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C1033 – September 22, 2010 – Micah 1:2-7 – The Fall Of Samaria

Tonight if you'll open your Bible to Micah. We want to start by being reminded of the three-fold outline of the book then we'll turn to chapter 1. Micah can be divided into three cursing-blessing cycles. This is the key to the book. The first cycle is chapters 1-2; the cursings are in chapter 1:2-2:11 followed by a brief section of hope, the blessings in 2:12-13. The second cycle is chapters 3-5. The cursings are in chapter 3:1-12 followed by the blessing in 3:13-4:13. The third cycle is chapters 5-7. So we have this back and forth, back and forth, cursing and blessing, cursing and blessing and tonight we want to enter into the first cycle of cursing and work with the first seven verses.<sup>i</sup>

We're going to deal especially with the northern kingdom, but vv 2-7 start off with a general case against both kingdoms. God has a case against Samaria and Jerusalem and in v 2 He's calling the nations to sit on the jury. These are general court proceedings against both kingdoms. In vv 3-4 we have description of the judgment. So it assumes God's case was airtight and therefore both Samaria and Jerusalem are going to be destroyed and the people will go into exile. In v 5 we're given the reason and it has to do with the sins of idolatry. That's the key problem. In vv 6-7 he turns to deal with the execution of the judgment on Samaria of the northern kingdom. So tonight we witness the Fall of Samaria which occurred in 722BC.

Let's start with verse 2, the lawsuit. God has a lawsuit or case against Israel. And the case opens with the words, **Hear, O peoples, all of you; Listen, O earth and all it contains.** He's summoning the jury. We're going to have trial by jury and the irony is that it's the nations of the earth that are called in for jury duty. Of all the people you could call to be on the jury God calls people that were without the law, people that did not have the standards given in

the Mosaic Law, people who simply had a conscience because they were made in God's image. And the reason God is calling these people to be the jury is because even though they didn't have the Mosaic Law as a revealed standard the sin is so great in the two Jewish kingdoms, they can easily see they're guilty. So God summons the jury, **Hear, O peoples, all of you; Listen, O earth and all it contains. And let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord God** is going to testify, He's the chief witness and He's going to testify against Samaria and Jerusalem to the atrocities. Now if you're going to have a court and a jury and testimony given then what else do you have to have? You have to have an agreed upon standard by which to judge. You can't make a judgment without a standard; you can't discern two things without some stick you're measuring by. And this is the futility of people saying, oh we should never judge others and these people have a big mouth but when they start flapping their jaws just gently, carefully, respectfully please shut it for them, for when they say we should never judge what have they just done? They've made a judgment. So they've stepped into their own trap and admitted, yes, we know very well there is a standard and we intend to judge you according to our standard, but you aren't allowed to have any standard to judge us. That's the game that's being played. You can never escape absolutes, you can never escape standard, everyone has one located somewhere. Somewhere some place you'll find what they consider immovable, and that's where you attack.

Now the thing that was immovable and is the basis by which this jury of nations is going to measure the two Jewish kingdoms is revealed in the next phrase, **The Lord from His holy temple. <sup>3</sup>For behold, the Lord is coming forth from His place. He will come down.** So here comes the witness and He's coming down **from His holy temple**, He's **coming forth from His place** and obviously the author wants to convey that He's coming down from heaven. And in that heaven there is such a thing called a **temple**. It's the Hebrew *heykal* and it refers to a large palace. If the idea of a temple is too religious for you think of it as a king's palace. He's going to come down from His heavenly palace and give His testimony. Now the idea of the temple or palace in Scripture we're familiar with from the time of Moses when they built the tabernacle in the wilderness and transported it from place to place. The design for that tabernacle was seen by Moses. Moses got to look at the heavenly temple and it was from the design of the heavenly temple that he built the earthly temple. So the archetype is the heavenly temple and the

