

# ***THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE***

## **THE MINOR PROPHETS:**

### ***THE PROPHECY OF MICAH, PART 2***

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The people of God had become sinfully and idolatrously very sick during the time of Micah. The covenant people who had been called to manifest God's Kingdom in a world of sin and misery had become wounded beyond repair in Israel and Judah (both the northern and the southern kingdoms were full of sin:

*ESV Micah 1:9 For her wound is incurable, and it has come to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem.*

Israel and Judah had become just like the idolatrous, God-denying pagan kingdoms that surrounded them rather than being a "kingdom of priests to YHWH and a holy nations" (Exodus 19:6).

Although things in Israel and Judah were extremely bad, Micah the Prophet did not lose hope in the faithfulness of God to His people:

*ESV Micah 7:7 But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.*

Although judgment would come on Israel and Judah before God's Kingdom would be fully established, nevertheless, Micah would look to the Lord and wait on God prayerfully. Micah realized that even in times when it seemed like the church was in a hopeless condition, he prayerfully sought God, knowing He is faithful to his people and he will build his church and the gates of hell will never prevail against her.

***What is a key verse for interpreting the message of Micah's prophecy and understanding the Church's mission? (1)*** Micah 6:8 is a key verse for interpreting Micah's prophecy. In this passage, Micah looks back prophetically and redemptive-historically to Moses and Samuel, two prophets before him. Micah speaks of YHWH and the truth of his covenant purposes for his people:

*ESV Micah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,<sup>1</sup> and to walk humbly with your God?*

*ESV 1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.*

*ESV Deuteronomy 10:12-13: "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,<sup>13</sup> and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?"*

Micah reveals that God's will for his people is that we love concretely by His grace doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly and obediently before God.

## **I. A Prophetic Lament: "All Have Fallen Short of the Glory of God" (7:1-6)**

Have you ever looked around you and thought: "Man, things are really bad; how could it get any worse than this?" As you take a gander at the sinfulness all around you in our world, it is easy for us to despair like this.

Micah looked around him and in *prophetic lament* was sorrowful for all of the greed and corruption he saw in the world around him- -especially the sin of the people of God. Micah in our passage is on a search for a righteous man in the midst of a world of sin and misery.

The imagery of Micah's search for righteousness is that of a search for fruit (vv. 1-2). Micah searches for fruitfulness in the land of Israel.

*Isaiah 5:7: For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed;<sup>1</sup> for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!*

Micah as God's prophetic mouthpiece speaks judgment upon those who have sinned against God. Just like many of us today, we look around us in a world of sin and misery and we are tempted to despair.

What did Micah see around him? *How did Micah specifically describe the sins of the world around him? (2)* The fruits of the flesh rather than the fruits of the Spirit!

- No fruit in the visible church under age (7:1)
- Hyperbolically, Micah says that the godly have perished from the earth altogether (7:2a). Like Abraham before him who looked for one righteous person in Sodom and Gommorah, he is not to be found.
- There is murder in the hearts of men (7:2b)- -sociopathically and psychopathically, men hunt each other down to kill. As the Psalmist cried out for justice:

*<sup>ESV</sup> Psalm 10:8-11: He sits in ambush in the villages; in hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless; <sup>9</sup> he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor; he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net. <sup>10</sup> The helpless are crushed, sink down, and fall by his might. <sup>11</sup> He says in his heart, "God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it."*

- Evil is actually something that is done well (7:3a); mankind excels in evil-doing.

- Even princes and judges who are supposed to guard against injustice, crime, forgery, and all manner of evils of oppression and unfairness take part in the crimes (7:3b).
- There is a public speaking of sinful things that should not be even discussed in secret; the sins of man's heart is uttered (7:3c)- -even the great man who is in a position respected by all.
- The best of mankind is like the sharpness of a brier or thorn that cuts the skin deeply (7:4a).
- No one can trust their own neighbor (7:5a) and even the one closest to you intimately cannot be trusted (7:5b).
- Even in the family, sons treat their fathers with contempt, the daughter disrespects and dishonors her mother, in-laws bicker and quarrel, and those who are supposed be close, by virtue of blood-relations are at war with one another (7:6).

Pretty bad situation!

Similar to the way things look in our culture today! Is there any hope? As the Psalmist cried: "Why so downcast O my soul, put your trust in God (Psalm 43:5)!"

Micah turns heavenward, remembering that God is sovereign and faithful in spite of mankind's sins- -there is indeed hope for the troubled heart!

## II. "Yet I Will Trust in the LORD" (7:7-17)

*ESV Micah 7:7 But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.*

In contrast to those who trust in idols, who put their hope in politics or economical successes, Micah will look to the LORD and wait for the God of my salvation.

