance to those who walk in the light of His Word (cf. Joh 8:12; 1Jo 1:7). The warning of judgment in Mic 1 is repeated in the face of many mockers (Mic 2:6), but is combined with a call to trust in and walk by the Word of truth. In every generation, there will always be a remnant, as Elijah learned (1Ki 19:18).

1. The corruption of the rulers, Mic 2:1–5

The rich and powerful often use their power to enrich themselves at the expense of those over whom they rule. Since all true authority comes from God (Rom 13:1–7), they must answer for their corruption before the Lord—the ultimate authority. Micah declares that those who have deprived many of their homes and lands will, in the end, be homeless—even losing their eternal inheritance in the land (Mic 2:5). The literal meaning of “*the power of their hand*” (v. 1), is “the god of their hand,” indicating that they have corrupted their power into their god. The recent housing crash in America (2008–2010) is a perfect example, as those who helped bring about the collapse only gained in wealth and power, even as many across the land were losing their homes and land. These corrupt leaders will not escape the judgment of God!

Principle: God is just, and will ultimately render to each man according to his deeds—Rom 2:6; Psa 62:12; Pro 24:12; Isa 3:8–11; Mat 16:27; Luk 12:48.

2. The contention with false prophets, Mic 2:6–11

Micah responds to those of his generation who reject the Word of God. They resist the true prophets, calling them “prattlers” (v. 6), but Micah says the true prattler is the false prophet who tells them what they want to hear (v. 11). It is inevitable that men devoted to evil will seek to suppress the truth (Rom 1:18). In 3Jo 9–10, John speaks of “*Diotrephes*,” who was always “*prating against*” him. The word means “to speak with great excitement to the point of foaming at the mouth.” Here the verb *nataph* means to drip, dribble, and slobber. This was the opinion many had of Micah’s ministry. Pashhur the priest treated Jeremiah in the same way (Jer 20:1–6). The prophet assures them that the Spirit of God is the source of his words, which will benefit those who walk by them (v. 7). Those who

have become “enemies of God” (v. 8) by robbing their own people, will surely suffer for their evil deeds (vv. 8b-10). They have followed their “prattling” false prophets into the *cul de sac* of judgment.

### The Story of Every Generation

1. God’s truth and salvation is available to every generation, Isa 51:7–8.
2. In every generation, there are righteous men and women, Gen 7:1; 1Ki 19:18.
3. Every generation is responsible to pass the truth of God’s Word to the next, Psa 48:12–14, Psa 78:1–4, Psa 102:18, Psa 145:4.
4. Every generation will be tested regarding their response and loyalty to God’s Word and will reap either cursing or blessing accordingly, Deu 11:26–28, Deu 29:14–29, Deu 30:1, Deu 30:15; Psa 12:6–7.
5. Some generations will be more devoted to evil than others, Pro 30:11–14; Mat 12:39, Mat 12:45, Mat 17:17, Mat 23:33.
6. Evil generations often sow their unbelief and cursing through succeeding generations, Exo 20:5; Exo 34:7; Deu 5:9.
7. In every generation, there will be believers who will have historical impact through subsequent generations, Psa 112:1–10.

3. Restoration of the remnant promised, Mic 2:12–13

### The Power of God’s Word

1. The Word of God will outlast all creation—Isa 40:6–8; Mat 24:35; 1Pe 1:24–25.
2. God’s Word is compared to a fire that devours and a hammer that destroys all that resists it, Jer 23:29.
3. The Word of God is living and powerful, able to analyze the human heart, Heb 4:12–13.
4. The longest hymn and prayer in the Bible is dedicated to the power of God’s Word, Psa 119.
5. God’s Word is reliable because God is immutable, Psa 27:1–14; Isa 55:8–11; Heb 6:13–20.
6. The Word of God produces faith in those having ears to hear, Rom 10:17.
7. God the Father works through His Son; the Son through the Spirit; the Spirit through His Word; and His Word works in those who believe, Joh 5:17–24; Joh 14:16–18, Joh 14:26–27, Joh 15:26–27, Joh 16:7–15.