earthly is a built to scale model of the real deal in heaven where God dwells. Of course, we don't mean that God is limited to the space of His heavenly temple. God is omnipresent. And when Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem he understood this for he proclaimed, "Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!" So Solomon understood God is not limited spatially. But there is a heavenly palace or temple and Solomon built an earthly model in Jerusalem. Now the significance for this case is that in the temple you had two rooms, the Holy Place was the first room you would enter and the second room, the innermost room was the Most Holy Place. You had a series of furniture pieces in the first room but in the second room you had only one piece of furniture and what was it? The Ark of the Covenant. It's that box you saw on the Raiders of the Lost Ark with Harrison Ford. It looks like a small coffin overlaid with gold and it had cherubim on the lid looking down at the lid and they're wings expanding up to hide their faces because above the lid was where God was enthroned. That was a visible depiction that God sat on the throne of the universe and because God is holy the angels can't look at God directly, they look down at the lid of the ark. Now inside the ark were three items. Anybody remember what they were? Aaron's rod that budded. A jar of manna. And a copy of the Ten Commandments. That was God's copy. So when it says at the end of verse 2, **the Lord from His holy temple** we gather that it's referring to the standard to be used in the court. The Ten Commandments. So the jury has some canon, some standard by which to judge. God is coming with this document. It would be like the Supreme Court taking the US Constitution and presenting it to a jury and saying, alright, here's the standard and when you hear testimony you judge by that standard. I know that sounds like a foreign idea in our day, for the Supreme Court to actually judge by the words written in that document and not their own interpretation of the document, but that would be the modern parallel to what's happening here. They're going to judge on the basis of the Ten Commandments which are the basis of the entire Mosaic Law. Every law that comes after the Ten is just an expansion of some aspect of one of the Ten and so the basis of all of the Mosaic Law is the Ten Commandments

Between vv 3a and 3b the jury has concluded that God's testimony is true. We don't have a record of that, but the ensuing verses indicate that they found both Jewish kingdoms guilty of violating the Mosaic Law and so we see the Lord coming to judge. **For behold, the LORD is coming forth from His**

place. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. <sup>4</sup>The mountains will melt under Him And the valleys will be split, Like wax before the fire, Like water poured down a steep place. Now this is a picture of the Lord coming down to earth to judge and He's like a gigantic person. When He steps on the earth He's like you stepping across a stream and you step from rock to rock. The only difference is He steps from mountain to mountain and when He steps on a mountain it's just leveled beneath Him. He crushes it because of His mighty weight. And so you notice in verse 4, the descriptive simile, but remember, these similes have a connection to reality. If the descriptions of verse 4 don't have a basis in reality then the simile loses all its meaning, it has no base, that's how figures of speech work. If you don't know the reality then you're disconnected from the meaning of the comparison. So first we simply look at verse 4 for the reality. If it helps, we have four phrases here, just put an a, b, c and d next to the four phrases of verse 4. Now phrases c and d begin with the word **Like**, that signals a simile and they introduce the reality, this is what we know and we move from the known to the unknown. So in phrase c he says, **Like wax before the fire** and I know that, I've got my experience base, I've got candles or I've played with wax and fire and what does wax do before fire? It melts, it runs down and forms a flat puddle, you should be impressed with those flat puddles because phrase a is the corresponding truth. When God's heat of judgment comes on the earth it melts the earth, it heats up the rock and it flattens mountains. See the power of that display? That's His majestic power. That's fantastic geological energy - many orders of magnitude larger than Hiroshima atomic bombs. At Mt St Helens the explosive force released in the first 9 hours was the equivalent of 33,000 Hiroshima size atomic bombs. So this is an analogy to give us the idea of what God's judgment is like. It flattens you. There's no stopping Him. You're not going to hold Him off. Then if we look at phrase d, here's our second comparison, **Like water poured down a steep place**. We studied this, we studied breeched dams; we think Grand Canyon was formed by a breeched dam of an ancient lake left by the retreating flood waters called Hopi Lake. And when the waters overtopped or piped through that dam it triggered catastrophic geologic processes like cavitation where you have high water velocities and that decreases the ATM pressure causing evaporation and forming these tiny bubbles. When the ATM pressure increases again these bubbles explode with tremendous force ripping out rock. We studied other catastrophic processes like a kolk where underwater tornados rip large chunks of rock right off the bedrock floor and toss them downstream causing

rapid formation of canyons. That's what he's describing in phrase d of verse 4, **Like water poured down a steep place**. We know what that forms, that forms deep cuts in the earth, valleys and canyons. So now move to phrase b for the comparison with God's judgment. **And the valleys will be split**, - the word for valleys is the Hebrew word for something profound, something deep. Every once in a while you hear something profound and you say, boy, that's deep. Well, that's the idea of God's judgment. It cuts deep, it cuts right through all the flack, you're not going to hide from Him under a rock someplace. He's the heart reader. And when He reads He reads the bottom line. There won't be any excuses. There won't be any appeals. He already knows. And so when He judges these two similes liken it to catastrophic geological processes being unleashed. The earth melts before Him, He cuts right to the chase.