***How specifically can the people of God be encouraged surrounded by the sinful effects of a fallen world? (3)*** Micah knows that whatever is wrong with this world, with sinful mankind, ***God is still greater***. In the midst of the trouble, he can call upon the LORD and God will hear him!

We can be confident of this hope as well. When we are troubled not only with our own sinful hearts, but live in a world that seems to be sinfully falling to piece, going to "hell in a hand basket" as we sometimes say, we can still trust in the LORD that he is faithful, and he hears us in our prayers and groans for justice and the world to be made right.

We all long for another place - -a heavenly place - -a restored place where there are no sinful effects. We long for God where he shall dwell with his people in a New Heavens and a New Earth- -where sin has been punished.

In verse 8, Micah begins to speak as a prophetic representative of Israel. The prophecy moves from lament to a first-person “Incarnational” confession of hope in God. ***How does Micah speak as a mediatorial-prophetic-representative of Israel? (4)***

In the larger context, remember that Micah is preaching to the Israelites who have been sent into exile for their sins. Micah as a remnant-prophetic-representative of Israel confesses his sins and we get a faint glimpse and the soft sweet voice of Jesus ultimately speaking through this confession of God’s goodness.

***What does Micah confess as mediatorial-prophetic-representative on behalf of believing (“true”) Israel? (5)***

- Just because Israel is fallen for her sins, there will be resurrection-restoration (7:8a).
- Although presently all seems darkness, the LORD will be his light (7:8b).
- Micah as prophetic-mediator over Israel at this point in redemptive-history says that he will bear the indignation of the LORD because he has sinned against him (7:9a). Micah confesses his sins to the LORD, knowing that God is faithful and just to forgive him and cleanse him from all unrighteousness (cf. 1 John 1:8-2:2). Micah confesses his own contribution to the sinful mess.
- Micah knows that God will plead his cause as greater mediator and execute vindication-judgment against all his sinful enemies (7:9b). Micah hopes in the LORD that he will bring him into the light and he will see with his own eyes not injustice against the oppressed, the poor, the fatherless and the widows, but that he will experience and “look upon his vindication”- -Micah’s cause will not lead to eternal death- -he will experience vindication-resurrection (7:9c).
- In Micah’s great vindication-exaltation, his enemies who now scoff will be silenced by God’s redemption and salvation (7:10)- -Micah’s enemies will be destroyed or “trampled down like the mire of the streets”.
- Micah hopes not in what he sees, but for what he does not see; a future day when Israel shall be built up and her boundaries far exceeding the present geographical horizon in the Middle East (7:11).
- In that future day that Micah sees prophetically by faith, Israel’s worst enemies, the Gentiles, will come to the LORD, will come to Jerusalem (Assyria and Egypt will experience salvation by faith, 7:12).

- The earth will be judged because of the fruit of their deeds (7:13, 16)- -Micah envisions a judgment as well as a salvation to be revealed in the future when God acts.
- Micah sees a day when God’s people will be shepherded by him, the very beloved “flock of your inheritance” and they will graze in a good land, a garden—an Edenic-like land (7:14); they will lie down and enjoy safe, peaceful, bounteous pasture lands of God’s grace and provision.
- Micah compares this future day with the great salvation-redemptive event of the Old Covenant times and people: the Great Exodus (7:15)- -Marvelous things of salvation, of redemption from oppressive bondage and slavery- -sonship, Micah sees (7:15).
- The nations who rebelled against the LORD and His Anointed One, the nations that fought against God’s True Spiritual Israel will be ashamed and judged by deafness before God. They will be judged like the serpent in Eden: doomed to like the dust, “like the crawling things of the earth” (7:17a).
- Those nations that once persecuted the people of God will be punished and come in surrender out of their strongholds; those who caused much fear and anguish in the world, those who did not know the fear of God before their eyes, will be those who will fear the living God- -his judgment upon them and they shall fear God’s people because they will be living witnesses of God’s faithfulness to them and they will testify against the wicked for their evil deeds (7:17b).

That day is coming...

### III. “God is Faithful to His People (7:18-20)

Micah concludes his prophecy with a play upon his own name. The name Micah may recall means “*Who is like YHWH?*” In Micah’s time, parents named the children with hopes that they would live lives that would reflect what their names meant. Micah’s parents must have been very proud of him (or rather very thankful to God for his grace to Micah!).

Micah asks “*Who is like YHWH or God?*” (7:18) in that he pardons iniquity?! How can God who is the searcher of our hearts, who sees the sinful condition and problems so much more intensely and clearly than we; how can God who knows all things, and knows better than ourselves just how sinfully polluted we are; how can God who has seen all of our wicked behavior- -not punish us—but rather,

“...Pardon iniquity and *pass over* transgression for the remnant of his inheritance” (7:18b)? Like God in the Exodus protected his people from the angel of death that was sent to judge His enemies; like God in the Exodus specifically passed over

because of the blood on the doorposts that symbolized his covenantal love and substitutionary sacrifice, so God delights in passing over our transgressions because of the precious blood of Jesus Christ!