### II. The Second Message (Mic 3:1–5:15)

- A. The mighty ministry of God’s Spirit, Micah 3—the sign of spiritual giants among us

In Mic 3:8, the prophet boasts of his power to stand against his evil generation, ascribing it to the mighty working of the Spirit of God. In every generation, there will be spiritual heroes who stand as a rebuke and an example to the people of their time.

## 1. Condemnation of the rulers and prophets, Mic 3:1–7

First, Micah rebukes the leaders and rulers (vv. 1–4), who pervert justice and love evil, but hate good. He warns that the day will come when they will call out to the Lord, but He will not hear them (v. 4, cf. Pro 1:24–33). He then singles out the prophets who, instead of rebuking the evil of their time, proclaimed a message of “*peace, peace*” (vv. 5–7, cf. Jer 6:14, Jer 8:11, Jer 23:16–17; Eze 13:10; 1Th 5:3). He says they “*chew with their teeth*,” or literally, “the bite of the serpent” is in their words (see Rom 3:10–18). For them, the day will come when they will seek a word from God and receive nothing (see Amo 3:7 vs. Amo 8:11). So it will be for the false teachers of our own generation, who deceive with flattering words (Col 2:8, Col 2:18; 2Pe 2:18–19).

## 2. Conviction of the leaders, Mic 3:8–12

In contrast to the corrupt leaders and prophets, Micah stands as a spiritual Samson, filled with power by the Spirit of the Lord. Judges, priests, and prophets were established by God to lead the people into truth and righteousness (Lev 10:10–11; Deu 17:11, Deu 33:10). Instead, all had corrupted their office by greed. They were mere hirelings (Joh 10:10–13), putting in their hours for wages. Then they salved the conscience of the people by assuring them that no harm could come to them because the Lord was among them (v. 11). The message of Micah, far less palatable but true, was that “*Zion [Jerusalem] shall be plowed like a field*” (v. 12). Interestingly, this verse is quoted in Jer 26:18 by the princes and people who stood against the corrupt priests and prophets of their day, who wanted to put Jeremiah to death for prophesying the same thing. Their reasoning was that if Hezekiah did not persecute Micah for his message, why were they attempting to put Jeremiah to death for saying the same thing?

### The Corruption of Spiritual Leaders

1. So-called spiritual leaders, who are more worried about their pay and benefits than the souls of the people, are identified by Jesus as mere “hirelings,” day-laborers (Joh 10:11–13). Their “*god is their belly*” and they have become “enemies of god” (Phi 3:18–19, Jam 4:4).
2. Balaam stands as an example of those who are “ministers for hire” (Num 22; 2Pe 2:15; Jud 11). In the end, he died under God’s just judgment (Jos 13:22).
3. The way of the hireling is revealed and rebuked by the Lord in Eze 34:1–10.
4. The work of the minister (priest, prophet, pastor) is to teach the people from the Word of God, that they might discern between the holy and unholy, good and evil (Lev 10:10–11; Deu 17:11–13; Deu 33:10–11; Jer 15:19; Eze 22:25–26; Eze 44:23; Heb 5:11–14).
5. The three most corrupting influences on spiritual leaders are power, money, and sex. I remember hearing that Dr. Billy Graham often told young ministers, “Never touch God’s glory, His money, or another woman.”
6. Pastors and leaders should constantly review these passages (1Ti 3:1–7; 2Ti 6:11–16; Tit 1:5–9; 1Pe 5:1–4), and pray daily for grace and strength to live up to them.