Now before we go to verse 5 we want to deal with the end of verse 3. We skipped this phrase so let's return to it. **He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth**. Let's develop the **high places of the earth**. You could just read right by that and think, oh, he's talking about the mountains. No, he's not. He's predicting the sin problems of verse 5. So we want to develop our understanding of the **high places**.

Now the **high places** are geographically high, there's no question about that, but the significance of the **high places** is that these were the worship places of the Canaanites. See, after the Flood you have eight people on the earth; Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth and their wives. And it was from these four families that the earth was populated. One of the people groups that came out of Ham were the Canaanites. And in Gen 9 you have a strange event where Noah gets drunk with wine. Remember that event? What happens? It says Noah was drunk and he lay naked in his tent and Ham went in and saw his father's nakedness and then he went outside and told his brothers. Now they handled the situation differently, they respected their father and so they went in backward and covered him up. Now you think that's just a benign little thing until you find out that when Noah woke up he knew what his youngest son had done to him. If he just looked at him like I'm looking at you how would he know that? The guy was konked out naked on the bed. And then a serious curse is leveled at Ham's descendants, the Canaanites. Now, we think what really happened was Ham had homosexual relations with his father and that's how Noah knew. Noah had pain. And so this curse is leveled on the Canaanites. Now the Canaanites were the most sexually perverse

society ever known to man. If you thought the 20th century was sexually perverse, you haven't seen anything. The Canaanites had it all over us. They tried everything under the sun. And they were the descendants of Ham. Well, they spread out all over the Middle East area; they lived in the Promised Land. And they really got their religion going. It centered on guess what? Sex. And here's what they did. They would find a high place, geographically speaking, and build an altar. Why did they do this? What's the significance of going up to a high place? Because they thought they were getting closer to god. And what kind of thinking is that? If I can go up on a mountain top and get closer to god then what kind of god is he? He's just a little higher than me on the scale. See, it's the same thing from the Tower of Babel idea. We can build a tower that reaches to heaven. And the idea underlying that is that God is just an amplified version of us. He may be bigger, he may be smarter, he may be higher, but essentially he's the same stuff as us. And if I can get up on a mountain top I'll be closer to him. It's the Continuity of Being, the ancient idea that all is one and everything that exists is on a scale. That's what's underlying the expression **high places**. It's a pagan view of God.

And so with that background turn to Deut 7:1. Notice the context. He's talking about the Conquest, going into the Promised Land. "When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites" see, there they are, the Canaanites, "and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, <sup>2</sup>and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them." That's holy war, in the biblical sense. "you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them." Remember that, no covenants with these people, no political alliances - we'll come back to that, it's important. Verse 3, "Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons." Again, that's a key idea, no intermarriage, hold on to that and we'll come back to it, no contracts and no intermarriages. Verse 4, "For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. <sup>5</sup>"But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their *sacred* pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire." Now, four things about these high places are

mentioned in verse 5. First, they always had an “altar,” that was the center of the worship and it was like a bed, that’s where they had sex up high, close to the gods, the Jews were to tear those down. Second, they had “*sacred* pillars” and what this usually was was a rock that looked like a phallus, so they had public pornography, they’d look for rocks that represented the male god. Third, they would have “Asherim” and this was a tree or pole that represented the female deity, she was a fertility goddess. And fourth, they’d have images of the gods and goddesses and usually they’d build a building to protect the images. They were to tear it all down. Why? Because its paganism, it’s the Continuity of Being. The whole worship system is built on the premise that God is not the Creator and man is not the creature. And the minute you’ve blown that distinction you’ve blown open the lid of idolatry because now you’ve got the Creator and the creature all down here as the same stuff. And what’s the first of the Ten Commandments? “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me, Thou shalt not make any graven images.” So it’s a cut off to idolatry.

