

DUE JUSTICE - MICAH

Sermon Series Plan

Micah Introduction

This Fall we will preach through the book of Micah. Micah was a prophet who spoke to God's people around 750 years before the ministry of Jesus. The prophets were God's spokesmen sent to Israel with His message. As with all the prophets, the Word of the Lord comes to God's chosen nation in a covenant relationship with the True and Living God. God rescued them from slavery in Egypt, redeemed them as His own, and brought them to Himself in a special relationship. As God's people, He gave them a covenant filled with promises to bless, protect, provide, and care for Israel as their True King. The nation was to trust in God, rejecting all other gods and idols, and therefore having their lives shaped by the character and love of Yahweh. The entire Old Testament story follows two incredible themes. The first is God's faithfulness, He will keep His covenant promises. The second, though, is the unfaithfulness of the people, who generation after generation move away from their relationship with Yahweh and into idolatry and injustice. So, in love, God sends prophets who serve as prosecuting attorneys bringing who remind the people of their relationship with God, reminding them of the Law of God, and presenting God's case before them. They deserve God's justice, His judgment, and without repentance God will send surrounding nations to be the vehicle of that judgment. Yet, there is always hope because God is faithful and His salvation is coming.

Micah identifies himself with the reign of three kings in Judah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. These kings ruled in Jerusalem from 750-687 BC. Most of Micah's prophetic message comes from the mid years of this span. This is during the period of Israel's history we know as the years of the Divided Kingdom. After the reign of David's son Solomon ended the unified nation we know of as Israel went through a civil war and split into two kingdoms. Samaria to the north had a long series of evil and idolatrous kings, moving the Northern Kingdom further and further from their covenant relationship with God. The trajectory of Judah, the Southern Kingdom included a series of kings (all whom were descendants of David) who fell into injustice and idolatry with a few good kings sprinkled in.

By the time of Micah there were two significant threats for Israel. The first was external, the rise and dominance of the Assyrian Empire. Assyria was a ruthless and cruel empire wreaking havoc in the name of power and wealth. They ruled much of the Middle East and forced both Judah and Samaria to pay taxes and pledge allegiance to Assyria. Assyrian conquest would be devastating, yet for a century or so prophets had warned (especially in the north) that this day was coming as an act of justice and judgment from the arm of the Lord. The second threat was internal, the idolatry, rot and rebellion of God's covenant people. The self-centered idolatrous practices had led to all kinds of oppression, injustice, and evil among the covenant people of God. In both cases, though, the people believed that they were too special to fall, and God loved them too much to let them be conquered by Assyria, and that they were entitled to God's blessings. So Micah comes, like the other prophets, functioning as God's prosecuting attorney bringing His case against the people and explaining why the judgment of God was coming and almost certain. Micah is from a small town in the Southern Kingdom, yet his early prophecies speak to both Samaria and Judah. During his ministry, though, Assyria rolls its armies through the Northern Kingdom which falls in 722 BC. The warning of judgment for half of God's covenant people happened. Yet God rescues the Southern Kingdom from the armies of the

Assyrian king Sennacharib miraculously.

Micah's name means "Who is like Yahweh?" is a reflection of the key theme, not just for his work but for all the Scriptures. God is glorious, just, righteous, and loving. He both judges the guilty and offers forgiveness and restoration. The nation's covenant failure has left them dark, guilty, and deserving the judgment that is coming their way. Micah begins with warnings of the coming judgment through the Assyrians, and eventually warns of a future judgment on Judah through the Babylonians. They are offered the opportunity to repent, but the nation is due justice and eventually God must act to defend His glory, holiness, and name. Still, Micah's prophecy reminds them that their hope is still in the faithful love and holy character of their God. The promise of restoration is embedded in the book with the prophetic announcement of the ascent of God's Kingdom and revelation of its True King who will come from Bethlehem. So like any Word from the Lord, it comes with an invitation for God's people. The invitation is to repentance, faith, and obedience. For both them and us, the prophecy of Micah is an invitation to God's people to turn from sin and rebellion, idolatry, injustice, self-centeredness. Micah calls the nation to reject wicked religious leaders who will be function as echo chambers telling rebellious people only what they want to hear. Micah calls them and us to repent from our desire to serve power, riches, and fame. Yet, he also reminds us that this only works if we turn to a different and better King, seeing the great Kingdom of Christ. Our hope is in Jesus alone, and we are saved when we find Him. But this Kingdom will always produce the character and values of the King in the lives of His people. Therefore, in faith and obedience we will love justice, do kindness, and walk humbly with our God. When these traits define the people of God, they will begin drawing the nations to Zion where the beauty of King Jesus will be on display.