## The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

1. The Spirit of God is the dominant force in the work of conviction of sin, Joh 15:7–11.
2. Again, it is the Spirit of God who is foremost in the work of regeneration, Joh 3:3–8; Tit 3:4–7.
3. At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit performs five works resulting in a new creation (2Co.5:17). They are:
  - Baptism into Christ (1Co 12:13)
  - Regeneration to new life (Tit 3:5)
  - Indwelling of the new believer (Joh 14:17; Rom 8:9–11)
  - Gifting and calling to service (1Co 12:4–7; Rom 11:29)
  - Sealing unto the day of redemption (2Co 1:21–22; Eph 1:13–14, Eph 4:30)
4. To the believer, the Spirit of God has ministries of:
  - Helping/comfort (Joh 14:16–18)
  - Teaching and recall (Joh 14:26–27)
  - Joint witness (Joh 15:26–27)
  - Guidance into all truth (Joh 16:13–14)
  - Illumination of God’s Word (1Co 2:10–13; Eph 1:18–19)
  - Enablement to live out the Word (Eph 3:16–21).
5. It is the work of the Spirit to take the weak and make them strong, Zec 4:6; Rom 8:1–4; Gal 5:16.

B. The army of the Lord of Hosts, Micah 4—the sign of the return of the mighty men of God

Micah anticipates the formation of the army of the Lord in Mic 4:6. He declares that God takes from among the *“lame ... outcasts ... afflicted”* to make *“a remnant ... a strong nation.”* This parallels Paul’s roster of God’s “mighty men” in 1Co 1:26–31, proving that God’s power is perfected through weakness (2Co 12:9), and that it is out of weakness that we are made strong (Heb 11:34b). Actually, Jesus is called “the Lord of Hosts” because He marshals an army made up of armies. At His second advent, His army will contain at least four “cohorts” or battalions made up of angels, believing Israelites, believing Gentiles, and returning and resurrected Church-Age believers.

1. Promise of His coming kingdom, Mic 4:1–5

Five things are said here of His kingdom:

- First, it will be established in the latter days (v. 1),
- Secondly, His kingdom will rule all nations (v. 1b–2, see Dan 6:25–27),
- Third, nations will gather in Jerusalem to be taught by the Lord (v. 2),
- Fourth, all wars will cease (v. 3), and
- Finally, everyone will enjoy peace, prosperity, and blessing (v. 5).

Is it any wonder that the King, when asked for a lesson in prayer, taught His disciples to pray *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”* (Luk 11:2)?

## 2. Prophecy of His army's victory, Mic 4:6–13

The truth remains, however, that before peace prevails, evil must be judged and defeated. Therefore, we see in these verses the call to battle. The Lord will take the “*meek*” of the earth (Mat 5:5), the weak, lame, afflicted, and the outcast, and make of them a mighty army (see Zec 4:6, Zec 4:10). Although a significant place name in history, the “tower of the flock” (see Gen 35:21), which was in the “Shepherds’ fields” near Bethlehem, is really a title for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is “*the stronghold of the daughter of Zion*” (v. 8). It was here, by the birth and incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mic 5:2), that His new kingdom would begin. However, before that kingdom is established, their “*Counselor*” must perish (see Isa 9:6–7), and the nation of Israel must go through “*birth pangs*” (Mic 4:9–12, see Rev 12:1–6). Whereas the emphasis in Rev 12 is the travail of Israel to bring forth the Savior, here (Mic 4:9–12) as in Isa 66:7–11, the birth pangs are to bring forth the nation. “*Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, She gave birth to her children*” (Isa 66:8). Thus the modern nation of Israel was born in one day, on May 14, 1948. From her, will come the army that will defeat all her enemies (Mic 4:13).

### The Return of the Mighty Men

1. In 2Sa 23:8–39, we read of David’s mighty men and of their astounding exploits.
2. These are similar to the “heroes of faith” we read of in Heb 11:32–40.
3. The prophet Daniel (Dan 11:32–35) tells that in the latter days there will be a return of the “mighty men” of faith.
4. Of these Micah speaks in 4:6 and 5:8, “*Jacob shall be among the gentiles ... like a lion among the beasts of the forest.*”
5. At this time, God will strengthen the weak so that they are like David, Isa 40:29–31, Isa 43:1–6; Zec 12:8.
6. When God calls for His army, He will “[awaken] *the mighty men*” and the weak will say, “*I am strong,*” Isa 13:4–5; Joe 3:9–10.
7. This army includes the Jewish evangelists of Rev 7:1–8, Rev 14:1–5.
8. At the Second Coming, four cohorts will be fighting: the Jewish heroes (Mic 4:6, Mic 5:8), the believing Gentiles (Mic 5:8; Mat 25:31–40), returning Church-Age believers (Rev 19:14), and angels (Mat 24:31).
9. This army will be unlike any that the world has ever seen, as they “*run like mighty men ... they lunge between the weapons ... are not cut down*” (Joe 2:2–11). It is possible that angels and Church-Age believers will be a shield to the Jewish and Gentile cohorts, so that the enemy’s weapons cannot harm them.