Now at the Conquest Joshua and the nation Israel partially conquer the land. They didn’t conquer all of it, there were parts that remained unconquered because they didn’t learn to walk by faith and finally God pronounced doom at Bochim, that’s Judges 2. They’re not going to conquer all the land until God sends a conqueror to conquer the land and that’s a proof text for pre-millennialism - the fact that the Messiah is the conqueror and He’ll conquer all the land, removing all their enemies and dividing it up among the tribes of Israel. But in Joshua’s day they didn’t conquer it all. They went into the period of the Judges and then came the Rise and Reign of King David. King David is the best thing they had on the other side of the cross. He brought the nation together, all 12 tribes in one kingdom. Then the kingdom was passed to Solomon and they enjoy the Golden Era, but during Solomon’s reign a theological rot came in because of what? Because Solomon started marrying all those foreign wives, he was making political alliances through intermarriage and in the ancient world that’s the way you sealed the deal. You married the daughter of the king you came into a covenant with and that way the deal was secure because if he breaks the deal you’ve got his daughter. And so it gives security to the deal. And what did we say earlier? I said, remember those two ideas God warned them against, no intermarriage and covenants with foreign kings. Don’t do it Israel because when you start intermarrying foreigners you’re not just marrying some pretty girl, she may

be pretty, but along with her comes baggage. What baggage? Thought forms, religious ideas. And so you're not only importing girls, your importing pagan ideas with the girls and Solomon excelled at this and a rot set in the kingdom. And God was displeased. He said He was going to tear the kingdom apart. And so the next king is Solomon's son Rehoboam and five years after his reign the Kingdom Divided. Two tribes stayed in the south with Rehoboam, that's Judah. Ten tribes went to the north with Jeroboam, that's Israel. You can always remember those two because their names rhyme, Jeroboam and Rehoboam. So now we have two Jewish kingdoms with two Jewish kings but only one religion, they're supposed to worship exclusively where? In Jerusalem. But Jerusalem is in the southern kingdom of Judah and so Jeroboam says, we're not doing that. He sets up high places. He does it at Dan and Bethel and they start worshipping God in an unauthorized fashion. Then you have another king come on the stage and his name was Ahab and to make matters worse Ahab imported a girl from Tyre up in Phoenicia named Jezebel. And she just happened to be the daughter of Ethbaal, who was the chief priest of Baal. And what did we say about importing pretty girls to make political alliances? You're not just importing the pretty girl; you're importing the pretty girl's religious baggage. And this pretty girl was well-schooled in the Canaanite religion of Baal and so she starts importing heavily and they're building high places everywhere. And that's when Elijah has his great contest with the Baal cult at Mt Carmel. That boots it out for awhile but later kings bring it back. Baalism became the standard religious cult in the northern kingdom.

Now that's the background and so when you come back to Micah you see what these high places are all about. In verse 3 when he says, I'm going to **come down and tread on the high places of the earth**. He's talking about the high places of the Baal cult, He's talking about the phallic rock, the asherah pole, the altar and the idolatrous images, and He says I'm going to smash them. I hate them, I detest them and I warned you so now I'm going to destroy.

Come down to verse 5 and you can see more, **All this for the rebellion of Jacob And for the sins of the house of Israel**. The sin is all this idolatry. Remember **Jacob**, Jacob had a little problem with idols in his house didn't he? Remember Rachel, what did she have to tote along in her knapsack? An idol. So God says it goes all the way back to father Jacob and down through the **house of**



**Israel.** Like father, like son. It started with the father of the nation, it continues with the son nation, always toting along idols because, well, gee, we can't really trust God, we've got to have our idols too. Always gotta have a backup, just in case God falls through. And it's all a gimmick, we do the very same thing, whenever we try some gimmick to solve our problems, just in case God falls through I've got this alternate plan over here, just in case, which is just a flat out statement that I don't believe God can solve my problems. Instead I trust in my gimmick over here.

And now he gets explicit with what we've been talking about all along. **What is the rebellion of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? What is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?** Notice the **high places**. **Samaria** and **Jerusalem**. And so now we learn that the central places of idolatry are the two capital cities of the two Jewish Kingdoms. They're the political centers. That's where the corruption is proliferating from. And it's always that way, always the center of politics is the center of corruption, deceit, malice and it goes out from there and infects the whole nation. We have the same thing in our country. And there's a reason for it. Satan isn't stupid; he's not going to go waste his time in some two-bit rural town like Fredericksburg. He's going to hit the nation's capital because that's where the big decisions are made, that's where the leaders of the country are and if he can get them going in a direction he can get the whole country going in the same direction. So the centers of corruption, vice and all the rest of it are the urban centers, the capital cities. They always have been and they always will be. It starts there and works out.