Micah speaks to us today. In so many cases we see those who claim the name of Jesus living lives of idolatry, injustice, and pride. There are myriad of church and religious leaders who will do nothing more than tell us about our own greatness, affirm greed and sin, and who will never call people to repentance. Those who claim Jesus follow pundits who are nothing more than echo chambers, and reject any true prophetic voice when they speak any negative words directed at their tribe. Like 8th Century BC Israel, we are due God's justice. We need a Word from the Lord that will remind us that God is faithful, but when we put ourselves in the center God is more than willing to judge the church and our culture in order to display His holy glory. But Micah also reminds us that Christ came into the world and took the ultimate justice that we deserve. We are due ultimate justice, yet Jesus absorbed this on the cross and offers us grace instead. Micah is an invitation to those of us who believe to remember the faithfulness of our God, and fall in love with Him again. It is an invitation to see the beauty of the Kingdom and our King Jesus. And it is an invitation to repent and be shaped by the values and character of the Kingdom. Because we received grace where justice is due, we can become people who do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

Due Justice - Sermon Plan & Dates

Sermon 1, September 24 - *Mr. ADA* (Micah 1:1)

Sermon 2, October 1 - *Indictment: Idolatry* (Micah 1:2-16)

Sermon 3, October 8 - *Indictment: Injustice* (Micah 2:1-13)

Sermon 4, October 15 - *Indictment: Oppression*(Micah 3:1-12)

We will celebrate Communion

October 22 - Guest Preacher, David Meyer

Sermon 5, October 29 - *After Darkness, Light* (Micah 4:1-13)

Sermon 6, November 5 - *O Little Town* (Micah 5:1-15)

Sermon 7, November 12 - *The Way Forward* (Micah 6:1-16)

Sermon 8, November 19 - *Lament and Repent* (7:1-17)

We will celebrate Communion

Sermon 9, November 26 - *Who is Like You?* (7:18-20)

ESV STUDY BIBLE NOTES - INTRODUCTION TO MICAH

Author and Title

Rather than being identified by his father or family (cf. Joel “son of Pethuel” [Joel 1:1]; Jonah “son of Amittai” [Jonah 1:1]), this prophet is identified by a location, “Micah of Moresheth” (Mic. 1:1; for Moresheth-gath, see 1:14). It was about 22 miles (35 km) southwest of Jerusalem in the “lowland” or Shephelah region. Unlike the calls to prophetic office of some other prophets (e.g., Isa. 6:1–13; Jeremiah 1), Micah’s call is not recorded. Micah is never explicitly referred to as “prophet,” but the source of his power is explicitly attributed to the “Spirit of the LORD” (Mic. 3:8; cf. 2 Pet. 1:20–21). The name “Micah” may be translated as a simple rhetorical question: “Who is like Yahweh?” Similarly, the book concludes with an inquiry: “Who is a God like you?” (Mic. 7:18). These questions underscore the unrivaled character and actions of the Lord.