### C. The beginning of His kingdom, Micah 5—the sign of the travail of the woman

The prophecy of Messiah’s birth in Bethlehem (v. 2) is without doubt the best known passage of Micah. Here we see the staggering condescension of the Lord of glory—

stooping to be born in a village “*little among the thousands of Judah.*” Yet this “*root out of dry ground*” (Isa 53:2) will one day rule a kingdom encompassing heaven and earth. But it is important to catch the “*But*” (a conjunction of contrast) that begins Mic 5:2. It is in the face of Israel’s rejection of her Savior (v. 1) when “*they will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.*” The word “*rod*” can also be translated “*scepter,*” thus showing the mockery and scorn displayed when Jesus was crowned with thorns, beaten with a rod, and jokingly bowed before as “*King of the Jews*” (Mat 27:28–31). It is in contrast to this rejection that Micah says, “*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,*” and foretells of the coming of “*the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting*” (v. 2). It is in consequence of His rejection that Israel must continue in labor (v. 3) until the “*remnant of His brethren shall return*” (v. 3). This prophecy again brings us to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948—a most significant date in history and in prophecy!

#### 1. The travail of Israel, Mic 5:1–5a

Prophecy is not always given in historically sequential fashion. However, it is worth noting when it occurs. In vv. 2–5 we have such a sequence:

- First, the Ruler of Israel is born in Bethlehem (v. 2).
- Then, due to their rejection of Him anticipated in v. 1, He gives them up to the “*labor*” of exile and captivity (v. 3). This was done in the destruction of Jerusalem, and finally of Israel, in 70–73 A.D.
- Then will come the return of the “*remnant*” to the land (v. 3b), which occurred in 1948.
- After this, He will “*stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God*” (v. 4). This could certainly describe the amazing deliverance of Israel from every attempt to “drive them into the sea” from 1948 to the present. As these mighty acts of deliverance continue, Jesus will ultimately become “*great to the ends of the earth.*”
- Finally, it is in “*this One,*” i.e., Israel’s deliverer, that “*peace*” shall be found (v. 5a), for Israel and for the earth. That “*peace*” is God’s only “*peace plan*” for the Middle East and begins with regeneration by faith (Rom 5:1), and is on display before the world through His Church (Eph 2:14–15, Eph 2:17; Eph 4:3). Israel will never know lasting peace until they cry out, “*blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*” (Mat 23:39). It is worth emphasizing that after the Lord restores His people Israel in their land “*the second time*” (Isa 11:11, which occurred in 1948), they will never be “*uprooted from the land*” again (Amo 9:15).

#### 2. The victory over Antichrist and his army, Mic 5:5b–9

Included in the travail of Israel is the Tribulation period, and the coming of Antichrist. This seven-year “*time of Jacob’s trouble*” (Jer 30:7) is anticipated in the advent and invasion of “*the Assyrian.*” This is a prophetic title or “*code-name*” for the “*man of sin ... the son of perdition*” so named by Paul in 2Th 2:4.

He will gain power for a time, but in the end “*the Assyrian,*” who is also the “Lucifer-man” of Isa 14:12-16, Isa 14:24-25 will be destroyed like Gideon destroyed the kings of Midian (compare Psa 83 with Jud 7:24-25; Jud 8:18-21 and Isa 10:20-26; Isa 27:1, Isa 32:8). Fighting in the battle we call Armageddon described here, will be “*seven shepherds and eight princely men*” (v. 5b), most likely, Gentile nations that will rally to Israel (compare v. 8 with Joe 2:1-11, Joe 3:7-17; Zec 14:1-5), along with the redeemed remnant of Israel (v. 7-9). The defeat of Israel’s enemies will be supernatural and final (Isa 63:1-6; Zec 14:14-15).