Now with the rot set into the two capital cities verses 6-7 narrow in on the judgment on Samaria. Let's look at it. V 6, **For I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country, Planting places for a vineyard. I will pour her stones down into the valley And I will lay bare her foundations.** <sup>7</sup>**All of her idols will be smashed, All of her earnings will be burned with fire And all of her images I will make desolate, For she collected *them* from a harlot's earnings, And to the earnings of a harlot they will return.** This is the description of the destruction of Samaria caused by Shalmaneser V in the war of 724-722BC, it was a three year siege. But before we go into the siege itself let's look at verse 7 and finish our idea of **high places** introduced in verse 3. God said **I will tread on the high places of the earth** and that's what He's doing. So verse 7 answers to verse 3. Now to understand what's

happening here from an 8<sup>th</sup> century Israelite perspective we have to understand the religion of Baal. We brought him in earlier now we want to fill in some details so we understand what's happening with the earnings and so forth in this verse. Three times the earnings of a harlot are mentioned and if repetition does anything it emphasizes.

Now the nation Israel was married to YHWH. At Mt Sinai the two were married in an indissoluble contract. Remember that the Law given at Mt Sinai is a contract. Just like when you get married you say vows and the vows are the terms of the contract. You're agreeing to fulfill those terms. And if you violate those terms then the other person has grounds for divorce. It doesn't mean they have to divorce, but they do have grounds for divorce. God was in a marriage contract with the nation Israel and the Mosaic Contract is the vows. And the nation has violated the vows. So God has grounds for divorcing the nation. He can cast her off and never take her back. She has not been a faithful wife. And the great book that portrays this is Hosea. Remember what Hosea had to do? Hosea had to go marry a prostitute. Hosea had to march down to the red light district and pick up a whore and marry her. Now why would God have him do a thing like that? To demonstrate to the nation what He was married to. He was married to a spiritual whore nation. They were prostituting themselves out to other gods.

Now the other gods were Baal and Asherah. We want to know a little bit about Baalism. Who introduced this religion? It was Ahab marrying that pretty girl Jezebel. And she was a religious fanatic. Her daddy was the chief priest of Baal. He was the central figure in a pantheon of Canaanite gods. Now who's Baal? Baal is Nature Forces with a capital 'NF'. So what Israel has done is she's started to worship Nature. Baal is just Nature Forces, he's a fertility god of nature. The word Baal simply means "lord" or "master." It was used in the marriage relationship for husband, so it was originally a good word, nothing wrong with the word. But when you're married to the Nature Forces you do have a problem because you're already married to YHWH and so now you're committing spiritual adultery.

Now the only way I can describe Baal in modern terms is to say he's something, in their minds, like Natural Law is to the modern man. The only difference is ancient man believed he could influence the Nature Forces, modern man doesn't believe he can manipulate Natural Law, but it's the

ancient corollary nonetheless. So they'd refer to the Nature Forces as the "lord's" the "Baalim." And so they segmented up nature up into spheres and you have the water sphere, you have the land sphere, you have the sky sphere and so you'd have the Baal of the water, the Baal of the land, the Baal of the sky and all these Baal's were projections of the human mind of gods and goddesses that controlled nature. They were nature forces that mysteriously controlled those spheres.

Now here's what happened: of all the things in nature what do you suppose most particularly concerned early men? They were an agrarian society so they depended heavily on agriculture and their lives depended on the next crop. So the issue was we want Nature to give us fertility so we can have a good crop, so we can have good genetics in our animals. They knew about breeding and we know that from as early as Gen 30. We want good genetics in our animals and we want good genetics in our families; lots of children because that means lots of workers and we can get more crops. So they worshipped heavily in these areas because these were the areas they were most interested in and most dependent on. And so in every polytheism one of the core ideas is fertility and fertility is linked to sex so you always have these lumped together in idolatry. So they want fertility out of Baal. They set up these high places like the Canaanite fertility cults would and they had an altar and they'd get up on the altar which was like a bed or they'd get beside the altar if the bed was taken and they'd have these orgies. What are they doing this for down at the local Baal temple? They thought that by getting up high, closer to Baal, that Baal would look down and see them having sex and this would do what? Well, the gods are like us so they must think like us and when we see someone having sex that stimulates us to have sex so they thought this will stimulate Baal and Asherah to have sex and they'll know we want fertility. We want fertility and it was a big message - that we want you, Baal, to get our fertility processes started so we can have a good crop, so we can have good genetic lines in our animals, so we can have big families and make a lot of money. And it worked both ways. If you were a man and you went down there they'd have professional prostitutes waiting there and you'd toss your gold in the offering plate and it would be an act of worship to have sex with one of these girls, and conversely they had situations where they had male prostitutes and it would be an act of worship for the female to have sex with one of these men. And obviously with that kind of theology you're going to attract a lot of people to your cult. They were bringing in money

hand over fist and what they did with the money was they fixed up the high places real nice. They just poured it back into the cultic practices and now look at verse 7.