Date

Micah prophesied during the reigns of the Judean kings Jotham (750–735 B.C.), Ahaz (735–715), and Hezekiah (715–687). The time span roughly parallels those of other eighth-century prophets like Hosea (Hos. 1:1) and Isaiah (Isa. 1:1), though Micah 1:1’s omission of the name of King Uzziah (767–739 B.C.) may place Micah somewhat later. It is difficult to assess the length of Micah’s public activity with any precision. At a minimum, the 16-year reign of Ahaz (2 Kings 16:2), in combination with the presumed transitions at the end of the reign of Jotham and the start of the reign of Hezekiah, provides a ministry length of 20 to 25 years. In Jeremiah 26:18 the elders of the land note the influence of Micah’s words on Hezekiah (directly quoting Mic. 3:12).

Theme

The theme of Micah is judgment and forgiveness. The Lord, the Judge who scatters his people for their transgressions and sins, is also the Shepherd-King who in covenant faithfulness gathers, protects, and forgives them.

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Micah writes in order to bring God’s “lawsuit” against his people (3:8). He indicts Samaria and Jerusalem for their sins (1:2–7), with both Assyria (5:5–6) and Babylon (4:10) looming as instruments of the divine sentence.

Free from Assyrian interference in the first half of the eighth century, the reigns of

Jeroboam II of Israel (782–753 B.C.) and the Judean kings Uzziah and Jotham (see Date) witnessed the emergence of a wealthy upper class. Yet this brought with it significant corruption. As Amos had condemned the economic and legal injustices prevalent in the northern kingdom in the first half of the eighth century (Amos 2:6–7; 5:10–12; 6:4–5), so Micah catalogs specific sins of both the northern and southern kingdoms. These sins included idolatry (Mic. 1:7; 5:12–14); the seizure of property (2:2, 9); the failure of civil leadership (3:1–3, 9–10; 7:3), religious leadership (3:11), and prophetic leadership (3:5–7, 11); the belief that personal sacrifice satisfies divine justice (6:6–7); and corrupt business practices and violence (6:10–12).

The reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, along with the increasing threat of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, provide the broad background for Micah. First, Ahaz stands out among the three Judean kings for his idolatry (2 Kings 16:1–4; Mic. 6:16) as well as for the help he sought from the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 B.C.) in the face of Syro-Ephraimite aggression against Jerusalem (2 Kings 16:5–9; 2 Chron. 28:16–21). Second, Samaria, the northern Israelite capital, experienced exile as it fell (2 Kings 17; Mic. 1:6–7) to the Assyrian Shalmaneser V (727–722 B.C.). Finally, Sennacherib (705–681 B.C.) captured numerous cities and villages of the Shephelah controlled by Hezekiah (1:10–16), but ultimately failed to capture Jerusalem in 701 (2 Kings 18:13–19:37).

Key Themes

1. The character of the sovereign Lord and the sins of his people demand judgment (1:2–5; 2:3; 6:1–2, 9–11). The sentence of God’s “lawsuit” comes in the form of an oppressor (1:15; 4:11; 5:1, 5–6) and by means of covenant curses (6:13–15) rendered for covenant unfaithfulness (6:16).
2. A Shepherd-King gathers and delivers a remnant (2:12–13; 4:6–8; 7:14, 18). This deliverer, functioning as a new David, will come from the very region under Assyrian control (5:2–5a).
3. Covenant faithfulness consists not merely in ritual but in the proper expression of the primary forms of love: justice, mercy, and faithfulness (6:8; cf. Matt. 23:23).
4. The Lord is the focus of worship. The nations will no longer “flow” to false gods (cf. Jer. 51:44) but to Zion to learn of the true Lord and to live in peace (Mic. 4:1–5; 7:12; cf. Isa. 2:2–5).
5. The liberating light of grace flowing from the Lord’s steadfast love (Mic. 7:18–20) overcomes the ominous sentence due to sin (7:8–9). Forgiveness is grounded in God’s faithfulness to his promises (7:20).
6. God’s saving acts in the past (6:4–5; 7:14–15) are interpretative analogies for his saving acts in the future (7:19–20).