### 3. The ultimate destruction of Babylon, Mic 5:10-15

In Rev 18:2, we read, “*Babylon ... is fallen, is fallen.*” This great and evil city-state is the kingdom of Antichrist called “*Babylon the great, the Mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth*” (Rev 17:5). John is here quoting the prophet Isaiah, who identifies this “*Babylon*” for us in Isa 21:9-13 as being “*Arabia,*” the “*glory of Kedar*” (Isa 21:16) is likely Mecca. In Isa 63, we see the prophecy of the returned Messiah, the Lord Jesus, coming up from “*Edom*” (southeast of Israel) with blood-stained garments, having begun the Armageddon campaign alone (Isa 63:1-6), He will then gather His armies for the final assault, which will end in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joe 3:2, Joe 3:12-17). The nations that are set against Israel, and finally destroyed are enumerated in Psa 83:6-8; Isa 13-23; Eze 38:3-7. Though many erroneously postulate the Antichrist as coming from Europe (I have myself previously held to this view), further study shows that all these are Middle-Eastern nations. Thus, final judgment will come upon all “the nations that have not heard,” or literally, “have not obeyed” the Gospel (see Rom 1:5, Rom 10:16, Rom 16:26).

### Small Things in the Hands of God

1. Because the power is of God, small things in His hands become mighty weapons, Zec 4:6, Zec 4:10; 1Co 1:26-31.
2. For Moses, God used a shepherd’s rod, Exo 4:2, Exo 14:16.
3. With Samson, God used a jawbone of an ass, Jud 15:15.
4. David went to meet Goliath with five smooth stones and a sling, 1Sa 17:40.
5. Elijah sustained the widow’s household with a handful of meal, 1Ki 17:12.
6. Elijah prayed for rain, and it came from a small cloud, 1Ki 18:44.
7. Elisha delivered a poor widow with a small jar of oil, 2Ki 4:2.
8. Jesus spoke of the power of “mustard seed faith,” Mat 13:12.
9. The Lord fed over 5,000 men and women with five small loaves, and two little fish, Joh 6:9.
10. Are we willing to become small enough, weak enough, so that God can use us? 2Co 12:9-10.

Shamgar had an ox-goad  
David had a sling  
Dorcas had a needle  
Rahab had some string  
Mary had some ointment  
Moses had a rod  
What small thing do you have  
You'll dedicate to God?

### III. The Third Message (Micah 6:1–7:20)

#### A. The Gospel according to Micah, Micah 6—the sign of spiritual awakening

Micah's "gospel" in 6:8 is in response to a question—apparently by a repentant remnant—as to what the Lord requires for sinful man to be right with God. Taken rightly, his message echoes many New Testament calls to "repent ... believe ... obey." As we have seen previously, there will always be a "remnant of grace" (1Ki 19:18; Rom. 11:5). This is due to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit (Joh 16:7–14) and the power of His Word (Rom 10:17; 1Th 2:13b; Mat 24:35; 1Pe 1:24–25). We can be sure, in our own witness, that God's Word will never fail to bring fruit (Isa 55:11), because the Spirit of God empowers His Word through the people of God (Joh 15:26–27).