**All of her idols will be smashed**, you relied on them I'm going to smash them, show you they didn't give you the fertility, it was I who gave you the fertility. **All of her earnings will be burned with fire.** That's the gold they received in the offering bucket, they overlaid the idols with gold and God says it's going to be melted back down. **All of her images I will make desolate**, showing their nothing. Then the reason is given. **For she collected them from a harlots earnings**, it all came from the sex, sex, sex, rampant sex. So He concludes, **And to the earnings of a harlot they will return**, meaning that the Assyrian army, the soldiers are going to loot the gold from these high places and what do soldiers use money for? Next time they are near a whore house what are they going to use the gold for? They're going to go into a prostitute. Ancient man is no different than modern man.

In conclusion, let's handle the destruction of Samaria in v 6. Samaria sat up on a hill, it was high up and on all sides it descended into valleys and so when the Assyrian army comes in they're going to wipe it out. All the stones from the city walls are going to be tossed down the hill into the valleys below and the foundations will be laid bare. That's the picture. It will be so barren on top of that mountain that you'll be able to plant a nice vineyard where the city used to be. And if you visit the site today you can see that indeed it was laid bare.

Now how it came about was the Assyrian Empire made its rise in 745BC when Tiglath-Pileser III came to power. He had a dubious lineage so it's not the first time in history that people have questioned the legitimacy of a ruler. People question the legitimacy of our own president. There's nothing new under the sun. Tiglath-Pileser III, who the Bible calls Pul, had a questionable lineage. Nonetheless, he ruled until 727BC and his reign was one big military campaign to take over the trade routes of the Middle East. He wanted to control the commerce so he could control the economics and he did a pretty good job of expanding his empire and taking over the region. He imposed tribute on all three of the kings in Micah; Jotham, Ahaz and Hoshea. But in 727 he died and Shalmaneser V came to reign in Assyria. About the same time a Cushite King of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty of Manetho, from Nubia took over

Egypt. And so you have a power struggle going on. Assyria is to the NE, they're a big boy and you have Egypt to the SW and they're growing into a big boy. Hoshea is sandwiched in the middle. He saw this and thought he could stop paying tribute to Shalmaneser and get a better deal from Egypt so he went to them and paid them tribute. It turned out to be a bad idea, just another political gimmick. They turned to Assyria, they turned to Egypt but God forbid they turn to the living God. God sees all this. So Shalmaneser got bent out of shape and he came down and besieged Samaria. Turn to 2 Kings 17. The Assyrian have a six-sided prism that records their destruction of Samaria, Josephus records it and so does the Bible. This is key evidence. Verse 3 "Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute. <sup>4</sup>But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as *he had done* year by year; so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison." In other words, the first guy Shalmaneser took out was Hoshea. Hoshea apparently came out of his palace and went to talk to Shalmaneser, a stupid move, they just arrested him. Verse 5, now they've got no king, "Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years." This wasn't a good year. In Assyrian war tactics they'd take you and stake you to the ground and peel your skin off with knives while you're alive. If you were captured, a POW, they followed the procedure of verse 6, "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, *on* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." So they'd transplant your population to a foreign land and they'd import other people into your land. And you were naked when they did this. They linked you together in big long chains of people, naked, shaming you, they split up your family and send you to foreign lands and had other people intermarry with you to consolidate their empire. That's the SOP of Assyrian warfare.

Now, for the conclusion of the matter we get the prophetic analysis in vv 7-18. We'll just read it straight through. "<sup>7</sup>Now *this* came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods <sup>8</sup>and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and *in the customs* of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. <sup>9</sup>The sons of Israel did

things secretly which were not right against the LORD their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. <sup>10</sup>They set for themselves *sacred* pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, <sup>11</sup>and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations *did* which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. <sup>12</sup>They served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this thing.” <sup>13</sup>Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets *and* every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.” <sup>14</sup>However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. <sup>15</sup>They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and *went* after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them. <sup>16</sup>They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, *even* two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. <sup>17</sup>Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him. <sup>18</sup>So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah.” That brings us to 722.