History of Salvation Summary

In every age God wants his people to respond to his love by doing justice, practicing loving-kindness, and walking humbly with God (6:8). This is genuine humanness, and by it Israel was called to commend God’s goodness to all mankind. Israel and Judah in Micah’s day were corrupted by their refusal to embrace God’s purpose, and thus would suffer judgment; but there

would yet be a remnant who would experience God's forgiveness and be part of his plan to bless the world through the Messiah's rule. (For an explanation of the "History of Salvation," see Overview of the Bible. See also History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ.)

Literary Features

Micah comprises a series of oracles (prophetic pronouncements) delivered in a variety of historical and political contexts. The overall genre is prophecy. While Micah uses a variety of forms such as disputation (2:6–11) and lament (1:8–16), the two leading prophetic forms in Micah are the oracle of judgment (2:1–4) and the oracle of salvation or redemption (5:2–5). The oracles of judgment follow the rules of satire: they have one or more objects of attack, a vehicle in which the attack is embodied, a stated or implied norm by which the criticism is conducted, and a prevailing tone that is either biting or laughing. Some of the oracles of salvation picture a future golden age (which can be taken either as messianic visions of the first coming of Christ or as apocalyptic visions of Christ's second coming). Much of the book's content is embodied in poetical language, requiring the reader to unpack the meanings of images and figures of speech such as wordplay (see note on 1:10–15), metaphor, and simile (1:4, 8; 2:12; 3:3, 12; 4:9–10; 5:8; 7:1, 4).

The Near East at the Time of Micah

c. 740 B.C.

Micah prophesied to Israel and Judah during the decades just before the fall of Samaria through the time of King Hezekiah of Judah. Micah witnessed the destruction of Israel by the rising Assyrian empire, yet he probably also witnessed the Lord's dramatic rescue of Jerusalem from the Assyrians during Hezekiah's reign.

Outline

The current arrangement of the text permits a number of possible outlines. One that has garnered much support, and that is followed here, centers on the pattern of judgment and salvation found throughout the book. In each of three large units, the use of the plural imperative "hear" begins a major section on judgment, and each unit moves toward hope and deliverance (1:2–2:13; 3:1–5:15; 6:1–7:20).

I. Superscription (1:1)

II. The Announcement of Judgment on Israel and Judah (1:2–2:13)

A. God's punishment of Samaria and Judah (1:2–16)

1. Judgment on Samaria (1:2–7)

2. Judgment on Judah (1:8–16)

B. Abuses and abusers of Yahweh's land (2:1–11)

1. Indictment and future punishment (2:1–5)

2. Rejection of the prophetic word (2:6–11)

C. The divine promise to gather Jacob (2:12–13)

III. The Present Injustice and the Future Prospect of Just Rule in Jerusalem (3:1–5:15)

- A. Present leaders denounced (3:1–12)
 - 1. Judgment against the heads of Jacob (3:1–4)
 - 2. Judgment against the prophets (3:5–8)
 - 3. Judgment against the heads of Jacob (3:9–12)
 - B. Jerusalem's restoration among the nations—promised (4:1–7)
 - 1. Nations approach Zion in peace (4:1–5)
 - 2. Divine promise to gather Zion (4:6–7)
 - C. Jerusalem's restoration among the nations—accomplished (4:8–5:15)
 - 1. Restoration of Zion's dominion (4:8)
 - 2. Nations approach Zion for battle (4:9–13)
 - 3. The Shepherd-King arrives and the remnant is restored (5:1–15)
- IV. The Lord's Indictment and Restoration of His People (6:1–7:20)
- A. Israel accused: covenant violation (6:1–8)
 - 1. The prophetic summons (6:1–2)
 - 2. Divine interrogation and saving acts (6:3–5)
 - 3. People's response and prophetic reply (6:6–8)
 - B. Crisis in relationship (6:9–7:7)
 - 1. Divine indictment of treachery (6:9–12)
 - 2. Divine sentence for treachery (6:13–16)
 - 3. Consequences of disobedience: social upheaval (7:1–7)
 - C. Zion's repentance and renewed faith in Yahweh's help (7:8–13)
 - D. Restoration of the relationship between Israel and Yahweh (7:14–20)