#### 1. The Lord's appeal to His people, Mic 6:1–8

In the first five verses, God calls Israel—before the witness of creation herself—to hear His indictment of them. When He asks, in v. 3, "*How have I wearied you,*" it is like His passionate query in Isa 5:4 "*What more could I have done ...*" He then reminds them how He delivered them out of slavery in Egypt by Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, and defeated the counsel of Balak, king of Moab (see Num 22–24). It is in response to this appeal that some apparently inquire as to how they can be made right with God (vv. 6–7). To this, Micah gives a three-step response: "*Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God*" (v. 8). If not taken rightly, this would appear to support a position of salvation by good works. We know that such an interpretation would contradict all of Scripture. Therefore, consider the following formula: "repent ... believe ... obey." Micah is dealing here with a people who have broken the covenant of God. The only "just" thing a sinner can do before a Holy God is to stop justifying himself, and acknowledge his guilt—thus to repent. But, repentance alone is not enough; there must be a "love of mercy." The word "*mercy*" in Hebrew is *hesed*, the covenant-word for the redemptive love of God. This "*mercy*" was fully revealed through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, as Paul clearly states in Tit 3:4–8. Thus to "*love mercy*" is to receive/embrace the Savior by believing in Him (Joh 1:12–13). It is worth noting that Paul, in the Titus passage cited, ends with the words, "*those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works*" (Tit 3:8), thus supporting Micah's final step, "*walk humbly with your God.*" This requirement can only be made of one who is a "*new creature in Christ*" (2Co 5:17), to use

New Testament terminology. Therefore, while Micah's answer does not ignore "good works," it properly makes those works dependent on and subsequent to saving faith, as does Paul (Eph 2:8–10).

### The Doctrine of Redemption, Regeneration, and Reconciliation

1. Redemption means the payment of a price. In the case of sinners, it is the purchase of a slave from the slave-market of sin. Only in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross could the payment be made for every human being throughout history. The framework of redemption is revealed by the redemption of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, by the blood of the lamb (Exo 12:1–14, Exo 12:21–23).
2. When one believes in Jesus Christ we are said to be born again—a new creature—because of the work of regeneration. According to Jesus, this is the essential criteria for entering into His kingdom (Joh 3:3–8). Paul tells us that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit performed in the one who believes in Jesus Christ (Tit 3:4–7). The believer therefore is called a "new creation" in Christ, (2Co 5:17).
3. Because we are a new creation, we are able to be reconciled to God as a child to his Father, rather than of a sinner to his God. This is the work by which an active enemy of God is delivered from the enmity of sin and made a child of God (Rom 5:6–11). The call to believe in Christ is also a call to be reconciled to God (2Co 5:18–21), and since every believer is a witness to Christ, he/she is ordained as a minister of reconciliation.

#### 2. The wages of sin paid in full, Mic 6:9–16

"*The wages of sin is death*" is the warning throughout God's Word, but is accompanied with the promise, "*but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rom 6:23). Micah began by saying the Lord was coming down to earth to judge sin (Mic 1:3). In Joh 9:39, Jesus said, "*For judgment I have come into this world,*" but the judgment for sin He bore upon His cross (2Co 5:21). Thus, the "prince of this world (Satan)" was judged (Joh 16:11). Therefore, it is also true to say, "*God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*" (Joh 3:17). When Micah says, "*Wisdom shall see Your name*" (v. 9), he is saying in essence that the wise will know Him. Or, as Jesus put it, "*Wisdom is justified by her children.*" (Mat 11:19; Luk 7:35). Those who are children of wisdom (that is, born of wisdom), are able to identify their parent. And we are told that, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*" (Pro 1:7). This wisdom is personified in the Lord Jesus Christ, "*Who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.*" (1Co 1:30) To his generation Micah says, in essence, those having wisdom will come to the Lord. For the rest, they must bear the judgment of rejecting Him (see Joh 3:17–19). For those who continue in unbelief and evil there is coming increasing sickness of soul (Mic 6:11–13), famine (v. 14), sorrow and loss (vv. 15–16). If they continue in the ways of Omri and Ahab (see 1Ki 16:25–33), they will suffer the end of their ways. As Paul declared, "*Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he*

*will also reap*” (Gal 6:7). Yet how we love to sow the wild oats, and how we grieve when the harvest comes!