If God sees and knows all things, if he is the searcher of men's thoughts and hearts (Heb. 4:12-13); if what we see around us in this sinful world can be overwhelming to us, how can God not retain his anger?

Because he delights in steadfast love [חֶסֶד] (7:18b). **What is 'Hesed'?** (6) God delights in compassion and *hesed* loving-kindness, or mercy, or grace, or goodness toward his people, or **covenantal faithfulness!** There are a lot of words in English or concepts to get at *hesed* but at the end of the day, it about God's grace toward those who do not deserve anything but death. **It is God's relentless, ever-loving, eternal, covenantal love for His people!**

How can God not retain his anger forever at the cosmic rebellion against God, of all of the times we have sinned against him? How can God have compassion on us and tread our iniquities under foot? (7:19)

Because of Jesus Christ.

Although Israel was presently experiencing exile from the land because of their sins in Micah's time, a day would come where a remnant would be pardoned because God delights in steadfast love.

That day that Micah saw prophetically was consummately revealed by a cosmic sign, a star that shone in the sky over Bethlehem. That day was a reason for angels to rejoice- -and for the poor and outcasts of society to find hope in a baby born in a manger-cave, the very Son of God, the very son of Mary.

***ESV Micah 5:2-5a: <sup>1</sup> But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. <sup>3</sup> Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. <sup>4</sup> And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. <sup>5</sup> And he shall be their peace.***

In this baby was the glory of God revealed. In this baby, was revealed God's ultimate revelation of his *hesed*—In Jesus, those who believe, whether from Israel or from the Gentile nations, would find peace with God because of God's covenantal love or *hesed* to his people.

In Bethlehem the shepherds found the cure for their iniquities- -in Jesus we can still find this same peace. No matter how sinful you are, no matter how much you have rebelled against the living God, God will forgive those who come to him by faith!

Because of Jesus, we can know for certain that our sins have been cast into the deepest parts of the sea. As far as the east is from the west so far has God removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103). He knows our sinfulness and yet he provides a redeemer, an eternal ruler over Israel (5:2) and Jesus shepherds His flock in the strength of YHWH.

And so in Jesus, the promises made to Abraham and His seed that He would be the father of many nations and that his descendents would be as numerous as the stars of the heaven and the sand of the seashore, and that he and his descendents would be heir of the world (Rom. 4:13), has come to pass.

As Micah ends his prophecy:

*ESV Micah 7:20 You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love [hesed] to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.*

God has been faithful to Israel in Jesus Christ; God has shown faithfulness to Jacob and his *hesed* (covenantal love) to Abraham. God has kept his promises- -and those promises are realized ultimately in Jesus Christ.

*ESV Galatians 3:16, 26-29: Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave<sup>1</sup> nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

As we catch a glimpse of Jesus and the faint sound of his pre-Incarnate voice in Micah's prophecy (7:7-17), we understand later in redemptive-history more fully the sound of the Shepherd's voice and we follow him.

***How is Jesus Christ revealed as a greater mediatorial-prophetic-representative of Israel and the world? (7)***

Like Micah, Jesus was the Mediator-Representative of God's People. Unlike Micah, Jesus was not tainted by the sin that Micah was tainted by although he was a righteous man. Jesus as the perfect Mediator-Representative of God's people (and this includes the remnant of Israel) can say more fully than Micah did:

- "In my death for sinners, do not think that my enemies have triumphed; when I sit in the darkness of the tomb for three days and three nights do not think that my body will see corruption. Rather, know this that I shall rise and the LORD will be a light to me" (7:8).

- “I will bear the indignant wrath of God upon the cross and God will place the sins of my people upon me until I am vindicated in resurrection-exaltation; I shall see God’s vindication of my perfect work and sacrifice of myself for my own (7:9).
- “I will draw through my Spirit those from Assyria and Egypt, Gentiles from all over the world to be my disciples, and I will come to judge the earth” (7:12-13).
- “I will shepherd my people and with my rod and my staff I will comfort them; I will lead my sheep to safe pastures where they can lie down in peace before God and graze upon my abundant provision; I will make goodness and mercy (my *hesed*) follow my people all the days of their lives and they shall dwell in the House of the LORD forever and ever (cf. Psalm 23)” (7:14).

O holy Child of Bethlehem  
 Descend to us, we pray  
 Cast out our sin and enter in  
 Be born to us today  
 We hear the Christmas angels  
 The great glad tidings tell  
 O come to us, abide with us  
 Our Lord Emmanuel

Praise be to God for His Word! Praise be to God for His Christ!

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