Now do you see it's not good to disobey God's commandments? If you're a believer God can put very heavy discipline on you if you're in rebellion against Him. He does that because He loves you. He does it so you will confess your sin and be restored to fellowship with Him according to 1 John 1:9. That's all God wanted from the nation but the nation refused and so He whipped them good with the rod of men.

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<sup>1</sup> Let's review the time historical setting of verse 1, **The word of the LORD which came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.** Now the word of the Lord came to Micah over a period of about 50 years, starting in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, during the reign of **Jotham**, about 745 and extending into the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, during the reign of **Hezekiah**, about 609. We said **Micah** didn't choose to be a prophet,

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you don't choose to be a prophet; God chooses who is a prophet. And God chose Micah by personally, verbally and audibly communicating to him in the Hebrew language. God can and does speak to man, though He doesn't do it all the time, except in the Bible. But as far as prophets and apostles go God isn't speaking to man in this way all the time. But He was speaking this way in Micah's day. Micah is in a long line of Hebrew prophets whose lives overlap and the benefit of that is that each prophet is able to check the claims of prior prophets and detect false prophets. So you had a system of checks and balances built into the method God used to compile the OT canon of Scripture. Then about 400BC that line of prophets is cut off and God was silent until the revelation of Christ and the apostles. God spoke for about 70 years and then, once again, He went silent. And we haven't had anything like that since. God has been silent for 1900 years. He hasn't uttered a word except through the Scriptures, of course. What we have had is a number of self-proclaimed prophets who say they're the final revelation, Mohammed and Joseph Smith but it's always just one guy, it's not what we find in the Old and New Testament. These guys' lives don't overlap like in the OT and NT, these are just individual guys claiming they got a revelation. But who's going to check their work? I don't see any string of prophets there. But Micah lived during a long string of prophets whose lives overlapped for over 1,000 years. So we want to see this because it's a powerful argument against modern day prophets. In fact, we know who the next prophet to arrive will be because the last chapter of the OT tells us Elijah will come and prepare the way for the Messiah. Since John the Baptist was not Elijah we expect him to arrive before the second coming of the Messiah.

How did God speak to Micah? What was the mode of revelation? Notice the end of the verse, **which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem**. The Hebrew word for **saw** is *chazah* and it means to "see a vision, to get a prophecy by way of a vision." Now the vision differed from the dream in that the dream, obviously you're asleep during the dream, you're just laying there on your bed conked out and God uses the brain mechanics, He creates activity in the brain so that what you're seeing is all in your head, though it is descriptive of real events outside of your head. The vision is different in that you're awake and we're not sure whether God uses the brain mechanics in the same way as He does in a dream inside your head or if He uses another mechanism outside your head and the signal is actually transmitted through the ears and eyes to the brain where it's translated. But whatever mechanism he uses in a vision, that's what Micah both saw and heard.

Now verse 1 tells us **Micah** was from the town of **Moresbeth** which most commentators say is Moresbeth-Gath because it was close to the Philistine city of Gath over in the Shephelah. The Shephelah are these coastal plains that gradually slope down from this north-south ridge line where Jerusalem sits. Jerusalem is up high, everything around Jerusalem is down, every direction you walk, which is why you read in the gospels, they went up to Jerusalem, they always go up and that's simply because no matter what direction you're coming from you have to go up to get to Jerusalem.

But Micah was from the Shephelah and these were the lowlands over by the modern day Gaza strip and his town here, **Moresheth**, is about 20 miles SW of Jerusalem as the crow flies. So **Micah** is from the southern kingdom of Judah but he's going to minister to both the north and the south, not like Hosea, Hosea was from the north and he ministered almost exclusively to the north, but Micah is going to minister to the north and the south, primarily to the south. So while he's going to talk to **Samaria**, the capital city of the northern kingdom, he's primarily going to talk to **Jerusalem**, the capital city of the southern kingdom, which is his home kingdom, and he's a man who has to say some very hard things, he's going to be the first prophet to predict the destruction of Jerusalem. Up to this point we've heard prophets rail against the northern kingdom and warn of their imminent destruction. And that's clearly taught in Amos and Hosea. But now, for the first time, a prophet predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah. And this broke Micah's heart because he loved His nation, he was a patriot and he loved the God who formed his nation and preserved it around the Davidic dynasty. So to see it destruction on the horizon caused Micah incredible grief as you can see from verse 8, tremendous grief.

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