### Sowing and Reaping

1. As the rich and powerful of Micah’s time have done to the poor (Mic 2:1–5, Mic 3:1–4, Mic 6:10–12), even so God will do to them (Mic 6:13–16). Compare Rom 2:5–6 and Jam 5:1–6.
2. It is a law of both the natural and spiritual realm that “whatever you sow you will reap” (Gal 6:7–9).
3. Those who sow evil will always reap sorrow (Pro 22:8; Eph 4:17–32). It is impossible for the believer to grieve the Spirit and not share in that grief.
4. God is able to turn “good” investments, from a human perspective, into evil results, when one’s motives are evil (Jer 12:13; Heb 6:7–8; Jam 4:13–15).
5. The only way to turn a bitter life into a blessed life is to begin sowing in humility, (Hos 10:12–13; Jam 4:5–10; 1Pe 5:6).
6. Those who sow in grace find a blessed harvest, (Isa 32:20; Ecc 11:1; 2Co 8:1–5).
7. Those who sow carelessly in life will always reap chaos and confusion (Hos 8:7–10).
8. People who always see themselves as “victims” of others or circumstances simply refuse to accept their own accountability for the things they have sown in life. Such people blaspheme God constantly, saying that they do not deserve their sufferings, therefore cannot find any measure of lasting happiness in life.

B. The great Shepherd of Israel, Micah 7—the sign of the shepherd’s rod

The final promise and prophecy of the book, given in 7:14–15, is of the Lord’s ultimate victory on behalf of His people. Here the “Shepherd of Israel” (Psa 23:1; Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10; Eze 34:12–16, Eze 34:22–31), will deliver and care for His flock.

1. The curse of unfruitful Israel, Mic 7:1–6

We have the second “*woe*” of the book (see Mic 2:1). There, the prophet denounced the evil workers of his generation. Here, the woe is his own grief as one sent to gather spiritual fruit, where none exists. Greed and corruption have permeated every level of society. So corrupt has the nation become that even family members cannot trust one another (vv. 5–6). This passage was quoted by Jesus when sending out the disciples to preach (Mat 10:34–36). It is inevitable that when a nation’s leaders—both political and spiritual—set the example of greed and corruption, it will spread into the homes of the nation. When the family—which is the foundation of the nation—becomes deceitful and corrupt, there is no hope for the nation, and only destruction can put an end to the evil. This is the real point of Jesus cursing the fig tree (Mat 21:18–19).

2. The cry of the prophet’s intercession, Mic 7:7–13

When all is hopeless, there is always hope with the Lord. Micah will “*wait on the Lord*” (v. 7 with Isa 40:31). As he intercedes for his nation, Micah knows that his prayers will be heard. Each of us is also called to be an intercessor (1Ti 2:1–6), and we need the same assurance. Our prayers are never in vain. Though we may not see the results, God may be answering us by calling out an invisible remnant of believers, as He did in the days of Elijah (1Ki 19:18). Though he acknowledges his own sins to be deserving of God’s discipline, he knows that his faith will bring victory in the end. As we bear our discipline in this generation, let us rest assured that the outcome for those who submit will be blessing (Heb 12:5–11).

### 3. The care of Israel’s Shepherd anticipated, Mic 7:14–20

Micah knows that the “Shepherd of Israel,” who led them out of Egypt, and who redeems from all sin, will in the end prevail by His mercy. In Christ alone is found victory over sin and judgment. When the Shepherd takes up His staff (v. 14), though it be for discipline at first, in the end it will be for deliverance. In the person of Jesus Christ, we find the “*good shepherd*” who lays down His life for the sheep (Joh 10:11), the “*great Shepherd*” (Heb 13:20–21), who supplies our every need, and the “*Chief Shepherd*” (1Pe 5:4), who is coming again to reward our faith. These three “portraits” of Christ are also seen in Psalm 22 (the suffering shepherd), Psalm 23 (the guardian shepherd), and Psalm 24 (the shepherd-king). When God finishes His work in the nation of Israel (and in His church as well), “*the nations shall see and be ashamed*” (Mic 7:16). In vv 18–20, we have a song of benediction, declaring the blessings of God on those who trust in Him. He is a mighty God, who pardons sins, delights in mercy, and will ultimately “*cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.*”

And so the book ends with the very praise of the prophet’s name, since “Micah” means “who is like the Lord?” In view of His greatness and glory, what kind of people should we be? This is a question which occurred to Peter, when he asked, “*what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God ...*” (2Pe 3:11–12). Each of us must answer this question in our own lives, according to our measure of faith.